SUCCESSFUL RURAL SCHOOLS USING

THE MARY DOUGLAS GRID

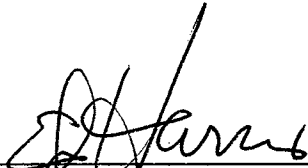AND GROUP TYPOLOGY

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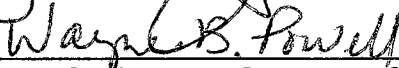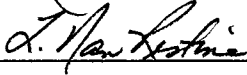Weatherford, Oklahoma
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SUCCESSFUL RURAL SCHOOLS USING

THE MARY DOUGLAS GRID

AND GROUP TYPOLOGY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Successful Rural Schools Using the

Mary Douglas Grid and Group Typology

Schools in small towns and throughout rural

America serve more than one-third of the

nation's students. Unfortunately, many of

these schools face ...unique and lingering

challenges as we head into the next century...

Yet many rural schools often enjoy certain

advantages, such as strong community involvement,

individual attention to students, and flexible

scheduling that are well worth nurturing and

emulating.   (U.S. Dept. of Education, 1995)

As the future of America confronts the people today, it

is clear that the rural way of life is worth preserving.

Rural schools, those having fewer than 500 students,

characterize independent, intimate, and moral life styles.

Rural people emphasize in their schools a desire to be close

to nature in open spaces and to reveal a strength, vitality

and integrity which result in caring and collaborative

efforts to solve their own problems and create their own

future. It is these rural values which are threatened as

rural schools dwindle in number along with their

communities.

Since rural communities are facing difficult times, such as declining economies, populations, tax bases, and many others, rural schools are also having these problems. They face falling enrollments and lower tax support for their services with increasing state and federal requirements (Elliott, 1994).

The uniqueness and differences in rural settings are seldom fully understood or appreciated. Some of the confusion can be attributed to the intrinsic diversity of rural areas and "a lack of knowledge of the subtle influences of the rural gestalt on persons who live and work in rural communities." (Carlson, 1988, p. 43)

Rural communities display different characteristics depending on isolation, socio/economic and cultural factors. Nachtigal (1980) in his studies of rural communities discovered that they tend to be personal and tightly linked, with the same people interacting at school, church, the market, etc. They are relatively free of bureaucracy and more homogeneous in terms of culture. These communities have more traditional values, and a desire for public policy which values and accommodates rural cultures and rural schools rather than trying to reshape them into a likeness of larger schools and communities.

Successful characteristics of the small rural school, according to Nachtigal's (1980) study, are as follows: classes are smaller, therefore, instruction is more

individualized; teachers know their students individually,
often knowing the family background, thus ensuring a better
fit between instructional program and student; students are
individuals with important functions in the school; teachers
have a sense of control over what and how they teach;
administrators and teachers are usually on the same side;
school board members are known as individuals, providing the
opportunity for community input in policy formation; a
minimum amount of bureaucratic structure allowing for a more
efficiently functioning school; and an open atmosphere
for the encouragement of parents and community members to
become actively involved in the school.

Most residents are proud of their public schools and
consider them to be successful. The annual Gallup poll
(1979-1989) on the public attitude toward public schools
consistently reports the highest satisfaction among
residents of small towns and rural areas. The majority of
the teachers, administrators, and school board members say
that their small schools do a good job of teaching basic
skills, maintaining good discipline, keeping the curriculum
up to date, controlling alcohol and drug abuse, fostering
good communication between teachers, students and parents,
and keeping facilities up to date. This enhances the
learning environment and creates an effective atmosphere in
which students can master the basic skills as measured by
achievement tests. However, there is much more to a

successful school than top scores on achievement tests, as was mentioned earlier. The successful school image is much more encompassing than the definition of effectiveness (Sergiovanni, 1991). It includes the high ideals or the quality of schooling that most Americans desire for their children (Goodlad, 1983).

Some of America's best schools have been identified through the Secondary Schools Recognition Program, yet they do not include any exemplary rural schools. Good and Brophy (1986) reviewed many major studies that focused on measures of school process, school input, and school outcomes. They found that some processes consistently characterize more and less successful schools, but that data on school effects were limited because most effective school research has been conducted in urban schools. Lightfoot's portraiture of six different schools in her search for goodness also concentrated on urban or larger schools omitting goodness in rural settings (Lightfoot, 1983). The meaning of success in rural schools is yet to be determined.

Statement of the Problem

Many researchers, school districts, and states have settled on a particular list of correlates to measure school effectiveness and success for all types of schools -- large or small, rural or urban. These correlates are based on a unidimensional criterion, achievement scores, and are

understood to apply uniformly to all schools (Brookover &
Lezotte, 1979; Edmonds, 1979; Lipsitz, 1984).

There are critics, however, who contend that the
uniform application or generalization of any particular list
of correlates is misleading and may be hazardous for the
long-term health of schools (Rowan, Dwyer, and Bossert,
1982; Sergiovanni, 1995). Sergiovanni (1991) defines
successful schools as those that get the job done in a
satisfactory manner while exceeding ordinary expectations
with high achieving students and hard working teachers.
Rural schools have been omitted from the studies of
effective and successful schools, thus universal
generalizations about what counts as successful may be
particularly inappropriate. Furthermore, rural schools may
have unique, individual definitions of success (Douglas,
1982).

The problem the above two conflicting propositions
address is that what constitutes school success as a single
criterion is being applied to diverse, complex social
contexts which may have different and unique meanings for
success. The definition and operationalization of "success"
may vary among similar settings and much more among diverse
contexts.

Mary Douglas (1982) poses that unique contextual
meanings and practices are constructed in particular
settings because of and through the dynamic, interacting

dimensions of grid and group. Thus, in a particular school
these dimensions determine both definitions and
operationalizations of success. These unique definitions
may or may not fit with the commonly used single criterion
of success--test scores--or with Sergiovanni's definition of
success.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to test the usefulness of
Mary Douglas' (1982) grid and group theory to examine the
cultural construction of success in selected rural schools.

Research Objectives/Questions

An objective, or a general aim, of this research is to
determine what makes these rural schools successful and what
characteristics add to its effectiveness.

1. How does Mary Douglas' (1982) grid and group
typology explain the cultural construction of success in
each school?

2. What is the relationship among these constructed
meanings of grid and group and the criteria for successful
schools, namely, student-centered curriculum, academically
rich programs, positive school climate, collegial
interaction, shared leadership, creative problem solving,
and the involvement of parents and the community
(Sergiovanni, 1991)?

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

This study of selected rural schools attempts to

provide insight into their success by examining their characteristics through the theoretical framework provided by Mary Douglas (1982). This framework has been used to compare and interpret social environments and now is being used in the educational context (Harris, 1995). Her typology "enables researchers to meet the conceptual and methodological challenges inherent in cultural inquiry," and takes into consideration, "the total social environment and individual member interrelationships among each other and their context" (Harris, 1995).

Douglas (1982) identifies two social factors which are useful in identifying and contrasting characteristics of these rural schools. In this case study, "grid" refers to individuation or autonomy of the community and parental involvement within the school district and the school itself. The "group" concept refers to a collective or holistic aspect of the school district in the study. From these two broad categories, Douglas (1982) has constructed four sets of social environments. The first one is the low grid/low group type or the "Individualist" culture. In this setting the individual is free from the constraints of group rules or traditions. It is very competitive with little emphasis placed on group survival. The next environment is the high grid/low group set which is often called "Bureaucratic Systemic," because it limits individual autonomy, but the behavior is totally defined.

Another of the classifications is the high grid/high group known as the "Corporate Systemic" setting. Boundaries are clearly defined by the group pertaining to social relationships and experiences, while individual behavior and identification is controlled by the group. Hierarchical roles are present, and the perpetuation of the group's traditions and its survival is vitally important. The last concept is the low grid/high group which creates a "Collectivist" social setting. This is similar to the Corporate Systemic except that there are no hierarchical roles with fewer social distinctions. Table 1 explains this concept.

Table 1

Types of Social Environments

	Low Group	High Group
	Bureaucratic	Corporate
	(high grid, low group)	(high grid, high group)
Grid		
	Individualist	Collectivist
	(low grid, low group)	(low grid, high group)

The schools which have been selected for this research study are similar in size having less than 400 students enrolled. They are regarded as successful by community members, by other school administrators, and by teachers in

neighboring districts.

The selected schools fall in contrasting categories of this model, yet they are all considered successful rural schools. One is highly individual oriented, the low grid/low group setting; the other school is the Corporate Systemic, high grid/ high group with the other two falling in between these classifications.

Significance of the Study

Research

"That rural education is a distinct phenomenon with characteristics allowing it to stand apart from other educational realities has been documented" (Dobson, 1987, p. 29). This study adds to the knowledge about the significance and vital importance of small rural schools through qualitative research. Extensive research has been conducted in selected urban environments (Lightfoot, 1983), but very limited research has been done in rural schools. The thick description is a holistic account of the selected rural school districts and their successful, yet different, characteristics.

Theory

The Douglas (1982) framework is founded in social systems theory (Harris, 1995) and has been used in fields other than education. The significance of this research is that it is an application of this model to educational settings.

<u>Practice</u>

The knowledge gained by this study may provide relevant information to practicing rural administrators and teachers as they face unique challenges (Chance, 1992) concerning consolidation and the importance of rural schools to their communities and to the students attending them. The significance of this research on successful schools is not only to identify excellent rural schools, but to serve as models for those that want to improve. This study may provide insight into how a school gains exemplary status. The resolution of problems and answers to questions in such a process may be applied and/or adjusted to fit similar situations in other schools.

Procedures

<u>Instrumentation</u>

It has been many years since the researcher graduated from a small rural school and taught in five different sized schools throughout one state ranging from the smallest to one of the largest. During that time schools were encountered that were considered excellent, poor, and mediocre in quality, and it is believed that these experiences will positively affect this study. Fellow teachers and peers also have come from varied backgrounds. Throughout all of this time, it has remained a great interest of the researcher of this study to understand the successful characteristics of rural schools and the

realization of the limited amount of research conducted on them. The large number of college graduates, the successful work habits, the positive competitive spirit, and the leadership skills are just a few of the qualities of rural graduates that have been observed. The researcher in an interactive process became the primary instrument for data collection and analysis by developing observational and analytical abilities (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, Allen, 1993). This naturalistic research will reveal the characteristics of successful rural schools.

Data Collection

The procedures used in this study are qualitative in nature. One of the primary data sources includes the observations of the schools themselves. Not only the experience of teaching in five different schools for the past twenty years but also the current position as an assistant professor of education allows the researcher to enter many rural schools as a supervisor of student teachers and of residency-year teachers. After studying observational and interviewing techniques, the researcher can be a keen observer of what is occurring in a natural setting and conduct thorough observations as the investigator who also is an active part of the environment. The thick description of the schools from the author's participant-observer point of view includes a complete portrait of the schools' facilities, their environment and

atmosphere which basically are the schools' climates. This data also consists of observations of various incidents and of interactions among individuals and groups, such as students, teachers, administrators, parents, patrons, maintenance personnel and others involved with the schools. These observations encompass various activities, displays of awards, and any other significant characteristics that indicate the successful attributes of the schools.

Interviews are another valuable source of data. Administrators, including superintendents and principals, can reveal information concerning policies, trends, achievement statistics, financial standing, plus other vital facts and opinions that have caused the schools to be viewed as successful. Interviews with teachers, students, janitors, cooks, and school secretaries are relevant in understanding their perspectives of their schools. Another important viewpoint to obtain is that of parents and community members. All of these combined can create an accurate picture of the school, its effect in the community, and its successful nature.

Artifacts are an important data source. School records, achievement test scores, awards, honors, newspaper articles, and extra-curricular achievements, just to mention a few, are revealing sources of information which can clarify the total picture of the schools being examined.

Another procedural characteristic that needs to be considered is the population or sample used in this study. Highly regarded rural schools were selected because of their successful nature and the reputable traditions that they have maintained throughout the years. These schools were recommended by administrators of higher education institutions who had continual business transactions with these schools, by other school administrators throughout the state, by parents whose children had attended these schools, and by the State Department of Education's list of successful schools.

The findings of this study may reveal characteristics of successful schools as listed by Sergiovanni (1991) through the comparison of the selected schools using the Douglas Model of Grid and Group Typology, but these findings may be transferable depending upon the degree of similarity between this context and the others being compared (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Analysis

The primary purpose of this study was to describe the successful characteristics of selected schools that fit into the four categories of the Douglas Model of Grid and Group Typology. This type of study was deemed to be qualitative in nature and did not focus on the testing of null hypothesis and other quantitative statistical analysis. The data gathered were analyzed in a manner that allowed for its

use as a descriptive tool in qualitative methodologies rather than for the determination of significance levels as used in quantitative methodologies.

Some of the same methodologies that ensure trustworthiness are utilized as data are analyzed during data collection. This includes triangulation, which provides insight and enhances meaning through the collection of several different types of sources and provides thick description of relevant information. Also the development and the testing of working hypotheses help to determine emerging themes and their viability. The researcher unitizes the data by breaking it down into the smallest independent thought, then codes them for easier access. The most important aspect of data analysis is that it is continuous and that it interacts with the data collection (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, Allen, 1993).

Summary

In summary, this study's purpose is to explore and classify four rural schools comparing their similarities and differences within the accepted definition of successful schools (Sergiovanni, 1993). Qualitative methods such as observations, interviews, and examinations of records and artifacts are utilized to gain a clear picture of each school. The vehicle to be utilized to achieve this purpose is Mary Douglas's Grid and Group Typology. Lingenfelter (1992) explains it in this way, "This model is not intended

to reduce social and cultural differences to a simple, four-variant social matrix, but rather to release participant-observers from the conceptual bondage of their own social environments by providing a means for contrast and comparison. The grid/group model provides conceptual glasses through which we may discover new perspectives on the people, the social activities, and the expressed meanings and values that are part of living and working..." (p. 33). This first chapter has explained the design of this study.

Reporting

This case study is presented from a descriptive, participant-observer point of view. The introduction, background, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study are discussed in Chapter I. Chapter II contains a review of selected literature on rural schools, effective and successful schools, and Mary Douglas Grid and Group Typology. Chapter III contains the methodology and procedures. Chapter IV consists of background information on the rural communities and the case study reports of the four schools under investigation. Descriptive material and information that capture the richness of the school through personal observations, interviews, formal and informal discussions, classroom observations, artifacts, information on programs and activities, and parental and community involvement are

described in this chapter. Chapter V contains an analysis
and interpretation of the case studies, and my reflections
on the process and outcomes of the study. Chapter VI brings
closure to the study with a summary and drawn conclusions,
implications and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The search for the related literature for this review revealed three areas of interest: (1) rural education, (2) successful schools, and (3) Mary Douglas' Grid and Group Typology.

Rural Education

To understand the totality of rural education, one must first comprehend the concept of rural. The Census Bureau defines rural residents as those people who live in towns of less than 2,500 population and in the open country. "Rural areas are not as traditional as a lot of people like to think they are," states David Brown, a professor of rural sociology at Cornell University and a co-author of *Rural and Small Town America*. "You will find divorce, drug addiction, crime and all the other social problems" (1990, p. 25). In social trends, Brown concludes, "The difference between urban and rural is a difference of degree, not of kind." But there are real contrasts, such as lower income levels and higher poverty rates in rural areas, older aged community members and a whiter racial composition (Brown, 1990).

Vacated buildings, boarded-up storefronts and fewer thriving businesses are the familiar signs of distress in many rural localities. "People are reluctant to move to a place that does not have adequate grocery stores, schools, medical facilities and other amenities, and industries are reluctant to move to a place that does not have an adequate work force" (Gimlin, 1990, p. 416). The list continues, but rural sociologists conclude that the concept "rural" is multifaceted and "there will be no one conceptualization of it suitable for all occasions; its use is situated" (Falk and Pinhey, 1978, p. 547; Pahl, 1966; Bealer, 1975).

In spite of these obstacles, rural education survives and serves between one-fourth and one-third of the nation's students (Lewis, 1992). Demographers conclude that about half of all school districts in the country are rural. The October 1986, annual National Rural and Small Schools Consortium Conference reached a consensus on the following definitions of a rural school district, a small school district, and a remote/isolated school (Belden, 1986).

> A rural district can include nonmetropolitan
> areas, sparsely populated areas, or remote areas.
> A district is considered rural when the number of
> inhabitants is fewer than 150 per square mile, or
> when it is located in a county where 60% or more of
> the population lives in communities of 5,000 or fewer.

A small school district has fewer than 2,000

students enrolled in grades K-8 or K-12... A very

small high school has fewer than 350 students.

A remote/isolated school district meets either

of the above definitions in a location 100 or more

miles from the nearest nonsmall school district

(Belden, 1986).

So what is rural and rural education? Peshkin (1978)

has stated that rural culture and rural education differ

from urban culture and education and that the culture of

rural America is evident in its politics which will survive

as long as the rural school survives. Poor, small, and

rural school districts caught in the Nation-at-Risk reforms

of the '80s and '90s seem to be "swimming up stream"

creating an endangered species called rural communities in

which a "kinder and gentler school" (Lutz, Lutz, Tweeddale,

1992, p. 49) can exist.

The unique and different characteristics of rural

settings are seldom fully understood or appreciated. The

qualities of rural education have been the subject of

numerous case studies (Carey, 1988; Carlson, 1985, 1988, &

1990, Carlson & Matthes, 1985; & Finley, 1988) Some of the

findings reveal that rural teachers and administrators cope

with fewer resources and have to "make do" with what the

school can afford. These educators consider their workplace

to be similar to a fishbowl in that they are closely

observed in whatever they do professionally or privately (Carlson, 1990).

Elementary schools in rural areas tend to be truly open systems (Carlson, 1990). Members of the community, such as parents, school board members, and other citizens visit these schools without any hesitation and openly state their opinions in attempts to influence the behaviors of the professionals. This is considered common practice.

The following research findings provide a perspective on the conditions and help identify some unique features of rural schools. These statistics reflect the diversity of rural America and aid in the understanding that rural America encompasses a wide variety of people and institutions which includes different social, economic, political, and cultural conditions (Johnson, 1989).

> 1.3 million students are educated in small, rural, and poor schools (Stephens, 1989). 75% of all school districts are small (<2500 students) or very small (<1000 students) (Stephens, 1989).
>
> One quarter of American schools have fewer than 300 students and serve half a million students and employ 50,000 teachers (Carlson & Matthes, 1987).
>
> Rural schools lack breadth of curriculum and special services (Monk & Haller, 1986).

Rural schools experience a shortage of qualified

teachers (Monk & Haller, 1986).

Rural schools have greater teacher and

administrator turnover and burnout (Monk

& Haller, 1986).

Smaller schools have greater levels of achievement

(Swanson, 1988; Walberg & Fowler, 1987; Eberts,

Kehoe & Stone, 1984; Miller, Ellsworth & Howell,

1986).

Increasing the size of the student body

corresponded to a similar rise in the school

dropout rate (Pittman & Haughwout, 1987).

Rural schools have a larger percentage of students

engaged in school-related activities (Barker &

Gump, 1964; Ross & Rosenfeld, 1988).

Rural schools experience fewer discipline problems

(Monk & Haller, 1988).

Qualitative research reveals more subjective qualities

and characteristics. Case studies and various research

studies describe the authors' experiences in rural schools.

These are the findings from this research.

Rural schools have a "family-like" atmosphere

(Carlson, 1990).

Rural schools are the center of social life and

pride in a community (DeYoung, 1987).

Some professional staff members in rural schools

feel a sense of isolation and social scrutiny

(Coward et al., 1983).

Students have limited contact and experiences

outside their rural community (Monk & Haller,

1986).

Students in small schools were less likely to

experience loneliness (Page, 1990).

Students were less likely to drink alcohol, smoke

cigarettes and use other drugs than those in

larger schools (Page, 1990).

Students, teachers, and parents form close

personal and social relations in rural schools

(Monk & Haller, 1986).

The strengths of rural schools are directly related to

their small size (Nachtigal, 1980). Teacher-student

familiarity, individual attention, small class size, student

participation in school activity and governance, program

flexibility, community support, and parental involvement

represent several strengths often observed in rural schools

(Nachtigal, 1980). "Small is working" characterizes recent

curricular developments in many rural schools (Parrett,

1984). Barker (1985) claimed that many problems such as

finances, shortage of teachers, changing social values, and

special interest groups were magnified in small high schools

yet, due to smaller size, they offered the best

opportunities to create a school climate conducive to the best teaching and learning. Foster and Martinez (1985) summarized their views by saying that small schools appear to experience difficulty in staffing and in offering a wide variety of curriculum options compared to larger schools yet students seem more actively involved in activities that develop leadership qualities and close working relationships. In contemporary life, young people too seldom form relationships within their communities that foster a strong sense of identity (Bell & Sigsworth, 1988). An education in a small rural school offers clear opportunities to do so; it gives students a secure environment that increases their chances to be recognized as individuals.

Newton (1987) states that "small rural schools are alive and well." He continues that with a new spirit of cooperation and new technology their future is bright. As long as small schools are judged by standards designed to evaluate larger schools, they will continue to appear deficient (Sher, 1979). When the distinctive characteristics of smaller schools are understood as potential advantages instead of static shortcomings, such institutions will have a chance to succeed and flourish (Bell & Sigsworth, 1987).

Effective/Successful Schools

Effective school research has been conducted for the
past twenty-five years, but most of the research has been
based on urban or large schools, rather than rural schools.
This research shows that there are common characteristics in
exemplary schools (Steller, 1988; Austin & Holowenzak, 1985)
and that schools do make a difference in student achievement
if several characteristics are present.

To assess how schools can make a difference in
achievement, the indicators used to describe effective
schools are crucial. According to Lipsitz (1984), effective
schools are "safe, orderly schools where poor children, as
well as middle class children perform reasonably well
academically, as indicated by standardized measures of
academic achievement" (p. 10).

In the Austin (1974) study as well as in Edmonds (1979)
and Brookover and Lezotte (1979) research, effectiveness was
determined by standardized test results. McNeil and Schave
(1985) wrote that "there is a long-standing bias that
schools with the highest achievement test scores, Scholastic
Achievement Test (SAT) scores, and students who attend
college are the most successful and, therefore most
effective" (p. 150). Gray and Jones (1985) said
effectiveness is "the extent to which pupils have made
greater or lesser progress than would have been predicted

from knowledge of their backgrounds and/or prior attainments" (p. 103).

Miller (1985) said "The existence of exemplary schools and their study lies at the heart of the effective schools research movement" (p. 3). Purkey and Smith (1983) synthesized the major characteristics of effective schools from all different types of studies. They found these attributes:

* Order, control, and discipline.
* High staff morale and expectation for student achievement.
* Emphasis on instructional leadership by the principal or other staff member.
* A clear set of goals and emphasis for the school.
* Schoolwide staff development efforts.
* A system for monitoring student progress.
* Considerable control over training and instructional decisions within the school.

Ralph and Fennessey (1983), Levine and Havighurst (1989), Macchiarola and Hauser (1985), McNeil and Schave (1985), Austin and Holowenzak (1985), and Roueche and Baker (1986) agreed with this compilation of characteristics with the addition of community support, continual improvement, a knowledge of their weaknesses, and the utilization of resources with a feeling of optimism maintaining a healthy organization and being student centered. Lightfoot (1983)

recognized the teachers as the "critical educational authorities" who guide their students' learning and development closely. The teachers "give shape to what is taught, how it is taught, and in what context it is transmitted" (p. 334). In good schools teachers are not expected to be superhuman but are recognized as talented leaders who are supported and rewarded for their work. Lightfoot refers to this attitude as "kind and consistent regard" or "nurturance" (Lightfoot, 1983, p. 335).

Sergiovanni (1991) refers to a difference between effective and successful school research which is worthy of review. Since the word *effective* commonly means "the ability to produce a desired effect" (p. 76), then schools that produce that which is deemed desirous by a group is considered effective by that group. Therefore, effective schools have usually attained that level by scoring high on achievement tests. Sergiovanni (1991) attests that leadership, management, and teaching have contributed to the effective school model but in a rather limited way. "*Successful* is meant to communicate a new and broader definition of effectiveness" (p. 76).

Rowan, Dwyer, and Bossert (1982) view effectiveness as a "multidimensional construct." Other factors such as citizenship, self-esteem, self-discipline, and independence are also within the realm of the school's purpose. "By focusing exclusively on academic achievement, much of the

literature on school effectiveness has ignored the relationship between achieving effectiveness in academic outcomes and achieving effectiveness among these other dimensions" (Rowan, Dwyer, and Bossert, 1982, p. 12). Researchers, however, have used test scores to measure effectiveness because they are easier to define and measure and because they are concerned with measuring basic competence than a broader perspective of success. Standardized tests are more reliable and valid and that is the reason for their use in measuring a school's success (Squires, Huitt, and Segars, 1981). Ronald Edmonds (1979) would agree that these tests are probably "the most realistic, accurate, and equitable basis for portraying individual pupil progress" (p. 29), but they cannot be the sole criterion. He continues with this statement, "Excellent means that students become independent, creative thinkers, learn to work cooperatively, and so on, which is also enormously important" (p. 31). A multidimensional approach would address the qualities within a school that dealt with "social, affective, and psychomotor goals, purposes, and objectives" (Sergiovanni, 1991, p. 84).

Sergiovanni (1991) has adapted, from Campbell (1977), a list of twenty-four measurements and criteria which can be used to identify school effectiveness based on the multi-dimensional approach. They are briefly listed as:

1. Productivity-the extent to which students,
    teachers, groups, and schools accomplish outcomes
    or services intended.

2. Efficiency-the ratio of individual and school
    performance to the costs involved for that
    performance.

3. Quality-the level and quality of accomplishments,
    outcomes, performance, and services of individuals
    and the school.

4. Growth-improvements in quality of offerings,
    responsiveness and innovativeness, talent, and
    general competence when a school's present status
    is compared with its own past state.

5. Absenteeism-number of times not present and
    frequency of nonattendance by teachers, students,
    and other school workers.

6. Turnover-the number of voluntary transfers and
    terminations on the part of students, faculty, and
    other workers.

7. Teacher job satisfaction-the extent to which
    teachers are pleased with the various job outcomes
    they are receiving.

8. Student satisfaction-the extent to which students
    are pleased with the various schooling outcomes
    they are receiving.

9. Motivation-the willingness and drive strength of teachers, students, and other school workers as they engage in the work of the school.

10. Morale-the general good feeling that teachers, parents, students, and others have for the school, its traditions and its goals, and the extent to which they are happy to be a part of the school.

11. Cohesion-the extent to which students and teachers like one another, work well together, communicate fully and openly, and coordinate their efforts.

12. Flexibility-adaptation-the ability of the school to change its procedures and ways of operating in response to community and other environmental changes.

13. Planning and goal setting-the degree to which the members plan future steps and engage in goal-setting behavior.

14. Goal consensus-the extent to which community members, parents, and students agree that the same goals exist for the school.

15. Internalization of organizational goals-the acceptance of the school's goals, and belief by parents, teachers, and students that the school's goals are right and proper.

16. Leadership-management skills-the overall level of ability of principals, supervisors, and other leaders as they perform school-centered tasks.

17. Information management and communications-the completeness, efficiency of dissemination and accuracy of information considered critical to the school's effectiveness by all interested parties including teachers, parents, and the community at large.

18. Readiness-the probability that the school could successfully perform some specified task or accomplish some specified goal if asked to do so.

19. Utilization of the environment-the extent to which the school interacts successfully with its community and other arenas of its environment and acquires the necessary support and resources to function effectively.

20. Evaluation by external entities-favorable assessments of the school by individuals, organizations, and groups in the community and in the general environment within which it interacts.

21. Stability-the ability of the school to maintain certain structures, functions, and resources over time and particularly during periods of stress.

22. Shared influence-the degree to which individuals in the school participate in making decisions that affect them directly.

23. Training and development emphasis-the amount of effort and resources that the school devotes to developing the talents of teachers and other school workers.

24. Achievement emphasis-the extent to which the school places a high value on achieving existing and new goals (Sergiovanni, 1991, p. 80-81).

Duttweiler's (1988; 1990) review of successful school literature (Purkey and Smith, 1983; 1985; Rouche and Baker, 1986; Stedman, 1987; Wayson and Associates, 1988; and Stringfield and Teddlie, 1991), provided a more comprehensive list of effective/successful school characteristics (Sergiovanni, 1991, p. 88-90). These included:

* Effective schools are student-centered.

* Effective schools offer academically rich programs.

* Effective schools provide instruction that promotes student learning.

* Effective schools have a positive school climate.

* Effective schools foster collegial interaction.

* Effective schools have extensive staff development.

* Effective schools practice shared leadership.

* Effective schools foster creative problem solving.

* Effective schools involve parents and the community.

A general review of effective schools research explains that there are common characteristics of successful schools. However, Sergiovanni (1991) states that "indiscriminate application of school-effectiveness research findings and, in particular, the development of generic lists of correlates or indicators that are subsequently applied uniformly to schools pose serious questions about the proper use of research and can result in negative, unanticipated consequences for teaching and learning" (p. 91). Therefore, the lists of effective school characteristics are to be used as general indicators. "They are not so much truths to be applied uniformly, but understandings that can help principals and others make more informed decisions about what to do and how in improving schools" (Sergiovanni, 1991, p. 91).

Mary Douglas Grid and Group Typology

Anthropologist Mary Douglas is considered an expert in the science which deals with the origin, development, races, customs, and beliefs of mankind (Gross & Rayner, 1985). Her early experiences go back to her fieldwork in the Belgian Congo. *Purity and Danger* (Douglas, 1966) presented an anthropological approach to human cognition in which she stated that there would always be a mutual adaptation of views about natural dangers and views about how society functions. In 1978, Aaron Wildavsky inquired whether

anthropology made its cultural analyses only for tribal people and ancient civilizations, or could there be a cultural change in contemporary America. In *Risk and Culture* (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982) the authors collaborated and worked out the argument concerning the awareness of technological dangers in modern society.⌡ The central task was to explore the effects of the social dimension on behavior, and this remained true in the qualitative study of rural schools to "patiently let events unfold and let people reveal the categories of their thought" (Douglas 1975, p. 212).

Whether it is studying African tribes or studying rural schools, Douglas described the role of the researcher in *Implicit Meanings* in this way:

> The anthropologist is inclined to respect the
> intellectual capacities of the tribe he studies.
> There is a built-in professional bias to believe
> that our own implicit knowledge is likely to be
> of the same order as theirs. Consequently the
> anthropologist who realizes that their idea of
> nature is the product of their relations with one ·
> another finds it of critical importance to know
> just where and why our own ideas about the world
> are exempt from sociological analysis (Douglas,
> 1975, xi).

In *How Institutions Think*, Douglas, (1986) reviews the

theories of John Rawls' *Theory of Justice* (1971). The

discussions of justice, community, and self are important in

that they reveal enlightening aspects of any individual,

school, or community being studied. In Rawls' first account

of community, the members are motivated by individual goals

and self interests. The community is external to their aims

and interests. The next account is referred to as the

"sentimental conception of community" (Douglas, 1986, p.

115). Members cooperate because the community reaches their

feelings. "Both conceptions presuppose that the subject is

individuated apart from or before the community experience,

so the boundaries of the subject's self-hood are fixed

independently of situations and are presumably incapable of

change" (Douglas, 1986, p. 127). However, a third theory

indicates that the individuals are penetrated by the

community and that identity is even formed by it.

> On this strong view, to say that the members of a
>
> society are bound by a sense of community is not
>
> simply to say that a great many of them profess
>
> communitarian sentiments and pursue communitarian
>
> aims, but rather that they conceive their identity...
>
> as defined to some extent by the community
>
> of which they are a part. For them, community
>
> describes not just what they *have* as fellow
>
> citizens, but also what they *are*, not a relationship
>
> they choose (as in a voluntary association) but an

attachment they discover, not merely an

attribute but a constituent of their identity.

In contrast to the instrumental and sentimental

conceptions of community, we might describe this

strong view as the constitutive conception. (Sandel

1982, p. 150)

Douglas continues with her argument that "to classify

is a necessary human activity and that there is a universal

human tendency to pass adverse judgment on that which eludes

classification or refuses to fit into the tidy compartments

of the mind" (Douglas, 1975, p. 285). Douglas has been

influenced by the research of Ruth Benedict in *Patterns of

Culture* (1934), which discussed the internal consistency of

a culture. Douglas's *In the Active Voice* (1982) presents a

chapter called "Cultural Bias" which begins with ideas about

accountability, then focuses on different sources of bias in

interpretation. Therefore, the grid/group analysis which

denotes the relationship between social organization and

values and beliefs is an attempt to classify individuals or

groups of people. *"Group* means the outside boundary that

people have erected between themselves and the outside

world. *Grid* means all the other social distinctions and

delegations of authority that they use to limit how people

behave to one another" (Douglas, 1982, p. 138). Grid/group

analysis is an approach to interpret data from a social

environment that constrains individuals or the belief that

the environment constrains them. Grid/group analysis helps
in assessing the visible social aspects of people as they
demonstrate their beliefs and values in their daily lives
within their social framework. In this study the analysis
is within the realm of four educational settings and their
communities. This is a typology of social environments and
is adapted to successful rural schools.

Summary

Characteristics of successful rural schools must be
understood to thoroughly appreciate this research. A rural
district is usually sparsely populated, in a remote area,
and in a nonmetropolitan region. Successful rural schools
are characterized by small class size, teacher-student
familiarity, student participation in school activities,
flexibility, community support, and parental involvement
(Nachtigal, 1980). Sergiovanni (1991) adds a
multidimensional approach to the meaning of success with
high productivity, efficiency, morale, motivation, and
quality; low absenteeism of students and low turnover of
teachers; teacher and student job satisfaction; plus
flexibility and goal setting. Mary Douglas' (1982) grid and
group typology is the framework utilized within the
successful school realm. This research is an application of
this model to rural educational settings.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

A total of twenty-one rural schools are located within
a seventy-mile radius of a town of 10,000 people surrounded
by an agriculture and rural population. The selection was
narrowed to ten schools which were listed as top ranking
schools by a publication which is printed each year by the
State Department of Education (Coppedge, 1996). The report
is based on the following information: percentage of
dropouts, percentage of graduates entering college,
achievement test scores, college entrance exam scores,
average daily tardies and absences, financial status of the
school, parental involvement, curriculum, percentage of
students enrolled in extra-curricular activities, and the
teachers' qualifications and professional development.
Since the State Department of Education criteria
corresponded with the successful school research, this
selection process seemed to be a logical first step in
narrowing the field of study. Public school administrators
and teachers, higher education faculty members, and
community leaders concurred through informal discussions
that these selected schools indeed were successful rural
schools.

Each of the ten schools was observed and studied with

extensive notes written about each one. These cumulative
notes were divided into separate pieces of information and
written on individual notecards with the names of the
schools on the backs of the cards. The notecards were
sorted by the degree of individuation or grid, and the
degree of social incorporation or group (Douglas, 1982, p.
190).

When the notes about the schools indicated a very
competitive, highly individualized structure in which
teachers made decisions concerning resources and classrooms,
these notecards were placed in the Low Grid section because
of the decentralized authority. The notes of schools which
had a noncompetitive atmosphere with a hierarchical chain of
command and an administration who controlled the decision-
making process with more centralized authority were
designated as High Grid.

The High Group category contained notes of schools
which were strongly motivated by traditions. The survival
of the school was of the utmost importance, and a strong
allegiance to the group was evident. The Low Group
descriptions included a lack of traditions, an indefinable
group membership criteria, a weak group allegiance, and a
view of the perpetuation of the school as unimportant.

The division of the notes created the four categories
of Low Grid, High Grid, Low Group, High Group (Douglas,
1982). When a specific characteristic that was written on a

notecard did not fall into a certain category or was borderline, it was set aside. In this way some of the schools were eliminated from the research because they were not strong examples of the Douglas Model. The four successful rural schools were purposively selected for the case studies in this research because of the emergent characteristics of each one that became representative of the quadrants of the Douglas (1982) typology.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of the Mary Douglas' (1982) grid and group typology in the culturally constructed meaning of success in four selected rural schools.

Research Questions

The objective of this study was to determine and clarify the characteristics that created successful rural schools using the Mary Douglas' (1982) grid and group typology through the following research question.

1. How did Mary Douglas' (1982) grid and group typology explain the cultural construction of success in each school?

2. What was the relationship among the constructed meanings of grid and group and the criteria for successful schools (Sergiovanni, 1991)?

Data Collection and Analysis

A three-phase process of data collection and data

analysis was used at each research site. The techniques are described in detail below. Obvious overlapping among these phases should be noted.

Data Collection: Phase 1

This study involved the use of several methodologies common to ethnographic research, including the use of interviews, discussions, observations, and a study of relevant artifacts. Attention was focused on the areas of rural conceptual framework, successful schools, and Douglas (1982) grid and group typology. Questions were asked during the interviews concerning criteria for school success (Appendix A) and Douglas's (1982) grid and group considerations (Appendices B and C).

To describe as completely and accurately as possible the experiences of students, teachers, staff, and administrators, data were collected through the primary methods of interviews, examination of records, and observations. Other methods included formal and informal discussions and collection of artifacts.

Data Analysis: Phase 1

In this type of naturalistic study, "it must demonstrate its truth value, provide the basis for applying it, and allow for external judgments to be made about the consistency of its procedures and the neutrality of its findings or decisions" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, Allen, 1993, p. 29). Guba and Lincoln have established these

strategies to accomplish what they call "trustworthiness"
and credibility: prolonged engagement, persistent
observation, triangulation, referential adequacy materials,
peer debriefing, member checks, transferability,
dependability, and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1989;
Lincoln & Guba, 1985). All of these strategies were used in
this study.

Date Collection: Phase 2

After four schools were selected for this study, ample
time was spent at each school to get an accurate or true
picture of the school setting and also to establish personal
relationships and credibility with the persons being
interviewed, the respondents. A minimum of five visits to
each school, one every other month from August 1996, to May
1997, were made throughout the school year. Personal
relationships were encouraged and developed. Guba and
Lincoln (1989) have referred to this as a "prolonged
engagement" which was a necessary step to attain
trustworthiness and credibility.

Personal interviews were held with individuals who were
purposively sought because of their relevance to the study.
Each person's pertinent information from his/her perspective
was necessary to complete the total picture of the school.
At each site the principal, the guidance counselor, parents,
the superintendent, community business leaders, students,
the custodian, the cooks, and others who were referred or

volunteered were interviewed in several 30 to 50 minute sessions. Many of the individuals had follow-up interviews. To establish trustworthiness (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, Allen, 1993) the data had to be reconstructed so that the respondent could verify them. After each interview, extensive notes were compiled into thick description which were perused by the respondent to verify the facts, interpretations, and conclusions.

Data Analysis: Phase 2

It was necessary to "view life through the eyes of the respondent" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, Allen, 1993, p. 25). Information had to be viewed as an accurate interpretation and true-to-life, or corrections were made to attain that goal. These strategies were referred to as peer debriefing and member checks.

As a result of the thick description and purposive sampling, "transferability," the ability to apply the findings to other contexts, could occur because of similar characteristics. "...the naturalistic researcher attempts to describe in great detail the interrelationships and intricacies of the context being studied. Thus the result of the study is a description that will not be replicated anywhere. The 'thick description' that has been generated, however, enables observers of other contexts to make tentative judgments about applicability of certain observations for their contexts and to form 'working'

hypotheses; to guide empirical inquiry in those contexts"
(Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, Allen, 1993, p. 32-33).

Data Collection: Phase 3

Dependability of the research was based on its
consistency. Confirmability was reached as the researcher
sought to be objective in the observations that were free of
biases and contamination, but the data were confirmable.
"This means that data (constructions, assertions, facts, and
so on) can be tracked to their sources and that the logic
used to assemble the interpretations into structurally
coherent and corroborating whole is both explicit and
implicit" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 243). Confirmability
and dependability audits provided a paper trail and an
external review. Documentation such as the researcher's
daily journal and notes were available for an external check
of the manner in which the study was conducted. "...there
can be no transferability if credibility is lacking...
credibility can be established only if dependability can be
ensured...confirmability can provide nothing greater than
the value of what it confirms...these separate criteria are
bound together through the audit trail" (Erlandson, Harris,
Skipper, Allen, 1993, p. 35). Notes, the reflective
journal, and other research data were available for scrutiny
at any time. During this research, an observer or a
participant could trace the steps of the research process

through the documentation to check for accuracy,
credibility, and confirmability.

<p style="text-align:center">Data Analysis: Phase 3</p>

As an observer in the school, it was necessary to
identify significant events and relationships within each of
the four schools that emerged as grid and group
characteristics. Through persistent observations, it was
possible to constantly analyze and to reach different
interpretations.

When observing the principals' organizational styles,
leadership in student program development and evaluation,
relationship to parents and community, expectations of staff
and students, involvement with instruction, and the types of
incentives and rewards offered in the pursuit of excellence,
all of these characteristics were viewed as relevant for an
accurate picture of each school. Teachers were observed in
time spent on noninstructional tasks versus time spent on
instruction or activities related to instruction. Teachers'
expectations for student achievement, the stress on
application of knowledge and skills, student mastery of the
subject, and involvement of students in the learning process
were specific examples of classroom observations.

Another dimension of observation was the school climate
as it related to safety, cleanliness, and conduciveness to
learning. The atmosphere, the attitudes, and the behaviors
of those involved in the four schools were examined and

systematically described. Parent volunteers were observed
while working at the school and all were more than willing
to discuss the kind of work they performed at the school,
their views about the school, and their relationship with
the school. Extracurricular activities such as livestock
shows, sporting events, assemblies, open house activities,
and parent-teacher conferences were all valuable resources
for observations of the schools' climate.

Artifacts were collected to provide information and to
make known how programs, assemblies, incentives, curriculum
decisions, and various other educational issues were
decided. Scrapbooks, articles in newspapers, samples of
teachers' awards and rewards, school communications,
folders, and pamphlets were a few of the items collected.

Various official records and documents were examined to
support the collection of data and to present holistic views
of the four schools included in the case studies. School
records dating back ten years, photographs, yearbooks,
school handbooks, pamphlets, videotapes, and other materials
provided a more intensive and thorough understanding of the
school's history and background. The State Department of
Education School Report was especially informative
concerning test scores, student enrollment, salary
schedules, curricular offerings, state school expenditures,
per pupil expenditures, and the ranking of school districts
throughout the state according to successful traits. These

documents were referred to as referential adequacy materials but were also used for triangulation, which meant "to collect information about different events and relationships from different points of view" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, Allen, 1993, p. 31). For example, the information received from an interview was verified through different sources, documents, records, and observations.

The data collected in this study from observations, interviews, discussions, statistics, and incidents that occurred at the schools were not viewed in isolation but as units that were assembled into the areas of Low Grid, High Grid, Low Group, and High Group (Douglas, 1982). Notes that were written at each school visit were systematically broken down into specific bits of information and categorized according to the grid and group typology. The data were carefully analyzed and four schools emerged as examples of this typology, and extensive research was conducted at each site to substantiate the findings.

The notes depicted the physical description of each school including the size of the community and the school district with all of the buildings and facilities. The schools' climates added an inclusive dimension to the research. The demeanor of the individuals involved with each school was described in great detail; this included students, teachers, administrators, other school personnel, parents, and community patrons. Various types of events

were observed carefully. Records revealed test scores, the success of graduates, awards, and accomplishments of each school. Extensive notes which included all aspects of the schools were compiled to form a data base of each school. After much sorting of information and studying the data, a clearer picture of each school evolved, and the case studies began to develop.

After the data were carefully analyzed, it was discovered that Low Grid/Low Group was best characterized by the Takota Elementary School in which competition was prevalent, the unique value of the individual student and teacher was appreciated, and group rules and traditions did not put constraints on the individual's social relationships and experiences. High Grid/Low Group was evidenced in Wettwood Public Schools which was similar to Takota Elementary School in that group-focused relationships, goals, and activities were weak, and there was no drive for survival. However, Wettwood did not have the competitive spirit or the individual autonomy that characterized Takota.

Survival of the school, group driven goals, the perpetuation of deep-seated traditions, and certain expected behaviors were significant traits of Torkington Public School, which was an example of the quadrant of High Grid/High Group in the Douglas Model. Low Grid/High Group, Bedford Public School, also valued traditions and the

school's survival, but there was much more emphasis on the individual and on competition as well.

The final data analysis was written in a narrative form, interspersed with dialogue, quotes, and explanations that emphasized the relationship of the overall quality of the school to the characteristics of the grid and group dimensions of Douglas's (1982) social order classifications. Because of the type of research involved in this study, analysis of the findings were from the viewpoint of the observer and researcher who was the primary research instrument. Individuals were observed going about their daily activities in natural settings. These activities were described and then clarified through interviews and discussions. In order to portray a realistic school setting and description, great care was taken to insure no deliberate manipulation of individuals or intervention of activities occurred. The goal was to capture through descriptions what the individuals did and why, and as clearly as possible.

A summary of the data collection-analysis process for each of the four rural schools under investigation are listed below:

1. Unitizing: Units of information from written transcripts and documents were transferred to index cards.

2. Categorizing: The researcher categorized the related
    subjects by successful school characteristics and by
    grid and group categories. These topics were reviewed
    and examined for similarities and differences.

3. Case Study Report: The researcher wrote individual case
    study reports for the four schools that emerged as good
    examples of grid and group.

4. Audit Trail: Confirmability was determined through an
    inquiry audit. The reflexive journal, field notes,
    documents, artifacts, unitized and categorized data, and
    the case studies provided clarification of the research
    process.

Summary

This chapter contained a discussion of the methods and
procedures used to carry out the study. The questions
addressed in the study were listed in the Appendices, and
the schools were briefly described. The methods of data
collection and data analysis were also explained.

For a better understanding and background of the
schools and the communities in which the schools are
located, the case studies of the four schools are described
further in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF DATA

To understand and fully appreciate a school's
qualities, one must inspect a wider circle of relationships
than those found within a school. A school is not a
separate institution unaffected by its surroundings, but one
which reflects the values and priorities of the community in
which it is located. Because of the type of research in
this study, the presentation of findings will be more
meaningful if descriptive information concerning the four
schools and their settings are discussed.

A total of twenty-one rural schools were observed with
four emerging as successful rural schools which were
applicable to Mary Douglas's (1982) grid and group typology.
After careful scrutiny, these schools and the individuals
therein were purposively sampled to characterize and to
build descriptive data into case studies of each school that
would exemplify the different quadrants of the Douglas
(1982) model.

Takota Elementary School

The first case study is a description of Takota
Elementary School, which is located in the northwestern part
of the state. The little community that surrounds this
school has many vacant buildings and only one store

which provides groceries, necessary items, gasoline, and a place to socialize. One leading community member commented with regret about the town's centennial celebration in this way, "This little old town has gotten itself all fixed up and painted as if it were getting all dressed up for its own funeral."

Everyone seems to realize that the town is slowly dying but there have been no joint efforts to save it. They also realize that the school's enrollment is dwindling to fewer than 80 students in nine grades and that future consolidation efforts are inevitable. "The closing of the school will really seal this town's fate, and that is a real shame because this is a good little school," stated the school board president while other community members listened and nodded in agreement murmuring similar remarks.

The school building houses kindergarten through eighth grade classrooms, special education resource room, music/band room, an industrial arts room, and a detached cafeteria and gymnasium. The main building is a very tidy, well-kept metal building about twelve years old with carpeting and mostly panelled walls. The classrooms are neat and orderly with a welcoming atmosphere.

On first arrival at this elementary school, it is obvious that the teachers govern their own classrooms with a very loose control by the principal. This independence seems to work effectively for the faculty and the students

as well. One can see different discipline plans posted on the walls greatly influenced by the teachers' different philosophies. Some classrooms are very structured by nature with desks in traditional rows and with attractive bulletin boards that stress phonics, grammar rules, and maps. Next door to this type of classroom, one discovers a rain forest creeping into the hallway. The ceiling and walls are all part of this theme with tree limbs, leaves, animals, and learning materials that tie into the rain forest unit. A large bubble in the middle of the room provides an authentic reading area inspired with the rain forest motif in which students can enter and enjoy reading. In this type of classroom no desks nor teachers' desks are seen. Although quite different in teaching techniques, the teachers work side-by-side quite compatibly.

The principal, Mr. Bill Rose, a man with twenty years of teaching experience, shows each classroom and introduces the teachers and students with pride and acceptance of their individual differences. Mr. Rose explained that the teachers are heavily involved in the decision-making process concerning curriculum, finances, and other school issues. For example, when a new approach to teaching language arts was introduced to the school system about five years earlier, several teachers attended seminars and training sessions to be better prepared to implement this different teaching method. About half of the teachers chose not to

change their language arts curriculum and stayed with the more traditional approach. A situation such as this could have divided the faculty with ill feelings on both sides, but not at Takota. It was agreeable with all concerned that those who wanted to change, could; and those who did not want to change could remain the same. Everyone was happy with control over their own domain. Smiles are plentiful as they discuss these situations and others.

The teachers describe their situation as one in which they continuously attempt to keep up-to-date on the latest teaching methods. This is evidenced by their enthusiasm and their willingness to share their new ideas. They are encouraged to be creative and to try new techniques, and they do not hesitate to be innovative because they know that their principal will be supportive.

A quiet, respectful atmosphere is evident. In the cafeteria and the teachers' work area (there is no teachers' lounge) positive comments are made about other teachers, the students, and the principal. This type of behavior occurs each time the school is observed. Everyone seems to recognize the differences in teaching styles, but there does not seem to be a desire to try to change or conform others.

Parents and community members are actively involved and supportive of the school. Volunteering at concession stands and as teachers' aids, plus attending various school functions, are just a few of the examples of parental

involvement. The parents are quick to defend their small
rural school stating that their children are receiving a
quality education along with examples and lessons in high
morals, a strong work ethic, and individualized instruction
with such small class sizes.

Since this is an elementary school (K-8 grades) and the
high school is twelve miles away, school pride concentrates
mostly on this elementary school itself. Teachers and
students wear the school colors on certain days of the week;
they post signs to support their students in sporting or
academic competitive events; and they recognize students on
a regular basis with a "Student of the Week" award and other
honors. This seems to encourage autonomy, individual
achievement, and the competitive spirit. A "Teacher of the
Month" award has also been established to recognize
outstanding teachers and their accomplishments. This award
is not just passed around to everyone, but it has to be
earned. It carries much prestige and recognition and is
desired by all teachers.

Competition runs rampant throughout the entire school
year at all grade levels. Spelling bees, math contests, and
book reading races are conducted in many classes following
the traditional approach of individual competition.
Somewhat more nontraditional are the awards for the most
improvement in a certain area, the recognition for being
peer helpers and tutors, and numerous other creatively

invented contests which are intended to spark an interest among the students. The winners are recognized and awarded with certificates, medals, or trophies at monthly assemblies in which the public is invited. All of the elementary students attend while numerous parents, relatives, and community members eagerly await the public recognition of the students' achievements.

Good attendance is also stressed at Takota Elementary. It is not uncommon for the principal or a concerned teacher to visit the home of a child who has been absent for several days in a row. The parents and the child seem very appreciative of the personal attention and care that they are shown. Perfect attendance is rewarded with certificates, or other appropriate awards, which are greatly coveted by all of the elementary students. Also improvement in a student's attendance record can earn the child special recognition through something tangible such as a candy bar, a gift certificate, or a token of some kind. The attendance records of Takota Elementary indicate that students of all grades (kindergarten through eighth grade) are present in school at a remarkable rate of over 90% each year for the past three years. The teachers believe that this successful attendance rate is due to these efforts and the caring atmosphere within the school. One teacher commented, "No one wants to be gone for fear they will miss something exciting, and they also know that they will be missed. I

think that is what keeps our students from skipping school."

Eight of the eleven teachers commute to this small community to teach. All seem to thoroughly enjoy their teaching positions, but there is an unspoken fear that this school will be closed within a few years to consolidate with a larger district nearby. In fact, they seem resigned to this predicament and when asked about the situation, most of them want a job, if possible, in the larger school district. There seems to be no collective group action to save their school, just an acceptance of the way it is.

The students of Takota Elementary are very successful in all areas. Their academic excellence is evident from their consistently high achievement test scores. From their records of the past five years, the students have averaged in the 80th percentile on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. They also perform very well competitively in Academic Bowls and other academic contests with the individual honors, awards, and certificates proudly posted in the halls and in the classrooms. Individual recognition abounds in Takota Elementary. Newspaper articles, yearbooks, plaques, school records, and other documents verified these accomplishments through triangulation.

In sports events, such as basketball, baseball, and softball, the elementary students compete very successfully with their grade levels of nearby small schools. Beginning at the third grade, competition in sports is introduced to

the children. Observing a physical education class
consisting of third, fourth, and fifth graders, one can see
students involved in basketball drills, ball-handling
exercises, conditioning drills, and team scrimmages. The
coach agreed that these activities are similar to the
practices conducted by most high school programs. The
physically adept children (those on the first team) are
participating in the scrimmages and the higher-level skilled
activities. The other students are participating in drills,
playing with the basketballs, and various other activities
to keep themselves entertained and out of trouble. They do
not seem to mind that most of the attention is spent on the
more talented basketball players. The coach uses this as an
incentive for the children to try harder and do better, then
they will be allowed to play on the team. He effectively
praises and encourages all of the students and they respond
favorably. Competition is realized even at this age. All
of these children work very hard to win and to do their
best, because they desire the individual attention and the
recognition that winning achieves for them.

Takota Elementary also has a sound music program.
Instrumental and vocal music are introduced to the children
at all grade levels through listening to various musical
productions, playing different instruments, and singing all
types of songs. The music teacher tries to expose her
students to the arts and culture. "Most of these kids are

from the northwest part of the state and have been nowhere else but here, so this is the only culture they know. I try to broaden their horizons just a little bit by taking them to the opera in Wichita, Kansas; classical musical concerts at our nearby university; and to a jazz festival in Oklahoma City. Mr. Rose, our principal, is very cooperative about allowing us to take these field trips, and since they are usually quite a distance, we try to include maybe a trip to the zoo or to a museum. The kids seem to really enjoy it, and I think it helps them in the future."

The students and parents seem pleased with their quality of education and enjoy the small school atmosphere. Everyone knows everyone else. Although they are aware of the approaching demise of their school, the students seem to be happy with their situation each day as it comes and very resigned to the changes in their future. Some students stated that going to a larger school could enhance their opportunities and would benefit them individually in the long run. Some said they would hate to see Takota close, but if some things could be improved, it might be better for them.

Takota Elementary School takes pride in their autonomy and in their individual endeavors. The students and the teachers continually strive to be better which is seen in their numerous competitions of various natures. The individuals involved with the school respect each other as

they support one another in the different athletic and
academic events. Teachers and other school personnel from
neighboring school districts have a high regard for this
small rural school because of their successful attributes
and many accomplishments.

Wettwood Public School

On the road to Wettwood, which is 20 miles west of the
seventh largest city in this state, deserted skeletal
remains of oilfield equipment dot the countryside as a
dismal reminder of the oil boom and its devastating
aftermath fifteen years later. Vacant lots and uninhabited
buildings occupy most of the city limits; however, a
thriving grocery store, two convenience stores, and several
other small businesses maintain the livelihood of the small
rural town, population 400, which once boasted of having not
one vacant building or lot within its premises.

Many of the community's farmers and investors became
rich quickly when oil was struck, and oil prices were at
their prime. Families moved into this area to reap the
benefits of this newly discovered wealth by starting
businesses and working in the oilfields, but that number
rapidly dwindled as the jobs along with the oil-related
businesses decreased.

The school district also witnessed an influx in money
and in the number of students, so a new high school was
constructed about fourteen years ago. With a state-of-the-

art two-story building with an elevator, highly advanced technological laboratory equipment, and top of the line facilities, Wettwood was a model school in the northwest area of this state. It still is an excellent school respected by everyone, but now it has fewer students and less money.

The high school principal, Mr. Jerry White, indicated that it is growing more difficult all the time to maintain and upgrade their technology and computer labs plus keep all of the activities and pay the necessary expenses. What once exemplified a model school is now existing with almost obsolete equipment.

Activities and achievements of this school are carried on successfully through many extracurricular events and academic accomplishments. The students' scores on the achievement tests are well above the state average, which the teachers and parents anxiously and proudly announce when discussing their feelings about their school. In addition to a sound academic curriculum, effective FFA (Future Farmers of America) and 4-H programs plus numerous awards in athletics and academic contests have brought recognition to the school and to the community. However, the participants who are the outstanding students in these contests are not representative of the entire student body nor of the entire community. These young people are from traditionally well-known families who have been long-time members of the

Wettwood community.   The other group of students are the
"newcomers" or commonly called "oilies" because of the
parents' work in the oilfields.   Lacking the money to
participate in some of the expensive extracurricular
activities, such as FFA, 4-H, cheerleading, and football,
these students do not experience the successes nor the
notoriety of the wealthier children.   They are not chosen
for as many honors, awards, and scholarships, and they do
not demonstrate as much leadership as some of their peers.
The parents of these students were not willing to volunteer
information about their opinions of this school and the
community.

Because of the successful accomplishments that Wettwood
has experienced, most of the students and community members
maintain a sense of pride in being a part of this
educational establishment.   Parents often volunteer to
assist in many ways, and they are supportive of the school
and the students.   Attendance at sporting events and other
extra-curricular activities always is high, and there is
never a lack of interest in helping monitor tests, working
at concession stands, and raising money for school-related
activities.

For the past five years the graduating classes of
Wettwood have sent 75% of their seniors to continue their
education through colleges or vocational-technical training.
The counselor boasts that each graduating senior who is

entering college has a scholarship of some kind. Community groups have supported this endeavor by granting many scholarships to the local students.

The teachers are well-educated and very progressive in their ideas and in their teaching techniques. Of the 27 certified teachers of the Wettwood School District, 12 of them have advanced degrees. All of the teachers declare proudly that they have more than the required accumulated professional development points. Continuing education, college courses, and educational workshops are common topics of conversation among the teachers as they willingly want to try new things. The procedure for change of almost everything follows traditional steps beginning with a written proposal and progressing through the chain-of-command. The process of choosing new programs, determining which teacher attends certain workshops, and other decision making is controlled by Mr. White, the principal, and Mr. Green, the superintendent. They sometimes involve the board of education but most of the time they do not. The teachers understand the hierarchical chain of command and comply with it unquestioningly.

The leadership of the school is evidenced in respectful remarks made by the teachers, students, and community members concerning the principal and the superintendent, who have both been at this school for twenty years. These two men describe themselves as conservative and concerned about

the students' welfare. The superintendent commented that the community and the school board would like to build a new gymnasium to replace the fifty-year-old structure which is too small and too inconvenient but is still being used for elementary, junior high, and high school basketball games. "We have had many excellent basketball teams throughout the years, and many of the folks around here think we deserve a new gym. To tell you the truth, I do, too, but our budget just won't allow it. As long as I'm in control, I'm not going to undertake such an expensive building project with the instability of our economy like it is."

The school buildings of the Wettwood School District are maintained in a clean and orderly manner. The pride of the school is obvious through the display of numerous plaques, trophies, and banners throughout the hallways and gymnasium. It is not a highly personalized environment but depicts a more traditional institution. Individual lockers and the walls are not heavily decorated with awards for personal accomplishments, yet one can sense the pride and the successful traditions that emanate throughout this school.

The high school, which is the newer building, is attractive and decorated tastefully with plaques, trophy cases, and school pictures. The classrooms resemble each other with traditional rows of desks. Some signs of age and worn out carpet are evident, but the teachers proudly

display their rooms as good examples of what a traditional
classroom should look like. Maps, chalkboards, and posters
decorate the walls that stimulate interest in reading,
health and nutrition, self-esteem, and up-coming events.

A common concern among the faculty is the division
between the groups of students who are part of the upper
socio-economic status and those who are of the lower socio-
economic status. One teacher states it this way, "We try to
be fair at Wettwood and treat everyone the same, but it is
very difficult to do. Our students are divided into two
groups--the 'haves' and the 'have nots.' It is a shame but
the 'have nots' do not get as much recognition as the
others. They don't have the money to buy the expensive show
calf or to pay for the ACT Preparatory Workshop, for
example, so they don't seem to be as successful. We do what
we can to be fair but sometimes it is out of our control."

Looking at Wettwood statistically on paper seems to
reveal that the community is rather mobile which is not a
common characteristic of rural schools in this part of the
state. Of the total population of 260 students in grades
kindergarten through seniors, approximately 20 of this
number are moving in and moving out of the school district
throughout the school year. Upon further investigation and
discussions with the guidance counselor, it is revealed that
the families which are moving are predominantly of the lower
socio-economic status. The parents have insecure

employment, no extended family in this area, and undesirable
living conditions. Although this is a small percentage of
the student body, it is of great concern to the counselor,
administrators, and teachers that these students do not feel
that they are an integral part of this school. Therefore, a
concerted effort is made to address the needs of these
transient students. Programs such as peer tutoring,
academic assistance after school and before school, and free
and reduced breakfast and lunch programs have been
implemented with some degree of success.

The principal made these comments concerning this
subject, "These programs and others work, but the students
themselves make the difference. When a kid reaches out to
another student and lets him know that we care, that is when
progress is really made. Our counselor has worked with some
of our students in a Peer Assistance program in which they
become aware of potential problems and in turn they become
more sensitive to another's situation. They become a 'big
brother/sister' and that personal attention really helps.
We have seen a more positive attitude in our entire student
body and our dropout rate is not very high at all."

"All of our students are receiving a good education.
We have a good school and every child experiences some level
of success. We make sure of that. I would like to see more
empathy and understanding between the two groups of
students. They don't socialize or work very well together,

but we are working on that. In spite of this division,

however, our students are good kids and have experienced

much success," said the superintendent. "I am not sure if

our community realizes the impact of the poor economic times

on the school. It seems that they think that we can exist

on the memories of the highly successful years of the past."

The financial struggles that this school experiences

are, in fact, quite real. The teachers and the counselor

feel that their "hands are tied" when it comes to the

budget, curriculum decisions, and overall direction of the

school's goals. School records, financial statements,

newspaper clippings, and statements by the administration,

teachers, parents, and students all agree that the future of

this rural school district is a bleak one. Programs will

either have to be cut from the curriculum, the number of

teachers will have to be reduced, or other drastic changes

will have to be made for the school to continue

successfully.

The community usually supports the school bond issues

fairly well according to the reports and the newspaper

articles reporting about school issues, but comments from

the superintendent indicate that it is not clear if the

parents are voting favorably for school issues for the

school's sake or for the advancement and interest of their

own children. "Either way one looks at it," the

superintendent continues to add, "this rural school is able

to survive because of the parents' pride in their children and their desire to see them achieve. We believe that we can verify that we are successful through our achievement test scores, ACT scores, the many honors and awards that our students receive throughout the state, and the quality of education that our students are receiving."

Torkington Public School

In the middle of wheat and alfalfa fields lies the small rural town of Torkington in the northern part of the state with a population of barely 200. Located twenty miles northeast of a larger city, which has the nearest hospital, supermarket, and shopping areas, this little village has become nearly self-sufficient with a service station, a convenience store, mammoth grain elevators, a lumber yard, and a grain mill all owned and controlled by the rural cooperative. The Torkington Co-op was formed about fifty years ago when area farmers invested in stocks in this cooperative to maintain the services necessary for their farming operations. It is a pervading philosophy that is evident in all aspects of this agriculturally-based community's existence, that these people will do whatever it takes to maintain their town and their school.

When stepping into the convenience store, one instantly notices the immaculately clean premises which does not allow smoking or selling alcoholic beverages. The decision to abstain from promoting these products was a community-wide

determination and was actually put to a vote whether to sell beer and cigarettes when the store opened its doors in 1995. It is believed by many that the deciding factor is the existence of four fundamentally basic Bible congregations whose members control the Co-op board of directors, the city council, and the school board. "This community is not known for its wild parties, unruly drunken kids and adults, and we want to protect Torkington's good reputation," a city council member proudly stated when asked about the alcohol issue.

The town itself is also very neat and tidy with every street, even the alleys, being paved and well-cared for. The rural school is located in the center of town on Main Street which is also an indication that the school is the center of activity for the entire community. Every three years an alumni banquet and class reunions bring former graduates back to this little burg for reminiscing and for hoping to revive within themselves the spirit and school pride that has always been evident in Torkington. A large crowd is always expected for these events with graduates of all ages in attendance.

The school building itself was built in 1963 but looks much newer due to the excellent care and respect it has received throughout the years. Grades one through eight are housed on one side of the building, and the junior high and high school classrooms are on the other side. The

administrative offices, the teachers' workroom, and other classrooms are located in the middle of the building. A gymnasium and cafeteria are adjacent to the main building and a portable metal building which houses the kindergarten, special education, music room, and another classroom are located directly behind the main building. A small gymnasium, which is mainly used for the elementary grades' physical education or can be rented for community or family gatherings, is also located on the school property.

Vocational Agriculture is a large part of the curriculum at Torkington, and they have a building which contains a classroom and a shop for welding, mechanics, etc. A separate building is designated for livestock shows which holds the buses during bad weather, and another building houses the animals and storage. The Future Farmers of America (FFA) have contributed livestock trailers, playground equipment for the elementary school, and other welded accessories and supplies for the school and the community. The students say that this a is a positive way to contribute to the community and to the younger students in grade school. Unselfishly they do not seem to mind that they will not reap the benefits of these projects but that others will enjoy them.

When entering the school facility, one does not feel that it is a thirty-five-year-old structure. Shiny waxed floors, graffiti-free walls (inside and out), and a clean

pleasant odor greet parents, visitors, and community members
as one gets the feeling that all are welcome to this school.
Pictures of former graduates dating back to 1920 from the
four different schools that were consolidated into the
Torkington School District in 1969 are proudly displayed in
the foyer along with trophies, plaques, and other
memorabilia which convey a sense of pride.

Mr. Gary Bennett, the superintendent, and Mr. Bob
Smith, the principal, who both have been in this school
system for about ten years, are definitely at the top of the
hierarchy. The teachers good naturedly refer to them as
their leaders, and they refuse to answer any questions that
they are unsure of but refer the interviewer to the
administrators. Everyone seems very content with their
jobs, their coworkers, and their students.

During school hours, smiles, pleasant comments, and
concerned remarks are seen and heard by teachers and
students alike. A family-like atmosphere is evidenced by
all of their behaviors. Older high school students who
happen to wander into the grade school area speak politely
to elementary teachers and call the younger children by name
much to their delight. Visitors are also welcomed with
pleasant greetings and smiles welcoming them to Torkington.

A group of high school seniors commented about the
smallness of their school and the atmosphere in this way,
"We are like a big family here at Torkington... Everyone

knows everybody else, and that is nice. However, it can also be a problem because it seems that everybody knows what is going on in your life, even the private stuff."

A group of students indicated that they enjoyed working together on almost everything, except homework, and they all laughed. One high school girl said, "We talk to each other about drugs and alcohol, sex and dating, and things like that. I think they call it positive peer pressure, and that is what we do. We encourage each other to be good, to work hard, and to have fun. It seems to work because I think we have a good reputation."

The dropout rate is almost nil at Torkington High School, and those who are involved with the school believe that there is a reason for it. Mr. Smith puts this feeling into words when he said, "We take a personal interest in the welfare of each child at our school. If someone is absent, we find out why and we visit with the parents. Then we assure them they are missed, and they make up their work. We have had some pregnant teens in the past, and we try to take it in stride and do what is best for the student. Usually they continue to attend school as regularly as possible. Whatever the problem, we will try to work it out so that the child can stay in school. That is part of our philosophy -- all kids need an education. That's what we're here for."

The turnover rate for the entire faculty is very low at

Torkington. A very cohesive group can be seen at both levels but especially within the elementary school, who have worked at this school for an average of fifteen years. They often dress alike, and sometimes they arrange their rooms similarly which are the results of group decision making. They agree to use the same programs or textbook series, but the basis for their decisions is always what is best for the school and the students and with the ultimate approval of the administrators. About ten years ago the elementary teachers decided that they would obtain more training to become better reading teachers. With the encouragement of their principal, all seven of them went back to school to earn their Master's Degree in the area of Reading Specialist.

When asked why they believe Torkington is successful, one veteran teacher of twenty years laughingly said, "I didn't graduate from here, but both of my children will, because this is the best school around. They say I bleed purple (the school's color), but really I am just proud of this school and the kids here. I wouldn't want to teach or live anywhere else."

Another teacher remarked in this way concerning the successful attributes of Torkington, "There are certain expectations that Torkington has for its students and for its teachers. I have been here for twenty-two years, and we have consistently been at the top for our Iowa Test of Basic

Skills results, and I mean throughout the whole state we
scored as the number one school in test scores. That does
not come easily. Parents and the entire community expect us
to always do this well, and we usually do, but it is because
of their support and willingness to help. Many of these
parents graduated from Torkington, also, and they want this
good reputation maintained."

The principal, Mr. Smith, verified these remarks and
indicated that the school's open-door policy keeps the
school aware of the pulse of the community. Attendance to
school plays, musical productions, livestock shows, and
sports events is a full-house each and every time. Not only
parents and relatives are in attendance, but also neighbors
and concerned community members take an active part in the
school's activities, which become their social gatherings.

It is not uncommon for fund-raising activities to
follow these events in the school cafeteria for the purpose
of raising money for school-sponsored groups. A baked
potato bar clears $1,200 for the state History Day winners
to help pay their way to the national History Day contest.
Homemade ice cream and cake raise money for the scholarship
drive sponsored by the Lion's Club. Pie and dessert
auctions, raffle sales, and other fund-raisers are seen
often at these school functions and they are supported well
by the entire community.

Another example of overwhelming community support can

be seen in the consistent passage of school bond issues and mill levies. The school district is fortunate to have a stable financial background in spite of its small size, but every year as the state legislature threatens consolidation and the need to close ineffective small schools, the community rallies around the school to do whatever is necessary to preserve this successful establishment.

Competition is encouraged by organizations, school officials, and community members, but it is more of a group effort than an individual accomplishment. For example, when individuals reached the national level of competition in the FFA Public Speech Contest, FFA livestock shows, National History Day Contest, Science Fair Projects, etc., the individuals who have reached these levels are praised and given much positive publicity, but the main emphasis is that they are bringing recognition to Torkington School and a sense of pride to the community. Scrapbooks in the library are filled with newspaper clippings, photographs, certificates, and documents which verify the successful accomplishments achieved by school groups and individual students.

Team sports events, such as basketball and baseball, are held in high regard as they promote group effort and shared goals. Individual sports such as tennis and track are not built into the athletic curriculum while the team effort is greatly esteemed.

By supporting sports, academics, and organizations, the community and the school are showing their loyalty and their desire to perpetuate these successful accomplishments. This seems to be of the utmost importance in Torkington, and that is the survival of the school and the community, which they believe goes hand-in-hand.

An educational foundation has been established to enhance and further encourage the successful traditions and excellence that Burlington students have achieved. At the initial meeting over 40 interested individuals attended to learn more about the different ways in which they could support the school system. An advisory board has made progress toward the official establishment of the Torkington Educational Foundation which has already begun to collect funds for this effort. This is just another example of the way in which this community rallies around their school to do everything possible to save it and to perpetuate the successful traditions of Torkington Public School.

Bedford Public School

An innovative rural school best describes Bedford. The small town of about 1,500 surrounds its schools as a protective coating to shelter it from the real world. Thirty miles from the nearest large town the sparsely populated community relies heavily on the agriculture-related businesses for survival such as the rural cooperative and farm machinery businesses, but the

commercial section is also the largest compared to the other rural towns in this study. A pharmacy, grocery store, convenience store, clothing and dry goods, and a flower shop plus several other establishments create a self-sufficient environment that the other small communities do not experience. Houses of all sizes and price range are neatly displayed with a sense of pride on well-cared-for lawns and streets.

The school building itself is a thirty-year old structure, but because of excellent maintenance it looks and smells brand new. All grades maintain classes in one large building grouped K-8 in one area and the high school in another with a gymnasium attached. Nearby, several smaller metal buildings contain a Head-Start program, music and band rooms, and vocational agriculture classes. A football field, a track, and a baseball field are located across the street. All of the school grounds and parking lots are immaculate. Not a trace of trash nor graffiti can be seen anywhere.

Posters, trophies, and motivational quotes are seen proudly posted on the walls and in classrooms. Plaques and awards decorate the lockers and the clean, uncluttered halls recognizing the many achievements of individual students. The classrooms themselves are as individualized as the teachers and students who occupy them. Some of the classes consistently meet outside, unless weather prohibits it, with

the use of manipulatives as the principle instructional tool. This is especially true of the science classroom's project of creating a pond and a garden, and the vocational agriculture classes which tour wheat and alfalfa fields one day, construct welded gates as another project, continuously work with their livestock projects and show these animals at various livestock shows, just to mention a few of their activities.

The classrooms are conducted in the way that the instructor believes is most beneficial for the students and is based on the teacher's individual educational philosophy. Therefore, some of the classes both at the elementary and at the secondary levels are traditional rooms with desks in rows, the lecture method of instruction being used the majority of the time, and the use of workbooks and worksheets dominating the students' time. Based totally on the teacher's individual preference, other classrooms utilize the computers, such as the secondary English classes which concentrate on grant writing or other types of writing. Another example of diversity is in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade self-contained classrooms who incorporate thematic or integrated units throughout the school year. For example, a two-week unit about bats includes geography, literature, mathematics, science, and creative arts all concentrated on the subject of bats.

The principal recognizes the differences in teaching

styles and willingly supports the teachers' individuality. "Not every teacher feels comfortable teaching integrated units or projects, and I respect that. I believe that the teachers will do the best job of teaching if they decide on the type of classroom that best fits their curriculum and their needs, as long as it meets the state mandated requirements."

The school district of Bedford boasts of a stable, respectable school system with only two superintendents within the last twenty-five years (the second, Mr. Jack Garrin, took his position four years ago and with him came a new principal, Mr. Ken Whitely). The curriculum has changed dramatically during the past two years as the administration and the school board have seen drastic school reform mandated by the State Department of Education on the horizon.

To anticipate these changes and to accommodate the needs of the students, they have implemented learning projects at the secondary level and other exemplary programs which have placed them on the cutting edge of innovative and effective schools. Bedford School has been recognized statewide by school administrators, higher education staff, and teachers as a successful rural school and one that is willing to try new things if these new ideas will benefit the learning of children.

This is the second year that the high school has

scheduled a four-day week with extended lengths of time for classes to meet the state curricular requirements. On Fridays special arrangements are made for teachers to complete professional development in-service workshops and to work with students on their individual projects. These innovative projects include an outdoor science laboratory with a garden, a pond, and the appropriate wildlife; a grant-writing workshop for English students; practical physics projects using farm tools and equipment; mathematics projects that involve a local oil industry and other businesses; plus many other integrated thematic units with relevant hands-on projects which the students seem to really enjoy.

One student said, "I really like being in this science class now because it all makes sense. We can actually see the natural habitat of toads, for example, and see how the environment affects them. We don't just rely on the textbook for the information. Research is fun when it can be investigated first-hand."

The teacher who directs the grant-writing projects and is the librarian and English teacher has seen a much more positive attitude toward writing since the students are able to see the product of their toil. Last year their grants, which amounted to $350,000, were approved to help finance extra books and materials for the library, the school grounds, and the outdoor science classroom. The grant money

also helped supply an abundance of software and add more computers to reach the total of 91 computers which are networked for the entire student body of 350 students. These are divided into two computer labs of 20 per lab, and the others are in the classrooms for the teachers and the students to use at their convenience.

A big concern of the Bedford community is to maintain their high achievement tests scores throughout the school district and not to allow them to decline while experimenting with new programs. The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills results have not declined; in fact, the records indicate that they have increased in the areas of science, reading, and language arts.

"The achievement test scores are a big concern of ours. We have consistently scored above the state average in all areas, and we did not want them to suffer, so we watched them closely to see how the projects would affect the achievement tests, but our scores were great and we are very pleased," the high school counselor smilingly states.

"It was not that easy getting the community to grasp the concept that we are trying to accomplish with the projects, because they have a lot of pride in this school and in its reputation. Change does not always happen easily, but once they saw how enthused the students were about school in general, the parents, the teachers, and the community have backed us all the way," comments the high schoo:

principal, who was instrumental in successfully implementing

the changes at Bedford High School. The personal attention

and enthusiasm he supplies to all school matters has led to

his role as change agent in the school. This role has

contributed greatly to the school's success.

"One thing I like about this projects concept is that

it empowers the teachers and the students. We are an

integral part of the decision-making process in that we

decide on our own projects with the input of the students

and the final approval of the administration. It is a great

feeling to implement our own ideas in the curriculum," a

high school teacher remarks with a sense of pride and

satisfaction. Another teacher comments, "This school has

sound educational programs that exhibit both quality and

equity. The staff possesses a sense of collegiality and a

spirit that makes it enjoyable to work here. We have a low

rate of absenteeism of both students and teachers. The

turnover in the staff is also low. Our students are

motivated and very loyal to Bedford School. They are

actively involved in school and the drop out rates are

almost nonexistent. Who could ask for anything more?"

"We realize that we are small and rural, but our

students can compete with the best of them, no matter how

much bigger their school is," a parent comments when asked

about their school and its successful traditions. The

yearbooks and the weekly local newspapers are filled with

verifying pieces of data to confirm the outstanding
accomplishments of the students in this school.

Community involvement in the school is encouraged
through the projects and through various other programs,
such as Pizza Hut's Book-It, which encourages elementary
students to read and rewards them with free pizza when they
have reached their goals. Parents are also involved in the
school as much as possible. They volunteer for monitoring
tests, tutoring, and aiding the teachers in many ways. One
exemplary program for the involvement of parents is the
visitation day, which is designed to give parents more
insight into their child's school day as well as to acquaint
them with their teachers, class requirements, and policies.
Parents who participate attend all their child's classes for
that day. They eat lunch in the cafeteria and are permitted
to ride the bus to and from school if they desire to do so.
At the close of the day, parents have the opportunity to
have input into school policies and procedures. Parental
involvement has steadily grown each year because of these
efforts.

Competition and recognition of individual students and
teachers are strongly encouraged in Bedford, and a variety
of awards and programs thrive in this environment. Teachers
stress the importance of each student reaching his/her
potential and being recognized for the achievement.
Sometimes the recognition is achieved through the adornment

of junior high and senior high school students' lockers or the desks of elementary students with certificates, badges, balloons, or medals. It is emphasized that each student, kindergarten through senior level, is appreciated as an individual and a contributing factor to the success of the entire school.

National Honor Society admits high school students who uphold high academic standards. The group, which is more than just a name, holds regular meetings and planned activities for students. Elementary and high school students are recognized through the "Student of the Month" program which rewards students for their achievements and also improves their self esteem, confidence, and morale. The faculty and administration believe that the students' positive feelings about the school enhance the general climate and raise the level of school pride. The school plans to add other programs that recognize students' achievements in a positive way.

Teachers are recognized through a "Teacher of the Year" program. Anyone can make a nomination for a person who has performed an extra uncompensated duty, such as chaperoning a field trip or writing a grant application. For the recognized effort, the teacher receives a certificate of appreciation. Teachers are also encouraged to enter competitions in their own fields and are given time to attend workshops, seminars, and meetings that further

enhance their personal professional development.

Bedford is not as threatened with consolidation as the other schools in this study due to their somewhat larger size and their remote location, but every indication is present to lead one to believe that the community, the parents, and the school faculty would do everything within their power to save this institution which they call Bedford Public School.

Summary

Takota, Wettwood, Torkington, and Bedford are considered successful rural schools according to the definition of Sergiovanni (1991). All of these schools can substantiate statistically a high quality education that has low absenteeism of teachers and students. Community members as well as students and the schools' faculty are enthusiastically satisfied with their schools' goals, achievements, leadership, cohesion, stability, and morale. The family-like environment and community involvement, which are common characteristics of rural schools and successful school research, are quite evident in these schools.

The successful characteristics of the schools of Takota, Wettwood, Torkington, and Bedford emerged as representative examples of each of the quadrants of the Mary Douglas' (1982) grid and group typology. This is explained in Chapter V.

Chapter V

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to test the usefulness of Mary Douglas' (1982) grid and group theory to examine the cultural construction of success in selected rural schools. To collect information and to create a holistic picture of four successful rural schools using the Mary Douglas (1982) grid and group model was the focus of the study. Successful attributes of the four rural schools were described in the case studies and the ways in which they were representative samples of the Douglas grid/group typology. Observations and interviews targeted the schools' curriculum, students, faculty, administration, parents, community members, classroom settings, and interactions and associations among the teachers and students inside and outside the formal learning environment.

The research interview was selected as the most suitable method for gathering data for the study. The research interview permitted the gathering of greater depth and in more detail than could be provided through a more formal approach (Isaac and Michael, 1981).

The questionnaire was designed to be used for on-site visitations. Credibility was developed through consultations with those who were interviewed and observed

to verify that the information was accurate. The goal of credibility was to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in a manner to ensure that the schools were accurately described (Marshall and Rossman, 1989).

The interviews were conducted using open-ended questions, allowing for a dialogue approach to the research. The open-ended questionnaire incorporated questions concerning successful schools (see Appendix A).

Successful Schools

According to the research on successful schools, they have several basic factors in common. The major tenets are student-centered curriculum, academically rich programs, positive school climate, collegial interaction, shared leadership, creative problem solving, and the involvement of parents and the community (Sergiovanni, 1991). The schools selected for this research exemplified this criteria for successful schools.

There were several effective characteristics that all four schools had in common. Teachers held high expectations for students' achievements and continually encouraged them toward excellence. Many examples of rewards for students' efforts were visible throughout the schools. Trophies, plaques, ribbons, stickers, displays of students' work, and many other visible signs of students' achievement were present in all of these schools. The teachers used different activities and grouping situations to vary the

presentations of lessons and learning experiences. Learning

tasks were of appropriate levels of difficulty for students.

One of the most noticeable universal teacher qualities at

the schools was the personal interaction and rapport that

the teachers had with students. Teachers offered their

friendship and counseling to the students and showed concern

for his or her success. Teachers emphasized completion of

homework assignments and having good study habits.

Homework, when assigned, was checked promptly and accepted

for an evaluation. Tests, quizzes, and guided practice were

also used to monitor student progress.

The students of the four schools realized how much

teachers cared about them, and they commented about how

welcomed they were in the schools. The teachers encouraged

the students to succeed in all avenues of their school

experience, because they had confidence in their abilities.

The students said that they enjoyed the small, close-knit

atmosphere and the opportunity to become involved in all

activities with leadership roles in many of them.

Students in all four schools were well-behaved and

orderly throughout an ordinary school day and were very

respectful. They clearly understood policies and rules

pertaining to their transportation on the school busses or

in their own vehicles. A respectful manner of entering and

leaving the school building and dismissal from the gymnasium

to the classrooms was demonstrated by elementary and

secondary students in all four school settings. When they were allowed to go to their lockers, the lunchroom, the restrooms, or when changing classes, the students had a thorough knowledge of the procedures and the expectations for their behavior and acted accordingly. In the classroom, they understood and followed homework, discipline, and class procedures.

The schools themselves displayed the pride of each of the communities represented. Neat and well-cared for buildings and streets with no graffiti or litter revealed the essence of the rural schools' laudable demeanor. All parents that were interviewed said that they thought the schools were excellent. Parents who volunteered in the school said it made them feel good when they received a call asking them for help at the school and to be thanked warmly for any task they performed. Parents said the teachers and principals wanted them there, and they were always given a sincere welcome. In return, they wanted to do as much as they could to support their schools through volunteer programs of various natures. Parents involved in the four schools expressed a sense of ownership and pride for their schools and for all of the students.

Former high school graduates from these schools commented that they felt very well-prepared for college due to the curricular requirements which were above the state mandated high school graduation requirements.

Grid and Group Typology

Questions were asked that addressed Douglas's (1982) grid considerations (see Appendix B). Lower scores revealed a low grid which was the individualist category. In this environment individuals were competitive with a sense of autonomy and no constraints from the group. Higher scores reflected high grid which indicated that individual autonomy was minimal, and the individual followed group rules and traditions.·

Questions were asked that addressed Douglas's (1982) group considerations (see Appendix C). Rating the replies from 5 (high) to 1 (low) determined the group dimension. High group was indicated by a prevailing desire for group survival and the perpetuation of traditions. Group activities and group relationships were heavily stressed in the high group unlike the low group in which these activities were not encouraged at all. Low group was characterized by a lack of concern for the group's survival.

Douglas (1982) identified four distinct "cosmological types" (p. 205) based on the grid/group concept. These social environments are presented in Table 2 with the schools' names that are representative samples of each quadrant.

Table 2

Types of Social Environments and the Schools

	Low Group	High Group
	Bureaucratic	Corporate
High	Wettwood	Torkington
Grid	High Grid/Low Group	High Grid/High Group
	Individualist	Collectivist
Low	Takota	Bedford
Grid	Low Grid/Low Group	Low Grid/High Group

Low Grid/Low Group

Takota Elementary School revealed low grid scores which would indicate that they were more oriented toward the individual teacher, student, and administrator. In Takota, which was low grid/low group, the teachers reached decisions concerning the curriculum, the classroom discipline, and the arrangement of the classroom on an individual basis. Every room displayed the personality of the teacher therein. Although a variety of teaching techniques abounded, a mutual respect was ever present as positive comments were exchanged from the teachers and the principal. Everyone was on a first name basis with no special role status attached to the administrative position of principal. One teacher described Mr. Rose's job as merely the head custodian and manager of

the building. All teachers had equal input in the decision making process. The teachers, students, and the administrator were valued as unique and autonomous beings without any constraints placed on them to conform to any certain standards.

Characteristics of low group were evident in the resigned comments of community members concerning the dying town of Takota and the school due to the reduced population and the recent consolidation of the high school to a larger nearby school. With all of these regrets no plans or efforts were made to raise money, increase the population, or maintain the school at Takota. The perpetuation of the school was not of the greatest importance which placed Takota in the low group category.

High Grid/Low Group

Wettwood Public School displayed characteristics of the high grid/low group quadrant of the Douglas (1982) model which included clearly defined expectations and role distinctions. Individual autonomy was repressed in a high grid category. The low group was characterized by a lack of strong relationships and few group-focused activities. There were not long-term goals for the group's survival. Although Wettwood School was not a perfect example of high grid/low group, there were enough similar characteristics for it to be representative of this social environment described by Douglas (1982).

Wettwood Public School had centralized authority with the administrators exercising the control over decisions about finances, staff, curriculum, and resources. With this characteristic, the school was placed in the high grid category of the Douglas Model. The teachers and the community were in agreement that the final decisions relied on the expertise of the administrators. School board members commented that they believed that their responsibilities were substantial in establishing school policies and in hiring the right people. At times they even felt that it was a powerful position to be on the school board, but they did realize that it was necessary to rely on the administrators who were hired to maintain the school's business. This hierarchy and role status were examples of the high grid category.

The low group criteria of Wettwood was characterized by the weak group allegiance and the contrasting socioeconomic groups. Efforts were being made to bring the two groups together, as seen by the desire of teachers and administrators to be fair and not to base honors and awards solely on accomplishments achieved through the aid of monetary means. Achievements were recognized based on the students' progress and improvement in a few teachers' classes, but this was not a widespread practice. Most of the honors went to the students who could afford the expensive show calf for the FFA and 4-H livestock shows, to

the athletes who could afford to attend specialty camps, and to the students who paid for tutoring, computers, and college-preparatory workshops.

A division of the students, the "have's" and the "have not's" as some referred to it, developed a separation within the community. This was not a totally unpleasant situation in that the groups learned to survive side-by-side, but the lack of strong feelings of cohesion led to little or no desire to work for the survival of the school. The community of Wettwood did not rally around the school with fund raising activities and social gatherings intended to build school spirit and perpetuate the school's traditions.

High Grid/High Group

Torkington Public School displayed the characteristics of the high grid/high group quadrant of the Douglas (1982) social matrix. A high grid category was evident by the highly constrained social relationships and experiences which were controlled by Torkington and its community. Individuals received recognition and their identification mainly through the school itself rather than on an individual's own worth. It was a very controlling atmosphere. Actions were directed by the group goals determined by Torkington School. A small number of individuals had the power and were at the top of the hierarchy with several designated role distinctions beneath them. The principal and the superintendent were the leaders

who were at the top of this hierarchy. However, no one
seemed to mind that the administrators were in control.

Group survival and the perpetuation of traditions were
of utmost importance which described the characteristics of
the high group category. Indications of group effort were
evident in many different instances. Elementary and
secondary teachers along with parents and community
volunteers worked together closely on school productions,
such as the high school plays and the all-school musical
productions. Some volunteers worked on the scenery while
others contributed props and costumes. Everyone cooperated
by giving up some of their class time and supervising
students in various situations to ensure a successful
production that traditionally became the pride of the
Torkington community each year. This same type of
cooperation was seen in the Future Farmers of America (FFA)
and 4-H livestock shows, speech contests, and banquets.
Parents volunteered to work with the school personnel to
make these events successful ones. The underlying reason
for the extra time and effort devoted to these projects was
their pride in their school and in their community plus a
strong desire to see the school remain a successful one.

Torkington Public School did not thrive on the
individuality of their teachers or students which was an
indication of high grid. The elementary teachers in their
self-contained classrooms conformed to similar teaching

techniques, classroom arrangements, and curriculum under the
supervision of the principal and the superintendent. They
reached decisions concerning these matters through a group
process and always considered what was best for Torkington
School and the community with the final determination made
by the administration.

Wettwood School was maintained and controlled in a
similar manner to the Torkington School, an example of high
grid characteristics. It was not a stifling atmosphere nor
was it unpleasant in either school, yet the prevailing
hierarchy was evident in all aspects of both schools.
Independent decisions were not reached by faculty members,
maintenance workers, cooks, or secretaries. The higher
ranking administrators and sometimes even the school board
members were designated as the ones with the control and
power.

The Torkington junior high and high school teachers
were a cohesive group but not quite as close as the
elementary faculty. Because of the teachers' different
subject areas, their teaching styles varied somewhat as did
their classroom seating arrangements and discipline plans.
Weekly faculty meetings kept everyone informed of upcoming
events and other important issues. All of the faculty
members regularly attended extracurricular activities to
demonstrate their support for the individual students and
for the school.

The students themselves competed on an individual and a group basis in academic competitions, sports events, musical contests, and FFA and 4-H activities. Consistently Torkington students performed very well and achieved many honors and awards, but these accomplishments were attributed more to the school's effort than because of an individual's own merit. Students and their parents readily diverted the attention away from the individual's accomplishment to the recognition of Torkington School, which was another example of high group.

Low Grid/High Group

The individualist atmosphere plus a strong desire for the school's survival was evident in Bedford, which placed this school in the low grid/high group quadrant. The Bedford teachers were actively involved in the decision-making process concerning the curriculum and their individual teaching styles. On first examination of the Bedford School the dimension of individuation was not as obvious as was seen in the elementary school at Takota. However, delving deeper into the origination of the curriculum, discipline philosophies, and various other aspects of the school system revealed that individual teachers were given the reponsibility to reach decisions on their own that affected all dimensions of the school setting. This was exemplified through the individual projects in which many teachers participated, and the

traditional approach that the other teachers chose to follow.

Competition was encouraged academically through scholastic meets and academic bowls in which Bedford students always walked away with many awards. In sports their football, basketball, and track teams placed within the top four statewide for the past four years with consistent winning seasons in all areas. Several junior high and high school students were state qualifiers in track and field events. This school also was recognized with an outstanding Future Farmers of America (FFA) Chapter which received many individual honors for showing livestock, judging, and giving speeches in competitive public speaking contests.

Individuals were recognized for their achievements in various activities at awards assemblies, posters on the walls of the school, banners and ribbons on their lockers, and throughout the community through the publicity of the local newspaper. This proved to be a motivating factor for all students to participate and strive for excellence knowing that recognition for individual achievement was so readily available.

In this classification Bedford Public School possessed similar characteristics to Torkington Public School especially in that the preservation of the high quality rural school was of paramount importance to everyone

involved with it. Teachers, administrators, parents, community members, and the students themselves worked cooperatively to enhance the school's efforts and to continue the successful traditions that Bedford School had established. This was a strong characteristic of the high group dimension, which Bedford and Torkington exemplified.

A brief description of each school based on the Douglas (1982) grid/group concept is summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

Description of Grid/Group Typology and the Schools

	Low Group	High Group
	Wettwood	Torkington
High	High Grid/Low Group	High Grid/High Group
	Hierarchic roles	Dominant roles
Grid	Unindividuated	Lack of autonomy
	No group goals	Thrive to survive
	Lack survival desire	Perpetuate tradition
	Takota	Bedford
	Low Grid/Low Group	Low Grid/High Group
	Individual decisions	Autonomy
Low	Competitive	Individual achieves
	No long-term goals	Group membership
Grid	Inevitable demise	Group survival

Summary

Each school embraced a quadrant of the Mary Douglas'
(1982) grid and group typology. In brief, Takota and
Bedford displayed competitive and individualized endeavors
which placed them in the low grid categories while the high
grid schools, Wettwood and Torkington, had hierarchical
roles and less autonomy. Torkington and Bedford were high
group which indicated that their interests were in group
survival and the perpetuation of traditions. In the low
group Wettwood and Takota did not demonstrate this desire
for survival. These characteristics of grid and group were
easily recognizable and enabled the classification in the
quadrants of the Douglas' (1982) grid and group typology.

The successful school criteria (Sergiovanni, 1991) was
not as easily categorized. Many of the characteristics of
successful schools were evident in all four schools.
Positive school climate was demonstrated in all of the
schools. Smiling faces, congenial remarks, and friendly
environments were equally common in Takota, Wettwood,
Torkington, and Bedford. All four schools enjoyed graffiti-
free walls and facilities in their neatly maintained and
preserved classrooms and buildings.

The academically rich programs depicted another
characteristic of these successful schools. This was seen
in the exceptionally high achievement test scores and in the
graduates' successful records at college and at vocational

training schools. Takota, Wettwood, Torkington, and Bedford excelled in various academic events, science fair contests, and history day competitions. Their scholastic excellence was recognized throughout the state.

Some of the attributes of successful schools varied by degree of comparison from one school district to another. The student-centered curriculum (Sergiovanni, 1991) abounded in the low grid schools of Takota and Bedford because of their individualized and competitive natures. Bedford's learning projects were an example of a curriculum centered on the students' interests. To a lesser degree this was seen in Torkington and Wettwood due to their high grid characteristics. Decisions about the curriculum were based on what was best for the students and the school with the administrators and the school boards making the final judgments.

Other successful school characteristics that were evident in varying degrees were collegial interaction and shared leadership. In the low grid schools of Takota and Bedford, collegial interaction and shared leadership were most obvious. The teachers and the administrators in these schools considered themselves on the same plain in regard to the amount of responsibility and shared decision making that took place. In Wettwood and Torkington, high grid schools, the decision making and leadership were derived from the administration which were at the top of the hierarchy.

Collegial interaction was seen in these two schools, but it was more for the purpose of positively working together for the betterment of the schools and not for making decisions that pertained to leadership.

Parental and community involvement were strong characteristics of all four schools. In the high group schools of Torkington and Bedford, a substantially greater amount of volunteerism was evident as the communities' priority of survival of their schools dominated every activity and school function. A sense of urgency and determination prevailed in the high group communities; however, parents and community members attended and supported school activities in all of the schools with a remarkable sense of enthusiasm.

Through the utilization of Mary Douglas' (1982) grid and group typology, it was possible to examine the characteristics of successful rural schools (Sergiovanni, 1991) using the four selected schools as representative samples of grid and group.

Chapter VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS,

IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This last chapter presents some thoughts on naturalistic inquiry as it relates to the four schools studied. Answers to the proposed research questions are stated, and recommendations for further research are given.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine four successful rural schools that exemplified the characteristics of Mary Douglas's (1982) grid and group typology. Takota Elementary School, Wettwood Public School, Torkington Public School and Bedford Public School were selected because they fit the criteria for rural and for successful and effective schools, and they emerged as representative samples of the different quadrants of the grid and group model.

Much of the research on successful schools has been conducted in large urban schools. This study incorporated a qualitative approach for the purpose of examining the theoretical framework of Mary Douglas 's (1982) grid and group typology of four successful rural schools.

Naturalistic inquirers are confronted with the problem of the amount of time spent at a setting. Too much time

could create a disadvantage if the researcher becomes more
of a participant than an observer. However, too little time
might eliminate the chances of developing rapport and
observing and collecting data. I believe that my five all
day visits to each site throughout the course of a year
(1996-1997) were adequate for the purpose of establishing
trust and rapport and for gathering in-depth data.

Observations, interviews, and the collection of
artifacts were the primary means of obtaining information.
In all four schools the administrators, teachers, students,
and support personnel were cooperative and willing
participants in my research. Rapport, trust, and a sense of
openness became evident immediately.

The observations of the schools and their communities
proved to be the most revealing aspect of the research
process. Noticing the small towns, the graffiti-free walls,
the neatly manicured lawns, and the location of the schools
themselves helped depict an accurate picture of the school
in its natural setting. Students and teachers were observed
in their day-to-day routine, moving through the halls from
one class to another, interacting with others, working in
the classrooms, and eating in the cafeteria. These were
just a few of the incidents observed.

The school buildings themselves provided a wealth of
information. The neatness and appearance were relevant to
the age of the building. The arrangement of the furniture

in the classrooms, the decorations and posters on the walls,
the books and equipment on the shelves were viewed as
descriptive data that helped create a vivid image of each
school. Human behavior was also keenly observed through
facial expressions, body language, and mannerisms.
Everything was viewed as important for a complete and
accurate description of the school. Extensive notes were
taken as I attempted to describe in words what my eyes had
seen.

The interviews and conversations filled in any gaps
that remained plus they clarified and reinforced the data
gathered previously through my observations. Questions were
answered willingly and without hesitation. In fact, it
usually happened that more information was volunteered by
the interviewee than was asked. Voluminous notes were
transcribed from these interviews which verified the data
obtained through the numerous observations. The documents
and artifacts also provided another valuable source of data.

After I had completed the data collection, the
inspiring task of writing the case studies awaited me.
Could I describe the schools accurately? Would the schools
concur with my description of them? After all four schools
read the written accounts about them, they were in agreement
that the picture was accurate. This defined who they were
and what they had become, and they were not displeased with
the definition.

Conclusions

As a result of the observations and interviews, several conclusions have emerged as key outcomes of this study.

1. How did Mary Douglas' (1982) grid and group typology explain the cultural construction of success in each school? A major question investigated here concerned whether the schools in this study had the characteristics of successful schools, as outlined in the research of successful schools. The evidence, as revealed by the observations, the review of data concerning the schools, and discussions and interviews with administrators, teachers, parents, and students overwhelmingly indicate the presence of successful attributes. All of the factors of successful schools, such as student-centered curriculums, academically rich programs, positive school climate, collegial interaction, shared leadership, creative problem solving, and the involvement of parents and the community (Sergiovanni, 1991), were present in all four schools to some degree. Some of the characteristics, especially community involvement, positive school climate, and the student-centered curriculums were very strongly represented in this study.

2. What is the relationship among these constructed meanings of success and the criteria for successful schools? This second issue concerned whether rural schools of less than 250 students in grades K-12 could be viewed as

successful with differing social factors (grid/group) according to Mary Douglas (1982). Schools, such as Torkington and Bedford who were high group, were dominated by school pride and the perpetuation of traditions. The pervading theme throughout all of their activities was the survival of their schools and ways to achieve this success. Students, parents, and the school faculty all worked together to reach this goal, and they achieved many great accomplishments in striving for that objective.

On the other side of the typology was a completely different perspective which was exemplified by the schools Takota and Bedford who were low grid. The students, parents, and teachers focused on individual achievement and autonomous behavior. Their schools received recognition through the students' honors, but the emphasis was placed on the individual rather than the group. The teachers and administrators also were more self-governing and not so dependent on one leader or in teaching the same way. Takota and Bedford had also attained successful school status but through a different value system which provided more individual recognition.

Implications

The study of these four schools helped provide a better understanding of successful rural schools through Mary Douglas' (1982) grid and group typology. Another perspective

of these schools contributed to a more thorough

comprehension of successful rural schools through the

examination of the cultural construction of success

(Sergiovanni, 1991) in schools.

Recommendations

"That rural education is a distinct phenomenon with

characteristics allowing it to stand apart from other

educational realities has been documented" (Dobson, 1987,

p. 29). This study added to the knowledge about the

significance and vital importance of successful rural

schools through qualitative research.

The conclusions and implications suggested that

research using Douglas (1982) grid and group typology could

be transferred to other contexts. Transferability is

achieved when thick description "enables observers of other

contexts to make tentative judgments about applicability of

certain observations for their contexts and to form working

hypotheses to guide empirical inquiry in those contexts"

(Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, Allen, 1992, p. 32). To

observe and collect data of social classifications in the

educational setting can be useful in determining different

perspectives of successful schools. This could be conducted

in various other contexts as well.

Schools that wish to emulate these four institutions

would do well to examine those things that were done by the

school leaders to involve parents, the community, teachers,

and students. Schools in similar circumstances should be encouraged to have a vision and to see that through dedicated efforts, obstacles and difficulties can be overcome to achieve success.

Another recommendation would be to study other schools, such as accelerated schools, essential schools, school renewal initiatives, and charter schools, using Mary Douglas' (1982) grid and group typology and successful school criteria according to Sergiovanni (1991) for the purpose of gaining more insight into the group dynamics, hierarchical role establishment, and other vital characteristics of these educational settings.

Prospective administrators could research various schools using the vehicle provided by the Mary Douglas (1982) model and Sergiovanni's (1991) successful school criteria to determine if similar goals, ideals, and membership roles exist. A better understanding of the social construction would provide a more successful transition. This perception could be helpful not only with administrators but also with teachers, support personnel, and other interested members of the community.

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Appendix A

These were the types of questions asked during the interviews about school success.

1. Describe your feelings about your school?

2. What qualities do you consider necessary for a successful school to have?

3. Which of these characteristics does the school in your community possess?

4. How do you determine if the school has these qualities or not?

5. What is the mission statement of your school?

6. What are the goals established by your school?

Appendix B

The following questions address Douglas's (1982) grid

(individualism) considerations:

1. Teacher's individual   Teacher's individual

    decisions do not affect   decisions carry much

    changes in the school.   weight in affecting

                                      changes in the school.

    5-------------4------------3-------------2------------1

2. The building   The building

    administrator's   administrator's decisions

    decisions do not   greatly affect changes

    affect changes in   in the school.

    the school.

    5-------------4------------3-------------2------------1

3. There is no emphasis   There is great emphasis

    placed on the teacher's   placed on the teacher's

    effort when striving   individual effort when

    toward a goal.   striving toward a goal.

    5-------------4------------3-------------2------------1

4. There is no emphasis   There is great emphasis
    on the building   on the building
    administrator's   administrator's
    individual effort   individual effort when
    striving toward a goal.   striving toward a goal.
    5-------------4-----------3------------2-------------1

5. Teachers have no autonomy   Teachers have autonomy in
    in curricular-related   curricular-related
    decisions.   decisions.
    5-------------4-----------3------------2-------------1

6. Administrators have no   Administrators have
    autonomy in curricular-   autonomy in curricular-
    related decisions.   related decisions.
    5-------------4-----------3------------2-------------1

Appendix C

The following questions address Douglas's (1982) group

considerations:

1. Collaborative teachers'   Independently teachers
    efforts are utilized to   reach goals.
    reach goals.

    5-------------4------------3------------2------------1

2. Curricular decisions are   Curricular decisions are
    determined by a consensus   determined privately and
    of the group.   independently.

    5-------------4------------3------------2------------1

3. The exchange of ideas is   The exchange of ideas is
    public and open.   private and closed.

    5-------------4------------3------------2------------1

4. Educational programs are   Educational programs are
    influenced by tradition.   influenced by individual
                                   choice.

    5-------------4------------3------------2------------1

5. Support of the school is   Support of the school
    obligatory.   is non-obligatory.

    5-------------4------------3------------2------------1

6. The preservation of the   The preservation of the

    school is of the utmost   school is not a priority.

    importance.

    5-------------4-------------3-------------2-------------1

7. Educators have common   Educators have varied and

    educational beliefs.   different educational

                                    beliefs.

    5-------------4------------3-------------2------------1

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 10-09-95   **IRB#:** ED-96-034

Proposal Title: SUCCESSFUL RURAL SCHOOLS USING MARY DOUGLAS'
GRID AND GROUP TYPOLOGY

Principal Investigator(s): Ed Harris, Sue Dippel

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

ALL APPROVALS MAY BE 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:

Signature: Date: October 19, 1995
_____
Chair of Institutional Review Board

VITA

Sue Lynne Diel

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