

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF A SPECIAL EDUCATION SCHOOL:

THE HARRIS-HILLMAN STORY

by

Frederick Lawrence Patrick

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by

Frederick Lawrence Patrick

Dissertation

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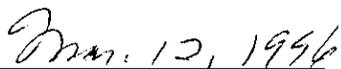
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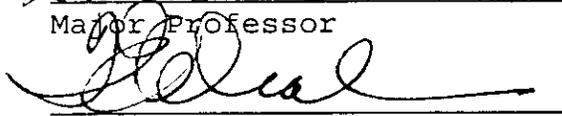
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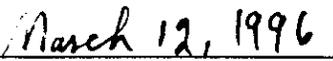
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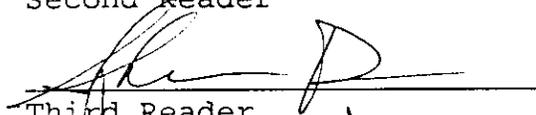
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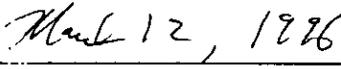
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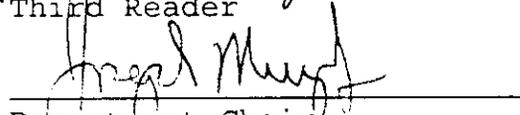
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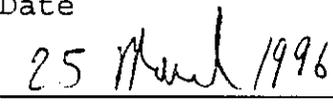
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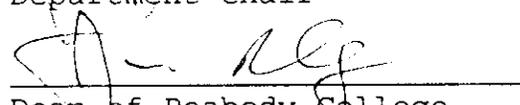
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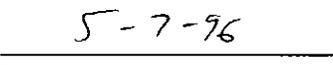
Department Chair



Date



Dean of Peabody College



Date

Harris-Hillman School Philosophy, circa. 1993

To improve the quality of life for each student through individualized instruction and therapy designed to enhance physical, mental, self-help, social, and communication capabilities.

To develop a greater awareness of and ability to participate in events that surround each student daily. Further, to provide for the monitoring of the health care needs of each student and to extend support to their families.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study would have been impossible without the cooperation of principal Terry Kopansky and the Harris Hillman staff and faculty, who tolerated having me in their midst during the 1994-95 school year. Similarly, I would have made little headway without the support of the Metro Board of Education and its central office staff; the faculty of the Vanderbilt University departments of medicine, educational leadership, and special education; former Harris Hillman students and staff; parents of present and former Harris Hillman students; and community participants.

I owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude to my family. Maggie, Scott, and Todd have sacrificed much so I might add a new dimension to my professional life. My Peabody College research committee consisting of chair Robert L. Crowson, Terrence E. Deal, and Sherman J. Dorn, good friends Gene and Bella Higdon in Murfreesboro--all encouraged me throughout the research process and this study. Thank you all.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Chapter | Page |
|---|------|
| I. INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| A. Need For the Study | 1 |
| B. Purpose and Framework of the Study | 2 |
| C. The Problem Investigated | 5 |
| D. The Theoretical Framework | 6 |
| E. Organization of Study Chapters | 7 |
| F. Limitations of the Study | 9 |
| G. Summary of the Problem | 11 |
| II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE | 14 |
| A. Cultural Studies of Schools | 14 |
| B. Historical Overview | 17 |
| C. The Inclusion Debate | 20 |
| D. The Organizational Saga | 23 |
| E. Institutional Analyses of Schools | 28 |
| F. Criticism of the Literature | 29 |
| G. Naturalistic-Narrative Inquiry | 32 |
| H. Chapter Summary | 33 |
| III. METHODOLOGY | 36 |
| A. Research Design | 36 |
| B. Criteria for School Ethnographies | 40 |
| C. Analysis Techniques | 42 |
| D. The Collective Tale | 44 |
| E. Study Participants | 45 |
| F. Measures and Procedures | 48 |
| G. Method of Presentation | 50 |
| H. Chapter Summary | 51 |

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Cont'd)

| Chapter | Page |
|---|------|
| IV. STUDY RESULTS | 52 |
| A. Overview | 52 |
| B. The School and Its Environment | 54 |
| C. Terry Kopansky, Principal | 55 |
| D. Norma Fawbush, Parent and Aide | 72 |
| E. Christa West, Teacher | 83 |
| F. Karen Smith, Former Student | 96 |
| G. Emmett Gardner, the Community | 108 |
| H. Chapter Summary | 121 |
| V. DISCUSSION | 123 |
| A. Overview | 123 |
| B. School Culture at HHS | 124 |
| C. The Environmental Elements | 131 |
| D. Legitimacy and Community | 138 |
| E. Chapter Summary | 142 |
| VI. CONCLUSIONS | 145 |
| A. Overview | 145 |
| B. Understanding of School Organizations | 147 |
| C. Operating Successful Schools | 153 |
| D. Chapter Summary | 155 |
| REFERENCES | 159 |
| APPENDIXES | 172 |
| A. Definition of Terms | 172 |
| B. Letter to HHS Inclusion Committee From the Metro Special Education Director | 181 |
| C. Metro Position Paper on Inclusion | 182 |

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Frederick Lawrence Patrick, Ed.D.
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The purpose of this study was to describe, using the tools of ethnography and qualitative research, selected events in the history of a public special education school and its school culture. The year of the study, 1994-1995, the school served 125 students with cerebral palsy and other disabilities affecting some or all of their physical, sensory, and cognitive abilities.

Study participants included faculty and staff, former students, parents, school administrators, and others identified with the school and in the Nashville community during the 1994-1995 school year. In-depth interviews with study participants, on-site observations, semi-structured interviews with informants, document, and archival research were used to create five collective tales based on stories of those who knew the school best between 1975 and 1995.

This is a story of one special education school's founding, success, and survival. In recent years, the local school system closed 5 of 7 special education schools, its own K-12 school enrollment decline, and rumors it too would soon close. The story presents a saga of success and

survival as the school faced a new social construction of schooling called the "inclusive schools movement."

By applying institutional theory to the study of organizations, this study offers an explanation of how one special education school survived the inclusion movement by adapting to societal demands by maintaining certain environmental elements considered important to school survival. This study provides a number of stories which serve as evidence of how the continuum of services for students with disabilities continues to work as inclusion efforts in some public schools often go awry.

This study investigated (1) events beginning with the school's founding in 1975, (2) school success and survival using institutional theory and organizational analysis, and (3) the school as a model day school in special education's continuum or Cascade of Services. At the time of this study, the inclusive schools movement was believed to be responsible for declining enrollments at Harris-Hillman, increasing numbers of students with disabilities being placed in other public and private schools, and rumors the school would soon be closed.

Study results offer a collection of stories from one educational setting over two decades. Discussion of these stories is followed by study conclusions that provide support for special education schools and a continuum of

service and placement options for students, in need of special settings with appropriate curricular content and instruction. It is a unique story of a special education school and its history over 20 years between 1975 and 1995.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A final way of judging institutional goodness for students is to observe the regard and treatment of the weakest members. (Lawrence-Lightfoot, The Good High School, 1983, p. 349)

Need For the Study

This study contributes to a growing, but still meager, literature on the real life stories of schools (Boyer, 1983; Goodlad, 1984; Grant, 1988; Jackson, 1990; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983; Peshkin, 1986, 1991) and, particularly, our knowledge of special education schools. I wanted to know the many faces of Harris-Hillman Special Education School, both inside and outside its organizational boundaries.

Harris-Hillman School (HHS) is one of two special education schools, out of the 122 public schools, in the Metropolitan Public Schools of Nashville-Davidson County, Tennessee (henceforth, Metro Schools). In the last decade, Metro Schools closed five of its special education schools and only HHS and Murrell School remained open in late 1995.

What I found, during the 1994-1995 school year, was a paradox of beliefs about where to educate children with disabilities, and one school at odds with its own school system and several national groups over school placements, or where to place students with developmental disabilities.¹ I also found a school with a strong organizational culture, developed over 2 decades, grounded in taken-for-granted beliefs, and a shared sense of legitimacy and commitment both inside and outside the school's organizational boundaries.

A paradox of beliefs emerged that found inclusionists and Metro Schools claiming the placement of all students with disabilities is controlled by a legally-mandated least restrictive environment rule found in federal law. The alternative view asks Metro Schools to protect the continuum of service and placement options, noting the options are also legally-mandated by law, and to reject inclusion's "one placement fits all" philosophy when an alternative student placement may better match and meet the student's needs within special education's continuum of services.

Purpose and Framework of the Study

This study proceeds on two levels: (a) it offers an examination of school culture in a special education school and (b) it applies the theory of new institutionalism to the

¹Developmental disabilities are defined as mental, sensory and physical impairments with onset before age 22, likely to continue indefinitely and with substantial functional limitations (Drew, Logan & Hardman (1992, p. 7).

study of one school organization and how it has fared in the continuum of services and its own institutional environment. The research methods of ethnography, naturalistic-narrative inquiry, and grounded theory were used in this study.

Consistent with a grounded theory approach, 3 themes emerged during the study: 1-how organizational sagas hold schools together, 2-how legitimacy and commitment are needed for school success and survival, and 3-the role of symbolic leadership. First, the school offered many vestiges of an organizational saga (Baldrige & Deal, 1975; Clark, 1975; Selznick, 1949/1966). Clark (1975) defined the organizational saga as publicly-held beliefs about a group (a) rooted in history, (b) focused on unique accomplishments of the institution, and (c) held with conviction and emotional attachment. Clark found organizational sagas link past, present, and future, and that group-held beliefs can become so entrenched that schools may even feel isolated from their institutional environments (see Appendix A).

Ogawa (1993) believed any analysis of schools, using institutional theory, must first consider the broader societal environment in which schools and school districts operate, rather than focusing on relationships and networks operating within the school and school district. With this in mind, I approached this study and analysis with the new

institutionalist view that broad societal influences exert substantial control over school success and survival.

My analysis of the data attempted to link the school's institutional environment, consisting of both the local school system and national efforts to end special education school placements, with its perceived organizational niche. The HHS niche was created in 1975 by the local school system and by a federal law requiring local schools to have a continuum of services. By 1994-1995, however, the school's niche was threatened by a declining enrollment, a new construction of schooling called the inclusive schools movement, rumors in the community HHS may close, and the fact the local school system had closed five out of seven Metro special education schools² in recent years.

A third theme to emerge during the study was the role of symbolic leadership as a factor in school success and survival. My analysis of HHS's organizational culture, using institutional theory, began by determining if the institutional rules of 1975, the year HHS opened, were still relevant in 1995. I concluded my analysis with a discussion of the conditions necessary for special education schools, like HHS, to serve as model schools in the continuum of services, or the Cascade of Services (see Appendix A).

²Metro special schools closed since 1989: Bailey, grades 9-12; Cavert, 1-8 (actually moved to Murrell which had been closed); Jones, 1-8; Caldwell and Martha Vaught, both pre-K to 1st grade schools. Source: Metro School's Office of Research and Evaluation.

The empirical contribution of this study is a brief history and cultural perspective of one school through the collective tales of those who knew the school best. My analysis considered dependency factors, legitimacy and commitment, and leadership as key environmental and cultural elements necessary for school survival. This analytical focus applied Hannan and Freeman's (1989) view of the institutional ecology of organizations, with its emphasis on declining populations (staffing and enrollment), and the role of "niche" (see Appendix A) to understand how Harris-Hillman has survived. I believe this approach provides a realistic look at one school and some of the conditions necessary for schools in the continuum of services to work.

The Problem Investigated

An institutional ecology of organizations, (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Hannan & Freeman, 1989), and the role of societal influences found in institutional environments, (Dorn, 1992; Meyer & Rowan, 1991; Ogawa, 1993; Powell, 1991), emerged as primary concerns as this study evolved. These concerns formed the questions: Has Metro Schools been caught in a new 'cultural construction' of schooling and is it blind to what is best for all children with disabilities? Or, has Harris-Hillman lost its contemporary relevance, due to an out-of-date continuum of services and changes in the

larger institutional environment calling for inclusive education of all students in regular schools and classrooms?

There also was a need to tell the school's story because it has never been told, according to the school's two surviving principals.³ Recent calls for such studies included: (a) Is there evidence the continuum of services can "indeed work" and what conditions are necessary for its successful operation (Fuchs, 1994)? (b) Do model special education schools exist, within the continuum of services, and can they be replicated elsewhere (Martin, 1994)? and (c) Does the continuum of services, of the 1970s, have contemporary relevance in the 1990s along side the inclusive schools movement (Taylor, 1994)?

The Theoretical Framework

By blending the ideas of the "old institutionalism" (Baldrige, 1971; Clark, 1975; Selznick, 1949/1966) with some views from the "new institutionalism" in organizational analysis (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Meyer & Rowan, 1978, 1991; Ogawa, 1993; Powell, 1985, 1988, 1991; Scott, 1981, 1991, 1995; Zucker, 1983, 1987, 1991), I attempt to explain how institutional environments shape organizations and how the processes of isomorphism, or adaptation, determine if

³HHS school principals: Robert E. Halpin, Jr., 1975 to 1980 (deceased); Robert F. Sasser, Jr., 1986-89; and Terry Kopansky, 1980-1986 and, again, 1989 to the present (1996).

schools survive, or fail, as they respond to societal demands and other environmental factors.

My approach was to examine the school in the context of its organizational sagas and capture as many as possible in five collective tales. The Harris-Hillman story, depicted in a series of organizational sagas, was focused on a preceived conflict with an inclusive schools movement and other societal influences in 1995 and events impacting the school.

Organization of Study Chapters

The purpose and framework of the study, the problem investigated, and some study limitations are presented in this chapter. Chapter II confirms that little is known about: (a) How successful special education schools "work" in the continuum of services (Fuchs, 1994; Skrtic, 1991); (b) Cultural stories related to educational reform (Deal, 1987; Giroux, 1994); and (c) How schools operate in broader societal contexts (Dorn, 1992; Franklin, 1994; Katz, 1987).

Chapters I and II consider recent calls for research on successful operation of the continuum of services and model schools in the continuum while testing the contemporary relevance issues presented by Fuchs (1994), Martin (1994), and Taylor (1994). Chapter II also provides a review of the literature on organizational sagas, status quo in schooling, organizational analysis in institutional analysis, criticism of extant research, and naturalistic-narrative inquiry.

Following a discussion in Chapter III of the research design, ethnographic criteria, data analysis techniques, and a demographic summary of those participating in the study, Chapter IV offers Study Results with stories or tales of how the school was founded, how it achieved legitimacy, and an organizational niche over its 20-year history. Chapter IV chronicles the school's opening in August 1975 and blends the results of 18 in-depth interviews, and other data, into five collective tales about the school and its storied past.

The organizational saga of HHS is played out in Chapter IV through collective tales presenting a school and its organizational culture that emerges slowly and deliberately. The tales shed light on cultural and structural changes emanating from the reciprocal effects of societal and institutional processes that have shaped the school into its current form. Chapter V discusses the processes of isomorphism and persistence, in the theory of new institutionalism, and issues facing schools like Harris-Hillman, including public perception and efficacy issues confronting the continuum of services and inclusion.

An analysis of the discussion questions and answers, distilled from the fieldwork and content analysis, leads to study conclusions in Chapter VI. Here I articulate the role of legitimacy, commitment, unity, and persistence as strong cultural elements along with effective leadership that to-

gether enable special education schools to "indeed work" in public education's continuum of services to students.

Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted in three phases during the 1994-95 school year. The first phase was a pre-study, authorized by the school principal and my major professor, and conducted between August 1994 and February 1995. The pre-study emphasized participant observation, key informant interviews, and archival research during weekly visits to the school site. The second phase ran concurrent with the pre-study and through the end of 1995. It involved archival research at the school site, local libraries, the Metro School's Central Office, and constant verification of data.

The third and final phase of the research study followed approvals by both University and Metro Nashville Schools, in June 1995, granting me permission to conduct 12 or more in-depth interviews with study participants. These interviews were used to construct the collective narratives for each group of study participants--teachers, former students, parents, Metro administrators, and others affiliated with the school during its first 20 years. No current students were included in the interview sample for reasons of personal choice and privacy of minors.

In an effort to reduce bias, those interviewed were asked to volunteer as study participants. Kerlinger (1979)

suggests bias may occur in interviews and observations, with both being affected by reactions to the researcher and also by the interview environment. In this study, the majority of participants had the opportunity to know me from my weekly visits to the school and attendance at staff meetings during the 1994-1995 school year, and to choose the location for their interview. Participants were asked to sign a consent form and two participants (Kopansky and Fawbush) consented to my use of biographical data in the stories found in Study Results.

The consent form was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Vanderbilt University, listing any perceived risks and benefits from participation in the study, and each participant had the option to withdraw at any time. The interview and observation phases of the study were conducted primarily at the HHS site, with other interviews with study participants and key informants conducted at the Metro Schools Central Office, the Tennessee Technology Access Center, Nashville Tech (community college), Vanderbilt University campus, the Duncanwood Campus of First Steps (a preschool program), the Charlotte Park School campus, and a semi-independent group home in the Nashville area.

Study limitations, involving differences in interview environment and of personality, judgment, and perception that could bias the study, were reduced as much as possible

by asking each participant the same questions, applying a consistent format for recording observations, and electronic recording of some interviews with the consent of the study participant.

The initial scope of this study was limited to describing one school's history, its culture depicted in collective tales distilled from in-depth interviews and archival research, and inclusionary affects on the school. Themes emerged, however, in the analysis of the study data and they are discussed in the concluding chapters. The conditions necessary for schools like HHS to survive and to enjoy future success in the continuum of services were considered, as a legally-mandated alternative to inclusive schools. Because of these and other study limitations, the study results may not be generalizable to other special or regular education schools in many or all respects.

Summary of the Problem

By examining an obscure niche of social and cultural life embodied in HHS, this school ethnography is in ways pathbreaking by accepting the challenge (Fuchs, 1994; Martin, 1994; Taylor, 1994) to record an account of what is generally regarded as the antithesis of the inclusive schools movement--the special education day school in the continuum of service and placement options.

This study is more than one school's brief history captured in a school ethnography--it represents a modern organizational saga conceptualized in the emergent themes of taken-for-granted beliefs, a strong sense of community and trust, and culminating in one school's unique response to a new cultural conception of schooling called the inclusive schools movement. Indeed, this is a story of school survival, presented against a backdrop of organizational and institutional interests, and a paradox of beliefs of how to best serve the special needs of children with developmental disabilities in one community and nationally.

It is a study that uses narrative inquiry to create a school ethnography in a naturalistic and narrative context. The tales describe how one special education school, created in 1975, offers society's weakest members a safe and appropriate educational environment. The study examined one organization's founding and development in response to explicit institutional rules, (a state law, P.L. 839, 1972; federal law, P.L. 94-142, 1975/1990; The Metro Plan,⁴ 1975-1976), and compared these three explicit rules with impli-

⁴Metro Schools adopted a 10-year plan in March 1976, the same school year HHS opened. Titled Services for the Exceptional Child: Design for the Future (1975-76), the plan was designed to meet the needs of all students with disabilities in the Nashville community with "short-range program guidelines" to be used to implement the plan, and "long-range plans for the next ten years." The plan established a formalized structure for HHS and its students, ages 4-21, in 1976.

cit, yet forceful, societal influences in the Nashville school system, the community, and nationally.

My study explored the adaptive process of isomorphism as a means for schools to navigate organizational and institutional environments. It examined contemporary views of school survival and societal beliefs in the context of an organizational saga. The Harris-Hillman story demonstrates how a strong sense of legitimacy and commitment, combined with other environmental elements, enabled one school to retain its organizational niche when confronted by Metro's conception of inclusionary practices (Appendixes B and C).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Dewey and others encouraged the differences among children rather than attempts to minimize them with inclusive placements in graded schools. (Andrews, Braeburn Elementary School, 1967-1990, 1994, p. 10)

The purpose of this chapter is to review relevant literature in the areas of (a) cultural studies of schools; (b) the broader societal context of schooling through an historical overview; (c) the inclusion debate and the contemporary relevance of the continuum of services in special education; and (d) the role of organizational analysis to examine survival in institutional environments.

Cultural Studies of Schools

Some of the better studies on school culture were published in the 1980s. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) examined school culture in six high schools with reputations for excellence. She sought to find stories with cultural meaning from inside the schools and in the subcultures composed of students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Her stories tell how spirit and values move from generation to gen

eration, and capture the subculture of schools, creating portraits of good high schools that, she claims, may be replicated elsewhere.

Grant (1988) wrote about the myth of how American schools and school cultures are responsible for providing both education and character-building for all students. He captured this dual purpose of schooling in a fictional high school he called Hamilton High. He described the 17-year history of a "real school" in New England and used the story as a metaphor to follow changes in American schooling during 2 decades. In The World We Created at Hamilton High (1988), Grant described a "mainstreamed school" that he believed, "social policy in the U.S. intended to produce" (p. 5).

Boyer (1983) reported finding at Ridgefield High, a pseudonym, a distinctive school culture in conflict with prevailing views of what effective schools should be. In contrast to the successful schools portrayed by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Grant, Boyer's High School told a story of adversity in American institutions and social policies mirrored in its schools and students. At Ridgefield High, Boyer depicted teachers and students operating in an environment that he described as "keep off my back and I'll keep off yours, with little interest in teaching and learning" (p. 16).

In a similar vein, Goodlad developed in his A Place Called School (1984) a composite picture of American school culture taken from a research project he supervised while serving as director of UCLA's Laboratory for School and Community Education. The study examined 38 schools, utilizing over 60 researchers, and took a number of years to complete. His findings reflected a system of beliefs and adversity similar to those reported by Boyer the year before. Goodlad argued for change in American institutions, including public schools, beginning with a "youth culture powerfully preoccupied with itself and made up of individuals much less shaped by home, church and school than was once the case" (p. 321).

Goodlad joined Lawrence-Lightfoot and Grant in seeking schools that offer a better way of understanding and creating the cultural elements necessary for schools to work effectively. Sarason (1982, 1983) referred to such schools as having a distinctive culture that must be understood if any meaningful change was to occur. Sarason believed educators possess the knowledge of their school's culture and this enables them to engage in school reform, or nullify and defuse any change from outside that may conflict with group-held beliefs and the perceived way of doing things.

In many respects, I found that a distinctive school culture to be a form of institutional power. When built on strong group-held beliefs, trust, and commitment, together

they provide schools with the necessary elements to survive. Bolman and Deal (1991) reported all organizations, with any history, possess myths, symbols, and ceremonies that build group beliefs into a highly developed sense of commitment as reflected in the social support and resources provided by its constituents. These are the necessary cultural elements which allow school organizations to be transformed into distinctive cultures and niches within their environments.

Historical Overview

Feinberg and Soltis (1985) chronicled a rebirth of interest in the social relations of schools, community, and society in the 20th century in their School and Society. They claimed an increasing number of works describe complex processes affecting organizational structures, cultural development, and how schools survive in American society.

Feinberg and Soltis' study and Dewey's (1896/1980) The School and Society both serve as examples of new versus old institutionalist views of schools and culture. They represent a departure from studies by Boyer, Goodlad, and Lawrence-Lightfoot, which focused on the values and norms, or interworkings of specific schools. The works by Dewey and, later, Feinberg and Soltis examined the broader societal influences on the social constructions of schooling. These works, I believe, serve to contrast old and new institutionalist views of schools.

Nearly a century before Meyer and Rowan's (1978) study linking organizations, such as schools, with the broader institutional environment, Tonnies' Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft (Community and Society) (1887/1957), provided a 19th century conception of schools and society. Tonnies studied small groups, such as families, villages, schools, and linked changes in these small groups to a broader institutionalized society he found in Medieval Europe which he then traced through the end of the 19th century.

Tonnies' examination of the technological changes to local cultural structures and the larger institutional society, in 19th century Europe, was a technique not dissimilar to new institutionalism and organizational ecologists today. His work viewed the transition of technology from an agrarian culture to an increasingly urban one, and its corresponding impact on the group-held beliefs of families, villages, and local school populations and their respective cultures (Marshall, 1994).

Lawrence-Lightfoot's 1983 work, in contrast to Tonnies, Dewey, Feinberg and Soltis, sided with the new "institutionalists" view of small groups and organizations, provided valuable insight about how institutions survive external demands and create cultural meaning in the process. Lawrence-Lightfoot focused on the structure and culture of six high schools, three public and three private, using

school portraits which she created from ethnographic methods of interviewing, observation, and archival research. These schools had earned reputations for excellence: George Washington Carver H.S. in Atlanta, Georgia; John F. Kennedy H.S. in the Bronx, New York; Highland Park H.S. near Chicago; St. Paul's in Concord, New Hampshire; and two schools in the Boston area, Brookline H.S. and the Milton Academy.

Lawrence-Lightfoot claims her work, an extension of her doctoral dissertation at Harvard in 1973, sought to capture themes of "excellence and goodness" which she found in each high school she studied. She purposely chose to write about successful schools and their cultures, using what I call "romantic formalism." I found her romantic formalism to be similar in context to the excellence theme in organizations captured in Peters and Waterman's In Search of Excellence (1982). Like Lawrence-Lightfoot's study of high schools, Peters and Waterman viewed what was good and excellent in private-public organizations, with both works spanning the 1970s and the early 1980s.

Goodlad (1984) concluded, 2 years following publication of Peters and Waterman's book and 1 year after Lawrence-Lightfoot, that "excellence is not found studying the status quo, but by studying successful schools" (p. 360). Grant (1988) claimed he also sought the "atypical school" (p. 5). In my view, the Harris-Hillman story adds to the literature

on successful schools, but in the context of the special education school, its place in the continuum of services, and as a response to calls for such studies by Fuchs (1994a), Martin (1994) and Taylor (1994).

The Inclusion Debate

Meyer and Rowan's (1991) work in institutionalized organizations argued for the 'whole-truth' in studies of organizational survival and Hannan and Freeman (1989) called for a "more fully-developed ecology of environments" in institutional studies of organizations. These works led me to seek past research on both sides of the inclusion debate and to formulate my own views based on what I perceived to be the contemporary relevance of special education schools and also the continuum of services as competing social constructions of schooling in education.

To do this, I chose to respond to what Meyer and Rowan (1991) saw as the problem of "restrictive institutionalism," defined as a need to study schools in "more depth" and to tell the "whole truth" about educational organizations in society (p. 202). Ethnographies, even those exposing the darker side of schooling, while expanding the boundaries of educational organizations and their environments, can be a "debunking exercise," according to Fielding (1993), "when used to shed new light on the darker corners of society" (p.

156). By considering the negative as well as the positive aspects of the educational environment, I believe we loosen some of the restrictive noose that Meyer and Rowan claimed chokes institutional analysis in educational environments.

Fielding's "debunking exercise" also offers an approach for understanding disability and the cultural context of schools. This is achieved, according to Ingstad and Whyte (1995), through the real life situations of students with disabilities and their family members. To gain insight and loosen the restrictive noose of institutional analysis, I listened to the voices of study participants as they shared their own experiences that ultimately captured the reality of the school.

Past research, concerned with questions of inclusion and segregated special schools, has tended to concentrate on the notions of societal changes as an explanation for why schools like Harris-Hillman may no longer offer contemporary relevance in the 1990s (Skrtic, 1991; Taylor, 1994). A call for increased integration of regular and special students, intensified in the mid-1980s, and grew into the "inclusive schools movement" of the 1990s. Some whose ideas have been most influential are Gartner and Lipsky (1987), Stainback and Stainback (1992), Taylor (1988, 1994), and York (1991).

Haring, McCormick and Haring (1994) defined inclusive education as placing all students with disabilities in regu-

lar classrooms in their neighborhood schools, thus, eliminating the need for special education schools like Harris-Hillman. Mainstreaming, or integrated placements, they contend, is significantly different since students with disabilities spend part of the school day in a regular class and part in special classes or resource rooms. Inclusive schools allow students with disabilities to be in their home school with a teacher and an interdisciplinary team. Other authors have claimed that, although the federal law, P.L. 94-142, sought to bring students with disabilities "into the mainstream," the services that support these students are part of a dual system of regular and special education that, absent collaboration and administrative support, perpetuates segregation of students with disabilities from their non-disabled peers (Bateman, 1994; Gerber, 1994).

Hallahan and Kauffman (1994), as part of the inclusion debate, saw "disability" creating a cultural element in school organizations, or a culture of disability. This conception of culture uses the characteristics of the person with disabilities to develop a positive identity between people. Hallahan and Kauffman noted the distinctive cultures of the deaf and the blind, and their use of sign language and Braille devices, respectively, as preferred forms of communication. These environmental elements are shared by persons with similar disabilities, allowing them to re-

late within the family, schools, community, and the larger society. They also serve as cultural elements that allow them to have their own identity.

The distinctive cultures of the deaf and blind are examples (Giroux, 1994; Hallahan & Kauffman, 1994), for understanding how disability has its own cultural identity. Cultural elements must be understood if reform or change is contemplated. School change agents, it is argued, need to be aware of the distinctiveness of disability culture if the inclusive schools movement is to be successful.

Bolman and Deal (1991) offer a segue to the next section as they claimed all organizations, with any history, possess myths, rituals, symbols, and ceremonies, and often have a highly developed sense of mission and a broad base of social support from constituents in the environment. These cultural elements, identified by Bolman and Deal, allow mere organizations to be transformed into distinctive ones, and their organizational sagas provide a strength and an intensity not found in generic case studies.

The Organizational Saga

My review of the literature on organizational studies attracted me to four organizational sagas: Baldrige's (1971) study of political, cultural, and economic processes affecting New York University in the turbulent 1960s; Clark's (1970a, 1970b) sagas of three private colleges seek-

ing renewal and legitimacy; Jacob's (1995) story of a school's act of institutional defiance and renewal in east Harlem; and Selznick's (1949) classic study of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). All four organizational sagas provided a framework for using institutional analysis to understand varying forms of ambiguity and uncertainty in organizational environments and the role of culturally-shared beliefs to adapt organizations to their institutional environments.

Skrtic (1991) noted few studies of this type were available in the current organizational literature. Historically, he said, educational research has neglected the organizational context of schooling and special education schools, in particular. My focus on school culture and organizational survival did find, however, a number of studies that provide a nexus between organizational culture and success: Organizational Culture and Leadership (Schein, 1986), Deeper Culture: Mucking, Muddling, and Metaphors (Deal, 1986), The Culture of Schools in Leadership: Examining the Elusive (Deal, 1987), The Organizational Culture Perspective (Ott, 1989), Building Community in Schools (Sergiovanni, 1993), and Deal and Peterson's The Principal's Role in Shaping School Culture (1990) and The Leadership Paradox (1994).

Deal and Peterson (1994) made the following observation about how legitimacy, commitment and leadership contribute to the success and survival of school organizations.

Sagas are stories of unique accomplishment, rooted in history, and inspiring to the whole school community. Sagas define the core values of a school to its members and convey to the outside world an intense sense of the [legitimacy] that captures imagination, engenders loyalty [commitment], and secures resources and support [leadership] from outsiders who themselves are seized by the spirit of the place. (P. 35-36)

Sagas provide an understanding of the link between school culture and success-survival in educational organizations. Themes of emotion and empathy also were noted in the sagas, described in the collective tales found in Study Results, and provide evidence of the school's group-held beliefs.

This study considers the role of symbolic leadership as one of the conditions necessary for the success and survival of schools, like Harris-Hillman, and the continuum of services. My research found these conditions existed in studies concerned with multicultural education and with culturally-shared beliefs in school organizations.

Jacob (1995), for example, described an organizational saga in a east Harlem high school. The school defined its own unique learning environment, while defying institutional rules and authority as it rejected a New York City school chancellor's "rainbow curriculum." Jacob gave the school the pseudonym of Heritage High and described how it favored a program mapped from the bottom-up by the students and fac-

ulty over institutional change imposed from the top down. This saga described how a single act of defiance created and strengthened school culture.

I found organizational sagas, from Selznick's TVA study, a half-century ago, to Jacob's Harlem school in 1995, provide an appropriate conceptual framework for considering processes influencing organizational culture and structure in many institutional environments; be it a government utility in the South (TVA), an urban school (Heritage High) in New York City, or Harris-Hillman School. While sagas are concerned with change and adaptations to change, another of the great paradoxes of public education has been how little schools have changed during recent decades of ferment, turbulence, and systematic efforts at reform (Boyd & Crowson, 1981; Skrtic, 1992). In much of the literature on school reform and restructuring, I found a preference for the "status quo" in the structure and process of American schooling.

Literature on the Status Quo

Metz (1989) referred to notions of the status quo as a common script for the "real school" in American society, which many Americans prefer to perpetuate, even though they also call for reform in public education. Metz reported that she found in eight "ordinary, typical high schools across the social spectrum" in a midwestern metropolitan