

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

THE ECOLOGY OF ACHIEVEMENT:
A CASE STUDY OF JOHN NORQUAY COLLEGIATE

by

CAMERON SYMONS

A Thesis

Submitted to The Faculty of Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Education

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND FOUNDATIONS

Winnipeg, Manitoba

March, 1992



National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file *Votre référence*

Our file *Notre référence*

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-315-77794-X

Canada

**THE ECOLOGY OF ACHIEVEMENT:
A CASE STUDY OF JOHN NORQUAY COLLEGIATE**

BY

CAMERON SYMONS

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

© 1992

Permission has been granted to the LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA to lend or sell copies of this thesis, to the NATIONAL LIBRARY OF CANADA to microfilm this thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film, and UNIVERSITY MICROFILMS to publish an abstract of this thesis.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

ABSTRACT

John Norquay Collegiate, a grade seven to twelve school in rural Manitoba appears to be an exceptionally high performing school in terms of measures such as dropout rates, rates of chronic absenteeism, percentage of graduates attending post secondary education, and performance of graduates in post secondary education. The purpose of this case study has been to discern the factor or combination of factors responsible for this exceptional performance.

Data was collected through interviews with the current School Division Superintendent, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and the new principal of the Collegiate as well as a group of eight former students of the Collegiate who graduated between 1986 and 1990.

The study found that a school culture had been created as a way of galvanizing constituent communities at the inception of the school. This culture has been sustained and perpetuated by homeostatic mechanisms such as closely coupled community-school links and close feedback loops; community insularity limiting

dilution of the school ethos from outside; and a concentration of focus on academics within the school itself which prevents dilution of the ethos from within.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.	i
LIST OF TABLES.	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.	vii
CHAPTER	
1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY.	1
John Norquay: The School	3
The School, Students and Community	9
The Community Environment	12
Staff	16
Educational Expectations and School Programs	18
Classroom Work and Teaching.	19
Student Behaviour and Development.	20
Student Achievement	21
Summary	22
2. RELATED LITERATURE.	24
Framework for the Analysis	31

3.	METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY.	33
	Interview Questions.	36
	Student Interviews	38
	Student Respondents.	40
4.	INTERVIEW RESULTS	45
	Staff.	76
5.	ANALYSIS.	87
	Introduction	87
	"The Big Picture".	89
	Competition.	93
	Cohesion	96
	Institutional Homeostasis.	100
	Coupling	103
	Community Insularity	112
	Concentration of Focus	115
6.	CONCLUSIONS	118
	The Ecology of Achievement	125
7.	IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY FOR SCHOOLS . . .	129
	FOOTNOTES	132
	SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	133
	APPENDICES	
	A. Post Secondary Plans of John Norquay Graduates From 1986-1990.	137

B. Letter To Parents of John Norquay Students
From the Principal, 1984. 138

C. Respondents' Letter of Consent Form 141

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
1. Dropout Rates in Area High Schools	5
2. Post Secondary Participation Rates For High Schools in the Crocus Hills Area.	7
3. Student Populations of High Schools in the Crocus Hills Area	10
4. Selected Demographic Characteristics From 1986 Census (Source: Statistics Canada).	13
5. Description of Respondents' Backgrounds.	42

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study is the product of many heads, hands and hearts other than my own. To the following people I am greatly indebted:

Dr. J. A. Riffel, whose unique combination of patience and support guided this project along the way and helped it over the rough spots;

Dr. John Seymour and Dr. Jon Young, for their valuable constructive criticism and suggestions as Committee members;

The Superintendent and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Garden Plains School Division and the Principal of John Norquay Collegiate for their observations and insights into the school and its community;

The graduates of John Norquay Collegiate who took time to meet with me and share their experiences and feelings about their time in high school, and;

My wife, Victoria and children, John and Elizabeth who supported and encouraged this work and put up with an absent husband and father while it was being done.

CHAPTER 1

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In September of 1985 I began employment in the Garden Plains School Division as an itinerant guidance counsellor. The position called for the provision of guidance services in the two high schools operated by the Division: John Norquay Collegiate, in the Village of Crocus Hill, and Alfred Boyd Collegiate in the Village of Garsonville.

My initial impression in going from one school to the other from day to day was that there was a noticeable difference between the two schools in terms of a sense of order, relationships with teachers, and attitudes of students. At that point however, the distinctions were somewhat nebulous and difficult to define specifically. Later, while developing a profile of John Norquay as an assignment for a graduate course in Education, some of these differences were identified in a more substantive form. I found, for example, that the dropout rate in the school was almost non-existent, that chronic absenteeism was virtually non-existent, and that traditionally about three quarters or more of each year's graduating class went on to further education

after high school.

Inquiring as to the reasons for these unusually positive high school traits, I was offered a number of explanations by students, teachers, administrators and members of the community. Suggested explanations referred to the size of the community, the long term continuity of staff in the school, the educational background of community members, and the existence of a large Mennonite population in the area, as well as other possible factors. At the end of the road however, no conclusive consensus emerged. Each individual who was asked had his or her own individual perception of the phenomenon.

An exploration of the literature on high performing schools was informative in the same way, in that it offered a number of plausible explanations for high achievement. In many of these theories, one could sense a resonance with the John Norquay situation and see how the particular theoretical perspective could reflect some aspect or aspects of the Norquay phenomenon. The same dilemma arose however, in that there were a variety of perspectives with no single theory or group of theories emerging as the definitive final answer; none which reflected the totality of the situation.

Given this background, and given my relationship

with the institution, the purpose of this study has been to follow up these leads; develop a comprehensive picture of the forces which have shaped and continue to shape the character of the school; and, informed by the literature on the subject, attempt to formulate an explanation for this phenomenon.

JOHN NORQUAY: THE SCHOOL

By all conventional measures John Norquay Collegiate, in the Village of Crocus Hill, Manitoba is an unusually effective high school. By conventional measures I refer to those which have gained common usage in describing the level of effectiveness in any school. These are: dropout rate, rate of participation in post secondary education after high school, rate of chronic absenteeism, failure rates, quality of student-teacher interaction, and others. John Norquay Collegiate's record in terms of these measures sets it apart in a significant way from the norms of the Manitoba high school system.

While provincial figures are unavailable on the dropout rate in Manitoba, the Department of Education and Training, in its high school review document, Challenges and Changes (1988) quotes Rumberger (1987) and Radwanski (1987) as estimating American and Canadian

dropout rates as 30% and 33% respectively. The Province is beset with various difficulties in arriving at an accurate measure of the dropout rate in Manitoba.

First, the Department of Education and Training does not at this time have the Ontario luxury of a centralized computer system which can track students from school to school using a unique identifying number for each student. Further, the old procedure of arriving at dropout rates by comparing the number of grade twelve graduates in a certain year to the number of grade ten students three years previously is no longer felt to be reliable for it fails to account for those students who, because of part time jobs or other commitments may take more than the standard three years to complete their high school program. Moreover, no accounting is available for those students who quit full time attendance at high school to work, but continue to take high school courses in the evenings or through correspondence.¹ Given the absence of local figures the Department appears to agree in general terms with the Rumberger and Radwanski figures, observing: ". . . a general consensus remains; a significant number of students do not complete their high school education."²

An informal survey of school counsellors in the area of the Province surrounding Crocus Hill yields the

following figures on dropout rates:³ (Figures were based on estimates of the average over the past five years as exact numbers were, in most cases, unavailable).

TABLE 1: DROPOUT RATES IN AREA HIGH SCHOOLS

Community Dropout Rate (%)

Hallbrough	15-20
Mayfield	16
Durban Ridge	5
Duston	15
Garsonville	15

By way of contrast, a survey of class lists at John Norquay Collegiate over the past five years shows an annual dropout rate at or less than five percent.

Province wide figures on participation in post secondary education are available for students two years after graduation.⁴ However, figures on the number of students attending a post secondary institution right after graduation are not available. Lacking a comprehensive tracking system, the Department of Education has attempted to estimate this sequential post secondary participation figure by comparing the first year enrollment at the Province's colleges and universities with fall enrollment figures for the

previous year's grade twelve cohort. This is the source of the 20% figure which is often cited in reference to college and university participation, for the average ratio of first year students to previous year's grade twelves has traditionally been in the 20/80 range.⁵

There are clearly gaps in such an accounting system. Fall grade twelve enrollment figures will not match the end of year graduate numbers because of grade twelve attrition and so we can't accurately know what percentage of graduates continue on to post secondary education. Further, the system cannot account for students going out of the Province, or students coming in to the Province to attend first year university or college. Given these problems, the system is no longer used to provide figures on sequential participation in post secondary education, however the twenty percent figure may be of limited use in estimating the general area in which the actual figure must lie, given allowances for a large margin of error.

An informal survey of school counsellors in the high schools of Crocus Hill region of the Province yields the following rough estimates of post secondary attendance:⁶

TABLE 2: POST SECONDARY PARTICIPATION RATES FOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE CROCUS HILLS AREA

<u>Community</u>	<u>Percent Continuing Directly to Post Secondary Education</u>
Hallbrough	30-35
Mayfield	35
Durban Ridge	20
Duston	46
Garsonville	61

By way of contrast again, a look at the post secondary plans lists for John Norquay graduates since 1985, (Appendix A), tells a different story. Among the eighteen graduates of 1986, all eighteen applied to and were accepted at post secondary institutions. Of those eighteen, sixteen registered in the fall, (89%). The class of 1987 numbered sixteen, of which fifteen graduated and eleven continued their education in the fall (73%). All of the class of 1988 graduated successfully with twelve of that class of fifteen pursuing post secondary education (80%). In the 1989 class twenty students are listed of which one failed to complete the grade twelve requirements. Of the nineteen successful graduates, seventeen were accepted at college or university, and all registered in the fall (0.89%). The average over this four year period is 81%.

When they go to college or university, graduates of the school appear to perform well academically. According to the Garden Hills Superintendent, confidential data from universities indicates that while grade points on average decline from grade twelve to first year by approximately one half grade point, the Norquay students in the late seventies scored a grade point average increase of .18. Information from a survey done by the school principal covering 1981 to 1983, (Appendix B), indicates that Norquay graduates had grade point averages higher than the provincial mean by factors of 0.93, 0.21, and 0.63.

Rates of chronic absenteeism vary widely across the province from school to school and over time, and hard figures on these rates are not available. By chronic absenteeism I mean a rate of absenteeism sufficient to invoke a school's attendance policy to deal with the student. At Norquay absenteeism is virtually non-existent. Since 1985 when I commenced employment at the school there has been only one case of chronic absenteeism, this being supported on medical grounds by the student's mother.

A review of classlists over the past five years shows the failure rate at Norquay to be approximately 2-3% per year. This is much less than one might expect,

particularly so in view of the high level of academic performance required in the school.

Vandalism in the school is virtually nonexistent. In twenty six years of operation the school has had one break in, and one incident of graffiti painted on a wall. One needs only to walk down the hallway of the school and see the walls and floors, clean and unmarked, and notice the lockers devoid of locks, to see that this is a student body which respects the property of others and takes ownership of the school building as its own.

THE SCHOOL, STUDENTS, AND COMMUNITY

John Norquay is, (as of March, 1992), a school of just over one hundred students. It's a small school, perhaps as small as a school can get before becoming too expensive for an average rural school division to operate. Classes are small, the largest class being twenty six students, the smallest enrolling only nine. As a result of this size, students come to know each other well during the years from grades seven to twelve. The social network is small enough that if a particular student has transacted some sort of mischief, every other student in the school either knows who is responsible, or could find out quickly if interested. Its size relative to those schools around it is

indicated in the table below:

TABLE 3: STUDENT POPULATIONS OF HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE
 CROCUS HILLS AREA

Hallbrough	374	Grades 9-12
Mayfield	375	Grades 9-12
Durban Ridge	213	Grades K-12
Duston	545	Grades 7-12
Garsonville	250	Grades 7-12

It may be suggested that the environment of the small rural community is the major factor in the high performance of the school; however the community of Durban Ridge which is only five to ten minutes drive away provides an interesting perspective on this assumption. In the Durban Ridge high school one sees a school which more closely approximates the characteristics of the average Manitoba high school. While estimates of the dropout rate are similar to Norquay's rate, other indicators such as chronic absenteeism, failure rates, and the numbers of students continuing their education after graduation are more in line with the provincial norm. In short, one sees pretty much what one might expect to see in a regular Manitoba high school. To one who would suggest the

rural setting as the source of Norquay's performance then, the existence of the other school in a virtually identical geographic setting with a similar population only five miles away, would necessarily cast significant doubt on this hypothesis.

It is of particular interest that the two schools have developed different identities, given the fact that since 1970 the schools have operated a shared campus system in which senior high students take courses in both schools throughout their high school careers.

This system was brought about in the early seventies to combat the problem of declining enrollments in senior high classes. Thus, rather than offering a Biology 200 class in each school with from six to twelve students in each, the school divisions joined forces to offer one class of Biology 200 with an enrollment of twelve to twenty four. These senior high classes were split between the schools and a shuttle bus was provided to ferry the students from town to town for their classes. Under this system then, a student may spend the first period of the day in Crocus Hill, the second in Durban Ridge, the third in Crocus Hill and the final period back in Durban Ridge.

This of course also means that senior high students from each of the two schools are mixed together during

all of their senior years. Yet, in spite of this, the differences between the schools remain.

In the early eighties, attempts to rationalize the senior high program by having all senior high courses in one community and all junior high courses in the other were soundly rejected by both communities. The issue at hand here was that of the placement of the senior high. Perceiving it as the more prestigious of the two, each community demanded that the senior high be placed with them and neither would accept the junior high. After some five years of negotiations, public meetings, and generalized acrimony, the issue was dropped and has not been resurrected since.

THE COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

A variety of interesting observations are available from a review of information from the Statistics Canada 1986 Census, and Table 4 outlines selected characteristics of the communities.

Using this information, the Manitoba Atlas has placed the community of Crocus Hill in the highest category in terms of the percentage of population with some post secondary education. This puts Crocus Hill in the same category as the large urban areas such as Winnipeg and Brandon; a category less well represented

among smaller rural communities in the Province.

TABLE 4: SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS FROM 1986 CENSUS (Source: Statistics Canada)

	MANITOBA	DURBAN RIDGE	CROCUS HILL
Total population 15 years and over:	813,935	625	425
Non university education -			
without certificate:	44,290 (5.44%)	15 (2.4%)	10 (2.35%)
with certificate:	105,700 (12.98%)	100 (16.0%)	85 (20.0%)
University Education-			
without degree:	81,840 (10.05%)	15 (2.4%)	45 (10.58)
with degree:	72,815 (8.94%)	30 (4.8%)	20 (4.7%)
Total Post Secondary Education:	304,645 (37.43%)	160 (25.6%)	160 (37.64%)
Family Income -			
Average:	\$35,486	\$30,910	\$33,644
Median:	\$31,464	\$26,849	\$29,899

It is interesting to note the difference in post secondary participation between the two towns of Durban Ridge (25.6%), and Crocus Hill (37.64%). This would

appear to support the observation by students and community members that education and academic success are priorities among the parents of Crocus Hill. Whether the academic ethos of John Norquay Collegiate is a cause of this demographic phenomenon, a product of it, or both, is a question on which further investigation may shed some light.

The community is economically stable, inasmuch as it is possible for a community based wholly on agriculture. There is no resource based industry whose economic ups and downs create immigration or emigration from the community. Therefore, there is extremely limited migration in or out of the Village or area. Most people in the area are long standing residents, thus creating a strong sense of community continuity.

Median and average family incomes in Crocus Hill are closer to the provincial average than those of its neighbour, Durban Ridge. Again, whether this is a cause or product of a higher rate of post secondary participation is undetermined.

As if from some era past, the family unit in the Crocus Hill area is by and large intact. The traditional roles of family members also prevail, with fathers working outside the home and mothers usually working in the home full time, or working on a limited

basis in traditionally female occupations or helping on the farm.

According to Superintendent, John Macdonald, the Garden Plains School Division is the smallest in the Province in terms of student numbers and among the largest in terms of geographical area. This may explain why the preponderance of John Norquay students, (about 70%), are farm children. This of course brings with it the idea of a higher than average level of parent-child interaction and a reduced influence of peers. There is virtually no activity in which a child may be involved without his or her parent's knowledge and approval, as nearly all social activities for children will require that the parents transport the child to wherever the activity is taking place. Thus, the general level of parental supervision would far exceed that found in urban settings, at least to the age of sixteen.

Without doubt, part of this picture of stability and solidity in the community is related to the religious demographics of the area. A review of the school registers indicates that approximately forty five percent of the families sending children to school are members of the Mennonite faith. It is a group which takes its religion very seriously, and communicates its set of standards to its children in quite unambiguous

terms. The practical side of this conviction was evidenced in very clear terms at one point in the sixties when then teacher (subsequently, principal), Bill King's home was destroyed in a house fire and the Mennonite community mobilized, building a new house for his family with their own volunteer labour. It is clear to the observer how this conservative Mennonite presence does much to colour the complexion of the community and the school.

Among the fifty five percent or so of non Mennonites in the area, churches of other faiths are a significant influence for many as well.

STAFF

The school staff consists of a principal who teaches one quarter time, a vice principal who teaches full time, and six full time teachers. As well, the school is serviced by a resource teacher (half time), one teacher aide, and a counsellor (one third time). A paraprofessional runs the library, and the secretary works half time in that role and half time as a teacher aide.

With the exception of the principal who began his first year in the Division in 1990, almost all of the staff of the school have quite long associations with

Norquay. Michael Bliss, the senior member, has been in the school twenty seven years teaching Social Studies, Mathematics and other courses. Marg Lawrence, who now teaches English and Art, has been in the school seventeen years. Ned Hanlan has taught Physical Education and English at Norquay the last nineteen years. Steve Hawkins, the Vice Principal has been teaching Mathematics and Science at Norquay for fifteen years as has Bob Oppenheimer, another Science teacher hired fresh out of Faculty thirteen years ago.

Norquay does have a couple of less experienced staff on board. Jim Brown has been teaching Business subjects in the school since 1986. The other recent addition to the staff is Jim Kirk, whose teaching areas are junior high school Social Studies and Language Arts. Kirk just moved over to Norquay in 1989 after teaching at the elementary school since 1976. His acquaintance with the Norquay ethos is a longstanding one however as he is himself a graduate of the school. One may naturally wonder if this stability of staff may be a significant factor in the school's performance. By comparison with the other school in the Division, Norquay's average staff seniority is 14.75 years. The average staff seniority at her sister school, Alfred Boyd Collegiate in Garsonville is 10.4 years. Of eight

staff at John Norquay, only two have been in the division less than thirteen years, (25%). Of seventeen staff at Alfred Boyd ten have been there less than thirteen years, (59%) and of those, eight have six years or less in the Division.

EDUCATIONAL EXPECTATIONS AND SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Of the academic, vocational, and social purposes of education, the priority ranking in John Norquay would read: 1. Academic, 2. Academic, and 3. Vocational.

For this school community academic success is measured by marks, plainly and simply. Academic success means graduating with good standing and continuing to college, university or the workplace in good stead.

This statement of mission is an unspoken one. While the unstated objectives of the school remain remarkably consistent from teacher to teacher, there exists no school wide declaration of purpose or method within the school. If someone were to suggest the articulation of such a common statement of goals the staff response would likely be something like, "Everybody knows what we're doing. Why waste our time stating what everyone already knows?"

The academic end of the school program is clearly the school's primary focus. Extracurricular aspects of

school life are given less attention by staff in general. There are teams for boys senior basketball and girls senior volleyball as well as a boys senior curling and soccer team. This, however, is the extent of the sports program in the school. Clubs are limited to the Yearbook Committee and the Student Council. Clubs in other areas such as Drama, Music, the Arts, and so on do not exist.

CLASSROOM WORK AND TEACHING

Permeating all of the classes in the school is the ongoing inculcation of the academic ethos of Norquay. Before they arrive at the school, elementary school students hear about "how tough it is," and throughout their time there, the academic priority is constantly reinforced from class to class.

Changes in teaching methodology have at times been regarded as passing fashions and, while there is ongoing work with new approaches, (particularly in the Language Arts area), the traditional methods still predominate in the school. Students who expect a class in which homework will be taken up, new material will be introduced with lecture and notes, and new homework questions assigned, will find their expectations satisfied more often than not. There is limited

evidence of teacher to teacher consultation on issues of methodology. Each teacher has his or her style and by and large, the onus is upon students to adapt to that style rather than having the teacher adapt to the student's style.

In the regular classes the principle of organization is clearly evident. Classes start on time and run their full length with interruptions absolutely not tolerated. There are very clear expectations of student behaviour and teacher behaviour, however these are established by the staff themselves and student input is not solicited on these matters.

Homework is regularly assigned and checked and assessment by formal means occurs regularly. In all cases the assignments are returned promptly.

STUDENT BEHAVIOR AND DEVELOPMENT

Student behaviour is indicative of the values set imparted mutually by the home and the school. Perhaps the primary behavioral attribute of students falls in the area of respect; respect for property, and respect for authority. Respect for authority is evident in student's relationships with their primary authority figures in the school, the teachers. Respect for property is evident in a variety of places. The fact

that the school has no problem with theft or vandalism is an indication of this characteristic. Probably the most obvious indicator of this respect for property is the fact that none of the students' lockers have locks on them. While the option of placing a lock on their lockers exists, students have not felt it necessary to do so.

In the history of the school there has been one incident of graffiti being sprayed on the exterior of the school, and one break in. Fights in the school are virtually unheard of, as are incidences of disrespectful behaviour towards adults.

Students bring out the best in each other academically more through competition for marks than through mutual support. There is a clear peer pressure to perform academically and to conform to the rules of the school. Concomitant with this pressure to conform to school rules is a strong pressure to conform to rules of the social group. This is a school in which it can be very difficult to be different.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Approximately six students, or one per grade, are likely to fail to satisfactorily complete their year's work in a given year. Of these, about half will be

retained in their grade for another year. The other half will be promoted to the next grade based on their identification as special needs students.

The dropout rate at Norquay would be the envy of many other high schools. Since 1985 there have been two students leaving school before the completion of their programs. A significant number of students of Mennonite background transfer out to the Providence Collegiate Institute, a private religious boarding school in another town. This usually occurs in the final years of senior high school. Of those who remain, ninety five percent of them complete their programs at Norquay, following which about one fifth go to work or attend to work on the family farm and the other eighty percent continue their education at college or university.

SUMMARY

This then is a brief portrait of the school, its environment and its people. A small school in a rural community, it seems to stand out from the schools around it. It is located in a prosperous agricultural area with a strong representation of adults who themselves have pursued higher education. It has a large portion of the population which represents the Mennonite faith. It apparently has good support from the parent community

at large for the efforts of the school. Its staff are well experienced and most have been in the school for a long period of time. They have strong expectations for student performance and seem to show a high level of consistency in expectation on two levels. The expectation of each student seems quite consistent from staff member to staff member, and each staff member seems to have expectations which are consistent from student to student. Students appear to relate well with staff, have few disciplinary problems, and focus a large percentage of their energy on academics, as is the expectation. Few fail, and very few drop out. Most go on to further education after high school.

In pursuit of the factor or interaction of factors which has created this picture the first logical step is to review the results of others' searches for the sources of high performance in schools. Accordingly the next chapter will be devoted to this task.

CHAPTER 2

RELATED LITERATURE

A review of related literature may shed some light on which of these factors have appeared elsewhere, and may provide some clues as to possible formats for this study.

A seminal study of factors related to school effectiveness was the "Coleman Report" on Equality of Educational Opportunity. The Coleman team, commissioned by the Congress of the United States, made a sweeping two year study in which some 570,000 pupils were tested along with 60,000 teachers, and information was gathered on over 4,000 schools. The study brought an extensive range of statistical tools to bear on the question of whether differences existed in the quality of education provided to black and white students in the United States.

A number of interesting and unexpected findings emerged at the end of the long and labrynthine quantitative trail, among them: the observation that there was virtually no relationship between school facilities and academic achievement or per pupil expenditure and academic achievement. Writing in The Public Interest (1966), Coleman observed:

Per pupil expenditure, books in the library, and a host of other facilities and curricular measures show virtually no relation to achievement if the "social" environment of the school - the educational backgrounds of other students and teachers - is held constant. (p. 73)

Coleman's conclusion pointed to the social environment of the home as the greatest factor relating to achievement in the school setting:

Altogether, the sources of inequality of educational opportunity appear to lie first in the home itself and the cultural influences immediately surrounding the home; then they lie in the school's ineffectiveness to free achievement from the impact of the home and in the school's cultural homogeneity which perpetuates the social influences of the home and its environs. (Ibid. p.74)

Coleman further suggested the existence of cultural factors within the school itself, factors springing from the social environment of the peer group, which showed a strong correlation with school achievement:

Attributes of other students account for far more variation in the achievement of minority group children than do any attributes of school facilities and slightly more than do attributes of staff. (E. E. O. R., p. 302)

The Equality of Educational Opportunity Report was significant not only for its findings, but also for its method. It took the focus away from school inputs as a measure of effectiveness and brought that focus to bear

on the output or performance factor as a criteria for establishing the level of a school's performance. Critics have pointed to the narrowness of using academic achievement as the sole output measure and suggested that other factors such as retention rates, post secondary participation rates, income and occupation of graduates, and even such measures as reported happiness and self esteem should be considered. The use of academic achievement as a measure however did set the standard for looking at output, and as such made possible the consideration of these other output measures as indicators of school success in studies which followed it.

In a more recent work (1987) on public and private high schools, Coleman and Hoffer again found that a common or shared set of values in the home was a significant determiner of school achievement. Comparing the dropout rate at Catholic and independent private schools, the authors attribute the lower dropout rate in the Catholic schools to:

. . . the functional community that exists around a religious body to which the families adhere and of which the school is an outgrowth. The independent private schools, in contrast, ordinarily lack such a community, consisting as they do of a collection of parents who have individually chosen a school but who do not constitute a community outside the school. (p.214)

While accepting that there seemed to exist a correlation between lower achieving schools and student bodies drawn from lower socioeconomic status and/or minority families, Wilbur Brookover (1979) contested the implication of a causal relationship. Working from the observation that some schools with disadvantaged students were capable of high achievement he suggested that there were factors within each school which could be modified in order to improve school performance. Through observation of "effective" schools, (effectiveness being based on criteria such as state achievement tests, surveys of student self-concept of academic ability, and student self reliance), Brookover and others focused on the importance of the social climate within the school as a determining force in school achievement.

Brookover (1982) posited the existence of three clusters of characteristics which influence school effectiveness. The first of these is the ideology of the school, or that set of common beliefs, norms and expectations about student performance which permeate the staff and student body. Second among the characteristics is the organization of the school into a non stratified community of the whole in which expectations are consistent for all, as opposed to a

situation in which different expectations exist for different ability groups. Finally, Brookover identifies the cluster of instructional practices, including facets such as time on task, reinforcement learning, assessment, and student team learning.

Brookover's work has both positive and negative qualities to it. On the one hand, it redeems the educational effort from the social determinism of the early Coleman sensibility. Under Coleman it seemed apparent that the social backgrounds of a school's students would determine the level of that school's performance, the most noble efforts of educators to improve that performance notwithstanding. Brookover put the educator back at the helm, showing that school improvement was an educational possibility.

On the other hand, Brookover may be accused of viewing a complex phenomenon in terms which are perhaps too simplistic. He has developed a program which is in effect, an effective schools cookbook in which you take an ineffective school, add uniform expectations, add organizational factors, effective instruction and consistent discipline, heat with assessment and reinforcement, and finish at the end with an effective school. To be sure, he has identified a number of characteristics which influence school performance,

however to limit one's vision to this list of ingredients is to ignore a variety of other influential factors.

Working from an longitudinal rather than correlational perspective, Michael Rutter et. al. (1979) examined a cohort of some 1487 ten year olds prior to entering secondary school and then retested them in their third year. Using self report and observational measures as well as teacher interviews and pupil questionnaires he studied five outcome measures, specifically: behaviour in school, attendance, examination success, employment, and delinquency.

Echoing Coleman's work, one of the findings of the study was that physical factors seemed unimportant in school performance. His exploration of factors influencing school performance, while supporting both Coleman and Brookover, went beyond the sum of the two. Like Brookover, he found institutional factors were in evidence; factors such as teacher behaviours, pupil responsibility, and incentives. Like Coleman he found that the academic strength of incoming students was a factor. Going beyond this however, he suggested that the combination of these factors working together created a whole effect which was greater than the sum of the parts:

. . . the association between the combined measure of overall school process and each of the measures of outcome was much stronger than any of the associations with individual process variables. This suggests that the cumulative effect of these various social factors was considerably greater than the effect of any of the individual factors on their own. The implication is that the individual actions or measures may combine to create a particular ethos, or set of values, attitudes and behaviours which will become characteristic of the school as a whole. (p. 179)

A further significant implication of the Rutter study was the suggestion that a causal, rather than simply correlational relationship could be drawn between school ethos and school product:

. . . the total pattern of findings indicates the strong probability that the associations between school process and outcome reflect in part a causal process. In other words, to an appreciable extent children's behaviour and attitudes are shaped and influenced by their experiences at school and, in particular, by the qualities of the school as a social institution. (p. 179)

The work of Brandwein (1981) describes an ecological framework to explain school performance. Using the analogy of a thermostat he suggests:

In effect, the social system in these communities contains a kind of servomechanism: a device responsive to feedback and to evaluation of the factors . . . necessary for the success of a school system. (p. 16)

The system as a whole functions as a closed system of interdependent factors which interact with each other; as each factor approaches its optimum level of effectiveness, the system as a whole moves towards optimum effectiveness as a system. Conversely, as in the analogy of the forest or pond system, "if a factor essential to the life of the forest (say, water) deteriorates, the forest deteriorates. If a factor essential to the life of a school (say, support by the community) deteriorates, the school deteriorates."
(p. 17)

FRAMEWORK FOR THE ANALYSIS

This review of literature on school effectiveness provides direction in terms of the framework for analyzing the John Norquay case. Is its performance explicable in terms such as Coleman might suggest: that the home influence has created a peer group culture which has established the school's level of achievement? Is it a case, as with Brookover's analysis, where the social climate of the school has been created by school ideology, organization and instructional practices, and these things determine its achievement? Could it be, as Rutter suggests, that the home context and school factors have combined to create an ethos which has

shaped the meaning participants assign to their experience of school, thereby defining the performance of the school itself? May it be the type of ecological system described by Brandwein, in which the interaction of factors over the years has created and maintained the conditions necessary for optimum performance? The study seeks to determine to what extent these conceptual frameworks either individually or collectively help to make sense of the John Norquay phenomenon.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Based on the foregoing description of the school and its environment, a number of leads suggested themselves as possible factors behind the school's performance. These include factors such as: the small community, the rural context, the religious demographics, the stable staff, parental educational backgrounds, competitive climate between communities, length of staff service time in the school, closely knit social networks, and administrative consistency in expectations. A major goal of the study therefore, has been to pursue each of these leads to determine their effects on the performance of the school.

This study has attempted to pursue these leads primarily through the use of interviews. Printed materials such as Board minutes, School Division documents, newspaper articles, yearbooks, and so on were used as adjuncts to the main source of data collection.

Interviews were organized into two blocks as follows: The first group of interviews sought to define some areas of inquiry for the second set of interviews. With this in mind, three significant individuals were identified for this first interview group. They

included: the current Superintendent of the School Division, the current Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and the current principal of the school.

The Superintendent was chosen because of his long term association with the school, first as a teacher and counsellor, and later as Superintendent. The work of Easton (1965) illustrates the concept of a feedback loop by which political constituencies provide input to policy makers on the acceptability or unacceptability of their policy decisions. To use Brandwein's analogy, like the thermostat which reads room temperature and makes adjustments accordingly, the administrators within a system are the focal points of this feedback loop. Since, in a small school division such as this, much feedback also goes through the superintendent's office, the current Superintendent of the Division, John Macdonald, was identified as a primary resource.

The chairman of the Board of Trustees was chosen because of the combination of perspectives he could bring to the study. Bob Borden, himself a graduate of the school in the 1960's offers the perspectives both of student and policy maker; the perspectives of the early years of the school and of the present time. Born and raised in the area, he brings to the study the perspective which comes with an intimate knowledge of

the community.

The current principal of the school, Alex Mackenzie was chosen because he was new to the school, having arrived there in September of 1990. As such, he was in a position to shed an objective light on the character and quality of the school as compared to others he has seen and worked in. Further, he was in a position to describe whatever processes of indoctrination may occur with an administrator new to this particular setting.

This first set of three interviews was used to seek out leads to be pursued in the second set of interviews which took place with former students of the school. As well, the Superintendent and Chairman of the Board were asked to suggest suitable objective and articulate candidates for the second round of interviews, based on their acquaintance with the alumni of the Collegiate.

Former students are an important source of information in that they have been the focus of the educational efforts of the school. Further, they have a personal awareness of how those educational services have helped or hindered them in their pursuits in the adult world of college, university or the world of work. With this in mind, a list of names was gleaned from the Superintendent and Chairman and a list of interview candidates created. This list was then modified by the

author in order to balance the sample in terms of year of graduation, post secondary destinations, sex, and rural or town home setting, and a final list of twelve former students was created. Of the twelve, eight of these graduates were interviewed individually and the interviews transcribed from tape subsequent to the interview. The eight were chosen from the list of twelve according to their geographical availability for an interview.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The first set of three interviews explored the following questions:

1. Is John Norquay different from other schools in Manitoba? If so, in what ways?

Probe for: a) Is the school being perceived as unique?

- b) What characteristics determine this uniqueness?

2. Has your impression of the school remained constant or changed over time?

Probe for: a) differences in perception based on role relative to the school (ex. student, trustee, teacher, superintendent, etc.);

- b) degree of consistency regarding the way the school has been perceived over the years;
 - c) degree of consistency in perception of the school between subjects.
3. What effect do you think each of the following has had on the school: community size, rural context, religious demographics, staff, parental influences, competitive climate between communities, administrative policies?
- Probe for: a) Perception of the influence of each of these factors in influencing school performance.
4. Do other factors exist which may have contributed to the school's performance?
- Probe for: a) Perception of other factors related to school performance.
5. Have there been times in which the community seemed unhappy with some aspect of policy or practice within the school? If so, how was this communicated and what was the result?
- Probe for: a) Examples which will illustrate a feedback loop if such exists.
- b) descriptions of communication networks in the community/school

context;

- c) Indications of community sentiments, priorities, demands, etc.

6. If a new principal were to assume command of the school, would he/she experience an indoctrination process of any kind? What form(s), if any, would this process take?

- Probe for:
- a) Existence of acculturation process or nonexistence of same;
 - b) sources of the acculturation process;
 - c) methods of acculturation;
 - d) character of the culture or ethos being conveyed to the newcomer.

7. Can you suggest a list of names of former students who would represent a good cross section of the Norquay alumni, and who may be willing to talk about their experience with this School?

STUDENT INTERVIEWS

Interviews with former students addressed the following questions:

- 1. Did they have any impressions of the school before they attended as students? If so, how were these impressions communicated to them?

Probe for: a) description of school

culture/ethos;

b) description of inculcation
process;

c) identity of inculcators (ex.
parents, elementary teachers,
siblings, peers).

2. Did they see the school as being different from other schools in Manitoba they had heard of or may have attended at one time? If so, in what ways was it perceived to be different?

Probe for: a) consistency between their

expectation and their experience of
the school;

b) perception of Norquay as unique;

c) characteristics which cause it to
be perceived as unique.

3. If they saw the school as different, what were the sources of this impression? (ex. fellow students, parents, teachers, personal experience, other).

Probe for: a) sources of the impression that the
school has unique characteristics;

b) consistency between their personal
experience of the school and
perceptions they had heard from

others;

- c) whether their personal experience of the school modified the prior impression had of it.

4. What effect did they think each of the following had on the school: community size, rural context, religious demographics, staff, parental influences, competitive climate between communities, administrative policies, other factors?

Probe for: a) the perceived relationship between each of the above factors and school performance.

5. Do they see factors which have not been discussed that may have contributed to the school's performance?

Probe for: a) perceived relationships between factors or interactions not as yet identified and school performance.

STUDENT RESPONDENTS

Eight students in all were interviewed. The number eight was seen as a compromise which would allow for enough variety among respondents yet at the same time avoid creating a ponderous mass of data too voluminous

to use effectively. Each interview was tape recorded and transcribed later with the resulting data from student interviews amounting to some two hundred pages of interview transcripts.

Student respondents were selected with a view to obtaining a broad cross section in terms of communities of origin, farm/town contexts, college/university/work plans, sex, and year of graduation. Accordingly, of the eight, four are male and four are female. Five have their homes in the Crocus Hill area and three originate from the outlying feeder communities. Four respondents were farm residents and four were living in the town of Crocus Hill during their school years. The respondents cover a five year period in terms of their year of graduation with one from 1986, two from 1987, two from 1988, one from 1989, and two from 1990. Post secondary destinations roughly reflect the profile of graduates as a whole in that four of the respondents went to university after high school, three to other programs, (two to community college and one to a hospital nursing program), and one to working on the farm after a brief time in a post secondary program.

TABLE 5: DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS' BACKGROUNDS

NAME	SEX	HOME	GRADUATED	DESTINATION
Pat	F	Farm	1986	University
Stan	M	Farm	1987	College
Gloria	F	Farm	1987	Nursing
Lisa	F	Town	1990	Work
Paul	M	Farm	1988	Univ/Work
Daniel	M	Town	1990	University
Terry	M	Town	1989	University
Shauna	F	Town	1988	University

Following is an overview of the respondents and their backgrounds: (Pseudonyms have been used in each case).

Pat is a female graduate of the Collegiate. She came from one of the outlying community feeder schools, graduated in 1986, and went on to the University of Manitoba where she completed a Bachelor of Education program. At the time of this study she was in her first year of full time employment as an elementary school teacher.

Stan also came from an outlying community. He graduated from Norquay in 1987 and went to Assiniboine Community College for a diploma program in electronics technology. After some time working for a business

machines firm in a larger centre he moved back to the family farm which was where his interview took place.

Gloria also graduated from Norquay in 1987 after coming into the school from an outlying community feeder school. Following her graduation she completed a two year diploma nursing program and, after working for a time as an emergency ward nurse in a larger centre, returned to her home area where she married and obtained a job in an area hospital.

Lisa came to Crocus Hill half way through elementary school. She graduated from Norquay in 1990, registered in a technical school program and withdrew after about six weeks. At the time of this interview she was settling in to married life and living with her husband on a farm in the area.

Paul graduated from Norquay in 1988 and went directly into a physical education degree program. He withdrew from the program at the end of the first year, took a year off and then enrolled in the Agriculture Diploma program at the University of Manitoba. He was part way through this program at the time of the interview.

Daniel's family moved from a mining community outside of the Province and he entered Norquay in the middle of grade seven. He completed his studies at

Norquay in 1990 and went on to a Science degree program at university en route to a Pharmacy program. At the time of the interview he was working on his Science degree.

Terry was born and raised in the Village of Crocus Hill. He attended Crocus Hill elementary school and went on to John Norquay, graduating in 1989. At the time of the interview, Terry was working on completing an Arts degree at university with aspirations to enter the Faculty of Law at the University of Manitoba.

Shauna was born outside of Crocus Hill but her family moved there while she was an infant. Like Terry, she attended school in Crocus Hill from kindergarten to grade twelve. After graduating in 1988 she continued her education in the Faculty of Management at the University of Manitoba and was about to enter her final year when her interview took place.

CHAPTER 4

INTERVIEW RESULTS

This chapter will attempt to provide an overview of responses to the interview questions by integrating both the responses from the three primary interviews and the eight student interviews. Common themes will be identified as will contradictions among respondents. For the sake of simplicity and clarity, the questions will be dealt with here in the order they were asked of respondents in the interviews.

1.

"last year when I went to university I found that I was a lot more prepared than a lot of other students." (Daniel)

Nine of eleven respondents indicated that they saw Norquay as distinct from other schools in the Province. The remaining two responses could not definitively be categorized as either a yes or a no. Shauna's description is representative of the nine in identifying the fact that there was the perception of a difference, albeit a difficult one to describe:

I was kind of trying to think what it is (that makes this school different), and I can't say that I know, but I know that kids from Durban Ridge and kids from Catskill are a lot different than the kids from Lyon,

Bracken, Wier and Crystal City that came to this school. . . . I don't know what it is but it's just a different mentality or a different, . . . priorities.

Lisa exhibited that same sense of attempting to describe an intangible phenomenon, however she was able to define the focus in terms of the different priorities to which Shauna alluded:

. . . education is a top priority I think more than in other schools, . . . It's just something that, just the environment. I don't know how to explain why it happens but it's there.

John Macdonald, the Superintendent of the School Division attempted to describe this difference by giving evidence of its outcomes:

Interviewer: I wonder at this point if, having seen the last twenty six years , do you see that school as being different from other schools in the Province?

Macdonald: Different today?

Interviewer: Yes.

Macdonald: I'm not sure the mandate is as clear anymore, although, you know what the results of the last math exam were don't you, the last provincial math exam?

Interviewer: No.

Macdonald: Norquay had no failures, had two students do in excess of twenty-nine out of thirty, and had an average of 77%.

Interviewer: Versus Boyd?

Macdonald: Versus Boyd which had four failures and a class average about ten percent lower.

Daniel identified the results of this difference as

being manifest in university:

Daniel: . . . last year when I went to university I found that I was a lot more prepared than a lot of other students.

Interviewer: How so?

Daniel: In our science courses; I took basic health sciences last year, and in physics I didn't have any problem with it, but people from other schools said that they'd never taken it. Half the year was review for me. Same in chemistry. It was about the same.

These quotations serve to adumbrate the types of responses to this question. In all of the cases, educators and alumni alike, there existed the perception of a clear difference between this school and other schools. The consensus among participants was that this difference was most strongly expressed in terms of an attitude which placed a strong emphasis on academic achievement.

2.

I think the parents would be disappointed if the eighty percent of kids didn't go on as usual. (Bob Borden)

The issue of whether the Norquay image had remained consistent over time could be answered only by John Macdonald and Bob Borden, as they were the only ones with an historical perspective on the school. John Macdonald indicated that there have been some changes in

methodologies but that the mandate has remained consistent. He describes how the focus on academics is often achieved at the expense of ancillary activities such as athletics, drama, music and so on. With a few exceptions he sees the community support for this focus to be the same now as it was when he taught there in the first years of the school's history:

For years the community has supported (the academic focus), and as we've talked about, still seems to support it, despite the fact that there's the odd growling and grumbling in certain quarters.

Board Chairman, Bob Borden also identified this consistency among the parent community in terms of its expectations of the school:

I don't think that the educational standards have changed, or the feelings of the parents. I think the parents would be disappointed if the eighty percent of kids didn't go on as usual. I can't think of any parents in our Division who don't want and expect their kids to finish grade twelve.

3.

"Everybody in the whole town is really keen on making, . . . giving the best to their kids." (Terry)

In addressing community size and its effects, the overarching theme which respondents identified was the idea of the close networks that exist in a small

community. This overarching theme led to the emergence of three sub themes connected with the existence of those close networks, namely: accountability, support, and competition.

Bob Borden's remarks describe the kind of personal accountability students in the community grow up with, and the kind of support they can expect to receive:

You don't get away with anything in a small community. If you're a small kid and you smash a window it's only a matter of minutes before the owner knows who did it. And that teaches you responsibility and respect. If you get caught doing that it's an embarrassment to the whole community. Another thing that I think is good; With friends here, if you ever needed anything you wouldn't hesitate to ask for it and I wouldn't hesitate to lend someone five, ten, twenty dollars and never worry about getting it back. There was trust.

A significant effect of community size in Stan's eyes was that teachers came to know each individual student's personality and potential well:

Everybody knows everybody. I guess people tend to get along a little better that way. And teachers know your background, so that would help too. They know how you've been brought up and what your temperament is like and so on. I would say that made a difference.

This idea of close connections resulting in closer teacher student ties was echoed by others, for example,

Shauna:

I would say that (in) Crocus Hill as opposed to Winnipeg, you'd have a definite impact because, like I said before, you don't see your teachers in Winnipeg at the ball game, or if you do it's a mere coincidence and you don't help out at the fall smorg at the potato bin next to the teacher that's working at the gravy bin, you know. So I would say that in that way a small community is better because you get to know people better and then if you know a person you can form an opinion about them other than just being a superior and a teacher and then you have a respect for them.

Gloria made reference to this concept of close ties in terms of student-student closeness and talked about it's outcomes:

I think that just, not only knowing your teachers well enough and knowing that you have the support of the community, you know, knowing your friends' families and knowing your friends' friends and the closeness; I think that makes a big difference as far as sort of feeling comfortable with what you're doing and also getting the support you need to do your best, and also having the extra push from your peers and from those people close to you because you want to do well, because you don't want to fall behind everybody. Like it's expected that you're going to finish school and you're going to do this. . . . But you know, it's just expected and I think that the size of the community makes you that much more willing and that much more set on doing well.

Daniel identified the lack of external distractions as a factor of community size which may have had an effect on school performance:

Maybe a larger town might be better, but there might be a downside to that. If you have a larger town, you have more things to do, you're going to put your school aside. I found that.

The following excerpt from Stan's interview supports this same notion:

Stan: Well, another thing I was just thinking about too, like as far as staying out of trouble, every day I'd be gone from home from, I think I'd get on the bus at about 7:30 or quarter to eight and I'd drive to school and be there all day, like you can't go anywhere from the school. You're stranded there. And then I'd get home at 4:30, quarter to five. So that's a long, . . . you haven't got a lot of time to be going anywhere else.

Interviewer: You can't run down to the arcade. Stan: No, that's right. You just can't do it. Haven't got time. And really I guess in Crocus Hill, I can't think of anywhere that they would go in town. Like I don't remember people ever wandering off from school much to go downtown.

Interviewer: There was nothing to go to?

Stan: No, absolutely nothing.

Another feature which emerged in discussion of the effect of community size was the idea that the community of students which was formed in John Norquay Collegiate was actually a composite of groups from the Village of Crocus Hill and the outlying villages of Bracken, Wier, and Lyon, each with its own tradition of community pride. John Macdonald described this situation within the context of a volleyball game:

When I'm talking about the volleyball team, if the principal's son and the custodian's son are both playing volleyball, and if some of your key players are from each of the surrounding communities, then you have a mix of publics that have the common goal of that team doing well. So they're standing there cheering alongside each other where a year to two before they would have been cheering against each other.

Lisa described how the mix of communities may have been responsible for creating an undercurrent of competition:

Probably (community size had an effect on the school) to a point because there was not as many students, and because of the community being so small we had to have one school with so many different towns. So you got so many different people, but, different ideas were all brought together into one lump I guess. Maybe that's why it was competitive because we had so many different towns. We weren't just one town.

Pat's response to this question illustrated that this pride of the smaller constituent communities is still a force:

I don't feel that Crocus Hill puts a lot into their school. I don't feel that they put a lot into anything community oriented, but of course I'm biased, because I think that Wier does.

The conversation with Terry shows the interaction of community competitiveness and close community

connections:

Terry: I think (community size) would have a big part to do with competition. Everybody knows everybody. The classes are small, and especially in the double 0 level. And you know everybody and because everybody's your friend it's not really a competition that is unhealthy. It creates a healthy competition because you can always give each other the works, and it never ever was destructive. I just leads to better performance I think.

Interviewer: I wonder why that exists in this community and it doesn't in other communities the same size.

Terry: Well maybe it's just the whole overall, . . . the school and the community has always had a tradition of, . . . of doing well and going on to better things. And maybe a lot of other communities have never had that way of thinking. A lot of other communities are sports minded and they want you to go to school but number one they want you to be a good athlete; or a community that's really really rural and the kids that graduate get married and go farming and the girls or the guys go back and work for their dad and that kind of thing. I think that everyone here, I think that the community expects its students to do well also. Everybody gets a big kick out of going to the graduation ceremonies and seeing what students are doing next year and they'll always stop you on the street and ask how school is going.

Interviewer: They do?

Terry: Yea, everybody does that. Even people that aren't even your family or close friends. I just went in the drug store the other day and the first question that the clerk asked me was how was my intersession going, and had I caught up my courses this winter since my operation. Everybody in the whole town is really keen on making, . . . giving the best to their kids.

4.

There are a lot of stabilizing things out here, and everyone knows you. (Bob Borden)

As with their perceptions on community size, respondents identified three main themes which they saw as being connected with living in a rural setting. These are: the idea of rural values or work ethic, the concept of strong peer support and the concept of strong parental support. John Macdonald described his perception:

There was definitely a work ethic there. Students were expected to do their homework. It didn't matter how much was assigned. It would likely get done without any complaints.

Interviewer: Would you see that as something that is normally associated with rural communities anywhere or specific to that community?

Mr. Macdonald: I've seen it in other places, but it was certainly evident there. I saw it at (my home town) when I was growing up there, the same thing was evident there.

Interviewer: So it existed in other towns?

Mr. Macdonald: To a degree. It existed to a degree in other places across the region, but there . . . boy! If a student wasn't working you just talked to their parents for about ten seconds and you didn't have any problem with getting any work done.

While others mentioned the concept of the rural work ethic, they were inclined at the same time to add some qualifications. The Principal, Alex Mackenzie

observed:

There's that work ethic and the parents expect that but also I don't think it's unusual. I noticed the same kind of thing in (another rural town) where attitudes towards working were similar.

Paul qualified his observations on work ethic as well:

Well I guess it's always the belief that the rural people have a lot more of a realistic idea of what's going on than city dwellers but, maybe that helps them to perform better, I don't know, maybe they have a better work ethic, like right from the ground up.

Interviewer: Just from the kind of lifestyle they have?

Paul: Yea. A little bit better work ethic from their home life and growing up on the farm. Maybe that doesn't have a big part of it anymore but probably it used to.

Discussing the question on rural context, Bob Borden made an incidental observation about how the economic structure of a rural community may bring about a certain set of values and attitudes towards work:

Another thing that probably improves the quality of education or students in our area is the fact that we're all businessmen, either a businessman or a professional person.

Interviewer: Can you expand on that?

Borden: Well, of all the kids in John Norquay, their parents are either running a business in town or running a farm business. There are some that are workers too but there's a real high percentage of people that are either running a farm business or grocery store

or they are something like a mechanic or a teacher or doctor or lawyer or something like that where you have to go for education.

Paul saw this strong business presence as creating an atmosphere of initiative and self motivation:

I guess it would give you more initiative because your mother or dad doesn't just work on the assembly line somewhere. It might give you a little more initiative to see that they've done well, and they've gone out on their own and they're completely independent of anyone else so . . .

Interviewer: And it would create a kind of independence?

Paul: Yes, it would give that person more of a willingness to work because they can see what happens. You can be successful on your own, not just have a routine job to go to.

Participants were emphatic on the idea of strong support networks in the rural community setting. On the topic of peer support networks Bob Borden related:

There are a lot of stabilizing things out here, and everyone knows you. If you're having trouble in the community whether it's with the wife or the farm or whatever and people know that, and your kids are reacting in a negative way, people understand that and make exceptions for your kids. They'll try and help them out, bend over backwards to help them. In the city they don't know them to start with so you don't get the support. It's like one big family in a way. You may not realize you're getting the support but it's there.

Lisa began discussing rural values and then moved on to the idea of group support, saying:

I think maybe growing up on the farm you might, maybe treasure things a little more or things might be a little more important to you and you understand the concept of hard work and dedication because you've grown up with that and that's going to stay with you forever, so it comes into the school. I don't know . . . just in a rural community everyone knows everyone and that, . . . being small and rural it just brings everyone a little closer.

Interviewer: And what kind of effect does that have?

Lisa: . . . when someone is say, in a math contest or something and since you're all good friends you root for that person and in a city school you wouldn't know; you wouldn't care. The math contest team; you probably wouldn't even know half the people on it, but here you do. You do know who it is and you know them personally and you're friends with them and so you root for them; but in the city schools you don't know them; like they could be in your grade but they could be in three other classes; like you could never have seen them before, so what do you care?

Gloria identified the rural support network as something which fostered the development of common sets of values:

Well, (laughs), everybody's business is everybody else's. (laughs) No. But it's true. In a way it's true. Everybody knows what everybody else, how everybody else is doing and so, you know, you don't want to be the bottom out of sixteen people, because everybody knows you're the bottom. And that's a silly way to look at it, but that's one thing. And another thing in the rural community is that you have so much support and if you were to make friends from Lyon, even though it's forty miles from my mom and dad's, it's not a big deal to say, "I'm going to Lyon to see so and so." or "I'm going to

study with this person." And I think you broaden sort of, I don't know how to express it. I think it makes you a better person because for one, you trust, and you have respect for other people's belongings, things, feelings. I think you learn a lot of basic morals and things that will make you go a lot further once you get to, you know, the bigger picture.

Echoing in part the observations of others about the lack of adolescent diversions in the area Shauna saw a closer parent-child support network as a feature of the rural environment:

I guess values are different in a rural community. Maybe a little more old fashioned than in the big city; more conservative, more, . . . well I don't know if it's more towards family or not. That's something I would say automatically but I don't really know if that's because it's been written so much that you hear it and you say it; because I'm sure there are families in the city that are just as close as families in the country. But it seems that it's more prevalent here. Maybe there's just not as much to do. (laughs) You know, there's no movie theatre. You make your own entertainment and you do it with your family.

Pat drew a connection between the economic structure of the rural setting where parents work primarily at home, and a higher level of parent-child interaction:

I think parents in a rural setting tend to be more involved, like they, . . . they're more concerned about their kids. I'm thinking more of Wier, but I know the parents there

always support everything at the school and they help with stuff and that kind of thing.

Interviewer: More parental involvement, support, supervision?

Pat: Yes, they care, you know, they are there, . . . well mom was always there when I got home and that kind of thing and the majority were then too. Now more people are working but, this is a farming community too so the mothers were more apt, . . . were at home.

Interviewer: So we're identifying a family structure that is prevalent around this area with moms usually staying at home and increasing contact with the kids?

Pat: And I think the parents support the kids too, like by parents would help me with my homework all the time, well, not all the time; but if I had questions they'd always sit down and help me.

5.

The parents are very concerned about this all the time and if you see any sign of disrespect of adults and teachers it's going against their religious philosophy where children have their place and their role.
(Alex Mackenzie)

As mentioned earlier, about forty-five percent of the student body is of the Mennonite faith. When asked if they thought this had an effect on the school seven of the eleven respondents indicated that they felt there was no effect. All respondents who felt that there was no effect pointed out the fact that the large majority of Mennonite students leave the school in grade ten or eleven to complete their schooling at a Mennonite private school in a different town. This is a

traditional practice among the students in this group as it was for their parents when they were in high school themselves. Of the four respondents who felt that the religious demographics had some effect on the school, most referred to the values set brought into the school by this group of students. Alex Mackenzie observed:

I think the fact that it's Mennonite makes the ideas on work ethic very conservative. The parents are very concerned about this all the time and if you see any sign of disrespect of adults and teachers it's going against their religious philosophy where children have their place and their role.

Shauna acknowledged the effect in this way:

. . . there's a big Mennonite population and they're very religious and family oriented and family values and that kind of thing, so that's obviously got to have an impact because they're your friends. They're your neighbours.

Bob Borden saw the Mennonite presence as a balancing influence:

I think that the Mennonites, because of their stronger standard of living as far as social things and their acceptance of divorce, failure in marriage and stuff like that; that's probably filtered over into the school. The fact that they didn't accept dancing and social drinking, that kept us from going too far one way. It probably had a neutralizing effect.

6.

"I think that Durban Ridge was very much more sports oriented and I think that academics were not as important. I think that there was a community difference in that regard."
(John Macdonald)

With surprising consistency all respondents, in dealing with the issue of competition between John Norquay and Durban Ridge schools described two schools with widely differing philosophies. Alex Mackenzie outlines the philosophical difference thus:

. . . and I was thinking of timetabling, questions now that are coming up, and Durban Ridge is reluctant to send their 300 kids over here for math. They would like to teach them there and I said, you know, if I had a kid planning to go to university I would probably want him to take his 300's at Norquay because the expectations are much higher, and I'm convinced that they would do much better. And I said, "How can you argue with success?" If Steve has no failures and a seventy-three average on the departmental examinations and four out of seven failed at Durban Ridge, and I knew that as a parent, I would want my kids to come over to Norquay. But those parents don't feel like that. There's a difference. Durban Ridge parents want their kids to stay there where they are going to experience some success even though the standard isn't as high. That's what makes the timetabling a bit of a problem. Because you have two different sets of expectations from parents. They're reluctant to send them over for 200 physics too because Bob demands too much.

Interviewer: It's like they want to give them success in grade eleven whereas here . . .

Mackenzie: Here they're grooming them for university, yes.

Mackenzie's observations of the difference came out at another point in the interview as well where he said:

I don't think there are . . . I know there is a difference of opinion in terms of standards and expectations. In fact I just ran into it in terms of timetabling. Durban Ridge is doing its utmost to keep its kids there because they're worried about them coming here because we expect too much and give them too many units in math, give them . . . this is what I just got from the Superintendent, . . . when their kids are only required to do a core plus a couple of options our teachers will give them more options. The teachers here I think have one eye on the university, and that's another thing maybe when I come to think of it, because they're saying, "we would like to offer our kids a calculus course because that would be an advantage in university. We want to give them extra units in math because that would be an advantage when they go into engineering or into whatever science." I've heard teachers say this when they're talking about the advantages; that they're kind of grooming them for university.

Interviewer: Whereas Durban Ridge . . .

Mackenzie : I don't think Durban Ridge does that. They're more interested in just general education and they don't, . . . maybe it's unfair for me to say that but I just don't think they have that same consciousness of the university. And it's pretty much expected here that you'll go on. It's an amazing school that way. I look at the graduating class and everyone is going on to this or that. They're all going away with the exception of a couple of kids.

Students also perceived differences between Durban Ridge and Crocus Hill which became manifest in levels of academic performance. Terry described the difference:

I could get in trouble for saying this but, everybody here knew that, I guess it would be general knowledge but, students in Durban Ridge aren't as, how do I say it, academically oriented. And maybe that's to do with the teachers. Maybe that's the way it always has been. I just think that we've always known that, because of the integrated classes, that we would always do much better.

Daniel referred to the John Norquay emphasis on academics as that which set it apart, not only from its neighbour but from other schools as well:

I just found that in this town for some reason the people have a different attitude towards school. Like in Durban Ridge it was more an "Oh well, I don't care." attitude, but in Crocus Hill when I came here everybody, . . . if there was a test they studied whereas other schools it was, "Yea, test tomorrow. Oh well, I can pass it without studying." Crocus Hill was, "Well I want to get a good mark."

Gloria echoed the same opinion:

They were much, well, it's hard though, because their class when we graduated was over half guys and they had maybe four or five girls, but they had a lot of guys that sort of said, "Oh, so what." School was school and they sort of did what they had to to get by and then they'd carry on type thing, but I think that also shows, if you went back to the graduating class that graduated the same time that we did, I think as far as the number of people that went on and as far as the number of people that actually made it to that point, I think that it would show drastically the difference in the attitude towards academics.

Bob Borden identified the idea of different arenas

of achievement for each of the two schools:

I think the average student at Norquay feels good if he's got seventy percent. I've heard it said that if you get seventy or seventy five at Norquay that's equivalent to eighty or eighty five at Durban Ridge, as well as some other schools. So I think that the staff thinks that in their marking and grading, they've graded a lot harder so that the average student can still get seventy. So while our marks aren't any higher on an average than other schools, they've had to work harder to get those marks.

Maybe John Norquay has done better academically because Durban Ridge has always done so well in sports.

After outlining the difference in academics, Bob Borden identified the idea that Durban Ridge's strong suit was sports. This was a theme which was agreed upon by most of the respondents. John Macdonald observed, "I think that Durban Ridge was very much more sports oriented and I think that academics were not as important. I think that there was a community difference in that regard."

A survey of responses to this question confirms suggestion that each community had more or less staked out its competitive territory; for Durban Ridge the high ground would be athletics, for Crocus Hill: academics. Terry described the dichotomy as one of "geeks and jocks" :

There was the odd exception but, just that attitude, and they would always think that we were, I mean it would be a friendly joke, but they'd always think that we were geeks and we'd always think that they were jocks.

Lisa saw the schools themselves as instrumental in fostering and perpetuating this dichotomy:

I think maybe Norquay put academics before sports and Durban Ridge put sports before academics. Like in high school it just seemed that the sports were so important but if someone failed that was OK. If someone failed a test that was OK but if they could, you know, smash that volleyball that was better than getting a better mark you know.

Interviewer: And in Norquay, how would you describe the attitude in Norquay?

Lisa: I think our sports were more for fun, for relaxation than, you know, to put the school's name somewhere. Like, the school would be more proud of someone winning a math contest than someone winning a volleyball game. Like that's just how it was and I think that's a better attitude to have than a sports attitude because it's just, that's just the way it was.

Interviewer: Can you figure out where that difference might have come from?

Lisa: Oh. . . . The teachers make a difference because I think they had a higher priority of education than sports. It was OK if you were out playing hockey or whatever, but if you didn't do your homework because of sports, you know.

Interviewer: And in Durban Ridge?

Lisa: Well, Mr. Greene was the volleyball coach and if the girls didn't get their homework done because of a volleyball game that was OK. But it wouldn't have been OK for Crocus Hill, because you know, the school's supposed to come first and that's the way it should be. It was just a totally different attitude in Durban Ridge.

Interviewer: So you see the teachers as

creating the attitude?

Lisa: Yea, just the whole environment. Like, it just seems that all of the teachers that I was involved with in Durban Ridge; sports were just, bang, that was the top priority. And sometimes we'd spend half a class talking about a volleyball game or something in Durban Ridge. But, you'd never find that in Crocus Hill. Maybe it would be mentioned in class or something, or congratulations or whatever, but you'd never spend half a class talking about it. So that was something that I really noticed was a difference between the two schools.

Feelings on the competition with Durban Ridge ranged to both extremes of the spectrum, from Pat who said;

No I'm thinking back to grade twelve and, . . . no, . . . we were, . . . We didn't really consider ourselves Durban Ridge and Crocus Hill. We just, you know, were kids. We really, I don't think there was that attitude. Maybe with some students but I didn't feel that.

To Paul who said:

. . . as soon as you got on the volleyball court it was the same thing there too. You had to beat Durban Ridge. They were your rival. They were your enemy on the other side of the net or on the other side of the classroom. It didn't matter where you were. Or even on the bus going back and forth. There was Crocus Hill there and Durban Ridge there. It was very competitive.

While the extremes were represented however, the preponderance of opinion was that this competition was

not a major factor. Daniel and Shauna both suggested that the competition between communities was primarily a phenomenon among parents and didn't affect students that significantly. Three students addressed this question by saying that while a strong competitive climate existed in the student body it was an individual competitiveness rather than a school to school competitiveness:

I don't think that I would have said I want to do better because I'm a Crocus Hill kid and I want to do better than Wier or Durban Ridge. It was just that I want to do well. I know that between Matthew and myself in high school, because he was always at the top, Matthew, Janice and myself, and it was between the three of us and two of us were from Crocus Hill and he was from Wier. But that wasn't the issue. It was just that we were all in a sort of a competition. But it wasn't bad. And it wasn't because Matthew was from Wier and Janice and I were from Crocus Hill. It was just that you wanted to do well. (Shauna)

No one ever said, "I'm going to win this math contest because I'm from Norquay." It was, "I'm going to win this contest because I know I can do it." Like it was that Durban Ridge, they were going to win this volleyball game because the Durban Ridge Irish were the best. Crocus Hill was more of an individual goal and achievement. Durban Ridge was more of a school goal and achievement. But we were proud when three people won a math contest or achieved the highest mark or we were proud of them because they came from Norquay, but they didn't win it because they were from Norquay. That's how I thought. Maybe other people didn't think that way. That's how I thought it came across. (Lisa)

I would say that at least from my experience, I don't think that that was necessarily a factor because for at least the last four years, we've had classes together, we've done this together, and this year the kids even graduated together. So I don't think it's so much a competition between schools as it's actually the individual competition thing like if you're in the same class you want to do well. It's not because this person's from Durban Ridge and this person's from Crocus Hill. It's more an individual thing when it comes down to competition. I never ever found, aside from sports that is, that there was a competition as far as marks or academics go, between Durban Ridge and John Norquay. (Gloria)

7.

Interviewer: So it's more that the principal changes to adjust to the school rather than the school changing to adjust to the principal?

Terry: I think so. Because the staff members have been here for many years and they're not just going to change overnight.

An interesting pattern emerged when respondents were asked if administration would have an effect on the school's performance. Of the eight former students who answered the question, seven observed as Gloria did, "I don't think it would have had an effect on that, as long as the teachers were the same." Of the eight former students all but one had seen the school under the leadership of more than one principal and therefore

would have had a good basis for understanding whether a change of leadership would change the school. Of those eight, all but one indicated that they felt the school would continue on as before, kept more or less on an autopilot setting by the staff. The one student who was unable to give a definite answer to this question was the same student who had seen only one principal in the school during her time there. The sentiments of the other seven tended to agree with Daniel who said, "I think the teachers kept it running the same way."

Terry's response illustrated the common sentiment that the school would change the administrator rather than the administrator changing the school:

I think that they would have the general idea that I think maybe that the principal that comes into Norquay for the first time; everyone would like to quickly tell him all the good things about the school and give him that: "You'd better be proud of all of this stuff if you're going to be our principal." I think that we, I know (an earlier principal) was here for years and I think that he had that, he, like the other staff members, wanted us to do well and that sort of thing. I know when (the next principal) came in, I know that stepping into the situation he was even moreso concerned in the back of his head about everyone doing well and, say in a math contest or something, and representing our school, because it wasn't maybe as natural as for someone like (the earlier principal), who'd been here for those years already and didn't have to play the role, and where someone like (the next principal) just stepped in. I think he played the role more and was more conscientious about Norquay and the attitude

and everything. I think he had to play it more and then it would eventually come naturally. I just got that impression from him, whenever he would give an assembly or something like that and he would be jumping on the Norquay bandwagon and saying we have to do well at this or congratulations to so and so for doing this or whatever.

Interviewer: So it's more that the principal changes to adjust to the school rather than the school changing to adjust to the principal?

Terry: I think so. Because the staff members have been here for many years and they're not just going to change overnight.

8.

It's almost like going back into a time warp. You know, like going back twenty years.
(Alex Mackenzie)

Comments on the issue of parent influences in the school seemed reminiscent of the often cited 'good old days'. John Macdonald described the climate in the sixties as the school was in its infancy:

Interviewer: I guess we've already talked about parental inputs in terms of the school . . .

Macdonald: Strong . . . support the school. It was almost unquestioned too. We've talked about it and you've heard it from others that the school was entrusted with educating these students and the community basically said, "We support you, but we're not going to interfere with the day to day operation of your enterprise." and they didn't. If you wanted support you asked for it and you got it. If you wanted to let people know what you were doing, you called a parent meeting. We used to have a big awards

night ceremony every fall and that was a major thing. That was when (the school's first principal) used to be eloquent in discussions about what the school was doing and that was certainly a waving the flag type of occasion.

Interviewer: There seemed to be a real consistency among parents in terms of their philosophy?

Macdonald: Yes. It was a remarkable consistency. Like, if a kid ever said . . . a kid that was misbehaving ever said, "I'm going to tell my father on you." I would say, "Go ahead. Your dad and I will certainly have a discussion tonight and I don't think you're going to come out a winner. You want to disobey the school rules? You don't want to work? And you're going to tell your dad on me? Well just get to it."

Alex Mackenzie, at the time of this writing in his second year in the principalship at Norquay, discussed how many facets of that traditional parent support climate still exist in the Norquay community:

The parents are not, . . . seem to let the school do its own thing. They seem to have a lot of faith in the school. There seems to be less parental interference in the school than I've seen in other places. Like I've seen administrators dance two steps all the time and try to worry about what the community is going to think about this and everything else. Here they don't give a damn, you know, in this school. They just do it. And maybe that's one reason why they get . . . some of them have gotten themselves into a little bit of trouble on occasion. You know, "This is the way it is. These are my standards. If those kids can't measure up to it that's too bad." They haven't played this political game so much.

But on the other hand, parents, whether they've given up trying to influence or whether they just have turned the responsibility for educating their children to the people in this

school, I don't know what it is, but for some reason we just don't get this parade of parents and parent groups coming into the school. Now (the Superintendent's) concern was that he wanted the parents, the people to know more about what was going on in Norquay and so I put out a newsletter and tried to get word out in different ways but there's very little parental interference in this school.

Interviewer: It's not to say that they don't care.

Mackenzie: No, it's not that they don't care, but . . . and I wouldn't go so far as to say it's a case of 'you're the professionals, we give you the job of educating our kids.' but it almost appears to me to be like that. Because, as I said, we're not challenged very much at all on what we do, and in other school systems we were continually challenged and we get into this defensive teaching where we have to be covering ourselves all the time and, here, they don't do that.

In another interchange, Mackenzie cited an example of parent reaction to a disciplinary measure and drew the relationship to the 'old days' thinking:

If you phone a parent you get an awful lot of support. I've only been challenged once and I would call that a minor case where the school has been challenged in terms of discipline. When I had those kids phone the parents up (for having beer on a field trip) and have them drive sixty five miles that night at ten o'clock, the parents said "Thank you very much. We really appreciate it. We would have been unhappy if you'd done it any other way." And I can see lots of other areas where the parents would have been upset and they would have found it a great inconvenience to drive up there at that hour of the night and pick them up. And every time I have the kids phone or I phone and talk to the parents I get . . . there's just one example I suppose where the parents are hostile. We don't have to adopt that defensive

stance that we do in other places . . . as much . . . we don't have to be so conscious about it.

Interviewer: You've anticipated another question again which has to do with parent expectations. The consistency between or among parents in terms of expectations.

Mackenzie: I think so, yes. You just don't run into the same kind of thing here when you're dealing with a kid. Some other places you phone a parent and you don't know whether you're going to be supported or not and here you're ninety five percent sure anyway that you're going to get lots of support. It's almost like going back into a time warp. You know, like going back twenty years. Although they have the television and the modern cars and all their luxuries, some of their attitudes are very very fortyish, fiftyish.

Students identified a kind of shared values set among parents in the community:

Well I'm thinking of my friends' parents and they all seemed to have the same sort of, . . . the ones that were in that group in this school all seemed to do the same sort of thing. They were all very family oriented. They believe in respect for older people. They think that you should better yourself, and they don't think that you should quit things in the middle of something. (Shauna)

Interviewer: Another item on the list that you've already alluded to is parental influences. It sounds like students in the school seem to get the same kind of message from all of the parents in the community about the importance of school and how one ought to perform in school.

Terry: From my own parents and from everybody's. Everybody has that kind of thing.

Interviewer: So it's like there's an above average level of parent involvement with their kids, and . . .

Terry: And also parental involvement with

other parents' kids. You know, we used to call Mrs. Bridges, we used to call her 'mom'. She wanted us to call her 'mom'. She was everybody's mom. And that sort of thing. Everyone was concerned about everyone else, even people that, . . . I just had an example the other day where, even a parent that doesn't have kids who are my age, she has kids who are a lot younger than I am, even she's interested in what kids my age are doing. And I think that even if they never went to university, they're interested in what we're doing in Winnipeg, or whatever university, you know. Maybe they kind of wish that they could have done that, but they always wish the best. They always want to, to see you do really well.

Clearly an integral part of the parent profile is a common expectation as regards goals after high school:

My mom and dad both, . . . I think, . . . I don't know whether I would have decided to go to school on my own if they had never said boo about it but from day one it was, "You're going to university." It wasn't like, "You have to go." It was more like, "Well when you graduate and you go to university what are you going to take?" It wasn't, "Are you going to go to university?" It was, "What are you going to take?" But I never really thought about it that way. But I could never see myself in grade twelve saying, "I'm not going to go to university." That would be just silly.
(Shauna)

I don't think that the educational standards have changed, or the feelings of the parents. I think the parents would be disappointed if the 80% of kids didn't go on as usual. I can't think of any parents in our Division who don't want and expect their kids to finish grade twelve. Yet five miles from here in Rolling Trail I was talking to a parent the other day who's a farmer like we are, and he has five boys and not all of them are going to be able to farm. The farm's not big enough

to spread out amongst two of them never mind five, and his attitude towards education . . . I couldn't believe it. If the boys want to drop out in grade nine or ten and get a job that wouldn't bother him one iota. He wasn't going to put any pressure on that kid to stay. If the kid didn't want to go on to college he wouldn't stand in his way. I don't think that that's, . . . that attitude shocked me.
(Bob Borden)

Again, the issue of the common employment demographics in the community came up in discussion of how parents have influenced the school and students:

. . . of all the kids in John Norquay, their parents are either running a business in town or running a farm business. there are some that are workers too but there's a real high percentage of people that are either running a farm business or grocery store or they are something like a mechanic or a teacher or doctor or lawyer or something like that where you have to go for education. . . .

Most business people have a pretty good self esteem and they feel pretty good about themselves. Most farmers have got some pride in what they're doing. If I worked in a factory and I punched out the same material every day, it's not something I'd hand down to my kids. . . .

. . . I'm always giving (my daughter) lots of lectures about being responsible. She says, "I don't want to." or "I don't like doing this." and I say, "Well I didn't want to do chores but I have to. That's the way life is. I don't want to get up in the night when it's forty below to check cows, but that's when I need to do it the most. If you look at the people who achieve anywhere you'll see people that do the extra, that aren't afraid to stay a little later, or to give it a hundred and ten." (Bob Borden)

Some students also concurred with this observation

and drew some inferences about its effect, for example
Shauna:

Very small number, (of wage earners), and that creates kind of an independence because when you're your own boss you are very independent. You have a more independent personality than someone who is a subordinate continuously I would think.

Interviewer: What kind of effect filters down to the children of those people?

Shauna: You're going to try to be like your parents I would think. If your parents are very independent and very 'go get em' and very "do well" then that's what you're going to do, because when you see your parents you want to be just like them or most people do. Depends on what your parents are like I guess. So maybe the fact that there are so many people in that kind of position where they are owner-managers they've got to have a different personality than someone who takes orders.

STAFF

Throughout the interview process the topic of staff was continually mentioned by respondents. The sum of their comments on staff form a kind of mosaic of characteristics which defines the way staff seems to deal with students as a group and describes the effect they have on students in general.

Primary among these characteristics is a uniformly shared philosophy which prizes academics above all other school pursuits; a philosophy which finds it's grounding in a universal level of expectation for students,

administrators, and each other. Alex Mackenzie describes it thus:

(The staff philosophy has) evolved over the years and maybe they wouldn't be able to articulate that, like it hasn't been set up on a wall or plaque or anything like that but it's there. Like they all have the same kind of common expectation and it's also an expectation in terms of each other as well, and if they feel that you aren't doing your job they can be pretty hard on you too. If you miss informing them on something, and it interferes with their teaching and their classes you're in trouble. And a lot of schools I've been in, if there's a chance to get out of class or something like this, fine. It relieves them of a little bit of pressure in the classroom. Not here, cause they have their program and they know what they're going to be doing with the kids, and they covet that class time with their kids. Especially the best teachers in the school. Marg Lawrence for example, "give up some time from my class? Forget it!" Even though she's getting some extra time at the end of the day, because of the way the schedule worked out, she's very reluctant to give that up.

It is clear that this philosophy is communicated to students through a well defined and largely inflexible level of expectation:

One thing I think is their expectations. They all have very high expectations of their students and they just don't . . . some of the teachers in the school seem to be quite harsh. You know, they just don't bend at all. They're inflexible. But I think one of the reasons why the school is successful is because the kids realize this. (Alex Mackenzie)

Students are provided with a clear message that

academics are not to take second place to other activities in students' lives:

. . . if you were out playing hockey the night before or something like that or if you had a volleyball game or something and you couldn't get your homework done, that wasn't an excuse. You know, school was always first, and I could never get, even if it was a school sport, and you had to finish your work or prepare for a test, that was never a good enough excuse. It was your academics first. (Terry)

Concomitant with this philosophical unity is a conservative approach to methodological change, a tendency to favour a moderate and methodical type of metamorphosis in methodology rather than the 'bandwagon' approach which many schools are accused of having:

. . . I think that some schools would change easily whichever, I don't like to use the word 'fad', but, whatever was going. You take our two schools and the amount of P.D. days taken by teachers at Boyd over the years is astronomically higher than the number of P.D. days taken by Norquay teachers. Yet Boyd's performance, if you judge performance on student academics, is no better than Norquay's. So they may have changed their methodology five times whereas Norquay, some people would say, has never changed at all. In fact, it's only the last couple of years that you could really distinguish some of the changes at Norquay, and in fact if you hadn't been looking below the surface, you'd never even notice. (John Macdonald)

Two main features were identified as underpinning

the staff approach to methodology. They were: an insistence on a sequential approach to skill development with mastery at one level before approaching the next, and; a teaching approach which forced students to think independently. Alex Mackenzie comments on the topic of the sequential approach:

No, the expectation is that . . . see one of the problems is . . . I can think of a couple of kids, my own child for one, and another one where these kids have come in from the outside and they're used to manipulating teachers. You know, they'll hand it in late and they might lose a percentage or a couple of marks or something like this. Here there are no questions. Like: "You hand it in late, you get zero for it. But that doesn't relieve you of the responsibility of getting it in. You still hand it in even though you get zero, because everything builds on another thing." And this is what I keep hearing teachers say, "We are building here." and I've talked to two teachers in the last two days. Both of them spoke to me for some time about the importance of the grounding and the building one level at a time, and if they don't get their grounding they're not going to be able to do this, and so they insist that the kids get the labs in. It was the labs in one case with one teacher.

I was talking to another teacher today and it was the same thing. "If you don't get the grounding from the very beginning, we build from there, and you'll be lost." They're very concerned when they see a kid coming in without that kind of sequential background. It's amazing. I've never seen a school where there is that kind of concern. Usually a school will talk about taking them from where they are and taking them from there, but here they seem to have a real concern over that.

In like fashion, students reported seeing the

sequential approach as something which made the difference for them in later studies. Discussing the fact that other university students who had taken calculus in high school were having difficulty while she was doing well, Pat attributed the difference to the approach she had been trained with in high school. Referring to her Grade twelve math teacher she said:

He did it all step by step, which a lot of teachers don't do and they don't do in university either. Like, they don't show you all the steps and they don't show you why, you know, why you do this and why you do that, whereas he did, and that's why I could relate to it.

This observation was echoed by other students, for example, Terry:

In biology you more or less went from chapter to chapter and every chapter was a new subject, but math I think for sure you were always progressing from one stage to another, and then at the end you get the big picture, and where everything, . . . you learn this in the first semester and then second semester . . . I remember algebra in 300 math and looking back at the start of the year how simple that was; how simple that method looks at the end of the year and how difficult it was at the beginning. You build up in a progression like that.

The second underpinning of the method was an approach to problem solving which seemed to develop problem solving skills by refusing to offer answers to

students, forcing them to solve problems independently, as outlined in this interchange with Terry:

. . . they made you think for yourself. That's what I believe our teachers were always pretty good at was letting us do things on our own more than us waiting for them to tell us what to do. They make you think more for yourself and that helps in university I think.

Interviewer: Can you expand on how they did that?

Terry: Well, I could give an example. I always remember Mr. Oppenheimer's class. We would be in Physics. We'd get a mind boggling question and it would never seem that it would make any sense and if you'd go up and ask him, "Can you help me with this?" he would just look at you and say, "You have the knowledge and the skill to do it, so go do it yourself." And sometimes you'd go a whole class without getting, . . . he would never tell you the answer. He might, if you forgot a certain something that we'd gone over in class, he might point that out, but if we'd gone over it in class and if it was in the book or the handouts he'd given us, he'd let us solve the problem ourselves rather than say, like some teachers might (when) you go ask them for help and they say, "Here, here it is." You never really learn that way.

Interviewer: That used to frustrate some students terribly, didn't it?

Terry: A lot of students would hate him for that but a lot of students respect him for that also. Like the students that went on to university or maybe at that time were thinking at a university entrance level. You might hate him at that moment and say, "Tell me please. I don't get it." but after you solved it you'd say, "Well hey, I did that myself." And by him letting us do it ourselves I think that we respected him more, and he's done his job better. You can teach by showing somebody how to do something but that's, . . . as far as the problem solving stuff goes you can teach during the lesson, but if you're doing problems, that's for you to do and not the teacher.

Students identified non methodological characteristics of staff as well. Four common themes which emerged were an impression of high intelligence among staff, strong content knowledge, a personal relationship with students, and a propensity for demonstrating to students an attitude of caring, encouragement and individual helping.

On the issue of intelligence:

. . . they're all very clever people. Like that's another thing that's interesting about this staff too is that they are all pretty intelligent. Bob probably borders on genius in some respects; Mike is the same way; Steve -logic. (Alex Mackenzie)

Stan echoed this perspective from the student's vantage point:

I suppose. Like one thing I'm quite sure of is that I think they're, . . . that the average IQ of those teachers is extremely high. I know Marg Lawrence, I think I was told she was in university at, . . . I forget what age it was, but like she was ahead of herself. And probably if you checked in school records at how they did when they were in Education, they probably did pretty good there too. I would imagine that would be something.

Interviewer: How did they get across that impression that they were smarter than the average teacher?

Stan: Well, mostly because they, well, as far as me in class, I could never outsmart them, that's for sure. Like you could ask questions and stuff and they would usually, you know, were already a step ahead of you. They always seemed to be, you know you could never stump them.

Coupled with intellectual acuity a number of students observed a strong content knowledge among staff:

When I came to grade nine I remember thinking that the teachers were so knowledgeable in their areas. You know, whereas in Wier we would ask the teacher and she wouldn't quite know or we'd have to look it up, whereas (at Norquay) you could go beyond. You could ask them more questions and they could help you figure out the answer or they would know the answer. That's what really impressed me I think was, because they were so knowledgeable. Like, I don't know, Mr. Bliss, he'd been all over and stuff like that. You could ask him questions and, . . . and Mrs. Lawrence, she's so good. I thought she was really good. And then um, I had Mr. Hawkins and I thought he was really good too. It's due to him that I did really well in university too because I took all math courses in university and I did really well in my math courses. (Pat)

I think that the staff of this school compared to others I found that this school, their staff was a lot more knowledgeable. Well, except for Mr. Black from Durban Ridge. He was really good in his chemistry field but, a lot of teachers over there were just teaching the course. They weren't really specialized in it where here most of the teachers were specialized in what they were teaching. Mr. Oppenheimer was physics and computers. Mr. Bliss was geography and history. He knows everything about it. You'd ask him anything. I just found the teachers here were, . . . knew a lot more about what they were teaching. (Daniel)

On the personal relationship between staff and students:

. . . I never stayed at recess either because they just had time for you in class, and I think too they had a more personal relationship with their students too because you have a smaller number of students in your class which helps too because they had more time. They had more time for you. (Pat)

. . . they didn't seem so far away. Like they weren't on a different level. Like they'd talk to you about things at school and then they'd say, "Oh, are you going to watch the baseball tonight?" or "Are you going down to the curling rink later?" We had the curling; the teachers were on the same curling team. I don't know if they do the same in Durban Ridge or Wheeler. (Another town outside the Division). I don't know. But they would get involved in that and so you saw the teachers on a social basis also. Like I know Mrs. Lawrence and Mrs. Olsen (the library paraprofessional) are good friends of my mom and dad. They're in the same group and they go places, and so I'd see them that way and seeing them uptown and that, . . . all of the teachers would say Hi and ask you things other than school. It's not like you just saw them at school and they were just your teachers, that was it. (Shauna)

This being a small school, the teachers know the kids and the kids know the teachers and they know what the kid's goals are, and I think they all desire to play a part in that. (Terry)

. . . that closeness is not also exclusive to the students. I think that part of the reason that it's special is that students feel that whether it's the weekend or part of the week they could still approach the same teachers that they do at school and laugh and joke with them, or ask some questions about school. Like it's not a relationship that ends as soon as the school day's over, and I think that that makes a big difference too. (Gloria)

Added to this climate of personal relationship is the idea of staff as encouraging, caring about each individual student and going out of their way to help:

I think that the biggest thing is that you can tell that the teachers actually care what you're doing. Like they take the time to give you the help if you need it. They'll stay after school, they'll help you during their class time or after class time during the breaks and stuff, just to make sure that if you're aware that you're having a problem and if you're willing to take the time to fix that problem or avoid further problems, then they're more than willing to help you do that. And I think that in that way, I got the impression that by them being willing to do that they were also willing to make sure that you did that much better. (Gloria)

I know I had a lot of trouble with math which is funny because I'm in accounting and when I got into Mr. Hawkin's class he really helped me with it. He would say, "Come after school if you want help." and "Come at recess." and "Come at lunch hour. I'll help you figure this out." And it wasn't ominous or I didn't feel like I would be . . .

Interviewer: It wasn't like a punitive thing.

Shauna: No. I wasn't nervous to go to him or worried about going to him and asking for help. He always made it seem like he had time to do this and he didn't mind the extra time, like he wanted to help you. And because of that I went and got help and I did a lot better in math after that. Like I had good marks. Up to grade nine I had poor marks, to be generous. And in grade ten, eleven, and twelve, I did relatively well in math. (Shauna)

(Mrs. Lawrence) knew that I could do well so she kept telling me that and she kept, . . . like if I would do something like, if I did a

paper and if I did it really well she knew that I worked very hard on it and she would write a little note on the bottom or keep me after class and tell me that I'd done all this well and if I didn't do this well she'd get me in for help and, like she must have just known that that's the kind of student I was and she really, if it wouldn't have been for her, I don't think I would have got anywhere actually in high school. (Lisa)

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS

Introduction

I just found that in this town for some reason the people have a different attitude towards school. (Daniel)

Without exception, all of the respondents in their interviews talked about the Norquay "attitude". This attitude which permeated all other phenomena under discussion emerged as a unifying theme underlying all other facets of discussion. Three focal points emerged in discussion of this attitude as if, like a tripod, the attitude rested on three points of expression.

The first focal point was referred to by respondents as the "big picture", meaning life after Norquay and the emphasis on further education as a vehicle for economic survival and self fulfillment.

Second among these focal points was competition. This was not identified so much as a competition with Durban Ridge, but rather a peculiar brand of friendly non-threatening but extremely pervasive competition between students within the Norquay student body itself and is manifest consistently from class to class and year to year.

The third element of "the attitude" is a sense of cohesion among the student body, springing from a homogeneity of values and expectations and working to support the competitiveness identified above.

It can be established that this attitude was part of a conscious effort of culture creation at the beginning of the school's history, however one would expect that any school would succumb to the influence of cultural forces outside itself over time and this attitude would be diluted or modified with the passage of the years. It is apparent however that this process has not taken place with John Norquay Collegiate; this in spite of the fact that its students share classes with Durban Ridge, a school with an attitude which is manifestly different. One would naturally expect that in a setting where students are in the same classes with the same teachers throughout their senior high school years there would occur a mixing of values and expectations between the groups. Surprisingly though, each student body has maintained the integrity of its own values system and each remains largely unaffected by the other. This separation appears to be able to persist by virtue of three homeostatic mechanisms which keep its values on course with its unspoken mission:

First among these mechanisms is a tightly coupled

parent-teacher-student network with a clear close and strong feedback loop. Tight coupling occurs not only between parents, teachers and students but also between students from higher grades to lower grades, thus perpetuating the values set.

A second homeostatic mechanism is the idea that there is minimal dilution from the outside by virtue of limited turnover of staff and students.

Third among these mechanisms is the idea that there is minimal divagation within the system itself. That is, there is a narrowness of focus on academics within the system and sharp limitations on co-curricular or extracurricular diversions or distractions.

The purpose of this analysis then, will be to explore each of these topics in turn.

"The Big Picture"

It had something to do with the attitude towards school. Here everybody was like, . . . the way we thought about the school. Like we'd think, you're not going to go anywhere if you don't go back to school and go to university. And if you go to university you'll get a good job, make some money. That's what kept me in school. Other places it was like, 'I hate school. I don't want to go back.' There weren't many people in our class that thought that way. (Daniel)

As mentioned earlier, each student identified this concept of the "big picture", the fact that going to

further education after Norquay was an unquestioned assumption.

Peers, parents and teachers were all seen to be sources of this assumption as in the following excerpt from Terry's interview:

Interviewer: Can you identify where that expectation came from?

Terry: Probably from many sources. Our parents would probably be number one. Our teachers would prepare us for university and they would . . . say, "Well if you're planning to do this, you'd better know this."

And I suppose peers too. You know, if you're going to university next year or going to college. If all your friends are going to Winnipeg next year except you there's not much incentive. Unless your parents are wanting you to stay home on the farm, I can't imagine people not wanting to go on to university.

There was a common expectation. Everybody believed that, so from seeing brothers and sisters going on and thinking, "Well, I'm going to do that too."

Lisa saw an element of peer pressure promoting this expectation, saying, "It has to sound good at graduation, what you're going to do."

Shauna saw parents as articulating the expectation:

My mom and dad both, . . . I don't know whether I would have decided to go to school on my own if they had never said 'boo' about it but from day one it was, "You're going to university." It wasn't like, "You have to go." It was more like, "Well when you graduate and you go to university what are you going to take?" . . . I could never see myself in grade twelve saying, "I'm not going to to to university." That would just be silly.

Other respondents saw the staff as responsible for inculcating this expectation. Gloria remembered the process beginning with her entry into senior high:

. . . the thing I noticed was that right from grade nine on you're prepared for starting into university and things are more intense and you're writing exams . . .

Sometimes this message was communicated to students indirectly by way of the level of difficulty of the content. Daniel remarked, "I knew people from Owl River School and they were having troubles with (first year) courses and I gave them my last year's notes to read over and to help them along." Terry made this kind of observation about the material in mathematics class:

I think (math 300) was difficult and (Mr. Hawkins) meant it to be that way. You're in 300 math, you're going to be taking, . . . I never took any math in university but, in 300 math you're usually going on to post secondary education so I think he was, without just outright telling us, he was preparing us for university and a university way of thinking. And the people that were maybe frustrated and couldn't understand why he was teaching us this stuff; I remember a lot of people complaining how he was teaching us university level math or something like that; they were wondering why they were getting that in grade twelve, but you look back on it now and say, "Why not?" Sure it's tough then, but how important is a good mark in 300 compared to a good mark in math in university, if you're going on to the larger picture?

While the expectation was often communicated by indirect means, teachers often drew a specific relationship between work in high school and academic work after school:

When I went to school here I found like in our English courses and our physics courses and chemistry as well, they treated it almost like you were in university.

Interviewer: How did they do that?

Daniel: I don't know. Mrs. Lawrence, she treated us like, "If you're taking this, you're going to university next year. You're going to have to do it this way next year so do it this way now. You're going to have to get use to it." It was the same way with Mr. Oppenheimer. That's how it was taught.

Interviewer: So they kept constantly making reference to next year?

Daniel: "Next year you're going to have to do it this way so do it that way now." In physics, Mr. Oppenheimer, he made us learn it ourselves. If we were having a problem and said, "Show us how." he wouldn't show us how right away. He'd sit down and say, "Well, figure it out yourselves. That's the way you'll have to do it in university because that's the way the professors are there."

Terry also noticed direct references to class work as preparation for university:

They wouldn't just say, "Here, I'm helping you for university." But if you ever made a complaint about how hard something was then they might, . . . I remember Mr. Hawkins would say something like, "You're not going to have me here or your parents here when you're in university." He always used to say that; that you're going to do it yourself because you'll be doing it yourself next year.

Clearly, the "big picture" seemed to loom large in the minds of all Norquay students, regardless of level:

. . . you kind of went into high school thinking, even if you were taking an 01 course; all my friends that were in 01 were still taking them to go to college or something like that; I know my close friends didn't have any plans to not go to school after this. (Terry)

Competition

I think it's been good for both Durban Ridge and Crocus Hill. Competition is a good thing for keeping everyone even. In terms of productivity, I don't think you can hold up a system for the sake of the weak. Morally you have to take care of people's self esteem and so on but where do you draw the line? Do you compromise the educational system to accomodate two or three or five percent on the bottom who will never achieve a diploma, or should you put a real high standard in so that the ones who do get their diploma feel that they've achieved? (Bob Borden)

All eight alumni respondents addressed the question on competition with Durban Ridge by steering the discussion to the competition which existed within Norquay itself and describing it as an individual student to student kind of competition. Lisa described the difference saying, "Crocus Hill was more of an individual goal and achievement. Durban Ridge was more of a school goal and achievement."

Shauna saw the competitiveness coming from a context of close and supportive relationships:

. . . when we all started in grade seven we did everything together. Like, if we had a get together, went to somebody's place for a movie, everyone was invited and so everyone got to be close that way, and so if someone did well in school it was, "Oh, that's great." And it was kind of a competitive thing but it was good. It wasn't like, "Well I beat her. Way to go!" It was, "Well, I did well but so did she."

Shauna's statement and the statements of others bring into relief a striking anomaly in the Norquay setting. In most instances it is normal to assume that competition and mutual support would be mutually exclusive. Popular stories abound of competitive settings which pit students against one another. We hear of Japanese schools with high rates of stress, emotional breakdown and suicide. We hear of competitive faculties in our universities where one Law student will find a case source required for an assignment and tear the pages out of the book to prevent other students from having the same advantage. Popular culture trains us to see the ideas of competition and collegiality as antithetical, yet at Norquay they are inextricably bound together, each supporting the other.

A first impulse is to see competitiveness as a threatening or demoralizing influence on the less academically oriented students, however the following observations by Gloria and Paul demonstrate that in the

Norquay context this was not the effect:

One of my girlfriends had a lot of trouble with a couple of her courses and you could tell that it meant a lot to her to get as close to the top as she could even if that was the best that she could do. I think that everybody was, for whatever reason, pushed to do the best that they could. Whether that was just an inner thing that was, "I don't want to be down at the bottom when everyone else is excelling and at the top." or whether it's a combination of that and teachers saying, "Well you'll have to do better." or "This is what we can do to make things better." or whether it's from the parents or what. Personally I think it's a combination of things, of all three of those things. (Gloria)

A very friendly competitiveness; we had fairly small class. There were about sixteen or seventeen of us and we were all good friends but we liked to perform well I think. I wasn't the highest performer but I liked to do well and know what I'm talking about. (Paul)

How does Norquay achieve competition without leaving some students out? How does it extend the franchise to be all inclusive in the way it does? Pat's description of a case illustrates that the more skilled students often pick up the less skilled and pull them into the game:

I know when I was helping some kids with their math in grade twelve and some of them, they even competed with themselves to try to get their score higher sometimes. There were lots of them failed their tests, but then, . . . I helped them during class and then one of them got ninety one on a test and he, . . . he actually beat me. So he was sort of

competing with me.

For some reason, this competition didn't seem to impinge negatively on the self concepts of students. There seemed to exist a very egalitarian and positive spirit around the issue as described by Terry:

I suppose there's been the odd exception over the years but everybody is there to do well, and if the person sitting next to you is doing great and you did poorly it was very rarely that you said, "I'm stupid. I'm not very good at this." Everybody would always say, "Well I'm going to beat you next time!"

In summary, this competition seemed to be a focal point around which all students could relate. It seemed to achieve the status of the school sport that all could play all the time:

That was our day to day competition. Moving from one class to another you could have a little competition in your life that you didn't get as much outside. It was always there to have fun if you wanted it that way.
(Terry)

Cohesion

It's not like a classroom of a hundred and you have five friends in that hundred. You have twenty friends and that's the entire classroom. (Shauna)

Superintendent John Macdonald describing the first days of Norquay spoke of the challenge of taking

students from four villages spread over two hundred square miles and blending them into a cohesive unit. Lisa's comments indicate that this process was still consciously being carried out by staff in the eighties as new classes of students came into the school:

At first you'd stick to your own groups but then the classes were put into working groups and the teachers really tried to get the different towns mixed together. I could sense that. I remember Mrs. Crocker's class. She'd always put Crocus Hill and Bracken and Wier all together. Like, she'd always try to mix. So we got to know them and it wasn't a very big class, and there wasn't a lot of kids coming from those towns so they just kind of mingled and after probably I'd say, by Christmas there weren't any separations. It was just like we'd gone to school together always. We all got along really well.

Size seems to be a significant factor in creating a sense of group cohesion as articulated by Gloria:

When you only have sixteen kids in your graduating class and you take all of your courses with those same sixteen people, then you know, you end up doing a lot with everyone, and everyone's included in everything, whereas if you have sixty kids taking the same classes but it has to be split because there's too many students for one teacher or whatever, then I think it divides up and I think that as you divide them in the classes you also divide them as far as where their loyalties are and where their friends are.

Among the most important results of this intimate group atmosphere is a sense of homogeneity among

students; a sense that there are no distinctive sub groups or sub cultures but rather, that all students share in a unifying identity:

It seemed like Crocus Hill was the kind of a school where you didn't have complete rebels and you didn't have complete straight people either, or maybe you did have rebels and straight people but they got along really well. Like, I wasn't one to go partying myself but I could get along with anyone in my class or the class below me. It really didn't matter, and vice versa, so there was a really good happy medium there. Nobody was, . . . there were no extremes really. It was kind of good that way. Everybody got along.
(Paul)

Concomitant with this sense of homogeneity are two things which are critical to positive adjustment to school. One of these is a feeling of acceptance:

In Winnipeg you are either a geek or a jock or a headbanger and there's all those classes, and out here everybody is just, . . . well you can be who you want and everyone will still hang around with you. (Terry)

The second important product of this homogeneity and cohesiveness is support from the other members of the group:

Everybody sort of supports everyone else. Like, if someone was having trouble and saying, "Oh I'm ready to quit. I want to quit." all the other students would be behind that person and saying, "No, you can't quit. You've got to keep trying." and "Get some help." or "Here's some help.", and you know,

everybody sort of stands behind everybody else and I think that's why you run into the fact that there's not so many dropouts or people leaving school. I think that it makes a big difference as far as, . . . the class thinking the same way. . . . it's acceptable to excel. It's acceptable to go on. It's acceptable to do your best and if your best is only 50% then you're still doing your best, but if you just say, "I quit. That's it." That's not acceptable. (Gloria)

Identity, acceptance, and support; these characteristics appear to provide Norquay students with an effective buffer against the alienation and ennui which, in many schools can lead to feelings of disenfranchisement and discouragement, and result ultimately in disengagement from the institution by dropping out.

Institutional Homeostasis

We've always been friends in both towns but, I could get in trouble for saying this but, everybody here knew that, I guess it would be general knowledge but, students in Durban Ridge aren't as, how do I say it, academically oriented. And maybe that's to do with the teachers. Maybe that's the way it always has been. I just think that we've always known that, because of the integrated classes, that we would always do much better. I mean there was the odd exception but, just that attitude, and they would always think that we were, I mean it would be a friendly joke, but they'd always think that we were geeks and we'd always think that they were jocks. (Terry)

Terry's comment on geeks and jocks encapsulates the general perception of students, staff and community members on the differences between Norquay and Durban Ridge. Before addressing the issue of Norquay's current identity and its response to the cultural influence of Durban Ridge it will be helpful to outline the process of culture creation undertaken in the first years of the school's existence by its first principal, Lawrence Roblin. John Macdonald describes the process:

The culture was being worked on and there was a definite direction. Academic excellence was the goal.

Interviewer: What was the source? Roblin?

Mr. Macdonald: I think that he was a large part of it. He was going to build a good school and he was going to build a good school based on student learning, and I think one of the reasons for that was that all the communities were putting student into the school like Lyon, Wier, Bracken and Crocus

Hill so there were really four communities that were contributing students to the school and so there had to be some theme to find a common base for some unity; and I think one theme that everyone would agree on was good education. So I think it grew out of a need to unite communities who had really lost their little high schools, and I think Lawrence saw that very soon and in part that was just the way he was.

Roblin created the Norquay culture on both an individual and group level. Bob Borden recalled his experiences with Roblin while a student at Norquay:

I think we had a fair amount of freedom but at the same time there was an understanding that you knew what the rules were. Lawrence and I got along really well. I liked to have a lot of fun and I got into as many crazy things as anyone but I never came out of the principal's office with the feeling I'd been mistreated or anything like that. He had a way of pointing out how you'd gone wrong. I have a lot of respect for him.

John Macdonald mentioned some of the things that Roblin did to establish the tone and image of the Collegiate on a group or community level:

There were things about that culture, . . . he would get up in front of parent meetings, you know, meetings in the community, and he would speak on that theme 'education is very important. We want our young people to do well. We want our young people to excel.' In those days not all teachers had degrees. I remember when I went back to university and came back I finished two degrees the year I was away and they were put in the paper, you know, "Mr. Macdonald has come back. He now has a B.A. and a B.Ed."

He'd stress the academic levels of the staff and he was doing quite well in terms of getting quite highly educated people for the times; and if they weren't well educated at the start, they were moving in that direction for sure.

For many institutions, culture or identity seems to be a fluid phenomenon which changes with the passage of time in response to internal and external forces. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about John Norquay Collegiate is that this culture, created in the nascent stages of the school's existence persists largely unchanged thirty years later. This can be seen as quite an extraordinary accomplishment particularly in view of the fact that for the last twenty of those years Norquay's students have shared classrooms, courses and teachers with a school down the road. Yet in spite of this integration of publics the Norquay identity has remained resolutely stable.

Three factors emerged in the interviews for this study which help to explain this stability; homeostatic mechanisms as it were which, like the forces within an ecosystem or a living body, effect the checks and balances which keep the each part of the system working towards the survival and thriving of the system as a whole. These mechanisms are: a tightly coupled parent/teacher/student network, insularity from the

outside, and concentration of focus inside the institution.

Coupling

I'm thinking of when I started going to business dinners and whatnot, and you have the whole array of utensils. You sit back and watch how people use them and what people do. So you come into this situation, you sit back and take note of what goes on here and then you do it, and you fit in. And then it keeps going. The people that are close to you, the grade six people that come in are closer to your age so that they learn from you, and you learn from the grade that were grade sevens when you came in. (Shauna)

A diagram of the communication links between the constituents of the John Norquay Collegiate community would likely not look like a neat blueprint of lines going from one location to the other. It would more likely resemble a bird's nest with a system of intertwining so extensive and complicated as to render a diagram virtually unintelligible.

As Shauna describes above, virtually all students entering Norquay have undergone an informal but quite effective process of acculturation in advance. They have been exposed to the Norquay mythology by elder sisters and brothers. Paul talked about observing his brother and sister and their friends:

They have all this homework and it just seems like, 'Oh man! It's going to be my turn soon. I don't know if I want to go through that.' It's just intimidating.

The process seems a lot like a process of initiation where the object is to raise the anxiety level of the new recruits:

I knew people that were in high school and I think it was more just a joke than really serious. Like they'd say, "Oh, you'll really have lots of work and they'll give you all this work; four hours of homework every night." And they knew that it wasn't really true but they'd just tell you that.

Interviewer: Do you think that most people that went into that school were getting the same kind of message?

Lisa: Oh yea, cause I can remember we'd sit at recess in grade six and talk about at the end of the year what we'd have to go through so we were all scared. I remember Mary and I just shook all the way to school.

Bob Borden observed that the communication links between students from grade to grade are established early on in their school careers, largely the result of living in a small community setting:

Another positive thing is, we have a school of twenty five or so kids at Wier and (my daughter) was in there in about grade three or four and her friends ranged from twelve to six years old. The whole school played together and I think that is a personality building opportunity you don't get many places.

Clearly, the communication between older and younger students is well established.

Students of Norquay also have closely coupled links with parents and the community at large. Paul commented, "When we had hot lunches and things like that, mothers, and whatever, families would really come in and help and take their time and take part in the school activities as far as that goes." Gloria spoke of the connection and support from the business community in town:

Just, even the business community showed that kind of committment to the students by, when we had lunches here or when we had functions uptown, letting us use their facilities or getting our supplies for our hot lunches and things like that and not always at a benefit to them. Sometimes they would just do it at cost and not only that, when we had curling bonspiels and things like that; when we had people coming down to see how things were going. Just little things often can show that kind of support.

Terry described this student-community contact in both general and specific terms:

Everybody gets a big kick out of going to the graduation ceremonies and seeing what students are doing next year and they'll always stop you on the street and ask how school is going.

Interviewer: They do?

Terry: Yea, everybody does that. Even people that aren't even your family or close friends. I just went into the drug store the other day and the first question that the

clerk asked me was how was my intersession going, and had I caught up my courses this winter since my operation. Everybody in the whole town is really keen on making, . . . giving the best to their kids.

Daniel's comments suggest that there may be times when some students might wish the networks were not so efficient:

Mom would come home and say, "I was talking to your teacher at the grocery store and she told me this."

Interviewer: So you couldn't get away from it?

Daniel: No, it's such a small town. You see everybody all the time. Your teachers are always talking to your parents about how you're doing and then your parents come home and talk to you about it.

Student-teacher coupling is close while the students are in school partly due to the multiple overlapping of roles that naturally occurs in a small community. Shauna saw this as having a positive effect:

(The teachers) didn't seem so far away. Like they weren't on a different level. They'd talk to you about things at school and then they'd say, "Oh, are you going to watch the baseball tonight?" or "Are you going down to the curling rink later?" We had curling. The teachers were on the same curling team. . . . so you saw the teachers on a social basis also.

This contact continued after students graduated from Norquay. Shauna said, "I still come home on

weekends and go and see them, or if I see them uptown I'll stop and have a conversation about how things are going both ways."

This brings important feedback to teachers as well. Gloria described how she had difficulty in adapting to multiple-choice questions in her hospital nursing program. In Norquay Steve Hawkins had given students the option of doing multiple choice or long answer questions and Gloria had always opted for the long answer type as she found them easier to handle. Having experienced the tribulations of having to adapt to them after high school she came back and talked with Hawkins:

I came back and told Mr. Hawkins, "You should have made me write those multiple choice questions." And he said, "Well that wasn't my choice." (laughs) But he said it was good to know, and I think that's another thing; they're more than willing to know if you have something that will improve students for the next year. They're more than willing to listen to that. Whether they do it or not will depend on its merit and whatnot but he really appreciated the fact that I came back and said, "This is important to what we're doing after school."

This kind of feedback occurs constantly between graduates attending post secondary institutions and the staff at Norquay, and changes in content and method have resulted from this feedback.

Feedback comes to school personnel from parents as

well via the multiple overlapping of roles in which parents and school personnel meet. Bob Borden remarked on how John Macdonald's background in the community gives him an advantage in sensing community sentiment:

Well one of the advantages here is having a superintendent who's been here all his life basically. Most of the parents he would be talking to he has taught himself at one time, so they know who he is and they support him. So he's doing school business eighteen hours a day because it doesn't matter where he goes, people know him, and the first thing they bring up is school since that's a good way to start a conversation. I think that's a real positive thing. There are lots of times when good communication could take place, but if you don't know the superintendent, if he's a total stranger, then nothing's going to happen.

Macdonald himself articulated how informal feedback from the community acts as a constant course correction for school personnel, sometimes on a conscious and sometimes on an unconscious level:

When I was, and even now, when I want to find out something about the community I move within the community. I go and have breakfast in the coffee shop. I go in the garage and I hang around and talk with people and if I want to find out something about the community I move in the community. And I think that to a degree you have to be indigenous to get a valid response and some debate, and even now, if there is something controversial going on in Crocus Hill I will spend more time there in the coffee shop around three o'clock in the afternoon and I'll get all the feedback I want. That's what I've always done, and now that I look back on it that's how Lawrence and some of the others were indigenous to . . .

that's why it's difficult to describe because a lot of the things we did, we did because they were sort of everyday . . . that's the way you did things. You sort of moved through the school and through the community and what you felt, you integrated with what you did and you never had a list of questions about why are we going this route, why are we going that route?

Macdonald spoke of the informal indoctrination process which would be experienced by Alex Mackenzie in his first years in the principalship: discussions at the hockey rink, while buying groceries, and so on. Indeed, he mentioned the fact that Mackenzie had bought a snowblower at the local hardware store and described it as "a very astute move."

Mackenzie himself described the indoctrination or acculturation process from his point of view:

Some of the parents . . . they would make sort of remarks like, "Well, I hear you're doing a good job of shaping up things in the hallways." A Board member said, "I like what you're doing." I said, "Do you have any comments about this school or anything else?" and he kind of rocked back in his chair and smiled and said, "I like what you're doing in the hallways." He says, "I think it's about time." I'd get comments like this. That's the way I was getting messages; sitting at a hockey game or having a coffee with the neighbours.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of this phenomenon of close coupling acting as a constant course correction mechanism is the revelation in the interview

with John Macdonald, that this process has a direct effect on personnel decisions for the school and was a primary influence in the selection of Mackenzie as a principal who would maintain the core values of the school at the same time as bringing modification in specific areas. While this excerpt is lengthy, it has been included in its entirety since it provides such a revealing portrait of how this process ensures the perpetuation of the school's culture:

I thought we chose Alex quite carefully in that I thought he embodied a lot of the characteristics that were already there, perhaps he embodied some of the changes that were already occurring. I talked about some of the changes with Marg and Jim. Alex had studied cooperative learning. Alex had studied administration in recent times and yet he's been in the business twenty five years. He's not about to throw out all the old things to accomodate all the new unless he sees some value to it. I thought he had a unique blend of characteristics that would suit the school. Sure, people would say, "Well this is the way we've been doing it for years." and a lot of the time he would say, " I don't know if that's a good thing to do." Some of the changes he made in just monitoring lunchrooms; a lot of the staff said, "Gee, this is simple. This works. Why didn't we think of this years ago." It was just an idea that somebody would have from having been somewhere else. So I think there would have been an attempt to indoctrinate him, but I think the indoctrination may be going both ways. At least that's what I hoped. See, from my point of view as an administrator, that's a way of maintaining the culture and yet putting pressure on it to move forward without losing touch with the base that had been established. You see, Alex isn't radical. You don't grab the tree and shake

all the apples out of it. You pick them. So, that's how I viewed that process.

You see, some of these things happen so indigenously that you hardly notice them, and maybe when I'm making decisions about Norquay, about the principal and so on, I'm doing it almost intuitively. Like, all those things weren't outlined on a piece of paper.

Interviewer: So we have a mechanism for ensuring continuity in a very subtle, not outwardly purposive way?

Macdonald: Yes. What would have happened if there were a superintendent who hadn't worked in Norquay, making decisions about who the principal would be. Would the principal be different? You see, the staff would likely not see me as relating quite as closely to their culture as I did back in the sixties. In fact, I think they likely feel that I'm a long way from their culture. Yet, intuitively, I may not be as far away from it as they think.

To summarize on the topic of coupling, it is evident that the close networks among students and throughout the community at large ensure that all students are thoroughly conversant with the school's identity and expectations before they begin school there, during their tenure at Norquay, and later in their role as citizens and parents themselves. Further, it is clear that this tight coupling of constituent groups allows for constant ongoing feedback to school personnel on issues across the whole range from the small decisions on books, scheduling and test items to the major decisions such as the selection of administrators and staff; and ensures that the decisions made are consistent with the values of the community

and the culture of the Collegiate.

Community Insularity

The one thing that strikes me about Norquay is that you just don't have the ethnic diversity that we had up in (my former school) for instance. We had people from literally all over the world. I'm talking about kids from Guatemala, Spain, Italy, England, Scotland; such a diversity. . . . in eastern Manitoba we had the Anglos, the Ukrainians, German population, English population, so it was really quite diverse. (Alex Mackenzie)

Another of the homeostatic mechanisms that appears to operate in the Norquay setting is the ability to limit external influences on the culture. This is achieved by a low turnover of staff, low rate of in migration of students, and community limitations on lifestyle influences such as the arcade.

The topic of staff stability has been documented earlier in the study. Among the effects of this low rate of staff turnover is the absence of, or at least limitation on, modification of staff culture which would likely be the result of a large or ongoing influx of teachers with varying educational philosophies and approaches. The currents of staff change are not sufficient to sway the course significantly.

As well as limited migration of staff, there is

a very limited migration of students in or out of the Norquay student body as well. A review of the class rosters from grades eight to twelve for the 1991-92 school year shows that of about one hundred students only four have not been in the school since their grade seven year, and these four represent three families who have moved into the area over the past five years. Whereas in many other schools the flux of incoming and outgoing students would lend some fluidity to the school culture, at Norquay, this effect tends to be minimized.

Finally, there is the issue of external social influences on the student body as this interchange with Stan illustrates:

As far as staying out of trouble, every day I'd be gone from home from, I think I'd get on the bus at about 7:30 or quarter to eight and I'd drive to school and be there all day; like you can't go anywhere from the school. You're stranded there. And then I'd get home at 4:30, quarter to five. So that's a long . . . you haven't got a lot of time to be going anywhere else.

Interviewer: You can't run down to the arcade.

Stan: No, that's right. You just can't do it. Haven't got time. And really I guess in Crocus Hill, I can't think of anywhere that they would go in town. Like I don't remember people ever wandering off from school much to go downtown.

In a larger centre students could congregate after hours at the convenience store or the arcade and find

social interaction with a variety of other people, some from other schools and some who are no longer in school at all; this by way of contrast with Crocus Hill where, as Daniel observed:

When I lived in a larger town I never even bothered with school once it was done. Here, I'd come home and sit and there was nowhere to go anyway so you'd might as well do your schoolwork.

This is not to paint a picture of Crocus Hill as a Pangnirtung of the prairies, and many students related how busy they were kept in their after school hours with athletics, hockey, 4-H, and similar types of recreation. The activities however, are not of the type that would tend to detract from the values of school and community or expose students to alternate values systems. Indeed, they are the type of activities, as Shauna noted, that would tend to reinforce those values:

Maybe there's just not as much to do.
(laughs) You know, there's no movie theatre.
You make your own entertainment and you do it with your family.

The combined effect of these factors is to create a kind of invisible boundary layer around the school community that prevents, or at least limits cultural influences from external sources.

Concentration of Focus

When I went there there really weren't a lot of extracurricular activities. (Stan)

The school also acts to limit cultural divagation from within. It accomplishes this by placing tight restrictions on any things which may detract, distract, or divert the school from its primary goal. Respondents identified this kind of narrowness of focus largely in terms of extracurricular activities. Daniel said, "There's nowhere to hang out. With the smaller school there's no after school activities." Stan echoed these sentiments saying:

When I went there there really weren't a lot of of extracurricular activities like, you know, sports was really fading; like no basketball to speak of really. There was volleyball there but not highly organized. It didn't seem to be, . . . the student population wasn't big enough. You couldn't have a football team or play hockey so I don't know if that would leave you more time to do schoolwork or what it would do.

John Macdonald indicated that this concentration of focus on academics has been a constant since the school's beginning and has by and large found approval within the community:

They tend to stay with their mandate which is on the academic side and if there are criticisms of Norway it is that we are

neglecting drama, music, and to some degree sports to accomodate academic goals. for years the community has supported that and as we've talked about still seems to support it, despite the fact that there's the odd growling and grumbling in certain quarters. I don't think that even if we look at our other Collegiate, I don't think that Boyd could get away with that kind of an emphasis without sideline supports from the operetta, from the sports, from the little music program that they have. There's a little band (at Boyd). The parents support the band. There's no band in Crocus Hill. They had a choir. I think that a lot of people felt that their kids were missing too much class time to participate in the choir, so cancel choir. I think that's different than some schools. Some schools would have said, "Well, so they miss a class, so what?"

The following interchange with Chairman, Bob Borden is extremely enlightening in terms of elucidating how this concentration of focus can be applied even to subject areas within the high school curriculum:

If John Norquay were a big school it would have had the shops and the industrial arts courses and all those other things and I really think that the closer you can keep to , . . . we were forced to take a limited number of options and they were all geared to university entrance and so everybody's goal was to hit university. And as soon as you put in a bunch of industrial arts courses, and some of them are OK, but as soon as you do, people start to lose sight of their main objective and they take these other courses and pretty soon the goal has changed. I bet it would scare the Department of Education to see the number of kids who had the potential but were a little lazy at about grade ten or had some difficulty, or for whatever reason, had an opportunity to lower their sights and changed to an easier route.

I really hesitate about setting up woodworking shops and the like. I think for a lot of kids that would deviate so far from the goal that they'd never have a hope of coming back to it. I think that they can take courses in sciences and maths through the 01 section. I think we're taking them on a path of no return with all of that stuff.

You've got to have a goal and I think that goal has to be set before kindergarten, by the parents and the community. If you allow anywhere in that system for those goals to be eroded to a point of no return then you're not going to have graduates and you're not going to have university students.

I'm not so sure that we shouldn't go back to a straight university entrance and allow a few dropouts. Maybe it shouldn't be a disgrace to have a few dropouts or a few kids failing grade eleven but if you're going to have that, you'd have to have everyone from kindergarten to university level on side and working in collaboration so that kids who couldn't make it could get into college in programs like electrical and so on.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

It's like a square. You need all four sides and if you take one away it's not a square anymore. It's a triangle. (Gloria)

The portrait of John Norquay Collegiate creates a feeling of resonance with many of the findings in the literature on school performance. Coleman's conclusion that the home is the greatest influence on educational achievement seem to be borne out in this case. Also, his observations that the social environment of the peer group has far more to do with student achievement than school facilities fits well with the Norquay setting. Coleman's observation that this social environment of the peer group, clearly a major influence in Norquay, is of slightly more importance to achievement than attributes of staff seems questionable in the Norquay context in that staff are identified by respondents as a significant influence. Moreover, it could be suggested that staff themselves have historically had significant roles in shaping the very peer group culture which Coleman suggests is of major importance. Overall though, the significance of home, cultural influences surrounding the home, and the peer group culture of the school itself are critical to the performance of Norquay

Collegiate as they were in Coleman's study.

As described in the Coleman and Hoffer work on public and private high schools, Norquay seems more to reflect the findings in the Catholic system wherein the parents of students constitute a cohesive community of parents outside of the school setting. This idea of a values set shared commonly by adults in the community at large fits the description of Norquay provided by its administrators and graduates.

Brookover's clusters of effective schools characteristics also show a surprising match with the Norquay situation. First, there is the concept of the ideology of the school, shared by students and staff alike as regards norms and expectations of the school. Secondly, there exists, as Brookover suggested there must, a non stratified organization of students in which the expectations were consistent for all, regardless of ability. Finally, there are the instructional practices within individual classrooms: the sequential approach to learning; high percentages of time on task; frequent assessment, and; more recently, team or co-operative learning.

Rutter's synergistic concept that the cumulative effect of positive variables creates a product greater than the sum of the individual variables is highly

informative in the Norquay case. His suggestion that individual measures combine together to create an ethos which defines the school as a whole finds strong validation at Norquay.

Brandwein's ecological framework is also extremely useful in conceptualizing some of the processes of the feedback loops in the Crocus Hill area. Further, the idea of the closed system in which, as each factor moves towards an optimum level of performance, the system as a whole moves towards an optimum level of performance, offers a useful way of perceiving the events and processes in the life of this Collegiate. One can see that, as one factor moves out of balance, the rest of the system mobilizes to correct the problem and restore balance to the environment.

Each of these theoretical frameworks therefore, has something to offer in explaining the phenomena around this school, as does each of the leads pursued in the interviews.

Community size seems to create a sense of accountability, support, and competition within the school. Closer teacher-student ties and student-student ties, have fostered the pursuit of academic achievement. Given this however, we must ask, "Is this the factor which is responsible?" In order to answer this question

in the affirmative we would be asserting that all or most schools in small communities perform better than all or most schools in large communities. Since this is manifestly not the case, we cannot accept small community size as the factor determining achievement.

In the same way, respondents attributed positive school outcomes to the fact that the school was in a rural environment. Rural or farm work ethic, strong peer support and close parental supportive relationships were all seen as springing from a rural context in the eyes of respondents. Again however, as with the last factor, to accept this as the major causal agent for high performance would be to accept the proposition that most or all rural schools perform better than most or all urban schools; an unacceptable proposition.

Religious demographics seemed to respondents to be an insignificant factor compared with others although, as demonstrated in the Coleman and Hoffer work on Catholic schools versus private public schools, the large representation of families from one religious group would necessarily create a climate of shared values and expectations which would have some effect on the school. As with other factors though, we can look at other locations with large Mennonite populations in their schools and not see the kind of results shown by

students at Norquay. Therefore, this factor by itself cannot be established as sufficient to account for Norquay's performance.

Competition with Durban Ridge was not seen by respondents as a significant factor in explaining Norquay's performance. Responses on this issue however, did lead to remarkable insights in terms of the integrity of cultural identity between the two groups of students and this will be of significance in drawing some conclusions later in this paper.

The question of administration provided very similar results to the question on competition with Durban Ridge. The role of individual administrators was seen as more a maintaining role than a leading and developing role. There was a clear consensus that a new administrator would change to adapt to the school rather than effecting changes in the school itself. Incidental conversations on this issue however yielded fascinating insights on how administrators seem to have been chosen according to their philosophical congruity with the established culture of the school. Personnel selection becomes a homeostatic process of maintaining equilibrium while improving the overall efficiency of the complete system. Since this process could not exist without the prior existence of school culture and environment, this

factor can be considered as having a maintenance function only and not a causal relationship to school performance. One important exception to this rule must be identified though, and that is the role of the school's first principal, Lawrence Roblin, to whom much credit can be given for establishing the cultural foundation of the Collegiate.

Descriptions of parent influences have a resonant ring with Coleman's claims of the importance of home settings in school performance. To speak of parents as the primary causal factor however, begs the question, "Do parents exert this influence because they sense the cultural context around them, or do they all simply hold such strikingly similar values and expectations merely as a result of a serendipitous coincidence?" While the existence of happy coincidences cannot be ruled out, it seems much more likely that parents do what they do with their children at least in part because they see that other parents around them have been doing those kinds of things in the past and are continuing to do them in the present.

Respondents' opinions on staff gave a good deal of credit to teachers for student performance. Staff were seen as all sharing a uniform educational philosophy and a uniform set of expectations about students. They seem

to exhibit consistencies in terms of a conservative approach to methodological change, an insistence on a sequential pattern of learning, and a style which challenges students to develop solutions independently. They are seen as demonstrating above average intelligence, exceptional content knowledge, and a caring and supportive relationship with individual students. Staff are seen as being responsible in large part for the achievement of their students. However, they have the advantage of working with students coming from the kind of home environment and community environment which has been described in detail earlier in this study. Were they to deal with students in an inner city environment where the student backgrounds and expectations are significantly different they would likely still get good results. They would not likely get the results they get at Norquay though; and this means that while staff is a necessary factor it, like the others is not sufficient in and of itself.

What then is an explanation that can deal with the complexities of this portrait? Like the analysis of Rutter and Brandwein, an explanation of this phenomenon would have to embrace both a multiplicity of causal factors, and the idea of an environment in which these factors interact with each other.

The Ecology of Achievement

It's like they say in (the livestock) business, "Ninety percent of what an animal looks like is management and the other ten percent is genes." I don't think that there is any genetic difference between this area and other areas of the Province. I think that somewhere down the line people put an emphasis on education and knowledge.
(Bob Borden)

In the early sixties Lawrence Roblin became the Principal of the new school in Crocus Hill. Part of the government's plans to amalgamate school districts, John Norquay Collegiate would draw students from Crocus Hill and a number of outlying communities as well. Himself a graduate of a Catholic boys school, Roblin had some ideas about how he would like to run the school. At the same time however, he looked around to the communities that would be sending students and sought out a common unifying theme that would get all the communities pulling together in support of the new school. The theme would be academic excellence. In school assemblies, parent-teacher meetings, and at the local grocery store he promoted the theme. He chose staff to fit with the theme. His genius was not in inventing a theme that would sell, but rather in discerning the lay of the land, finding the seed that would flourish, and nurturing it to the point where it could become self

sustaining.

All those things which would support the theme were encouraged. Students were constantly reminded of the "big picture", that there was life after high school and education was the key to it's fulfillment. The school was the first in the Division to establish a guidance program to raise awareness among students about post secondary options.

Communities each sent their own children to the new school with a spirit of healthy competition. This spirit of competition was nurtured through official functions such as awards nights and on a day to day basis in individual classrooms.

Communities each sent their own children to the new school with a spirit of co-operation. This spirit was nurtured through the mixing of different communities in classroom groups and school athletic teams.

Eventually, the interaction of these processes created what has come to be referred to as "the attitude," that is, the culture of the Collegiate which prizes academic achievement, competition, and cohesion among students.

"The attitude" has persisted not only through changes of administration and changes in society, but more remarkably, through twenty years of a shared campus

system with a different school. It has maintained its integrity as a 'school within a school' as a result of a variety of homeostatic factors. Its feedback loops between students, teachers, administrators and parents have been close and effective. Students from higher grades train incoming students before they even arrive at the school as do their parents. Parents feed input into the school whenever they sense a deviation from the agreed upon course of the Collegiate. The senior administration of the Division helps to maintain the agreed upon course of the Collegiate by selecting personnel whose values are consistent with the expectations of the Collegiate and the community.

Dilution of the school values by external sources is minimized by economic variables in the community which limit migration in and out. Stability of staff serves to minimize external upheavals in methodology, and the nature of the community itself limits the extent to which children are given the opportunity to find unproductive distractions from their appointed roles as Norquay students.

Dilution of school culture from within is limited through a concentration of focus and a rigorous limitation on diversionary influences in the curriculum, such as drama, sports, and so on.

To use Brandwein's analogy, if any part of the forest system is compromised, the system itself is compromised. If there were compromises in factors such as staff, parents, or community at large, over time the productivity of the system would be compromised. Norquay's singular good fortune however consists in the fact that all of the factors have seemed to coalesce harmoniously, with the somewhat serendipitous outcome that the resulting whole is, as in Rutter's examples, greater than the sum of the parts.

To attribute Norquay's success to any one factor would be impossible. To attribute its success even to the additive effect of a number of factors would be to compromise the truth. It is as Gloria articulated, "It's like a square. You need all four sides and if you take one away it's not a square anymore. It's a triangle." It is a combination both of individual factors themselves and the relationships they have with each other which creates the overall effect.

CHAPTER 7

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY FOR SCHOOLS

At first glance this study may appear to offer little in the way of ideas for schools that wish to improve their performance. So much of what happens at Norquay is dependent on a combination of variables which could not be replicated elsewhere. There are however, some issues of application which can be gleaned from the Norquay example.

First, there is the idea that an administrator new to a school can gain a significant advantage in the new role by doing a careful force field analysis; looking and listening scrupulously to the sights and sounds of the community outside the school to find the possible commonalities of sentiment that could be exploited in order to galvanize the school community to work towards a shared goal.

The Summary Final Report on School Leavers prepared by Price Waterhouse for the Canadian government in 1990 provides a useful illustration of facets of the Norquay situation which may be helpful to try to duplicate elsewhere. This report identifies common threads among those who have dropped out of high school as well as those who have continued on to graduate. Three common

threads influencing a student's decision to remain in school were: having close friends at school, parents interested in and checking on their school programs and personal role models. (p. 9)

While these factors occur naturally at Norquay, they offer examples which other schools may try to duplicate in whatever manner they can.

The influence of parents at Norquay is clear, and while it would not be possible to ensure that they have a common values set, it would be within the power of a school to develop practices which would enhance communication with parents. Tightening up the coupling with parents could have significant outcomes in terms of dropout prevention.

Norquay achieves close student-student relationships as a result of a small community network with students attending the same schools all their lives. In most urban centres today this is clearly far from the case and could not be artificially duplicated. Schools can however, support the recent movements towards peer helping or peer counselling which seek to foster the development of supportive relationships between students and reduce the sense of alienation often cited as a reason for dropping out.

Norquay students have personal role models among

their parents, teachers, older siblings and their friends. Schools may do well to consider a permutation of the peer helping model where each incoming student is given a 'big brother' or 'big sister' from a senior class to act as a guide and role model.

Finally, much has been written in the business and educational literature on the topic of corporate or institutional culture (Peters & Waterman, 1982 et.al.). The Norquay case provides a good example of how an institutional culture can affect the expectations and performance of students, and it provides an argument for some serious work on the part of administrators in the area of culture creation.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 C. Jean Britton. (Planning & Research Branch, Manitoba Education and Training). Interview. August 28, 1990.
- 2 Challenges and Changes. (1988). Manitoba Education. p. 44.
- 3 School counsellors from the neighbouring high schools were questioned on September 7, 1990. Information on 'Alfred Boyd' Collegiate was taken directly from school records.
- 4 June 1986 Graduate Follow-Up Provincial Results. (1988). Manitoba Education.
- 5 C. Jean Britton. (Planning and Research Branch, Manitoba Education and Training). Interview. August 28, 1990.
- 6 Same sources as footnote #3.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Boyer, Ernest L. (1983). High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America. New York: Harper & Row.
- Brandwein, Paul F. (1981). Memorandum: On Renewing Schooling and Education. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovich.
- Brookover, Wilbur, Beamer, Laurence, Efthim, Helen, Hathaway, Douglas, Lezotte, Lawrence, Miller, Stephen, Passalacqua, Joseph, Tronatzky, Louis. (1982). Creating Effective Schools: An In-Service Program for Enhancing School Learning Climate and Achievement. Holmes Beach: Learning Publications Inc.
- Brookover, Wilbur, Beady, Charles, Flood, Patricia, Schweitzer, John, & Wisenbaker, Joe. (1979). School Social Systems and Student Achievement: Schools Can Make A Difference. New York: Praeger Publishers.
- Brookover, Wilbur B. & Erickson, Edsel L. (1969) Society, Schools and Learning. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Coleman, James S., "Equal Schools or Equal Students?" The Public Interest, No., 4, Summer 1966, pp. 73-74.
- Coleman, James S., Campbell, Ernest Q., Hobson, Carol J., McPartland, James, Mood, Alexander M., Weinfeld, Frederic D., & York, Robert L. (1966). Equality of Educational Opportunity. Washington: Office of Education, U.S. Dept of Health, Education and Welfare.

- Coleman, James S., and Hoffer, Thomas. (1987). Public and Private High Schools: The Impact of Communities. New York: Basic Books.
- Easton, David. (1965). A Systems Analysis Of Political Life. New York: Wiley.
- Government of Canada, Minister of State for Youth. (1991) Qualitative Research on School Leavers: Summary Final Report. Ottawa: Minister of Supply & Services.
- Lightfoot, Sarah Lawrence. (1983). The Good High School. New York: Basic Books.
- Lightfoot, Sarah Lawrence. (1978). Worlds Apart: Relationships Between Families and Schools. New York: Basic Books.
- Manitoba Education. (1988). High School Education Challenges and Changes: The Report of Manitoba's High School Review Panel. September, Nineteen Eighty Eight. Winnipeg: Manitoba Education.
- Manitoba Education and Training. (1990). Answering the Challenge: Strategies for Success in Manitoba High Schools. Winnipeg: Manitoba Education and Training.
- Manitoba Education: Planning and Research Branch. (1988). June 1986 Graduate Follow-Up Provincial Results. Winnipeg: Manitoba Education.
- Manitoba Education: Planning and Research Branch. (1986). Summary Profile: Manitoba High Schools '86-06. Winnipeg: Manitoba Education.

- Manitoba. Surveys and Mapping Branch. (1983). Manitoba Atlas. Altona: D. W. Friesen & Sons.
- Mosteller, Frederick, & Moynihan, Daniel P. (1972). On Equality of Educational Opportunity: Papers Deriving From the Faculty Seminar on the Coleman Report. New York: Random House.
- Ogbu, John U. Minority Education and Caste: The American System in Cross Cultural Perspective. (1978). New York: Academic Press.
- Peters, Thomas J. and Waterman, Robert H. (1982) In Search Of Excellence: Lessons From America's Best Companies. New York: Harper & Row.
- Rutter, Michael, Maughan, Barbary, Mortimore, Peter, Ouston, Janet, & Smith, Alan. (1979). Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and their Effects on Children. London: Open Books.
- Spindler, George. ed. (1982). Doing the Ethnography of Schooling: Educational Anthropology in Action. New York: Holt Rinehart & Winston.
- Tizard, Barbara, et. al. (1980). Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and their Effect on Children. A Discussion. London: University of London Institute of Education.

Wilson, Bruce L. & Corcoran, Thomas B. (1988). Successful Secondary Schools: Visions of Excellence in American Public Education. London: The Falmer Press.

Appendix A:

Post Secondary Plans of John Norquay Graduates
From 1986-1990.

YEAR	WORK	COLLEGE	UNIV.	OTHER POST SEC.	TOTAL
1986	0	7	8	3	18
1987	5	6	2	3	16
1988	3	5	6	1	15
1989	2	7	6	4	19

Appendix B:

Letter to Parents of John Norquay Students
from the Principal, 1984.

HOW DO WE STACK-UP?

In recent years there has been an increasing amount of criticism of the education system. There has also been a very loud call for the education system to be accountable.

There have been many concerns expressed relative to the quality of education that our schools are delivering. The conventional wisdom seems to be that with the introduction of new courses in the areas of Computers, Industrial Arts, Home Economics, second languages, Art, etc., the basics of academic education have been receiving less emphasis. We hear horror stories about our students entering universities with the ability to program a computer to cook, to build soldering irons, to sing, act, play the flute and to draw in perspective, but without the ability to read or write fluent English.

If we were to believe all we hear and read, it would be at least a cause for concern. As a school administrator, I am particularly concerned. As a parent, I am even more concerned.

The Manitoba Association of School Trustees conducts a survey annually to determine how successful Manitoba students are in their first year of University. They gather information from the three universities and arrive at a provincial average. This average is based on the students' GPA at the end of first year. This Grade Point Average is determined as follows:

- A = 4.0
- B+ = 3.5
- B = 3.0
- C+ = 2.5
- C = 2.0
- D = 1.0

A student taking five full courses and achieving marks of B+, B, B, C, C would have a GPA of 2.70 $(3.5 + 3.0 + 3.0 + 2.0 + 2.0) \div 5$

As a matter of interest and concern, I contacted all of the students that graduated from [redacted] in 1981, 1982 and 1983 and went on to University, to determine how we stack up to the provincial average. The results follow:

Year	Manitoba	Div.	[redacted]
1981	2.39		3.32
1982	2.30	2.31	2.51
1983	2.28	2.67	2.91
1984	2.27	2.30	

Taking into account that rural students have to adjust not only to University procedures but also to city living and being away from home, it would appear that the graduates of [redacted] are definitely holding their own. They are prepared for further study.

Johns
NORQUAY

It seems fair to conclude that the basics are being given sufficient emphasis. How else could our students score consistently above the provincial average?

This study will become an annual exercise. The 1984 graduates have been contacted and asked to submit their GPA's as soon as they are available. The MAST study will come out in the fall. I am confident that the graduates of [REDACTED] will continue to do well.

J.N.C.I.

[REDACTED]
Principal

Appendix C:
Respondents' Letter of Consent Form

Box 446
Manitou, MB
R0G 1G0

Dear _____,

This is to provide you with information on my study of John Norquay Collegiate, and to request your participation in the study. This study will eventually be presented as a thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education at The University of Manitoba.

The purpose of the study is to examine the factor or combination of factors which have affected John Norquay Collegiate's performance as a high school. Should you agree to be interviewed your role as a participant in the study will be to provide information and opinion based on your experiences with the school. I hope to meet with each participant for an initial interview of approximately one hour, with a subsequent follow-up interview of approximately one half hour.

In accordance with the Policies and Procedures for Ethics Review at The University of Manitoba, I wish to acquaint you with your rights as a participant in this study. Any information which you feel should be kept in confidence will be handled as such. Should you at any time wish to withdraw your participation from the study, you may do so at any time. A summary of the results of the study will be mailed to you as soon as possible after the successful completion of the study. In addition, should you wish to obtain any further information about the study, you may contact me at any time at the address above, or by phone at 242-2947.

Should you agree to be a participant in the study would you kindly sign the statement of consent on the next page and return it to me in the enclosed stamped, self addressed envelope.

Thank you for considering participating in this study. Should you agree to be interviewed, your input will be much appreciated.

Yours truly,

Cam Symons

. . . 2

2.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

Please sign and return if you agree to participate in the study.

I agree to participate in the case study of John Norquay Collegiate. I am aware of my role as a participant in the study and understand that it will involve participation in an initial interview of approximately one hour with a subsequent follow up interview of approximately one half hour. I am also aware of my rights as a participant in the study as outlined in the Policies and Procedures for Ethics Review at the University of Manitoba.

Signature of consent.

Address to which summary of results may be sent:

