

CASE STUDIES OF LEADERSHIP INFLUENCE OF FOUNDING  
SUPERINTENDENTS ON ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE  
IN TWO VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL  
SCHOOL SETTINGS

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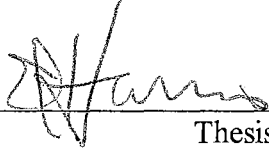
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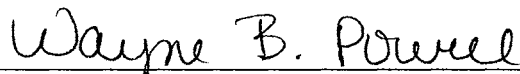
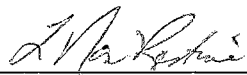
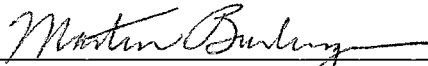
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## CHAPTER I

### DESIGN OF THE STUDY

A proliferation of literature describing the characteristics of successful leaders came to the market during the 1980s. Until the 1970s, the human aspect of the workplace had all but been ignored in favor of the scientific approach to managing processes that in turn managed the actions of the people. As a result of a more humanistic approach to the workplace, questions began to be asked about the various roles played by people in an organizational context (Bennis & Nanus, 1985).

From the information gained through insight to the leader's role emerged the idea of organizational culture. The role of the individual became a key construct toward the definition of the local culture. How much influence do members of the organization exert on the culture? Is their culture definable? How much autonomy do members of the organization possess? Are policies and processes dictated or negotiated between leader and employees? How much interaction occurs between individuals and groups? What operant biases exist within the organization? Linda Smircich (1985) concluded that "the study of culture is bringing forth a new way of understanding organizational life" (p. 57).

When analyzing the role, if any, that leadership has in the formation and management of culture, the researcher must look beyond popular terms used at present to define effective leadership – words such as "teams" or "participative management." The

researcher must analyze the historical context, organizational beliefs, values, standards and norms under which the organization operates. Culture as defined by Smircich (1985) is “the possession of a fairly stable set of taken-for-granted assumptions, shared beliefs, meanings, and values that form a kind of backdrop for action” (p. 58). Mary Douglas defines culture as “the common way that a community of persons makes sense of the world” (Gross & Rayner, 1985, p. 1).

This qualitative study examined the influence of leadership of founding superintendents on organizational culture in two vocational-technical school settings. Using data collected from short interviews and from the researcher’s role as the participant observer, this study provides information relative to the superintendents’ influence on the organizational culture in two vocational-technical school settings.

### Statement of the Problem

Leadership authority is generally considered to consist of certain styles that will work in all contexts. Vocational-technical institutions are generally considered to possess a certain success structure for labor networks relative to the local training network. There are studies to indicate, however, that the success characteristics of a particular leadership style are not appropriate for all organizational contexts (Moss & Liang, 1990). A dilemma is created when the leadership style does not complement the social network of the school and existing community networks. With regard to the conflict created when the leadership style and organizational culture do not match, Mary Douglas states,

he (sic) will fail to make any sense of his (sic) surroundings unless he (sic) can find some principles to guide him (sic) to behave in the sanctioned

ways and be used for judging others and justifying himself (sic) to others. (Douglas, 1982, p. 190)

Mary Douglas's (1982) framework of grid and group provides the contextual dimensions to examine socially diverse constructions: grid is the bundle of constraints on social interaction, a composite index of the extent to which people's behavior is constrained by role differentiation, whether within or without membership of a group, and group represents the extent to which people are restricted in thought and action by their commitment to a social unit larger than the individual (Gross & Rayner, pp. 5 & 6).

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine and explain the cultural context of two vocational-technical training centers and to determine the influence of leadership on organizational culture in each school setting.

### Research Question

How does superintendent leadership influence the cultural context in each vocational-technical school?

### Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

Douglas's (1982) typology of grid and group provides the conceptual framework for determining the influence of leadership in this study. Her grid/group analysis is a method for comparing organizations, communities, and other social units, large and small, according to the strength of two factors in the social environment. For the purpose of

categorizing the dimensions for this study in relation to leadership and culture, grid is defined as the overall strength of the leader and employee relationship; and group is defined as the extent to which the behavior of individual members depends on their membership in a definable social unit (1985, p. ix).

Douglas proposes four prototypes of the grid/group dimensions which are expressed in general terms below and illustrated in Table I:

- A. An Individualist (low grid/low group) environment allows for maximum options for negotiating contracts, allows for individual mobility, is suitable for the frontiersman or capitalist entrepreneur. No cares about the past, each person is responsible for him/herself and for whomsoever h/she chooses, this dimension is not for the weak or needy.
- B. The Bureaucratic/Systemic (high grid/low group) environment is paternalistic and the behavior of the stakeholders is strongly regulated according to their socially assigned class. Persons are classified out of the decision-making process based on either age, ancestry, or class.
- C. Corporate/Systemic (high grid/high group) environments are tradition-bound institutions in which everyone knows his place, but in which that place might vary with time; prosperity and security are concerns.
- D. A Collectivist (low grid/high group) environment is typically indicative that the external group boundary is the dominant consideration, leadership tends to be charismatic and lacking clear rules for succession.

TABLE I  
MARY DOUGLAS'S (1982) TYPOLOGY  
OF SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTS

Bureaucratic (high grid, low group)	Corporate (high grid, high group)
Individualist (low grid, low group)	Collectivist (low grid, high group)

Harris (1995) determined that the grid/group model helps researchers in exploring the dynamic interaction, interdependency, and interrelationships among individuals and their organizational context. Rose (1990) calls what stakeholders do

a form of life. By it I mean that there are formal frameworks to our lives that contain them, such as corporations, of which we are all members. By corporations I mean the legally chartered public, private, and nonprofit institutions that are the scaffolding—or form—for our way of life in America. (pg.18)

Just as he read history to account for the body of knowledge he needed, Douglas's typology has proven to be an effective tool to account for culture in a social setting. For this reason, this researcher chose Douglas's typology to take a deeper look at the culture of two vocational technical schools.

### Significance of the Study

#### Research

In his study, Harris (1995), posits a question – “can leaders effect culture?” (pg. 643). This particular question for this study is answered through the grid/group lenses

of each member of the cultures of the two schools that were studied. The unique and varying roles that each member played provided a rich description of their leader and his role within the culture. The degree of influence exerted by the superintendents and their participation in the formation of the culture was the framework for the design of the interview questions and observation notes.

The role of leadership influence on organizational culture cannot be generalized across all vocational-technical schools, however, the results of this study can provide some insight into a method for defining leadership and its inherent influence on the formation of culture in the vo-tech setting. The study of each site will provide particularly thick description of the activity central to the formation of the school districts, building the first buildings, and hiring the first staffs for each site.

This study can add to the knowledge of the formation of culture in the vo-tech school setting particularly in the state of the two sites that are subjects of this study. One constraint that should be noted by the reader is the approach to public education taken by this particular state is unique when compared to all other 49 states. This state is the only state that has a distinct, three-pronged approach to its public school system—common education, vocational-technical education, and higher education. All other states incorporate vocational education as a small department within either the common education state agency or the higher education state agency. Therefore, the results of this research may be limiting in terms of its application to other sites, but does add to the current knowledge base in the field of school culture.

Research using the grid/group typology has been used as a framework for studying the cultures and “corporate principle” (Rose, pg. 27) of tribes, political environments,

ancient biblical social and political structures, rural schools, private schools, and metropolitan schools, however, no research exists where the vocational-technical school is the setting for investigation.

### Theory

Douglas's grid/group typology is grounded in social systems theory and is significant as a model with applications for all social environments. Douglas's typology is utilized as the framework for studying two vocational-technical – a setting where the typology has never been applied.

### Practice

The knowledge gained by this study may be useful for practicing superintendents and those aspiring to become superintendents as a method for identifying local community culture, the role the school plays within the community, and the dynamics of existing power structures. In addition, it may also be useful for identifying where a superintendent should spend time and effort in either reinforcing the current culture or making an effort to implement change where needed to enhance the school's effectiveness in the delivery of its mission.

## Procedures

### Researcher Biographical and Methodological Implications

The researcher has 22 years experience in education with professional experiences ranging from classroom teacher for five years to the coordination and administration of programs in a vocational-technical center for 17 years. Eight months of the 17 years were spent as a state supervisor of vocational business and office programs in the state Department of Vocational and Technical Education.

The researcher became the primary instrument in the collection and recording of data. The data provided an ethnographic thick description (Geertz, 1973) of the context of each site.

The researcher has a practicing philosophy that leadership is the driving component in the successes or failures of the local educational setting. The leader's intellectual capacity and practical ability to formulate, identify, transform, and transcend the organization's current realities is the driving force for organizational effectiveness. The thesis statement of John W. Gardner's (1984) book, Excellence, is that leaders must have a capacity for highly motivated action. Leaders can not motivate employees, but they can provide an environment for the employee to be motivated to do the best job possible in any given set of circumstances (1984).

I believe Joel Barker stated my belief best in his presentation to a group of business and industry representatives on the Meridian Technology Center campus on April 7, 1994,

leaders, if they are doing their job, have time to find the future. Most of their time should be spent defining the future. That individual secures the future for the followers. Notwithstanding, however, the leader does



resolve crises, he/she meets to report findings and to bring people back together. A leader is a person you will follow to a place you would not go by yourself. (Barker, 1994, oral presentation)

In essence, I believe a leader negotiates with significant individuals or groups in a local setting to formulate a culture that will carry the group beyond its current realities – it perpetuates itself through continual transformation by transcending to the next higher level of operation. History records the acts of those who were successful in building and transforming cultures – Moses, Noah, Ghandi, Winston Churchill, Margaret Thatcher, Martin Luther King, Jr., and in most recent history the leadership practices of the host state's own Dr. James Diamond.

### Data Collection

The procedures for this study are qualitative as the researcher had a desire to provide some insight into the formation of culture in a vo-tech school setting rather than quantify a single dimension of a particular problem.

Data were collected from an investigation of the historical contexts of the two identified sites made available to the researcher from the state's Department of Vocational-Technical Education. The Department's information revealed details of the schools' formations in memoranda, meeting notes, and board of education minutes. In addition the files provided data relative to the financial foundation of each school and the process for the selection of the superintendent.

The schools were chosen with the common criteria that both superintendents were hired after the district was formed but prior to the selection of a site for the school. It is rare in the recent history of education that superintendents are hired to essentially build a

campus and develop staff members prior to conducting class. In the host state there are four superintendents who share this same experience including the two who were interviewed.

The communities of both sites are relatively traditional and are located in rural settings. Each is located within 45 miles of the state's two major metropolitan cities. Notes recorded from interactions with staff members indicated a reference to church activities, and time with their families.

Both schools serve high school and adult students through their full-time high school and short-term adult courses. One site has eight daytime programs and the other site has five programs with each serving a population mix of high school and adult students within the same programs

Descriptions of the current settings were taken from interviews through "systematic questioning and careful listening" (Rose, 1990, pg. 35) with the superintendents, purposively selected employees of each setting, and purposively selected community residents of each setting. The researcher developed an interview guideline with questions for interviews with the superintendents (see Appendix B) and a different guideline (see Appendix C) with interview questions for teachers and staff members. To determine the grid dimension of Douglas's (1982) typology for the settings, the interview questions centered on the themes of insulation, autonomy, control, and competition. For the group dimension, other questions related to membership criteria, life support, relationships, and survival.

Data were also gathered from the results of a short survey instrument (see Appendix A). The instrument proved useful in garnering opinions of each participant of

their local setting relative to fiscal resources, work and labor activities, authority structures, financial and budgetary decisions, and communication channels. The instrument was used as only one source of data. It was not used for nor was it intended to be used for a scientific survey. In addition, the collection of data from the survey was not used in order to be an accurate representation of the categorization of the Douglas's (1982) typology. Also, the qualitative interviews are much more descriptive and include data that illustrates and adds to the data from the instrument.

The observation notes came as a result of time spent by the researcher on-site in each of the two schools and provide a basis for the thick description from the author's point of view. They include a description of artifacts that were identified by the schools for the value they are to the setting, and a record of interactions between teachers and administrators, students and teachers, and students and administrators as well as other staff members and the boards of education.

### Date Analysis

The case study approach was used to interpret the respondents' constructions and to provide an assessment of each organization's context that is found in each school's particular setting (Erlandson, et al, 1993). The primary purpose of this approach was to describe the superintendent's influence on organizational culture in two new vocational-technical school districts. The descriptions provided data for categorizing the schools into two dimensions of Douglas's typology of social environments.

Some of the methodologies used to verify the data were inherent in the process of collecting the data, two of which were trustworthiness and triangulation. Each interview

was structured such that the same questions were asked of each person to gain information from differing perspectives. Conclusions were drawn as to whether the information gained from each interview setting would be verified through other interviews. Several sources of information were obtained that provided data to either verify or provide discrepancies in the information.

The purposive selected sample of interviewees provided varying perspectives that ranged from the larger group which supported the culture to one negative case analysis who operated on the boundary of each culture. Each of these people provided the antithesis of the dominant opinion of the culture and easily provided their rationale.

Working hypotheses from emergent themes were continuously developed throughout the data collection and data recording activities. Units of data were recorded on note cards that provided for ease in placing each unit into the cultural attributes of Douglas's typology in a card file.

### Summary

In summary, the purpose of this study is to determine the influence each superintendent had on their organizational culture and to explain each of the cultures using Douglas's (1982) typology. Qualitative methods such as observing and gathering artifacts, reviewing historical files, conducting a short survey, conducting interviews, and observing were used to provide a data base to facilitate the categorization.

The grid/group model is used in this study to seek to uncover the institutional structures that uphold the moral life of the two schools (Gross & Rayner, 1985). The model provides a conceptual lens into defining the values, the perspectives, the dynamics

of social interaction, and the leadership influence of the cultures in the vocational-technical schools that are subjects of this study.

### Reporting

These case studies are presented from a descriptive, participant-observer perspective. The design of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, theoretical/conceptual framework, significance of the study, and research methods are discussed in Chapter I. Chapter II presents a review of the literature that includes current research in leadership in vocational education, and the body of knowledge that contains the use of Douglas's typology as the conceptual framework.

Chapter III contains the methods and procedures for conducting this study. They include the purpose of the study, research questions, and the data collection and analysis. The presentation of the two case studies is contained in Chapter IV.

Chapter V provides the analysis of the data facilitated with the use of Douglas's typology as the framework.

The summary, conclusions, and recommendations are found in Chapter VI. A Bibliography and Appendix are included after Chapter VI.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Two areas of the existing knowledge base became the basis for the review of literature: 1) leadership in vocational-technical education, and 2) Mary Douglas's Grid and Group Typology.

#### Lack of Research on Leadership in Vocational- Technical Education

One fact became apparent in a study funded by The National Center for Research in Vocational Education that consisted of a norm group of 551 vocational administrators and vocational teacher leaders.

... leadership becomes especially critical to organizations in unstable situations – situations in which change in the environment makes familiar ways of conducting the affairs of the organization unsatisfactory or irrelevant. (Moss & Liang, 1990, p. 2)

The study further provided that

A great deal of research about leadership has been conducted during the last four decades in a wide variety of disciplines and fields of practice: philosophy, anthropology, psychology, sociology, political science, social psychology, management, and the military have all contributed to the body of literature. Education is a latecomer to the study of leadership and almost no research has been done in vocational education. There is no consensus on a specific definition of leadership, an explanatory model of leadership behaviors, or the most useful means for measuring the effectiveness of leaders. (p. 3)

Moss and Liang (1990) also brought forth evidence to indicate that vocational education lacks an adequate number of leaders and efforts necessary to develop them was missing.

From a research project undertaken by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education conducted by Finch, et al.(1992), a range of leadership attributes was demonstrated by successful vocational education administrators as they met the challenges of change. The attributes were organized into 12 related groups and presented as a case study for aspiring leaders. The 12 related groups became topics for each of the cases they presented in the study:

1. Determining institutional direction, goals, and policies;
2. Participating in accreditations and evaluations;
3. Collaborating with boards, agencies, and organizations;
4. Implementing mandated changes and improvements;
5. Implementing self-selected changes and improvements;
6. Linking with business, industry, and community;
7. Enhancing institutional visibility and image;
8. Maintaining and improving fiscal posture;
9. Securing and improving facilities and equipment;
10. Handling crises;
11. Resolving staff and student problems; and
12. Participating in individual and group discussions.

The overriding concept of the 12 related groups of leadership attributes is that the leaders' specific behaviors are determined by their attributes or qualities interacting with their

perception of group attributes – including culture – the particular tasks at hand, and the general context of the local school setting (Moss & Liang, 1990).

### Quality Programs Dependent Upon Competent

#### Administrative Leadership

In a graduate school lecture at The Ohio State University on May 22, 1974,

Professor Ralph C. Wenrich of The University of Michigan, stated,

There is considerable evidence to support the idea that the quality of local programs of vocational and technical education is dependent upon competent administrative leadership—persons who have those insights, understandings and skills which enable them to identify needs and to bring together and effectively use the school and community resources (both physical and human) in the development of dynamic programs to meet these needs. (p. 13)

The Panel of Consultants on Vocational Education in their report, “Education for a Changing World of Work,” (1963), recognized the need for quality administrative leadership.

The leadership of vocational education will determine both its quality and effectiveness. In a rapidly changing world, this leadership must be dynamic and forward-looking, and able to adapt its thinking to the constantly changing situation which it faces. Capable leadership is always in short supply, especially in the new fields. (Wenrich, pg. 14)

The general report of the Advisory Council on Vocational Education titled “Vocational Education – The Bridge Between Man and His Work” (1968) found:

Prior to the Vocational Education Act of 1963, leadership activities had received only token attention nationwide. It was left to the old theory that “the cream will rise to the top” to supply part of the need for leadership, but suddenly the demand for sophisticated personnel in leadership positions made the old practice unsatisfactory and new catalysts were needed. (Wenrich, 1968, p. 14)



Unlike public school education, the program design for vocational-technical education is driven by the job market and premised on local demands whether they be statewide or the local community. The Vocational Education Act of 1963 and subsequently the amendments of 1968 gave states and local communities more responsibility for program planning and evaluation. The federal leadership role was shifted with more emphasis on administrative and statistical responsibilities and the programming role was given to the states, with a high degree of local involvement made mandatory. The shift created a need for an increased number of local vocational education leaders who have the competence to plan, operate and evaluate vocational programs on the secondary and post-secondary levels.

In describing the type of persons recruited to the leadership development program at The University of Michigan, Professor Wenrich noted as follows.

... we try to screen out the person who is so emotionally attached to his own area of specialization that he might find it difficult to set aside his 'first love' while he becomes more knowledgeable about and involved in other areas of vocational education. On the other hand, our recruitment efforts are directed toward those individuals who have a commitment to vocational education. We think a leader should show some enthusiasm for his area of responsibility if he is expected to convey to others the idea that the work in which they are engaged is important. (Wenrich, 1974, p. 17)

The summary comments of Professor Wenrich's lecture provided some insight into the requirements for leadership effectiveness in the vocational-technical school setting.

A person to be a leader must have the capacity to 'live ahead' of his (sic) colleagues and his (sic) institution; to interpret his (sic) institution's needs to the public and the public's needs to his (sic) institution; and to conceive and implement strategies for effective changes required for his (sic) institution to fulfill its purpose. The leader in administration roles tends to have a stimulating, prodding and sometimes even disruptive influence. He (sic) tends to emphasize creative planning, initiative and future-facing boldness. (Wenrich, 1974, p. 24)

He further stated that an effective leader in the vocational setting engages in these behaviors:

1. He (sic) helps others to accept common goals.
2. He (sic) initiates productive action in group situations. He (sic) initiates the action and motivates the group to act.
3. He (sic) establishes clear plans and work procedures.
4. He (sic) maintains warm relationships with members of the group while being goal-oriented.
5. He (sic) gains commitment and cooperation from those with whom he works through persuasion rather than through threat or force.
6. He (sic) effects change and builds structures for the achievement of meaningful purposes. (Wenrich, 1974, pp. 24 & 25)

A study conducted by Migler, Wardlow, and Swanson (1990) of the University of Minnesota also provided insight into the administrative style which appeared to be the most successful in the operation of a vocational-technical school. They concluded that

Administrative styles tended to be participatory rather than authoritarian. These administrators also appeared to practice leadership by vision rather than by closely managing people's activities and were generally proactive rather than reactive. In addition to having high expectations of themselves, they also had high expectations of their staff members. Administrators encouraged the development of new ideas by their staffs. Instructors noted a sense of autonomy in their instructional activities. They tended to be satisfied with their jobs, were competent and knowledgeable, and had expectations of professional behavior. They genuinely cared about students and had high expectations of their students as well as themselves. They cooperated with other staff members and sometimes engaged in friendly competition with each other. "Flexible" was the term that characterized teachers and administrators in exemplary institutions. (p. 16)

Bottoms (1977), at the time of his presentation, was director of the Southern Region Education Board, presented seven present and future challenges in leadership in vocational education. The challenges are:

1. Vocational education must have leaders who meet the challenge of providing direction – take stock of and have the capacity to know where they are currently, begin to design the future, and articulate the future.
2. Arouse among vocational educators a sense of professionalism.
3. Plan for and create programs for the future to meet changing and emerging needs of youth and adults.
4. Possess the ability to recognize the components of successful programs.
5. Invest our money into some risk things, and begin to probe into the future and explore various alternatives.
6. Develop the capacity to create different delivery systems.
7. Develop the capacity to relate vocational education to economic development.

Finch, et al. (1991) concluded that

... vocational education administration is a complex, dynamic, and multifaceted process. The successful administrator approaches administrative responsibilities in a holistic manner. Preparing administrators to be change agents appears to be as important as preparing them to “deal with a staff or student problem and participate in a face-to-face situation.” (p. 20)

In a report for vocational educators, Phillips and Burrell (1994) summarized their research efforts with three “Points of Summary”:

1. Employers and educators need to form a close coalition to plan, design, and execute a system of education and training that will meet the needs of the work force of the future;
2. Education for the work force must be an ongoing process through either seminars or advanced systems of training; and
3. Employers and educators must strive to demand experiences from their students and workers that will enable them to develop the qualities required to achieve anticipation, innovation, and excellence.

The reader will note that the review of literature provides a rich source of research on leadership in vocational-technical education from the mid-60s through the 70s. The limited amount of research conducted during the 80s and 90s leaves a gap for understanding leadership in the vocational-technical schools at perhaps the most critical stage of their existence. Philosophical changes in the administration of the Carl Perkins Act at the federal level, and leadership changes at the state and local levels in the host state calls for a thorough study of leadership and change for the state's area vocational-technical schools.

#### Mary Douglas's Grid and Group Typology

To understand the making of culture we have to take a closer look at early socialization patterns (Douglas, 1982). We have learned that in any social order there are values and beliefs that are shared by its members. Those shared values and beliefs have been formulated and learned over time and become the reference point for which all transactions of the social order take place.

Language patterns, stories that consistently stand the test of time, modes of transacting business, and a definition of the relationships among members of the culture all provide a rich array of color from which a “human tapestry” (Fetterman, 1993) can be drawn. A definition of a closed versus open system and variations of the two are drawn from the analysis of any culture’s constructs.

Geertz’s definition of culture pulls directly from the symbolic anthropology concept that is “culture is a system of shared symbols and meanings. Symbolic action needs to be interpreted, read or deciphered in order to be understood” (Smircich, 1983, p. 342). Smircich further stated, “To interpret an organization, a researcher focuses first on the way experience becomes meaningful for those in a setting” (Smircich, 1983, p. 350).

The challenge for the leader in a social order is to find a way to make some sense of the many and varying constructs of the culture upon which he or she is called to provide leadership. Derived from the cultural symbolism research, leadership can best be described as the management of meaning and the shaping of interpretations (Peters, 1978; Smircich & Morgan, 1982).

A problem posed by the new leader is to answer the question: How best can I seek to understand the systems of social transactions? The “management of meaning and the shaping of interpretations” provides a lens through which a leader can begin to recognize the various facets of the prism are reflections of not only the individual members of the culture, but the group as a whole. The management of interpretations becomes then an activity of recognizing bounds, parallel patterns of action, and individual modes of

action that have been agreed upon consensually by members of the culture as the bias for operation.

A cultural analysis moves us in the direction of questioning taken-for-granted assumptions, raising issues of context and meaning, and bringing to the surface underlying values. (Smircich, 1983, p. 355).

As a theoretical framework for the interpretation of culture, several researchers have found Douglas's (1982) grid/group typology to be an effective tool for analyzing a culture. As a historian, Ellis (1993) utilized Douglas's typology to categorize belief systems of the American political cultures. He stated,

Douglas's theory of culture is promising not only because it offers a way out of the wilderness of detail into which Geertzian thick description leads but also because it offers a way of synthesizing knowledge about American culture without returning to the idea of a national consensus, which historians' painstaking work over the past several years has discredited. (p. 152)

He found that measuring the utility of Douglas's model against alternative theories, Douglas's model of grid/group framework adds to our understanding of the American past and present.

In his attempt to discredit the grid/group framework, Spickard failed to draw a definite conclusion that Douglas's model was ineffectual as a model for studying social cosmologies. He argues that the model grew out of a Durkheimian mode that seeks to determine "how social factors condition belief without, she claims, becoming reductionist" (1989, p. 151). What he failed to do as he analyzed the transitions she had made in her definition of the cosmologies, is to give her credit for transforming her own paradigm shifts that grew out of her study of various cultures. While he tried to classify her as a reductionist thinker, he failed to recognize the dynamics of change that took place through

her enlargement of knowledge as a result of the application of the grid/group typology over a period of time. Her own personal paradigm shifts can be used by the researcher as a lens for confirming the integrity of her model.

Lingenfelter (Thompson, Ellis, & Wildavsky, 1990) successfully utilized the Douglas model in his research and found that

each way of life is dependent upon the existence of the other four and draws power from competition and complementarity with the other ways of life. Each of the five is constrained by the necessity of congruence between a particular set of values and beliefs and a particular pattern of interpersonal relationships. (pp. 1-5)

Deal and Kennedy (1982) defined components of a culture that could aid an outsider in the study of an organization. The components verify Douglas's techniques for giving definition to an organization's culture.

Every business – in fact every organization – has a culture. Sometimes it is fragmented and difficult to read from the outside – some people are loyal to their bosses, others are loyal to the union, still others care only about their colleagues who work in sales territories of the Northeast. On the other hand, sometimes the culture of an organization is very strong and cohesive. (p. 4)

In his reflection on the Douglas technique for studying culture, Weick (1985) gave rise to the comments written below.

This work of fitting actions to ideas in the course of negotiations and of bargaining about categories is actually the essential part of social life. Both the concept of strategy and the concept of culture are attempts to capture this categorizing process and its products. Categorizing is done to create meaning, and the ongoing argument over the nature of categories and the assignment of particulars to these categories constitutes the bulk of the action from which cultures and strategies are inferred. (p. 384)

He concluded this particular article with the thought that culture provides a lens for individuals to take appropriate action – strategy is culture, culture is strategy.

Understanding categories of culture provides insight into the actions of its group members and vice versa.

The recurring themes of the review led to this list of attributes to study when defining the culture of an organization:

1. How do members of the group relate to one another?
2. What are their patterns of communication?
3. What are the common goals that members of the group share?
4. What values and beliefs do they share?
5. Are personal goals subordinate or superior to the group goals?

A common list of attributes relative to leadership and management emerged from the review.

1. Is leadership centralized or distributed?
2. In what activities does top management spend their time?
3. What level of trust does leadership place in members of the group?
4. How active is leadership in the daily activities of the group?
5. Who makes the decisions?
6. What kinds of activities are delegated?

Beck and Moore stated in *Linking the Host Culture to Organizational Variables*,

... people seldom have time to reflect on what the bursts mean. When culture and strategy are intact, they don't have to. But when cultures rupture, the bursts lose their meaning. That is when we realize that "good managers make meanings for people, as well as money" (Peters & Waterman, 1982, p. 29).

A typology that has been and is being used by organizational anthropologists to define the culture of an organization is Douglas's grid/group analysis.



It looks at public allegiances, tributes, incorporations, and rejections, seeking positivistically to construct from unquestionable bases a social environment that people say constrains them, or acts as if it constrains them. Between the two axis of grid and group, a great range of variation in the quality of social life can be charted. (Douglas, intro. to Gross & Rayner, 1985)

In her comments for the introduction to Gross and Rayner's (1985) book, Douglas further defines the grid and group categories. Relying on Gross and Rayner's analysis of group, she states that strong group is that

proportion of time spent in the group compared with total allocatable time; frequency of meeting; closeness of interlocking character links; the proportion of shared to unshared links and strength of the boundary of the group. (Douglas, intro. to Gross & Rayner, 1985)

Gross and Rayner further define group, the horizontal coordinate, as the extent to "which people are restricted in thought and action by their commitment to a social unit larger than the individual" (p. 5).

High group strength in the extreme case requires a long-term commitment and a tight identification of members with one another as a corporate entity. Individuals are expected to act on behalf of the collective whole, and the corporate body is expected to act in the normative interests of its members. Group strength is low when people negotiate their way through life on their own behalf as individuals, neither constrained by, nor reliant upon, a single group of others. Instead low-group individuals interact as individuals with other individuals, picking and choosing with whom they will associate, as their present preoccupations and perceived interests demand. (1985, pp. 5 & 6)

Grid measures quite a distinct set of indices which tell even more about the feel of living in a community. It will be different if its members try to make its style egalitarian or if they have organized a clear pecking order. Furthermore, it will face organizational problems according to these differences. (Gross & Rayner, 1985, intro.)

The vertical coordinate, grid, is the extent to which people's behavior is constrained by role definition, whether within or without membership of a group. Grid is high strength whenever roles are distributed on the basis of explicit public social classifications, such as sex, color, position in a

hierarchy, holding a bureaucratic office, descent in a senior clan or lineage, or point of progression through an age-grade system. It is low strength when classificatory distinctions only weakly limit the range of social choices or activities open to people. A low-grid social environment is one in which access to roles depends upon personal abilities to compete or negotiate for them, or even of formal regulations for taking equal turns. Where access to roles is not dependent on any ascribed characteristics of rank or birth, we would recognize a low-grid condition.” Where roles are primarily ascribed grid, constraints are high. Where roles are primarily achieved, grid constraints are low. (p. 6)

As a typology of social environments, Douglas’s (1982) model is adaptable to studying the leadership influence on the formation of culture in the vocational-technical school setting.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

There are a total of 34 area vocational-technical school districts in the state. When compared to the historical development of the state's higher education and public school system, the vo-tech system is very young. The system was legislatively enacted in 1964 through the vision of Mr. Tom Ruby, Director Emeritus, of the state's vocational and technical education department. Mr. Ruby then hired Dr. James Diamond whose education experience at that time included being a vocational agricultural teacher in small high schools and a superintendent in small public schools in the state.

Dr. Diamond was named to the newly formed Area Schools Division at the department. Through Dr. Diamond's reign in that division, and as Director eventually succeeding Mr. Ruby, the state has become known as possessing one of the best – if not the strongest – delivery of vocational-technical education in the world.

The state's vocational-technical system has developed and grown under the leadership of superintendents who are still living and can talk about the first generation culture of the vo-tech schools. There are four vocational-technical schools in the state that continue to be operated with the first generation of leadership. All four superintendents are white male. Two grew up professionally in the vocational system with their introduction to vocational training while participating in public high school

vocational programs. Of these two, one is a product of an internship program that was under the direction of Dr. James Diamond, Director of the state Department of Vocational and Technical Education Department, now deceased. The other two first became associated with vo-tech education as superintendents in public high schools in the state administering various vo-tech programs prior to employment in a vocational-technical school.

As this researcher began to consider the premise for conducting this study, thoughts focused on leadership and culture in the vo-tech school setting. The researcher's bias toward organizational development is that the organization is in large part a direct reflection of the person who is charged with bringing the setting together. This assumption is supported by other researchers (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Douglas, 1982; Finch, et al. 1991). Therefore, the discovery was framed to study superintendent leadership and its influence on organizational culture in the vocational-technical school setting.

Initially the intent was to study the formation of culture in my local setting and one other site. After consultation with the dissertation adviser, the decision was made to study two sites that are the most unfamiliar to the researcher. Therefore, the sites chosen were Oak Tree Vo-Tech School, and Wheatland Vo-Tech School.

## Methods

I chose to conduct a naturalistic inquiry of the two previously identified vocational-technical schools because I have an operant interest and curiosity in the organizational development of schools. This interest grew out of my own desire to aspire

to a leadership position within a vocational-technical school setting and to solidify my thoughts and assumptions about leadership influence on the formation of culture.

As a qualitative research method, conducting a naturalistic inquiry placed me as the participant-observer inside the cultures of Oak Tree and Wheatland Vocational-Technical Schools. Realizing the impossibility of generalizing, I wanted to gain a deeper understanding and explication of social phenomena as they are observed in their own contexts (Erlandson, et al, pg. 16).

The qualitative method of conducting a naturalistic inquiry allowed me to collect thick data and demonstrate their interrelationship with their context. The relevance of choosing a qualitative method was best suited for answering the research question of “How does superintendent leadership influence cultural context in each vocational-technical school?” Observing the superintendents’ interactions with staff members, students, members of their boards of education, and the general public gave me a wealth of information to note and use successfully in this study.

Conducting a naturalistic inquiry encompasses the ideal that all theory should be grounded at some stage before it is applied. In keeping with Erlandson, et al approach to conducting a study of this nature, I chose to apply Douglas’s (1982) Typology of Social Environments as the theoretical framework for my study.

Recording the intuitions, apprehensions, and feelings of the members of each culture proved as useful to me as the propositional knowledge spoken by each subject during the interviews. Therefore, I became the primary research instrument in each site coupling the experience with information gained during individual interviews of a

purposive sampling of the population and knowledge gained from a short survey instrument.

I interviewed each subject in his or her office or classroom thereby preserving some level of comfort that only a familiar setting can provide. Each interview was dynamic in that the setting most familiar to the interviewee allowed for the occasional interaction with other staff members as they dropped by the office or setting during the interviews. Some of my richest observation notes came from the occasional informal visit as staff members would drop in on the interviews. Sometimes I was sitting across the desk from the subject and at other times, I was walking around the building as the subject answered my questions at the same time he or she was making me more familiar with their setting.

Each school was observed and studied with extensive notes written and interviews conducted on each site. The notes were recorded on individual notecards and sorted for either grid or group characteristics. Within the grid category, the notecards were again separated into four categories that further assisted in categorizing the schools into one of four typologies provided by Douglas (1982): 1) insulation; 2) autonomy; 3) control; and 4) competition.

Within the group category, the notecards were further separated into four categories: 1) membership criteria; 2) life support; 3) relationships; and 4) survival. One other category was used to sort notecards that were descriptive of the superintendents' style of operation within that particular school.

### Purpose of the Study and Research Question

The purpose of this study is to examine and explain the cultural context of two vocational-technical training centers and to determine the influence of leadership on organizational culture in each school setting.

How does superintendent leadership influence cultural context in each vocational-technical school?

### Data Collection and Analysis

Following Rose's (1990) "logic of inquiry," this researcher conducted a review of literature to determine the existence of research relative to leadership in the vocational setting. The researcher then experienced life in the two schools as a participant observer. After organizing the information that was gathered during the process, this paper serves as a recording of those collective thoughts, reading, and experiences.

#### Data Collection Procedures

Several techniques were used that are properties of case study analysis. The raw data consisted of notes kept by the researcher that became a recording of each visit to the sites. These notes were gathered through interviews, observations, a review of printed media, and collecting brochures and other printed pieces of material that provided insight into the schools' formation. In addition a vast collection of memoranda provided insight into the school's history also became a part of the collection.

Douglas's (1982) grid/group typology and a review of literature regarding leadership in the vocational-technical school setting provided the framework for organizing the collection of data. The researcher kept a notebook of information that was organized into these categories: 1) incidental notes, 2) field notes, 3) superintendent questionnaire, 4) participant questionnaire, 5) consent forms (Appendix A), 6) organizational culture rating sheet, and 7) relevant documents. In addition other documents relative to the early formation of the schools that had been collected throughout the endeavor were kept within easy reference.

The incidental notes provided a log of reflective thoughts about the sites and notes to consider when the analysis began. The field notes were the result of the researcher's transcribed notes from interviews and observations. Open-ended questions were developed to provide a guide for the interviews with purposively selected staff members at each site and for the interviews with the superintendents.

Questions asked during the interviews related to the respondents' perception of the school's culture. These questions were framed to gain insight into the background of the interviewee and a profile of the school and community (Appendixes B & C).

As a participant/observer in both sites, discovery became of paramount importance. I chose to ask open-ended questions during the interviews relative to seeking the individual's worldview of the norms, rituals, interpretations, diversity, structure, symbols, and communication patterns that exist within the context. When necessary, I also asked closed-ended questions to confirm pieces of information. The questions were developed prior to entry into either site and became my tool for maintaining control of the



direction of the interview to ensure that the interviews produced the target information in the short time allotted (Fetterman, 1989).

The validity of the questions that I had developed became apparent immediately in the first interview. The interviewees provided me with a myriad of information that facilitated thick description and verbatim quotations portraying a variety of cultural scenes and episodes (Fetterman, 1989).

Maintaining control of the interviews would have been judged by my colleagues as only slightly successful. The occasional meandering by the interviewees, however, did reveal useful pieces of information. I knew from the experience gained in two previous naturalistic inquiries that my role was to listen and learn as much as possible without being too intrusive and their role was to talk.

The initial set of interview questions was modified only slightly throughout the interviews. The modifications were necessary as they aided in clarifying or confirming pieces of information stated by subjects in previous interviews. As much as possible, my goal was to create a natural flow of information in an informal setting.

A short survey instrument, developed by Dr. Ed Harris, was completed by some members of the staff at each site that asked each of them to note their perception of the school's culture in terms of fiscal resources, work and labor activities, authority structures, financial and budgetary decisions and communication channels (Appendix D).

Dr. Harris developed the short survey instrument as a result of his extensive research experience having used Douglas's (1982) Typology of Social Environments as a theoretical framework for much of his research efforts. His findings have been published in juried journals relative to educational research. In addition, he is a contributing author

along with Erlandson, Skipper and Allen to the book *Doing Naturalistic Inquiry: A Guide to Methods* (1993). Including this project, Dr. Harris has guided the research efforts of ten doctoral candidates in conducting naturalistic inquiry on various education related topics using Douglas's (1982) typology as the theoretical framework. He currently serves as Chair of the Education Administrative Affairs Division of the College of Education at Oklahoma State University located in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

The use of his instrument in this study was a first attempt to capture the subjects' interpretations of their culture in a targeted response; therefore, its use was considered a pilot effort. The instrument was completed by each of the interviewees at each site.

After compiling the responses on the instrument of each person, the collective perception of their culture relative to social networks, work and labor activities, authority structures, communication channels, and financial and budgetary decisions became another piece of useful information to add to the collection of extensive notes taken from interviews and observations of each site.

After the two vocational-technical schools were selected for this study, ample time was spent at each site to gain an accurate picture of the school setting and to establish personal relationships and credibility with persons being interviewed. A minimum of eleven visits per site was made from January through May 1998. In addition, notes were collected from attendance at a school board of education meeting at each site, a faculty meeting, a meeting with representatives from the state's Department of Vocational and Technical Education, and an advisory meeting concerning a School-To-Work partnership.

Interviews were scheduled with fifteen purposively selected respondents at Oak Tree and with ten purposively selected respondents at Wheatland. Prior to conducting the

study I formulated a list of possible subjects by title to be interviewed. Throughout the interview process as diverging and consistent thoughts, conversations, and activities emerged, I revised the list of subjects when natural linkages became apparent from one respondent to another. Among the respondents was one member of each staff who provided the negative case analysis of the dominant culture in the vocational-technical school. Both superintendents, teachers, custodians, program directors, secretaries, teacher's aide, members of the boards of education, and chambers of commerce presidents were interviewed in segments of 30 minutes to one and one-half hour each. Follow-up interviews were conducted with both superintendents.

### Data Analysis

Douglas's (1982) grid/group typology (Appendix E) and a review of literature regarding leadership in the vocational-technical school setting provided the framework for analyzing the data. The data collection and analysis activities virtually became indistinguishable from the start of the activity. The two activities became an interactive process in that one gave rise to the other from the start through the drafting of the report.

### Trustworthiness and Credibility

Trustworthiness and credibility of the data were established through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, purposive sampling, triangulation, referential adequacy materials, peer debriefing, member checks, thick description, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Each of these strategies was employed throughout the study.

### Prolonged Engagement

Prolonged engagement at each site is evidenced by the notes of my observations taken during extensive interviews of the eleven site visits. Persistent observation allowed me to seek clarification about divergent information from the sampling of respondents. As an example, the negative case analysis identified at each site was a female who sought to be an administrator in an all male administrative group. Each negative case analysis was either currently meeting on a weekly basis with the male administrators or had been meeting with the group and was no longer considered a part of the group due to a change in position.

### Purposive Sampling

In addition, purposive sampling of the population emerged from a preset list of subjects by title who might be considered as respondents. During the first interview with each superintendent I clarified who the respondents might be and the superintendent provided the names and locations of each person. In addition, the initial list of respondents was modified throughout the engagement as emergent ideas gave way to seeking clarification. Multiple sources of data and methods were used to substantiate the investigation. Eleven site visits at each school resulted in notes regarding observations, and extensive handwritten notes transcribed into a log of notes.

### Referential Adequacy

Referential adequacy materials consist of copies of files provided to me by the Department of Vocational and Technical Education for each school, as well as I was given the opportunity to collect newspaper articles, memos, and various publications that provided a host of data for the study.

### Peer Debriefing

Dr. Ed Harris, my dissertation adviser, provided peer debriefing as he assisted in analyzing the material, listened to my ideas and concerns, asked probing questions, and – on occasion – played devil’s advocate. Our conversations allowed me to devise the research strategy, organize my thoughts, and keep me focused throughout the process.

### Member Checking

Member checking was conducted simultaneously and continuously throughout the project. At the end of each interview, I sought to clarify and summarize the data allowing the respondent to correct any misinterpretations or errors in facts. Each interview allowed me to clarify and reinforce information gained through previous interviews. In addition, when I needed clarification, I either scheduled an appointment to visit with an earlier respondent or on occasion took the opportunity in an informal conversation to gain their perspective.

I attempted to provide the “widest possible range of information for inclusion in the thick description through purposive sampling” (Erlandson, et al., 1993, p. 147).

Descriptive passages of the site, respondents, superintendents, and community context are provided in this study in an effort to provide the reader with a clear understanding of the cultural context of each school.

### Transferability

Transferability of findings of this research is confirmed in that Douglas's (1982) typology of grid and group has been successfully employed as a theoretical framework in previous studies (Harris, 1995; Ellis, 1993; Spickard, 1989; Lingenfelter, 1992). The thick description in this study may enable

observers of other contexts to make tentative judgments about applicability of certain observations for their contexts and to form "working hypotheses" to guide empirical inquiry in those contexts. (Erlandson, 1993, pp. 32 & 33)

### Dependability

The dependability of Douglas's (1982) typology of grid and group as a theoretical framework has been successfully demonstrated in the works of previous researchers, and was a successful framework for examining and explaining the cultural context of two vocational-technical training centers and to determine the influence of leadership on organizational culture in each school setting. In addition the trustworthiness of this report can be confirmed in that the data can be tracked to their sources. Extensive quotes were used that were taken directly from note cards as a result of the lengthy notes taken from each site.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis became an ongoing activity throughout the development of the research activity that included gaining entry to each site through the drafting of the report. “Data analysis involves taking constructions gathered from the context and reconstructing them into meaningful wholes” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 333). Four elements of data analysis were utilized as a foundation to reconstruct the respondents’ realities: 1) unitizing data, 2) emergent category designation, 3) negative case analysis, and 4) bridging, extending, and surfacing data.

### Unitizing the Data

Employing the methods described in the foregoing paragraphs set the stage for unitizing the data. Each unit of data was heuristic in that it provided an “understanding of some aspect of the context or some action” that I took to seek clarification or to gain more information (Erlandson, et al., 1993, p. 117). The units were typed on 3 X 5 index cards and each unit varied in length from a few words to whole paragraphs. The unitized data provided ready recall and ease in translating the data into thick description during the drafting of the report. The constructed realities of the respondents gave life to the report in that the respondents’ quotes, verbal pictures, analogies, and personal experiences provided the color and rich description of each site.

### Emergent Category Designation

The units of data were then sorted into categories of ideas following Douglas's typology (1982). To define the grid portion of the typology, the units were sorted into four categories: 1) insulation, 2) autonomy, 3) control, and 4) competition. To define the group portion of the typology, the units of data were sorted into four other categories: 1) membership criteria, 2) life support, 3) relationships, and 4) survival. One other category was used for each site that included units of data describing the superintendents' leadership style through the lens of the respondents. A dissenting opinion of the dominant culture of each site was found in both sites providing an opportunity for negative case analysis.

### Narrative Form

The final data analysis was written in narrative form with emphasis given to the use of explanations and quotes. Staff members were observed conducting the daily tasks of their jobs. The explanations, quotes, and observations provided information relative to the life of that particular culture in a natural setting. Great care was taken in drafting the open-ended interview questions in order to not manipulate the information gained throughout the process. Capturing what the individuals did, their behavior, relationships, and daily routines as clearly as possible were the goals of the researcher as a participant observer.



## Summary

This chapter provides insight into the methods and procedures used to capture the world view of the respondents' within their respective setting. Weaving each part of the "ornate human tapestry together" (Fetterman, 1989, p. 93) came from utilizing these methods and procedures used to facilitate the study. The questions utilized in the study are listed in the Appendixes B and C. The vocational-technical schools were briefly described setting the stage for an in-depth presentation of each site in Chapter IV that follows.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION OF DATA

This chapter is dedicated to constructing a narrative and providing a description of the two communities for the reader. Oak Tree Vo-Tech School and Wheatland Vo-Tech School were purposively selected from the group of 34 schools because they share a common denominator. Each site is being led by a superintendent who was hired prior to the selection of the site for the new center – a rare case when compared to the ages of the public school and higher education systems.

Prior to the formation of the vocational-technical school concept in the state, the state's voters approved State Question 434 in May 1966, creating a constitutional amendment that would make it possible for two or more school districts to join together to form an area vocational-technical school district. The new government entity would provide increased vocational educational opportunities for the citizens of the state that would otherwise not be possible within a single community school district. To finance the new system a new source of funds was made available so vocational programs in area vo-tech schools would not drain common school districts of funds for academic needs.

## Oak Tree Vo-Tech School

### Context

The town of River Falls lies 40 miles south of the state's second most populous city. Historical documents reveal that the town used to be a thriving oil town. In fact, people boasted that more millionaires lived in this town than in New York City (River Falls Chamber of Commerce brochure).

River Falls was built around the Mahwah Council House (that still stands) that was built in 1878 and served as the Capitol of Mahwah Nation. The first productive oil strike is noted in 1907. The town's population peaked at 30,000 in 1980. The oil bust of the 70's and 80's led to a mass exodus.

An issue published by the state's economic development department describes the town of River Falls as this:

Varying segments of America's past are alive and well in its buildings. The plight and the pride of the Mahwah Nation are sheltered in the stately Italianate Council House, while nearby stand the multistoried, fancy-styled buildings where rich oil men strutted their stuff. (pp. 112-115)

The population of the town now stands at 13,730. It plays host to three banks, 61 churches – 50 Protestant, 2 Catholic. It is located on a major highway linking two major interstate highway systems and it is 40 minutes from the state's second most populous city. A December 1997 report notes that the unemployment rate of the area was 1,070 or 7.3% (state Department of Commerce report).

## History of the School

A request for the formation of a new vo-tech school was asked by the county board of commissioners and sent to the state's Department of Vocational and Technical Education. Subsequently an election to form the district was called to be conducted on April 23, 1991. A school board election was called shortly thereafter to determine which five board members would begin the task of selling the vo-tech school concept to each of the towns to be represented. The first school board election ended with two members to be seated while three other races continued to runoff elections.

From the time the five members were elected until the district was formed, the members had the daunting task of organizing first steps toward the reality of a vo-tech school. In February 1991, a town meeting was held with invitees to include civic club presidents, chambers of commerce presidents, mayors and city councils, boards of education of the sending schools, county officials, and PTA and PTO groups. The purpose of the meeting was to provide this group with an orientation to the vo-tech system and explain the process for the formation of the district.

Oak Tree Vo-Tech School District was officially formed on February 18, 1992, as the result of an election calling for a five-mill operating levy to form a vo-tech district to serve parts of Pulaski and Conway counties. By a vote of 1,351 for and 1,109 against the proposition it was reported in the State Board of Education minutes that "the rural areas really carried the election" for the 28<sup>th</sup> vo-tech school. There would be 13 public school districts served by the new vo-tech school. Dr. Miller, the superintendent, stated,

the two largest towns (River Falls and Golden) were vying for the school to be located in their town and some negative reactions to the school district had formed because of the tension created.

The rural area carried the election even as a large agricultural organization was publicly campaigning against the district's formation.

In the Superintendent's description of the early development of the campus he stated,

We actually set up temporary classes for some of the short-term adult programs in an old funeral home – put one teacher in the casket room. When we told the teacher where they would be teaching, the teacher didn't show. We later moved the class so the teacher would teach the class. The prep room of the funeral home became the snack room for the staff!

During the 1997-98 school year the enrollment consisted of 240 high school and adult students in the full-time programs. The Superintendent stated, "We don't have much full-time adult enrollment because only last year did we offer PELL funding."

The organizational structure and leadership of the school are hierarchical in nature. All policy is set by the school board upon the recommendation of the superintendent. From this policy, the board allows the Superintendent to make the operational decisions of the school.

### Superintendent Background

In a memo dated April 10, 1992, the current superintendent's name is listed in a group of 22 possible candidates for the superintendency. On July 1, 1992, he was hired to begin building the school.

In August 1995 the school became a reality as it opened its doors to the public to begin holding classes for the high school juniors and seniors, and adults. The 42,000

square foot facility was built to accommodate the full-time courses including business technology, computer technology, health science technology, practical nursing, carpentry, law enforcement, drafting and manufacturing technology.

As the school's first and only superintendent to date, Dr. Miller is a former high school business teacher having taught in a public school district located in the northeast quadrant of the state. The superintendent was formerly the director of two campuses of another vocational-technical school before being named the superintendent of a newly formed vocational-technical school in the south central portion of the state. The superintendent was subsequently hired at Oak Tree. The superintendent possesses a doctorate of education in educational administration.

### Staff

The first decision he made after being hired was to employ an administrative assistant. The challenge laid out for him required a support system to allow him to begin garnering support from various interest groups within the district. Dr. Miller very quickly began meeting with sending public school superintendents, making presentations at chambers of commerce, and meeting with representatives of business and industry.

Within a period of two months he also hired the administrative staff of the school who began to develop courses and hire part-time staff members to begin offering short-term adult classes. He stated,

I was hired in July 1992, and in November 1992 we had classes going on a satellite basis. We used the public schools to hold classes, hired their teachers, and invited the community to participate.

The administrative staff includes Mr. Wayne Denny, second to be hired, who was the principal in the district's second most populous town, Golden. Mr. Ben Medlock, formerly of the JTPA program in the area, was hired to oversee the operations of the short-term adult and business and industry training programs.

### Organizational Structure

The board of education consists of four males and one female. The male group represents two college instructors, one retired public school superintendent, and one retired elementary school principal. The female represents an original founding family in the area whose family owns several banks and she serves as an officer in the local bank. All five members are original members of the first seated board of education.

The all-male administrative staff consists of the superintendent, director of daytime programs, director of business and industry programs, and counselor. Each of them are long-time members of the town or towns that are a part of the vo-tech district. The director of full-time programs and the counselor were previously employed in the local public school and a nearby public school that is a member of the vo-tech district, respectively.

Other staff members include the coordinator of the Tech Prep program who also serves as the Education Enhancement Center instructor (female), and a half-time employed business manager (male). There are ten faculty members, eight of whom teach on campus and two faculty members teach at the local technical college. The faculty group represents four males and six females all teaching in traditional male/female roles. There are three bus drivers who also work on-campus when not driving the bus. Two bus

drivers are male who also serve the school as custodians and one is female who is a part-time secretary. In addition, the board of education employs an encumbrance clerk who serves as the secretary to the director of daytime programs, two secretaries and the superintendent's administrative assistant all of whom are female.

The administrative staff meets every Monday morning in the superintendent's office. Included in these meetings is the teaching director of nursing and is the only teacher who carries a "director" title. She represents the negative case analysis at this school.

When I asked each of the administrative staff to describe an incident(s) that seemed to mark a low spot for them, they described issues that seem to reflect on their unwillingness to confront issues. As an example, the selection of a site for the house-building project for the carpentry program generates a lot of heated discussion among the school board members as the superintendent lets the members select the site. The previous sites selected have either been too far away from the school and has created a bit of dissention or the people for whom they have built the house have not allowed them to build a quality product representative of the program. This was related to me by the superintendent and was confirmed to me during the board of education meeting that I attended as the site selection was one of the agenda items. It did indeed create quite a bit of discussion. This topic was the one discussed at greatest length during the meeting.

Other issues relating to their unwillingness to confront issues are whether to close the law enforcement program, make an effort to hire more minority staff members, make a decision to earnestly conduct more industry training programs, and solve "a little diffugalty among the clerical staff." The tension that exists between the female director of



nursing and the all-male administrative staff remains unsolved because as one administrator stated, “she’s just a little different than we are. She comes from [another state], she’s just real aloof.”

### Funding

The funds for area vo-tech schools are calculated using the ad valorem tax base for the public school districts in the vo-tech school district. In February 1991, the valuation of the district was \$91,000,000. The state’s Department of Vocational-Technical Education calculates that each \$10 million of valuation will support one full-time program. Therefore, Oak Tree began planning for six programs with the seventh and eighth programs to be held on the campus of a nearby community college. As of March 1998, the valuation was \$95 million.

Each year the superintendent prepares a line item budget of operations and presents it to the board of education for their approval. This budget establishes the limits of expenditures for the ensuing school year. The superintendent made no mention of legislators who represent the area. He depends on the Department of Vocational and Technical Education to provide the funding sources from the state level. The state funds combined with funds from the local ad valorem tax and income from sales, tuition, and fees provide the other sources of income.

## Relationship with the Board of Education

### And Special Interest Groups

Currently seated on the board of education are two instructors who are employed at the nearby community college; the only female board member is from a family of bankers in the area; another one is a retired elementary school principal, and the fifth one is a retired superintendent of schools in the second largest town in the district. Since the formation of the first board of education, there has been only the potential for one school board race. The man who filed against the incumbent lived out of the zone and admitted that he was running because he is the boyfriend of a nursing student who was expelled from the program for misconduct. Because the boyfriend lived out of the district he was declared not qualified to be a candidate for that particular board seat.

During one board meeting the researcher attended, an issue was listed on the agenda for which the superintendent had recommendations for how the issue should be handled. Rather than give his recommendation up front, he allowed the members to discuss the issue. They did so. A lot of discussion ensued regarding the pros and cons of how to handle the issue. After a lengthy discussion, the superintendent gave a recommendation and one of the members stated the superintendent's recommendation in the form of a motion and it carried with all "ayes." This board of education does not make decisions for every purchase that the school has to make. They make decisions on issues that could potentially have an impact on the manner in which the school is perceived in the community.

Kept at the forefront of any decision that the board of education and administration make are the significant special interest groups. Several conversations focused on the relationship between the vo-tech school and the public school superintendents of the sending schools. The public school counselors, principals, taxpayers, and parents are other significant special interest groups for which the school gives particular attention.

In addition, they are very conscious of the school district's socio-economic status. The assistant superintendents gave particular attention to the low-income groups that have taken a positive advantage of their programs. They mentioned the fact that their teachers must be cognizant of how to relate to those whose income level is at or below poverty level.

### Curricular Issues

The instructors form advisory committees representative of individuals from business and industry to advise their program. The committees are required to meet at least once per year. Their input is sought with regard to curriculum content, equipment, and training trends.

The school is not bound by the textbook adoption policies set by the state Department of Education. The curriculum is designed to address the local job market. Therefore, the curriculum content this year may not resemble the content from the previous year.

The educational needs of the local labor market are diversified. The community boasts 28 businesses and industry representing all aspects of commerce and 61 churches.

### Superintendent's Leadership Style

Gaining access to this site presented itself as no problem. In a telephone conversation prior to arriving on campus, the researcher briefly described the intent of the activity. He responded without hesitation, "absolutely no problem in studying the school." Actually he provided the assistance with empathy as he had just completed his dissertation and graduated one year earlier.

We met a brief time in his office and then he became the "tour guide" providing detail about the history of the school, background of each instructor, and providing the rationale for the programs that are offered on this site. He introduced me to the staff as if he were introducing me to begin my first day of employment.

In discussing the formation of the school he reflected on some of the activity he initiated.

Meetings with economic development representatives in the chambers of commerce, attending and making presentations at various civic clubs promoting the school soon became a constant calendar item.

The superintendent stated that,

I also attend the Golden Chamber of Commerce meetings and the African-American Chamber of Commerce in River Falls—a group to which I also presented the millage issue asking for their support.

In its formative stage the vo-tech school was a question mark in the minds of some of the district residents. He stated,

One question we always had to answer was why do we need a vo-tech school when a tech school is already here? We responded that the tech college is an associate degree granting institution and that high school courses were not being offered in some of the trades areas.

Another question he often responded to was “why didn’t you build it [the school] in Golden?” His reply was

there is a lot of competition between the two larger towns in the county. We relied on the state department to conduct a demographic study to determine the best location. The host county is a union area with a 40% African-American population. Golden does not have a lot of black people. And there is an equal distribution of the Indian population in both towns.

The superintendent stated that his only regret about the facility is that the kitchen is a service kitchen only and not a production facility and that keeps them from instituting a food service program. The resource center is too small. Their plans are to meet shortly with an architect to develop a site plan.

The superintendent typically arrives on campus by 7:30 a.m. to begin the day. When I arrived at his office the first morning, he was busy working at his computer as he keeps the school’s financial accounting and budgeting at his computer for easy access.

As described by the director of daytime programs, the superintendent includes the administrative staff in everything. “99.9% of the decisions that are made by the superintendent has included both directors.” The superintendent is very good at including the teachers in the decision-making process as well. The superintendent asks that both directors at this site meet with every teacher at the end of the year to allow the teachers a chance to evaluate their programs and make a list of their “wants and needs.”

Other descriptions given were that the superintendent has an open door policy and is very receptive to ideas from staff. The director of daytime programs stated,

the superintendent is very good about following the chain of command. If a teacher approaches the superintendent with an issue, he always refers them to either me or the other director.

In addition, “the superintendent supports me, backs me with the teachers. We want this to be a safe place for our students.”

All respondents indicated that the superintendent is current with technology and its impact on the classroom and he is current with curriculum issues. In essence, “he’s a Philadelphia lawyer—he knows a little bit about everything” stated the daytime programs director. The same director stated that

financially, he makes sure the teachers have the money – (as evidenced by) the FATS system in the law enforcement program, and new computers in the business technology and drafting programs.

In describing the initial formation of the school, the daytime programs director stated that

I couldn’t have had a better learning experience than when we first started the school. I learned the nuts and bolts of it – from the ground up. We actually didn’t have funding until three weeks before school started. We held classes at the community for one and one-half years until the building was completed. The superintendent included me in on everything from the bottom up.

The director went further to say that

the superintendent is impatient with teachers who don’t do their documentation. In a lot of other ways, he is really patient – may even take too long to make a decision.

The superintendent stated,

There is dialogue between me and the teachers, I give direction, I don’t dictate. The director of daytime programs actually interacts with the teachers. I don’t go in and check the content or the time on task.

Insight provided by other members of staff included that the superintendent is laid back, but directive. “He is one of the most focused individuals I’ve ever been around. He

is slow and dogmatic,” as related by the director of business and industry programs. This same director stated,

in the initial formation of the school that was a good quality to have. We actually didn't have the authority to proceed until June 10, 1993, and were actually in a holding pattern. The superintendent just kept waiting—had it been up to the other director and me we would have made lots of mistakes. We were hired to put a school together—the other director and I built the walls, put in the steel studs, sheetrocked, mud and taped, put in the heating and air conditioning system. I carried most of the materials up three flights of stairs (the school first met in the Golden High School). The superintendent told us how and when to do everything. The superintendent bought the equipment and we hired the staff.

Relative to the superintendent's decision-making process, one member of staff described him as follows: “The superintendent is the most methodical individual I've ever been around. God almighty – waiting for him to do something will drive you crazy!”

Members of the group stated they operate as a team, but are “smart enough to know who is head of that team.” He has very little to do with the day-to-day operations. The lines of communication between the directors and superintendent are informal in that they do not have to schedule formal meetings to gain his input or approval.

The superintendent retains the right to have the final word. When asked how that goes over with staff, the director of daytime programs stated, “99% of the time it goes over pretty good.”

The carpentry teacher was quick to say,

the superintendent is very much to the point, very professional, and has high expectations. He demands that we do our job. We don't have a bell to indicate the beginning and ending of class so it is up to us to manage our program accordingly. When reports are due, they have to be on time. He expects that 100% of the time in class is to be spent on task. He follows the chain of command.

Another member stated that,

He's the type that doesn't want a close relationship with staff. With the directors, I can go to lunch and we will talk about problems. We solve those problems in a very short period of time.

From another instructor came,

Sometimes we feel uncomfortable because he's always looking for something. However, the superintendent is an excellent superintendent—no one could do a better job.

From a custodian,

Nothing goes unnoticed whether it be marks on the wall or mud on the floor. The superintendent is particular and that's not bad.

When it comes to recognizing staff members for their accomplishments, one member related,

it's just not his style to throw parties for recognizing our accomplishments. But the superintendent does acknowledge them. The enthusiasm is low, but it is still there.

During the interviews it became apparent that this site had one dissenting member who lived on the boundary of the dominant culture and provided the negative case analysis. The researcher was allowed to have access to the instructor. The instructor's thoughts follow:

There is not clear communication from administration about the school's goals and objectives. As an example, we have submitted a proposal to upgrade the electronic equipment in the school, but the decision still has not been made. Committee meetings have been held to determine which equipment to purchase. Those who were invited to attend were two school board members, two business instructors, and the superintendent. When asked about the nursing instructor's input, we were then asked after the fact to provide input. We need the superintendent's ability to thoroughly think things out—both positive and negative aspects. The decision-making hasn't been delegated and things get bogged down in his office.

This statement is contradictory to statements given by other respondents, but is still applicable because while the others stated that "he includes others" and "he asks for our



opinion” in the final analysis he does verbalize the decision rather than delegating to someone else. In essence, participation in decision-making is high, but the superintendent provides the final decision – “he listens, but has the final say.”

Relative to the equipment purchases, the instructor said,

When we’re told we’re here for the students, that’s not necessarily the case. Some teachers feel there’s better equipment in the front office than in instructional support.

A hobby of one of the staff members is that he is a bird hunter, therefore, the bird hunting terminology was a metaphor for the superintendent’s style of operation.

The superintendent is an old dogmatic superintendent. Dr. Miller came this way to get this school started. The superintendent’s style of operation has paid off here in more ways than one. This building is a direct result of the superintendent. During the construction phase of the school, Dr. Miller noticed the bulldozer was moving dirt for the building in the wrong direction according to the layout of the building. When the superintendent explained the situation to the equipment operator, sure enough, the operator was laying it out the wrong way. The superintendent birthed this baby. If not for Dr. Miller bird-dogging from day one, this place would be a piece of junk.

An interview with one of the board members provided insight as well into the superintendent’s style of leadership.

We advertised in journals, had quite a few applications, and we interviewed five people. We went through another set of interviews with three of them. We selected a superintendent who had vocational-technical education experience, and who had built a vo-tech school. His strengths came out in the interview. We narrowed the selection to two candidates, rated them in various areas and tallied the points. We were confident with both people, however, Dr. Miller had the edge as we felt he would do the best job.

The board member further related,

Then things had to start popping. He first hired a secretary. Then rented a small office. We received the first \$2.5 million to build the building, and purchase the equipment and supplies.

In addition, she stated,

Coming in from the ground up, he did a real good job of including the board members and keeping them informed. As a new board member at the time, he spent a lot of time in the first few years with us. One of the things that was not done intentionally, but happened because of the superintendent, is that I derive a lot of pride and commitment in building the school as Dr. Miller kept us informed and involved from the very beginning. He includes everybody. We have lunch meetings prior to our board meetings. In the meetings, if we're totally off, he will bring us back. He is a pretty good walkaround kind of superintendent. If he needs you for something or needs an answer, he'll come directly to you. We're relaxed in a sense. We don't have to wait in line to see him. But we're still pretty professional.

### Summary

The Oak Tree Vo-Tech School offers eight full-time day programs for juniors and seniors in thirteen public schools within a 35 mile radius of the vo-tech campus. They also offer short-term adult classes in the evening. In addition, the school has designated a full-time staff member responsible for training in the local business and industry sector.

One unique aspect of the campus's location versus the location of the state's other vo-tech schools, is that it adjoins the campus of a technical institute. The relationship between the two schools allows the vo-tech school to send students to two of the tech institute's programs. The programs would be considered high dollar cost if the vo-tech school had to make the capital investment in the equipment and pay the salaries for qualified instructors to teach the courses.

The administration of the school is male. Prior to employment they were residents of the local communities. In contrast, the majority of the instructors are female who teach traditional female-taught programs.

## Wheatland Vo-Tech Center

Shortly after my first meeting with the superintendent of this school, we began a tour of the campus. Dr. Goff proudly talked about the school, describing it from its formation through the school's current operation. On the tour the superintendent described for me the school's origination, its mission, and its plans for the future.

While in his office, a plaque on the wall caught my attention. "Wheatland – Where the men are strong, and the women are pretty." And another that noted, "A salute to Wheatland's #1 Boss."

### Context

The school serves three public school districts – Center Ridge with approximately 100 students per class K through 12 grades; Silex, a consolidated district with approximately 15 students per class; and Conway with approximately 75 students per class.

The vo-tech school currently serves 280 full-time students. The school lies in a wheat pasture on the area's major highway. The location is significant because the school board attempted to locate the school within equal distance of the three public schools that it serves.

The "Wall of Honor" was a significant piece of the tour. On the wall, the school board and the superintendent have placed pictures of individuals who have made a significant impact on the school. At this point, the wall of honor consists of previous

school board members, retired staff members, and a staff person who currently serves as an officer of the national association for health educators.

They have taken efforts to depict the linkage with the heritage of the area as evidenced by pictures hanging in the hallway. One picture depicts the Wheatland Trail through “The Sandhill Wedding.” Another picture is entitled “Arriving Early for the Dance.” And as tribute to the ranches and the wranglers – “Wrangler – Era of the Great Ranches.” In fact, when I asked one staff member to describe the school, the instructor began the description relative to the school’s location. “It’s a small rural school in the middle of wheat fields with cattle grazing at the windows.” A brochure of programs describes the location of the facility as “in the Buckle of the Wheat Belt.”

Center Ridge came into existence on April 22, 1889, when land owned by the federal government was opened to settlement. Settlers formed on the boundaries of the unassigned lands, and when the signal was given at noon, those assembled made a mad dash into the new area seeking to claim 160 acres of land, or a town lot. A huge area in what is now the central portion of the state was literally “peopled” overnight.

The city is situated on a part of the Wheatland Trail, over which millions of longhorns were driven to railheads in another Midwestern state in the years immediately following the Civil War. Extension of the railroads and settlement of the open range ended this colorful era.

The distribution of population by race as of 1995 is 90.28% are white; 2.88% are black, 4.81% are Native American, and the remaining 2.03% is comprised of all other races. Of the total population, 77.07% of the males are in the work force compared to 51.31% of the females. The county population is estimated at 13,400.

The fierce independence of the farmer and rancher played out in the dynamics during the formation of the district. As one board member stated,

the rural citizens are much less inclined to vote on taxes. We do have great support from the business community, but did experience resistance from the farmer in the beginning. Center Ridge seems to have a pride of ownership. We chose to locate the school centrally between Center Ridge and Conway because they are rival schools. Center Ridge would not vote for it if it was located in Conway and vice versa.

### History of the School

In a letter to the district's populous, the superintendent gave a short history of the school and where the school is today in terms of its mission. A portion of the letter reads:

On August 26, 1987, the patrons of the four participating school districts went to the polls to elect a school board to serve the Wheatland Vo-Tech district. The newly elected board called for a millage election to be held on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, which would provide funds to operate the newly created vo-tech district.

The voters approved this millage election by a positive vote of 73% of the people.

Board of education members consists of one female and four males with the males representing the agricultural sector of the district. The board of education soon hired a native of the vo-tech district to serve as the new superintendent. A few weeks later, a director of full-time programs was employed to head up the short-term adult programs. Adult classes were held in Center Ridge and Conway High Schools until a building was constructed in 1990.

The director of short-term adult training programs stated,

This year (1998) marks our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Wheatland Vo-Tech Center. We serve approximately 200 full-time students and over 2,000 adults each year at our center. Presently we have over 20 classes being offered in the evening for adults. . .

### Superintendent Background

While on our tour, Mr. Goff introduced me to all the staff members that were available giving detailed description of their backgrounds and their length of service with the school. When asked how he organizes his day, he replied,

I keep a "Things to Do" list. In addition, I keep an updated calendar, as well as the state department's calendar of activities, and use staff meetings to keep current.

At these meetings, he covers his calendar, addresses comments and concerns of staff members, and any building issues due to public use of the facilities, and assistance needed to set up the evening classes.

"This is the most rewarding job I have ever had, and the least controversial job than I have ever had," he stated,

When you're trying to help people it should be a win/win situation. The most controversial part of my job is with students in the practical nursing program. If they request a hearing as a result of teacher's disciplinary measure, we have to provide them one.

The superintendent is a graduate of Hope High School. He received both a BS and MS from a university in the state. He began his teaching career as a junior high social science teacher. From there, he moved to a neighboring state as a social science teacher in the junior high and also coached for nine years. He moved to yet another neighboring state and was employed there for six years as a counselor and became the elementary principal. He was the superintendent at four small public school districts in the state. He was previously employed as a bank vice president in Center Ridge.

Staff

He is upbeat when he talks about the personnel. He prides himself in the fact that there is very little turnover. In his tenure at the school, however, there have been two personnel issues that he has dealt with. He stated,

we had a weak teacher about three years ago. We observed her more often and even asked her to visit similar programs in other vo-tech schools. We also had a problem with our counselor and eventually moved her to the position of financial aid coordinator. This counselor was the only employee who wasn't my recommendation. She was actually my third recommendation. I asked her to read Stephen Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, and paid the registration fee for her to take a Zig Ziglar course.

This personnel issue was verified in the conversation with the school board member. She stated,

We have voted against a personnel recommendation when we hired our counselor. We had a couple of board members who thought the position was offered before the board meeting. It was a case where no matter how good the applicant might have been, they had a bias against her.

The superintendent stated,

since the board went against my recommendation on the counselor, they have not repeated that action. Those kinds of politics aren't happening anymore.

Continuing the discussion related to personnel issues, he stated,

We have had one person in a position – hard worker, intelligent, but who didn't work well with the high schools or the students. We had some schools who asked us not to send her back.

An interview with a board member confirmed there was a

personality conflict and he found a different position for her. The employee works well as the coordinator of financial aid and grants. It was a trying time for the superintendent because the lady does work so hard. He found a position that suited her talents.

On the question of who gets ahead, there was consensus among all respondents. The faculty is so small that it becomes a process of elimination. They have committees for various projects and events that provide an opportunity for leadership among the staff members. There is a mix of teachers and support staff who are members of the committees. Others stated that self-assurance and personality are the characteristics that Mr. Goff likes. In addition, those who go above and beyond the structured job description are those that get noticed. With agreement from all interviewees, the consensus is that one of the administrators and one of the instructors “does it.” For the millage election and open house activity, these two people split the responsibility. Mr. Goff likes to delegate and seems to favor the self-starter, self-motivated, and those who follow-through on their commitments.

The one staff person who seemed to be the most disenchanted with the school and its operation stated that those who get ahead are “males, non-controversial males.” As an example, she provided a scenario that “when a program coordinator was hired for a specific program he totally ruined the program. Eventually, he was promoted to the administrative level, given a salary increase and he is doing things he is not certified to do. He doesn’t have the education background.” She further explained that “it’s not so much those that are hard workers – it’s the good ole boys – the golf buddies.”

The interviewees felt that Mr. Goff’s retirement may provide an opportunity for promoting some of the staff people. In the interview with two specific staff members, both felt they are being groomed as the superintendent’s successor. One reported that

most vo-tech superintendents will mention a person’s name at staff meetings and Mr. Goff will tell me “they are grooming that person for the



superintendent's position," but it is too premature to make that statement public for this school. Personally it is my goal to get the position.

The other candidate for the superintendency stated, "I'm next in line for Mr. Goff's job."

Both members of staff were born and raised within the vo-tech school district. Both stated that it helps knowing the community as their contacts have helped hire instructors at the school.

In describing the kind of people who work at the school, they were described as people-oriented, possessing a helping type personality, people with a good work ethic, very positive, confident, possesses a sense of humor, shows an interest, makes the extra effort, and hard working.

The issue of morale didn't leave anyone at a loss for words. Each echoed the other when describing morale of the students. The students enjoy being at the school, as it is clean, and it doesn't look like a school. One stated that morale actually varies with the demographics of the various segments of the student population. One population is at the school as a result of a welfare jobs program. The morale of that student group is somewhat less than for all other students. One stated

this place is kind of a choice place, you don't see much unhappiness here. The instructors take a lot pride in the students, they care about the kids, and take pride in each student. Administration is supportive of the employees' families. It's described as a friendly place to work, and Mr. Goff is comfortable from top to bottom.

Staff morale is very good, everyone is willing to help. You always hear "Good morning, or Good night," as stated by a staff member. And another stated,

overall people are glad to be here. Mr. Goff doesn't play favorites, we're professionals, and sometimes we do hear of some employees who don't think they are being treated fairly.

One instructor confirmed that

a big problem is the lack of respect for other people's property. If you use it, return it in the same shape—whether it be slide projectors, overheads, etc. We're not very secure in the area of equipment. Thirty-seven books walked out of the library stating that "Casper lives here."

The keys seem to be a problem. As stated by a program coordinator,

Too many people have a master key. When we started, the superintendent gave a submaster key that allowed access to a person's specific area. I got a master key because of the hours that I work. The key opens Mr. Goff's office and other offices.

### Organizational Structure

The board of education consists of five members representing various zones of the vo-tech school district. There are four male members and one female member. The four male members represent a retired Air Force major, two farmer/ranchers, and one retiree who works at the Capitol as a host. All four of them are long-time members of the communities in the vo-tech school district. The female member works at one of the district's major employers and is a member of a founding family in the largest town served by the vo-tech school.

The all-male administrative staff consists of the superintendent, the coordinator of the short-term adult education programs, and the director of special activities who also serves as a business management specialist. All of them were born and reared in the school district. The director of the short-term adult education programs continues to live in the same house where he was born farming the same land that his parents farmed.

Other staff members include the Educational Enhancement Center coordinator who also serves as the counselor (female) and business and industry services coordinator (male). In addition, the school employs a vocational cooperative coordinator who is

female and provides the negative case analysis of this site. There are eight full-time program instructors; six are female and two are male teaching in traditional male/female instructional positions.

Other staff members include a business manager and three secretaries, one of whom drives a bus. All are female. The plant manager also serves as a bus driver and is male.

The three-member administrative staff meets every Monday morning in the superintendent's office. The two members who meet with the superintendent are also vying for the superintendency as the superintendent has made it known to both that he will retire within the next two to three years. Both of them told me in separate interviews they feel qualified for the position based on being born and reared within the district.

### Funding

In the interviews that were conducted, the researcher asked each respondent to describe any problems the school may have and to describe why they feel they are successful. The most common problem mentioned was the need for more space. They have had to turn people away from the computer classes due to a lack of space. Budget was mentioned as a problem with a qualification that right now it is alright because "we don't have the high cost programs. We're full now – every nook and cranny is full." There are plans to expand the facility. There are not enough people to keep pace with the building maintenance and custodial activities.

One of the secretaries serves as the bus driver meaning that she leaves at 3:30 p.m. each day and she could be used for another hour in the office. One of the maintenance people also serves as a bus driver.

Another staff member, when asked to discuss any problems the school might have stated,

I haven't seen any since I've been here. This is the most easy going place I've been in. Everybody knows their job and they do it. They [the administration] don't interfere with other people.

All respondents confirmed that two problems do exist for the school – 1) the facilities need to be expanded; and 2) they are understaffed.

A board member related a story about the local senator who cut the school district out of receiving \$1.7 million in the beginning stages of the school.

I think it's a fantasy that we will still get the \$1.7 million, but I still hold out hope to get it. The right thing to do is give the money to the school. We're maxed out on space—we need to grow.

When the legislator failed to support the funding from state sources,

we took people from all the communities into these board meetings (to apply pressure on the legislator). We slapped the legislator. It was at that moment that I didn't realize there was so much politics in education – it's deeply connected. The legislator voted against anything the legislative leadership wanted as he didn't want to support any of their programs. He also disagreed with the location of the school, but the growth is actually on the west side of the county. It made sense to place the school where it is currently located. Rather than get the \$1.7 million from the legislature as we had been told, we got \$400,000 from the state to place in the building fund. In addition, another \$400,000 was received from the federal government to go with the \$2.6 million that was approved by the voters in the millage election.

After the school board members' election, the first board meeting was held in Center Ridge, then in two of the smaller schools in the vo-tech school district.

One of the state department coordinators held our hands for eight months as we had no money, no place to meet, and no employees. After the first millage election, we advertised and interviewed for the superintendent position. We hired Mr. Goff and he immediately hired a secretary. The district rented an office in Center Ridge by a discount department store for about one and one-half years. While occupying this space, they started

short-term adult evening classes, farm business management, and small business management classes.

There seems to be one area where he makes the decision without input from the group and that is the finances. "We're beginning to have a little more input into staff decisions."

### Relationship with Board of Education

#### And Special Interest Groups

One interesting fact that emerged during our conversations is that he plans to retire from the vo-tech school in four years. He willingly discussed the succession plan for filling the superintendency. We continued the discussion of the change in leadership at the local level.

When asked about the succession plan, he replied,

If the board is happy with the ways things are going, we will hire from within. There are two staff members who are currently working on their administrative certification. One of them will be promoted.

He declined to speculate on the successful candidate, but does know that one of two employees will get the job.

A profile of those being considered are that they are insiders,

they are well-liked, well-respected, and liked by the board. If the school has another bond issue or if the millage is to pass, their reputation would help get it done. Neither candidate possesses a master's degree, but will need it.

"They have not had a school board race within the last four years and three members have served since the formation of the district." The profile of the board of education's only female member is as follows: Her family are lifelong residents of the

county. She graduated from a small high school and attended college within commuting distance of her home majoring in computer programming. Mr. Goff was her high school superintendent.

When the board position presented itself as an opportunity, “I saw it as a way to be involved without teaching.” Early in her college years she wanted to be a math teacher and later decided to change her major. “I visited with a representative of the state department of vocational and technical education to see what it is all about and decided to run.”

The board member has been employed at one of Center Ridge’s largest employers for 14 years. “I have always been a computer programmer or analyst.” She wanted to find a position in computer science close to home and did.

One person asked her how much she gets paid for being a board member “which of course, is nothing.” If you seek a board position, “you have to run for the right reasons. I’m proud I have had a small part in making a difference.”

When asked to describe the school, she immediately described the visible characteristics. “The campus is very serene, a lovely setting. But the space constraint is a problem.” She went further to say that, “we do need more space for adult classes.”

I am proud to know the school and now go out there and know that everybody is proud of it. Our people are very easy to work with. People-oriented, almost a family. They get along very well. Bringing students together from the sending schools has been good for them. Nobody comes from a rival school—they come from Wheatland Vo-Tech. Students know that other students can be decent people; vo-tech campus breaks down some rivalry.

### Curricular Issues

Curriculum seems to be the weakest area of the school as stated by the superintendent.

We don't have what I really call high-tech programs. Our problem is getting farmers to approve an increase in the millage. It is like pulling teeth to get them to see the need . . . until we're about twice the size we are now can we move in the direction of hiring a curriculum director.

Another problem cited was "making sure that the school continually plans for technology. Other public school districts need to join the school." An expansion of the number of sending schools to the vo-tech school would also expand the vo-tech's valuation translating into more tax dollars for the school. Yet another problem is the "perception of students attending the vo-tech school indicated by Center Ridge's low participation of their juniors and seniors."

Textbook selection and curriculum are up to us. He turns this responsibility to the experience in the field. I can't say it has always been that way. It has been a growing relationship of trust and good judgment on the part of the instructors.

### Superintendent's Leadership Style

When asked to talk about the leadership traits for a superintendent of a vo-tech school he stated,

The leadership of the future will have to continue to involve people in the decisions with regard to change. The day of telling people to do it is no longer realistic. The trend [in the vo-tech schools] is to bring in people who have more vocational background. I am from a common education background – it might be helpful to hire people with more vocational training or background than what I have had.

When asked to reflect on his practice as a leader, he stated that “I make myself available. Teachers are paid extra duty assignment to sponsor student organizations.” This practice, to his knowledge, has not been exercised in other vo-tech schools. “I don’t make a lot of the decisions based on my opinion only. I don’t believe in hiding things from the school board.” When the board and the superintendent need to make a decision, “I typically will provide them with three alternative solutions. If I feel strongly about an issue, then I will make a recommendation as to the best course of action to take.”

He provided insight as to how decisions are made with regard to the appropriate programs to offer.

We have invited people into planning sessions, conducted focus groups to gain ideas, and have conducted surveys. We also conduct weekly staff meetings to gain input. In addition, we meet monthly with the campus administrators for strategic planning.

The director of short-term adult programs stated, “an idea for a technology planning committee came from the monthly administrators meeting.”

“Our programs direct the personnel needs; money does, too. We use the Carl Perkins funds to fund the position of school counselor.” He works directly with the finance secretary who codes the purchase order requisitions and works with her to establish an operating budget. The rules and regulations are pulled from other school’s policy manuals and from policies provided by the state board of education. The sick leave bank concept is new to them and they are now drafting a policy to present to the board of education for their consideration.



“Policy is set by the board, but truthfully, I recommend all the policy and I give it to them 30 days prior to a board meeting for their review.” The board member mentioned policy in that

when the board approves a policy, that policy allows each person to make decisions and they do have the freedom to make the decision. It’s not very autocratic out there, but the levels of communication have to be respected.

The board member stated,

He is very good about keeping the board informed. At the last meeting, he invited an applicant. He described his testing process for interviewing and selecting the successful candidate and how he eventually made his recommendation. We never go into the process in the dark. Before making the recommendation, he informs us of his process of selection. That buys faith in him when everyone is informed. You feel comfortable with the recommendation.

As an example of the superintendent’s selection process when he recently hired a custodian,

Mr. Goff asked the interviewee to select products, read them to see how they are used, clean a lavatory and stool to see if he would. The superintendent believes that because they had a great interview doesn’t necessarily mean they will be the best workers.

In addition, she states,

the board is not into the day-to-day running of the school. We do not have a board who believes that is their purpose. He answers directly to us. He would have final say on most major decisions. On personnel, his job is to make the recommendation and we accept his recommendation.

Each group has a level of decisions to make. Teachers have a budget and as long as they stay within the budget, they have some power over purchasing. They have policies in place for the bidding process. The curriculum has to stay within state guidelines, however, the teacher has a lot of input.

As stated by the school board member, “the school board policies define a lot of the decisions.”

The teachers and employees respect Mr. Goff. The superintendent has formed a committee to handle conflict resolution that is chaired by the director of student services.

“I don’t think we’ve ever had to use it.” On two different occasions, two nursing students were dismissed.

The instructors were well-documented, there was no recourse for us to override the instructor’s decision. If there is a conflict with a staff member or with a student, the board is informed about it.

The board member further describes the superintendent’s leadership style as, “He is the captain of the ship. He is a very good, hard worker.”

She describes the administration of the school as

very limited management. He is the superintendent and principal, and has been on board since day one. He did not come with a vo-tech background—his is common education. The final selection came down to him and an assistant superintendent of another vo-tech school. Both were excellent and qualified. We chose Mr. Goff because he is from a small community in the vo-tech district which counts for making it work.

She goes on to say, “he’s probably demanding, but fair is a good description of him.”

His relationship with the teachers comes from one of

respect for the role of the teacher and believes he has hired the best person for the position. He is very supportive of the teachers. He does conduct periodic performance reviews and sits in the classes as a part of the review process.

The board member states that,

the students seem to be very happy there. Very few discipline problems. We do have problems with attendance. The superintendent and teachers meet with students and their parents to discuss the training program and attendance. It is at these meetings, that Mr. Goff asks the students and parents to sign a contract relative to attendance in the program.

In reference to communication, another staff person stated, “If I thought something needed to be improved, I would go directly to Mr. Goff. I would assume everyone else does too.” And yet another member stated,

If I recommend a purchase it goes to him and he has the final authority. There is a pretty short decision-making timeline. He has the ultimate authority. I like to think that he values my decision enough to know that I will make the right decision.

A program coordinator stated,

on budgeting, Mr. Goff has the final power to accept or reject. I have more flexibility than any other staff member, my program is so different than a normal six-hour day. It’s our personal decision to decide when to take off and do other things—he thinks we’re overworked and underpaid.

Another stated that “each is in charge of their program and budget. He is really good about listening to the opinions of others. He will hold meetings on something really important.” He further stated “there are three of us who run things.”

When asked why the school is successful, the interviewees responded with the school tries very hard to fill the need. We’re so helpful. The employees feel very confident that we’re not stepping on toes. We can state our opinion and it will be taken as an opinion and not as a personal attack.

They state “the trust level is high.” One said,

I’ve never really been in a position where I didn’t have support. This job is the most loose-rein I have had. We can take lunch whenever, we can come and go, no one is watching over our shoulder or saying “you came back at 12:01.”

The employee further stated that, “everyone trusts that you are doing your job to keep the area going.”

Other success factors included the desire of the employees to be at the school.

“Anytime you have that attitude it’s going to be a success. Others like to be here because it is positive.”

Mr. Goff picks the people who can do the best job. He is hands-off and doesn’t intervene until asked for guidance. He is also hands-off with the students and values the instructor’s time and teaching.

The faculty is the driving force.

We take our jobs very seriously. They are professional. When you walk by the classroom, teachers are teaching and students are learning. The instructors expect high student outcomes, and they are successful, professional people.

Another stated, “the school is a success because it is a team effort. Not any one person is taking the credit. We all take ownership.”

One staff member said success

boils down to Mr. Goff. He is really on top of hiring people that want to do an excellent job. He hires quality people. The only staff members who have left did so because they were moving from the area. I don’t recall anybody being unhappy and quitting and there have been no terminations.

The superintendent’s leadership style as described by some of the staff members leaned toward the side of being a hands-off type leader.

He is very on top of it. Possesses a lot of insight, seems to make things happen, works with people with ease, and he is a warm, friendly person. He makes the school a very pleasant place for employees. He strives to keep harmony. As the school has grown, it is sometimes harder to keep people happy. The school is a pleasant place. He is very understanding of staff members with families. But they all respect him too much to take advantage of his hands-off style.

Other comments relative to his style were that he

is very approachable, things run smoothly, and he is very professional. He likes a lot of input. The staff members are not told what to do. He’s very

methodical, but relaxed. He makes sure the school keeps a presence within the communities at all times.

With one exception, the staff says, “he does everything by the book.” When I asked the one with the dissenting opinion who provided the negative case analysis, the staff member stated that “he had broken the law as it relates to special education.”

One member of staff stated,

He makes a point to notice the accomplishments of staff and students and provides a lot of positive feedback. He allows staff to complete work on their own without much supervision. People want to do good for him and you want to do something for him. He has a positive attitude on everything. He appreciates the staff and the job they do. It makes a big difference when you have someone patting you on the back. From the students, I see respect for him and he for them.

Mr. Goff doesn't “send a messenger” as he likes to personally visit with the staff with regard to decisions about duties or tasks. By some, he is considered “more a personal administrator rather than directive.”

He is the idea man. He truly backs his staff as long as they are right. He allows them to make decisions relative to the programs and he provides input. He looks to the teachers as the professionals to have successful programs.

One said,

He's here. I sometimes get irritated when he walks in the room and just stands there. But over the years I just go on about my business with the students.

He's very active and visible, the kids know who he is. He has open meetings, open communication, he knows the staff and community needs. He is a doer. He views his job as a way to come back home and really do something for the community. Anytime you take ownership in something the way he has, it has to be a better product. We don't have to be a puppet of his. We're free to make mistakes. He has said, “the only time I will ever get on to anybody, is when they're not doing something.”

He's the one we answer to. I love it here because of his style. He hired me to do a job and the only time I hear from him is when I ask him something. People are hired to do their job and he gets out of the way. He doesn't keep a thumb on you.

He takes a lot of pride in the school. He is contemplative and thoughtful. We're kind of a close knit organization, but communication is somewhat lacking. Each program tends to do their thing. Mr. Goff tries to hire the best person and give them the freedom to run the program as they see fit, and sometimes does this without providing a lot of supervision.

From the negative case analysis came,

He delegates a lot of things, but then he doesn't really follow up on it. He doesn't give a lot of help on it either. Several times he has put things on my desk. He gave me another one last month and I just tossed it. I held it until the last day it could be submitted waiting to meet with him.

From another staff member,

He is not a micromanager. He's involved with us and our families. He's a friend of our teachers, very professional, well-mannered. We don't have finely defined roles. We all just respond to whatever is needed.

### Summary

A description of this school provided by one staff member summed up the thoughts of all respondents. This particular respondent stated,

we're small in comparison to other vo-tech schools, everybody works well together. There is not room for personal conflict because we have to work so closely together. It's a little different atmosphere here than in most places I've worked because we're so small.

Another member of staff stated, "we're [the group] really compatible." Yet another stated, "the morale is excellent, excellent. It trickles down, it's just a friendly place to work." The respondents also stated the one reason the school is a success is because of the staff and administration.

Offered by another member of staff, “the superintendent pays for a full page ad in the Center Ridge and Conway newspapers to advertise the successes of the faculty and students.”

In addition, the school is considered more rural than any other vo-tech school in the state as it is located five miles from the closest public school and twelve miles from the largest public school in the district.

The administrative staff of the school is male. In contrast, the majority of the instructors are female teaching in traditional female-taught programs. The school is very quiet and disconnected from the cultural activities of the communities within the district; therefore, I did not witness nor hear of any social events that involved any of the community residents.

## CHAPTER V

### ANALYSIS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the cultural context of two vocational-technical school environments and to determine the influence of leadership on organizational culture in each school setting utilizing Douglas's (1982) typology of social organizations as the framework. The information provided in the analysis provides information relative to the similarities and differences of the grid and group contexts of the Oak Tree and Wheatland Vo-Tech Schools.

Douglas's (1982) typology of social organizations as a framework for studying the cultural context of the subject schools is useful in that an organization's preferred mode of operation or its bias of operation can be placed in and described through any one of the four typologies (see Appendix D).

#### Two Educational Environments

##### Oak Tree Vo-Tech School

An analysis of the data revealed that Douglas's collectivist social environment best describes the school. They are organized internally into separate compartments, there are strong insider relationships, there are various solutions to internal conflicts, the group made levies on each other in terms of time spent beyond the contracted work relationship



to perpetuate the group, and each employee performed a specialized role within the organization.

### Wheatland Vo-Tech School

Douglas's bureaucratic social environment best describes the school. The staff members were constrained by the contextual boundaries of the group, there exist formal internal divisions, segregating, delegating, and specialized activities. In addition, the relationships in the group seemed somewhat ambiguous. Sanctions were imposed on members of the group who did not fit the formal performance expectations whether they be job related or personal in context. The power is remote and impersonal.

### Similarities in the Cultures at Both Sites

Both vo-tech schools continue to be led by the same superintendent who was first hired to develop the campuses in each location. They are comparable in organizational structure and size with five programs at one site and eight at the other one. The programs of study are similar with one difference being the manufacturing programs as a part of the curriculum at Oak Tree. Both offer short-terms adult courses during the evening hours on the campuses. The physical space of each campus is also comparable in size and function. In comparison to the other 27 campuses across the state, these schools are considered small.

Each board of education is comprised of one female member and four male members. The female board members at each site are members of families who settled in the areas early on. I learned through the discussions with staff members that the board of

education is very important because of their community connections. The administrative staff members are male and the majority of instructors are female who teach the traditional male/female classes. The administrative staffs are locally connected.

The superintendents participate in civic organizations as each has been president of their respective chamber of commerce and continue to hold either a board position or an office. The news media is very important to each in that their relationships with the local newspapers prove to be their best advertising mediums. Each superintendent writes the press releases and develops some of the ad designs for release to the papers. Even though one school employs a part-time business manager and the other one full-time, both superintendents keep the school's budget and encumbrance detail at their office computers. During a visit to each site, I happened to walk in their office as both were working on the financial reports.

#### Differences in the Environment at Each Site

##### Grid

The collectivist description of Oak Tree provides for a low-grid tendency versus Wheatland's high-grid environment. The differences lie in the degree of control and autonomy each member perceives to possess as a member of the group. Competition for resources and among the staff, and the degree of insulation due to strict adherence to policy and procedure is also measure of degree in the grid dimension.

The grid dimension as defined by Douglas (1982) is:

the degree to which an individual's choices are constrained within a social system by imposed formal prescriptions such as role expectations, rules, and procedures. (Harris, 1985, pg. 620)

As an example, the high grid dimension is best depicted by the Pygmy society whose social order is undergirded by a complex though informal system based on trust. "Their feelings of independence, and this sense of basic trust are reflected in the attitude toward the forest" (de Vries, 1999, pg. 68). In their culture, trust is an antidote to a proliferation of rules and regulations.

In high grid societies such as the Pygmy, participation is an essential part of the group culture. No one is forced to do something against his or her will. Nobody is afraid to speak his or her mind. There is not much of a power gulf between members of the group. Sharing, cooperation, independence, and autonomy are among the basic values in pygmy society. Another one is the maintenance of peace among group members (de Vries, 1999).

In contrast to high-grid societies, low-grid societies at the extreme end are best described as competitive between individuals negotiated by the individual; therefore, roles are achieved rather than ascribed. "The individuals may strive for rewards and status in an open competitive environment" (Harris, 1995, pg. 621).

Individuals operating in a low grid environment do so at their own pace without the constraint of a formal or informal set of rules and regulations. Insulation from outside forces is minimized as the individual chooses the best set of defenses when negotiating outside the group. Control over individual choices and actions is low because the individual operates without the constraints imposed by formal rules and regulation.

## Oak Tree – Low Grid

Competition. Among the staff members in the Oak Tree Vo-Tech School competition is minimal and there is no apparent hierarchy of roles. The only area of competition that was mentioned by the subjects is the competition for microcomputers. Two of the teachers felt that the administrative offices [administrative assistant and two secretaries] had better computers to use than the teachers did. There is a technology plan proposed, but one of the teachers did not know when a decision would be made to implement the plan.

Each instructor is provided with \$1,000 at the beginning of each school year to purchase supplies and other necessary items for their program. After the \$1,000 is spent, there is no more money to add to the individual budgets. The teacher must wait until the beginning of the next school year for another allocation. Although there is no competition among staff members to determine who gets these dollars, Dr. Miller, Superintendent, still must approve each purchase.

There are very few chances to aspire to the next level of hierarchy as there have been no changes in the administrative group since the school began operating. Therefore, I did not hear or observe any instances of competition among the staff members relative to upward mobility in the organization.

Control. Even though a policy and procedure manual had been developed it was not relative to any of the issues we discussed. I asked one administrator for permission to review his manual. After a short wait while trying to find it, he handed me a dusty manual that did not appear as if it had been used since he received it. I noticed that it had not

been updated since it was developed which was shortly after the school district was formed. The administrators stated that “he [superintendent] leaves the decisions up to us and he never interferes unless he disagrees with us, and that hardly ever happens.”

Concerning the students, the staff is very cognizant of the socio/economic differences and wants the students to have the same opportunity regardless of their background. The Superintendent forms a selection and interview committee consisting of at least one instructor and one other administrator to interview applicants for employment vacancies. The process is very informal and the members of the group change relative to the vacancy. After the committee has made their recommendation, the Superintendent then makes a recommendation at the next regularly scheduled board of education meeting.

Autonomy. The staff members negotiate their own way through the social order without the constraint of imposed rules and regulations. The instructors were left completely at will to develop their curriculum and determine the content. The administrators referred to only one person as “she’s not like us. She comes from California and she has the same type personality as they do. She’s aloof.” The expressed differences by the administrators about each other and the instructors were explained away as if the differences were of no concern. Lines of hierarchy did not exist.

There is no bell to sound to indicate the beginning of class nor the end of class. The Superintendent says, “the instructors are professional and they should know when class begins and ends.” He related the reason for not using a bell to business and industry. He stated, “We’re training them to work in a business-like environment, and bells are not used in business and industry.”

Insulation. As stated previously, even though a rule book does exist it does not, however, impact the transactional ability of each member of the group. Only one staff member felt constrained by the social order. The staff members communicated freely across the hierarchical lines and transacted issues based on the best resource available rather than a prescribed resource. The preservation of the group based on the individual perspectives is very high.

In addition, the Superintendent trusts that the staff will show up on time and leave on time. He says, "I don't check when they come and go. They have a job to do. When they quit doing their job, then I will get concerned."

#### Wheatland – High Grid

Competition. Among the staff members as a whole, competition for position and resources was not apparent, but with one exception. The Superintendent has told both male members of the administrative group that he will retire. On an individual level he has told both of them that they need to become qualified for the position because when he leaves, one of them will be recommended to replace him.

The interview revealed that money is scarce at their school and that leaves the system constrained to add new programs or build buildings to accommodate the programs. The area of competition that seemed to pervade the organization was the ability of each person to keep and maintain their territory and the resources that had been allocated to them. Each instructor talked about their classroom and equipment in terms of "my" classroom or "my" equipment. One teacher has suggested that the security level of the key system be enforced to alleviate "things just walking off."

Control. The Superintendent at Wheatland makes all purchasing and employment decisions. All purchase requests are approved by the Superintendent, and he makes the decision whether to purchase or not. If he approves the purchase, he also assigns a purchase order number to the request and returns it to the initiator. The staff members fulfill the obligations of their job, but do not work outside their position to further the cause of the school's mission.

The Superintendent acting alone screens, interviews, and selects all employees. He also uses a specific skills test relative to the nature of the duties of a particular position. As an example, there were 22 applicants for a custodial position. In this situation, he chose to interview all 22. After narrowing the choice to one, he asked the applicant to clean a stool and sweep and clean the bathroom floor. He [the Superintendent] based his selection criteria on the applicant's ability to take orders, to read directions that were printed on the containers of the cleaning items, and to witness the interviewee's willingness to clean the bathroom. He felt that if the applicant could meet all three criteria, the applicant would make a good selection to recommend to the board of education.

Autonomy. Working through the channels seemed to be a way of life at Wheatland. The communication channels are formal as are the budgeting and finance procedures. All full-time instructors report directly to the Superintendent as he has chosen not to name a division head or principal over the day program division. He has hired a director, however, to manage all operations associated with the short-term adult training programs that are scheduled in the evening. This director reports to work at 2 p.m. each

day to oversee the evening operations. All decisions relative to the operation of the school are made by the Superintendent.

Dispute resolution or staff discipline issues are handled by a committee of staff members which is selected by the Superintendent whose group chairperson is also selected by the Superintendent. The chairperson is one of two administrators who has been asked to prepare himself for the superintendency upon Mr. Goff's retirement. Mr. Goff is thankful that the committee has not had to be used since the inception of the school.

Insulation. The degree of social separation between the administrative staff and all other staff members is high at Wheatland. There appeared to be very little interaction between the Superintendent and other staff members as well as between the other administrators and staff. Any interaction that did occur was issue-related and not for friendly social interaction. The Superintendent and both administrators seemed somewhat separated from the other staff members in terms of social interaction.

In addition, with the exception of the short-term adult director, no other staff members attended the board of education meeting. Three of them, however, did attend the supper prior to the board meeting.

### Group

The collectivist description of Oak Tree provides for a high group environment as opposed to Wheatland's bureaucratic low group tendency. The differences lie in the value each culture attributes to membership criteria, survival, life support and relationships within the group.



Gross and Rayner (1985) view the group dimension as the degree to which people value collective relationships and are committed to a social unit larger than the individual. “Group deals with the holistic aspect of social incorporation and the extent to which people’s lives are absorbed and sustained by corporate membership” (Harris, 1995, pg. 621).

The group dimension is not deterministic; therefore, the group dimension can be depicted on a continuum from high to low. Examples of high group tendencies are best depicted through the example of a Catholic convent of nuns whose sole purpose is to serve God without the disruption of worldly forces. On the other hand, the low group tendency is best depicted in the individualist dimension of a group setting.

The low-group experience is a competitive, entrepreneurial way of life where the individual is not strongly constrained by duty to other persons. (Gross and Rayner, 1985, pg. 6).

In the low-group dimension people negotiate their own way through the culture not relying on the attachment to a specific group as a means of support or of value to their long-term success. The latest example of the low-group tendency grew out of the phenomenon attached to the “Gen-Xers.” Because of their distrust for the new corporate contract they, in essence, are not loyal to the group dimension nor view it as a significant factor for their long-term success. Loyalty in the low-group dimension is virtually nonexistent as opposed to the high-group tendency of complete loyalty to the long-term success of the corporate goal.

### Oak Tree - High-Group

The interviews conducted at Oak Tree revealed there is one factor of success that stands above all others they describe. The strict insider/outsider rules, in their opinion, have more to do with their success than all others. They boast that the administrative staff is, in essence, connected to the communities within the vo-tech district. If they are not directly from the district, they were at least reared in close proximity to district boundary lines. Each interview made reference to the carpentry instructor. Even though he does not live inside district boundary lines, "he was a very successful teacher at the local high school" prior to employment in the vo-tech school. Membership in the group, therefore, is based on the local connections each person brings to the culture.

Survival of the group is extremely important. One custodian who also drives the school bus described it best when he said,

this vo-tech school is the best thing that's ever happened here. Not only are the people great to work with, it provides good jobs, and the kids enjoy it here.

Another employee who works on a part-time basis stated,

this school has been a godsend to me. At 75, I get to go to school as well as work here. It's been the best thing that's ever happened here.

An instructor said,

we all work together real well, we are here for the kids. It's a good place for them [students].

Their successes are stated in terms of how they have helped a student(s) and their compassion for the lives of the staff members. They related the health difficulties of some of their staff members or those of their family members.

Life support is evident by the few social distinctions. They conduct once-a-month staff meetings that include everyone. They are usually conducted during the lunch hour and the elderly part-time staff person has taken the responsibility of providing the meal that consists of brown beans with ham, homemade cornbread, and a homemade dessert. She considers it a part of her duty to the group and her reward is the compliments she gets from the staff. Each member of staff is given the opportunity to provide input either in the form of a report or asking for assistance with one of the school's projects or to share success stories about the students or staff.

The relationships among the staff are very important. They share a source of pride in that there have been very few personnel changes since the school opened. Some stated, "We're a family."

There are small groups within the large group who also share common interests and derive benefit from the association. One such group includes the directors, counselor, and the carpentry instructor. The group shares lunches together where "we solve a lot of problems," and organize hunting trips – their one chance to be "mountain men."

The meetings of the board of education begin with a meal and members of the staff are invited to join if they have been designated to provide a report to the members that evening. The members of the board and administration take pride in the fact that there have been no elections since the initial election of each member. The one race that almost happened, but didn't, was the result of "a disgruntled boyfriend. His girlfriend had been dismissed from the nursing program." He was declared disqualified because he lived outside the boundary lines of that specific zone represented on the board of education.

### Wheatland – Low Group

Wheatland exhibited a low-group tendency. I did not witness nor was I told of any group or social activities that in some cases might provide the glue for the group.

Membership was important only in the administrative group. The instructors' membership in the group was based on their availability at the time of employment rather than their connection to the community because of the school's remote rural setting.

The superintendent came back to the area after having been employed in public education in other states, and other towns in the state. He was born in a small town in the vo-tech school district. The two staff members who also are members of the administrative group and who have been identified as possible candidates to succeed the superintendent were born and reared within the district.

Survival of the group was based solely upon the commonality of their employment – the school provides jobs. They counted their successes in terms of the numbers of people they serve. They are very cognizant of the importance of student count relative to state funding as local funding sources (ad valorem taxes) are limited.

Wheatland staff members have less a need for group activities. When asked to discuss their staff activities, life support of the group was low as virtually there was no internal life support system evident. They would make reference to their program or directly to their relationship with the superintendent. With the exception of one stakeholder, they did not make reference to team work, group events, or make statements relative to "we" as most were relative to "I," or "me."

When one stakeholder was asked to describe the morale of the group, she said, “It’s better than it used to be. But it’s still not good. Everybody thinks that they’re overworked.” The member went further to state, “sometimes some programs receive preferential treatment over the others – it’s the nursing program.”

Relationships among staff members were not important. Each person is assigned a specialized role at the time of employment and those roles are static. The only exception is the one staff member who was transferred to another position due to complaints received from a principal of one of the sending schools.

Relationships were not discussed relative to the group dimensions, rather they were discussed from the perspective of the individual contributions of the members. None of the interviews reveal a strong social connection to the group nor were there any discussions of social relationships to other members of the group. At this point, there are two administrative staff members vying for the superintendent’s position when he retires. During the interview of each, neither person revealed the value of the other to the organization. The discussions were limited to the merits each one brings to the position. They each related from an individualistic perspective that they could be superintendent because each was born and reared within the district.

### Leadership Influence on the Two Educational Environments

The influence of leadership of founding superintendents on organizational culture can be traced through the Douglas (1982) typology of social environments. The Superintendent at Oak Tree began building the school and making decisions from a purely bureaucratic perspective. As time has passed, he has become more group oriented and

people focused. The staff members are asked to provide input relative to purchasing, curriculum, and program structure and management.

The Superintendent at Wheatland on the other hand, continues to approach the decision-making process in the same manner that he did when first hired to build the school. He approaches the decision-making process from a centralized perspective and the staff members negotiate, respond, and take ownership from individual perspectives.

The transformation of the superintendents' influence on organizational culture varied at each site. From their first style of leadership in the initial stages of building a school to the more recent stages of the schools' developments, one made a shift and the other one did not. One moved beyond the directive, autocratic approach to group-focused valuing input of the staff members. The other one still operates within the preferred mode of leadership that was useful in the initial stages of building the school and that is authoritarian. He seeks very little input from staff members, controls the budgeting and finance process, controls whom chairs school committees, and conducts the employment process himself.

Harris asked the question "Can leaders effect culture?" (1995, pg. 643). The findings of this research project indicate that indeed they do. I began this study with an operant bias that organizations are a direct reflection of the one charged to bring the group together. I now complete the study having answered Harris's question and confirming my opinion of leadership influence.

As a matter of interest relative to the Douglas typology of social environments, Harris's question was easier to answer given the bureaucratic style of leadership at Wheatland, but it was harder to answer given the collectivist style of leadership at Oak

Tree. The analysis of Oak Tree shows it to be a much more complex system with a host of players participating in the decision-making responsibilities of the school. The subjects state that Mr. Miller “is the one in charge” or “he’s the one who made it all happen” and this statement is certainly true. The difference, however, between his style and Mr. Goff’s is that he directed all school operations in the initial formation of the school, but his present-day style is to depend on the input and rationale of the staff members for the decisions that he makes. Mr. Goff on the other hand, continues to function in the same style of leadership as he did in the initial stages of the school’s formation. He directed the construction and startup of the school and continues to direct the school in the same manner. There is a distance or aloofness in which Mr. Goff operates as opposed to Mr. Miller’s need to seek the opinion of other staff members.

The two division heads at Oak Tree were the second and third persons to be hired at the school behind the Superintendent, Mr. Miller. They came to the school as experienced administrators – one a former high school principal from a neighboring public school district and the other one came from the local Job Training Partnership office having coordinated educational resources for qualified adults. Devolving power to these two division heads came easily for Mr. Miller as he talked about their ability to get things done.

The two division heads at Wheatland are the second generation of leadership in each position. One came to the school as a former bank vice president in the local community and the other one was a former high school teacher. Neither of which possessed any experience in either public school or vo-tech school administration. And one of these two people will eventually succeed Mr. Goff when he retires from the superintendency at Wheatland a fact confirmed by all three subjects during interviews with

each one. One succeeded a program director who retired after having spent his entire tenure in the vocational-technical education system. Each of the two has two or less years of experience in the system. The other administrative position is a new position and has been added since the retirement of the experienced division head. My analysis after visiting with Mr. Goff is that devolving power to each of these two seems to be hard for him to do based on the fact that he takes a great deal of pride in having built the school from the ground through current-day operations.

The analysis of leadership influence at Oak Tree shows it is a much more complex system. The interaction of leadership and culture is much harder to disentangle. On the other hand, leadership influence at Wheatland was much easier to delineate and define.

Harris's question "Can leaders effect culture?" (1995, pg. 643) was easy to answer for the Wheatland site and for the Oak Tree it was much harder to answer.

#### Summary of Differences in the Two Cultures

The bureaucratic description of the Wheatland Vo-Tech School depicts them as hierarchical in organizational design. Each member operates within a prescribed role which does not change except when the Superintendent changes it. As an example, he changed the job responsibilities of one of the administrators and the counselor and they conformed to the changes.

Because of its remote rural setting, the school is not a center of activity in the community. No groups take advantage of meeting on the campus because of the distance. The staff members focus on achieving their job task and are very concerned about the numbers of students they train. The State Department allocates funds to the school based



on the numbers of programs offered. In addition, the school receives funds based on the local ad valorem tax base. There has been no increase in the local tax base, therefore, there has been no increase in funds from local sources since the school began operations. Surviving is the mode of operation.

A culture described the opposite of bureaucratic is collectivist which is descriptive of the Oak Tree culture. Their high group/low grid culture provides for a lot of autonomy as there are no formal sets of rules and regulations that control their actions and decisions.

There are strict insider/outsider criteria for any new members who may become a part of the organization. Acceptance in this culture is based on the individual's connections to the communities the district serves. Two of the three administrators were born and raised in the district and the other has been a lifelong resident of the county. Connections are important.

Group survival is important and in the best interest of the students. Opposed to Wheatland's concern for numbers of students served, Oak Tree is concerned about the manner in which they assist a student. Their curriculum is designed taking into account the benefits to be gained by the students. They talked very little about funding allocations, therefore, they were not constrained in their ability to be creative with the resources they have available to them. Their focus is on student success.

There is no differentiation in role status. Very seldom was there a reference made to the hierarchy, everyone is on a first name basis. At Wheatland, however, everyone addresses the other in a formal fashion usually with a "Mr." or "Ms."

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

TABLE II  
DESCRIPTION OF GRID/GROUP TYPOLOGY

Bureaucratic	Corporatist
<p>Wheatland</p> <p>High Grid/Low Group</p> <p>Hierarchical</p> <p>Little interaction among members</p> <p>No group goals</p> <p>Surviving is the mode of operation</p> <p>Prescribed roles</p> <p>Focused on getting the job done</p>	<p>High Grid/High Group</p>
Individualist	Collectivist
<p>Low Grid/Low Group</p>	<p>Oak Tree</p> <p>Low Grid/High Group</p> <p>Autonomy</p> <p>Group Membership</p> <p>Group Survival</p> <p>Ascribed Roles</p> <p>No differentiation in role status</p> <p>Focused on Student Success</p>

## CHAPTER VI

### FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter VI presents some ideas relative to naturalistic inquiry taken from the case studies conducted of each site. An answer to the proposed research question is stated, and recommendations for further research are given.

#### Findings

In summary, the culture of the Oak Tree Vocational-Technical School is best described as Collectivist (Low Grid/High Group). The members experience a high degree of autonomy, group membership is important for the survival of the group, there is no differentiation in role status, and each staff member spoke in terms of student benefits and their success as a result of being at Oak Tree. They are a thriving group. Leadership influence is active and open.

Wheatland is best described as Bureaucratic (High Grid/ Low Group). They are hierarchical in structure, there is little interaction among staff members, there are no group goals other than those focused on completing the task at hand, and surviving is the mode of operation. Leadership influence is remote and rigid, and adherence to formal communication lines and rules and regulations are important.

The purpose of this study was to examine the cultural context of two vocational-technical training centers and to determine the influence of leadership on organizational culture in each school setting. Douglas's (1982) typology of social environments is the theoretical framework for the study.

An examination of the cultures and the influence of leadership in each school setting was successfully accomplished utilizing Douglas's typology of social environments.

Leadership authority is generally considered to consist of certain styles that will work in all contexts. Vocational-technical institutions are generally considered to possess a certain success structure for labor networks relative to the local training network. There are studies to indicate, however, that the success characteristics of a particular leadership style are not appropriate for all organizational contexts.

Both vo-tech schools are similarly designed for the purpose of providing skills training relative to the local demand for specific skills. The results of the case studies revealed two distinct types of leadership styles – one bureaucratic/autocratic and one more people-oriented who worked closely with the staff members. Based on the opinion of staff members, board members, and community people both are considered successful school administrators in their particular setting.

### Conclusions and Implications

Leadership influence at each site on the formation of the school to present day operations provided a rich study in the contrast of influence on each site. The bureaucratic style of the Wheatland Superintendent was much easier to delineate than the more casual style of leadership at Oak Tree.

Mr. Goff, Wheatland, retained the bureaucratic style of influence that he employed in the early stages of developing the school. He has chosen not to hire a principal or director of students' services to deal with student issues rather he is both superintendent and principal. The administrative functions of program coordination are left to two division heads. However, it is apparent that actual program delivery only takes place at his direction.

Even though Mr. Goff spoke of his confidence in the abilities of both directors to carry out their responsibilities effectively, I did not witness nor have reason to note that either director operated with any autonomy.

On the other hand, Mr. Miller, Superintendent at Oak Tree, chose to devolve some of the leadership responsibilities as the organization matured. As a result, he has moved from a bureaucratic influence required in the initial stages of building the system to handing off some of the administrative operations of the school to two directors who have distinct responsibilities for the daytime program operations, and for the short-term adult and business and industry training initiatives. He is comfortable in the delegation of these duties because he has a preference for making and maintaining the political contacts who reside outside the walls of the school. The director for the full-time day programs is a former public high school principal and as a result deals directly with student issues apart from the involvement of the superintendent. The director does keep the superintendent informed of each action, but the superintendent does not require that he [the superintendent] be an active part in any of the situations that the director must deal with.

Both directors at the Oak Tree school did state that "he's [the superintendent] in charge." However, I did not observe any specific instance in which either director felt

compelled to seek advice from the superintendent in order to resolve the situation. My observations and interview notes allowed me to conclude that Mr. Miller has a high degree of comfort with the administrative abilities of each director. As a result each director operates with autonomy to carry out their responsibilities for the school.

It's important to note again here that the commonality in style which both superintendents possess is in the decisions that are made based on purchasing. All purchasing decisions are held close at hand by both superintendents. The difference is that Mr. Miller asks for the rationale from each person who makes a request prior to granting the request. Mr. Goff, on the other hand, seeks very little clarification concerning purchases because most purchases are made once a year with little need to make an intermittent request.

Therefore, based on the findings above, I have listed four conclusions relative to theory, research and practice concerning the purpose and intent of the case study.

1. A major question investigated here concerned the cultural context of two vocational-technical training centers and the influence of leadership on organizational culture in each setting. The evidence revealed through the interviews and observations two distinct leadership types in schools that are characterized in two different typologies of Douglas's grid/group framework.

Where there is an absence of research relative to effective leadership styles in the vocational school setting, the grid/group typology is found to be a useful theoretical framework for extending the research.

2. My research effort revealed a discrepancy between the questionnaire developed by Harris (1998), and the actual observations of the setting and conclusions drawn from the interviews. The instrument proved useful in garnering opinions of each participant about their local setting relative to fiscal resources, work and labor activities, authority structures, financial and budgetary decisions, and communication channels. It was used, however, as one source of information. It was not used for, nor was it intended to be used as a scientific survey. The qualitative interviews are much more descriptive and include data that illustrates and adds to the data taken from the instrument.

The instrument brought to light individual perceptions of leadership and leadership influence on the five areas relative to the operational aspects of the cultures. Research reveals a strong bureaucratic core to every successful organization relative to the operations of the organization. The survey confirmed that the participants perceived a strong bureaucratic core in their relative culture.

3. The data revealed that one Superintendent made a shift from a bureaucratic/autocratic style useful in the initial stages of developing the school to being more focused on the people aspects of the organization as the organization matures. The other Superintendent continues to operate in the bureaucratic state even though the organization has matured. Each style, however, is successful in their particular setting.
4. The research effort revealed that both superintendents made one set of decisions independent of all others. Budgeting and the purchasing process

was the one area of operations that the Superintendents did not use others to aid him in the decision.

### Recommendations

The conclusions and implications suggest that using Douglas's (1982) grid/group typology could be transferred to other contexts. The Douglas model is not a static description of a culture rather it is a transforming description of a culture over a period of time. The model allowed me to track the influence of founding superintendents from the initial stages of the schools' developments to their present day operations.

The Douglas model could be coupled with other theoretical framework such as network analysis especially when more information is needed to determine zones of influence within the culture or to determine specific power structures within the group. The use of network analysis as a theoretical framework coupled with Douglas's (1982) Typology of Social Environments would allow the researcher to gain a finite definition of the mutual friendships, small cliques, cleavages between groups, and general patterns of group integration and disintegration (Major, pg. 25) that may not become readily apparent through observation or interviews.

Network analysis provides a precise way to define important social conception, a theoretical alternative to the assumption of independent social actors, and a framework for testing theories about structured social relationships. (Wasserman & Faust, 1994, pg. 17)

In addition, using the Douglas typology may be useful for identifying where a Superintendent should spend time and effort in either reinforcing the culture or making an



effort to implement change where needed to enhance the school's effectiveness in the delivery of its mission.

Other items that could be researched are, first more research needs to be conducted relative to leadership in the vocational-technical school setting. In particular, the state in particular in this study is currently experiencing a shift in state leadership and a shift at the local vocational-technical school level. The state is unique when compared to the other 49 states in that its director's position is considered one part of the educational leadership triad at the state level. The network of vo-tech schools in the state have matured to the point that the first generation of superintendent leadership has now given way to second and third generations of leadership. Some fear it for the worse and some for the better. In any event, the state has not formulated a specific definition of successful leadership in the vo-tech school. Douglas's typology could aid in the development of a definition of successful leadership in the vo-tech school.

The second issue that needs to be researched is the impact the local superintendent's leadership has in the delivery of business and industry training in the local network. In this state, the vo-tech school was formed on the premise that the primary reason it exists is to train for business and industry. Some schools are successful at fulfilling this mission some are not. Douglas's model could provide insight in the success factors of those schools who are fulfilling the mission to train for business and industry. Finally, the third issue that could be researched is how to develop an effective leadership cadre who will be ready to step in when retirement begins to take out some of the most successful leaders in the system. An in-depth study of existing leadership networks

utilizing Douglas's model and the implication for leadership in the organization would provide insight into this phenomenon.

In summary, what does this study mean for the influence of superintendent leadership? This case study analysis provides a window for viewing schools and leadership influence as they currently exist. The results provide an opportunity for the leadership to make shifts or changes in the culture where the school would be more successful in fulfilling its mission to the local labor networks.

As found in the Oak Tree Vocational-Technical School, Mr. Miller, the superintendent, devolved leadership responsibilities to two division heads as the school system became mature in its operations. He then became more focused on developing and maintaining social and political contacts in the interest of the school. Mr. Miller moved from the initial work style of bureaucratic to collectivist as defined by Douglas (1982). Mr. Goff, superintendent at Wheatland Vocational-Technical School, chose to remain in the bureaucratic mode of leadership throughout the development of the school and at present state. Even though there are two division heads charged with the responsibility of daytime program operations and evening operations, respectively, he chooses to make all decisions relative to those operations.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM



## CONSENT FORM

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby authorize or direct Andrea Mason Kelly, or associates or assistants of her choosing, to perform the following treatment or procedure.

I hereby agree that I will participate in a short interview with the forenamed researcher for the purpose of collecting data to include in the written narrative of her dissertation. The interview as I understand will be no longer than thirty to forty minutes. In addition I also give consent to complete a short survey instrument concerning opinions about the organization in which I work.

I also understand that pseudonyms will be assigned for my name and the school in which I work thereby guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality. In addition the information taken from my interview will be recorded in such a manner that I cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to me.

I will not experience any possible discomforts or risks as a result of the researcher's efforts to gain information from me nor as a result of the documentation of the information that I give her.

As a participant, I may find the final written document a piece of information useful for further study into my organization's culture in the areas of membership criteria, degree of autonomy members of my organization perceive they possess, insulation, and life support.

This procedure is done as part of an investigation entitled "Case Studies of the Influence of Leadership of Founding Superintendents on Organizational Culture in Two Vocational-Technical School Settings." The purpose of the procedure is to determine the cultural context within which the social networks of two vocational-technical schools go about doing their business and to determine the extent to which the leader influences their particular culture.

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

-page 2-

I may contact Andrea Mason Kelly at telephone number 405-377-1309. I may also contact Gay Clarkson, Institutional Review Board Executive Secretary, 305 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078; telephone number:(405) 744-5700.

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ (a.m./p.m.)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject before requesting the subject to sign it.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Project Director

APPENDIX B

SUPERINTENDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

## Superintendent Questionnaire

---

Date

---

Time

---

Location

---

Superintendent

---

Site

### Background:

1. How long have you been in this position?
2. How many students, faculty, and staff are in your district?
3. What is your educational and professional experience?

### Management Profile:

1. What is the mission of your school district?  
  
What have you done to accomplish this mission?  
  
How is the curriculum of your school organized to meet this mission?
2. What have you done to promote your school district in the community and among your own staff?
3. What have you done to improve the instructional program in your district?
4. What problems have you faced in managing district operations such as budget and financial planning, facilities, personnel, rules, regulations, and support services?  
  
How have you overcome these problems?
5. What do you do for the training and development of your staff?
6. As you look down the road five or ten years, life will be different in your school district. What are you doing now to prepare your school for these changes?
7. Your job has many facets. How do you organize your work to stay on top of all these things?  
(Erlandson, et al. 1991.)

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

## Participant Questionnaire

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Date

---

Time

---

Location

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Participant

Background:

1. What is your position in this school?
2. How long have you been in this position?
3. What is your educational and professional experience?

School District Profile:

1. How would you describe this vo-tech school?
2. How would you describe the administration of this school?
3. How would you describe the superintendent's management style?
4. How are decisions made here?
5. What effect do you see the superintendent's job having on other people getting their jobs done (students as learners, teachers as instructors, etc.)?
6. How would you describe faculty, staff, and student morale?
7. Why is the school a success?
8. What kind of people work here? Who usually gets ahead in the long term?
9. What problems do you see at this vo-tech school?
10. What else should I know to get an accurate picture of the school?
11. In order to gain a clear understanding of the school, I need to get as many different viewpoints as possible. Who should I interview to gain a variety of perspectives?
12. What professional affiliations do you have?

APPENDIX D

YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL  
CULTURE

### YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Your Working Environment is ....	INDIVIDUALISTIC Autonomous		BUREAUCRATIC Authoritarian		CORPORATE Hierarchical		COLLECTIVE Egalitarian	
Fiscal Resources are.....	Competitively Obtained		Institutionally Controlled		Institutionally Controlled		Competitively Obtained	
	Individually Owned		Corporately Owned		Corporately Owned		Corporately Owned	
Work and Labor Activities are.....	Self-directed Individually		Authority-directed		Authority-directed Group		Self-directed Group	
	Initiated		Individually Focused		Initiated		Focused	
Authority Structures are.....	Decentralized		Centralized		Centralized		Decentralized	
	Fragmented		Fragmented		Coordinated		Coordinated	
Financial and Budgetary Decisions are.....	Individually Negotiated		Institutionally Prescribed		Institutionally Prescribed		Individually Negotiated	
	Individually Regulated		Individually Regulated		Corporately Regulated		Corporately Regulated	
Communication Channels are.....	Informal		Formal		Formal		Informal	
	Individually Regulated		Individually Regulated		Corporately Regulated		Corporately Regulated	

TOTAL

TOTAL

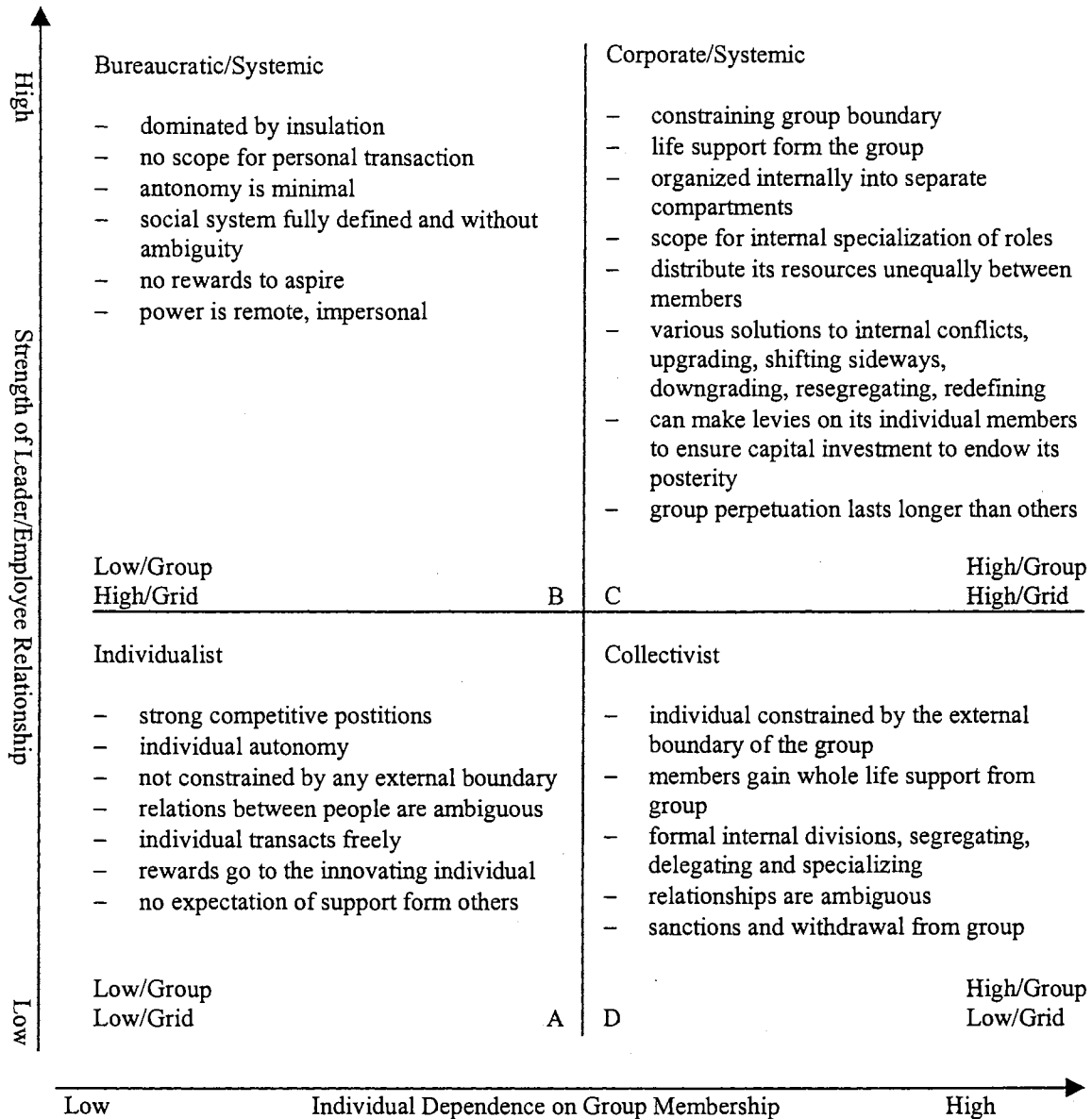
TOTAL

TOTAL



APPENDIX E

MARY DOUGLAS'S (1982) TYPOLOGY  
ENVIRONMENTS



Grid = overall strength of the leader and employee relationship

Group = the degree to which individual members define their relationship to the group; or depends on their membership in a definable social unit

APPENDIX F

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

APPROVAL FORM

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 06-27-97

IRB#: ED-97-109

**Proposal Title:** CASE STUDIES OF THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP OF FOUNDING  
SUPERINTENDENTS ON ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN TWO VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL  
SCHOOL SETTINGS

**Principal Investigator(s):** Edward L. Harris, Andrea Mason Kelly

**Reviewed and Processed as:** Exempt

**Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s):** Approved

ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT  
NEXT MEETING, AS WELL AS ARE SUBJECT TO MONITORING AT ANY TIME DURING THE  
APPROVAL PERIOD.

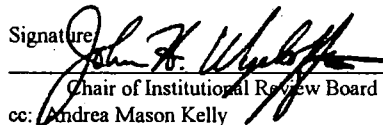
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR DATA COLLECTION FOR A ONE CALENDAR YEAR  
PERIOD AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE  
SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.

ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

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

Signature

  
Chair of Institutional Review Board

cc: Andrea Mason Kelly

Date: July 10, 1997

## VITA

Andrea Lou Mason Kelly

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: CASE STUDIES OF LEADERSHIP INFLUENCE OF FOUNDING SUPERINTENDENTS ON ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN TWO VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOL SETTINGS

Major Field: Educational Administration

### Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Hot Springs, Arkansas, on February 21, 1952, the daughter of James and Lou Mason.

Education: Graduated from Fairland High School, Fairland, Oklahoma in May 1970; received Associate of Art degree in Business Administration from Northeastern Oklahoma A&M Junior College, Miami, Oklahoma in May 1972; Bachelor of Science degree in Business Education from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, in May 1975 and a Master of Science degree in Business Education from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, in June 1981. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University in December, 1999.

Experience: Taught secondary school business subjects at Billings, Oklahoma; and secondary school business subjects as well as junior high school English at Agra, Oklahoma. In addition, taught at the Meridian Technology Center as a secondary and post-secondary instructor of business organization and management, served as Director of Extension Education Programs, then Director of Business Development. Currently serve as Assistant Superintendent of the Meridian Technology Center, Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Professional Memberships: Oklahoma Vocational Association, American Vocational Association.