A GRID AND GROUP REVIEW OF SELECTED

SUPERINTENDENTS' TENURE:

FOUR CASE STUDIES

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CHAPTER I

Design of the Study

Between 1820 and 1860 the responsibilities of administering a school fell on

school board members, who became overwhelmed with their enormous duties. Thus, the

job of the superintendent began to form sometime in the 1840's (McCloud & McKenzie,

1994). Since then, superintendents and school board members seem to have unclear

views of their leadership roles in the school. How the superintendent views his/her role is

often different from how the school board views the superintendent's role, and vice-

versa.

Chance and Capps (1992) state a "generally accepted view of school district

administration is that a board of education should legislate policies and appraise the

results and the superintendent should serve as the chief executive who implements these

policies" (p. 4). However, "this simplistic view of the relationship between the

superintendent and school board rarely exists in the real world," (p. 4) and over time,

these views of each other often become tainted with mistrust. When the superintendent

and school board do not see eye-to-eye on the others' roles, the superintendent is usually

fired (Renchler, 1992), which causes high superintendent turnover (McCloud &

McKenzie, 1994). The "superintendent turnover problem is caused by the unrealistic

expectations school boards. . . have about what. . . superintendents can accomplish"
(Renchler, 1992).

School board members and superintendents often question each others' roles
because so much is at stake: the students' education, the reputation of the community,
and the school district itself. According to the American Association of School
Administrators (1994), without superintendents and school boards knowing each other's
roles, schools cannot operate effectively. Both school board members and
superintendents need to know that they perceive roles differently, which destabilizes their
relationship and often causes short tenure for superintendents (McAdams & Cressman,
1997). Therefore, according to the American Association of School Administrators
(1994), "It is necessary that both parties examine their roles and responsibilities" (p. 1).
The knowledge and respect of leadership roles must be defined and communicated by
each school board and its superintendent for schools to be successful. The role of the
school board member seems to be clear because of the law. However, the role of the
superintendent is often less clearly defined. School board members often perceive the
role of the superintendent differently than the superintendent views his or her own role as
leader of the district (McAdams & Cressman, 1997).

Today's, superintendents see their leadership in the public school system as chief
executive officers and leaders (Peterson, 1998) of the organization, maintaining many
roles during their tenure as top educational leaders of their districts (Soares & Soares,
2000). Leadership has been defined by many theorists, researchers and businessmen. A
leader is one who is successful at getting people to follow him or her. A respected
authority on leadership defined leadership as those activities engaged in by an individual

or members of a group that contribute significantly to the development and maintenance of role effective group performance (Bass, 1990). The way in which superintendents execute their leadership responsibilities defines, states, and most importantly, models their own core values (Kelleher, 2002).

Besides being effective leaders, many superintendents see their roles as being effective managers. Some of these roles/responsibilities include: finances, curriculum and instruction, personnel issues, and safety. "Being a superintendent requires a unique blend of leadership, management, instructional, political, and operational skills needed in few other jobs" (Council of the Great City Schools, 2000, p. 6).

While some superintendents see their role as being a leader, others see their role as being managers, and yet others see their role as being both leader and manager. When these perceptions conflict with the board members' perceptions of the role of the superintendent, conflicts between the two parties arise, and these conflicts "are not rare" (Burlingame, 1977, p. 2). Thus, because the school board has the power to hire and fire superintendents, one of the greatest challenges facing today's superintendents is keeping the job. The Council of the Great City Schools (2000) declares that the superintendency is "a job that turns over too frequently" (p. 6). "Turnover has been taken to mean. . . involuntary movement of superintendents from one district to another" (Burlingame, 1977, p. 6). Therefore, superintendents must ensure that school boards judge them on their performances (Kelleher, 2002) and not anything else. But because some school board members let feelings or personal agendas get in the way of fair evaluations, short superintendent tenure is an ever-growing problem in our country and in our state.

The 1990 national average tenure for superintendents was 5.76 years (Yee &

Cuban, 1996). The Council of the Great City Schools (2000) reports that the average

tenure of school superintendents declined from two and three-fourths years in 1997 to

two and one half years in 1999. "Roughly one superintendent of every five (20%) is new

to his or her district each fall" (Burlingame, 1977, p. 6).

Problem Statement

In school districts, superintendents are the most influential administrators

(Andero, 2000). Therefore, school superintendents hold a key leadership role (Peterson,

1998). Renchler (1992) adds that the superintendent must be "in position long enough to

effect meaningful educational change" (p. 1).

Peterson (1998) proposes that a superintendent promotes educational change

through his or her personal belief about education and the organization's goals. This

belief is turned into a vision, "a set of professional norms that shape organizational

activities toward a desired state" (p. 9). The superintendent's beliefs and visions are

paramount because every decision is built on those platforms. Once the vision is

established, each school and its community incorporates the vision into specific goals,

which are then slowly carried out over time. The superintendent must have the school

board members' support of the goals in order for the seen visions to be carried out in full.

Frequently, these goals take time to accomplish. Thus, it is imperative that

superintendents stay in their positions long enough to make improvements. The American

Association of School Administrators (1994) claims that superintendents with a long

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tenure instill a "sense of confidence in their school leadership," (p. 8) and can ultimately attain their goals.

However, The Council of Great City Schools (2000) insists that the average tenure of school superintendents is only 2.5 years, which is not long enough to implement significant change. This average has dropped significantly over the past 12 years. In 1990 the average tenure was 5.76 years (Yee & Cuban, 1996). The short superintendent tenures impair the superintendent's ability to lead schools in changing times. Turnover, as seen by the American Association of School Administrators (1994), often seems to occur just when achieving vital goals is at its peak. Renchler (1992) states, "the educational careers of students are placed at risk when superintendents lose their jobs" (p. 3).

Although it is statistically probable most superintendents will stay in their position a maximum of five years, there are some superintendents with longer tenure. One possible reason for this discrepancy can be found in cultural theory, which takes into consideration such factors as power, authority, cultural bias and role expectation. Mary Douglas's (1982) grid and group typology will be used as a theoretical lens to explain the cultural of school districts where superintendents have had a long tenure. Harris (1995) explained Douglas's model can be used to represent four possibilities of social environments. These four social environments will be explained in the theoretical framework section.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe in grid and group terms the characteristics of successful superintendents that lead to longer than national average superintendent tenure.

Research Questions

The study examined the characteristics of school superintendents, who have served as superintendent in their current assignment for more than five years.

1. What are selected school superintendents' and school board members' perceptions about the leadership role of the superintendent?

2. How does the superintendent handle political relationships within the school and the community?

3. How is Mary Douglas's cultural theory useful in explaining the cultural setting within which school superintendents must operate?

4. What are the relationships within a community that enable a superintendent to be retained for a lengthy time period?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this study was the grid and group theory. This theory was developed by Mary Douglas, a British anthropologist. According to Harris

(1995), "Mary Douglas provides a typology that enables researchers to meet the conceptual and methodological challenges inherent in cultural inquiry" (p. 619). In her book, *In the Active Voice*, Douglas (1982) "identifies the individual as a valuable cultural member and decision maker and explains the complex, dynamic interplay between the individual and the social environment" (p. 620).

The grid dimension refers to the degree to which an individual's choices are constrained within a social system by imposed formal prescription such as role expectations, rules, and procedures (Douglas, 1982). The group dimension represents the degree to which people value collective relationships and are committed to a social unit larger than individual (Gross & Rayner, 1985).

Harris (1995) describes the four possible social environments within which a school district can be operating. "In Individualist (low grid, low group) environments, relationships and experiences of the individual are not constrained by imposed formal rules or traditions. Role status and rewards are competitive and are contingent on existing, temporal standards. The emphasis on social distinction among individuals is submerged, there are few insider-outsider screens, and little value is placed on long-term corporate survival" (p. 623).

"Bureaucratic Systemic (high grid, low group) contexts offer little individual autonomy. They are often hierarchical environments, and the classifying criteria focus on such factors as race, gender, family heritage, or ancestry. Individual behavior is fully defined and without ambiguity. Cultural members have meaningful relationships and life-support networks outside of the group; and, little value is placed on group goals or survival" (p. 623).

"In Corporate Systemic (high grid, high group) contexts, social relationships and experiences are influenced by boundaries maintained against outsiders by the group. Individual identification is heavily derived from group membership. Individual behavior is subject to controls exercised in the name of the group. Roles are hierarchical; at the top of the hierarchy, roles have unique value and power (generally limited to a smaller number of experts). There are many role distinctions at the middle and bottom rungs. Perpetuation of traditions and group survival are of the utmost importance" (p. 623-624).

"Collectivist (low grid, high group) contexts have few social distinctions. Role status is competitive, yet because of the strong group influence, rules for status definitions and placement are more stable than in weak group societies. The perpetuation of corporate goals and group survival are highly valued" (p. 624).

"Central to Douglas's theory is that each of the above social environments leads to a distinctive cultural bias, or unique way of looking at the world. Only a hermit, one who rejects the value of social relationships and chooses to live apart from society, is completely free from the demands of grid and group. Yet, the hermit also has a cultural bias, characterized by extreme individual autonomy and isolation. Further, the theory is not intended to portray social environments as static or motionless, but rather, each way of life . . . is a vigorous and precarious dynamic process" (p. 624).
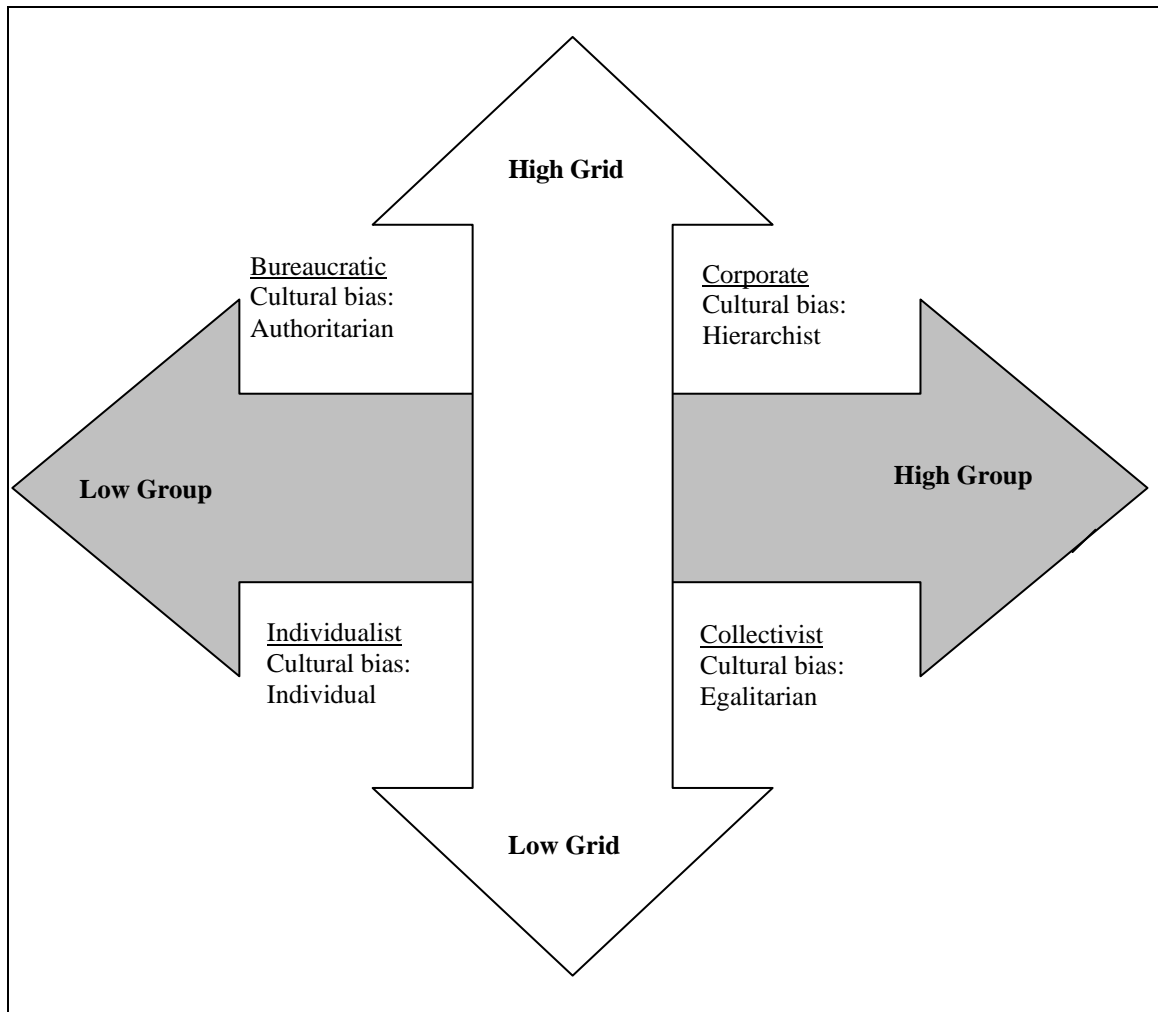
Figure 1. Mary Douglas's typology of social environment prototypes.

In analyzing the leadership role of the superintendent according to the superintendent and according to school board members, Douglas's model of grid and group provided framework to evaluate the superintendent's leadership role. The relationship between school board members and superintendents provides a social environment that can be placed on a grid and group model. The model for both grid and group contains high and low ranges.

The group dimension measures the possible range of the strength of group ties from the lowest of associations to tightly knit groups (Spickard, 1989). An example of a

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high group rating would be a school where strong allegiance is passed from generation to generation. Therefore, the school would be the site of many community activities (Harris, 1995). A low group environment would be a school with few community-school activities. People tend to be self-centered and move through on their own behalf. Individual is priority (Gross & Rayner, 1985).

The grid dimension measures the degree to which one is constrained by a set of rules. It "focuses on an individual's obligations to others" (Spickard, 1989, p.157). An example of high grid would be a social context with roles and rules dominating life choices. Harris (1995) says an example of low grid would be a social situation where "individual autonomy and freedom in role choices" (p. 623) exist.

Methodology

In this study, the participants (superintendents, board members, and principals) were asked seven grand tour questions. Both superintendents, school board members and principals were asked similar questions. The participants completed a survey that helped place the schools in certain quadrants of the Douglas grid and group matrix. Other information about the school district was gathered from a review of other sources such as financial reports, board meeting minutes and newspaper articles. Some information was obtained from school districts and other information was obtained at the State Department of Education.

This was a qualitative case study, where the researcher observed the day-to-day life of superintendents, school board members and principals. According to Miles and

Huberman (1994), qualitative research attempts to capture data on the local actors from the "inside" through a process of deep attentiveness of empathetic understanding and of suspending or "bracketing" preconceptions about the topics under discussion. The qualitative method utilized was through the use of interviews, which were tape recorded, transcribed, and carefully analyzed to identify any possible recurring themes.

The interviews and observations were conducted in four school facilities. These schools were located within 50 miles of metropolitan areas in the Central United States.

Interview Questions

These seven questions were asked of the superintendents:

1. Tell me your background in education.

2. Why did you want to become a superintendent?

3. What characteristics do you possess that have enabled you to have a lengthy tenure in your current position?

4. What leadership style do you utilize?

5. How do you handle political relationships within the school and the community?

6. How do you communicate with the school board?

7. Is there anything else that has allowed you to be successful in your current position?

These seven questions were asked of the school board members and principals:

1. Tell me your background in education.

2. Why did you want to become a principal/board member?

3. What characteristics does your superintendent possess that have enabled him or her to have a lengthy tenure in this school district?

4. What leadership style does the superintendent utilize?

5. How does the superintendent handle political relationships within the school and the community?

6. How does the superintendent communicate with the school board and other patrons?

7. Is there anything else you would like to discuss about the superintendent that allows for success?

Significance of the Study

It is expected that the trend of short superintendent tenure will continue due to school board members and superintendents having differing perceptions of the leadership role of the superintendent. Districts with short tenured superintendents often cannot operate effectively (American Association of School Administrators, 1994). By reviewing characteristics of long-tenured superintendents, it is expected that both the superintendent and school board members of those districts perceive the superintendent's role in the same manner, thus showing that it is imperative for a superintendent and the school board to perceive the superintendent's roles similarly. This research provided another example of how the grid and group typology classified the complex social settings of school districts.

Researcher Bias

I attended K-12 public schools for 13 years. Professionally, I was a classroom teacher and basketball coach for eight years. I am starting my eighth year as a building principal. In my 15 years as an educator in two large suburban school districts, I have worked for five different superintendents. My desire to be a superintendent and the turnover I observe in superintendents created my desire to engage in this study.

During the last 15 years, two superintendents have retired and two were asked to resign from their positions. I am currently working for number six. So 2.5 years is the tenure of superintendents I have personally observed. Miles and Huberman (1994) state, "One personally experienced or witnessed dramatic event means more than several you have read about" (p. 263). Some of my observations over the past 15 years have led to some researcher biases such as:

1. Some school board members hire superintendents to fulfill personal agendas.

2. School districts have a climate to which superintendents are expected to conform.

3. Some superintendents might be effective in one district and inappropriate for another.

Definition of Terms

Average Superintendent Tenure – The national average tenure for superintendent is about five years (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000).

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Tenure is the length of time a person remains in a position.

Role Expectation is how a professional/superintendent is expected to handle his or her responsibilities in a school district.

Mary Douglas's typology grid and group is a "means to classify and compare social environments in terms of their differing cultural constraints on individual autonomy" (Harris, 1995, p.617).

The grid dimension represents individual freedom in social settings. The grid dimension refers to the degree to which an individual's choices are constrained within a social system by imposed formal prescription such as role expectations, rules and procedures (Douglas, 1982).

The group dimension accounts for the social incorporation in the culture under study (Douglas, 1982, p.190). The group dimension represents the degree to which people value collective relationships and are committed to a social unit larger than the individual (Gross & Rayner, 1985).

Leadership is promoting excellence and equity in education by guiding others to achieve organizational goals or objectives (Snowden & Gorton, 1998).

Management is the role of conducting everyday business such as finances, curriculum and instruction, personnel issues, and safety (Council of the Great City Schools, 2000).

The superintendent is the chief executive officer who is "chosen by the board to implement policies and to provide professional leadership for a district's schools" (American Association of School Administrators, 1994, p.12).

The school board is a 3, 5, or 7 member governing body of a school district. These members may be elected or appointed.

Turnover is the "voluntary or involuntary movement of superintendents from one district to another, movement from the superintendency to some other position in the field of education or elsewhere, or retirement" (Burlingame, 1977, p.1).

Turnover rate is the rate at which employees in an organization leave and are replaced by other individuals who are employed by the organization (Burlingame, 1977).

Summary

This study applied Mary Douglas's grid and group theory of culture to the districts whose superintendents are tenured longer than the national average. The differing expectations of superintendent roles held by school board members versus those held by the superintendents are causing quick succession rates of superintendents. These changes tend to increase the anxiety of all stakeholders: parents, students, principals, teachers, board members, and the community itself. Superintendent turnover is a serious handicap to advancing school improvement (McAdams & Cressman, 1997).

The purpose of this study was to describe in grid and group terms the characteristics of successful superintendents that lead to longer than national average superintendent tenure. It is my intention to examine certain schools and communities to reveal important characteristics about extended superintendent tenure. Hopefully, the outcome of these interviews will carry over into the schools, so they can have greater synergy and carry out a better public education (American Association of School Administrators, 1994).

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to describe in grid and group terms the characteristics of successful superintendents that lead to longer than national average superintendent tenure.

The necessity of this study lies in the fact that the relationship between school board members and superintendents directly "correlates with their tenure" (Shields, 2002, p.25). When superintendent tenure is short, the district's stability is at risk (Renchler, 1992, p.7), and this tenure instability "has a direct impact on the success of any district" (Council of Urban Boards of Education, 2002, 5). Success is becoming more difficult to achieve "because of deteriorating resources and an increased demand for more and better educational outcomes" (Shields, 2002, p. 7). Mary Douglas's typology of grid and group could help to explain characteristics that may help districts attain longer than average superintendent tenure.

This review of the literature will addressed the history of the superintendency and superintendent tenure, the need for extended tenure among superintendents, the role of

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the superintendent versus the role of the school board members, and the purpose for Mary Douglas's grid and group.

History

History of the Superintendency

Before 1812, there were no superintendents of schools. All responsibilities of administering a school fell on state boards, since public education was the sole responsibility of each state. States assumed more and more responsibilities as public interest in education continued to grow. State legislators began allocating small amounts of money to local communities to help support their educational needs. The states appointed volunteer committees to oversee financial needs of local schools. Eventually, state and local boards were formed to run accounting systems for the funds. Because the duties became more complex and boards became overwhelmed with their enormous duties, the states began to pay officers to handle the accounting as well as an increasing the number of responsibilities. In 1812, New York was credited with appointing the first, full-time state superintendent. State superintendents were not in their positions to influence education, but rather to distribute state funds and collect data.

As communities expanded because of population growth, small local school systems formed. State superintendents were burdened with the daily operations of schools where they were not able to visit and oversee. Thus, history repeated itself by creating local, paid positions to oversee operations. Eventually, local superintendents were

formed. In 1837 the first local superintendents were established in Buffalo, New York and Louisville, Kentucky (Houston, 2003).

Although the superintendency began to form in the 1840's (McCloud & McKenzie, 1994), the idea of a local superintendent did not spread quickly. Some of the superintendents oversaw one district, and some oversaw many schools (Houston, 2003). According to Glass, Bjork, and Brunner (2000) "Early in the history of the superintendency. . . the superintendent was often little more than a supervisor whose position was generally tenuous" (p. 53). The first local superintendents were hired to manage tasks and business affairs. They acted as coordinators to ensure similar practices among schools, maintain buildings, and keep financial records (Glass, 2003). This position continued until the 1940's when superintendents changed their self-perceptions to that of professional educators" (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000, p.53).

The more complex districts grew, the more superintendent positions were created. By the 1960s, there were more than 35,000 superintendents nationally (Houston, 2003). With the 1970's back-to-basics movement, superintendents began to see themselves more as instructional leaders. With the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, school superintendents really broke out of their traditional, managerial roles, and the pressure on them to deliver successful schools became severe. Superintendents began to see themselves as serious, prestigious school leaders. However, as the federal government became more aggressive in education during the 1980s and 1990s, the job of the superintendent was no longer seen as prestigious (Glass, 2003).

At the start of the 21st century, communities began holding superintendents accountable for the achievements and progress of the students. Therefore,

"superintendents today find themselves in a role markedly different from even a decade ago" (p. i).

"Today's superintendency is in a state of crisis" (p. 4). The leading reason for this crisis is the school board/superintendent relationship. "The alarmingly high rate at which school superintendents are leaving or being asked to leave their jobs has many worried (Renchler, 1992, p. 3).

In recent years schools have been deprived of veteran leaders for many reasons: retirement incentives (Trubowitz, 2001, p. 13) or a superintendent's aspiring vertical mobility (Burlingame, 1977, p. 9), tension caused by deteriorating resources, an increased demand for more and better outcomes (Shields, 2002, p. 6), and, most prevalent, 75 percent of schools lose their veteran leaders because of disharmonious relationships between school board members and their superintendents (Shields, 2002).

Shields (2002) insists, "From the literature reviewed, the most cited reason that caused turnover of the superintendent of schools was the negative relationship between the board of education and superintendent" (p. 14). Whether these negative relationships were caused by the board, the superintendent, or unrelated issues, this negative relationship directly correlates with low superintendent tenure. Since frequent shifts in leadership can and do take a toll on districts and impede reform efforts, "developing good personal and working relationships with the board is a key factor in superintendent employment and success" (p. 56).

News stories made popular by the media have shown school board and superintendent fallouts. Glass, Bjork, and Brunner (2000) state that recent studies address of conflicts between these two entities. Although this literature contained many studies of

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conflicts, there seemed to be little literature or current studies about establishing positive communication between these two groups, as a means to increasing student achievement and success (Bryant, 2003, p.236-238).

Even fewer studies have been conducted on superintendent characteristics that result in tenure in excess of the national average. Little attention has been paid to the cultural characteristics between school board members and their superintendents.

History of Tenure

According to Glass, Bjork, and Brunner (2000) in the 1970's the average tenure length was six years. In the 1982 study, the average tenure was 5.6 years. The 1990 national average was 5.76 (Yee & Cuban, 1996). There was a huge decline in the late 90's as tenure dropped from 2 ¾ years in 1997 to 2 ½ years in 1999 (Council of Great City Schools, 2000). Glass (2003) states that "The typical tenure of a superintendent in the largest large-city districts is two to three years" (p. 241). Ferguson (2004) claims that superintendent tenure is now just under three years.

A 2001-2002 study conducted by Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE) indicated a slight increase in urban tenure since the widespread 1990's media reports, which indicated that urban superintendents remained employed only 2.5 years on average. This report was reinforced by the 2000 Study of American Schools Superintendents that noted the most recent superintendency served an average of five years. The top 50 largest cities, however, averaged only 4.6 years. Although this statistic has increased, Glass, Bjork, and Brunner (2000) insist "the 2000 study did not contain a

question asking superintendents the length of tenure in their current position…because 50 percent of the superintendents sampled were newly contracted superintendents, which would create a national average of two to three years"(p. 42). If anything, tenure for most superintendents has stayed the same during the past decade. According to Glass, Bjork, and Brunner the national average for superintendent tenure is five years and that is the statistic I choose to use.

An influx of new superintendents hit the schools in the 1990's. According to Trubowitz (2001), in recent years, retirement incentives "have deprived schools of veteran leaders" (p. 3). Thus, the turnover of superintendents comes and goes with the seasons. Glass, Bjork, and Brunner (2002) affirm, "The fact remains that frequent shifts in leadership can and do take a toll on districts and impede reform efforts" (p. i). The CUBE (2002) survey theorized that "the only way to keep increasing the average superintendent stay is for school boards and communities to build productive relationships with their superintendents" (p. 5).

CUBE reports supported this view by re-emphasizing that the increase in average tenure "is good news…still there's room for improvement" (p. 5). The Challenge for Urban communities is to encourage even longer tenure because the stability of the superintendency has a direct impact on the success of any school district. "High turnover. . . can undermine reform efforts" (p. 5).

The tenure for superintendents continues to decline, now under three years in urban districts. Unless this phenomenon changes in the near future, school districts and their children will both be left behind. Effective, long-lasting change requires stable leadership (Ferguson, 2004).

"From the literature reviewed, the most often cited reason for turnover of the superintendent of schools was the negative relationship between the board of education and the superintendent of schools. These negative relationships were caused by the boards, the superintendents, and by other factors" (Shields, 2002). The findings of many studies dealing with the reason for turnover suggested that the relationship between superintendents and "their respective boards correlates with their tenure" (Shields, 2002, p.25). Therefore, studies like this using Mary Douglas's Grid and Group need to be conducted to see how these relationships can be strengthened.

As mentioned earlier, the role of the superintendent in school districts is at risk. Literature concerning superintendent tenure reports that the main cause for superintendent turnover as a negative relationship between school board members and their superintendents. According to Glass, Bjork, and Brunner (2000), this relationship must be mended for the sake of future education. The two entities must be committed to work together to develop and initiate "a governance team to improve student achievement" (p. 55). For a district to improve student achievement effectively, school board members and their superintendents must see eye-to-eye on their roles. If they have differing role expectations, then turnover will be high, and student achievement will decline (Renchler, 1992).

Kennedy (1976) expresses, "It is imperative that school board members and the superintendents are communicating" their role perceptions of each other (p. 3). Ideas, information, attitudes, and ambitions have to be communicated on a constant two way

basis. Because a general view of role expectations of the school board members' and administrators' roles are not always explicit, the roles between the two groups need to be clearly defined and communicated by the two parties.

Role of the Superintendent

The role of the superintendent has changed over time, and is different in every district (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner 2000). However, the one true characteristic every superintendent does have is playing a pivotal role in shaping the education of the district.

"The superintendent maintains many roles in his/her tenure" (Soares & Soares, 2000, p.3). "Superintendents tend to see themselves in their roles in accordance with their ability to satellize around the school board members" (Soares & Soares, 2000, p.6). Despite the fact that each superintendent has different role expectations, literature suggests certain expectations kept reappearing. Multiple facets of superintendents' roles were found to be: chief executive officer (CEO), financial advisor, manager, and political leader.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

The following is a list of roles that superintendents fulfill as CEOs of school districts. The list was comprised from research studies:

As CEO of a school, a superintendent:

1. Receives authority and responsibilities from the school board (Blumberg & Blumberg, 1985)

2. Initiates policy (Glass, 2003)

3. Meets with school board

4. Attends special events

5. "Maintains regular, two-way communication with business, civic, and religious leaders, and other influential members of the community" (Chappelow, 2003, p. 19)

6. Collaborates with others to produce the mission statement

7. Trains and educates the board

8. Gives recommendations to the board to hire and fire personnel

9. Orientates new board members

10. Builds and maintains a strong relationship with the board

11. Works cooperatively and openly with the board members in communicating roles and responsibilities of each other

12. Becomes CEO in name and in fact; rising above with a positive leadership role (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995)

Financial Advisor

Konnert and Augenstein (1995) insist that "In this age of expanding accountability and shrinking financial resources, most superintendents must become

financial wizards in order to keep their districts financially solvent. School funding in most states is a very complex process" (p. 68). "Many individuals enter the superintendency well-versed in educational matters but lacking in fiscal and business management skills" (p. 68).

Glass, Bjork, and Brunner (2000) stress that the number one problem a superintendent faces is that of finances. In 1992, 59 percent of superintendents ranked finances as their toughest challenge. In 2000, the percentage dropped to 44.2 percent.

Konnert and Augenstein (1995) claim that as a financial advisor, superintendents are not in charge of balancing the books and writing checks; they are to determine total costs of proposed packages to districts and alert boards of hidden costs such as professional leave, sick leave, and work days.

In compiling a list of expectations that board members have for superintendents, Cunningham and Hentges (1982) reveal that the second most primary expectation that boards have for superintendents is a knowledge of finance. Superintendents should be aware of this expectation.

Manager

Another expectation board members have for superintendents is that of internal management. According to Glass, Bjork, and Brunner (2000), 36.2 percent of superintendents see management as their primary job. Most people see a managing superintendent as one who takes care of daily decision making responsibilities such as

staff development and evaluation, grant writing, curriculum and instruction, personnel

issues, and safety (Council of the Great City Schools, 2000).

Another type of management expected by many superintendents is that of

business management. Konnert and Augenstein (1995) express that "Exposure to

business management concerns before entering the superintendency is a great asset" (p.

69). They claim working with the following business areas would be helpful to aspiring

superintendents who wish to be successful managers: transportation problems, federal

asbestos legislation, obsolete physical plants, civil service laws, unexpected utility

increases, and leaky roofs.

Political Leader

For a superintendent, being a political leader has three basic functions:

1. Being active in civic organizations

2. Seeking community members to be active on school governing committees

3. Meeting with elected officials, such as state legislators and state education
   agencies, to inform them on the district, its goals and objectives, and any
   issues pertinent to the district (Chappelow, 2003)

Role of the School Board

The average length of board membership is 7-8 years (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner,

2000). "Board members have differing expectations depending on their ages, their tenure

on the board, and the size of the districts" (Kennedy, 1976, p. 4). It is critical for board members to understand their roles, because they are the voice of the community. They are "the body that engages and involves the community in setting a vision for the school district. Without question, board members give increased credibility to a school district's efforts to communicate change" (Bryant, 2003, p.234).

Basically, the board "has the authority to hire, fire, renew contracts, and otherwise reinforce the work of the superintendent" (Soares & Soares, 2000, p.6). Horn (1996) explains that one of a board's purposes is to evaluate the superintendent. This is the one task that permeates all other tasks. How the board evaluates the superintendent's performance may do more to define the board's opportunity for success in relationship building than any other one board act. Boards need to evaluate according to criteria in the job description (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner 2000), but the review of literature proves that this is only true about 50 percent of the time. Boards let their personal feelings and motives get in the way of fair evaluations. Thus, conflicts between boards and their superintendents begin (Horn, 1996).

Besides evaluating the superintendent, other important roles of school boards include: general supervision, goal setting, policy-making, judging, planning, leading and championing education, and carrying out statutory duties. The board is not to specify means to achieve the desired results, but will evaluate all means and processes used to ensure that they are legal, reasonable, research based, and ethical (Horn, 1996).

So much research has been conducted on the roles of superintendents and school board members. Even so, the board members' and superintendents' roles are not always clear-cut (Kennedy, 1976). When roles are not clearly defined, superintendents and school boards begin to establish poor relations, resulting in low superintendent tenure. In California, "75% of superintendent turnover was attributable to disharmonious board relations" (Shields, 2002, p. 6).

From literature reviewed, most superintendent turnover stems from negative relations between school boards and their superintendents. Whether the problem factor lies in the superintendent, the school board, a board member, or the environment, turnover becomes inevitable with conflict, and the district is the structure that suffers (Shields, 2002). Both the "why" and "how" of superintendent/school board conflicts have been researched.

Why Superintendents/School Boards Have Conflicts

Since so much research has been conducted on the relationship between superintendents and their boards, then why is there so much conflict? Blumberg and Blumberg (1985) give three main reasons:

1. Schools attract the attention of the general public through the media

2. Schools are the public's business because people pay taxes to support the schools

3. Educating children in America is important to communities; patrons want their school system to be the best

Other reasons are also mentioned in the literature. Shields (2002) claims that superintendents and school boards have conflict "because of deteriorating resources and an increased demand for more and better educational outcomes" (p. 6). Bryant (2003) insists that all organizations experience change, and there will always be conflict when any major change occurs. The results from conflict can be anger, community uproar, or employee opposition. When any of these events occur, there is a high probability that boards and superintendents will conflict.

How Superintendents/School Boards Conflict

Superintendents and school boards conflict in many different ways: politically, personally, socially, and professionally. When direct conflict occurs, poor relationships are established. From reviewed literature, a list of political, personal, social, and professional causes for these poor relations has been established.

Political

Many boards and superintendents conflict politically when:

1. Superintendents see individual platforms of board members rather than the platform of boards as political bodies

2. Boards need to be political institutions, not problem solvers

3. A superintendent establishes relationships with board members individually but not collectively, which causes conflicts when board members think differently on a subject (Blumberg & Blumberg, 1985)

4. The board is not a stable group

5. Organizations and community groups apply pressure and either the board or the superintendent gives in to their pressure (Shields, 2002)

Personal

Many superintendents and their boards have personal conflicts because:

1. School board members have personal agendas for being on the board

2. Superintendents or board members sometimes take "ego-vitamins"

3. The superintendent's actions outside of the work day are unacceptable to board members (Shields, 2002)

4. Superintendents often feel job insecurity; they feel they have to defend themselves to the board who acts as the judge and the jury; there is a silent war of "Who's the boss?"

5. Pressures develop when the superintendent is hired to keep status quo; after a time, the superintendent, who is qualified to create positive changes, cannot execute change without support of the board, the non-experts, because they are influenced by the community, more non-experts; then, every so often, a new group of non-experts enters the scene

6. Superintendents feel inadequate because they want to be educational leaders, but they become political strategists, always trying to figure out how to not "take sides" when the board members are in conflict with each other (Blumberg & Blumberg, 1985)

Social

Social issues often occur when there are:

1. Employed friends or relatives of board members

2. Board members listening to opinions of individuals during private meetings

3. Sports coaches being hired and fired (Shields, 2002)

Professional

There are several ways in which school boards and superintendents conflict professionally:

1. When surprises produce tensions at board meetings (Blumberg & Blumberg, 1985)

2. When there are incorrect interpretations of board and superintendent roles

3. When the board is not being supportive of superintendent recommendations

4. When employees' actions are being discussed

5. When the superintendent's contract needs to be renewed- when to renew and for how long (Shields, 2002)

Theoretical Framework

Mary Douglas is a British anthropologist who has spent the majority of her life developing her grid and group theory (Harris, 1995). The grid and group theory is a lens with which to view the social and cultural interactions of people in specific organizations. It has been utilized by New Testament scholars (Spickard, 1989). Her theory has also been utilized to study different educational settings and school cultures (Harris, 1985).

Douglas first introduced grid and group theory in 1970 in *Natural Symbols.* Between 1972 and 1982, Douglas continued to elaborate and expand her theory in *Cultural Bias* and *Risk and Culture*. According to Spickard (1989), Douglas categorizes people's beliefs into types of social settings. People believe what makes sense to their social environment. The placing of people in social settings fit this study well. I looked at superintendents and the settings/cultures within which they operated.

"In Douglas's words, 'the theory predicts or explains which intellectual strategies are useful for survival in a particular pattern of social relations . . . Once a pattern of social relations is chosen,' she says, we can 'describe the package of ideas and values that are going to surround anyone'" (Spickard, 1989, pp. 154-155). This part of the Douglas model was useful to my study because superintendents are surrounded in a social situation where ideas and values are constantly placed upon them. Additionally, rules and roles are placed upon all the participants in an organization such as a school district.

Grid Dimension

The grid dimension is represented on the vertical axis. High grid scores are positive and are at the top of the axis. In high grid situations, individual choices are based on social constraints, rules, role expectations, management, and procedures (Harris, 1995). Also, in high grid environments, individuals do not freely interact with each other, and their options are restricted (Douglas, 1982).

The low grid environment allows for bargaining and movement in the organization. This environment also allows for individuals to advance up the ladder within the organization (Harris, 1995). Douglas (1982) described the low grid dimension as a more open and competitive environment where individuals are given more options to deal their own hands and choose their own partners.

Group Dimension

The group dimension is represented on the horizontal axis. The group dimension represents the degree to which people value collective relationships and are committed to a social unit larger than the individual (Gross & Rayner, 1985). The high group is on the right side of the axis and is represented by positive numbers. In the high grid dimension, strong group allegiance and commitment to the group exits. Survival of the group is more important than the individual (Harris, 1995).

In low group organization, individuals are more important than the group. An individual's allegiance to the group fluctuates (Harris, 1995). Individuals actually abandon group goals and negotiate with their own objectives in mind.

Grid and Group

The grid and group must be considered together to determine within which quadrant the organization is operating. Douglas's grid and group theoretical framework is broken down into four possible social environments within which a school district can operate.

Individualist

Harris (1995) describes the four possible social environments according to grid and group. "In Individualist (low grid, low group) environments, relationships and experiences of the individual are not constrained by imposed formal rules or traditions. Role status and rewards have been competitive and are contingent on existing, temporal standards. As the emphasis on social distinction among individuals is submerged, there are few insider-outsider screens, and little value is placed on long-term corporate survival" (p. 623).

Bureaucratic

"Bureaucratic Systemic (high grid, low group) contexts offered little individual autonomy. They are often hierarchical environments, and the classifying criteria focused on such factors as race, gender, family heritage, or ancestry. Individual behavior was fully defined and without ambiguity. Cultural members had meaningful relationships and life-support networks outside of the group and little value was placed on group goals or survival" (p. 623).

Corporate

"In Corporate Systemic (high grid, high group) contexts, social relationships and experiences were influenced by boundaries maintained by the group against outsiders. Individual identification was heavily derived from group membership. Individual behavior was subject to controls exercised in the name of the group. Roles are hierarchical; at the top of the hierarchy, roles have unique value and power (generally limited to a smaller number of experts). There are many role distinctions at the middle and bottom rungs. Perpetuation of traditions and group survival are of utmost importance" (p. 623-624).

Collectivist

"Collectivist (low grid, high group) contexts have few social distinctions. Role status is competitive, yet because of the strong group influence, rules for status definitions and placement are more stable than in weak group societies. The perpetuation of corporate goal and group survival are highly valued" (p. 624).

Central to Douglas's theory is that each of the above social environments leads to a distinctive cultural bias, or unique way of looking at the world. "Only a hermit, one who rejects the value of social relationships and chooses to live apart from society, is completely free from the demands of grid and group. Yet, the hermit also has a cultural bias, characterized by individual autonomy. Further, the theory is not intended to portray social environments as static or motionless, but rather, each way of life . . . is a vigorous and precarious dynamic process" (p. 624).

Since all of the superintendents in this study have been successful, it would be suspected that the schools would be operating within a similar position under Douglas's theoretical framework. Dr. Harris's study utilized a grid and group when conducting a study comparing four school districts (Harris, 1995). Harris's "four cases were chosen for this article because their grid and group dimensions offer vivid illustrations of each of Douglas's social order classifications. Two of the case studies, Eastwood Middle School and Hebrew Academy, were prior research efforts designed to explore leadership and cultural linkages" (1995, p.624). Leadership, represented as the "superintendent" and cultural linkages, represented as the "school district," were the two items considered for my study.

According to Harris (1995) "Mary Douglas's typology, using grid and group dimensions, provides a means to classify and compare social environments in terms of their differing cultural constraints on individual autonomy" (p. 617).

School Districts as Social Environments

School districts provide unique social environments in which members' roles are defined and within which superintendents must operate within to be successful. The superintendent, being the CEO, must be able to implement the policies set by the school board. At the same time, the superintendent must balance the relationships with principals, board members, community leaders, and parents. The culture, in part, is set up by all the participants involved within and around the school district.

School Districts as Organizational Cultures

The holistic perspective of grid and group suggests that culture should be conceptionalized as part of what an organization *is* rather than what an organization *has*. Organizations do not have cultures, they are cultures (Harris, 1995, p. 618).

Leontiou (1987) claims that organizational culture has been defined "as a system of shared values (what is important) and beliefs (how things work) that interact with a company's people, organizational structures, and control systems to produce behavioral

norms (the way things are done around here)" (p. 5). These beliefs and values produce

rules for behavior-norms that powerfully shape the behavior of individuals and groups in

the organization. Deal and Kennedy (1982) stated "four key attributes to organizational

cultures: values, the philosophies and beliefs shared by members of the organization;

heroes, those who articulate the organization's values as a vision of the organization's

role and future; ritual and rites, activities through which organizational beliefs are

celebrated and reinforced; communication network, the informal interaction among

members of an organization that can reinforce, elaborate on, and realistically clarify

and/or qualify the impact of values, heroes, and rituals" (p. 35).

Superintendents should be aware that school districts are social environments that

possess or display specific organizational cultures. Successful superintendents try to

examine school districts from multiple perspectives, so as to be aware of the social and

cultural environment present in the school district. Dimmick and Walker (2000) offer of

eight interrelated elements for leaders to consider: 1) collaboration and participation,

sharing power with others; 2) motivation, inspiring followers; 3) planning for visions; 4)

decision-making; 5) interpersonal communication, communicate to share knowledge; 6)

conflict management; 7) evaluation and appraisal; and 8) professional development of the

staff. These eight elements were not clear cut, but they represented key operational areas

of leadership when discussing a society's social culture (Dimmick & Walker, 2000).

Summary

      The literature cited in this chapter revealed that superintendent tenure is not lengthy. The history of state and local superintendents was defined. The problems of superintendent tenure were touched upon.

      The general roles of superintendents and school boards were characterized, followed by reasons for superintendent and school board conflicts.

      Mary Douglas's model of grid and group typology was explained as a framework with which to view the social and cultural settings within which superintendents work.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

This study utilized qualitative case study methodology. Merriam (1988) said,

"Any and all methods of gathering data from testing to interviewing can be used in case

study" (p. 10). Such a method was a good fit for this research because it focused the

researcher on the role expectations of superintendents, school board members, and the

social setting of schools. The research was also particularistic, meaning that case study is

a successful study to use when focusing on a particular situation, like superintendent

tenure. The case study allowed for a descriptive and inductive look at successful

superintendent tenure.

Case Study Sites

The study included four school districts from a South Central State. In these

districts, the superintendents have been tenured for a time period longer than the national

average, which was 5.76 years (Yee & Cuban, 1996). This statistic has remained constant

as reported by Burlingame (1977). "Roughly one superintendent in every five (20%) is

new to his or her district each fall" (p. 6). Care was taken to ensure that school districts

with similar characteristics were selected for the study. First, the criteria for choosing

districts was established. All the districts had to fall into all of the following categories: their superintendents had to have been employed in their districts for more than five years, all of the superintendents had to have been offered three year contracts by their present school boards, the school districts had to be located within 50 miles of each other, they all had to be classified as having a medium to large student population they all had to be a member of the United Suburban Schools Association, and all of the districts in the study had to be operating for more than 60 years. Next, I called area superintendents to inquire which districts fit these criteria. Four districts met the criteria and offered to participate in this case study.

Participants

The participants in each school district included the superintendent, school board members, and a principal. The superintendents were contacted via phone and agreed to help with the research project. Initial meetings were scheduled with the superintendents; to explain, the research project. The superintendents contacted board members and a principal, briefly informing them about the study.

Prior to each interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to each participant, answered questions, and acquired a signed consent form (see Appendix A). All participants were informed that pseudonyms would be used to achieve confidentiality, and school districts were given fictitious names.

Methods

All participants completed a grid and group questionnaire and participated in an interview. The interviews and observations took place between January 5, and April 22, 2004. Other data, such as board meeting minutes and newspaper articles, were obtained during the data collection phase of the research project. Observations of board meetings were made during this time period. Copies of board meeting minutes were collected as well.

Board meetings were observed to evaluate and record the working relationship between the superintendent and the school board members. I sat in the back of the board meetings in order to take notes and view all the participants. I compared my observations of the board meetings with my observations of those interviewed during meetings. Notes were taken during the board meetings and were also compared with notes taken during the interviews to establish relationships between the board members and their superintendent.

The grid and group questionnaire was utilized to determine within what type of social culture each school district operates. Observations of participants were also used during the interviews. I tried to notice facial expressions and body language. Observations, as well as interviewees comments were recorded in a notebook while the interview was being conducted.

A series of interview questions, asked of all participants, was developed prior to conducting the first interview. Two sets of interview questions were developed: one set of questions were asked to the superintendents, and a similar set of questions was asked to

the school board members and principals. The questions were similar, yet they allowed for possible contrasts in role perspectives from superintendents and the other participants.

Interview Questions

These seven questions were asked of the superintendents:

1. Tell me your background in education.

2. Why did you want to become a superintendent?

3. What characteristics do you possess that have enabled you to have a lengthy tenure in your current position?

4. What leadership style do you utilize?

5. How do you handle political relationships within the school and the community?

6. How do you communicate with the school board?

7. Is there anything else that has allowed you to be successful in your current position?

These questions were developed to encourage responses about the superintendents' successful tenure.

There were seven questions asked of the school board members and principals:

1. Tell me your background in education.

2. Why did you want to become a principal/board member?

3. What characteristics does your superintendent possess that have enabled him or her to have a lengthy tenure in this school district?

4. What leadership style does the superintendent utilize?

5. How does the superintendent handle political relationships within the school and the community?

6. How does the superintendent communicate with the school board and other patrons?

7. Is there anything else you would like to discuss about the superintendent that allows for success?

These questions were developed so the participants could respond about why they think the superintendent is successful.

During all interviews, probes and follow up questions, divergent from the established questions, were used by the researcher for clarification of responses (Borg & Gall, 1989).

Data Collection and Analysis

Analysis involved organizing data, searching for common themes, evaluating what was important, and choosing what to include in the report (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Miles and Huberman (1994) express that it is important to constantly compare and analyze data.

Data were collected from interviews, participant surveys, board meetings, and other notes. The data were kept by the researcher in separate folders and boxes, categorized by school district.

Qualitative case study techniques as described by Merriam (1988), were usded for data analysis which began when the data collection started. "Simultaneous analysis and data collection allows the researcher to direct the data collection phase more productively, as well as develop a data base that is both relevant and parsimonious" (p. 145). All information from schools and superintendents were collected and "organized so that intensive analysis" (p. 126) could begin. While analyzing the transcribed interviews question by question, common, recurring themes were noted, highlighted, and categorized. Each line of every transcribed interview was numbered. Words and phrases were highlighted because they kept occurring throughout the transcription. Lists were organized of all interviewees and important phrases and words used in their transcribed interview. I jotted down the line numbers every time the phrase, word, or similar word was used. These phrases or words became the themes. Finally, I comprised tables and charts comparing and contrasting these themes. I also utilized notes and self memos. The raw data were organized by arranging the documents chronologically. The data from each school was collected and stored separately to avoid confusion. All the data were reviewed, dissected, and analyzed for common themes.

While analyzing data, as categories emerged and developed, similarities, differences, and new ideas were noted. The transcriptions were coded to stimulate and develop thick, rich descriptive characteristics of successful superintendents.

A survey instrument, as (see Appendix B), was used to classify each school district on Mary Douglas's grid and group model. Her typology was used to classify the social and cultural settings within which the superintendents operated. The data were analyzed using qualitative case study methodology and observations.

Table 3:1 represents the data collection procedures used in this study. The data sources column lists the type of research methods were used by the researcher. The data collection column lists how and what raw data were collected. The data analysis column lists how the raw data were analyzed.

Table 3:1

Data Collection Procedures

Data Sources	Data Collection	Data Analysis
Qualitative Interview	-Interviews *Superintendents *School Board members *One principal from each district	I interviewed 5 superintendents, 19 school board members, and 4 principals. After the interviews, each interview was transcribed. I read each line from every interview and looked for recurring themes from all the participants. I combined themes into common categories and listed words into categories.
Documents	-Board Minutes -School CLEP -Historical documents -Office of Accountability Reports	I looked at school board minutes from each district to see voting patterns. I utilized each district's CLEP in order to describe the climate within which each superintendent operates. Additionally, I reviewed historical documents from each district to obtain background information.
Observations	-School Board meetings from each district -Interviews	I attended a school board meeting for each district to look for body language and to observe how each superintendent and school board operates. I noted body language during interviews.
Other Sources	-Informal conversations with patrons	I talked with all the participants casually, and I talked with other district employees while obtaining CLEP and State Office of Accountability Reports

According to Merriam (1988), there are six basic techniques a qualitative researcher can employ to ensure internal validity or transferability. They are: triangulation, member checks, long term observation, peer examination, participatory, and researcher bias (p. 169). I utilized triangulation, member checks, and peer examination. I also mentioned my researcher biases in Chapter I.

Triangulation was utilized by obtaining multiple sources of data and information, such as interview transcripts, self memos, grid and group survey, school documents, and professional peer review. It was done purposefully to gain a holistic understanding of how relationships affect superintendent tenure (Mathison, 1988).

Table 3:2 is a summary of the techniques and activities designed to establish transferability, dependability, and confirmability for this study.

Table 3:2.

Summary of Techniques and Activities for Establishing Trustworthiness

	Technique	Activities
Transferability	1. Prolonged engagement	1. I spent over a year and a half on the entire project. Conducting and analyzing the interviews took over five months.
	2. Persistent observation	2. While conducting the interviews and analyzing the transcriptions I would constantly go back and forth through all my notes, transcriptions and the information I obtained from the district CLEP and the district report cards.
	3. Triangulation	3. Triangulation was established by trying to find commonalities or middle ground between the interviews, transcriptions, historical documents, surveys, and school district report cards.

	4. Peer debriefing	4. I asked two educators with doctorates to look at all superintendent interviews and a board member interview from each district to look for themes I might have missed. Additionally, two English teachers reviewed randomly three of the school board members interviews looking for themes that I may have missed.
	5. Member checks	5. I mailed all participants the transcribed copy of his or her interview with a letter requesting them to read the interview and look for discrepancies or if they had changed their mind about something they were to call me back.
Dependability	Thick description	I think a thick description was established by the details given about each school district and by analyzing 28 interviews from different perspectives geared at looking at successful superintendents.
Confirmability	Audit Trail	I tried to establish an audit trail by keeping a detailed calendar of the interviews and a journal of notes.

Credibility

Qualitative research was the best research choice when multiple participants with similar perspectives were taking part in this study. Thus, credibility was established by the in-depth description and accurate responses of the multiple participants in this study. The case reports presented in the next chapter allow the reader to see how successful superintendents have operated within their school districts. Member checks were used by the superintendents, principals, and school board members who reviewed their own interview transcriptions to establish credibility. Peer debriefings were also utilized to provide feedback, improve clarity, and help guide the research.

Reliability/Dependability

"Reliability refers to the extent to which one's findings can be replicated. In other words, if the study is repeated, will it yield the same results?" (Merriam, 1988, p. 170) Reliability is difficult in the social sciences because human behavior is not always consistent. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested thinking about dependability or consistency of the results obtained from the data. Hopefully, someone else conducting the same study would get consistent and dependable results. By comparing four different superintendents and their school districts, and focusing on common themes that emerged, reliability was achieved. The in-depth descriptions of superintendents by school board members, principals, and the superintendents themselves, allows the reader enough in-depth knowledge to understand the study. So, a similar study in a different place should produce some of the same themes relating to successful superintendent tenure.

Summary

In this chapter, I explained the case study methodology used in this study. I also explained how the case study sites were selected, and what the criteria was for the case study sites.

The participants were also defined. Methods used on these participants included the following: qualitative interviews, grid and group survey, and observations. A list of interview questions for all participants was given.

The procedure for raw data collection was mentioned, followed by an in depth account of how the data were analyzed. Two tables were included to visually explain the data collection and data analysis procedures used in this study.

Finally, credibility was established by the in-depth descriptions given by multiple participants. Reliability was established by providing consistent themes found in four different superintendents and their districts.

CHAPTER IV

Presentation of Cases

The purpose of this case study was to describe in grid and group terms the successful superintendent characteristics that lead to longer than national average superintendent tenure. The theoretical framework was the grid and group model from Mary Douglas. Four school districts participated in this study. Within each district, interviews were conducted with the superintendent, school board members, and one principal. Collection of data focused on the following: superintendent characteristics, each school district's culture, and the relationships between all of those who were interviewed in each district. Additional information was obtained by observing school board meetings, state reports, and each district's Comprehensive Local Education Plan (CLEP). The information gleaned from all four school districts will be represented in this chapter. A plotted graph, on the grid and group, was included in the appendix for each district to show where each district is operating.

Each participant completed a grid and group survey. The surveys were scored and plotted on a chart to show the social culture placement in which each district is operating. Each case study ended with a brief description of the district's position in the Mary Douglas grid and group framework.

Data obtained from interviews and observations were coded, analyzed, categorized, and broken down into themes. To view the district culture in which the superintendents operate, I gave a detailed description of each school district's characteristics. These detailed descriptions are intended to enhance the reader's understanding of the characteristics of each district and provide a thick description, which is necessary for a qualitative case study (Merriam, 1988).

All four school districts and all the participants were guaranteed anonymity. Each school district was identified by a letter and participants were given pseudonyms. The superintendents were also identified by the same letter as their school district. All four school districts are members of the United Suburban Schools Association.

Case One: School District A

School District A Demographics

The following information was obtained from School District A's Comprehensive Local Education Plan (CLEP), historical documents, and the state department of education's accountability report.

School District A has a K-12 student population of approximately 3750. Located within 50 miles of a large metropolitan area, District A is bordered by three dependent K-8 school districts, and has a town population of 26,175. This town has two institutions of

high learning and a vocational school. The ethnic breakdown of students is 62 percent Caucasian, 8 percent Black, 1 percent Asian, 2 percent Hispanic, and 27 percent Native American.

Historical documents indicate that the first school in School District A opened on September 22, 1891. The first salaried teacher was employed in 1892. In 1909 the high school moved into a permanent building, which now houses the district's administration offices. In 1921 the high school moved into a new building, which is the present day middle school building. The current high school building was built in 1972. The district maintains nine different sites: one early childhood center, pre-K-Kindergarten, four 1st-5th grade elementary schools, one 6th-8th grade middle school, one high school, and one alternative academy.

The alternative school has been in place for 14 years in School District A. Primarily supported through the district's general fund, it has one full-time teacher for grades 6-8, and one full-time teacher for grades 9-12. Additionally, the district employs a part-time special education teacher, a half-time counselor, and a half-time principal at this school. Most of the coursework is done via computer-assisted modules. Students in the alternative school complete the regular testing as required by the State Department of Education.

A district's financial status is crucial to its operation. In District A,: the assessed valuation is $80,231,218. The 2003-2004 total revenue was $20,113,263 of this amount state aid accounted for $14,198,947, (70.6 percent), federal funds accounted for $2,627,674 (13.06 percent). The expenditures for 2003-2004 for salary and benefits were

$17,981,313 (85.3 percent) and the cost to maintain and operate was $3,098,639 (14.70 percent).

This school district maintains 38 buses. The buses cover 54 routes each school day. Over 2000 students are transported to and home from school daily. The buses cover 1750 miles each day. The transportation department employs seven full-time and 30 part-time staff members.

School District A employs 270 instructional staff members, 190 support staff, and 22 administrators. About 48 percent of the professional staff hold a Master's or Doctorate degrees. 65 percent of the staff have 10 or more years experience. The teachers salary with a beginning teacher with a bachelor's degree starts at $28,369, and the average teacher's salary is $37,384.

School District A maintains its own lunch program. The district operates seven cafeterias and employs 35 full-time people and 10 part-time employees. On the average day, 1,087 breakfasts are served, and 2,170 lunches are served.

The district maintains a four year capital improvement plan. To track the available bonding capacity and priorities for each year. The improvement plan appears to be an efficient way to monitors what is needed at each school site and the funds available to spend.

The School District A CLEP focuses on seven areas:

1. School Improvement Plan
2. Professional Development Activities and Budget
3. Capital Improvement Plan
4. School Facilities Inventory

5. Alternative Education Plan

6. Reading Sufficiency District Plan Grades K-3

7. Assurance Statement

The CLEP mentioned these four target goals:

Target Goal 1: All students will reach high standards in core subjects (math, reading, language arts, science, social studies, and fine arts) which are aligned to PASS.

Target Goal 2: Provide facilities and services to ensure a safe and positive learning environment for all public school A students.

Target Goal 3: Incorporate multimedia technology into the curriculum of all disciplines.

Target Goal 4: Increase parental and community involvement and support.

Each school site develops site goals that are consistent with the overall target goals of the district.

School District A has a very detailed plan pertaining to the Reading Sufficiency Act. The purpose of the plan is to ensure that each child is able to obtain the necessary reading skills by the end of third grade. Over twenty people serve on the Reading Sufficiency Committee. The plan is complete with testing guidelines, reading strategies, money, and ideas for remediation when needed. Additionally, every school has a detailed site plan to accompany the district plan.

The governing school board of this district consists of a seven member board. Only five board members agreed to participate in the study. Two said they were too busy to help with the study. The gender make up of the board is five men and two women. The

school board meets once each month, usually at the administration building. The board members who participated in the study have a combined 12 years of school board experience, or an average of 2.5 years.

School District A offers a wide variety of programs to its students. The middle school and high school have honors classes with Advanced Placement courses offered. High school students also have the option of concurrent enrollment at the local community college. Day care services are available for teen mothers. All in all, 58 different types of programs are listed for the students of this district.

School District A Superintendent

The superintendent of School District A has completed seven years in the district as superintendent. She has spent a total of 16 years in this district as an administrator. In January she passed on the offer made by the board to give her a three year contract. The superintendent explained that she did not feel as if she needed or wanted a three year commitment; she expressed that she was confident in her position and that at her age, she did not want to be tied down to a three year commitment. She spent seven years as a classroom teacher, and left education to enter private business for a short time period, almost 20 years ago (Superintendent A, 1-8-04).

After the superintendent graduated from college with a degree in elementary education, she received her Master's degree from a large grant university in the state. She has spent her professional life in the state where she is a superintendent. This

superintendent graduated from high school in a small town in the western part of the state.

I asked the superintendent why she wanted to become a superintendent, and she replied, "It just worked out that way, and it did not start out that way. The people I was working with asked me, so it kind of evolved."

<p style="text-align:center">Superintendent A Themes</p>

Some major themes emerged from the interview with Superintendent A. They were: communication, relationship building, public relations, versatile leadership, and recognition of people in the district.

Communication

When I asked the superintendent what characteristics she possesses that have enabled her to have a lengthy tenure in her current position, she stated, "I'm a pretty good listener. I'm not fast to make a decision. I tend to look at all sides of issues. I think I am non-threatening. I think that helps people feel comfortable to visit, talk, and communicate with me."

Almost every quote from this question produced an answer that had something to do with communication. When I asked about how she communicates with the school board, she had a variety of answers. "I do it formally with written information every week. It's called a Friday update to the board. We include information, specific

information, I feel they need to know. I may just call them just to see how they are doing. I use the phone or E-mail."

Relationship Building

Another theme that emerged was that the superintendent feels that relationship building is important. She insists, "I think I am fairly good in my relationship building." Calling board members just to see how they are doing appears to be one way she works on building relationships. She also answered, "When we are looking at new policy, I try and involve different constituents in the process. I have an open door policy; I am available to anyone that wants to talk to me." All these statements can be tied to the idea that she believes in forming relationships to manage the district.

Public Relations

The third theme that emerged was that Superintendent A believes public relations are important to success. She explained, "I think it's critical when you're in a superintendent's position that you're active in your community. I think you need to be part of the community. You need to be visible. I go to the civic clubs; I belong to the Salvation Army Board, Gateway, Big Brothers and Big Sisters. I think it's critical that you are seen in the community. I think being seen would benefit any superintendent." I think it is obvious that Superintendent A believes addressing public relations are crucial to a superintendent to be successful.

Versatile Leadership

Superintendent A practices a variety of leadership styles. She expressed, "Sometimes I am pretty directive, but then I allow people to feel that they've got room to make decisions on their own. I allow individuals latitude to take responsibilities for their positions. It's critical that a superintendent have good people working with you and allow them to make decisions in their areas of expertise. I try and utilize committees and yes, I utilize dual leadership styles: democratic, but sometimes directive."

Recognition

A final theme that emerged from the interview and my personal observation at the school board meeting was that the superintendent believes it is important to recognize accomplishments of people in the district. The night I attended the board meeting the seniors on the football team were being introduced. The team had just won the state championship, so being introduced at the school board meeting was a positive way to recognize the seniors for their accomplishments. I asked her about recognizing people, and she elaborated, "Every month we feature a school site and ask the principal to introduce their certified and support employee of the month. They are awarded a certificate and the newspaper mentions the recipients in an article. I even ask the board members to help with the presentation. I think recognition in the district is critical to my success."

A unique characteristic about School District A is that it is governed by a seven member school board. The other districts in the study had five member boards. Of the seven members, however, only five agreed to participate in this study. The other two board members said they were too busy to help.

Mark Willis, a school board member for three years, currently serving as school board president. Mr. Willis graduated from a major state university with an accounting degree. He is 41 years old and has two children enrolled in this district. Mark wanted to be on the board to be involved and try to help the children of the community (Willis, 1-7-04).

Felicia Luna has been a school board for three years. She is currently serving as second vice president of the school board. Felicia is a reading specialist teacher in a nearby school district. She has a PhD in reading and 23 years of experience as a teacher.

When asked why she wanted to become a school board member, she answered, "A lot of teachers were given a bad shake when it came to employment decisions. They would be side stepped, overlooked. This happened to me as well. I wanted to take the time and steer the schools on a positive course" (Luna, 1-10-04).

Kathy Rankins has been a school board for 1.5 years. She has an early childhood teaching degree and a Master's degree in child development from a major university. She taught school for six years and now she is staying at home with her children. She is a high school graduate from this district. Kathy was appointed to finish an unexpired term,

and she wants to be involved with the school because her daughter is now in school (Rankins, 1-13-04).

Bert Bailey has been a school board member in School District A for six years. Bert has an associates degree as a safety specialist. He wanted to be on the school board because he wanted to know "what the kids were being taught" (Bailey, 1-16-04).

Javier Garcia has completed one year as a school board member in School District A. He is a well educated man with a Master's degree in business and a BA in Spanish. He has been an administrator at a small college for 25 years. He wanted to be a school board member because he is worried about education across the country. He wanted to make a positive contribution in his home community (Garcia, 1-20-04).

The high school principal is Leroy Anasola. Leroy has been an educator for 21 years, with the first 15 years as a teacher and coach. As an administrator, he spent one year as an assistant principal and five years as principal. He graduated with a business degree from a state university before receiving his master's degree from a small state college. He is has spent his entire administrative career in this district (Anasola, 1-28-04).

School District A Themes

After conducting the interviews and analyzing the transcriptions from School District A, five themes developed concerning their successful superintendent. They were: character, communication skills, versatile leadership, public relations, and recognition.

Character

The superintendent obviously must exhibit great character; it was expressed in

different ways by all school board members. Bert Bailey said admiringly, "She's very

caring for the kids and she's concerned about every phase of the school district." "She

has good intentions," emphasized Mark Willis, "and she has the kids' best intentions at

heart." Felicia Luna agreed, "She is a good person, and she cares about people. She tries

to keep everybody happy." Kathy Rankins also remarked that "the superintendent is a

very caring person, and she does an exceptional job at getting along with many people."

All the board members in one way or another described the superintendent as a nice

person with character.

Communication Skills

The second theme that emerged was that the superintendent was an outstanding

communicator. Kathy Rankins insisted, "She is a good listener and communicator, and I

feel from my experience and listening to other people's ideas, she communicates openly

and fairly." Mark Willis exclaimed, "She provides all of us Friday Facts where she

summarizes what's going on in the district. This is an excellent tool; it provides us with

information from finance to the weekly schedule. The Friday Facts allows her to

communicate with all of us on an equal basis." Felicia Luna elaborated, "She will call us

if needed and if I call, she is very prompt to return my call. She is very responsive to

board members." Kathy Rankins added, "The superintendent keeps us abreast of things

going on with lots of phone calls and Friday Facts." All of the school board members explained that the superintendent does an exceptional job of keeping them informed on a weekly basis, and all members mentioned that the Friday Facts was a positive way to communicate. Principal Leroy Anasola admitted, "She is very strait with her communication. You know right where you stand with her and I love it."

Versatile Leadership

The third theme that evolved was that the superintendent utilized several leadership styles. Mark Willis proclaimed, "She does not lead from one point. Sometimes she is a CEO and sometimes she is authoritative. She does not jump the gun and she uses committees to give recommendations. She is very good about getting input." Felicia Luna replied, "She uses various leadership styles. Often times she seeks input from the community and leaders. She can be a dictator. She kind of uses a smorgasbord of styles, depending on the situation." Kathy Rankins pronounced, "She bases her decisions on what information she gets from other people." Bert Bailey offered, "I don't think she is autocratic. She includes a large number of people and tries to include the appropriate ones to help on committees." Leroy Anasola stated, "She seeks input from others when it's needed. If she has to stand up and lead on her own, she will do that too." It is very obvious that Superintendent A leads in various ways, depending on what situation with which she is faced.

Public Relations

Another theme and certainly not the least important is the fact that Superintendent A appears to be an expert in the area of public relations. She is very clever in the way in which she handles the area of public relations. Kathy Rankins hailed, "She's very active in the community as well as at the state level in education. She's president of the League of Women Voters right now." Bert Bailey admired, "She goes to so many events, all types of events. Her involvement in the community is exemplary." Mark Willis adored, "The district gets a lot out of her heavy involvement and all those functions she attends. Felicia Luna expressed, "She is very close with the newspaper editor. She is very visible at school activities and in the community. She is on boards and is a member of civic clubs. The people in town know her."

Recognition

The final theme that arose was that Superintendent A shows why it is important to recognize students, teachers and other stake holders in the district. Mark Willis said, "Every month we have a different building principal recognize a teacher, support person, and volunteer. It's really great because it gives a chance for those people to be recognized for what they are doing. Sometimes we recognize academic areas and sports teams when they have been successful." Bert Bailey cherished the same feelings that recognizing a teacher, support staff member and volunteer was an important tool for the superintendent. Kathy Rankins offered, "She seems to do a good job of recognizing teachers, students, or

whatever group needs to be recognized." Leroy Anasola responded, "I think when the superintendent recognizes different people and groups at the school board meeting, it does the district a lot of good and it is good P.R. for her."

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was the grid and group model from Mary Douglas. Each participant in this study completed the survey found in Appendix A. The results were calculated and plotted on the grid and group to see what social environment the school participants feel the district operates within. Each point was plotted and the mean and mode were calculated. The instrument served as a tool for comparing where the school board members, superintendent, and principal believe the district operates.

School District A was a strong collectivist culture, which is low grid, high group. The high group results of this district indicate that people value collective relationships and they are committed to the large social unit more than to the individual (Gross & Rayner, 1985).

Harris (1995) indicates that "In high group social environments, there are specific membership criteria, explicit pressures to consider group relationships, and the survival of the group becomes more important than the survival of individual members within it (p. 622). In a low grid environment individuals are acknowledged for behavior and character rather than role status. This fits well because the board members described the superintendent as a woman of great character. "The low grid environment promotes

individual liberty" (p. 621). In this district, individuals are empowered to take ownership, thus showing an example of individual liberties.

Four school board members and the principal all scored in the same quadrant of the grid and group model the low grid and high group collectivist culture. The superintendent and Felicia Luna scored in the high grid and high group quadrant. Felicia brought out some interesting ideas as to why she wanted to be a school board member. She had the highest grid score in the study. The grid and group scores for all the participants are listed in the following table:

Table 4:1

School District A - Grid and Group Scores

	Grid score	Group score
Superintendent A	+2	+9
Mark Willis	-1	+18
Felicia Luna	+5	+7
Kathy Rankins	-1	+11
Bert Bailey	-2	+7
Javier Garcia	-5	+7
Leroy Anasola	-1	+8
Totals	-3	+67

Mean score for grid = -.428 Mean score for group = +9.57
Mode score for grid = -1 Mode score for group = +7
The mean is the average score. The mode is the number-score that occurs most often.
School District A's grid and group plotted points can be seen in Appendix C.

Case Two: School District B

School District B Demographics

The following information about this school district was obtained from the district's Comprehensive Local Education Plan (CLEP) and the school district's report card from the office of accountability.

School District B, the smallest district in the study has a student K-12 population of 1600. The district is located in a large metropolitan area. This district borders a larger school district; it is actually land locked by this bigger district. There is no bus transportation to or from District B's schools. However, busses are available for use of school activities.

Historical records indicate that the school district, which covers about one square mile, was founded on December 27, 1910. The actual campus, which sits on a three block area, contains the elementary, middle, and high school buildings. The district contains a Developmental Center which is a Children's Center Specialty Hospital that is located three blocks from the main campus. The district maintained an Alternative Education program for students at risk. This program is located in the high school and students attend class Monday through Thursday from 1:00 to 5:15 PM.

According to the superintendent and four of the five school board members, the school district appears to be in good financial shape. The net assessed property value in 2001 was $8,257,449. The district has grown significantly, an increase of 36 percent in student enrollment, since 1997. This increase has also helped financially. The entire

revenue for the 2000-2001 school year was $6,545,733 with 73 percent being from state

aid. The biggest general fund expenditure in 2000-2001 was for instruction, which

consisted of 63 percent of the total. The next largest expenditure was 10 percent, which

was spent on students.

The significant growth in the district enrollment is directly related to student

transfers. 57.3 percent of the students are transfered in from surrounding school districts.

The resident students represent only 42.7 percent of the total student population. Some

transfers are denied because classrooms are at full capacity. The student ethnic

breakdown is 88 percent Caucasian, 6 percent Hispanic, 3 percent African-American, 2

percent Native American, and 1 percent Asian.

The socio-economic makeup of District B families ranges from middle to lower

class; however, the transfer students range from middle to upper class. According to the

State Department of Education, the average annual income for the head of household in

this district was $41,095, which is below the state average of $44,370. 36 percent of the

students qualify for the free and reduced lunch program.

School District B employs 86 certified employees consisting of: 6 administrators,

71 teachers, 3 counselors, 2 media specialists, 1 nurse, 1 speech therapist, and 1 part-time

speech therapist and 1 part-time psychologist. The average salary for a certified teacher is

$33,446. Advanced degrees are held by over 51 percent of the certified staff members. 11

of the certified employees graduated from the high school in this district. The district also

employs 43 support workers consisting of: 1 administrative assistant, 1 business manager,

1 facilities manager, 7 secretaries, 16 assistants, 8 child nutrition workers, 2 crossing

guards, and 7 custodians. The support staff has a combined 284 years of experience or an average of 66 years in this district.

The district developed this new mission statement in the fall of 1998: Business, parents and schools (BPS) providing opportunities for excellence to achieve student success. After the district mission statement was established, the CLEP committee met and established the following goals:

1. The district facilities will be improved by increasing the quality and quantity of classrooms and service space to an amount sufficient to provide the Council of educational Facility Planners International recommended amenities needed by a school with our student population by 2005.

2. By using vertical teaming and pedagogically sound teaching techniques our students' average score on standardized and criterion referenced tests will show a gain of one percent per year in each curricular area for the next four years.

3. Our district technology will improve yearly to support the teaching, learning, and administrative needs of faculty, students, and staff to the exemplary level as measured by the International Society for Technology in Education.

The third goal, technology, has become important to the education of all students. School District B has employed a part-time Technology Specialist who is responsible for installing all equipment software and meet the technology needs of the district. Every classroom in the district has internet availability and E-mail. Internet computer labs also exist at the three main sites and in both media center libraries. Each principal, counselor, and secretary has a computer with internet accessibility. The district utilizes an internet

filtering service to provide security for students using the Internet. Additionally, the district consents to commercial advertisements through "Channel One," a student news network, in each middle and high school classroom.

The governing school board of this district consists of five members, who are elected to serve five-year terms. The board makeup consists of three men and two women. Four of the five school board members graduated from School District B's high school. All of the school board members have children attending in the district. The school board meets two times per month in the high school auditorium. Most of the school board members have lived in the community for more than 20 years. Therefore, as a whole, they had a basic understanding of the community and school operations before being elected to the school board.

School District B has a Community Education Program for teachers, students, and community members. Classes typically offered are: English as a Second Language, computers, oil painting, cameras, parenting with love and logic, and Spanish. The classes are held three nights per week at the high school from 7:00-9:00 PM. The average attendance is about 300 participants per semester.

The school district borders a large, conservative church, where many people in the community, as well as students and school personnel, attend. All five school board members, the superintendent, and three principals attend this church. Some of the church values are considered when making school decisions. This was expressed by board members during casual conversation.

The current superintendent is credited with being a great financial manager, according to four of the five board members. A big feather in the superintendent's cap

was that he started the district's Foundation in 1997. This broad based, nonprofit organization secures funds and distributes them to teachers for students. Each teacher receives $50 per year to spend on classroom supplies from the Foundation. Each year the Foundation provides the school district about $7,000 in grants for the classroom. The Foundation has an annual fundraiser banquet and workers raise money at an annual Fourth of July celebration.

School District B has a partnership with Sodexho Nutritional Services to manage the Child Nutrition Program. The goal of this program with eight employees is to educate students to make healthy choices. Sodexho serves breakfast and lunch, and provides extra catering as needed.

The community's support of the district is exhibited in the volunteer program. The district receives more than 10,000 volunteer hours annually. Volunteers raise money, assist teachers and staff, and do anything to enhance the education of students. Annually, the district has a breakfast to honor the volunteers.

School District B understands the importance of safety. They have a full time security guard. Every classroom in the district is equipped with a call back button. The superintendent and all administrators are visible during the day. Before school starts, the superintendent welcomes children to school in the middle school parking lot. Each school practices fire, storm, and other emergency drills. The school district also has a good working relationship with the local police and fire departments.

School District B Superintendent

The superintendent of School District B has completed seven years in the district as superintendent. He is currently in the first year of a three year contract. He attended K-12 public school in the bigger school district that borders this school district. The superintendent, an educator for 29 years, started his career in a large school district as a business teacher and coach for 10 years. He spent 10 years as an assistant principal and 2 years as a head principal before becoming a superintendent (Superintendent B, 2-21-04).

The superintendent graduated from a small private university with a degree in business education. He then obtained a masters degree in educational administration from a local state college. Recently, he received his doctorate from a large state university.

As I was interviewing Superintendent B, it was easy to see that he did not care about receiving personal recognition. He gave lengthy answers to each of the seven interview questions. This superintendent really demonstrated a detailed understanding of the entire school district and the community he represents.

Superintendent B Themes

Five major themes emerged from the superintendent's interview. They are: teaming, versatile leadership, public relations, communication, and recognition of positive events in the district.

Teaming

When I asked the superintendent what characteristics he possesses that have enabled him to have a lengthy tenure in his current position, he replied, "I try never to use the word 'I'. It's always a 'we' approach, a team approach. It's our school district. I think one of the issues that has been a feather for us is to try it with a teaming approach." It was readily obvious that this superintendent believes in teaming.

Versatile Leadership

The teaming approach discussion served as a good transition to the next theme, his versatile leadership style. The superintendent described his leadership style as participatory management or transformational leadership. He continued saying, "We try to involve teachers, parents, and principals. The more people feel empowered, they are going to take more ownership in the workplace." He actually mentioned the word "empowered" four times while answering this question. He also added, "I would never ask anybody to do something I would not do myself. I mow the grass occasionally in the summer and I pick up trash after football games."

Public Relations

Another theme that emerged from superintendent B was the importance of public relations. The superintendent greets students and parents everyday in the middle school parking lot before school.

All administrators belong to a service organization such as Kiwanis or the Chamber of Commerce. The superintendent remarked, "I attend City Council meetings frequently." The superintendent invites the police and the fire department to eat breakfast with students once a month on Fridays. The superintendent also donates his Fourth of July each year to park cars at the district's Foundation fundraiser. The superintendent elaborated, "We have real good relationships with the community and different organizations involved in the community."

Communication

The fourth theme that emerged was the necessity of constant communication. The superintendent told me, "We have a calling system that can pick up the phone and call all the board members at the same time and disseminate information. I want to keep the board members informed; board members do not like to be bombarded with surprises. We send out board agendas on Friday before the Monday meeting."

Recognition

The superintendent continued with the last theme that he felt was very important: to recognize school district successes. Recently, this district's football team won a state championship. At a school board meeting, the seniors were recognized and they presented the school board members with autographed footballs. He also expressed that "When our principals and teachers win awards, we put them out front and hopefully people recognize them. Each year at our Foundation banquet, the following groups are recognized: volunteers, grant recipients, teachers, and students." This superintendent started the Foundation, but I had to ask him if he started it because he was too humble to tell me.

In summary, this superintendent wants everyone in the community to be involved in the education of all children. The superintendent stated, "I mow the grass for my own enjoyment, but it gives you a neat feeling trying to be involved in all areas of the school district."

School District B School Board Members and the Principal

School District B is governed by a five member board. It is important to give some background information on each school board member and give examples showing how each of them answered the interview questions. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of all participants.

Ann Jones, a school board member for 14 years, is currently serving as vice-president. Mrs. Jones was a public school teacher for four years, but now she works part-time as a bus driver for a local school district. She is a well educated lady with a Master's degree in Education. All three of her children attend School District B. She attended high school out of state, but graduated from a local private college. Ann first became interested in becoming a school board member when she was approached by a friend and urged to consider it. She has enjoyed this community service role (Jones, 3-5-04).

Bill Smith has been a school board member in School District B for one year, and currently works in the finance office at a college. He holds a Master's degree in Business Administration from a local university. Bill is 50 years old and has two children, one who graduated from this school district and one who is still attending the district. Bill was also recruited to fill a vacancy on the school board, and he expressed a desire to help improve the district for children (Smith, 3-6-04).

Sam Rodriquez has been a school board member in School District B for four years. Mr. Rodriquez is currently serving as the school board president. He has a Bachelor's degree in Business and a Master's degree in Theology. Mr. Rodriquez is 45 years old; he has one child enrolled in the district's school and one who has graduated from the district. Sam wanted to give something back to the school district; he believes in being positive for kids (Rodriquez, 3-9-04).

Jan Winn has been a school board member in School District B for two years. She has been a college nursing teacher for 14 years. Mrs. Winn has a bachelor's degree in chemistry and a Master's degree in nursing. Jan is 47 years old and has three children

who all attend the district's schools. Mrs. Winn decided to run for the school board because she wanted to be involved in her children's education (Winn, 3-11-04).

Princeton Vines has been a school board member in School District B for seven years. He has a bachelor's degree in religion and a master's degree in Philosophy. Princeton is 49 years old; he has two children attending School District B. Mr. Vines wanted to be on the school board because he believed that a school board could make an impact. Additionally, he wanted to know what kinds of things would be available for his two children. (Vines, 3-8-04)

The principal who participated in this study is David Allen. Mr. Allen graduated from a major university with a degree in political science. He received his master's degree in Education from a local university. Mr. Allen taught business and history for 11 years, and has been a principal for four years. As a teacher, David became interested in administration and curriculum, which led to becoming a principal. David believes, as a principal, he can make a big difference in the lives of kids (Allen, 3-17-04).

School District B Themes

When conducting the interviews, and analyzing the transcriptions with School District B board members and the principal, five themes developed concerning the superintendent: character, financial skills, communication skills, public relations, and leadership.

Character

The superintendent's genuine character was expressed by the following statements: Ann Jones commented, "He is a man of character and people in this area feel that's important." Princeton Vines added, "He is just a good man…a regular guy." David Allen responded, "He is a people person." Ann Jones also stated, "He is well liked in the community."

Financial Skills

Another common theme was that the superintendent had favorable financial skills. Ann Jones exclaimed that "He has done an excellent job with money. He has proven to be a good money person." Princeton Vines added that "He's exceptional in his ability to take care of budgeting and allocating funds in difficult times, and I would rate that as number one." Jan Winn replied, "I think he has excellent managerial skills and he is very good with management of money in a tight budgetary season." David Allen responded that "He has been successful passing bond issues. He financially has done some things that has really helped the district and provided a stable base for the district." Thus, all the interviewees respected Superintendent B's abilities as a money manager.

Communication Skills

The third emerging theme was that the superintendent was an effective, amiable communicator. Sam Rodriquez stated, "He communicates clearly and quite often. We get two to three E-mails a week of communications on school projects." We usually receive two to three voice mails a week. He lives by the old adage that informed people are happy people." Princeton Vines said that "He is very open with communication." Ann Jones replied, "He is very approachable." David Allen added, "He is very open with everything." Bill Smith even said, "The superintendent is a good listener." Everyone interviewed described the superintendent as possessing exceptional communication skills.

Public Relations

The fourth theme was that the superintendent was skillful at handling public relations. Jan Winn emphasized, "The superintendent is a good leader and he gets community people involved." Ann Jones states, "He brings in groups of people, former board members and staff members, living in the community to get input and support. The people in the community really seem to appreciate his interest in them and their ideas. He has good rapport with the police and city council members." David Allen agreed, "He relates well to the community."

Leadership

The last theme that emerged was that Superintendent B employs a variety of democratic leadership styles. Ann Jones remarked, "I think he uses democratic and participatory." Bill Smith replied, "I would say it leans in that direction and he is not autocratic." Sam Rodriquez elaborated, "I think that his style certainly is one that would try to bring about a consensus within the organization. A consensus within the administration. Certainly there are times that one has to step out and make a decision on his own, but I think for the most part our superintendent certainly leads by consensus and tries to build a team approach to the district and the decisions that he makes."

Additionally three of the respondents said that the superintendent uses leadership by empowerment. Princeton Vines expressed, "He is good at empowering the principals to take care of their own." David Allen replied that the superintendent "Empowers people around him to make choices and decisions." In response to evaluating Superintendent B's leadership, Jan Winn answered, "Empowerment management." David Allen summed up superintendent B's leadership style: "He uses a combination of democratic leadership styles."

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was the grid and group model from Mary Douglas. Each participant in this study completed a survey (see Appendix A). The results from each survey were calculated and plotted on the grid and group framework. This was

done to see what social environment the school participants believe the district operates within. Each point was plotted and the mean, and mode average were also calculated. The instrument served as a tool to compare where the school board members, superintendent, and principal felt the district operates.

School District B was a strong collectivist culture, which is low grid, high group. The high group results of this district indicate that people value collective relationships and they are committed to the larger social unit more than to the individual (Gross & Rayner, 1985). "In high group social environments, there are specific membership criteria, explicit pressures to consider group relationships, and the survival of the group becomes more important than the survival of individual members within it" (Harris, 1995, p. 622).

Harris (1995) also states that in a low grid environment individuals are acknowledged for behavior and character rather than role status. This fits well because the board members described the superintendent as a man of character. "The low grid environment promotes individual liberty" (p. 621). In this school district, individuals are empowered to take ownership, thus showing an example of individual liberties.

The majority of the school board members, the superintendent, and the principal all scored about the same on the grid and group survey. One school board member and the superintendent had the same grid score. With seven people participating in the survey, one board member's score did not compare to the average. Jan Winn scored a -11 grid and 11 group, which was a point that was not in the norm with the other points. But it still fits into the low grid, high group collectivist quadrant. Only one school board member

had a +1 grid score. The grid and group points for school board members are presented in the following table:

Table 4:2

School District B - Grid and Group Score

	Grid Score	Group Score
Superintendent B	- 2	+ 8
Ann Jones	- 2	+ 7
Bill Smith	0	+ 7
Sam Rodriqeuz	+1	+ 7
Jan Winn	- 11	+ 11
Princeton Vines	- 1	+ 11
Principal David Allen	- 3	+ 7
Totals	- 18	+ 58

Mean score for grid = -2.57 Mean for group = + 8.28
Mode score for grid = -2.0 Mode score for group = 7.0
The mean is the average score. The mode is the number-score that occurs most often.
School District B's grid and group plotted points can be seen in Appendix D.

Case Three: School District C

School District C Demographics

The following information about this school district was obtained from the

district's Comprehensive Local Education Plan (CLEP) and historical documents.

School District C was a middle sized school in the study. It currently has a K-12

student population of 4500 students. The student ethnic breakdown is 80 percent

Caucasian, 10 percent Native American, and 5 percent African American. The district is located at the edge of a large metropolitan area. This district is bordered by two smaller school districts.

Historical records indicate that this district's first school house was built in 1892. Children were bussed to school in wagons. Today, School District C covers 58 square miles. This district contains one 10th – 12th grade high school, two 7th – 9th grade junior highs, two K-6 elementary schools, one K-3rd grade school, and one K-2nd grade school. All seven of these schools are accredited by the North Central Association of Schools and the State Department of Education.

Currently, the district also has an alternative academy. This alternative school operates Monday through Thursday from 3:45 to 8:00 PM. Eight teachers spend nine hours per week teaching at the alternative school. High school students can take classes at a near by vocational school, or at a state college located close to the school district.

School District C has a 21 million dollar annual budget. 87 percent of the budget is spent on personnel costs. The biggest portion of the budget, 75 percent, is from state aid. 20 percent comes form local funds, and 5 percent comes from federal funds. The districts indebtedness capacity is 10 million dollars. The superintendent stated that the district was in decent shape financially.

The socio-economic majority of district C's families would be middleclass; however, the annual household income is $56,334, which is above the state average of $44,370. This almost $12,000 over average income is the highest income per household of the four districts in this study. 24.8 percent of the students qualify for the free and reduced lunch program.

School District C employs 325 certified employees, consisting of teachers and administrators. The average salary for a certified teacher is $33,493. Advanced degrees are held by 20 percent of the classroom teachers and by all the administrators. The average salary of the administrators is $61,998. The district also employs 225 bus drivers, cooks, secretaries, maintenance workers, and custodians. The district is the largest employer in this town and approximately 380 of the employees live in this district.

The district's new mission statement is "to provide educational excellence for all students." The statement of philosophy presented in the CLEP plan in District C "is dedicated to fostering intellectual understanding, physical development, character growth and social competencies that enable students to become fully functioning citizens, and promote the ideals of our nation's constitution."

The student enrollment has remained steady over the past few years. Last year's enrollment decreased by 1.7 percent.

According to the CLEP, priorities for this district are school improvement, capital improvement, technology and reading. The school improvement effort is addressed by each school developing its own CLEP, focusing on high expectations for all students. School District C has a district wide goal to improve educational excellence for all students. The primary model to achieve this goal is the Great Expectation methodology. Almost all teachers have attended the Great Expectations training.

Capital improvement is another target area that is of great concern to the district. The patrons have been very supportive of the district. This was observed recently by the passage of a bond issue by 88 percent. This last bond issue was to improve roofs and

parking lots at all school sites. The preceding bond issue, passed at 77 percent, was designed to purchase a quarter of a million dollars worth of computers.

The district wants to improve the use of technology in the education of their students. Every classroom has an internet accessible computer. The high school has a state-of-the-art distance learning lab. This learning lab provides students with extra learning opportunities to take courses originating from other sites.

The district desires all students reading on grade level or above. A Reading Sufficiency Act committee is in place at all four elementary schools in District C. All K-3rd grade students are assessed annually to monitor student reading levels. If it is determined that a student is not on grade level, then an individual reading plan is developed for that child. Teachers are taught to utilize a variety of reading strategies to enhance student reading performance.

The school board of School District C consists of five members who are elected to serve five year terms. The board consists of three women and two men who have a combined 40 years of board experience. The school board meets regularly two times per month. One meeting will take place at school in the district, and the other takes place at the central administration office.

The district has a non-profit, broadly-based community school Foundation. The Foundation was established in 1992 with the sole purpose of the Foundation being to assist teachers to improve the quality of education through the Grants to Teachers program. About $10,000 worth of grants are distributed to teachers annually from the Foundation.

School District C conducts its own child nutrition program through a full time director. Each school site has a cafeteria, but the high school cafeteria is not big enough to serve the entire student body, so the students are allowed to leave campus at lunch time. Expanding the high school cafeteria is a goal of the board and superintendent.

School District C Superintendent

The superintendent of School District C served the district for 30 years. He started as a high school teacher from 1972 to 1975. He was an assistant principal from 1975-1981. Then he became the high school principal from 1981-2002. He served as assistant superintendent from 1985-1994, and as superintendent beginning 1994, ending in 2002. According to all the school board members, this eight year superintendent would still be superintendent if he did not want to retire and run his family-owned private business. The eight years of service fit the criteria for this study, since I was looking for more than five years of superintendent service (Superintendent C, 3-1-04).

This superintendent graduated with a bachelor's degree in social studies from a state college in 1968. He received his master's degree and superintendent's license in 1974. He completed 45 hours towards a doctor's degree at a large state university. He stated that he really enjoyed working his entire career in this particular school district. While interviewing Superintendent C, it was easy to see and hear that he really enjoyed his entire career. This was demonstrated by smiles and the fact that he stated that he missed his colleagues. He added, "I feel that I was able to contribute in a positive fashion in all my positions in the district."

Five major themes emerged from the interview with this former superintendent. They are: character, versatile leadership, politics, communication, and involvement.

Character

When I asked Superintendent C what characteristics he possessed that enabled him to have a lengthy tenure, he responded with words that mean character. Exactly, he commented, "I think I demonstrated integrity, honesty, willingness to listen, not being bull-headed about things. I feel like I was always up front and honest with people. I tried to show people I like them. I think it's being open and honest with people. If you say you're going to do something for somebody, make sure you do it."

Versatile Leadership

During the interview, Superintendent C described his leadership style as using many styles. He insisted the only time to be an "autocrat was in a high stress situation like a bomb threat or things of that nature." He claimed to be very democratic in the leading process. He elaborated that in hiring for every central office and principal position during his tenure, he not only used a committee, but also went with the committee decision for the position every time. This superintendent assured that he "would form committees to seek input on all major decisions from bond issues to

curriculum issues." Knowing exactly which leadership style to use in which situation is a key to leadership.

Politics

The superintendent replied, "Political issues in the school and the community can be tough to handle." He expressed the best way to handle political issues is, "If you said you're going to do something, do it. On bond issues, if you say you're going to do something, make sure it's done." He felt politics are best handled by being open and honest, and by listening to people.

Communication

Another important issue the superintendent mentioned was that of communication. Superintendent C explained that he would send out a memo every Thursday to all board members with "what was going on in the schools." He said, "The board members like being informed of what's going on." This superintendent added that he would meet with the school board president once a week normally on Thursdays.

Involvement

The last theme which emerged was the fact that Superintendent C felt being very involved in school and community functions was important. He emphasized, "I think

working in the community, being involved in making sure that people see you out and about is important. It's important for people to see you at athletic events, PTA meetings, or going out to the buildings. Don't be reclusive and stay in your office. If I needed to talk to someone, I would go see them."

In summary, this superintendent believes the most important keys to continuous success are: character, versatile leadership, working politically, communicating frequently, and being involved.

The superintendent described in this part of the study retired two years ago. He was in no way asked or forced to retire; it was just a wise move for him financially to retire. His successor is a gentleman who has spent 24 years in School District C. Both of these men were gracious and helped me gather information.

The new superintendent in District C expressed the same feelings about being very visible and communicating frequently with everyone in the community. Recently, the new superintendent led the district to passing a bond issue by 88 percent, which is one of the biggest percentages I have ever seen.

School District C School Board Members and the Principal

School District C is governed by a five member school board. It is important to give some background information on each school board member and give examples of how each of them answered the interview questions. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of all participants.

Ann Phillips has served as a school board member in School District C for six years. She is currently the board vice-president. Ann is a retired school teacher with 38 years experience teaching in a nearby school district. Mrs. Phillips wanted to become a school board member to give back to the district for the wonderful education it provided to her two children. Ann graduated from a state college with a degree in drama and speech. She holds a master's degree in education (Phillips, 2-9-04).

Tim Olsen has served on the school board in School District C for 9 years. Tim has an associate's degree from a community college. Tim wanted to give back to the community that educated his two boys. He wanted to be a school board member to contribute and help kids (Olsen, 2-12-04).

Phung Nguyen is currently serving as the school board president for School District C. She has been on the school board for 10 years. Phung has a bachelor's and a master's degree in nursing. She has been a nursing teacher for 22 years. Mrs. Nguyen was approached by a couple of friends that encouraged her to run for the school board. Phung enjoys trying to be a positive influence for the school district (Nguyen, 2-17-04).

LouAnn White has been a school board member for eight years in this district. She attended college at a major state university for three years and then went to work in the oil and gas field. Lois is 53 years old and she has two children currently enrolled in School District C. She wanted to become a school board member to make a difference and to help kids (White, 2-20-04).

Billy Mitchell has been a school board member in this district for seven years. Billy graduated from a major state university with a mechanical engineering degree. Billy coached little league teams and he has a desire to make things better for kids. He was also

approached by teachers that wanted him to run for school board. Billy wants the district to grow and expand into a better district. He really loves being a school board member (Mitchell, 2-23-04).

The principal interviewed for School District C is Todd Clay. Mr. Clay was a science teacher and coach for 15 years. He has been a principal for five years. Todd graduated from a major state university. While teaching in three different districts and being a leader, Mr. Clay had a desire to become a principal so he could make a difference. His goal was to improve educational opportunities for children (Clay, 2-23-04).

School District C Themes

While I was analyzing and reviewing the interviews from School District C, four major themes emerged concerning the successful superintendent. The themes that developed were: community involvement, versatile leadership, relationship builder, and communication skills.

Community Involvement

The most prominent theme that developed when talking about Superintendent C was the level of his community involvement. All the interviewees expressed that the superintendent was very involved in the community and in the school district. Ann Phillips stated, "He taught in the district and he lived in the community for quite some

time. He belongs to community organizations and participates." Phung Nguyen added, "He lives in our district. He worked as a teacher and a principal, then central office." Tim Olsen insisted that "he has a big following." Todd Clay assured, "The superintendent was always attending events, sports, plays, and musicals. He was very involved." Ann Phillips also emphasized, "He makes it a point to go to a lot of the programs, the athletic events, band programs, you know, the different kind of activities."

Versatile Leadership

Another theme that emerged was that the superintendent had a versatile leadership style. The interviewees expressed that the superintendent used several leadership styles. Ann Phillips said, "He was a good confidence builder." LouAnn White added, "He used a democratic approach. He tried to get input and listen to all sides and then make the best decision. He is not autocratic." Phung Nguyen commented, "He is very open and honest with his leadership. He just lays the cards down on the table." Billy Mitchell responded, "He used a lot of different styles. He led by example. He used committees to seek input and gather information."

Relationship Builder

The third theme that emerged was that Superintendent C was strong at building relationships. Billy Mitchell stated, "He is a gifted person at developing relationships. He deals with people at all levels. He is able to relate well to business leaders or educators."

Tim Olsen agreed, "The superintendent was really good at building trust and developing relationships to lead." LouAnn White insisted, "He had a lot of allies in the district because he knew how to relate to everyone." Todd Clay expressed that "the superintendent knew how to make people feel important."

Communication Skills

The school board members from District C feel that Superintendent C is good with his communication skills. Ann Phillips said, "We would get a weekly report from our superintendent every Friday. It's a report of everything going on in the school district." Tim Olsen elaborated, "He always kept us informed. He will call us at home if something comes up." Lou Ann White responded, "He kept everybody from staff to teachers to administrators informed and that was the secret to his success." Jan Watson exclaimed, "He did a great job of communicating and keeping us informed."

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was the grid and group model from Mary Douglas. Each participant from School District C completed the survey found in Appendix A. The results from each survey were calculated and plotted on the grid and group framework. This was done to see within what social environment the school participants feel the district operates. Each point was plotted and the mean, and mode

were also calculated. The instrument served as a tool of comparing where the school board members, superintendent, and principal felt the district operated.

School District C was also a strong collectivist culture, which is low grid, high group. The high group indicates that people value collective relationships and they are committed to individuals (Gross & Rayner, 1985). Several board members mentioned that the superintendent was good at developing and forming relationships. This fits in the collectivist culture of grid and group because positive relationships are important to this culture.

The low grid environment displayed by School District C acknowledges the fact that behavior and character is more important than role status. The superintendent was looked at in a positive fashion because of his behavior and the way in which he lead School District C. The committees utilized by the superintendent in the decision making process allowed individual stakeholders to feel important and empowered, which is another example of low grid culture; people take ownership in expressing individual liberties.

All of the participants scored in the same quadrant of the grid and group framework. They all scored collectivist. Tim Olsen had the lowest grid score of -8, which was one of the lowest grid scores in the study. Ann Phillips had a 16 for the group score. A fifty cent piece would have covered all the other scores on the chart.

The grid and group scores for all the participants are presented on the following table.

Table 4:3

School District C - Grid and Group Scores

	Grid score	Group score
Former Superintendent C	-1	+5
Current Superintendent C	-1	+9
Ann Phillips	-2	+16
Tim Olsen	-8	+8
Phung Nguyen	-3	+5
Lou Ann White	-1	+14
Billy Mitchell	-5	+5
Principal Todd Clay	-4	+8
Totals	-25	+70

Mean score for grid = - 3.125 Mean score for group = +8.75
Mode score for grid = - 1.0 Mode score for group = +5.0
The mean is the average score. The median is the middle number listed from least to greatest. The mode is the number-score that occurs most often. School District C's grid and group plotted points can be seen in Appendix E.

Case Four: School District D

School District D Demographics

The following information was obtained from the school district's Comprehensive Local Education Plan (CLEP), historical documents, and the state office of accountability report.

School District D has a K-12 student population of over 14,000. This is the largest school district in the study. The district is on the edge of a large metropolitan area. It

covers 71 square miles. The town has a community college and an area vocational school. The community population is 74,220. The ethnic breakdown of students is 61 percent Caucasian, 27 percent Black, 2 percent Asian, 4 percent Hispanic, and 6 percent Native American.

Historical documents indicate the first school in School District D started as a dependent school. By fall of 1943, the state allowed this district to become an Independent District, which enabled school District D to purchase buildings. The first buildings were pre-fabricated 16 feet long and 16 feet wide. These buildings were put together by administrators, teachers, spouses, parents, and students.

Currently the district maintains 17 K-6 elementary schools, five 7th-9th grade junior high schools, three 10th-12th grade high schools, and one alternative school. The financial information about District D is as follows: The state provides 65.6 percent of the funds, which is $46.7 million. The local funds account for 21.3 percent of the funds, which is $15.3 million. Federal funds account for 12.8 percent, which amounts to $9 million.

School District D maintains 94 full-sized school busses. The district runs 83 bus routes daily and covers 642,391 miles per year. These busses transport over 1,000,000 students per year. The district uses over 100,000 gallons of fuel and makes over 2500 activity trips each school year.

School District D employs 794 regular classroom teachers, 533 support staff, consisting of bus drivers, secretaries, custodians, and teacher aides, and 67 administrators. About 40 percent of the professional staff holds advanced degrees. The

classroom teachers average 13 years of experience. The average teacher's salary is $36,737. The average salary for administrators in School District D is $60,136.

School District D maintains a school lunch program. They serve 7500 lunches, and 3250 breakfast trays each day. 52 percent of the students are on free and/or reduced lunch. Each school has an individual cafeteria.

School District D has a total population of 74,220 people. The poverty rate is about 11 percent. The average household income is $42,610, which is slightly below the state average of $44,370. The district would be considered as a lower middle class neighborhood.

The school district's CLEP focuses on eight areas. They are:

1. School Improvement

2. Professional Development

3. Instructional Programs

4. Instructional Technology

5. Technology Center

6. Reading Sufficiency Act

7. Alternative Education

8. Capital Improvement

The mission statement for School District D is to accept each child as a unique entity, capable of learning in different ways at different rates. We strive to provide an environment and educational opportunities which ensure that children of all ability levels can acquire the knowledge, master the skills, and develop the attitudes that lead to a rewarding and productive future.

At each school site, a school improvement committee is in place with the goal of improving in each area of the curriculum. The committee is made up of staff members, parents, students, and patrons. The goals of each committee are expressed in brochures and by classroom teachers.

The purpose of the district's professional development is to provide opportunities for the enhancement of student learning. The emphasis is placed o the interrelationship among the site-needs, district needs, and the curricular goals. All activities must be consistent with state law. Professional development is strongly site-based with four of the five professional days dedicated to site improvement.

Each area of the curriculum is broken down with specific instructional goals. Of the four districts in the study, this CLEP was the thickest document; it actually consisted of three separate books. The specific goals cover every area from gifted and talented students to the alternative school.

The technology plan in School District D is detailed and elaborate. The technology goal for the district is to develop a technology rich, student centered, learning environment spanning K-12 education. Goals are in place for all students grades K-12. Additionally, training for teachers and administrators seems to be detailed and well organized.

The district is in line with the Reading Sufficiency Act. Each school committee in the district annually adopts and updates its own reading sufficiency plan. Again, a detailed plan is in place to help ensure all children are on the appropriate reading level by grade.

School District D recognized the need that some students need alternate placement to be successful. This district has a massive alternative education program for students in grades 3-12. In grades 9-12 four different alternative programs exist for students to be successful.

This large district also maintains a well documented capital improvement plan in its local CLEP. The bonding capacity for each year is noted and documented for the next five years. Every building in the district is evaluated annually by the district maintenance personnel. The capital improvement portion of the CLEP is over 200 pages long.

The governing school board of this district consists of five members who are elected to serve five-year terms. The board makeup consists of three men and two women. All of the school board members in School District D have or have had children who attend school in this district. The school board meets two times per month at the administration building.

School District D Superintendent

The superintendent of School District D has completed ten years in the district as superintendent. She is currently working with a three year contract. Before being named superintendent, she served three years in the district as assistant superintendent for instruction. In a career that has spanned 24 years, she taught English five years, spent one year as an assistant principal, eight years as an assistant superintendent in three districts, three of those eight years were spent in School District D, and ten years as superintendent in School District D (Superintendent D, 4-5-04).

School District D's superintendent graduated from a large state university with a degree in English and drama. She also received a master's and a doctorate degree from the same large university. She had her doctorate when she started working as an assistant superintendent in School District D.

Superintendent D was able to give long detailed answers to the seven interview questions. She really demonstrated a broad understanding of the school district and her role as superintendent.

Superintendent D Themes

The major themes that emerged from her interview were: experience, communication, collaborative leadership, and putting kids first.

Experience

Superintendent D expressed that all of her experiences in education have helped her be successful as a superintendent. When she responded to how she communicates with the school board, she explained, "Just like in the classroom, you have all your modalities in the classroom. I find myself communicating with the board just like communicating with kids in class. All my experiences have helped me from being a teacher to assistant principal and being involved in most every area as a central office administer helps. I have a pretty good understanding of what the majority of the employees are dealing with day to day."

Communication

When I asked Superintendent D what characteristics she possesses that have enabled her to have a lengthy tenure in her current position, she stated, "My strongest skill is the communication end of it. Whether it's writing or it's verbal or whatever direction that needs to take, that has served us well. We have to explain to people and bring them along." When asked about communication with the board, she reflected, "I am very direct."

When communicating with the school board members, Superintendent D proclaimed, "I meet with the board members individually as needed. I send them a memo every week (FYI) of what's going on. The cardinal rule is we're not going to get any surprises. I'm not going to get one at a board meeting and they're not going to get one from me. A single board member does not get any information that they all don't get. If somebody calls for information, then I send it to everybody and they get the good, the bad, and the ugly as far as that particular piece of information. I have found that works pretty well. We've had a couple of new board members along the way, and we kind of have to get them in that same pattern and they learn pretty quickly; that's how we operate, and it, I think, gives them some comfort."

Collaborative Leadership

Superintendent D also explained that she utilizes a versatile-collaborative leadership style. She insisted, "My leadership style is very definitely collaborative. I do

not like to make a decision without input. So having people that you can go to that can

get you some honest input from becomes real important. At times you also have to be

directive or authoritative. I try to use collaboration as much as possible; however, in my

position you have to use several leadership styles." A definite teaming leadership

approach was explained by the superintendent.

Putting Kids First

Another theme that evolved from the interview that is so important was putting

kids first. The superintendent emphasized, "Keeping the kids first…I see some problems

if people don't have a real focus on why we're doing what we're doing in school, and

keeping kids out front." This statement reminded me how other participants said doing

what is best for kids is important.

School District D School Board Members and the Principal

School District D is governed by a five member school board. This board consists

of three men and two women. One school board member declined to participate in the

study because she was too busy. Again, background information on the participants will

be given. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of all participants.

Bill Anderson has been a school board member in School District D for 22 years.

He has a bachelor's degree in biology, a master's in chemistry, and he is a doctor. Dr.

Anderson wanted to be a school board member to give back something to the community.

He is 59 years old and both of his children graduated from School District D (Anderson, 4-7-04).

Lisa Ellis has been a school board member in this district for six years. She has an associates degree and works as a legal secretary. Lisa is 50 years old and her two daughters attended School District D. She wanted to perform a community service, so she decided to run for school board (Ellis, 4-10-04).

Michael Frost has been a school board member for 14 years. Mike is 61 years old and all three of his children graduated from this school district. He joined the board because he wanted to provide some type of public service (Frost, 4-14-04).

Dr. William Edwards has been a school board member in School District D for 35 years. He graduated with his doctor's degree in 1961. He was appointed to fill a vacant board seat in 1969, and after that term ended, he loved serving on the board as a service to his home community. He is 71 years old and both of his children graduated from this district (Edwards, 4-14-04).

The principal from School District D that participated in this study is Michelle Butkus. Mrs. Butkus has been an employee in this district for 33 years. She was an English teacher for 8 years, counselor for 9 years, assistant principal for 5 years, and a head principal for 11 years. Michelle received her bachelor's degree and master's degree from a large state university (Butkus, 4-22-04).

When conducting the interviews and analyzing the transcriptions with board members and the principal from School District D, five themes emerged concerning their successful superintendent. They are: character, communication skills, public relations, versatile leadership, and student centered.

Character

The superintendent's genuine character was expressed by the following statements. Dr. Bill Anderson described the superintendent. "She has integrity that's at the top of the list. She is a people person. She has a good working relationship with teachers, support people, and administrators." Michelle Butkus exclaimed, "She is a person of integrity. She is someone you can trust. I think she has a lot of character." Mike Frost added, "The superintendent is very concerned about everyone and everything in the district." I observed that all the school board members mentioned that the superintendent was a good person and they all talked with confidence when discussing her character.

Communication Skills

Another theme that developed from the school board members and the principal was that the superintendent is an outstanding communicator. Interesting enough is that Superintendent D feels like communication is her strong suit. Dr. Anderson exclaimed,

"She is a good communicator. She gives us a weekly FYI, (for your information),

regarding what's going on. If something bad happens, she tries to reach us first." Dr.

Edwards agreed, "Communication is one of her strong suits. She uses E-mail, faxes, the

phone, and a weekly FYI. This is important to know she communicates with all the

school board members equally. Whatever she tells one board member, she tells us all, so

nobody feels left out." Lisa Ellis hailed that "she does an excellent job of communicating

with us. We are well informed; she keeps us abreast of what's going on." Mike Frost

said, "She's a good communicator." Michelle Butkus admired, "She is a great

communicator, and this spring she met with every principal in the district for one hour

talking about the school. She really understands how to support the people around her."

Public Relations

Being a fine communicator probably helps the superintendent in the next theme of

being fervent at handling public relations. Dr. Bill Edwards replied, "She works well with

all the community leaders, city council, mayor, and she belongs to Kiwanis, Rotary,

Chamber of Commerce, and she presents programs to the civic clubs. She is very active

in the community and at school activities." Lisa Ellis bragged, "She is great at presenting

our needs to the legislators and the community leaders." Mike Frost elaborated, "She

belongs to different organizations and she pitches our needs to the community and she

has never lost a bond election. She visits all the local civic organizations." Michelle

Butkus pronounced, "She makes every effort to relate well with the community. She

invites them to committee things and she invites business leaders to sponsor the schools."

Superintendent D is very active and visible in the community. Every person interviewed shared in some way that she is very much involved as a public relations figure for the school district in the community.

Versatile Leadership

In the area of leadership, Superintendent D utilizes a variety of styles. Dr. Bill Anderson remarked, "She does not have a dictatorial type of leadership. I guess you call it leadership by consensus, and getting all our opinions. She uses a team approach and she tries to protect us as school board members." Dr. Edwards admitted, "She has different leadership styles. She is hands on; she delegates and gets input from everybody. She is fairly democratic." Mike Frost said, "She is hands on and works with committees and she is fairly democratic." Michelle Butkus stated, "I think she is a collaborative leader. She is democratic by seeking input from committees and other administrators." The superintendent uses multiple leadership styles and all the participants in the study described her as using more than one style.

Student Centered

Another theme that arose about the superintendent being successful was that she puts the kids' best interests first. This point was brought out in the following statements. Dr. Anderson quoted, "She puts the children of our district as the top priority.

Dr. Edwards added, "She even puts students on committees to get their input." Lisa Ellis adored, "She truly cares about the children." Mike Frost expressed, "She is very caring about the kids in this district." Michelle Butkus responded, "She is student centered."

Without being asked a question about the children, every participant expressed that the superintendent really puts the children of this district first.

Theoretical Framework

All the participants scored in the same quadrant of the grid and group survey. Again, a collectivist culture was representative of this school district. Two board members and a principal had the same grid score of -2. The superintendent and a board member had the same group score of +6. Only one school board member was very far from the others. The one off was Lisa Ellis with a grid score of -7 and a group score of +17, which was still collectivist.

School District D was a strong collectivist culture, which is low grid, high group. The high group results of this district indicate that people value collective relationships and they are committed to the larger social unit more than to the individual (Gross & Rayner, 1985). "In high group social environments, there are specific membership criteria, explicit pressures to consider group relationships, and the survival of the group becomes more important than the survival of individual members within it" (Harris, 1995, p. 622).

In a low grid environment individuals are acknowledged for behavior and character rather than role status (Harris, 1995). This fits well because the board members described the superintendent as a person of character. "The low grid environment promotes individual liberty" (p. 621). In this school district, individuals are empowered to take ownership, thus showing an example of individual liberties.

The following table represents all the scores from the grid and group survey:

Table 4:4

School District D – Grid and Group Scores

	Grid score	Group Score
Superintendent D	-1	+6
Bill Anderson	-4	+6
William Edwards	-2	+8
Lisa Ellis	-7	+17
Mike Frost	-2	+10
Michelle Butkus	-2	+5
Totals	-18	+52

Mean score for grid = -3 Mean score for group + 8.67
Mode score for grid = -2 Mode score for group + 6
The mean is the average score. The mode is the number-score that occurs most often.
School District D's grid and group plotted points can be seen in Appendix F.

Summary

The case study data produced by each school district was presented in this chapter. Each school district was presented individually. First, for each district, the demographic information was given, followed by a briefing of the characteristics of the

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superintendent of that district. The emerging themes from each superintendent were given after each superintendent was introduced. School board members and one principal from each district were then presented. Emerging themes, from school board members and a principal, were once again reported for each school district.

The results from the participants' grid and group surveys were also presented at the end of each case study. An additional graph was provided in the appendix for each school district. In this study, each district was operating in the low grid, high group quadrant, which is called collectivist quadrant, of the Douglas model.

The themes that developed in this chapter were further discussed and compared in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

Analysis and Interpretation of the Case Studies

The case studies represented in Chapter IV were analyzed individually in order to

obtain a thick description of the characteristics of successful superintendents. According

to Merriam, it is necessary for the qualitative researcher to establish a thick description in

order to have reliability and dependability (Merriam, 1988). According to Lincoln and

Guba (1985) comparing data individually and collectively will improve the consistency

and dependability of the research.

The purpose of this chapter was to describe how the Mary Douglas framework

provided a lens for the entire study, and to take the themes a step further by comparing

themes produced by the participants in each district. The thick detailed descriptions

presented in Chapter IV provided a description of what is happening in each school

district; Chapter V will provide further discussions and comparisons of these themes to

the Douglas model and to other research pertaining to guidelines for successful

superintendents.

For the purpose of reporting, this chapter was divided into sections; the first

section is another description of the Mary Douglas model fitting this case study. The

remaining sections will be a list of the major and minor themes, how they related to grid

and group, how they were practiced by the superintendents in this study, and where these themes are observed in the literature.

Grid and Group Framework

The Mary Douglas typology of grid and group was an effective framework for this study because the anthropologist approach comes from three different perspectives: holistic, symbolic, and dualistic (Harris, 2004).

The holistic approach means comprehensive. Every culture contains members in schools - students, teachers, support employees, administrators, parents, and school board members. The holistic approach tries to encompass the complex nature of the culture. Members in the organization try to define their roles and responsibilities (Harris, 2004). This study looked at the characteristics of successful superintendents and the roles of superintendents and school board members. The holistic approach fits this study well.

The symbolic approach to schools is that "they are social organizations comprised of people with a set of shared beliefs, complex rituals and relationships" (Harris, 2004, p. 3). The study concentrated on superintendents and leadership, since leadership is partially responsible to improve the culture.

The dualistic approach emphasizes, in any given social context, a person's knowledge, feelings, beliefs, and values as significant. "From this perspective, culture is a combination of ideas or theories that people use collectively and the way they act out those ideas or theories" (Harris, 2004, p. 5). Qualitative case study is a very effective

method of divulging the personal perspectives of the participants. The dualistic portion of the Douglas model fits well with this qualitative case study.

The Mary Douglas typology of grid and group does not allow for an infinite number of possibilities. The grid and group provides two dimensions and four possible social cultures within which school districts operate.

"In Douglas's frame, grid refers to the degree to which an individual's choices are constrained within a social system by imposed prescriptions such as role expectations, rules and procedures" (Harris, 2004, p. 7). In some organizations autonomy is controlled by bureaucratic rules. In other organizations, there are few regulations and individuals have input and choices in the decision making processes.

The grid strength has a range from high to low. In high grid environments, role and rule dominate individual freedoms. "In high grid environments, teachers typically do not have the freedom to select their own curriculum and textbooks and many decisions are made by the school board, superintendents, or site administration" (Harris, 2004, p. 8).

On the low end of the grid scale, teachers and workers feel more independence in choosing curriculum. Teachers have more ownership and input into the decisions that impact the entire school culture. Individuals are appreciated for their skills and abilities. In low grid school districts, several employees from all levels take part in the hiring process of teachers and administrators.

In this study, every district scored low on the grid scale, which means that teachers and middle level administrators have a great deal of input in all four school

districts. Employees of all four districts are not isolated; their input and voices are heard in many of the decisions that have to be made.

"In summary, grid refers to the degree to which individuals are constrained by role differentiation, rules and expectations. On the grid continuum, high grid educational contexts are those in which role and rule dominate individual life choices, and low grid environments are characterized by individual autonomy and freedom in role choices" (Harris, 2004, p.9).

The group represents the level to which people appreciate collective relationships, and the commitment to the larger social unit. In this study all four school districts displayed a high group ranking. Pride was evident in all four school districts; allegiance from community is shown in all four districts by passing traditions of the school on to future generations. "In high group social environments, specific membership criteria exist and explicit pressures influence group relationships. The survival of the group is more important than the survival of individual members within it" (Harris, 2004, p. 11). The study also revealed another characteristic of high group environments in that all the school districts displayed tradition and relished success in athletics and academics. Additionally, community recreation and activities constantly take place in all four school district facilities. These four school districts all are high group schools which was noted by the results of the survey instruments and by the tone of all the interviews.

An example of low group would be observed in school districts that do not have strong traditions. The social system of this type of district is in constant change due to teacher and administrator turnover (Harris, 2004).

In this study all school districts were reported as collectivist (low grid, high group). In the collectivist environment there are few social distinctions and roles are competitive; however, rules for status and roles are more consistent than in weak group environments.

Douglas (1982) wrote that strong group environments incorporate individuals in common residence, share work, share resources and recreation, and exert control over family life. The school is a type of family where there is a sense of community among teachers, parents, and students. Again, this statement by Douglas is very inclusive to all four of the school districts in this study. These school districts are all managed by school boards and superintendents who put the school as "the family first." Input from stakeholders is also a common practice in these districts. Douglas would look at all four districts as textbook collectivist cultures.

Major Themes from the Studies

I took all the themes mentioned by superintendents, school board members, and principals from Chapter IV and charted them into major and minor themes. I considered a theme that was prevalent in all four school districts to be a major characteristic necessary for long superintendent tenure. If a theme emerged, but not in all four school districts, I considered it to be a minor characteristic needed for successful superintendent tenure.

The following table represents the major themes/characteristics for successful superintendents:

Table 5:1

Major Themes

	Communication Skills	Versatile Leadership	Public Relations/ Community Involvement	Good Character
Superintendent A	X	X	X	
Principal and School Board A	X	X	X	X
Superintendent B	X	X	X	
Principal and School Board B	X	X	X	X
Superintendent C	X	X	X	X
Principal and School Board C	X	X	X	
Superintendent D	X	X		
Principal and School Board D	X	X	X	X

Communication

The four major themes produced by this study can all be viewed as part of the collectivist culture in the Douglas grid and group framework.

Communication in Grid and Group

The first major theme produced in this study was communication. According to Harris (2004), collectivist school administrators exhibit the characteristics of good quite

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communicators "by listening, seeking input, facilitating problem solving and giving feedback" (p. 15). In the collectivist environment, communication occurs quite often and in various ways. The superintendents in the study communicated frequently with the school board members in multiple ways. The four superintendents in this study exhibited another collectivist communication technique by communicating educational goals to the community and listening to the community members concerns.

The following paragraphs are examples of how each superintendent in this study communicates:

Superintendent A uses a variety of methods to brief her board. She uses e-mail, phone calls, and weekly writings. She also gives each board member a Friday Facts sheets with pertinent information. In observing her at board meetings, she was calm and referred to seeking input from a committee concerning a new policy issue before the board. She even takes notes during the board meetings, so she does not miss anything important. This shows that she has fully developed her board into leading the district. She does pay close attention to seeing that the board members are satisfied, and she treats each board member equally. They feel ownership in their policy making decisions because she has given them all the pertinent information needed to make positive governing decisions for the district.

Superintendent A was noted by board members as being prompt with her information. Some recalled that she communicated openly, honestly, and fairly to all board members equally. This openness and honesty builds her credibility with the board. Finally, she is very responsive to the board members; she makes them a high priority.

Superintendent B explained how he uses a calling system to call all of the board members at the same time to disseminate pertinent information. According to the board members, who feel he is very open with his communication, he also sends out two to three e-mails a week to the board members to keep them abreast of school projects going on throughout the district. Superintendent B does not like to bombard his school board with surprises.

Superintendent C also has many of the communication skills necessary for successful superintendent tenure. This superintendent noted that the board members like to be informed. Thus, he is aware of what their needs are and he is treating them as a precious asset.

Board members in District C also agree that Superintendent C is great with his communication skills. They received weekly reports from the superintendent, and he would call all of them on the telephone if something came up that they needed to know about. They felt that their superintendent's secret to success was his great communication skills.

Superintendent D stated that her biggest rule in communicating with the board is that they will not get any surprises. She sends out all pertinent information to each board member weekly. As new information arrives, she sends all of it- the good, the bad, and the ugly- out in a timely manner. This telling of the full truth builds her credibility to the board as being an honest leader. Superintendent D also feels that in order to keep the board comfortable, she acclimates the new board members into the same pattern as the other existing board members. This act takes much time, but she does it because fully developing her board is a high priority on her list.

School Board members in School District D also feel that their superintendent is a great communicator. In fact, they see communication as her strongest character. If something bad happens, she contacts them immediately. These timely phone calls increase her trust factor. She uses faxes, e-mails, phone calls, and weekly FYI's to communicate pertinent information to the board members. They all feel very informed to make wise decisions. Finally, they are feel very supported by her, which means she knows how to make them feel satisfied and feel as if they are a high priority.

Communication in the Literature

The first emerging theme discovered was that all four superintendents were considered to be outstanding communicators. This fact was reported in one way or another by every school board member and principal in the study. It was also mentioned as an important characteristic by each superintendent.

According to Houston and Eadie (2002) there are three ways to effectively communicate with school board members:

*Be honest and open - this builds credibility and trust. Always tell the full truth the good and bad truth (p. 93).

*Be pertinent - give precise, right information.

*Be timely - present all information soon enough for them to make well-governed decisions. No surprises- do not let them get caught off guard and publicly embarrassed. Always judge when board members need to be briefed whether through e-mail, fax, or telephone (p. 94).

Houston and Eadie also say that in order for a superintendent to be "board savvy," he or she needs to make governing boards a high priority. One can accomplish this by:

*Making board governance a high priority.

*Treating the board members as precious assets.

*Fully developing your board in leading their districts. Pay close attention to
   seeing that school board members feel satisfaction in their governing work, on
   their feeling like the real owners of their decisions.

*Training new members so they fit in and learn how things are done around here.

*Investing time which will produce rich dividends and critical, long-term success
   over time (p. iix-80).

Finally, Houston and Eadie point out that board-savvy superintendents are far more likely to survive and thrive in their school districts than those who do not communicate well with their board members. In this study, so many of the characteristics listed above were seen between these four successful superintendents and their boards.

Versatile Leadership

Versatile Leadership in Grid and Group

The second major theme found in this study was versatile leadership. All four of the superintendents practiced several different leadership styles. As noted by Harris (2004), leadership in the collectivist culture is directed on the basis of group service and group goals. Teamwork is another method utilized by leaders of collectivist organization.

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The leaders seek a great deal of input from subordinates and stakeholders in this environment. In the collectivist culture, it is important for the participants to get a fair chance to participate. Committees are frequently used to evaluate and give input before decisions are made. "Consensus, however, does not mean unanimity" (p. 16).

The following paragraphs explain how these four superintendents practice leadership styles common to the collectivist environment.

Superintendent A said that although she was directive; she allowed others to make decisions on their own and she had them take responsibility for their own performances. The school board members bragged on her ability to use various leadership styles, depending on what situation she was faced with. The following comments were used by the board members to describe the different leadership roles she plays: authoritative, dictator, smorgasbord of styles (depending on the situation), seeks input, stands up and leads on her own, and CEO.

Superintendent B described his leadership style as participatory management or transformational. He involves and empowers others to think and act so they take ownership in their work and expand their capabilities. He fosters networks of relationships with teachers, parents, and principals. He creates learning environments by greeting parents and students before school.

The board members state that he uses the following leadership styles: democratic, participatory, not autocratic, makes some decisions on his own, leads by consensus, and tries to build a team approach.

When leading his organization, Superintendent C claims to be very democratic. He used committees when interviewing, he seeks input on all major decisions. The only

time he is autocratic is when high stress situations, like a bomb threat, arise. To him, knowing which leadership style to use in which situation is a key to his success.

Superintendent C's school board agrees that he is not autocratic, but uses a democratic approach. He fosters a network of relationships from which he seeks input. He expands others' capabilities by building their confidence. They said that he also leads by example, which creates a positive learning environment.

Superintendent D claims that in her position, one must use several leadership styles. Her versatile roles include mostly collaborative, but also include directive, authoritative, and a team leadership approach. Her board agrees that her style is a team approach, and includes democratic, collaborative, and leadership by consensus. They say she does not have a dictatorial type of leadership. She protects the school board members so they can make wise choices that align with the district's goals.

Versatile Leadership in the Literature

The second major theme found in the four districts of this study was leadership. Leadership has been defined in a variety of ways by a variety of different researchers and theorists. For the purpose of this study, the role of the "leader" belongs to the superintendent. Superintendents are hired by boards "to meet the unique needs of the school district" (Snowden & Gorton, 1998, p. 69).

The traditional view of superintendents as people who set the district's goals and make all key decisions is no longer acceptable; those days are gone. Senge (as cited in Hickman, 1998) says, "The traditional authoritarian image of the leader as the boss

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calling all the shots has been recognized as oversimplified and inadequate for some time"
(p. 442).

Today, there are more democratic decisions being made than top-down decisions. A "major approach to leadership emphasizes that the most important variable that should determine the leader's behavior is the nature of the situation in which the leader functions. This school of thought rejects the premise that one approach to leadership is preferable to another. Instead, the proponents of situational leadership set forth the propositions that the leadership approach employed by an individual should be relative to the situation and that different situations demand different kinds of behavior from the leader…The situational theory of leadership maintains that no particular style of leadership or personal qualities of a leader is appropriate for every situation" (Snowden & Gorton, 1998, p.68-69).

This theory is confirmed by Senge (as cited in Hickman 1998) who states that long-tenured superintendents seem to know just when the make democratic decisions and when to make authoritative decisions. Successful superintendents were able to use the different leadership styles necessary to make decisions of "greatest contribution to group effectiveness" (p. 449).

The four superintendents in this study were all successful because they knew when to use different types of leadership styles. When making decisions, superintendents are responsible for knowing which leadership style to use when leading organizations where people are:

- continuously expanding their capabilities to shape their future

- allowing followers to think and act on their own

- creating learning environments

- fostering networks of relationships

- making wise choices that align with the school's culture

- taking responsibility for their own ethical behaviors, development, and
  performance (Hickman, 1998).

Because superintendents wear so many hats and have so many different responsibilities, it is imperative that they know exactly when to lead with which leadership style. In this study, all of the superintendents mainly use democratic style, which, according to research, is the most effective style in today's society. The superintendents in this study also used other styles, such as authoritarian, when necessary. They all had the intuition to know exactly which leadership style to use in which decision making, which contributed to their long tenured terms as superintendents.

Public Relations/Community Involvement

Public Relations/Community Involvement in Grid and Group

The areas of public relations and community involvement were woven together to form the third major theme found in this study. According to Harris (2004), "educators in collectivist schools acknowledge that solutions to school problems lie in all members of the community. They are typically active in communal pursuits and view collaboration as central to the community" (p. 17).

"Leaders at all levels of collectivist schools should actively participate in the cultivation and maintenance of school-home-community partnerships. Strategies for implementing these cooperative ventures include:

- involving parents directly in the teaching and learning process (e.g., supplementing classroom instruction, seeking financial and resource assistance, and inclusion on advisory boards),

- integrating classroom and work-based instruction,

- including business and community leaders in helping to define authentic learning strategies that require the application of various skills and subject areas,

- communicating educational goals to the community,

- listening to and respecting concerns of community members,

- incorporating partnership initiatives, such as adopt a school, internships and job shadowing,

- forming and supporting foundations, and

- utilizing community members' expertise in developing pertinent accountability standards and strategies" (p. 17).

The following paragraphs are examples of how each of the four successful superintendents were actively engaged in public relations and community involvement.

Superintendent A believes it is important for her to be active in the community. She is very visible and actively participates in several civic clubs. One school board member described her as being "very clever in the way she handles public relations."

Another school board member stated "her involvement in the community is exemplary." She has a great relationship with the local newspaper.

Superintendent B is an extremely visible superintendent in his community. He is a member of Kiwanis and the Chamber of Commerce. He was described as having good relationships with the police and fire departments. The school board member describes him as being able to get the community involved with the school district. He also seeks community members to serve on committees.

Superintendent C described himself as being active in the community. He attended community functions and described the importance of visibility. The school board member described the superintendent as being involved in the community and being involved with community organizations.

Superintendent D was described by the school board member as being a leader that works well with the community. She belongs to civic organizations and commonly makes presentations to various civic clubs expressing the school district's needs. Like all the superintendents in the study, she is very visible in the community.

Public Relations/Community Involvement in the Literature

The third major theme exhibited by the successful superintendents was that each of them was outstanding in the area of public relations/community involvement. This theme was reported by almost all the participants in the study. Newsom, (2003) reports that a 1997 study, "found that the top three management skills most important to school superintendents are those that prepare them to relate to and communicate well with their

board of trustees, other internal publics, and external publics" (p. 39). Since the superintendent is the leader of the school district, he/she must take the lead in the area of public relations. It is important to disseminate information to the public because school districts are facing new federal and community demands. Additionally, schools are supposed to be service oriented institutions. Newsom (2003) quoted school public relations as, "an evolving social science and leadership process using multimedia approaches designed to build goodwill, enhance the publics attitude toward the value of education, augment interaction and two way symmetrical communication between schools and their ecosystems, provide vital and useful information to the public employees, and serve as an integral part of the planning and decision making functions" (p. 11).

Some school districts are so big that they need to hire a person in charge of public relations or a director of communication. However, for the purpose of this study, I concentrated on the role of the superintendents in the area of public relations. All superintendents and school districts need to have a plan in place for the entire public relations process (Chappelow, 2003). Some recommendations from Chappelow's article are:

> *School and district administrators are encouraged to belong to and participate actively in civic and service organizations.
>
> *The superintendent maintains regular, two-way communication with business, civic, and religious leaders, and other influential members of the community.
>
> *Community members are regularly sought to serve on school district advisory committees.

*The school district should use multiple channels of communication to reach

   citizens who do not have children in the schools.

*The superintendent should meet periodically with a representative from the local

   newspaper and other media to alert them to the organizations position on special

   issues.

*The school district should seek partnerships with local businesses that provide

   mentors and other assistance to students in their schools.

In this study all the superintendents mentioned following some of the guidelines set out by Chappelow. Additionally, all the superintendents expressed that they have a communication plan currently in practice to disseminate information to, school board members, teachers, students, parents, and the rest of the public.

It is very clear that these four successful superintendents have very sound practices in the area of public relations. They all seem to follow some of Chappelow's guidelines for public relations.

Character

Character in Grid and Group

The final major theme that was found in this study was that all four of the superintendents were noted as having outstanding character. Character is not a theme that is directly described in the Douglas collectivist culture. However, within the collectivist culture, there exists a distinct insider versus outsider bias. Participants in the collectivist

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culture are more trusting of insiders than they are of outsiders (Harris, 2004). Every superintendent in this study was considered to be an insider before being named superintendent of his/her district. Therefore, the school board members had a good idea about all of the superintendents' integrity and character before they were hired as superintendents. The following paragraphs describe the positive character displayed by the superintendents in this study.

Superintendent A was described by the school board member as having good intentions and being a good person. It was also stated that she is very concerned about the children and every aspect of the school district. All the school board members from School District A described her as a good person.

The school board member from School District B described their superintendent as a man of character, a good man, and a people person.

Superintendent C believed he demonstrated character and integrity as being honest and upfront with people in every situation.

The school board member stated that superintendent D was a person having integrity and a lot of character. It was also mentioned that she is someone you can trust. She also displayed a good working relationship with teachers, support staff, and administrators.

An interesting point about the theme of the superintendents all displaying character was noted that Superintendents A, B, and D did not mention having good character as one of their traits; however, the school board member from each of these districts mention their superintendent displayed outstanding character. Superintendent C described himself as having good integrity and character. However, his board did not

mention character as a quality of Superintendent C. I thought this comparison was quite interesting.

Character in the Literature

The last major theme produced in the study was that all four superintendents displayed the quality of fine character. Character is a common word with a fairly broad definition. Ryan and Bohlin (1999) define character as, "an individual's pattern of behavior. . . is moral constitution"(p. 5) They continue to describe character as:

- Knowing the good

- Loving the good

- Doing the good

Knowing the good means it's ones ability to choose the right thing to do. It is very important for superintendents to be able to analyze situations where they have to make good choices. So, knowing how to make a good choice is imperative to superintendent success.

"Loving the good means that a person must develop a range of moral feeling and emotions, including a love for the good and a contempt for evil, as well as a capacity to empathize with others" (p. 6) Superintendent A displayed the character trait of "loving the good"; she described that she calls board members at times just to see how they are doing.

Doing the good is defined as after considering all the circumstances and facts of having the will to act. Many people know what the right thing to do is, but lack the will

or nerve to carry out the right thing. In relating this to superintendents' roles, they must have the courage to do the right things for the school district. The school board members described all the superintendents as being able to consider all sides of situations and being able to stand up and do the right things.

In summary, character is a combination of intellectual and moral habits. It is a combination of good habits, bad habits, choices, and vices. These habits help determine the choices and the way one responds to life's challenges.

Minor Themes from the Studies

The themes that were mentioned in the study, but not across all four districts, were considered minor themes. The minor themes were important because they displayed differences in opinions, needs, or expectations in each school district. They also expressed that each school district has a culture of its own. The minor themes were: recognition, relationship building, student centered, financial skills, politics, and experiences.

Table 5:2

Minor Themes

	Recognition	Relationship Building	Student Centered	Financial Skills	Politics	Experiences
Superintendent A	X	X				
Principal and School Board A	X					
Superintendent B	X					
Principal and School Board B			X	X		
Superintendent C					X	
Principal and School Board C		X				
Superintendent D			X			X
Principal and School Board D			X			

Recognition

Recognition in Grid and Group

The first minor theme found in this study was recognition. According to Harris (2004), leaders in collectivist school districts offer social support to teachers, students, and other group members. The accomplishment of a teacher, or the academic achievement of a student, would be recognized as a positive achievement for the entire school district. The leaders realize that recognition to individuals in the school district will bring positive attention and pride to the entire district.

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The theme of recognition was mentioned in School District A and School District B. In School District A, every month some people from the district are recognized at the school board meeting. The school board member and superintendent feel this recognition is important to show employees and students appreciation. Since these people are recognized and put in the newspaper it ties into the major theme of public relations.

In School District B, the superintendent feels it is important to recognize the success of students, the district, and employees. He stated, "When our principals and teachers win awards, we put them out front and hopefully people recognize them."

Recognition in the Literature

People in organizations like being recognized for their efforts and success. When people are rewarded and recognized, it improves their affiliation with the group. Kouzes and Posner (1993) insist, "For long term success, we need to attract and retain the best people in the industry. To do that, we must create a company in which everyone can contribute his or her best, in which everyone is valued regardless of differences" (p. 88). If school people feel valued and recognized, there is a better chance they will be more successful and happy to help improve the organization.

Relationship Building in Grid and Group

This minor theme is very closely related to the major themes of communication and community involvement. By communicating and being involved in the community, these four superintendents are constantly involved in relationship building.

In the collectivist culture, as mentioned by Harris (2004), leaders devote a great deal of attention "to cultivating and maintaining healthy, trust-centered relationships among all school members" (p. 15). Additionally, the superintendents support relationships from school, home, and community in the collectivist high group, low grid cultures. The four superintendents in this study all work on relationship building.

Superintendent A and Superintendent C demonstrated skills at building relationships. It was not directly mentioned about the other two superintendents, but it could have been inferred that Superintendents B and D are good at relationship building as well.

Superintendent A stated, "I think I am fairly good in my relationship building." She involves people in the decision making processes and she believes in building relationships for success. She uses the technique of calling and checking on people to build relationships.

Superintendent C was described by the school board members and the principal as being gifted at developing relationships. He was described as relating well to educators and business people.

Relationship Building in the Literature

"Effective education is all about relationships and the active collaboration and cooperation of partners–teachers and students, students and parents, teachers and parents, schools and communities, superintendents and school boards. One of your primary responsibilities as superintendent and CEO of your district is to play a leading role in building and maintaining strategically significant relationships, and the one that is at the heart of your district's strategic and policy - level leadership – and most critical to your effectiveness as CEO is between you and your school board" (Houston & Eadie, 2002, p. 73).

Student Centered

The third area that emerged as a minor theme was that successful superintendents were student centered. The district goal in schools is centered around academic success for all students. "American education has always been based on the belief that all people are, in principle, created equal and should enjoy equal social, political, and economic rights and opportunities" (Harris, 2004, p.3). In true collectivist cultures, leaders ask students for input and utilize students on school wide committees. Superintendents leading in a collectivist culture try to make sure the focus is on the group goals for all students. They do whatever is necessary to make sure that everything is running smoothly, so that all students have an equal opportunity to learn.

Superintendent B and Superintendent D were mentioned as possessing this characteristic. Superintendent B was described by David Allen as "doing what is best for kids whether it is digging a hole or picking up trash."

Superintendent D described a great need to put the children first. She said, "Keeping the kids first…I see problems if people don't have a real focus on why we're doing what we're doing in school and keeping kids out front." Superintendent D according to all her school board members puts the students first. She even utilizes student input on school committees.

Financial Skills

Financial Skills in Grid and Group

The next minor theme, financial skills, possessed by a leader is not widely described in the Douglas literature. However, in recent years, financial problems have plagued school districts because of reduced state funding (Shields, 2002). Superintendents operating in collectivist cultures developed committees to address problems concerning finances facing school districts. Every superintendent in this study uses committees to face problems proposed by school finance.

Superintendent B was viewed by his school board member and the principal as having great financial skills. Finance was only mentioned in this school district. One reason could be that Superintendent B started the school district's Foundation and he

seems to be outstanding at raising money. The increased enrollment in School District B also helped the school district financially.

Financial Skills in the Literature

The success of any C.E.O. would be somewhat related to the organization's financial soundness. Odden and Picus (1992) claim, "School finance is one of most discussed and least understood aspects of public education policy in the United States" (p. xv). School money is obtained from three major sources: local taxes, state taxes and federal funds. The main concern about school finance is the distribution and the use of money for providing educational opportunities for children.

In recent history, school finance has been a very touchy subject due to budget cuts and reduction in forces. Additionally, school finance is very complicated and maybe superintendents and school board members were reluctant to discuss financial implications on superintendent's tenure. Glass, Bjork, and Brunner (2000) state, "School finance is viewed by superintendents as the number one problem both they and their school boards face" (p. 66). 96.3% of the superintendents surveyed in 1992 rank school finance as their biggest problem.

Politics in Grid and Group

According to the Douglas model, the interacting of group members is political. "Parents, teachers or sometimes students in the system may have political power due to coalition support, money, or their relationship with a board member. And in some schools, individuals may hold all or a combination of power sources" (Harris, 2004, p. 27).

The superintendent is constantly considering political issues when managing and interacting in the district. Handling politics was a minor theme mentioned by Superintendent C. He said, "Political issues in the school and community can be tough to handle." He tried to handle political issues by being open and honest with people. This theme was considered to be minor; however, it could be closely related to three of four major themes: relations/community involvement, communication skills and versatile leadership.

Politics in the Literature

Political relationships are on-going in schools and communities. The superintendents are involved in political relationships with the school boards and other civic leaders in the community. Superintendents also must keep up with politics on a state and national level. So, superintendents could be viewed as political actors at times.

Brunsson and Olsen (as cited in Hickman, 1998) say, "Political actors are driven by a logic of appropriateness built into standard operating procedures, conventions, and rules of thumb rather than (or in addition to) a logic of calculated self-interest" (pg. 83).

Experiences

Experience in Grid and Group

The last minor theme was experience. According to the Mary Douglas grid and group model, when a culture is collectivist like in this study, individuals have a good chance to move up in the organization. Three of the four superintendents moved up in the organization and the fourth superintendent was a long time community member with a great deal of community respect and support.

The last minor theme was expressed by Superintendent D. A culmination of her experiences helped her be a successful superintendent. She began her career as a teacher, advanced to a principal, continued on to assistant superintendent, and is currently superintendent. This statement and peer review led to a bigger theme that all the successful superintendents had very similar experiences. All four superintendents served as teachers, vice principals, principals, and finally, superintendents. Three out of four served as assistant superintendents in their current district before being named as superintendent. These four all traveled a similar path to the superintendent position. Thus, their experiences must have something to do with their success.

Summary of All Four Districts

This chapter addressed the three perspectives of grid and group, followed by an explanation of grid and group. The characteristics of the collectivist culture were then explained.

The major themes produced in this study for successful superintendent tenure were: communication skills, versatile leadership, public relations/community involvement, and character. These major themes were very clear and consistent in all four districts. These themes evolved from every district and almost every interview.

According to the participants in this study, every superintendent possessed fine communication skills. Each superintendent communicated frequently with the school board members and all other interested people in the school districts. These superintendents utilized a wide variety of methods to communicate to constituents.

Every superintendent used multiple versatile leadership styles. Since these four superintendents are successful, it appears they know exactly when to use the appropriate leadership style such as: democratic, authoritative, and participatory.

All the superintendents seemed to actively participate in public relations and community involvement was a high priority. They were all members of civic organizations. Additionally, it was very obvious that all the superintendents were very visible in their school districts and in the local communities.

The last major theme that emerged was that all the superintendents display a great deal of character and integrity. These four leaders are respected for caring a great deal about the children, school districts, and the people they lead.

The four major themes that emerged from this study are practiced by these successful superintendents.

The minor themes produced in this study for successful superintendent tenure were: recognition, relationship building, student centered, financial skills, politics, and experiences. These minor themes were not exhibited by every school in the study; however, these themes are helpful for selecting school superintendents for school districts. The minor themes were at least important to the people that produced the themes in the study.

CHAPTER VI

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of this study was to describe in grid and group terms the characteristics of successful superintendents that lead to longer than national average superintendent tenure. Four different superintendents and school districts were included in the study. It was intended that the study would reveal characteristics and roles that successful superintendents display.

The research was a qualitative case study using the following methods: interviews, observations, document collection, and analysis. Peer review was utilized to help find themes within interviews and demographic information. The collection of data focused on the perspectives of superintendents, school board members, and principals toward superintendents' roles. Upon consultation with my advisor, it was determined a study of four different superintendents and their school districts would be most effective. The four superintendents were chosen to participate, because they had been in their current positions for more than five years. For the purpose of data collection, each school district was studied individually and collectively as a whole. The purposes of the data collection, presentation, and analysis were to characterize each school district into the

Douglas theoretical framework and to present the findings in reference to the framework and literature.

The data collection and data analysis occurred simultaneously during the data collection phase. Triangulation of data was achieved by comparing multiple sources, such as transcribed interviews, participant surveys, board meeting notes, historical documents, and peer reviews of both interview transcripts and demographic information. Member checks were also conducted to help with confirmability and triangulation. All the coded categories that were developed were examined for significance and compared across the four school districts.

The findings of this study suggest these successful superintendents have some common characteristics or practices. The superintendents in this study produced these major themes: communication skills, versatile leadership, public/community relations, and character. It was surprising that financial skills did not evolve as a major theme utilized by the superintendents in this study.

Each of the school districts produced some minor themes that were important to their individual superintendent's success. They were: recognition, relationship building, student centered, financial skills, politics, and experience. These themes demonstrated that although certain characteristics are important in one district, they may not be as important in a nearby school district. However, these minor themes merit some consideration for superintendents to consider.

A survey was utilized to classify each district into the grid and group model. For this study, all four school districts were classified as low grid, high group, which is the collectivist culture. A characteristic of collectivist culture is that the group is more

important than the individual. Additionally, in the collectivist culture, individuals commonly have the opportunity to move up in the organization. Ironically, three of the four superintendents in this study moved up within their current school districts. The other superintendent was a long time community and church member who has a great understanding of the school district's culture.

Findings

The most interesting outcome of the study involved looking at the participants through Douglas's grid and group theory. Every participant in the study completed the questionnaire located in Appendix A in order to place the district on the grid and group framework. Each individual did this alone without any knowledge of the Douglas model. Every district ended up being in the collectivist low grid, high group culture. The interviews produced major themes possessed by the superintendents: communication skills, versatile leadership, public relations/community involvement, and good character. Additionally, minor themes about the superintendents' characteristics were also produced: recognition, relationship building, student centered, financial skills, politics, and experience.

By utilizing the Douglas model and the interviews together, a better picture of the school districts was presented. The successful superintendent characteristics produced by the interviews are considered to be the same characteristics of the collectivist culture, according to Douglas. These similarities offer credibility to the Douglas model while analyzing a school district's culture.

As a result of this study, the research questions were answered. In addition, similarities and differences among superintendents and school districts were found.

Research Question Analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) advise that "Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials accumulated to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others" (p. 145). The process of data analysis also suggests that analysis involves working with data, organizing data, synthesizing it, and searching for themes. Analysis also involves deciding what to tell others.

The four research questions in Chapter I were intended to help analyze the data. The original research questions were:

1. What are selected school superintendents' and school board members' perceptions about the leadership role of the superintendent?

2. How does the superintendent handle political relationships within the school and the community?

3. How is Mary Douglas's cultural theory useful in explaining the cultural setting within which school superintendents must operate?

4. What are the relationships within a community that enable a superintendent to be retained for a lengthy time period?

The first question studied was: What are selected school superintendents' and school board members' perceptions about the leadership role of the superintendent? All

the school superintendents in the study described their role as being the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the school district. The CEO handles the day-to-day operations and serves as an advisor to the school board. Several school board members also expressed that the superintendent is the administrator and CEO of the district. The most experienced school board member, Dr. Edwards, said, "It is important not to get the role of the superintendent confused with the role of the school board."

All of these superintendents have been in their current positions longer than the national average because each school board member and each superintendent has had the correct understanding of the superintendent's role and the school board's role. The school board members not only expressed what their superintendent's role was, but also knew exactly why their superintendent had been successful. The superintendents and experienced school board members worked extremely well together. They even trained the new school board members to make everything a smooth transition.

The second question studied was: How does the superintendent handle political relationships in the school and the community? First of all, communication was at the top of the list in handling political issues. These superintendents have had to communicate with the school board members, principals, teachers, and patrons of their community. The superintendents expressed that they were very forward in communications with everyone. They were also very honest and open, so they established credibility with all stakeholders.

The second way in which the successful superintendents handled politics was by utilizing multiple leadership styles. These superintendents all sought input from principals, teachers, other administrators, community members, parents, and community

leaders. They also knew when it was appropriate to go out on a limb and make an authoritative decision. Using multiple leadership styles and seeking input from stakeholders is a way to handle the school district and community politically.

A third way these superintendents handled political relationships was by being active members of civic organizations. Every superintendent in this study belonged to local civic groups. The superintendents utilized their memberships in these organizations to publicly express the needs of the district. Thus, when problems arose, the superintendents already had the public support needed to handle a sticky situation. Thus, a superintendent's being active and visible at school activities is a way of politically dealing with school issues.

Finally, the fourth theme of having good character was another way to handle political relationships within the school district. All of the school board members and principals felt that their superintendent was a person of great character. Character builds the trust and credibility that each leader must have in order to keep political relationships strong.

The third research question was: How is Mary Douglas's cultural theory useful in explaining the cultural setting within which superintendents must operate? The Mary Douglas cultural theory provides a lens with which to view organizational cultures. Since school districts are cultures, this framework fit the study well. In this study, each school district had in common the fact that their superintendent was successful by being tenured longer than the national average.

The Douglas model was described in Chapters I, II, IV and V. Each participant completed a survey that helped place each district in a particular quadrant of the Douglas grid and group model.

In this study every school district was placed in the collectivist region of the model which is low grid, high group. In summary, this quadrant is found to have the importance of the organization over that of the individual. People in the organization are not isolated; they typically have input in the decision making process.

These four superintendents all sought input from various stakeholders frequently before decisions were made. This was a classic example of a collectivist culture being practiced. This small piece of the Douglas model was a good example of how the superintendents understood the culture of the districts they were leading.

Another example of the collectivist culture in practice is the fact that three of the four superintendents all moved up in the school district from the position of assistant superintendent to that of superintendent. These four superintendents all had a great understanding of the culture of the school district before being named superintendent. The Douglas model provided a lens from which this study viewed the culture of the districts.

The fourth research question addressed was: What are the relationships within a community that enable a superintendent to be retained for a lengthy time period? These four school districts represented a collectivist type of culture. This type of culture is typical when the community has a great deal of allegiance to the school district. Many of the school board members in this study were alumni of the school districts in which they

are board members. Likewise, many of the superintendents were also involved in their districts long before becoming superintendent of that district.

In a collectivist type culture, the school is viewed as part of the community. In this environment a great deal of pride is taken in the school district. There is a sense of teaming between the community and the school district. In this study, the relationships fostered by the superintendents within their communities definitely helped each superintendent stay in office.

Similarities and Differences of Superintendents

In order to provide a better picture of the characteristics of successful superintendents, it is necessary to provide some similarities and differences exhibited by these superintendents and the school districts they serve. Both similarities and differences exhibited by the four superintendents were:

- The superintendents in the study were two men and two women

- All of the superintendents were at least 50 years old

- The superintendents were all exceptional at public relations; they were very visible at school and community activities

- The superintendents followed a similar career path: teacher, assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent, superintendent

- Three of the four superintendents were described by boards and principals as having great character

- All four superintendents communicated frequently with school board members

- All of the superintendents utilized multiple leadership styles

- All four superintendents were active politically at the state level and were members of national professional organizations

- The lengths of tenure of the district superintendents were: seven years, seven years, eight years, and ten years

- Two of the four superintendents believed strongly in recognizing people in the district

- Two of the four superintendents worked hard to form relationships in the district

- Three of four superintendents were assistant superintendents in their districts before being named superintendent

- One superintendent worked his entire career in education in that district

Similarities and Differences of School Districts

Like the superintendents, both similarities and differences were observed about the four school districts. They were:

- All four districts were members of the United Suburban School Districts

- The smallest district had a K-12 population of 1600. The largest had a K-12 population of 14,000

- Three of four districts had school board members with an average tenure of more than seven years

- All four districts were in the collectivist culture described by Mary Douglas

- All the districts had their own school lunch programs

- All the schools were located within 50 miles of a big metropolitan area

- The biggest district was the one that was the youngest, opening in 1943

- Three of four districts provided bus service for the students on a daily basis; the smallest district did not provide bus service for students

- Three districts had five board members; one district had seven board members

Based on the analysis of the research data and the evolving themes, a table of 25 common characteristics of the four successful superintendents was developed.

Table 6:1

Common Characteristics

1. Effective communicator

2. Versatile leadership style

3. Establishes positive public relations

4. Involved in the community

5. Of good character

6. Trustworthy/Credible

7. Relationship builder

8. Recognizes others' accomplishments

9. Student centered

10. Politically active

11. Good listener

12. Frequently attends school activities

13. People person

14. Integrity

15. Visible

16. Team player

17. Member of civic and professional organizations

18. Does not surprise school board members

19. Cares about others

20. Hard worker

21. Uses committees for input

22. Wants to work hard for best solution

23. Understands the district's culture

24. Likes to help others

25. Wears many hats

Conclusions

Based on the findings, I conclude the following about successful superintendents in this study. The roles of the superintendents were clearly understood by all the participants in this study. This conclusion is based on the fact that these superintendents have all been in place for a longer time than the national average. Douglas (1982)

explained that in collectivist cultures, there are few formal, specialized roles. Role status is competitive; yet, because of high group influence, rules for role status are more stable than in low group societies. The stability of role status produces less conflict, resulting in longer than average superintendent tenure.

For the superintendents and schools in this study, the role of the superintendent is clearly defined as the chief executive officer (CEO). The school board members seem to understand that the superintendents are the administrators and the school board members have the role of policy makers.

These superintendents and school boards function well together as a team. Douglas (1982) claims another collectivist culture characteristic is that the group survival is more important than individual goals. The group goal of all four districts was to do what is best for the students. With that in mind, the successful superintendents in this study used a team approach to solve problems. The team approach is common to collectivist cultures as describe by Harris (2004).

It is common for leaders in the collectivist culture to seek input, use committees, and lead democratically (Harris, 2004). Having a variety of leadership styles is possessed by all four successful superintendents in this study. Every superintendent and school board member stressed that the superintendent uses versatile leadership styles. They all tend to use democratic and participatory leadership to run their school districts.

The study revealed that these four superintendents all worked at developing community relationships. The development of these relationships was positive for the school districts and positive in helping the superintendent retain long tenure. The community and school district commonly have a close working relationship. Many times

in a collectivist culture, the school district is the site of many community activities (Harris, 2004).

Not only did the superintendents in this study communicate well with the public, but they also communicated well with their school boards. They communicated well with all district employees, parents, community organizations, and all other stakeholders. According to Harris (2004), in Douglas's collectivist cultures, communication occurs frequently at all levels in an organization.

All the superintendents used communications skills to develop positive relationships. They often communicated positive recognition of employees and students at board meetings. This kept communication flowing between students, parents, administrators, board members, and the community. By developing positive relationships with others, superintendents build trust. Trust and credibility with others are the foundations of character (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999). All four superintendents had outstanding character with their communities, their board members, and their employees.

Outstanding character is important for superintendents to possess, especially when politics and finance are involved. The superintendents in this study handled political issues by communicating frequently with all the stakeholders. The superintendents are also active politically on the state level. Each superintendent kept school board members informed on political issues which impacted the school district. This study revealed that successful superintendents in this study handled political relationships in the school and in the community by being skilled at the major themes: communication, versatile leadership, public relations/community involvement, and character.

Finally, each of the superintendents had a great understanding of the school district's culture before becoming the superintendent. Experiences in the district, before becoming the superintendent, played a role in keeping lengthy superintendent tenure. Three of the superintendents moved up the career ladder, to the superintendent's position, in the districts where they were employed.

Significance of the Study

Practice

Clearly, more research is needed in the area of the characteristics of successful superintendents. This study produced several themes that are characteristics of successful superintendents. The study can be beneficial for superintendents in similar environments who desire to improve job performance. A superintendent may also benefit by putting him/herself, all school board members, and all principals on Mary Douglas's grid and group model to see where everyone fits. Realization of cultural theory's grid and group practices would make a huge impact on what decisions were made within the district.

Additionally, this study can be helpful for school board members in similar settings looking for characteristics of potential superintendents to hire. Geradi (1983) advised, "A knowledge of the leadership behavior characteristics of the mobile and non-mobile superintendent could further sharpen the profile of the desired candidate" (p. 183). As school board members look to hire superintendents, knowing the characteristics of successful superintendents would be beneficial before employing a particular

superintendent. This study gave some characteristics to be aware of when looking for candidates.

The study can be helpful to college programs training superintendents and other administrators and also helpful to state departments training school board members. Because the relationship between school board members and superintendents needs to be amiable, roles need to be clearly defined. Training would help both parties understand their roles and the importance of knowing and defining each others' roles.

This study, which analyzed the role of the superintendent and characteristics displayed by successful superintendents, provided a starting point for possible future studies of successful superintendents.

Body of Literature

This study was a qualitative case study that viewed, through the lens of Mary Douglas's grid and group typology, the characteristics of four superintendents with longer than national average tenure. The current body of literature does not include this type of research.

Theory

This qualitative case study introduced the Mary Douglas grid and group typology as a framework to study selected superintendent tenure. Douglas developed this

framework which has been used by researchers to interpret and compare social environments (Harris, 1995).

In her development, Douglas (1982) made two primary assumptions:

1. individuals will fail to make sense of their surroundings unless they can find some principles to guide them to behave in the sanctioned ways and to help them use these principals to judge others and justify them to others

2. an individuals choices are permitted or constrained due to the social context of an organization

In compliance with these assumptions, the Mary Douglas grid and group typology served as a useful framework to focus on selected superintendent tenure, because superintendents work in unique, social environments. The superintendents in this study made sense of their surroundings and, therefore, knew what choices they were expected and forbidden to make.

Although Mary Douglas's typology has been used to study higher education and school culture (Harris, 1995), it has not been used to study selected superintendent characteristics which lead to lengthy tenure.

In this study the typology was useful in focusing on the culture within which these four superintendents operated. During this study the major themes related to successful superintendent tenure emerged and they all are supported in the Douglas collectivist model.

One limitation of my study was that each district operated within the same culture. It could be beneficial to develop this study with more than one of the Douglas cultures being studied.

Recommendations for Future Studies

While engaging in triangulation, I reviewed demographic information, transcribed interviews, studied notes, and discussed information with peers for their input. From these triangulation methods, three additional themes emerged. These additional themes are important and it would be good to include them in future studies on superintendent tenure. They are: school board tenure, career paths, and culture. Additionally, I came up with four other possible ideas for future studies.

School Board Tenure

By reviewing the demographic information provided by the school board members and talking with peers, it was determined that there may be a link between school board member tenure and superintendent tenure. In School District B five board members have served a total of 44 years on that school board, which is an average of approximately nine years of experience. In School District C five board members have served a total of 40 years on that school board, which is an average of eight years of experience. In School District D the school board has a combined 70 years of service, which averages about 14 years of experience. School District A is the only school in the study that did not have an experienced school board. With a seven member board the combined experience was only 24 years. Based upon this study there could be a relationship between the school board members' tenure and the superintendent's tenure. I think this possible relationship needs to be looked at in future research.

Another possible future study is the career paths of superintendents. Successful superintendents all followed a similar path to the superintendent's post. All of the superintendents followed the basic track: teacher, assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent, superintendent. Three of the four successful superintendents in this study followed this track exactly; one of the superintendents skipped the assistant superintendent position. Some school districts have hired outside business persons as their superintendents. This is not the case in these four districts. In fact, Superintendent C followed this track all the way through his district. He taught in District C, then became an assistant principal, a principal, an assistant superintendent, and finally the superintendent of District C. Superintendent A was an assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent, and finally the superintendent of School District A. Superintendent D was the assistant superintendent and then the superintendent of her present district. The only superintendent who did not work in his district prior to becoming superintendent was Superintendent B, who had been a lifetime member of the local church where all school board members attended. It is important to mention this theme because all these superintendents had extensive background knowledge of the school district before being named superintendent. Douglas believes school districts are cultures. Following a true characteristic of a collectivist culture, three of the four superintendents all moved up within their current school districts.

Deal and Kennedy (as cited in Hickman, 1998) claim that every organization has a culture, a pattern of human behavior that includes action, artifacts, speech, and thought. These institutions have beliefs and values to pass along; they provide meaning for all people involved. A strong culture, which has a system of informal rules, guides behavior and helps employees do their jobs better. "A strong culture enables people to feel better about what they do, so they are more likely to work harder" (p. 333).

Now days, according to Senge (as cited in Hickman, 1998) "leadership is intertwined with culture formation. Building an organization's culture and shaping its evolution is the unique and essential function of leadership" (p. 442).

Many of the school board members in this study were alumni of the school districts in which they are board members. Likewise, many of the superintendents also were involved in their districts long before becoming superintendent of that district. Thus, board members and superintendents were familiar with their school's culture. Outside superintendents, who often enter a school without knowing its culture, seem to have shortened tenure because the district is often a stepping stone for their careers. They do not know, or often do not care to find out, a district's true culture. According to Dealand Kennedy (as cited in Hickman, 1998) even if they do try to understand, many times the culture "is fragmented and difficult to read from the outside" (p. 328).

School board members without a personal knowledge of the district's culture often are on the board for personal reasons. Once they have achieved their personal goals,

they retire. On the contrary, superintendents and board members with personal

experience in a school's culture seem to stay longer.

The superintendents in this study all had a solid understanding of the district's

climate, culture, and social settings before becoming superintendents. I think this

understanding of the school culture definitely was a positive step in long standing tenure

for all the superintendents in the study. It would be interesting to conduct a future study

to see if superintendent's conforms to a district's culture or a culture conforms to the

superintendent.

Additional Possible Future Studies are:

- A study could be done to compare/contrast the characteristics of longer than
  average tenured superintendents with those who were not rehired after short
  tenures

- It would be beneficial to do this same study in another part of the United
  States to see if the same characteristics were exhibited by longer than average
  tenured superintendents

- The study could also be transferred to businesses to see if some of the same
  characteristics of successful superintendents are found in successful CEO's

- Finally, it would be most interesting to transfer this study to non-profit,
  volunteer organizations to see if their leaders have the same successful traits.
  This future topic would be researched to see if successful traits are habitual in

leaders or if the characteristics exist only because paid leaders do not wish to lose their jobs

Improving Current Studies

Ideas and suggestions for improving the study lie in methodology and timing concerns. Studying four superintendents and four school districts simultaneously was valuable, yet confusing at times. There was a potential danger in data analysis as the study evolved because of comparing the superintendents and school districts to the previously interviewed superintendents and their districts. I tried to guard against this danger by keeping notes or each school district's information filed separately. It would have been nice to study a single district for six to eight weeks before moving to the next district. The qualitative researcher should be careful when studying multiple sites and keep the data separated and organized.

Another idea that could improve the study would be to find school districts that are operating under more than one of Mary Douglas's cultures. In this study, all four school districts were operating as collectivist cultures. This could be changed if a researcher would use the grid and group survey instrument in the appendix before choosing which districts to include in the study. Finding out where schools were on the Douglas model and using schools with different cultures would probably provide some different themes to discuss.

The interview questions produced some consistent major and minor themes. However, I would recommend asking a question about the superintendent's financial

skills and ask all interviewees to list the 5-10 most important roles of being a superintendent. I think these two questions would produce new themes and characteristics to be studied for successful superintendents to possess.

Commentary

Going back to my researcher bias in Chapter I, I decided to engage in this study because of my desire to be a superintendent. I hope this does not appear to be selfish. Several of my professors guided me to pick a topic that I would enjoy and learn something from. I believe the study produced some valuable themes for superintendents and other leaders to review. I enjoyed the process of conducting the research, and I have gained a great deal of respect for all people that have completed dissertations.

A statement from Miles and Huberman (1994) has really stuck with me during this year and a half of study. They said, "One personally experienced or witnessed dramatic event means more than several you have read about" (p. 263). By the way, I just completed my 15th year as an educator, and I am working for superintendent number six. So in my career in education, the average superintendent tenure is 2.5 years.

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Appendix A

Consent Form

I, _____, hereby authorize or direct Dick Balenseifen to perform the following procedure.

Procedure: The individual names will be interviewed about his/her experiences, insights and understandings regarding the interrelationships of organizational culture and the superintendent leadership roles. The individual has the right to decline to answer any questions at any time or withdraw his/her participation after notifying the researcher. After the interview has been transcribed, the individual has the right to examine the transcription to clarify any misinterpretations. The responses will be analyzed for significant sources of data. All records of this study will be kept confidential, and the individual will not be identifiable by name or description in any reports or publications regarding this study.

Duration: The tape-recorded interview will last approximately 45 minutes. The researcher will develop the questions being asked.

Confidentiality: Pseudonyms will be used in the final document. Only the researcher will have access to the actual names of the participants. Tape-recorded interviews will be transcribed. Any information that is unacceptable by the interviewee for the final document will be deleted. It is important for the participants to understand that other people will not have access to their responses.

Potential Risks and Benefits: Although no questions of a personal or intrusive nature are intended, the interviewee may refuse to answer such questions at any time. Superintendents that wish to have longer than national average tenure may benefit from this research as they examine their school culture and leadership roles.

The researcher and the participant must sign this consent form before collecting any type of data in this study and while using any of the following qualitative methods: questionnaires, interviews, observations, analyzing documents, and reviewing artifacts. All records and data collected will be stored in a locked file cabinet in a locked office (confidential) and destroyed (shredded) within one year after the research project is completed.

I understand that participation is voluntary, and there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am able to withdraw my consent and participation in this research project at any time without penalty after notifying the researcher. I understand that records of this study will be kept confidential, and that I will not be identifiable by name or description in any reports or publications about this study. If I have any questions about this study or wish to withdraw, I may contact Dick Balenseifen at (405) 745-0996 or Dr. Carol Olsen, IRB Chair, Oklahoma State University, 415 Whitehurst, Stillwater, OK 74078, (405) 744-5700.

I have read this consent document, I understand its contents, and I sign it freely and voluntarily to participate in this study under the conditions described. A copy of this consent document has been given to me.

Date: _____ Time: _____ (a.m./p.m.)

Participant Signature: _____

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

Principal Investigator/Researcher Signature: _____
Projector Director (Dick Balenseifen)

Appendix B

Survey Instrument

GRID/GROUP TYPOLOGY QUESTIONNAIRE
For Instructional and Curricular Interests

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION

Position (please check one):

O Teacher   O Staff   O Administrator (specify level _____)

O Other (Please explain) _____   Total years of service <u>at this school site:</u> ____

INSTRUCTIONS

Below are 22 pairs of statements. For each pair:

- choose the statement that you think best fits the work environment in your school district
- check the best answer in either a) Always or b) Nearly Always for that pair of statements. **Check only one circle for each item.**

Please remember as you complete the survey to keep in mind your entire school district. (Note: In the statements below the term, "administrator" refers to any central office administration.)

EXAMPLES

I.   *Incorrect* way of completing questionnaire, because more than one circle is checked per pair of statements. *Don't* do it this way!!!

a) I like vanilla ice cream.	or	b) I like chocolate ice cream.
⊗ Always O Nearly Always		O Always ⊗ Nearly Always
a) OSU is better than OU.	or	b) OU is better than OSU.
⊗ Always ⊗ Nearly Always		O Always O Nearly Always

II.   *Correct* way of completing questionnaire, because only one circle is checked per pair of statements. *Do it this way!!!*

a) I like vanilla ice cream.	or	b) I like chocolate ice cream.
O Always O Nearly Always		⊗ Always O Nearly Always

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a) OSU is better than OU.		b) OU is better than OSU.
⊗ Always ○ Nearly Always	**or**	○ Always ○ Nearly Always

-2   -1   +2   +1

Grid Considerations

	a)	or	b)
1	a) Authority structures at your school site are decentralized and not hierarchical. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always	**or**	b) Authority structures at your school site are centralized and hierarchical. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always
2	a) There are no strict rules, roles and job specialization at your school site. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always	**or**	b) There are strict rules, roles and job specialization at your school site. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always
3	a) Individual teachers have full autonomy in selecting textbooks and resources for their classes. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always	**or**	b) Individual teachers have no autonomy in selecting textbooks and resources for their classes. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always
4	a) Individual teachers have full autonomy in generating educational goals and objectives (beyond PASS objectives) for their classes. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always	**or**	b) Individual teachers have no autonomy in generating educational goals and objectives (beyond PASS objectives) for their classes. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always
5	a) Instructional practices, methods and strategies in individual classrooms are teacher-determined/directed by teacher(s) or teacher teams. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always	**or**	b) Instructional practices, methods and strategies in individual classrooms are authority-determined/directed by administrator(s). ○ Always ○ Nearly Always
6	a) Students are encouraged to participate and take ownership of their education. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always	**or**	b) Students are discouraged from participating and taking ownership of their education. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always

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7	a) Instructional materials and tools (e.g., technology, manipulatives) are obtained by each teacher through individual competition or negotiation. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always	**or**	b) Instructional materials and tools (e.g., technology, manipulatives) are allotted to teachers by the administrator(s). ○ Always ○ Nearly Always
8	a) Instruction is individualized or personalized for each student. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always	**or**	b) Instruction is not individualized or personalized for each student. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always
9	a) Individual teachers are motivated by intrinsic self- defined interests. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always	**or**	b) Individual teachers are motivated by extrinsic institutional rewards. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always
10	a) Hiring decisions are decentralized; controlled by teachers. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always	**or**	a) Hiring decisions are centralized; controlled by administrator(s). ○ Always ○ Nearly Always
11	a) Class schedules are determined by individual teacher's goal considerations. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always	**or**	b) Class schedules are determined by institutional standards and routines ○ Always ○ Nearly Always

Sum of positive and negative grid scores:_____

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Group Considerations

1	a) Instructional activities are initiated/ planned by individual teachers acting alone. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always	or	b) Instructional activities are initiated/planned by all teachers and administrators acting collaboratively. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always
2	a) Socializing and work with colleagues are separate activities. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always	or	b) Socializing and work with colleagues are integrated activities. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always
3	a) Extrinsic rewards primarily benefit the individual. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always	or	b) Extrinsic rewards primarily benefit everyone at school site. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always
4	a) Teaching and learning are planned/ organized around individual teacher goals and interests. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always	or	b) Teaching and learning are planned/ organized around group goals and interests. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always

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5	a) Teaching performance is evaluated according to individual teacher goals, priorities, and criteria. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always	or	b) Teaching performance is evaluated according to group goals, priorities, and criteria. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always
6	a) Teachers work in isolation toward instructional goals and objectives. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always	or	b) Teachers work collaboratively toward instructional goals and objectives ○ Always ○ Nearly Always

7	a) Curricular goals are individually generated. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always	or	b) Curricular goals are group generated. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always
8	a) Instructional resources are controlled by teachers. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always	or	b) Instructional resources are corporately controlled by the school site. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always
9	a) Communication flows primarily through individual informal networks. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always	or	b) Communication flow primarily though corporate, formal networks. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always
10	a) Teachers and students have little allegiance to the school. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always	or	b) Teachers and students have much allegiance to the school. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always
11	a) Responsibilities of teachers and administrators at the school site are ambiguous and fragmented with little or no accountability. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always	or	b) Responsibilities of teachers and administrators at the school site are clear and communal with much accountability. ○ Always ○ Nearly Always

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Sum of positive and negative group
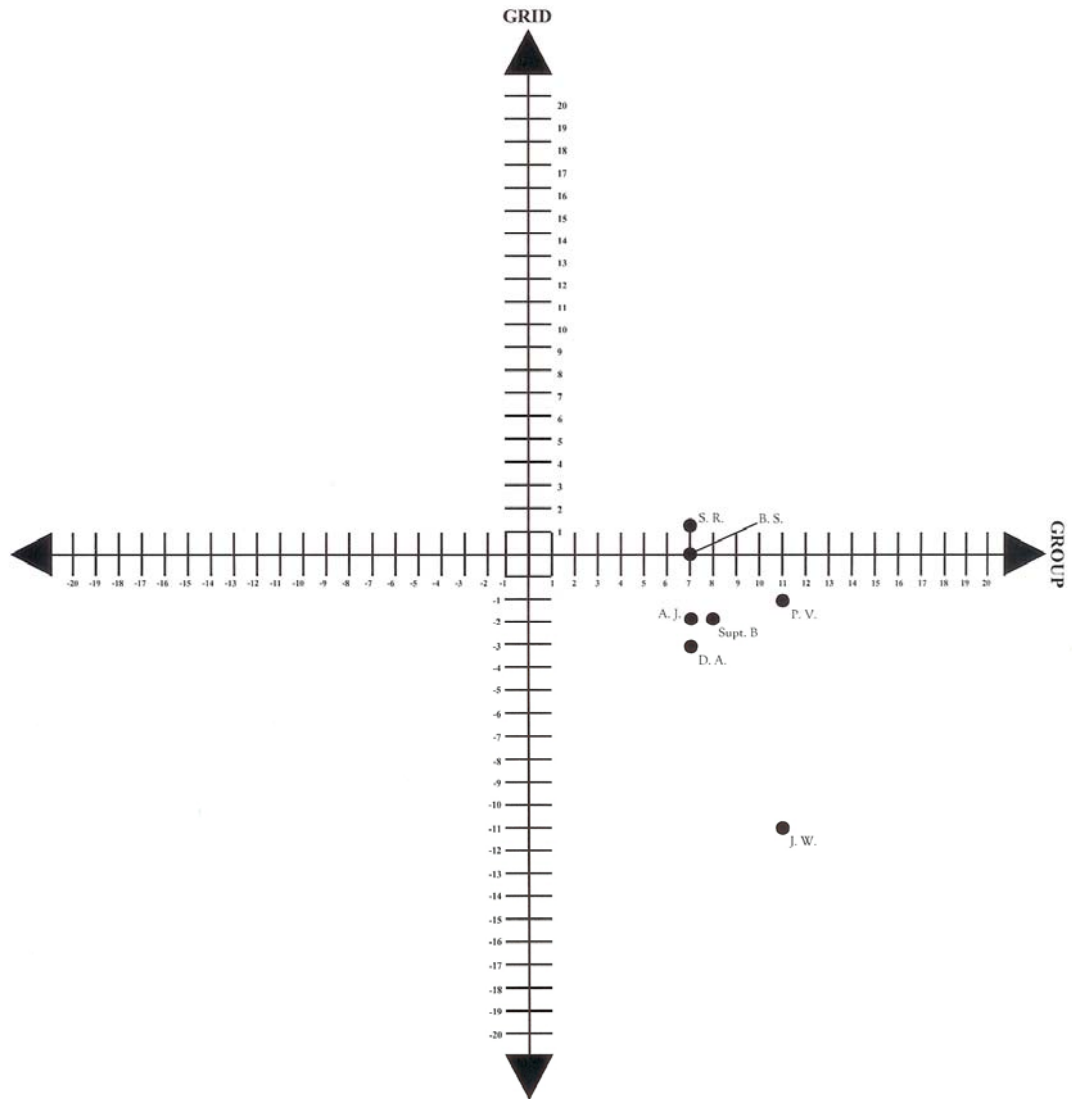scores:_____

Appendix C

School District A's Grid and Group Plotted Points
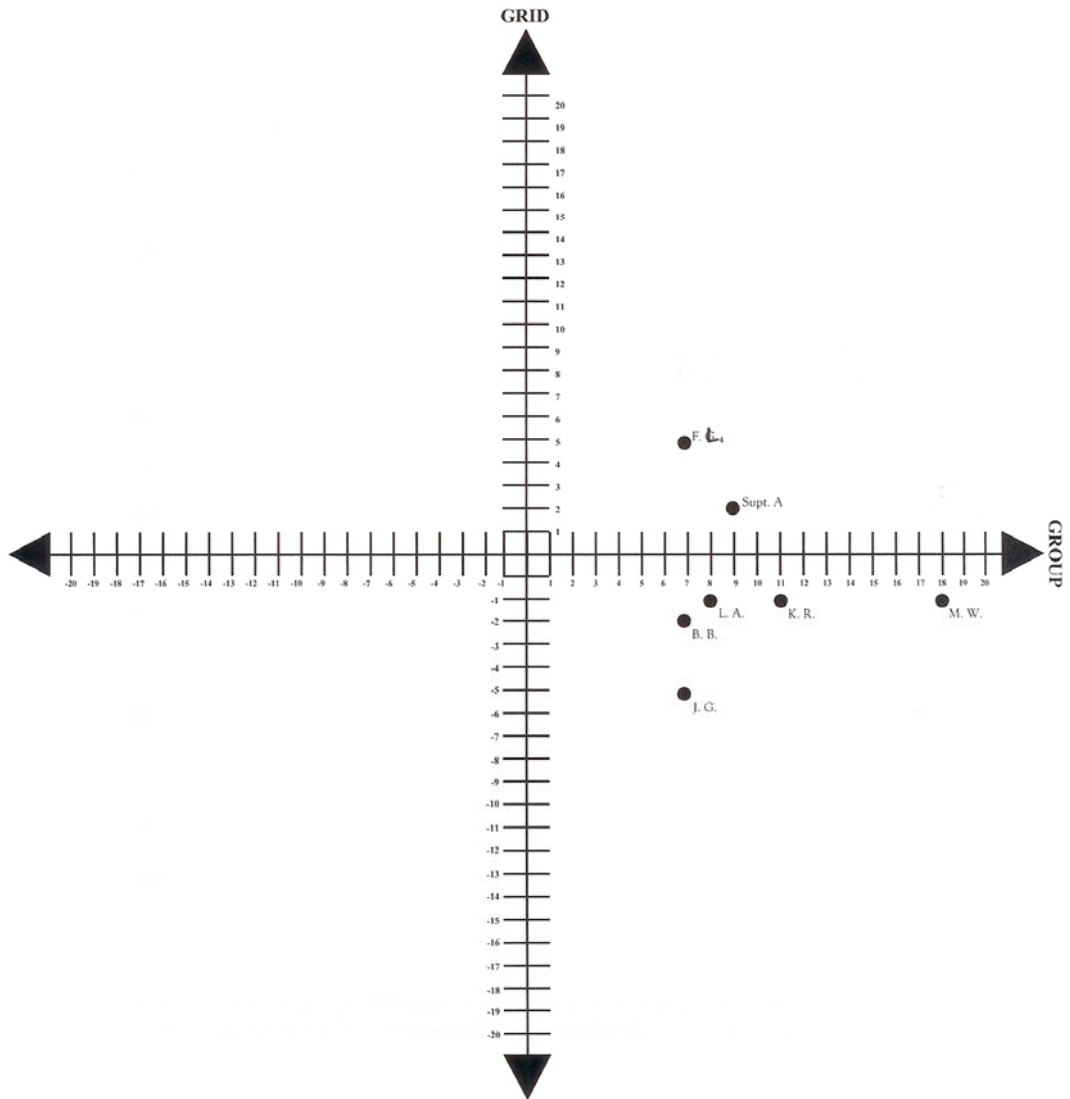
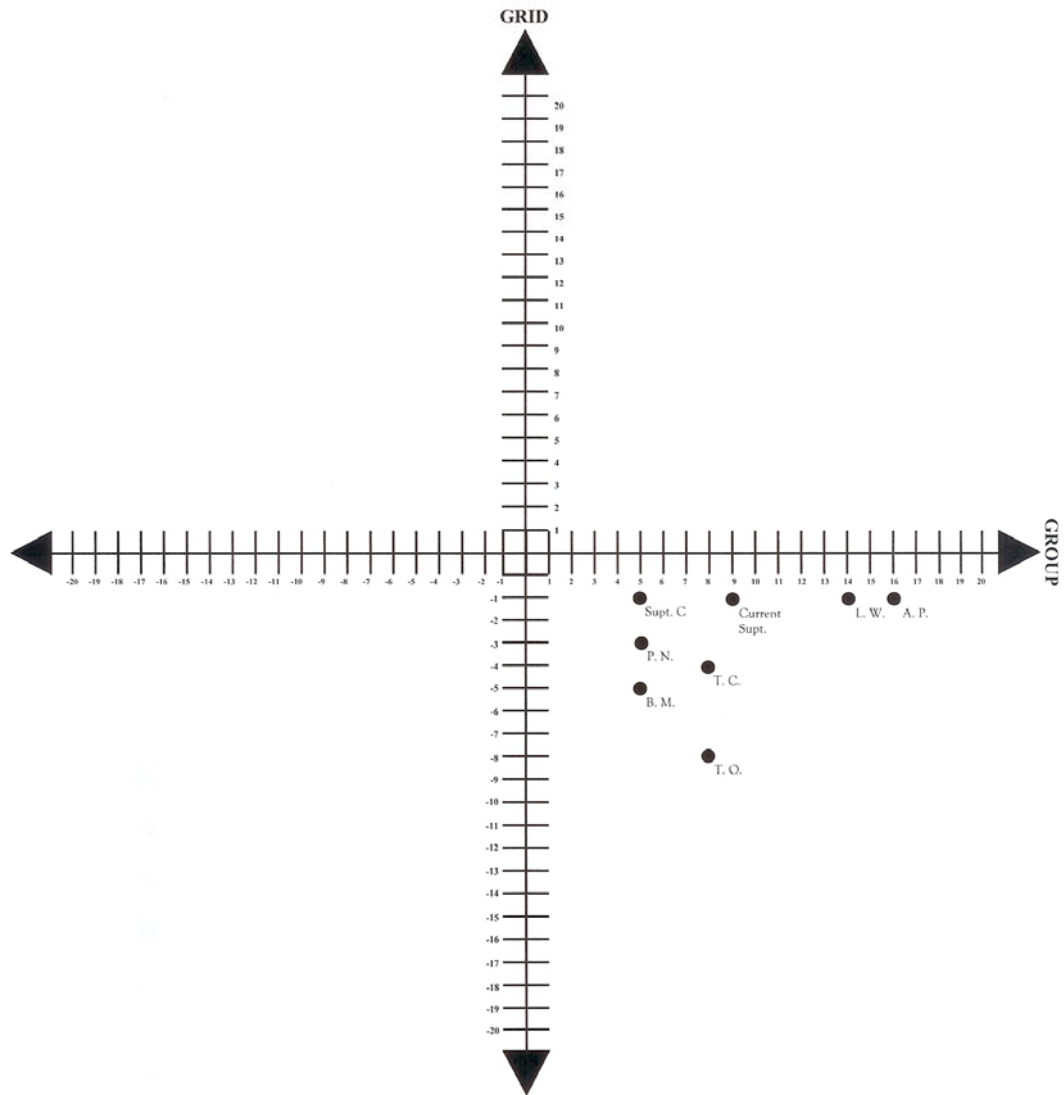

District A

Appendix D

School District B's Grid and Group Plotted Points
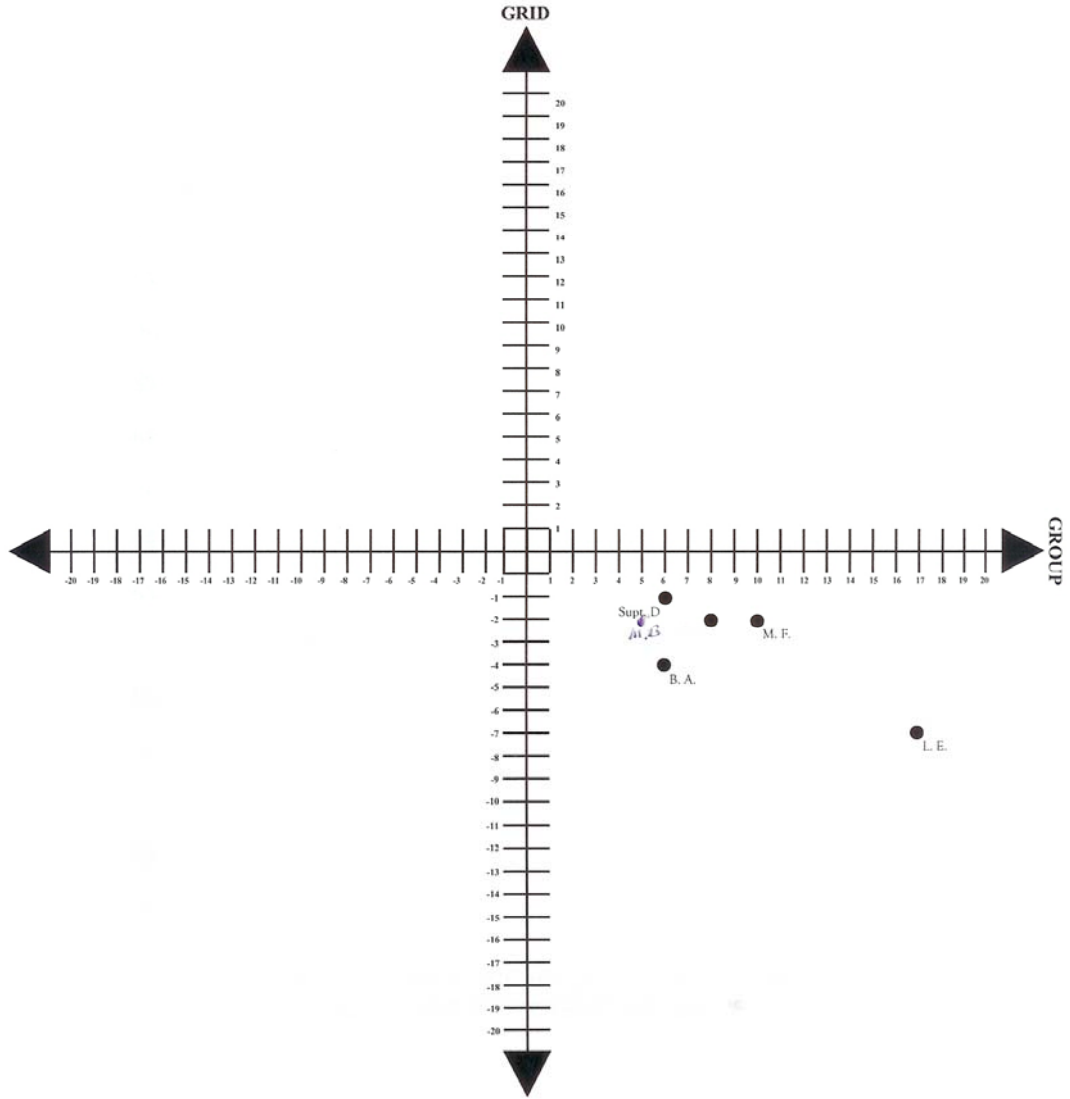

District B

Appendix E

School District C's Grid and Group Plotted Points

District C

Appendix F

School District D's Grid and Group Plotted Points

District D

Appendix G

Institutional Review Board Approval

**Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board**

Protocol Expires: 12/15/2004

Date: Tuesday, December 16, 2003   IRB Application No   ED0469

Proposal Title: A Case Study of Superintendent Tenure: A Grid and Group Review of Selected
Superintendent's Tenure-

Principal
Investigator(s):

Dick Balenseifen   Edward Harris
9108 SW 21st Street   308 Willard
Oklahoma City, OK 73128   Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and
Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Dear PI :

Your IRB application referenced above has been approved for one calendar year. Please make note of
the expiration date indicated above. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of
individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be
conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol
   must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar
   year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are
   unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. If you have questions about the
IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact me in 415 Whitehurst (phone:
405-744-5700, colson@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Carol Olson

Carol Olson, Chair
Institutional Review Board

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VITA

Dick William Balenseifen

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: A GRID AND GROUP REVIEW OF SELECTED SUPERINTENDENTS'
TENURE: FOUR CASE STUDIES

Major Field: Education Administration

Biographical:

Education: Graduated from Putnam City West High School in May 1983; received
Bachelor of Science in Biology from Southern Nazarene University in May
1987. Received Masters of Science in Education Administration from
University of Central Oklahoma in July 1992. Completed the requirements for
the Doctor of Education in Education Administration at Oklahoma State
University in December, 2004.

Experience: Employed by Putnam City Schools as a teacher and coach 1988-1997;
employed by El Reno Public Schools 1997-2003 as a principal; employed by
Putnam City Schools as a principal 2003-present.