Appreciative Inquiry: A Case Study of Two Superintendents, Communal Relations, and the School District's Responsibility For Community Economic Development

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ABSTRACT

The problem is the economic decline in rural West Texas and the modernistic outlook of school boards and superintendents regarding the role of the rural school in maintaining the community's economic viability. A comparative case study was used to study Appreciative Inquiry practices with two school superintendents in West Texas and members of their communities. Interviews and archival data revealed little knowledge of Appreciative Inquiry but did reveal the importance of strong relational skills on the part of the superintendent to be able to work effectively in the community. Utilizing a relational approach to organizational management and change, although not necessarily Appreciative Inquiry, these superintendents were able to successfully navigate political and cultural issues to affect positive change regardless of the economic viability of their communities. This approach provided a school culture that was conducive to producing a positive reputation, thereby playing a part in the procurement of economic development.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Small, rural communities are in trouble. “For at least a century, rural areas in the U.S. have been marked by a profound depopulation. In most cases, rural areas are losing economically and socially viable populations, tax bases, and essential services, such as schools and retail establishments” (Lyson, 2002, p. 136). The Federal Reserve Bank noted a measurable divide in rural economic performance, showing that almost all rural economic growth during the 1990s was limited to 40% of rural counties. These growth pockets are almost always near major cities, have striking scenic amenities, or are emerging hubs of rural commerce. Hundreds of other counties struggle with only modest gains at best, remaining tied to their traditional economic bases (Sherwood, 2000). This significant issue is a concern of not only rural areas, but also is paramount to the economic health of the country in general. Rural areas have and continue to produce a substantial amount of the food products as well as develop the natural resources this country consumes. Maintaining a viable, educated, work force is critical to the maintenance of that production. Economically sound communities, offering adequate housing and educational services, are an essential element to the survival of rural communities. According to Beeson and Strange (2003), 7.9% of students nationwide attend rural schools. Those children are being educated in communities where, according to Schmuck and Schmuck (1992), economic conditions were causing districts to have difficulty attracting qualified teachers (especially in science and mathematics) and also difficulty retaining veteran educators because of lack of resources.

The aforementioned finding reflects the small numerical stature that rural areas have in comparison to urban and suburban centers. With two out of three students across the United States attending urban or suburban schools, policy makers tend to legislate toward the benefits of larger populations thus providing little or no help to the rural education system. The implications of that are profound. Lyson (2002) wrote: "Superintendents, legislators, and the public in general need to understand that schools are vital to rural communities. Schools are not just educational centers for these small towns; they are drawing points for the cultural, sporting, and civic activities" (p. 131). The purpose of the study reported herein was to look at two small rural communities and determine what if any impact the superintendent had on maintaining the vitality of the community itself, not just the educational and financial integrity of the school districts they are charged with administering.

Rural Community Mindsets and Traditions

The modernistic mindset, the attitude of traditional economic and social expectation, has perpetuated static generational lifestyles as well as real status norms over countless years in small communities. "Schools reflect and transmit the culture of their communities across generations, preserving its unique future," (Emery, 2006, p. 3). The school serves as the gathering point that facilitates all aspects of the community. Aside from the physical facilitation, there is the facilitation for communication across social strata allowing for the sharing of common experiences. This sharing of common experiences is critical to the relational bonding that provides stability. Peshkin (1978, 1982) wrote about how vital a school is to the survival of rural communities. He noted that schools serve as symbols of community autonomy, community vitality, community

integration and control, personal and community tradition, and personal and community identity. According to Peshkin (1978), "Viable [communities] generally contain schools; dying and dead ones either lack them or do not have them for long, (p.161)." The school is a benchmark for the community's wellbeing. The sense of cultural survival for the adult citizens is attributed to the school because of the activities that year after year build that tradition (Peshkin, 1978, p. 161). That sense of survival, as Peshkin calls it, rallies those in power to attempt to maintain their comfort level, the status quo.

The trouble rests within the context of that status quo. If it is good, change is threatening to the *good* way of life, and the perception is that traditional power structures and modernist mindsets have to remain static if these communities are to survive. That type of mindset may have served small communities well in the past to maintain economic stability, but it has not allowed the progressive attitudes to emerge to compete in a global economy. According to Schmuck and Schmuck, (1992), many of the towns in they researched constituted populations that had declined 75% or more since the mid 1980s. Shopping centers strategically placed on the edges of towns had forced downtown merchants to close while local newspapers were scraping by on reduced advertising revenue. Schools were having trouble recruiting and maintaining a quality teaching force while superintendents were fighting tight budgets. Whatever a town's economy is based on, the authors found that small-town districts and the small towns they served were in economic peril. The changes in economic structures that support these towns are happening within the context of a global economy designed to extenuate competition that is unfamiliar to these small towns. Changing employment opportunities in small communities forces power bases to either diversify or accept competition from outside

and from nontraditional industries and services. “The most common or core sense of economic globalization refers to the observation that in recent years a quickly rising share of economic activity in the world seems to be taking place between people who live in different countries (rather than the same country)” (Klein, 2006, p. 31). The same concept applied locally implies the interest of the community itself has become much less self-sufficient, relying somewhat on the commerce through globalization of catalog business, to internet purchasing serviced through door to door delivery firms that, by design, bypass local interests. At the same time as the business world globalizes, local communities are trying to provide a unique niche of services. That providing of services requires the assimilation of outside ideas and even ideologies to maintain economic viability. Friedman (2006) called this the concept of “glocalization.” He wrote: “The more you have a culture that naturally glocalizes-that is, the more your culture easily absorbs foreign ideas and global best practices and melds those with its own traditions-the greater advantage you will have [in a globalized economy] (2006, p. 411).

Schools are communities, the towns they serve are communities, and the economic structures supporting both of them are in itself another community. "Rural schools and rural communities,” according to Chance and Capps, "exist in a unique symbiotic relationship" (1992, p. 231). Together the school and the community constitute "a greater community," one that "epitomizes people who share a common core of values regarding the young people of that community and their future" (p. 231). Administrators have a need to understand from whence the community comes, and the modernistic structure supporting the thought pool, or mindset, of the small town. "Rural school leaders," stated Chalker, "must understand the infusion or, as the case may be, the

intrusion of politics into the educational decisions" (1999, p. 243). That knowledge of understanding provides the starting point to effective change and will begin the journey through the challenges that are ever present in small-town political arenas. Aside from the communal aspects, the individual facets, familial relationships, economic dependence, the compilation of all these aspects provides the environment in which the small town and the school is to be understood. Successful schools, and successful superintendents, work in the community to provide a needed service for their mutual health.

Of course, not all rural schools and communities have that kind of relationship. Schools and communities have enjoyed a somewhat *closed shop* when it has come to competition from outside in their respective businesses. However, after one or the other, either the school or the community, begins to falter, the relationship is no longer one of complimentary bond. As Chance pointed out, schools and communities often do not realize their important bond until the existence of one or the other is threatened by external forces, and, unfortunately, "it may simply be impossible to develop a collaborative interdependence at that stage of the game" (1992, p. 233). Relational alliances, built over time, but at the same time built intentionally, have the capability to have the basis to positively affect educational as well as economic situations, perhaps even to the extent of providing economic stability for a rural area. Research indicates a great amount of study in the areas school quality as applied to the consideration of school consolidation, individual earning capacity for individual graduates, and general cost effectiveness in the management of educational facilities.

West Texas

Rural communities in rural West Texas have for decades provided opportunities for families to enjoy a slower paced environment while at the same time providing opportunities to raise children in an atmosphere of, for the most part, a homogeneous and modernist train of thought. The modernistic thought process provides a basis for the maintenance of tradition. The homogenous mind-set is evident with attitudinal expectations, religion, values, and economics for the most part, and cultural aspects within the community. The values are traditionally based and reflect conservative, West Texas politics. The lifeblood of these communities is the school system and the smaller the population, the higher the visibility of the school district and the stronger the part that district plays in the structure of the community. With respect to West Texas, research seems to be lacking on the tie between the successful school and the viability of the communities they serve.

Theory

Schools of today are in transition. Public schools are being asked by society to be the driving force to help maintain or change societal structure. However, schools themselves are in need of a deep structural metamorphosis to be able to attempt such a task. "Responding effectively to the increasingly complex demands placed on school systems requires change leadership to transform entire school systems, not pieces of school systems" (Duffy, 2006, p. 15). The change must be attitudinal as well as instructionally strategic. Superintendents have the opportunity to lead the attitudinal transformation change as well as the instruction. But the modernist mindset of the past has to be cast off by those superintendents if they are to realize a society that no longer

reacts to the traditional management tenets established by perceived expectations of the public. Superintendents, as well as other social leaders, must be able to provide a postmodernistic discourse as a means of confronting the status quo.

Appreciative Inquiry, sometimes referred to as AI, is emerging in the organization development literature and practice as a powerful and lasting approach to transformation in human systems: families, organizations, communities, and societies. The theory and process of Appreciative Inquiry continues to develop as it is utilized to gain credibility in the arena of organizational study (Watkins, 2001). The concept is an exciting breakthrough, one that signals a change in the way we think about change, and AI will be of enduring consequence and energizing innovation for the field (Beckhard, 1999).

Appreciative Inquiry is a mindset, a philosophy, and an approach to conducting an inquiry of almost any sort on an organizational system. Appreciative Inquiry incorporates progressive transformation techniques utilizing a consensual style. Where traditional, or autocratic, management styles do not utilize input from stakeholders to reach an organizational decision, Appreciative Inquiry uses discussions and universal organizational input to reach solutions for issues. David Cooperrider, largely credited with the development of AI, cited compelling examples of the impact of thought and images on reality from other fields such as medicine, psychology, sociology, and industry, among others. Most commonly known examples of AI are the placebo effect, the Pygmalion effect, sports psychology, and mind/body healing (Cooperrider, 1990). He argued that not only do we see what we expect to see, but we also *create* what we expect to see by the mere act of looking for it. And, thus, the kinds of questions we ask in an

inquiry, an important concept in AI, will determine what we find. For example, a fundamental premise of Appreciative Inquiry is the power of the positive image. Even as the most progressive of organizations expand and are successful, the use of hired labor for a permanent work force tends to create a modernistic, employee caste system (Wallace, 1998). To counteract such bureaucratic tendencies, managers have the opportunity to use postmodern, self- organizing, tenets such as appreciative inquiry that allow for the empowerment of employees.

Organizations, like plants, are heliotropic – as plants grow in the direction of light, so do organizations move in the direction of what gives them life and energy. "Much like a movie projection on a screen, human systems are forever projecting ahead of themselves a horizon of expectation that brings the future powerfully into the present as a causal agent" (Cooperrider, 1990, p. 97). Remembering and recounting peak times and best experiences, and relating those stories in great detail brings the positive experiences of the past powerfully forth into the present for both the teller and the listener.

Basis of Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative inquiry is based on postmodern constructionist theory; that is, reality is socially constructed. This becomes clearer when we look at the eight basic assumptions of Appreciative Inquiry:

a. In every society, organization, or group, something works.

b. What we focus on becomes our reality.

c. Reality is created in the moment, and there are multiple realities.

d. The act of asking questions of an organization or group influences the

group in some way.

e. People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future when they carry forward parts of the past.

f. If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be what are best about the past.

g. It is important to value differences.

h. The language we use creates our reality (Hammond, 1998, pp. 20-21).

Appreciative Inquiry sees organizations as mysteries to be embraced rather than problems to be solved. That approach enables the transformation to be established as an emergent process rather than a definitive answer to address the problem at hand. Appreciative inquiry asks about the best of what already is, the life-giving force or forces within the human system to be identified and amplified. It can be applied to any line of inquiry within an organizational system from the simple question of: what was most productive about this morning's staff meeting? to the more complex analysis of: what are the aspects of our company that generate passion and excitement? These conversations or stories are the basis of an appreciative inquiry to produce consensual transformation. One person might say something like, "From what we heard in these stories, we could . . ." and there follows a collective deep breath and then silence as people realize the new *we could* (Steinbeck, 2005).

Background to the Study

The job of the superintendent of schools is caught in a time warp. Local expectations and state regulations have placed the position of superintendent in the precarious position of satisfying both local and state entities while practicing in an

educational system that has not maintained itself to the reality of a changing social structure. English (2003) posited that postmodernism has entered the discourse of educational administration, and with that discussion, problematic themes have emerged. The first problem is that in the field of educational administration, one would become hard pressed to find more than a few practitioners who, first of all, understand the postmodern concept of Appreciative Inquiry, much less have the time or inclination to seriously address it. The concept itself requires thoughtful study to understand and apply to educational administration. Another problem is the time and accountability restraints placed on school leaders today. Time restrictions on school managers are depleting the administrator of quality study time available to sharpen the saw, or pursue meaningful organizational study and perhaps affect meaningful change. The accountability standards, the performances of which are under the auspices of the administrator, are in the process of defining the American educational system, and most definitely, the Texas public school system. The bureaucratic, modernistic expectations of state agencies continue to place management techniques in the workplace designed to perpetuate autocracy. These expectations encourage divisions of labor not only for specific assignments, but more importantly for the total goal of the project itself. In other words, completion of a project or goal for an individual is confined physically and intellectually to their position or job description. The understanding of postmodernism as an alternative to traditional bureaucratic management and the specific use of Appreciative Inquiry as a social discourse has the potential to address issues and produce solutions to these educational issues. Foucault (1980) wrote that the structure of discourse has the power to silence or give voice to subordinates. That choice is available to the educational

manager. Johnston (1991) argued that rather than considering schooling to be an object in need of management, one might approach school management as a social discourse. This reflects a view of an administration oriented toward facilitating conditions under which transformative educational discourse and practices may emerge.

Accountability expectations for the superintendent

The standards and assessment for accountability in Texas are called the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS). This is the objective grade or score from the state for the district, the superintendent, and by transference, the community. The system is not without problems as a few ulterior byproducts have surfaced. One byproduct is the economic benefit to publishers. "These standards are driving textbook construction, professional development, and local school district accountability measures" (English, 2003, p. 115). Another byproduct is the development of the standardized test industry. These byproducts have serious economic as well as governance issues to be addressed. However, it is to be understood that those restraints mentioned above are the result of state regulation, which is the result of legislation, which ultimately can be traced back to the top-down modernist approach to change or problem solving. "The traditional approach to change is to look for the problem, do a diagnosis, and find a solution. The primary focus is on what is wrong or broken; since we look for problems, we find them. By paying attention to problems, we emphasize and amplify them" (Hammond, 1998, p. 7). By magnifying the problem, energy and time are expended, negative aspects of the issue are brought to the forefront, extending a cycle of "find *it* and fix *it*."

Potentials for the superintendent as change agent

Change for the good, by the confident practitioner, is deliberate, distinct, and requires painstaking persistence. Situations requiring change or transformation are treacherous to any superintendent of schools, more especially one new to the community. Those situations are perpetuated and tested in the reoccurrence of tradition, colloquialism, and the status quo of intellectual injection into the community. The intellectual injection is known in small towns as *new blood* and it is viewed as a threat. The established culture is usually more interested in survival and maintaining social strata than considering a change in the community school. The new blood has no history in the community and therefore does not speak the language of its new surroundings, employees, and structure of the new community. This is in contrast to the existing language aspect described by Whiteley (2007).

> When we entered the workplace, most of us became automatically and largely uncritically socialized into 'modern' organizational life. In our talk we validate modernism without even thinking about it. When we are talking about structure, we are acknowledging that there is such a thing, that it is acceptable and that by and large people will function in accordance with the structure. (p. 78)

Superintendents' abilities to find their way in this structure are crucial for not only personal success, but also for the success of the school and community. Superintendents and their families represent features where well-educated, secure professionals seek to navigate through the language, historical, and other traditional mindsets, allowing many chances for alienation and even failure. The language they bring to the community may or may not be the language of the expectations of the position. Bushe stated, "language

and words are the basic building blocks of social reality" (1998, p. 2). Language, history and tradition construct the community from the power base to the management of the school system creating a social reality. Questioning the history of communities is treacherous to say the least. Therefore questioning the language that helped to build that history is not conducive to the longevity of employment. But questioning is the tool postmodernists use to achieve organizational change, and that transformation is essentially what the superintendent of schools is charged to do.

Status quo of superintendent preparation

Superintendents need insight into the idea of questioning the metanarratives in any field of study, but especially one as subjective as educational administration. However, positive community relations and the economic relationship between school and community is a non topic to the established system of preparation for educational practitioners. "Over the past several years (1977-2003), critics have labeled educational administration programs as seriously deficient. And have indicted them for failing to adequately prepare school and district leaders" (Hoyle, 2005, p. 7). The teacher and administrative preparation agendas are well established for universities, and as such, are not easily changed. If not mandated by legislative action, changes to the modernistic, administrator preparation programs are cumbersome and are likely to be perceived as a threat. That threat is extrapolated and used to intimidate the power of the status quo (industries of higher education). Conversely, Clinesmith (2007) quotes Loving stating, "For the predominantly modernist influenced professional development practices, the consistent adherence to definitive measures offers significant potential for revealing effective practices. However, some fear the limitations of the singularity of approach and

application standards may stifle additional, much needed, exploration through more expansive postmodern research approaches." (p. 25).

The attitude and knowledge base of superintendents, as reflected by, and prepared for by, academic preparation, has little or no basis for positive community social and economic interaction. Experience becomes the best teacher for superintendents in the area of community relations. School leaders who approach situations aggressively rather than passively have accumulated strategies for successful change that must be done proactively rather than reactively.

> Conflict resolution strategies, consensus building, and communication skills are essential. A genuine, unromantic representation of what a superintendency entails, particularly in rural and small school districts, must be achieved while, at the same time, maintaining and nurturing the desire and confidence of those seeking eventually to assume the role. The need for balance is either not addressed adequately in preparation programs or goes unheeded by the idealistic, enthusiastic superintendent. (Czaja, 1999)

Successful superintendents need all the data and relational aspects available for a chance at steering rural communities through change.

Superintendent/community relations and effective transformation

As modernistic as rural community structures are, the question remains as to whether or not a single public administrator can seriously affect such a community. Each community member and issue is related, both positively and negatively. Logically, these relationships form from the inner core of each of the various communities, and are a part of the culture of the town itself. Each relational history is a microcosm of the factions

and a macrocosm of the totality of the relationships. Each relationship has a story, a history that makes up their modernistic approach to relating with the other facets of communal or societal living. Societies are stories, as are companies, schools, cities, families, and individuals. There are bricks and mortar and flesh and bones, but all of it comes from a story. Even the flesh and bones of one person come from a story of two people uniting to form another. Understanding the history of the stories is essential for the administrator. Only then can he or she begin to bring forth the attributes necessary for positive movement. Through understanding and internalizing the histories an administrator can weave together stories that provide the basis for the change process.

History as a transformational tool

It is generally agreed that all aspects of communities want what is economically good for the town. All stakeholders in the community want what is good for the children in the community. Chance (1992) wrote, that a "community is united not just on the basis of geography but also on the basis of a 'shared sense of belonging, caring and community focus'" (p. 231). The skilled administrator will set in place a process to test the metanarratives, a process designed to change and transform the organization through intentional interaction. Such interaction is designed to not only provide a forum for discussion, but also to articulate the consensus of thought to push forward the idea of economic viability through school success. This interaction creates a process by which stakeholders maintain their community tradition while changing their school. The ensuing discussion is open, true, and productive providing for true respective discourse from all. In such a process, lifestyles of small-town values are secured while the educational opportunities and standards of their youngsters are raised.

Statement of the Problem

The problem is the decline in steady employment opportunities in rural West Texas in part due to the modernistic outlook of school boards and superintendents regarding the role of the rural school in maintaining the community's viability and preparing for future economic challenges. That a symbiotic relationship exists between the community and the school can be clearly seen as enrollment declines. A result of the lack of infusion of economic opportunities into small communities culminates in stagnant or declining employment opportunities for families. As families leave to find jobs elsewhere, declining enrollment results in less state funding, which is calculated from enrollment figures provided by local districts. That dwindling funding in turn places burdens on the district's ability to offer pertinent academic programs. As job losses in the community increase, enrollments dwindle, and the district is again impacted. As the cycle deepens, the modernistic outlook and the continuation of the status quo do not lend themselves to successful procurement of economic development to replace dwindling jobs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine relational organizational transformation, such as Appreciative Inquiry, implemented by the superintendent and its impact on the community and economic development. The study will test relational organizational change technique (the use of a consensual style of management) as a means of providing the desired school and community perception and articulate that perception's effect on economic development. The impact of relational, organizational change, by the superintendent of schools on the community, brings to mind the social aspect of the job.

Relational, or participative management and change are democratic in nature. Emery (2006) quoted Dewey (1922), who promoted democracy for learning and learning in democracy. "He realized that these two dimensions were inseparable to make progress. In planning for their desirable future within a participative democratic structure, communities learn and grow together" (p. 21). The work of Freire (1993) also enhanced the aspects of the democratic, and the participatory concept within communities to strengthen the ties between individual and relational structures for change. Freire posited: "Knowledge emerges only through invention and reinvention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (p. 72). The impact on economic development by the use of those relational concepts by the superintendent is to be explored.

This research explores the correlation between the perception of successful schools and economic development in rural communities in West Texas through Appreciative Inquiry (AI), as a postmodernistic approach to community economic development by school administrators. As a postmodern transformational technique, AI is entirely affirmative. It is different in that it does not include deficit, or zero based, approaches to organization analysis. These modernistic change analyses may include such concepts as root causes of failure, barriers, strategic threats, or resistance to the change itself. Appreciative Inquiry processes focus on the organization at its best performances in the past and present and expectations for the future (Whitney, 2003). Appreciative inquiry provides the theoretical underpinnings as a change theory for superintendents to utilize in this endeavor. This study provided insight into the usefulness

of such an organizational style in solving problems of community economic development.

Significance of the Study

Correlations between the economic stability of communities and the success of the school districts in rural West Texas are not obscure topics of discussion. Communities are "graded" on the perception of the success of their schools as assigned by the Texas Education Agency. That "grade" then enhances or detracts from the communities' ability to attract economic development. Of interest is the effect the superintendent of schools can bring to the issue with change strategies, skills, and understandings, as applied to rural areas and small towns. But of particular interest for this study is the effect of the relational change technique used by the superintendent of schools on local economic development.

Educational leaders have vast responsibilities as well as opportunities to serve the communities that have entrusted them with administering their schools. Appreciative inquiry allows the superintendent to not only bring educational expertise to the table, but a change management knowledge base which can help the community to survive and grow. This postmodernistic perspective can ensure the economic viability of the community, which in turn ensures the viability of the school. Little or no research is available on this subject.

Methodology

The research design was exploratory in nature as it explored an area of inquiry not previously examined. To determine the financial impact of a school on the economic development of the community, this research incorporated archival and qualitative data

collection and analysis. The expectation for this study was that the qualitative information be applied to the informational aspects of test scores and economic condition to provide the collection, or lack thereof, to the importance of superintendent use of the Appreciative Inquiry change theory, school and community perception, to finally economic stability. Because this exploratory research was open-ended in nature, there were no preconceived expectations.

> There should be the possibility of surprise in social research. Social research requires that researchers remain open to new evidence, whether or not that evidence supports their cherished beliefs. This openness leads to the possibility of surprise. Openness also makes research more exciting. If we know the results before hand, what is the impetus for the research? (Firebaugh, 2008, p. 29)

Qualitative

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible to the observer. The observer turns the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). A strength of qualitative research is the ability for the researcher to create the understanding from the researchers' perspective. Strauss and Corbin (1990) contend that some areas of research are more applicable to qualitative research. "Qualitative research uses multiple methods that are interactive and

humanistic. Qualitative researchers look for involvement in data collection and seek to build dependability and rapport with the individuals in the study" (Creswell, 2003, p. 181).

The research utilized archival data, interviews with community members, school board members, and their superintendents to produce a case study. Creswell (2003) defined case study as "[an activity] in which the researcher explores in depth a program, an event, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals. The case(s) are bound by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time" (p. 15). The data derived from these case studies incorporated grounded theory techniques across the longitudinal study to derive trends as to direct and indirect economic benefits. The case studies reflected scenarios that occurred from 2004 to 2009. This time parameter gave a basis for the gathering of data that was consistent across the communities. Creswell (2005) clarified that "case study research involves the study of an issue through one or more cases within a bounded system" (p. 73). The case study reported herein concerned the perception of the superintendent in the community as to whether or not she or he possesses the attitudes and organizational skills necessary to produce perceptual qualities of a school district to entice economic development. The case study utilized interviews of superintendents and focus groups with community members to gain data. "Interviews play a central role in data collection in a grounded theory study" (Creswell, 2005, p. 131). Gliner and Morgan (2000) described the interview as a data collection technique in which the "researcher asks questions orally of the participant who answers orally" (p. 339).

Denzin (1978) wrote:

> Archival records can be divided into public and private archival records. Although access to public archives may be restricted to certain groups (for example, certain law enforcement records, credit histories, school records, and so on) they are typically prepared for some audience. As a result, public archival records tend to be written in more or less standardized form and arranged in the archive systematically. (p. 211)

The researcher is a sitting superintendent in West Texas. The experience as well as insight available to the researcher lends credibility concerning interpretations of the data. Ezzy (2002) states "Qualitative research methods are particularly good at examining and developing theories that deal with the role of meanings and interpretations," (p. 3). Qualitative research brings rich writing as well as details brought by the researcher making the researcher study more meaningful.

Participants.

The study incorporated data from rural communities in West Texas of ten thousand or fewer population that have a single school district. The school districts, communities, and superintendents were selected to reflect a wide area of West Texas and stay within the parameters of the rural populations of the study. The communities were representative of economic standards of the area and incorporated, as close as randomly possible, one school district and community in the two wealth categories as defined by Chapters 41 and 42 of the Texas Education Code. The superintendents and communities were chosen as matter of convenience by the researcher for their locality.

The superintendents selected to participate in the interviews had a minimum of three years employment in the same district. Anonymity for all participants was assured.

The communities were purposefully selected to help the researcher understand the problem. Subjects were two practicing school superintendents, twelve adult members of their communities including business owners, bankers, pastors, government officials, and school board members from each district. The subjects for the interview segment of the research consisted of people that had given their consent to be interviewed. All participants in the interview took part in this phase of the study on a voluntary basis.

Research Questions

1. How do superintendents practice relational organizational change (transformation) known as Appreciative Inquiry?
2. How do superintendents perceive a connection between their management style, their relational change (transformation) technique and economic development in the community?
3. How do members of the community perceive a connection between the superintendent's relational change (transformation) technique and economic development in the community?

Assumptions

It is assumed for this study that all rural communities in West Texas have a vested interest in successful schools; that all rural communities in West Texas have a vested interest in a vibrant and progressive economy whereby young people can find employment and families with children can afford to live in the community. Assumptions also include that a community school is relevant to economic development, Appreciative Inquiry can enhance the ability of the superintendent to produce solid consensual change for the betterment off the school, and that change can help promote

economic growth. The researcher also assumed that the responses were truthful to the situation in which they were gathered.

Definitions of Key Terms

Appreciative Inquiry. A collaborative and highly participative, system-wide approach to seeking, identifying, and enhancing the "life-giving forces" that are present when a system is performing optimally in human, economic, and organizational terms. It is a journey in which profound knowledge of a human system at its moments of wonder is uncovered and used to co-construct the best and highest future of that system. (Watkins, 2001, p. 14).

Banker. A person involved in the day to day operations of a bank in the community.

Board member. A member of the school district's board of trustees from the community and district being studied.

Business member. A person involved in the management of a retail, industrial, or agricultural production business within the boundaries of the school district.

Community member. A person residing in the community.

Case study. Creswell (2003) defined Case Study as: [an activity] in which the researcher explores in depth a program, an event, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals. The case(s) are bound by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (p. 15). As with all case studies, the intent is to "involve systematically gathering enough information about a (. . .) group to permit the researcher to effectively understand how the [group] operates or functions" (Berg, 2004, p. 251).

Financial security. Entails the economic viability and future stability of communities. In this study, financial security entails economic growth as well as sustainability of existing business.

Grounded theory. A theoretical analysis approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) that alludes to the spiraled emergence of theory through a continuous, reflective content analysis. It denotes the evolving nature of findings from an initial point of origin.

Knowledge base. The body of accepted elements at the core of a given field, which

may be considered dependable, consistent, and enduring. For the purposes of this study, knowledge base reflects the postmodern perspective as being multiparadigmic, contextual, and plural (English, 2003).

Latent content analysis. The qualitative approach to exploring the meaning behind the

words, actions, and archival data gathered through the study. Analysis will follow the process of grounded theory, allowing the data to emerge with no parameters.

Modernists. Those who embrace a method of scientific research founded upon objective, predefined measures toward the development of a core set of standards.

Open coding. A process for sorting data through a wide inquiry which challenges the researcher to initially "believe everything and believe nothing" (Strauss, 1987, p. 28).

Postmodernists. Those who adopt a counter approach to modernism by embracing an acceptance that truth is plural, contextual, and involves multiple perspectives and outcomes determined outside predetermined norms (English, 2003; Marshall & Gerstl-

Pepin, 2005).

Research. A study conducted to examine a specifically identified problem.

*Rural community***.** A rural community for the purposes of this study represents a community in West Texas of ten thousand or fewer population and serves a single school district.

Strategic planning. Strategic planning addresses conscious, precise preparation and execution of a plan to resolve issues.

Status quo. The existing state of things. In organizations it may mean that those in power have decreed that things should exist in this way (Whiteley, 2007, p. 61).

Superintendents. Current district-level administrators with Texas State Board of Education Certification as superintendent. The educators used in this study serve public school districts in communities of population of ten thousand and fewer people.

Theme. A unit of information derived from both manifest and latent messages by the respondents, resulting in a common clustering of expressed experiences or views.

Theory. Defined by Webster (1990), a proposition that can be substantiated by accepted principles; i.e., an explanation for a particular set or system of occurrences.

Organization of the Study

Chapter I served as the introduction to the study and provided an overview of the pertinent literature, methodology used to gather data, and anticipated parameters of the research. Chapter II reviewed the literature as it related to organizations, cultures within organizations, transformational organizational change, specific change models, and finally the change theory of Appreciative Inquiry. The literature for the study of

superintendent change theory and economic development was almost nonexistent as was the literature concerning economic development in rural areas expanded to include schools. As a result, this study provided information about a gap in the research on superintendent change theory and economic development. Chapter III discussed the research design and methodology for the study. Chapter IV presented the findings of the study. Chapter V drew conclusions from those findings and explored implications for further research and practice.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

If I were to wish for anything, I should not wish for wealth or power, but for the passionate sense of the potential, for the eye which, ever young and ardent, sees the possible. Pleasure disappoints possibility never. And what wine is so foaming, what so fragrant, what so intoxicating, as possibility! Kierkegaard

Introduction to the Literature Review

The literature for the study of successful schools and economic development has been almost nonexistent. This is the case despite the fact that the well being of the nation's economy stems from the contributions of graduates from a strong public education system. In the United States, 4 out of every 10 young adults (ages 16-24) lacking a high school diploma received some type of government assistance in 2001. In addition, a dropout is eight times more likely to be incarcerated as a person with at least a high school diploma, which costs millions of dollars a year (Bridgeland, 2006). Johnson (2005) reported that 2.2 million students have left Texas schools without a diploma between 1986 and 2005, costing the state $500 billion in forgone tax revenues, and increased job training, welfare, unemployment, and criminal justice costs. Providing quality education resulting in diplomas for the students who have left the system requires communities to address the economic situations that support ad valorum tax bases. Maintaining tax bases to pay for quality faculty to help create those graduates is paramount. Louis V. Gerstner, Jr., former Chairman and CEO of IBM, noted that if we don't meet the challenge of finding and then providing support to the best teachers, we will have no basis to improve our schools. By not procuring the best teachers, we as a nation have made a conscious decision that will threaten our economic strength, political fabric, and inevitably, our stability as a nation (*Teaching at risk: A call to action*, 2004).

Correlations between the economic stability of communities and the success of the school districts in rural West Texas are not obscure topics of discussion. Aside from agriculture, school districts provide the employment that has the potential to create a great amount of capital injection into those communities. Yet, little study has been done as the literature concerning economic development in rural areas does not include schools. Of interest to this study is the effect the rural superintendent of schools can bring to the issue of economic development with successful strategies to transform out-of-date school organizational practices, intentional promotional skills, and the understanding of positive relationships with the economic community. But of particular interest for this study is the effect of the organizational management of the school superintendent on local economic development.

Organizations

Most literature on organizations (Van de Ven & Poole 2004; Schein, 1999; Stanford, 2007) suggests definitions specifically suited to the business world. Van de Ven and Poole (2004) described organizations as several groups within co-evolving job assignments, while Jones (1997) posited that organizations are constructed of people, and are tools used to coordinate actions to produce desirable goals. Organizations, by nature, have tendencies toward modernistic structures. Owens (2004) defined an organization as "an orderly, functional social structure (such as business, political party, or school) characterized by identifiable people who are members of the organization and an administrative system" (p. 428). For many kinds of work, organizational structure allows for the development and the specialization of job assignments, and thus a division of labor. The collective nature of organizations allows individual workers to focus on a

specific area of expertise and allows them to become more skilled or specialized in completing their task. According to Jones (1997), that *division of labor and specialization* is the first of five reasons for organizations to exist. The other four reasons are (a) The use of large scale technology, (b) The ability to manage the external environment, (c) To economize on transactions, and (d) To exert power and control.

The second reason for organizations to exist is *effective use of large-scale technology*. Technology, used as an organizational technique, produces effectiveness enhancing value. Jones (1997) described technology in organizations in three stages. At the input stage, technology is defined as skills, procedures, and techniques. These concepts allow each function within an organization to handle relationships with stakeholders enabling the organization to effectively manage its environment. The next stage is described as the *conversion stage* whereby technology is defined as the transformation of inputs such as machines, techniques, and work procedures to produce the desired outputs. The final aspect of technology defined by Jones (1997) is called the *output* and allows the organization to dispose of the outputs to external stakeholders. School organizations use technologies to increase efficiencies. These may include software to expedite payroll and attendance; transportation systems; and mass purchasing for food service.

The third reason, according to Jones (1997), for organizations to exist is the ability *to manage the external environment*. The external environment is that arena in which organizations operate. For schools the external environments are the communities of tax patrons, parents, teachers and staff, students, and combinations of each of these. Individuals have little resources to manage such outside influences to their causes such as

economic, social or political factors. However an organized company or school has the resources to develop specialists to handle such influences. For example, cohesion of the educational act as well as the administrative setting is easier controlled in centralized units. Business personnel, as well as other departments align themselves in the school organization to have an influence across the public through communication avenues. The superintendent likewise will try to manage the external environment by reporting from time to time to civic and other organizations as well as the media as to the status of their school district on matters of public interest.

The next reason to justify an organization is to economize on transaction costs. These costs concern themselves with the cost of negotiating, monitoring, and governing exchanges between people. Central purchasing offices in school districts provide this business service. Principals, at the campus level, manage the interactions between departments and individuals.

The final reason to have an organization is to exert power and control. Organizations have the ability to exert a great amount of power on individuals to conform (Jones, 1997). As individuals conform, they approach their work in a predictable fashion, behave in a certain way, and have the interest of the organization as a basic concern. In the school business, superintendents conform to trustees; principals to superintendents; teachers to principals; and students to teachers. Ritzer (2008) quoted Henry Ford on the subject of organizing workers. Ford said, "Repetitive labour--the doing of one thing over and over again and always in the same way is a terrible prospect to a certain kind of mind. It is terrifying to me. The average worker, I am sorry to say, wants a job in which he does not have to think" (Ritzer, 2008, p. 122). The modernistic system allows the

opportunity for all involved to provide as much or as little input as requested and still maintain standing within the organization.

Organizational structure of schools

School districts are representative of organizations. They have tendencies within them that reflect organizational structure, culture, and change techniques. Organizations either emphasize "company loyalty and commitment [or] individual freedom and autonomy" (Schein, 1999, p. 53). Rural school districts reflect Stanford's (2007) concept of organizational design in that they are seen as mature organizations (ones that have been around for two decades or more) and have their roots mainly in classical organization theory characterized by principles of scientific management. Based on these principles, schools are organizations that are structured to reflect economies of scale and standardization of work.

Barrett (1995) described a social constructionist view of organizations as meaning that the process of organizing involves the construction, maintenance, and destruction of meaning among organizational members, and where relating is the means that makes meaning. The value of having people organized for the purpose of any given outcome can be seen in school districts, communities, or even familial units. Over time, the stability that is created by the organization itself establishes the environment, perpetuates the culture, and provides an opportunity for a systematic system for the production of products or services.

Organizational culture

After the process of organizing people for a given purpose has been somewhat achieved, the culture of the organization has to be understood. The literature again is

abundant in this area and is representative of the work of Jones (2003), Schein (1999), and Chung (1981). Schein wrote that culture is the property of a group and that whenever there are enough common experiences, a culture begins to form. Chung (1981) described the culture of an organization in terms of the word *climate*. The climate is composed of members' perceptions of various group dimensions, including task structure, individual autonomy, managerial support, trust and openness, among others. Jones (1997) stated that organizational culture is a shared sense of values and accepted actions that control the members' interactions with one another, and with outside stakeholders as well. Louis cited Schein (1992), which is indicative of Peterson and Deal (1991) and Goldhaber, (1993) in defining culture as a pattern of basic assumptions that the group learns as it solves problems of external and internal origins. The solutions worked well enough to be considered valid and be taught to new members. This concept will be discussed later in reference to modernistic thought.

The literature suggests a strong link between the culture of an educational institution and its ability to produce the desired outcomes, which is as prevalent as the link in business (Elsmore, 2001; Schon (1991); Sergiovanni, 1992). As educators work in schools, the environment is affected by the culture provided by the organization. School administrators, while perhaps having little impact on individualism within the district have the capability to have an enormous effect on the culture in which these individualized relationships take place. Organizational culture is based on relatively enduring values embodied in organizational norms, rules, standard operating procedures, and goals (Jones, 1997). Perhaps the most succinct definition of this concept is Deal and Kennedy's (1982) definition of culture as "the way we do things 'round here" (p. 4).

The culture of an organization is all the beliefs, feelings, behaviors, and symbols that are characteristic of the organization. More specifically, organizational culture is defined as the shared philosophies, ideologies, beliefs, feelings, assumptions, expectations, attitudes, norms, and values (Lunenberg, 1996). Culture develops during the course of social interaction. In organizations there are many different and competing value systems that create a range of organizational realities and subcultures, rather than a uniform corporate culture. Culture is shaped by many factors including the societal culture in which an organization resides, its technologies, markets and competition, and the personality of its founding fathers (Holbeche, 2006).

Wheatley (1999) observed the following as applied to organizational culture. She referred to the organization's culture as a *field*. These fields cannot be seen physically but their influence on behavior is a mirror to the culture. In rural schools for example, the field is the traditional expectations for instruction and supervision. To learn what is in the field or organization, look at what the people are doing. They have picked up the messages concerning expectations, figured out what is truly valued, and then shaped their behavior accordingly. When organizational space is filled with conflicting messages, the invisible lack of clarity becomes as visible as troubling behaviors. Because there is no agreement or even consensus, there are more arguments, more competition and more power plays. People say one thing and mean another. Nobody trusts anybody. The organization changes direction and priorities frequently and can't find its way. Such is the case in observing an organization with less-than-positive relational aspects. Communication is at a minimum, and according to behavior, effectiveness will be affected.

Conversely, Wheatley (1999) posited that within a positive organization, the field is strong in its congruence with positive aspects across the organization. This positive field, or culture, assured the outcome of outstanding relationships with its customers. Wheatley wrote "For several years now, leaders have been encouraged to consider the impact of non-material forces in organizations – culture [being one of them. Culture] describes a quality of organizational life that can be observed in behavior" (p. 54). Culture then is a communicative aspect of organizations not associated directly with traditional or modernist evaluation concerns such as profit loss statements and the like. However, organizational culture has a direct relationship to the field of relational operations and therefore eventually, the overall effectiveness of the business of the group.

Culture and organizational behavior

Beliefs and expectations shared by the members of the organization produce norms that shape behavior. Behavior then takes the form and styles of actions that have proven successful in the past (Stewart, 1983). Providing the expectations for behavior, not only personal and corporate, but also toward the customer (parent, patron, or student) is the opportunity for the school manager to create a set of beliefs to help provide a successful environment. Creating successful patterns of production are a basis for this cultural environment. Specific behavior can be developed to help the organization reach its intended outcomes.

Culture then provides a sense of identity to employees supplying unwritten guidelines as to how to behave. Culture represents the collective programming of mind, which distinguishes the members of one organization from another (Holbeche, 2006). In the school business, successful academic endeavors, as well as athletic and aesthetic

strengths, and other positive student outcomes create a culture of flourishing and therefore a perception of success. Schein (1985) recapitulated this discussion stating: "Culture is manifested in three major ways- -through the language forms of its users; through their social, economic, political, and other behaviors; and through the artifacts they produce" (p. 6).

Rural school superintendents and culture.

There are many positive aspects of rural and small schools and their school culture. Tift and Ley (1990) noted the following elements that rural and small schools often have to offer: the absence of bureaucratic barriers, thus allowing more flexibility and quicker decision making; a sense of community and family interdependence with the school; the right size to give personal attention; a slower pace of living and working; raising children in a more controlled environment; and smaller classes. Along with these positive features, however, there are problems faced by superintendents of rural and small districts. Kennedy and Barker (1989) pointed out that teachers in these districts are more isolated from ongoing developments in education; teach a greater variety of courses, often without adequate staff development; often have outdated or inadequate supplies, and receive lower salaries. Successful rural school administrators must possess a variety of skills and abilities in order to appropriately meet the divergent needs of teachers, students, parents, and community members.

The superintendent of schools in a small town has the opportunity to be seen participating in the most mundane of physical tasks, from mowing the school yard, to handling flag duties, to unstopping toilets. These tasks have been part of the unwritten superintendent duties for years. The tasks have produced expectations that are very

traditional and have not kept pace with changing management styles or even job requirements. Rural superintendents are seen as those who know the business from the *bottom up*. In the urban areas, by contrast, the superintendent might be perceived as much more corporate and unapproachable. The superintendent's job in both rural and urban settings is highly complex and full of conflict, politics, and community input. The major difference between the two contexts, however, is that the rural superintendent may, in addition to the superintendent duties, also be teacher, counselor, building principal, bus driver, and the total central office staff. The typical rural superintendent wears many hats and answers to a multitude of different constituents on a daily basis (Chance, 1992).

The small school settings lend themselves to vertical relational aspects. Students interact with the superintendent every day just as they do with their teachers and peers. The superintendent deals with parents and community interests in all arenas. However, the small district places greater personal relational and communicative aspects on the superintendent's job. As cultures are communicative organizations, they are maintained by the interactive communication of all involved, not just management (Kowalski, 1999). The successful rural superintendent must be a competent manager and conserver of limited school and community resources while being an excellent human relations expert. She or he must focus on students and their well being, while also taking into consideration the larger, politically charged venue of the rural community and rural school district (Chance & Capps, 1992). The increased relational aspects of the rural superintendency provide challenges to handling situations involving change because of those closer relationships.

Modernism

Modernism is a term used to demonstrate philosophical ideas about how society should operate and the role of management in that society. This method of traditional management is evident in the resurgence of educational mandates such a the No Child Left Behind Act, where legislative action was taken not to provide a postmodern or progressive systems analysis to educational issues of today, but rather to provide a modernistic solution to be achieved by autocratic mandates (Owens, 2004). These ideas have materialized as deep systematic thinking in organizations. Whiteley (2007) stated that modernist philosophy typically includes the following beliefs:

a. There was one verifiable truth.
b. This truth was arrived at dispassionately and objectively
c. The methods of arriving at the truth should stand up to scientific scrutiny.
d. They should be reliable across contexts.
e. Concrete evidence should be presented to support the proof of things happening.
f. Ideally, a cause and effect chain of reasoning would lead to the true determination of fact or situation (pp. 45, 46).

Speaking to modernism within nations, Miller (2008) wrote that the concept of control and sovereignty itself relies on the thoughts of modernism. He posited that governments retain a role as the official authority overseeing "a relationship of *conformity* between words and things, between discourse and reality" (p. ix). This thought can be applied to the smaller government microcosms of state as well as local school governments. In the modernistic business as well as government viewpoint, roles

and positions are to be considered irrespective of who filled them Whiteley (2007). For example, in governmental organizations, the office of the president, or the position itself, is paramount to the operation of the system, not the relational aspects of the person holding the position.

Modernist lenses of perception are a reality in the construction and organization of successful schools. Owens (2004) spoke to modernist or structural thought stating,

> The pervasive assumption in Western cultures was that the world we live in must be characterized by some underlying patterns of logic, system and order. From that assumption arose the belief that these patterns could be discovered only by using systematic methods of study, generally called the scientific method. (p. 82)

This scientific method was applied to education curriculum as well as instruction. For many years, the structural view of Bloom's taxonomy categorized the scientific research that resulted in the manifestation of Bloom as the standard of instructional sequence. Bloom's *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* had an extraordinary impact on thinking and practice in both curriculum development and teaching methods (Owens, 2004). This use of scientific management in the classroom allowed for expediency of the teaching process. Schools realized a system that could be replicated. Bloom's applications to the aforementioned modernistic principles are: the one truth to instruction is identifiable, allowing for little subjectivity and variance. Applying this scientific method of discovery as a basis for logic and practice, schools and the industry of education became ingrained in logical, time proven, and traditional methods of management and leadership. Max Weber referred to this basis for discovery and eventual management as the formal rationality of bureaucracy. Ritzer (2008) pointed out:

> According to Weber formal rationality means that the search by people for the optimum means to a given end is shaped by rules, regulations, and larger social structures. After the development of formal rationality, they could use institutionalized rules to help them decide--or even dictate to them--what to do. (p.25)

Modernist view of the superintendency

From the time the position of superintendent was created to the first years of the twentieth century, the main focus of the local district superintendent was implementing state curricula and supervising teachers (Kowalski, 1999). These modernist, traditional ways of school management have led to perceptions of schools as being simply factories of educational outputs with the superintendents being reporters and managers but not leaders (Konnert, 1990). Speaking to scientific management and education, Dantley noted: "Management is seen as a rational way to sequence tasks so that predictable results occur" (English, 2005, p. 35). Most district functions are currently drawn from the managerial and bureaucratic domains: allocation and management of resources (money, materials, and personnel); collection and dissemination of information; monitoring evaluation and accountability; strategic planning; development of policies and regulations; coordination of departments, sites and programs (viewed as primarily as discrete components, all arrayed in boxes in a vertical aligned table of organization) (Lambert, 1995).

Kowalski (1999) quoted Glass (1992) who "asked a national sample of superintendents in all types of districts about the primary expectations that school boards held for them: being a general manager was ranked first, human relations skills were

ranked second, instructional leadership was ranked third, and knowledge of finance and budgets was ranked fourth" (p. 349). Kowalski (1999) found that regardless the size of the district, most formal job descriptions for superintendents are long and expansive and typically include a wide range of managerial duties, instructional leadership responsibilities, and analytical tasks. The public's perception or image of the job is in contrast to the reality of the assignment. Image is defined as "a public perception" (Webster, 1949, p. 650). Perception is the process by which people select, organize, interpret, retrieve, and respond to information from the world around them (Schermerhorn, 2005). "The perception or image of the public school is determined by the feelings the public has accumulated over time as a result of what they have seen and experienced" (Renihan & Renihan, 1984, p. 145).

That perception and image have been perpetuated into a modernistic narrative about traditional duties. Ritzer (2008) stated the following concerning a modernistic society that can be extrapolated to the school: "People rarely search for the best means to an end on their own, rather they rely on previously discovered and institutionalized means. Thus, when people start a new job, they are not expected to figure out for themselves how to do the work more efficiently. Instead they undergo training designed to teach them what has been discovered over time to be the most efficient way of doing their work" (p. 58).

What is expected of a superintendent through this lens is to expedite change of personnel (often extracurricular coaches) and to tend to the fiscal management of the district in a more strict, autocratic system of management. A popular formula for school reform concerning administrator expectations evolved during the 1980s and 1990s among

policy entrepreneurs and public officials who laid out experience tested truths drawn from business sources. These truths set clear organizational goals and high standards for everyone. They restructured operations so that managers decide what to do, and reward those who meet or exceed their goals. Those same managers shame or punish those who fail, the goal being to expand competition and choice in products and services (Cuban, 2004).

This modernistic approach to work constructs *mindsets* used by default to produce a vision of predictable expectation. *Mindset* is a word defined by Webster's (1997) as "a fixed attitude or state of mind" (p. 834). Communities as well as school leaders have mindsets they bring to the table to base their expressions of ideas. These mindsets are the result of modernist paradigms whereby past information is taken to be truth with little room being afforded to the reception of new ideas. Modernistic paradigms, in turn, create social, economic, as well as organizational, societies making change difficult. School administrators are inculcated in these paradigms by way of experience (status quo jobs with unspoken requests to keep their campuses and districts the same) and training in administrative classes that require little or no new thought to entrepreneurial school leadership

State and local expectations of superintendents

As superintendents approach their job of handling personnel, student discipline, and curriculum study and implementation, there are statutory requirements to the job. Traditional expectations for superintendents have been established by various regulatory bodies, statewide as well as local, perpetuating the modernistic basis for evaluation.

Shoho (2005) noted: "From its inception, the position of school administrator was designed to attract individuals who were willing to comply with a view of schooling that validated rather than challenged exiting norms" (p. 55). The basis for statutory requirements is cited in the Texas Education Code Chapter 21 (Appendix A). The statute was written in 1995 with the latest amendment in 2007 and lists the requirement for certification for professional educators. Derived from state expectations, local school boards have their own expectations from which to judge the performance of superintendents. These expectations are compiled from the state school board association, in this case the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB), with the purpose of providing guidance to the local trustees as to evaluating their superintendents. The legal and local documents of the TASB policies further state the requirements of the superintendent of schools from regulatory levels. The BJA legal policy (Appendix B) states the legal requirements in policy language while the BJA local policy (Appendix C) consists of standards constructed by the local district.

These standards are traditional in nature and heavily inculcated with a modernistic approach to supervision. Superintendents use this guide to fit their style to plan and implement their vision and specific programs to affect instruction, enhance academic success, and provide a positive perception for the community. The documents are representative of Whiteley's six modernist views as stated previously.

Community expectations of the superintendent

The regulations provide insight to the responsibilities of the superintendent from a legal basis. However, only a small part of the material addresses the work of the administrators in the community. Section 3 and specifically 3e through g of the local TASB policy speak to the official role of the superintendent in the community.

Modernistic aspects into community expectations are factors that superintendents must comprehend, and strategically deconstruct. Those expectations are posited by Shoho (2005): “School administrators were appointed as stewards of the communities in which they worked, charged with embodying and reinforcing the values of the power elites who hired them” (p. 55). The superintendent’s attitudes toward her or his community and sense of community in general are essential to his or her success and assimilation into the community on several levels. The attitude of the school’s leader will dictate the confidence the power base (power elites) of the community has in the ability of the superintendent and will affect the degree of success the superintendent will have in directing the school. Chalker (1999) argued that the fundamental political problem faced by rural school administrators is the "tension between the community's need for school leadership that can lead and be trusted, and the same community's desire to have its own will carried out by that leadership” (p. 248). That trust and confidence from the community allows the superintendent a sense of security to be able to lead and do business in a manner that reflects the individual’s comfortable, personal style of management. Scholars such as McCartney and Ramsey (1971) and Iannaccone and Lutz (1994) have made the connection between community power structures and local school boards (Kowalski, 1999). “Superintendents must be aware of community power structures early in their tenure. It is important to know how school issues might be perceived by the power structure and who to talk with about issues requiring community support” (Norton, 1996, p. 339). Superintendents of schools are considered to be persons of high motivation, education, and social skill and are seen to be representatives of the established status quo. They are tried in the elite and usually well-entrenched social

segments of the small communities to prove their proficiency in all types of social as well as business situations. In a rural district, the superintendent will frequently be the individual with the most formal education. So who would be expected to have the most knowledge about communication, human behavior, and group dynamics? If there is any hope for unity or effective governance, the person who has the most skills, presumably the superintendent, would build community support and intervene in conflict situations so that win-win situations are achieved (Czaja, 1997).

Superintendents who do not embrace the school division's relationship to local and state interests cannot hope to effectively lead their organizations (Johnson, 1996, cited in Czaja, 1997). The relationship to local interests, such as civic groups for example, builds a perception and attitude within the community about the superintendent. If the school administrator may be seen as physically aloof, this may cause the perception of his or her not wishing to be a part of the community. Accomplished superintendents know their community and the various groups representing it. They work to bring these differing voices together to create a unity of effort and a positive power base (Carter & Cunningham, 1997 cited in Czaja, 1997). The perception of the superintendent's job expectations in the community is important to the superintendent's understanding the expectations for success. Answering the question in the community about superintendent's perception and attitude comes only from the conscious interaction in the community by the superintendent. Perception becomes a variable to the reality of success.

Another variable to the success of a superintendent is the amount of time she or he takes or is given to produce the needed changes. The longevity of the superintendent

is important to establishing continuity of programs, relationships, and trust. Supporting longevity from the community's point of view Carter and Cunningham (1997) wrote: "Our nation's school districts must have more stable leadership, as do most of our private institutions; we need greater continuity at the top of the school district organization to sustain and nurture the continuous improvement process" (p. 242).

The literature stresses that one needs to understand the modernistic social basis for current school performance, understand community standards, and understand the perceived need for economic development. In other words, what is important to the superintendent may or may not be important to her or his community. Thompson noted: that superintendents, when understanding their boards and communities, must realize that: "It's their school, their kids, and their money" (Lamar University Superintendent Academy, 2006). When dealing with the final decision for change and action, if a common goal can be articulated, achieving it is still another matter for these questions still remain. What has constructed this group of people into a community? What maintains the structure of that construction? The answers to those questions determine the modernistic mindset of the community.

Postmodernism

Throughout the industrial era in this country, *modernism* and *autocratic structure* within organizations were the prevalent ideologies of the day. Political causes, struggles for equality, and industrial development were grounded in modernistic thought (Maxcy, 1994). Modernism served as the scientifically supported means of organizational

construction and bureaucratic maintenance. Postmodernism within organizational development represents not so much as a break from the autocratic past, but more of a deconstruction of traditional mindsets through discourse (Maxcy, 1994). Wallace (1998) said concerning postmodern management: “The flexible organization, one that can respond quickly and effectively to shocks and surprises, demands a completely different style of management. The old top-down command and control will not work here because it takes too long” (p. 94). By the time top management has studied the problem, made a decision on the best clinical solution, written out the instructions for various job assignments, and held meetings to implement the action plan, it may be too late to effectively execute a plan on the front line of contact. Postmodern, consensual, strategic planning cuts out most chances for variable interpretations of interactions simply by limiting the number of managerial interactions.

Table 1

Modernist and Postmodernist Perspectives

Modernist Perspective	Postmodernist Perspective
It is possible to identify and implement the best way to organize in any given activity	There is no right way of organizing human activity
It is possible to reduce variation then that it is to be welcome in the interests of efficiency	Differences in perspectives and ways of doing things are inevitable and welcome
It is possible to ascertain clear indisputable facts of historical events	There is no definitive history of anything. All history is composed of stories we tell each other to make sense of our experience in the world.
We have a fixed identity, which is our real selves and can be known as such	We construct ourselves through a multitude of stories told by us and by others
Knowledge can be found out through rational research and is independent of any view people might hold about it.	Knowledge is created by conversations between us all.

Postmodernism and the Superintendency

The superintendent must be cognizant of the stage he or she is on to maximize opportunities to perform in all situations. However, that trust and chance to perform in such opportunistic settings requires not only a clear vision of successful outcomes for the district, but also the ability to grasp and understand the historical basis for the present. Postmodernism posits that there exists no reality outside of a person's culture and

experience (English, 2008). That being the case, superintendents have the distinct challenge of leading school districts through areas of improvement that have no basis of reality to the community. Kowalski (1999) observed that the superintendency has evolved from custodial leadership to democratic leadership. This democratic leadership is indicative of the postmodern standard of management. The role of superintendent as democratic leader is anchored in political realities. The definition of *postmodernism*, as asserted by English (2003), is the deconstruction of established theories and practices of the modernist thought process. His process depends on language and understanding the six challenges to modernism and their educational leadership ramifications which are:

Table 2

Correlations of English's challenges and administrative ramifications

English's Challenges to Modernism	Educational Leadership Ramifications
The challenge to tradition.	The act of questioning power bases in rural communities is essential for affecting change, but also dangerous.
The challenge of open debate as opposed to guided debate	Facilitating open debate to affect organizational decisions
The challenge of questioning the "center."	Administrator recognition of the presence of modernistic parameters designed to maintain the status quo
The challenge of the "knowledge base."	Administrative recognition of traditional metanaritives as impediments to be understood, deconstructed and rebuilt in a pertinent problem-solving plan

Whitely (2007) continued the discussion of deconstruction, stating that sometimes it is in the form of an outright rejection of the issue in question where the aim is to deconstruct (in other words tear apart to reveal contradictions) modernist methodologies, and sometimes it is a plea for recognition of the consequences of modernism. This translates to a focus on the *use* of power, not just the *abuse* of power for which postmodernism is usually known. The positive use of individual and collective power assembled for communal change integrates postmodern influences. Wallace (1998) explained the difference between modernist and postmodernist approaches in this way:

the modernistic is being managed in a linear fashion from the rigid, bureaucratic, top down style where the decision making power is centered, whereas the postmodern organization must allow for flexibility to encourage participation from all involved. For Appreciative Inquiry, the theory that forms the spine of this research, the focus is on the use of power in different, more progressive and consensual ways than what exists in modernist thought. Bushe (1998) explained: "Rather than seeing language as a passive purveyor of meaning between people, postmodernists see language as an active agent in the creation of meaning. As we talk to each other, we are constructing the world we see and think about, and as we change how we talk, we are changing that world. From this perspective, theory, especially theory that is encoded in popular words or images, is a powerful force in shaping social organization because we *see what we believe*. Creating new and better theories/ideas/images is, therefore, a powerful way of changing organizations" (p. 3). Appreciative inquiry allows for the articulation of a common language as the basis of transforming diversified mindsets towards a common vision.

Only four of English's challenges are germane to this study and are further elaborated upon. Concerning the challenge to tradition, I*f we always do what we have always done, we will get the same result* is a popular cry from management gurus calling for the change in mindsets. That statement in itself is a challenge to traditional means of management based on scientific models for "Postmodernism challenges traditional notions of power and hierarchy" (Shoho, 2005, p. 56). Power and hierarchy are the results of bureaucratic construction that emerges as specialization and expertise, which are perceived as essential. Bureaucratic construction reflects schools and even management of rural schooling organizations. The postmodernist movement threatens

the tradition of educational administration. Administrators, being immersed in the local expectations of their districts, have the capability to spend years accepting their role as one of custodial action designed to maintain the place of their institution in the larger setting of the community. The administrator has, at this point in his or her career, usually figured out the path of least resistance, maintaining a relationship of traditional role playing in public, while personally, she or he may be looking to coast out to retirement. Upsetting the status quo with progressive and diversified thought is a major challenge to the modernist traditions of the community. The challenge of open debate as opposed to guided debate posits that open debate implies a single or perhaps many injections of ideas to strengthen the decision needed. An open debate is one in which the players do not decide prior to the debate what is the center, or the modern train of thought. The open exchange respects all the players while the closed or rational debate is concerned for respecting the debate process itself. The lack of the attempt to provide stability or recentering is one of the conflicts between modernism and postmodernism (English 2003)

The challenge of questioning the center is the third issue. The term *center* implies an area that is neither hot nor cold, neither east or west, and really neither truth nor untruth. English (2003) wrote, "A center requires margins" (p. 144), creating a postmodern contradiction to the categorization of thought. The fact that the center can be moved implies a weakness of the establishment and a loss of control. To question the "center" threatens the comfortability of the power base and is painful for both parties. But the concept has implications for leadership as it implies an insecurity of school

administrators (center) and not the challenges of students, parents, and teachers (English, 2003).

The challenge of the "knowledge base" is the final challenge discussed here. If the knowledge base is a collection of stories that by the simple repeating of themselves somehow become "science" then the acceptance of those metanarratives is not acceptable to aggressive and intuitive scholars. English (2003) called the knowledge base of any discipline "Perhaps the most privileged trophy of all" (p. 8). He defined the knowledge base as the "territory that has been determined to be stable, fundamental and enduring" (p. 8). Blind modernists are content to leave those standards unquestioned while the postmodernist is willing to not be lazy, to take a risk, and challenge the knowledge base.

Knowledge bases are usually synonymous with power bases in small communities. School administrators are not anxious to confront the modernist thoughts of these individuals and groups because of employment issues. But if the knowledge base represented by the power base is interfering with progressive approaches to educational change in the community, superintendents must be successful in their approaches to organizational change to not only be successful with the enlightenment but to also maintain their employment.

Organizational Change

The literature is exhaustive on the topic of organizational change. The majority of the publications studied were consistent with Cawsey and Deszka (2008); Stewart, (1983); and Bartlett, (1973). Stewart (1983) summarized this way: "An organization's

culture and climate, and its structure, technology, and environment enter to shape the outcome of change efforts" (p. 193). The literature ascribed to the concept of understanding the behavioral aspects of all concerned as the main impetus to the success of change. Jones (1997) defined organization change as a process by which organizations move from their present state to some desired future state to increase their effectiveness. The goal of planned organizational change is to find new or improved ways of using resources and capabilities in order to increase an organizations ability to create, value, and improve the return to its stakeholders. Cawsey and Deszca (2008) asserted that the act of planned change involved the alteration of components such as visions and goals, structure, technology or systems processes, and even the people themselves.

Van de Ven and Poole (1995) conducted a computerized literature search across disciplines and turned up over one million articles, reviewed about 200,000 titles, and read about 200 of the articles. They identified 20 different theories of development and change and clustered them into four main change theories that managers incorporate. These models are:

a. life cycle,

b. evolutionary,

c. debate synthesis,

d. goal setting.

The lifecycle theory states that an organization "follows a single sequence of stages or phases, which is cumulative (characteristics acquired in earlier stages are retained in the later stages) and conjunctive (the stages are related such that they derive from a common underlying process)" (p. 515). Based on biological approaches to cycles,

the lifestyle aspect reflects an understanding that change is a natural process and takes place in linear steps that are not within the control of the organization. In other words, change happens (Holbeche, 2006). The evolutionary aspect is based on Darwinian theory of survival suggesting natural selection and the survival of the fittest is in play. According to Burke (2002) more than 95% of organizational change is evolutionary. Venture capitalists operate with this Darwinian approach in mind. They realize that several projects may be invested in, and the strongest concepts and projects will survive. The debate synthesis model suggest that a conflict (debate) will arise from time to time forcing a resolution (synthesis) to change the organization until another conflict arises. Goal setting change involves indentifying gaps that separate the organization from its optimum efficiency. Setting goals and taking action to reduce those gaps identified produce an additional set of gaps requiring a new set of goals and the process in ongoing.

Organizational change is not an instant happening. Organizational change is, in fact a process whereby behavior patterns are adjusted over time, (Dalton, 1978; French, 1969; O'Toole, 1979). We all have ideas of how our organization works. For some the model says it all. It can be written and discussed. However many managers' views of the functioning of their organizations produce a scene influenced by their own personal experiences. The importance of deep understanding of the organization's structure is not the question. The question is the objectivity the manager can bring to the situation and her or his expertise as a change agent. Sometimes the person's knowledge is so personal it is difficult to communicate and even more difficult to challenge in a rational way. In effect, the modernistic outlook of the manager may place the organizational change

process at risk. Because of this possible pitfall, a strategic, systematic approach to change is warranted.

Change and culture

The resistance of the culture to change is an obstacle for the manager. Deal and Kennedy (1998) reported: "The myth that culture resists change is deeply embedded in the psyche of many managers. Anytime problems arise in implementing some new initiative, the knee jerk reaction is to blame everything on the culture. Since the problem cannot be the manager or the brilliant initiative, what better whipping boy than the culture" (p. 35). Deal and Kennedy (1998) continue writing about cultural change: Cultures are the living, breathing manifestations of deeply held desires of people to do what is right. Cultures thrive on change just as much as they champion tradition and are always adapting to the change that takes place around them. Failure to adapt would be threatening and would be seen as a sign that the culture was falling behind. The reasons cultures resist is because of the perceived danger to long standing core values or widely accepted rituals. According to Zander (1950), the main resistance factor is the nature of the change not being made clear to all the people who are going to be affected by the change. Changing an organizational culture requires distinct, strategic planning. Whatever the change model selected, successful change will take place only with persistence and a sense of security from the change agent. People, especially corporate boards as well as boards of trustees in the school business, want change to take place in a quick manner. New, perfect solutions and fads are being offered on a consistent basis allowing for the economic gain of those who proffer such panaceas. They are concerned with the outcome and remediation of change and not the process itself (Klein, 2006).

Patience is usually not a consideration. Just the desired result is expected with little thought to the process.

Change in the rural school district

Decisionmaking and change processes, in all school districts, urban and rural, are politically based, at least to some degree. Dantley (2005) noted: "Schools have become the purveyors of the culture that those who wield political and economic power deem legitimate" (p. 40). Speaking to superintendents and politics, Johnson (1996) stated: "They must build coalitions, negotiate agreements, and force concessions when necessary, all without hitting political landmines that may cost them ground" (p. 153). Rural school leaders need to understand the infusion and intrusion of politics into the educational decision (Chalker, 1999). Rural school politics, according to Chalker (1999), are unique for at least three reasons: First, rural areas and small towns have constituencies that are probably more open and more knowledgeable about local politics than their more cosmopolitan neighbors in suburban or urban America. Second, rural politics operate from a smaller population base where almost every political player is known in the community. And third, rural politics focus more on local issues than state or national issues. Rural settings provide challenges because inasmuch as the population is scattered, common ground for changing status is relatively easy to attain. The superintendent must convey that well thought-out change is what is needed, not hasty action.

Change agents

The variable of the change is the change agent itself, the manager of the organization. If the manager has a high ego, predictability of the process of change is

likely to be evident. The need for power and achievement drives the high ego manager to action to close perceived gaps in effectiveness. Life cycle changes exhibit an element of fatalism such as what will happen will happen. This does not fit easily with an active approach to change (Cawsey, 2007). Robbins and Langton (2003) analyzed change leaders' actions. These include change in mission or purpose, which involves the realignment of the organization within its environment; alterations in the organization's culture and beliefs include the redesign of formal systems, usually meaning the restructuring of relational reports; technology changes are made to affect efficiency; changes in the structure of assignments; and changing people, whereby shifting attitudes, perspectives and also by adding or removing key people from the organization.

Mechanisms for change

Choosing how to change an organization is an important decision. Organizations learn what works and what does not. Policies, rules, and procedures are set by organizations to provide parameters for decisions that capitalize on success. Organizations also develop patterned responses (habits), assumptions, and expectations that affect the way they perceive the world (Sull, 2002). This assumption is a modernist approach to change analysis. The assumptions and beliefs form a strong element of resistance, which encourages organizations and the people in them to maintain the status quo regardless of feedback or other input that may suggest a different way of approaching management. The timing for any change is crucial.

Charles Handy (1994) described the "sigmoid curve" that outlines the point in an organization's life where change would be the most advantageous. The curve increases during the early stage of development, flattens out at maturity, and then shifts into decline

over time. Choosing the right time for organizational change offers the opportunity for not only improvement but also possibly even survival. An example of this concept is the technology industry and the VCR. As the technology was developed, investors and consumers supported the new product, but competitors and advancing technology led to the flattening of the curve. As the DVD entered the market, the organizational life for VCR production reflected either a change toward further innovation or a status quo resignation to complacency and irrelevance. Another example is described by Ritzer (2008), where he wrote concerning cooking. He spoke to the hunting and gathering days for food procurement on an as needed basis, followed by the cookbook that streamlined preparation even to the point of mass production and consistency; then came the freezer allowing for food storage for all facets of society. The open fire used for food preparation has evolved into the oven that has been enhanced by microwave technology. The role of the superintendent of schools in the rural setting has reflected this concept. As the modernist tendencies of the reliance on policy and conformism has risen to create tradition, new postmodern expectations of curricular mandates, societal needs, and funding challenges have forced the position to move toward the center to maintain validity.

The cost of change is real and the benefits are uncertain. By holding off looking at needed change, the status quo will maintain the organization and also efficiency. But if conditions change and the organization fails to adjust, lack of action will force change to survive or die. By the time the system reaches point A, the need for change is obvious, but the reality of the change may be too much to support the trauma to the organization. However the timing of the action is crucial. Change should occur when things are going

well as a part of the general health maintenance of the organization. The tendency of people to follow routines without thinking and those tendencies perpetuating the structure and culture of the organization are formidable obstacles to change. As these obstacles are realized, the organization must choose between either evolutionary or revolutionary change. Organizations that pursue revolutionary change adopt a top down, modernistic, change strategy (Jones, 1997).

Problemsolving paradigms

Organizational change in systems is traditionally or modernistically approached through a top down management strategy designed to effectively alleviate the problem, for the utmost reason itself, timeliness. "The traditional approach to change is to look for the problem, do a diagnosis, and find a solution. The primary focus is on what is wrong or broken; since we look for problems, we find them. By paying attention to problems, we emphasize and amplify them," (Hammond, 1998, pp. 6-7).

Studying problems to produce the desired change is essential for the successful outcome of the organization's mission. However the traditional style of having little or no input from the people closest to the problem has produced the desired results in the short term, but longevity of the solution is usually not considered. This style of organizational study and change is not exclusive to any type of industry. Examples include the medical community, which focuses on illness and its treatment, or a classroom where a teacher identifies areas of weakness for remediation, or the penal system where the procurement or revenue is focused on the negative aspect of punishment rather than the more positive possibility of rehabilitation. Highly paid

consultants are called into these *broken* organizational systems to conduct needs assessments, identify problems, remediate, and finally apply interventions. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation suggests a problem-based approach, indicating a negative outcome as opposed to articulating a desire to have all children learning at higher levels (Daly, 2007). Another term for this tactic for indentifying and analyzing problems is called *deficit-based theory*. Deficit-based models require leadership to facilitate identification, documentation, and intervention around past failures in an effort to move the system to higher productivity. Actors in this system are required to examine their own beliefs and practices in an effort to create dissonance that is perceived as necessary to promote growth. Education incorporates strategic planning often relying on a deficit-based approach to problem solving. Educators are told to analyze problems rather than to focus on what works and how to amplify it (McKenzie, 2003).

David Cooperrider spoke to an article by John Kotter in the *Harvard Business Review* on the subject of successful change. In an interview with D. Greelman, Kotter stated: "He argues in the same old conventional way using a deficit-based theory. He actually argues that leaders of change first have to create a *flaming platform*. They have to talk about how things are falling apart and create such a fear-based sense of urgency that people will be open to change. In other words, we start change by emphasizing the deficient and the broken. In fact, he goes so far as to praise times when CEOs have actually made up the flaming platform by fudging the financial data to make people feel that the company is going under. He holds that up as a standard and I can't believe it!" This type of organizational change strategy reflects a modernist approach whereby the perceived situation drives the change, not the people involved. Cooperrider, credited

with the development of the consensual change technique of appreciative inquiry, attempts to apply a postmodern view of change.

There exists an ever-tempting course to take to receive the latest decisionmaking and change theory as a tool rather than a complete system or strategy for success. Attitudes toward societal as well as school change can be instigated simply as a silver bullet, but really not bought into by the organization. Powley, Fry, Barrett, and Bright (2004) wrote that there is no question that we are in the participative era of management and leadership. But at the strategic level, we seem equally rooted in the hierarchical mode of decision-making and action taking. At best, we incorporate small groups or teams of senior managers to strive for consensus in order to deliver recommendations to the CEO or other positional leaders atop the traditional pyramidal structure.

Postmodern efforts require the same strategic study of the problem, but with different diagnostic input to reach the desired prescription. That consensual diagnosis through discourse is crucial for the postmodern resolution. Discourse is not well accepted in the local education agency's world because of tradition; a tradition that sets schools, especially local schools as the authority in communities as to organizational structures. Administrators enjoy the hierarchy of position and may shun questions pertaining to the management system within the district, frequently treating them as insignificant enough to realize, much less address.

> Discourse theory is concerned about who is empowered to speak and the power relations that exist in the act of defining what discourse is and what it is not. Discourse theory envisions the points of discussion as sites of contestation or

> struggle where different groups attempt to monopolize and promote their interests in formal and informal ways. (English, 2003, p. 176)

However, the comment concerning discourse from English may not be understood by the educational administrator to be present in a given community. Postmodernism has entered the discourse in that sense, as an ironic and clandestine issue of offering different standards in a discipline steeped in communicative freedom. The sense of the questioning of metanarratives and the old guard modernists is on the rise as standards and expectations rise, the results are disseminated, and communities realize the outcome of the perception of their school on their lifestyle and their communal economic health.

Comparisons of Modern and Postmodern Change Techniques

Modern Change Technique

Countless change models have been established to visually show change techniques as well as theory. Examples from the 20th century to the present representing modern traits include: Taylor's Scientific Management, The Hawthorne Studies, and Kurt Lewin's three phase model. Taylor saw organizations as machines with removable, repairable parts. Informative aspects of the organization were simply part of the machine designed to carry out a specific, repetitive task. Ritzer (2008) wrote that Frederick Taylor believed that the most important part of industrial production output was not the employee, but rather, the organization that would plan, oversee, and control their work. Management was concerned with the cause of actions and the effect of that action on production. The Hawthorne Studies incorporated lighting in a manufacturing situation. As the lighting was increased, workers attitudes improved and production increased. Roethlisberger (1980) posited that the change itself was not as important as the effect of

the change to the significance of the workers' environment and that the reason for and meaning of the change was most significant. The studies provided the stimulus for discussion on group dynamics in the work context (Burke, 2002). Kurt Lewin's three phase model for change applies to all levels of individual as well of group change. (Spector, 2007). This concept is commonly adopted as Lewin's understanding of Unfreezing, Moving, and Refreezing. Unfreezing activities normally involve group activities designed to confront existing group behavior. The moving phase is the phase in which, having established the need for change, action is taken to bring about the desired change. Following this, the refreezing stage represents an attempt to reinforce the new behavior desired to bring about the desired changes (Collins, 1998).

Postmodern Change Technique

Autopoiesis. The term *autopoisis* is derived from the Greek meaning self-production, or self-making. "Autopoises are life's fundamental process for creating and renewing itself" (Wheatley 1999, p. 20). The concept of autopoiesis reached the scientific arena through an article published in 1974 by Varela and Manturana. The main purpose of the development of autopoiesis was to study the concept of life forms. Varela and Manturana moved away from what was the emerging trend in molecular biology, which sought a solution in DNA and its programming code, as well as population geneticists, who looked at evolution, with its properties of reproduction, adaption, and selection. Varela (1974) stated:

> "We assert that reproduction and evolution are not constitutive features of the living organization and that the properties of a unity cannot be accounted for only through accounting for the properties of its components. In contrast, we claim

> that the living organization can only be characterized unambiguously by specifying the network of interaction of components which constitute a living system as a whole, that is, as a "unity." We also claim that all biological phenomenology, including reproduction and evolution, is secondary to the establishment of this unitary organization" (p. 187).

Wallace (1998) asserted: "Self organization is not just a biological concept. As an aspect of autopoiesis, it clearly applies to human organizations" (p. 40). The autopoietic organization requires a great deal of patience and perceptual work to allow it to function. Change is never random; the system will not take off in bizarre new directions. Paradoxically, it is the system's need to maintain itself that may lead it to become something new and different. A living system changes in order to preserve itself (Wheatley, 1999). The viability and resiliency of a self-organizing system comes from its great capacity to adapt as needed, to create structures that fit the moment. Neither form nor function alone dictates how the system is organized. Instead, they are *process structures*, reorganizing into different forms in order to maintain their identity. The system may maintain itself in its present form or evolve to a new order, depending on what is required. It is not locked into any one structure; it is capable of organizing into whatever form it determines best suits the present situation (Wheatley, 1999).

While a self-organizing system's openness to disequilibrium might seem to make it too unpredictable, even temperamental, this is not the case. Its stability comes from a deepening center, a clarity about who it is, what it needs, what is required to survive in its environment. Self-organizing systems are never passive, hapless victims, forced to react to their environments. As the system matures and develops self-knowledge, it becomes

more adept at working with its environment. It uses available resources more effectively, sustaining and strengthening itself. It gradually develops a stability that then helps shelter it from many of the demands from the environment. This stability enables it to continue to develop in ways of its own choosing, not as a fearful reactant (Wheatley, 1999).

Key Elements of Autopoiesis

The concept of autopoiesis is applied to organizations in the following manner:

1. Autopoietic organizations are open organizations. "These systems are called "open" because they have the ability to continuously import energy from the environment and to export entropy" (Wheatley, 1999, p. 78). Information is allowed to enter the organization, be gleaned as to relevance, and then be applied as deemed appropriate.

No one and no one opinion are more important than any other. "An organization doesn't look for information that makes it feel good, that verifies its past and validates its present. It is deliberately looking for information that might threaten its stability, knock it off balance, and open it to growth" (Wheately, 1999, p. 83). Organizations that are not willing to receive new and sometimes irrelevant information will eventually use up the information they have, dissipate, and die. There are no intellectual gatekeepers.

2. Autopoietic organizations are self referencing: "when the environment shifts and the system notices that it needs to change, it always changes in a way that it remains consistent with itself" (Wheatley, 1999, p. 85). Open communication across the organization operating within a loose sense of protocol will enhance the ability to change, and the change itself, to be communicated. "Organizational self

> renewal postulates that effective change cannot be imposed on a school: rather, it seeks to develop an internal capacity for continuous problem solving. The process for renewal include the increased capacity to (a) sense and identify emerging problems, (b) establish goals, objectives and priorities, (c) generate valid alternative solutions, and (d) implement the selected alternative" (Owens, 2004 p. 234). The increased capacity of the organization is apparent on a quantum level as more and more ideas are allowed to be put forth resulting in multilevel thought processes capable of generating countless scenarios. These scenarios can then be applied to the large and small problems within the dilemma.

Self-reference is the key to facilitating orderly change in the midst of turbulent environments. In organizations, just as with individuals, a clear sense of identity—the lens of values, traditions, history, dreams, experience, competencies, culture—is the only route to achieving independence from the environment. When the environment seems to demand a response, there is a means to interpret that demand. This prevents the vacillations, the constant reorganizations, and the frantic search for new customers and new ventures that continue to destroy so many businesses (Wheatley, 1999).

The autopoietic organization is stable over time**.** "The total system achieves stability by supporting change within itself" (Wheatley, 1999, p. 86). As the change is institutionalized, the organization maintains stability, longevity, and validity because of its adaptability. School districts and communities are inherently long term organizations, and autopoiesis exists in all of them to a certain extent. Physical and fiscal needs force adaptation within these types of organizations on a frequent basis. Effective self-organization is supported by two critical elements: a clear sense of identity, and freedom.

In organizations, if people are free to make their own decisions, guided by a clear organizational identity for them to reference, the whole system develops greater coherence and strength. The organization is less controlling, but more orderly.

Appreciative Inquiry Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is emerging in the organization development literature and practice as a powerful and lasting approach to transformation in human systems such as families, organizations, communities, and societies. AI is distinctly different from the common problem-solving approach to management. It is the antithesis of human-deficit thinking. Deficit-based change approaches reinforce hierarchy, erode community, and instill a sense of self-enfeeblement (Whitney & Cooperrider, 1996). Appreciative Inquiry can cause movement toward greater equality and less hierarchy. It does not look back at what caused a dilemma as does deficit based problem solving, it dreams forward to the possibilities, giving all involved a voice. AI is a transformational organization change process. Ricketts and Willis (2001) wrote that individuals experiencing AI inspire others to leverage their most powerful and collective stories in order to dream and design a new affirmative future. In the process of truly listening to each others' hopes and dreams, people create community—they discover affinity, build relationships, and develop common language.

McKenzie (2003), writing in the *American School Board Journal* stated: "Appreciative Inquiry addresses a system's needs but finds solutions in past successes. The model energizes a community, rather than overwhelming it with ineffective, unproven approaches" (p. 38). Barrett and Fry (2002) described AI as a type of study that selectively tries to locate, highlight, and illuminate what are referred to as the life-giving properties of any organization or human system (p. 6). Watkins (2001) asserted that

"Appreciative Inquiry is a collaborative and highly participative system wide approach to seeking, identifying and enhancing the 'life giving forces' that are present when a system is performing optimally in human economic, and organizational terms" (p. 14). The management theory of Appreciative Inquiry focuses on discovering and valuing the life-giving properties through interviews and storytelling to reveal the best of the past and set the stage for an effective visualization of what could be. Appreciative Inquiry approaches change from a holistic framework and is based on the belief that human systems are made and imagined by those who live and work within them. Appreciative Inquiry, or AI, leads systems to move toward the generative and creative images that reside in their most positive core such as their values, visions, achievements, and best practices (Watkins 2001). AI is a mindset, a philosophy and an approach to conducting an inquiry of almost any sort on an organizational system.

History

In the middle to late eighties, David Cooperrider, a professor at Case Western University in Ohio, identified Appreciative Inquiry as a means for organizational study and change. The foundation of Appreciative Inquiry is in postmodernism, sociorationalism and social constructionism. The work of Burr (1995), Gergen (1994), (1999a) posited a view of reality as socially constructed, continually evolving. Social constructionism puts forth the view that there is not one objective reality that can be universally discovered and known. Reality is historically and culturally specific and socially constructed through language and social process. Our knowledge of the world, the way in which we experience it and understand it, our version of the "truth," all derive from our daily social interactions (Burr, 1995). According to Garfinkel (2006) the

individual actor is a strong component of social construction as they negotiate the reality within an organization. He asserts that even though individuality is sometimes institutionally constrained, it still has credence when applied to the constructed reality of the total organization. *Social process* is expanded by Newton (2007) emphasizing the importance of perceived social classifications in understanding social constructionism. Those perceived classifications cause language to be adjusted, allowing for the reality of that social construct.

A major facet of social constructionism is the power of language. Watkins (2001) stated that social constructionism is the creation of our own perception of the world as identified by the specific language we apply to describe the circumstances we experience. Relating individual and collective recollections of events and history happens in communication, in language, and thus discourse, or conversation, and is the center of meaning making. Appreciative Inquiry incorporates language in positive manners designed to propel change by way of common language, a sensemaking mechanism that can be expanded. The sense is generated by words used to construct sentences; then into conversations to articulate convey experience. Words are the basis for stakeholders to understand the common language constructed of common experiences (Weick, 1995). As language is conveyed across the arena of change in a methodical and comprehensive manner, meaning is defined and enhanced.

Components

Cooperrider defines the components of the concept as: **"**Ap-pre' ci-ate, v., 1. valuing; the act of recognizing the best in people or the world around us; affirming past

and present strengths, successes, and potentials; to perceive those things that give life (health, vitality, excellence) to living systems 2. to increase in value, e.g. the economy has appreciated in value. Synonyms: valuing, prizing, esteeming, and honoring." Cooperrider goes on to describe the term *inquire* as: **"**In-quire' (kwir), v., 1. the act of exploration and discovery. 2. To ask questions; to be open to seeing new potentials and possibilities. Synonyms: discovery, search, and systematic exploration, study" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 7). Watkins defined *inquiry* as "the process of seeking to understand through asking questions." Appreciative Inquiry is the search through cooperative methods for the best in people, organizations, and the holistic environment in which they function. and involves methodical discovery of what components give an organization 'life' when it is most successful in economic, ecological, and most especially human terms" (Watkins 2001).

Fundamental Premise

A fundamental premise of AI is the power of positive image. Organizations, like plants, are heliotropic meaning that as plants grow in the direction of light, so do organizations move in the direction of what gives them life and energy. Cooperrider described the concept in terms of a movie projector in that as human systems project their expectations for outcomes ahead of themselves, the future itself becomes a component in the present reality (Cooperrider, 1990). Remembering and recounting peak times and best experiences, and relating those stories in great detail brings the positive experiences of the past powerfully forth into the present for both the teller and the listener.

AI involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to heighten positive potential. Cooperrider argues that not only do we see what

we expect to see, but we also *create* what we expect to see by the mere act of looking for it. And, thus, the kinds of questions we ask in an inquiry will determine what we find. AI, with its social constructionistic underpinnings, sees organizations as mysteries to be embraced rather than problems to be solved. It mobilizes inquiry through crafting an "unconditional positive question" often involving hundreds or sometimes thousands of people" (Cooperrider & Whitney 2005, p. 21). In other words, the basis for posing the questions to precipitate the change is as important as the question itself. As questions were asked to employees about the positive aspects of the organization, the more the employees were able to participate in the creation of positive change (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

Research on AI

The body of quantitative, empirical research on the impacts of AI is sparse; however, ample qualitative and case-study research exists that documents the positive and transformative impact of AI processes both on individual participants and on the systems of which they are a part. For example, one of the case studies concerning schools is the Little Flower and Northeast Catholic Schools in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Buskirk (2002) reported in Fry (2002) that these schools were in disarray because of funding (Little Flower) and violence (Northeast). A faculty team from La Salle University was assembled to replicate the study *Catholic Schools and the Common Good* (Byrk et al., 1993). As the team was exposed to Appreciative Inquiry, they changed their focus. The campus team included parents, alumni, teachers, students, staff, and administrators. Calendars of assignments were assembled and in spite of the workload, the participants went about the process with an enthusiasm that surprised everyone. As

the members practiced the tenets of Appreciative Inquiry on each other, they soon realized that appreciating their community in a public arena revealed an unexpected depth of energy. Members were assigned questions designed for each school and more than 200 interviews were conducted and then transcribed. While not all the interviews went as planned or hoped for, many reported learning something positive about their school. The data were analyzed and the study was validated in a much more public as well as familial manner. At Northeast High School, disagreements were common and tensions were high. The project revealed that the school's handling of community and discipline was its most cherished characteristic. The realization of the consensus provided an opportunity for the reframing of disagreements, the identification of leadership strengths and weaknesses, and essentially energized the rejuvenation of the school. The Little Flower work revealed that the school's identity and hopes were based in relationships. That basis was identified and, language was applied to that concept.

Another case study by Caldwell and Robbins (1995) concerned a company called Group Health Cooperative. The company wished to improve the performance of the delivery system in the areas of cost, quality, and service. People within the organization were on their own timelines serving their own agendas. Goals for the improvement plans included building alignment around a common vision and building specific actions for improvement based on that vision. Intermediate process goals were building a vertical alignment within leadership; building a site-based effective employee involvement plan; and changing the inner dialogue. The first *discovery* and *dreaming* activities featured an event involving 300 employees representing all positions in the company. These participants were trained in the tenets of AI and each one interviewed five others over the

longevity of the study. By the end of five months, over 1100 had been interviewed in the company as to the strengths of the company. Many felt that the AI interview was invigorating and energizing. The data were coded and analyzed, for similarities as well as differences. The results of those data were sent out to all 1100 involved. Follow-up activities included identifying or designing accountability for work to be done and expanding the circle to involve more and more participants. Outcomes or delivery of the study reported reflected a strong leadership vertical alignment centered around a common, positive vision for the organization; improving systems for recognition and rewards; and increased organizational competence in how to facilitate and engage in appreciative discourse to appraise and capitalize on the intelligence, talents, and energy of the whole system (Watkins, 2001).

Fry and Barrett (2002) wrote that the impetus for the work of Cooperrider was the insight that action research had not lived up to its potential as an innovative change method. The appreciative *mindset* is based on the following principles:

Constructionist principle. The knowledge base and organizational destiny are interwoven. To be effective as members, managers, change agents, all must be proficient in the art of understanding, reading, and then analyzing organizations as living human constructions. Successful leaders and change agents then actually *read the constructed world* of their organizations in ways that attract stakeholders to want to participate in a cooperative effort. Human beings and organizations move in the direction that their knowledge and conversations take them. Senge (1990) asserted that most people do not believe that they create their own workplace realities. This makes the constructionist principle one of the most difficult concepts to convey in an appreciative inquiry.

Simultaneity principle. This is where the realization takes place that inquiry and change are simultaneous and not performed as separate events. Inquiry serves as an intervention into the issue. The seeds of organizational change are the issues people think individually, talk about as dialogue, and as a group create images of positive outcomes. These outcomes are the result of the questions themselves as they create the stage for what is found in the situation. What is found, or discovered, then becomes the outcome is constructed from. The principle of simultaneity states that the story of an organization can be rewritten at any time, and that story is the impetus for future understanding and interpretation.

Poetic principle. As the interpretation of the organization's story in constantly evolving by those living in it, we can study virtually any topic related to the human experience within the organization. With this principle, AI invites the reassessment of the aims and focus of any inquiry concerning organizational life. As poems have many interpretations, a reinterpretation of the organization's story can generate new realities.

Anticipatory principle. The most important resource we have for changing organizations is our capacity to unleash the minds and imaginations of coworkers. Much like a movie projector on a screen, organizations are forever projecting ahead of themselves a perspective of future expectation by their dialogue, in the workplace that brings the future powerfully into the present as a mobilizing agent. To refashion anticipatory reality, especially the artful creation of imagery on a communal basis may be the most valuable thing any inquiry can do. The force that ultimately gives life to an organization is the people's understanding of the vision and their ability to create and recreate it. That vision will perish if the people involved forget their connection to one

another. The result is a vision that is given as the company line, but not truly believed in or understood, thus creating divisiveness in the organization with the "in group" and the "outsiders" to the vision (Senge, 1990).

Positive principle. This last principle is not so abstract. It has been our experience with AI that building and sustaining the momentum needed for meaningful change requires a great amount of positive affect and social bonding; aspects such as hope, excitement, inspiration, caring, camaraderie, sense of urgent purpose, and sheer joy in creating something meaningful together are all essential to peak moments in organizational effectiveness We have found that the more positive the question we ask in our work, the more long-lasting and successful the change effort. The positive principle asserts that the more positive questions posed when community building, the more effective and long lasting the change. Being positive and affirmative helps create a safe and challenging climate that enhances relationships and trust.

Discussion of Key Elements

The key elements of the AI process, referred to as the *4Ds*, include *discovering*, *dreaming*, *designing*, and *delivering.* The discovering process could best be described as disclosing positive capacity within the organization. The discovery interview is the core of this phase. This interview is designed to help all those in the organization, no matter their station, to realize, through dialogue, the attributes the organization has as well as what they themselves bring to the system. "During the discovery phase, people throughout a system connect to study examples of what makes them their best, to analyze and map their positive core, and to investigate their root causes of success," (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005 p. 26).

The dream phase enables people to listen to the moments of the organization's life as articulated in the discovery process. According to Ludema (2003) the purpose of the dream phase of AI is to involve the entire system toward moving beyond the traditional status quo to a valued and vital future. The dream phase invites people to expand their expectations and imaginations and to articulate what the ideal organization would look like. The dream must be articulated communally to represent the best case purpose and function for the organization, then be shared with others, and culminate with envisioning a collective future within them.

After the dream phase where the organization is articulated to *what if* excellence, the design phase is commenced. This phase consists of actually creating the ideal organization. Whitney and Cooperrider (2005) stated: "During the design phase of AI, people are invited to challenge the status quo as well as the common assumptions underlying the design of their organization. People are encouraged to wander beyond the data with the essential question being, "What would our organization look like if it were designed in every way possible to maximize the qualities of the positive core and enable the accelerated realization of our dreams?" (p. 29).

Finally the fourth phase of delivering concerns the actual acting to realize the dream in alignment with the principles of the organization.

Appreciative Inquiry and the rural school district

Appreciative Inquiry attempts to determine the organization's core values (or life-giving forces) and seeks the best of "what is" in order to provide an impetus for imagining "what might be" (Cooperrider & Srivasta, 1987). This style of data gathering

is foreign to most rural organizations. As earlier, above the interview is an attempt to help the members of the organization realize the positive aspects of the group and to analyze what is working within the, in the case of this study, a school district. The basic rationale of Appreciative Inquiry is to begin with a grounded observation of the best of what is, articulate what might be, ensure the consent of those in the system to what should be, and collectively experiment with what can be (Cooperrider & Srivasta, 1987). Moving into a community has its challenges concerning making the necessary changes as new management sees fit to make. Every team-building skill possessed by the manager will be needed to hope for success. Assessing and molding the organization takes the "buy in" of the people in place. Once organization members shift their perspective, they can begin to invent their most desired future (Watkins, 2001).

Appreciative Inquiry in school district change.

Implementation of change in rural school districts is magnified because of relational density, meaning the conversational aspects usually cover extremely small cliques. These groups have deep histories within themselves and as individuals. Busche (1998) suggested three concepts that can form the basis of using AI as a change strategy in a situation such as this study:

First, organizations have an inner dialogue made up of the things people say to each other in small confidential groups that are undiscussible in official forums of organizational business. This activity is evident in the halls and staff rooms of schools as cliques arise and carry on the business and interest of the members of that group.

Second, this inner dialogue is a powerful stabilizing force in social systems that accounts for the failure to follow through on rationally arrived at decisions. It is here where people's real thoughts and feelings about what is discussed in official forums are revealed and communicated. These small groups provide security away from the upper and middle management and allow for negative as well as positive interaction. Busche concludes describing a modernistic modem for communication.

Third, this inner dialogue is mainly carried through the stories people tell themselves and each other to justify their interpretation of events and decisions. The change theory is: If you change the stories, you change the inner dialogue. Nothing the *rational mind* decides it wants will actually happen if the "inner dialogue" is resistant to it. When people talk in the hallways and over coffee it is often stories of past events that they use to justify the interpretations and judgments of current events. These stories get passed on and embellished with time and their historical veracity is irrelevant to the impact they have on how people make sense of organizational events. From this point of view AI can change an organization if it changes the stories that circulate in the organization's inner dialogue.

The theory of Appreciative Inquiry is applicable to school management and to this study. Core beliefs differ from district to district with unique characteristics of the district. However, a core principle that is constant is the need to help students to reach their potential. Core principals are the basis for the countless mission statements of schools as well as business and are used for construction of goals as well as evaluation. The variable involved is the strategy involved with reaching the desired outcome(s). The strategy is planned and implemented by organizational leaders through various

management techniques. The technique of teambuilding is part of this process. Appreciative inquiry provides a lens for organizational management whereby the existing stakeholders are brought along by the leader to share her/his vision, thereby reflecting the attitudinal expectations of the leader and the perception of the management style of the leader.

> AI is both a world view and a practical process. In theory, AI is a perspective, a set of principles and beliefs about how human systems function, a departure from the past metaphor of human systems as machines. Appreciative Inquiry has an attendant set of core processes, practices, and even 'models' that have emerged. In practice, AI can be used to co-create the transformative processes and practices appropriate to the culture of a particular organization. (Watkins, 2001, p. xxxi – xxxii)

Summation

The literature focused specifically on the role of superintendents in rural and small districts in effecting change is limited. However, one study by Boyd and Dimock (1993) found that superintendents of rural and small districts play a direct role as change agents because they are in the "unique position of being able to mobilize not only staff, but the community as well." The literature addressing the actions of superintendents' to produce a positive movement toward school success is abundant. However, extrapolating that success to providing a positive image for the school and then applying the positive perception to community economic development is somewhat nonexistent. The theoretical framework espoused by Appreciative Inquiry represents a postmodern view of change. The successful superintendent's attitudes toward community economic development should be communicated as a result of progressive or postmodernist

thought. However, that is not the norm and not easily understood in the confines of a rural community and the type of thought that has been established through diligent study as well as effective collaboration. That collaboration allows the economic community to have a place at the discussion concerning what is expected from the community school. The catalyst for progressive, collaborative change is the leader, in this study the superintendent of schools. For effective change to develop and culminate the leader must be involved at an extensive level. Hill, Wise, and Shapiro (1989) found that no effort studied was effectively brought to fruition without an active superintendent willing to make the commitment to the change. As stated above, school and community relations or school-community relations, must be open and forthright to help ensure the survival of both entities.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between the perception of rural schools and the establishment and strength of economic development in rural West Texas communities. Incorporated within the work was the study of organizational change, or transformation, and more specifically, the organizational change theory of Appreciative Inquiry. The concept of incorporating Appreciative Inquiry into school change is an emerging field and the extrapolation of the change theory into the perception of rural schools and the procurement of economic development has produced little research to note. The study reported herein was designed to determine to what extent the change technique of Appreciative Inquiry is being utilized to help produce the perception of a successful rural school and in turn enhance economic development. The research and subsequent findings were necessary to establish a foundation of understanding concerning positive community perception, derived from a school district, and the economic relationship realized. This study contributed to the literature addressing the place and effectiveness of the superintendent in leading these schools and whether or not they incorporate postmodern change technique.

Research Design

The research design was exploratory in nature, and explored an area of inquiry not previously examined. To determine the economic development impact of a school on the community, this research incorporated qualitative data collection and analysis. The expectation for this study was for the qualitative information to be applied to the

informational aspects of test scores and economic condition to provide the correlation, or lack thereof, as to the importance of the superintendent's use of the Appreciative Inquiry change theory; if superintendents and rural schools affect community perception; thereby affecting economic development and stability. This exploratory research was open ended in nature with no preconceived expectations. The possibility of surprise should be present in social research, as it requires that researchers remain open to any new evidence that may or may not support their beliefs. Such openness leads to the possibility of surprise. That openness makes the research itself more exciting because if one knew the outcomes before the research was completed, there would be no reason to do the research (Firebaugh, 2008).

Qualitative Research

Strauss and Corbin (1990) contend that some areas of study are more applicable to qualitative research. "Qualitative research uses multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic. Qualitative researchers look for involvement in data collection and seek to build dependability and rapport with the individuals in the study" (Creswell, 2003 p. 181). This present study, because of data collection and analysis requiring interviews and comparing, lent itself to a qualitative research design. Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible to the observer. The observer turns the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive,

naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005)

The concept of organizational culture and organizational change from modernistic to postmodern strategies lends itself to the qualitative method of research. Ezzy (2002) wrote that Postmodernism as a set of ideas is complex both in the sense that it is challenging to understand and that there are a variety of aspects of postmodern thought. Nonetheless, the theories of postmodernism have provided a major incentive to the practical analysis of the role of theoretical components in qualitative research.

A strength of qualitative research is the ability of the researcher to create the understanding from the researcher's perspective. Qualitative research methods are exceptionally good for examining, developing, and constructing theories that deal with the role of significance of meanings (Ezzy, 2002). Qualitative research brings rich writing as well as details brought by the researcher making the research more meaningful. Weiss (1968) asserted that qualitative data are more dense than quantitive data, are more vivid in clarity, and produce a more holistic work.

Of interest was the perceived negative slant placed on qualitative research in the academic community concerning the rigor of the research as opposed to quantitative methods. Some in the "hard" scientific and mathematics community have trouble accepting the validity of qualitative research methods and the degrees that support and produce the research (Biklin, 2007). There may exist some type of bias in the natural sciences as to the use of qualitative research. According to Miles and Huberman (1983), qualitative data have some serious weaknesses because the collection of and the

analyzing of the data is a highly labor-intensive endeavor. The data from qualitative research methods tend to overload the researcher at almost every point of the project from the wide range of phenomena to be observed, to the recorded volumes of notes, the time required for coding, and finally to the writeup itself. Indeed the research involved is formidable. However it is the method to be used to gather the information needed for this study.

This research used a case study component whereby two communities were selected to study the effects of the school system as it related to direct and indirect economic benefits. These communities were purposefully selected to help the researcher understand the problem. The researcher was be able to determine, through the qualitative aspects of the research, the relational aspect of schools to communities as well as the relational importance of the superintendent to producing schools that have the perception of being successful. The success of the superintendent's ability or lack thereof, to produce that positive perception became the variable to be tested.

Research questions

1. How do superintendents practice relational organizational change (transformation) known as Appreciative Inquiry?
2. How do superintendents perceive a connection between their management style, their relational change (transformation) technique, and economic development in the community?
3. How do members of the community perceive a connection between the superintendent's relational change (transformation) technique and economic development in the community?

Context of the Study

The study incorporated data from rural communities in West Texas of 10,000 or fewer population and having a single school district. This selection represented a basis for which the study had strong data applicable to the research problem. The communities were representative of economic standards of the area and incorporated one school district and community in each of the two wealth categories as established by Chapters 41 and 42 of the Texas Education Code. Chapter 41 districts reflect a tax base wealth per student level above $319,500. The tax base wealth level of Chapter 42 districts is below $319,500 per student resulting in access to equalized finance formulas. Using the two categories of school districts and communities in the study will ensure a fair cross section of data to apply to the research. Communities of such population and locality will provide the context to answer the research questions. Communities larger than the 10,000 population, level have the capacity to have a more diversified economy rendering the application for this research irrelevant.

Data Sources

This research incorporated three data sources: archival data, interviews, and focus groups. The information was used to compile the case studies.

Archival Data

The researcher compiled archival data. Denzin (1978) asserted that: “Archival records can be divided into public and private archival records. Although access to public archives may be restricted to certain groups (for example, certain law enforcement

records, credit histories, school records, and so on) they are typically prepared for some audience. As a result, public archival records tend to be written in more or less standardized form and arranged in the archive systematically" (p. 211). These arranged data allow for alphabetical, chronological, or other means of categorization. Archival data have no risk of intrusion into the research situation as they are practically nonreactive to any type of presence of researchers (Berg, 2004). Archival data provide for large amounts of data and can be utilized in an inexpensive manner. Archival data can be "mined" from public access venues such as libraries, governmental databases, motor vehicle registrations and the ever-expanding internet. Hashway (1988) stated that archival records were a readily accessible data source and that the use of past, current, and future routine databases is considered archival research. He also indicated that this type of research is not obtrusive because data collection is a normal part of the work cycle in organizations such as school districts. Accordingly, school performance and financial records can be considered archival records.

Advantages to collecting printed data include saving the researcher time and effort in collecting the data and then transcribing it. Printed data provide historical material and can be accessed at convenient times for the researcher (Creswell, 2003). Weaknesses of archival data include ensuring the validity of the information attained while assuring few, or no omissions. Researchers should be concerned that archives are the correct source of data to answer specific research questions (Berg, 2004).

Archival data collected included Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) scores of the rural districts that were studied. This data consisted of teacher longevity within the district, average teacher salaries, tax base after exemptions, and property value

per student. Data germane to the community included the economic basis for the community, economic development efforts, and print media coverage of school issues and events.

Case Study

The case study component consisted of two communities and their superintendents. The researcher purposefully selected two communities, their school districts, and their practicing superintendents to represent the criteria of the economic difference between the communities of West Texas. These communities, districts, and superintendents were purposefully chosen to represent two types of districts: one was of a district with chapter 41 status in a community with strong economic development; the other district was chosen as a chapter 42 district struggling with economic development. These school districts also were chosen to enhance the study by their economic differences. The settings for the case study were selected to reflect a wide area of West Texas and stay within the parameters of population for the study.

Glesne (2005) wrote:

> In ethnography, once the investigator selects a site with a cultural group, the next decision is who or what will be studied. Ethnographers rely on their judgment to select members of the subculture or unit based on their research questions. They take advantage of opportunities (i.e. opportunistic sampling) or establish criteria for studying select individuals (criterion sampling). (pp. 128,129)

The researcher selected the participants based on their ability to add to the study. Creswell (2007) continued: “In a case study, I prefer to select unusual cases in collective

case studies and employ maximum variation as a sampling strategy to represent diverse cases and to fully describe multiple perspectives about the cases." (p. 129)

The setting of West Texas is appropriate, as it will provide a constant with which to gather, interpret, and then compare the data. Information for the superintendents as well as board members will be derived from public information sources.

Data Collection Methods

Thompson (1994) said that the person doing the research must collect the data himself or herself and also assist in the design of the collection instrument. The researcher designed all data assessments.

Archival Data

The researcher utilized the Texas Education Agency web site to obtain the per-student expenditures cost ratios as reflected by tax bases and applied to enrollment. That information was then applied to accountability ratings to ascertain whether expenditures per student are relevant to accountability ratings and the perception of successful school districts. The researcher also collected economic development data from local banks and local chambers of commerce.

Case Studies

Creswell (2003) defined *case study* as a program, a process, individuals, or an activity that is explored in depth. The case or cases are bound by both time and activity they have in common, and researchers collect thorough information by using a variety of collection procedures over a prolonged period of time. This study incorporated

comparative case studies designed to gather information about interaction between school administrators and their communities. *Community* can be defined as some geographically identified unit within a larger society. Case studies of communities can be defined as the systematic procurement of information concerning an identified community to provider enhance understanding of who participates, and what binds the actors socially in the activities that go on in that community (Berg, 2004). "Case studies allow for a richer and deeper analysis of processes in which researchers are interested than is routinely afforded by experimental or survey details" (Bartel & Blade, 2007, p. 139).

Specific, yet opened-ended interview questions were asked at each location. The responses to these questions were studied and compared to the effectiveness of the superintendent as a leader and also the perception of their responsibility as to economic expansion and the role of the school in the expansion. While perceptions are difficult to qualify, the case study method allows the researcher to catch patterns, facial expressions and subtle nuances, and various group interactions that other methods may not notice (Berg, 2004). Disadvantages of case studies as a research tool include the researcher being seen as an intruder, private information observed may not be reportable, and the researcher may not have the skills necessary to achieve the objective (Creswell, 2003).

Creswell (2005) described procedures for conducting case studies. He cited Stake's (1995) work in his explanations on the appropriateness of the use of case studies:

> First, researchers determine if a case study approach is appropriate to the research problem. A case study is a good approach when the inquirer has clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the cases or comparison of several cases. Researchers next need to identify

> their case or cases. These cases may involve an individual, several individuals, a program, an event, or an activity. In choosing which case to study, an array of possibilities for *purposeful sampling* is available. I prefer to select cases that show different perspectives on the problem, process, or event I want to portray called "purposeful maximal sampling," but I also may select ordinary cases, accessible cases, or unusual cases. (Creswell, 2005, pp. 74, 75)

The case studies reported herein reflected scenarios that occurred from 2004 to 2009 to provide study of current practice, data consistency, and address the research questions.

Interview and focus groups

Ezzy (2002) stated that the purpose of a good interview is to obtain the story or interpretation of the story from the person being interviewed. The interviewer needs to genuinely listen to the person and not simply record their responses. Again, rich data can be gleaned from the interview. Three types of interviews are the standardized (formal) interview, the unstandardized (informal) interview, and the semistandardized interview that has a guided semistructure (Babbie, 1995). Wilkinson (2003) describes the same concepts as unstructured; semi-structured; and structured. The interviews for this study represented a semistandardized or semistructured format that required the interviewer to ask the same questions of all respondents while leaving room for flexibility. More questions are predetermined than with the unstructured interview, however, there is sufficient flexibility to let the interviewer have the opportunity to shape the flow of information. The interview is designed so that the participants would also receive the same stimulus allowing comparability. "Researchers using this method have

fairly solid ideas about the things they want to uncover during the interview" (Berg, 2004 p. 81).

In summation, semistandardized interviews were designed to elicit information using a set of predetermined questions with flexibility that was expected to elicit the subject's thoughts, opinions, and attitudes about issues related to this study. Therefore, standardized interviews operate from the viewpoint that the thoughts of the researcher are related to one's actions (Berg 2004). This being the case, it is important to state the relationship between thought and action for the respondents and their intention to maintain employment as qualified and successful superintendents.

The interview and focus group questions were constructed by the researcher to derive data pertinent to the research questions. These questions were then reviewed by members of the Texas Tech University faculty to assure academic compatibility with the study. The researcher then pilot tested the questions with sitting superintendents and citizens of communities of comparable size to clarify the questions and streamline the procedure.

Two interviews were completed with each of the two district superintendents, including the introductory session designed to apprise the superintendent of the purpose of the study as well assure confidentiality. Focus group interviews were utilized for data collection to provide convenience to both the interviewees and the interviewer. Two dates were ascertained in each community to interview school board members and 6 to 12 community members that included six business owners. The superintendent and focus group interviews were tape recorded and transcribed into written form. Anonymity for all participants was assured. There were no issues with dual relationships aside from the

employment similarities with the job of the researcher.

Advantages of using the interviews and focus groups as a research tool are: direct involvement as a researcher allowing a 100 percent success rate for the questions; the interviewer decides the follow-up questions immediately; the researcher has the ability to *hear* much more than what was being said such as body language, and tone of voice; participants often see interviews as a chance to voice opinions and *let off steam* about the subject; and in most cases, a vast amount of rich information is provided.

Disadvantages to using interviews and focus groups are the training required for the interviewer to become successful at the process; and the time consuming and possibly costly to conduct nature of the interviews. Other disadvantages of interviews include that the information provided is the interpretation of the phenomena by those being interviewed, with communicative and articulative differences that may skew the data. Also a disadvantage is that interviews are not retrieved in natural settings, but rather in clinical or unnatural settings (Creswell, 2003).

Participants

Interviews play a major role concerning the collection of data in a grounded theory study (Creswell, 2005). Gliner and Morgan (2000) described the interview as a data-collection technique in which the researcher and participant interact with oral communication. As stated in earlier paragraphs, superintendents and the resulting districts were chosen on the basis of the economic stability of their schools as well as the economic health of their communities. The two practicing school superintendents had a

minimum of three years of service in their present positions. After the communities and schools were chosen, the researcher purposefully selected the superintendents who serve those districts for interviews. After the interviews were completed, the superintendents assisted with selecting the focus groups. These recommendations were ascertained to assure that those interviewed in the focus group setting had a working knowledge of the community as well of the pertinent information related to the study. Concerning the working knowledge needed for interviewed participants, Zuckerman-Parker (2008) asserted that in qualitative research such as interviews, focus groups play a critical role. The focus groups consisted of two groups, one from each community. The focus groups drew from community members, board members, and business people from the list provided by the superintendent. Focus groups consisted of one or two board members, who were included in the six to twelve community members. The focus group interviews were held at a place of public access, such as a public library or community center and lasted no longer than two hours. Confidentiality was maintained through the following procedures. Written consent was obtained prior to the interview process. The participants were interviewed using a tape recorder with each of the interviewees being asked the same questions. The interviews were semistructured in nature allowing for expansion if necessary. Interviews were approximately two to three hours in length with an additional follow-up interview of two hours if warranted.

Others in the community, such as students, employees, and others do not apply to the study because of the lack of expertise and stations needed to answer the research questions. The researcher used the snowballing technique of selection to identify other potential participants for the study. These focus groups were formed to enhance

responses and also to provide for convenience as well as accommodate time restraints. "Focus groups are advantageous when the interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information, when time to collect information is limited, and when individuals interviewed one on one may be hesitant to provide information," (Creswell, 2007, p. 133).

Each interview participant was numerically coded. The master list of code numbers was to be for the investigator's eyes only. All persons who assisted were informed as to confidentiality and agreed to maintain that confidentiality. Participant names were not used, and they were not identified other than as practicing superintendents and community members.

Participants were not placed at risk and did not incur discomfort from this study. Participants could have chosen not to answer any of the interview questions and could have ceased the process at any time. There was to be no adverse action toward those participants who did not answer questions. The recordings and numerical codes will be maintained in a locked cabinet at the researcher's home for three years. After three years the recordings and codes will be destroyed. Benefits to the subjects are an increased awareness of their ability to influence positive change in their schools, communities, and areas of economic development.

Data Analysis

After the data were collected, analysis followed. "Although analysis is without question the most difficult aspect of any qualitative research project, it is also the most

creative" (Berg, 2004, p. 114). Concerning data interpretation, Ezzy (2002) asserted that the findings resulting from the analyzed data are not reported as truths in a scientifically validated way, but rather as results of a historically documented, event or subject.

Case Studies

The case studies were analyzed through the lens of the researcher and incorporated the transcripts of the superintendent and focus-group interviews to derive comparisons. Miles (1983) wrote: "One of the major decisions of doing a multi-site study is that idiosyncratic aspects of the sites can be seen in perspective, and self delusion about the conclusions is less likely" (p. 129). This study incorporated the use of two sites whereby comparison of findings can help to identify problems of self-aggrandizing, rewriting of history, and making the organization appear to be presented in a more favorable light. The data derived from the case studies were incorporated using grounded theory techniques. "The data collection in case study research is typically extensive, drawing on multiple sources of information, such as observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials" (Creswell, 2005, p. 75). The type of analysis of this type of data can be holistic in nature concerning the entire case or a specific embedded analysis of a certain aspect of the case. Through this data collection, a detailed description of the nuances of the case emerges in which the researcher details such aspects as the history of the case, the chronology of the events, or a day-by-day rendering of the activities of the case (Creswell, 2005).

Interviews and focus groups

In response to analysis procedures, Berg (2004) wrote that after the interviews are finished, researchers must then examine the possibility of patterns that emerge. The

findings that emerge, from the data, although undetected during the interviews themselves, are among the most fascinating and significant results obtained.

Speaking to the importance of accurate transcription, Bailey (2008) stated that the meanings and utterances are profoundly shaped by the way the words are said in addition to the actual content of what is said. The transcriptions of the interviews are systematically analyzed using the *latent content analysis method*. The researcher will identify seven aspects as defined by Berg (2004). They are words or terms, themes, characters, paragraphs, items, concepts, and semantics. The expectation for this study is for the qualitative information to be applied to the informational aspects of test scores and economic condition to provide the correlation or lack thereof as to the importance of successful schools to community perception to economic stability. The analysis continues with comparison within the case study. "Interviews, field notes, and various types of unobtrusive data are often not amenable to analysis until the information they convey has been condensed and made systematically comparable. An objective coding scheme must be applied to the notes or data" (Berg, 2004, p. 265). This coding system is important to the categorizing of main points as well as to indentify *outliers* of information. The selection of content to utilize should be consistently applied to the research criterion. This criterion should eliminate the practice of accepting only data that just supports the views of the researcher (Berg, 2004). The researcher will take care as to implement the interpretive approach into the analysis of the interview transcriptions. Berg (2004) described this approach as providing a process for discovering, understanding, and relating the meanings of the data.

The advantages of using the content analysis method is that it can be virtually unobtrusive, no one needs to fill out lengthy questionnaires be interviewed, and no one needs to enter a laboratory. Archival sources such as newspapers, public addresses, and library sources allow researchers to conduct analytical studies (Berg, 2004). Other considerations are the economical advantages such as little or no travel, and the time management consideration of flexibility of gathering as well as analyzing the data. The most serious weakness may be the locating of unobtrusive messages relevant to the particular research questions. In other words, content analysis is limited to examining already recorded messages. Although these messages may be oral, written, graphic, or videotaped, they must be recorded in some manner to be analyzed.

Data Management Plan

The scope of this study was challenging from both a logistical as well as a time management standpoint. It was fairly obvious that the best time to get the greatest number of responses from board members would be during the spring and summer after contract renewal season and before the budget work begins on the trustee level. The community members were available at anytime, except perhaps around the holiday season or during the summer. The superintendents employed in West Texas usually have the most time in the fall of the year after school kicks off and before the basketball seasons begins. They are inundated in the spring with contract renewal issues and the countless spring extracurricular activities that they must attend. The summer is concerned with staffing and budget work.

Summary

This study incorporated qualitative methodology techniques to collect data and to provide insight into the problem. The researcher attempted to ensure transferability by incorporating data from business as well as educational sources. This helped to provide a wider range of usefulness for the study. Drawing the data together converged the information into a holistic image. Researchers are likely to become close to and even immersed in the situation they are studying which provides for a greater sensitivity to the sources of data (Jick, 1983). In the case of this research, that was the case. Jick (1983) continues stating that qualitative data and the data analysis serve as the mortar that binds the interpretation of the results. The analysis benefits from the perceptions drawn by the researcher based on the observations. The artful researcher then uses the qualitative methodologies to enrich and deepen the research.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to report the study's findings and to analyze the data relative to the research questions as set forth in Chapter III. This chapter reports applicable hard data and describes the study's participants. Within this case study, similarities and differences between the individual participants emerged as well as similarities and differences within and between the communities.

Research Questions

1. How do superintendents practice relational organizational change (transformation) known as Appreciative Inquiry?
2. How do superintendents perceive a connection between their management style, their relational change (transformation) technique and economic development in the community?
3. How do members of the community perceive a connection between the superintendent's relational change (transformation) technique and economic development in the community?

Data Collection

Archival Data

The dynamics of West Texas are those of wide open spaces, a sense of economic stability, and staunch pride in one's hometown. Whatever the size of that town, school colors become the drawing card for identity as well as reputation. Athletics, fine arts programs, and recently academics have become extremely visible as competitive venues

between West Texas communities. The communities represented in this study are at both ends of the economic spectrum, one being wealthy with several revenue streams, whereas the other has a more narrow range of economic diversity and strength. But the schools in each community are the rallying arena for communal identity. These communities and their superintendents were chosen on the basis of economic diversity to ascertain the differences, similarities, and importance of the role of school management in the area of economic development.

The researcher attained archival data from the Texas Education Agency website. The documents attained were the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) reports for the school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009. Data used from this report included accountability ratings for the districts, average teacher longevity, average teacher salaries, tax base, and tax base per student.

Community newspapers were also examined to ascertain the coverage each school received in the local media and how those schools projected themselves and were projected by others to schools to the community and elsewhere.

Interviews

From the researcher's knowledge of West Texas and through consultation of archival data, the researcher chose two districts and their superintendents for this study on the basis of the economic stability of their schools despite the difference in the economic health of their communities. A minimum requirement of three years of on-the-job experience in the district for the superintendents was also met through this selection process. The two practicing school superintendents had a minimum of three years of service in their present position.

After the communities and schools were chosen, the researcher contacted the superintendents who served those districts for interviews. After the interviews were completed, the superintendent assisted the researcher with selecting the focus groups. These recommendations assured that those interviewed in the focus group setting had a working knowledge of the community as well as of the pertinent information related to the study. The focus groups consisted of two groups, one from each community. The focus groups drew from community members, board members, and business people from the list provided by the superintendent. Focus groups consisted of 1 to 2 board members and 6 to 12 community members. The focus group interviews were held at a place of public access such as a public library or community center and lasted no longer than two hours.

Pilot study. The interview and focus group questions were constructed by the researcher to derive data pertinent to the research questions. These questions were then reviewed by members of the Texas Tech University faculty to assure academic compatibility to the study. The researcher then tested the questions with sitting superintendents and patrons of communities of applicable size to ensure clarity of the questions and to streamline the procedure. The researcher used the interview questions to ascertain saturation of material by maintaining focus and guiding discussion.

Superintendents. Two interviews were completed with the two district superintendents, including an introductory session designed to assure confidentiality and to apprise the superintendent of the purpose of the study. Focus group interviews were used for data collection to provide convenience to both the interviewees and the interviewer. Two dates were chosen for each community to interview school board

members and 6 to 12 community members who included six business owners. There were no issues with dual relationships aside from the employment similarities with the researcher.

Superintendent 1. The interview for superintendent 1 was held in the superintendent's office on February 9, 2009, from 9 to 10:30 AM. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher reviewed the purpose of the study, explained the Institutional Review Board document (IRB), reiterated the tape recording process, and attained the proper signatures. The language used by the interviewer was professional and germane to the field of educational administration. The interview took place in a casual climate with refreshments, which helped ensure a relaxed atmosphere.

Superintendent 2. The interview for superintendent 2 occurred in a conference room at a regional education service center on February 13, 2009, from 2 to 3:30 PM. The setting was informal. The beginning of the interview consisted of a review of the purpose of the study and an explanation of what was to take place. After reviewing the IRB, the recording of the interview was discussed, and then the proper signature obtained. Again, the language used by the researcher was professional.

Focus group 1. The focus group 1 interview happened on February 19, 2009, in a local bank boardroom from 11:30 AM until 1:00 PM. The room was set up to provide maximum visibility for all participants to enhance discussion. The interviewer presented an overview of the study and expressed appreciation to the participants for their willingness to help with the research. The interviewer explained the IRB and the necessary signatures were placed on release documents A reminder was given about the tape recording of the focus group. The participants ate lunch during the interview. The

interviewer asked a participant to bless the food. The interviewer consciously used language designed to enhance the discussion as well as to set the participants at ease.

Focus group 2. The focus group #2 interview occurred on March 4, 2009, in the community's school board meeting room from 11:30 AM until 1:00 PM. The room was set up with participants facing each other to allow for conversation. An overview of the research was presented by the interviewer, and he expressed appreciation to the participants for their willingness to help with the study. The explanation for the IRB occurred, and the participants signed the appropriate documents. The researcher reminded the participants that the focus group activity would be tape recorded. The interview took place while eating lunch. The interviewer asked a participant to bless the food. Again the interviewer consciously used language designed to enhance the discussion as well as to set the participants at ease.

Banker 1. The interview for Banker 1 was the same day as the focus group 1 in the bank boardroom. The interview lasted approximately one hour. The researcher asked the same questions with the expectation that the position of banker would lend a more fiduciary response one-on-one as opposed to a group setting.

*Banker 2.*The interview for Banker 2 also occurred the same day as the focus group 2. The interview took place in his office. This interview lasted about 45 minutes. Again, the same questions were presented with the expectation that the position of banker may produce a more fiduciary response one on one as opposed to a group setting.

Confidentiality. Although the individual interview questions were not designed to be inclusive, the questions did cultivate discussion and produced responses that later emerged as themes. While the purpose of the interviews was to maintain consistency of

the research questions themselves, the interview questions were adjusted to address both the superintendent and focus group interview settings. To ensure confidentiality, the following key was used to differentiate the communities in which the two superintendents worked. These names are used to replace the real town names in quotes made by the superintendents, members of the focus groups, and bankers.

Table 3. Coding used for confidentiality in responses

Superintendent 1	S1 (Lawrenceville, TX)
Superintendent 2	S2 (Summerville, TX)
Focus Group 1	FG1 (Lawrenceville, TX)
Focus Group 2	FG2 (Summerville, TX)
Banker 1	B1 (Lawrenceville, TX)
Banker 2	B2 (Summerville, TX)

Analysis of Data

After the interviews were completed, the researcher immediately reviewed the audio rendition of the individual and focus group interviews for clarity and understanding. The recordings were then transcribed. Both superintendents declined to review the transcripts. The focus group participants also showed no interest in reviewing the transcripts. The researcher was in Lawrenceville on April 28, 2009, for one and a half hours at a local coffee shop. No focus group members accepted the invitation made a few weeks before this date to view the transcripts. He was available in community 2 on April 29, 2009 for one and a half hours at the district boardroom. No focus group members responded to the invitation to view the transcripts.

Transcriptions

The transcriptions were read once while listening to the recordings in order to check the transcriptions for accuracy. The researcher then read the transcriptions a second time without the audio recording to internalize the material. The third reading consisted of the coding itself. The material was coded by color to delineate common thoughts and observations. Those thoughts and observations were then *chunked* into categories representing emerging themes. Differences and similarities were also noted. The themes that illuminated the differences were identified with different fonts and colors to delineate superintendents' differences, focus group differences, and superintendent and focus group differences within the same community.

During this process, the autonomy of each community was maintained in the transcript by the designation of different fonts. Identifying names were also changed as needed to provide the anonymity necessary. Subsequent readings of the transcripts finalized similarities and differences between the two superintendents, the towns and the superintendents understanding of their roles as superintendents and the emerging themes.

Research questions, themes, and corresponding interview questions are notated in Appendix D.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Community 1. Lawrenceville is located on the south plains of West Texas. The population is 1,372 and has remained static for the past ten years. Lawrenceville has

approximately seven churches, one grocery store, two banks, a farm implement house, and various other small businesses. The town was founded in 1911 and is laid out in a traditional main-street type of business district. Many storefronts and buildings are closed and boarded up. The major industry is farming, with the main crop being cotton. The community has one school district consisting of three campuses. The student enrollment in 2008 was 312 and has remained static for the past several years. The campus buildings were built from 1926 to 1964. The campuses and grounds are clean and well maintained.

Lawrenceville schools were rated Academically Acceptable in 2007 and 2008. The average teacher longevity in Lawrenceville was eight years in 2007 and 6.6 years in 2008. Teachers' salaries averaged $38,497 in 2007 and $37,743 in 2008. The tax base after exemptions for the 2007 school year was $72,062,838 and was $90,719,550 in 2008. These tax bases accounted for a value per student of $224,495 in 2007 and $290,768 in 2008 for School 1. The Lawrenceville newspaper is published weekly. The newspaper editions studied (16) by the researcher were published between December 2008 and March 2009. The newspaper had a total of 342 articles during that time period with 144 of those articles, 42% of the coverage, containing information on the schools.

Community 2. Summerville is located in West Texas and has a population of 5,910. The population fluxuates with the oil and gas market. The community has approximately 29 churches, two grocery stores, several drilling rig services, agricultural services, and petroleum production, and at the time of this writing a robust retail sector laid out in a traditional town square. Summerville was founded in 1914 and has a single school district consisting of four campuses. The student enrollment in 2008 was 2,296

and is tied to the oil and gas industry. The campus buildings were built from 1940 to 1995 and the district had just passed a bond to build a new primary school and junior high school as well a as fine arts center. The campuses and grounds were clean and well maintained.

Summerville schools were also rated Academically Acceptable in both 2007 and 2008. Teacher longevity rates were 9.6 in 2007 and 9.6 years in 2008. Teacher salaries in Summerville averaged $46,254 in 2007 and $47,088 in 2008. The tax base after exemptions was $3,461,231,991 in 2007 and $3,954,652,182 in 2008. The per-pupil value was $1,543,126 in 2007 and $1,722,409 in 2008. The newspaper in Summerville is published twice weekly. The newspaper editions studied (30) were published between December 2008 and March 2009. The newspaper had a total of 469 articles, and 157 of those articles contained information on the schools for a 33% rate of school publicity.

Table 4. Comparison of archival data

Community	Accountability Rating	Tax Base	Tax Base per student	Average Teacher Salary	Average Teacher Longevity
1	Acceptable	2007 $72,062,838 2008 $90,719,550	2007 $224,495 2008 $290,768	2007 $38,497 2008 $37,743	2007 8 years 2008 6.6 years
2	Acceptable	2007 $3,461,231,991 2008 $3,954,652,182	2007 $1,543,126 2008 $1,772,409	2007 $46,252 2008 $47,088	2007 9.6 years 2008 9.6 years

Superintendent 1. Superintendent 1 is a Caucasian male in his mid-fifties who has 34 years of experience as an educator. Professionally, he has been a teacher, coach, principal, and superintendent. He has been a superintendent for nine years, all of that time in Lawrenceville.

Superintendent 2. Superintendent 2 is a Caucasian male in his early fifties who has been involved in education for 32 years. Professionally, he has been a teacher, principal, and superintendent. He has been a superintendent for eight years, all of that time in Summerville.

Focus group 1 and banker. Focus Group 1 was composed of a mayor, preacher, implement dealer, school board member who is also a farmer, a maintenance foreman

from the school, and a grocery store manager. The banker from the community was interviewed immediately following the focus group interview.

Focus group 2 and banker. Focus group 2 consisted of the board president who is a farmer, a board member who is a financial lender, the chamber of commerce manager, a banker, a preacher, a hospital administrator, a city administrator, a former mayor and small business owner, an economic development director, a real-estate agent who is the municipal court judge, a small business owner, an insurance agent, achief financial officer and the superintendent of schools. Another individual banker was interviewed immediately after the focus group interview.

Research Questions

Research Question #1: How do superintendents practice relational organizational change (transformation) known as Appreciative Inquiry?

The term *Appreciative Inquiry* was not known to the interviewees. The researcher gave an overview of the change concept technique and an explanation of each component including the discovery, dream, and design phases. This effort gave the participants a working understanding of the process. The researcher explained that Appreciative Inquiry involved consensual decision-making, allowing for all stakeholders to give input and achieve ownership of the outcomes. Examples were given of community meetings, small task forces, and one-on- one input. After hearing the explanations and examples, participants were more forthcoming with responses to the components of Appreciative Inquiry.

When the facilitator gave an overview of the technique and its three tenets discussed here, responses were mixed. None of the interviewees answered in the positive, when asked if they knew of the change technique called Appreciative Inquiry. The following responses were given: The Lawrenceville superintendent and banker said "no" and the Summerville superintendent responded with "no, not that terminology." The members of the Summerville focus group said "nope" and the participants from the Lawrenceville focus group and the banker from Summerville met the question with silence.

Discovery phase. The interviewer explained the first concept of discovery as bringing people together to express the positive elements that were happening to establish a basis to address the change. Superintendent 1 stated: "I don't know that I have specifically done that. But certainly when, in staff meetings, when we get TAKS results back or whatever, we really honor and praise those efforts that have turned out really good while there are some, like our science scores [that] have not been good." Superintendent 2 had the same type of response: "I'm sure I have. One of the things I do as superintendent [is to emphasize] if there is any opportunities to talk about anything that anyone is doing and the outstanding things of it."

Both focus groups and one banker had pertinent input for the discovery phrase. The mayor of Lawrenceville talked about the positive reality of having better and better busses every time they bought a new one and the banker from Lawrenceville said their superintendent asked their people questions to get their input. The members of focus group 2 stated that before their last bond election, they had a committee meet several times to discus the expectations the community would have for the building. "In the

presentation that I heard [with] the superintendent, it was always very positive. This is what we have, what we can use, what we are looking [at]."

Dream phase. The second phase of Appreciative Inquiry is called the dream phase. After an explanation of this concept of including stakeholders in the planning process, Superintendent 1 stated: "The community really does not offer a lot of input as a whole. You always have those in your visibility that are going to say "this is what I would like to see," but as an organized group they don't."

Superintendent 2 countered with:

> We had a group of about 40 people that were chosen, not necessarily because of what they do but about who they are, and whether or not they were respected. We had custodians and bank presidents on that committee, but all of them were very well received and leaders in the community in their particular venues. They came in just to dream and let them have a vision. We went into that bond election asking for 80 million dollars; we left with them telling us we were going for 110 million. There was a 30 million dollar difference between what we were asking for and what their vision said we need. And that came directly from that committee. Now, did it pass? Yeah, because they were involved.

Members of focus group 1 saw things differently in regard to the dream phase than did their superintendent. As one member said, "I think that our school has tried to do that. We have committee nights; getting people to show up sometimes is the problem, I think everyone feels open; I would feel very comfortable going to our superintendent." Banker 1 contributed nothing to the discussion of the dream phase of appreciative inquiry.

Members of focus group 2 concerning the dream phase work of their superintendent. said that he got in the middle of the community and rolled up his sleeves. "He put in his hours not only visiting with people but looking for sites to do and looking from every angle." They thought the superintendent needed to be aggressive and literally sell the project. "Regardless of the vision he had he couldn't have got it done without going out to those people and selling them on his vision." Banker 2 did not have a response

Design phase. The final aspect of the Appreciative Inquiry discussed here is the design phase. The interviewer explained this concept as allowing stakeholders, after they have articulated their positive stories of what works and created their picture, to actually create a solution to the problem. It is the segment in which people who are brought together are allowed to put their ideas forth. Even to the point of those ideas becoming a part of the project.

Superintendent 1stated: Well I've worked like I've worked for so long, I don't know that I could change into that real easy, you know. So, I'm going to say no. If I had to I would. Okay. If I had to I would, but it would be hard for me to." Superintendent 2 also had not used this concept saying: "No, by and large not. Other than them saying, hey we want a softball field."

Members of focus group 1 thought there were some aspects of the design phase in district decision-making. One member said:

> I think they are listened to. There are deals you always think, well that's not a popular side to take or something like that. But I think if there is something that is for the good for the city and the community and the school, I feel like they're

listened to; there's not just a deaf ear turned to it. I don't think but not all of them (ideas) are going to make that cut.

Members of focus group 2 stated that before the bond election, a committee met several times. So a lot of the bond was designed because they knew what was coming. "All the things they included in the bond were put in and formed with about 50-60 people. They made a recommendation to the school board that all those things be included." Again, the bankers had no response concerning the design aspect of appreciative inquiry.

Research Question 1: Summary of Findings

The Appreciative Inquiry component was explained to the superintendents and focus groups in an effort to extract concepts that pertained to the research question. Data were compared and contrasted to reveal insights into the similarities and differences of the communities themselves and their superintendents in particular regarding Appreciative Inquiry.

Community and Superintendent 1

Differences. The superintendent and community did not have much pertinent data to offer concerning the *discovery* phase of appreciative inquiry. However the *dream* phase produced some inconsistencies. Superintendent 1 said that the community did not give any input as a whole, but members of the focus group 1 thought input was abundant, saying there were committee nights and that people felt very comfortable talking to the superintendent. Superintendent 1 and his community's focus groups were different in their comments on the design phase. He did not feel as though he incorporated a lot of others' input into change. The focus group's response, conversely, reflected a perception that the community members were listened to.

Similarities. Similarities were gathered from the nuances of the separate interviews concerning the three phases of appreciative inquiry. Both the superintendent and the focus group felt that community input was available for all the phases. However, perceptions of the focus group were that the input was a reality and a viable part of the improvement process of the school. There seemed to be an understanding that information about issues and change was abundant in the district and community, and that it was brought to the superintendent's and board's attention on a consistent basis. The superintendent said he would welcome such input but did not speak to its existence.

Community and Superintendent 2

Differences. The superintendent and community focus group spoke to the same concepts (discovery, dream, and design) of appreciative inquiry with no noticeable differences. One exception was the feeling that the community had little input into the design phase aspect of actually communicating specifics into the projects.

Similarities. Similarities included the recognition by both parties (nothing from the banker) of the importance of community input and especially involvement in the actual planning of new buildings for the district. The superintendent even stated that the bond was increased by 30 million dollars as a result of community interaction. The discovery phase was reported as an important component in a successful bond election by the focus group. The community gave input as to the good things that had happened in the junior high, for example, and even though a new junior high building was proposed to be built, as long as the original building was going to be used, "people were alright with that." The superintendent spoke of "talking up" the band and choir programs to promote their successes to help with a new performing arts center. The responses about the design

phases exhibited similarities with the superintendent saying that the expectations from the community communicated the need for the project to have a certain level of amenities and appearance. His community calls it *Summerville Nice*.

Similarities and Differences between Superintendents

Differences. Since the basis of the dream, discovery, and design phases of appreciative inquiry require relational stakeholder input, the responses of the superintendents apply across the three concepts. Superintendent 1 felt as though his school was accepting, and listened to stakeholders, but did so in venues that were established, such as parent groups and the like. Superintendent 2 seemed to be more aggressive with his stance on utilizing community input in a clinical manner to help with needed projects.

Similarities. Similarities between the superintendents were apparent in one area. Both felt that the use of appreciative inquiry and its components had a place in their management schemes. But they also conveyed that making decisions is the job of the superintendent and cannot be passed off to committees. As these comments illustrate, both superintendents had the attitude that the buck stopped at their desk. Both also felt that the community did not want to get involved in the details of growth projects.

Research Question #2: How do superintendents perceive a connection between their management style, their relational change (transformation) technique and economic development in the community?

The management style of the superintendent is crucial to successful outcomes for the school district, and it affected the economic welfare of the community. The superintendents suggested that leaders have a variety of managerial skills that facilitated

whatever change was needed. These skills allowed change to impact a variety of arenas, depending on the nature and timeliness needed for the change. What is most important was the understanding of the superintendent as to which types of management and change styles were to be used in decision-making situations.

The superintendents emphasized the need to make specific decisions regarding strategy. The first decision to be made is whether or not to make a change decision in the first place. Decisions are dangerous because of the ramifications to the administrative security of the manager. This can be referred to as *picking your battles.* After the decision has been made to address the issue, the leader must then decide the most expeditious as well as politically tolerable methods of change. Both superintendents tended to believe there was need for an arsenal of various change techniques. One of the biggest challenges, they agreed, was addressing the need to make a change regarding something that has become tradition. That decision can never be for personal preference. Changing tradition is treacherous and requires a great amount of communication from the superintendent as well as trust from the community. And even then, the superintendent may not survive the change. Both were aware of that. However, both leaders agreed that there were instances when a change needed to be made to activities or situations that have 50 or more years of history. Situations were important when they considered what change-style to incorporate concerning traditional aspects of the district

Superintendent 1

Management style. Concerning his management styles, the superintendent from Lawrenceville said "A mixture. Probably about 60% autocratic though, and then a mixture for the other 40%." Believing that a superintendent needs to know the

community and its expectation of the decision-making role of their superintendent, the superintendent from Lawrenceville spoke to this expectation in his district saying that he needed to go out and sell why the change was needed. To do that, he uses one-on-one communication before he brings it to larger bodies for discussion. That one-on-one communication enhances trust and also facilitates the building of relationships. Maintaining traditional expectations enhances a superintendent's ability to affect positive change. By maintaining the positive aspects of the district, the superintendent is able to build on that when it is time for a change, because the trust has already been built by the superintendent, who already knows, understands, and acts on the expectations of the community. Superintendent 1 said:

> It depends on what the issue is, and that you work differently on different issues. Well, I think in small settings, the autocratic decision making probably comes more often than not [because] people would just as soon not get involved to a great extent, and I think it depends on what your relationship is with people. I've been here nine years and they trust my judgment. They say, you run it, you take care of it.

Superintendent #1 said that if an issue was controversial, a more consensual style of change would be more successful, and he would "be working with parent groups to make sure everybody gets input and then whatever we decide to do then that's what I'm going to back and agree with."

The superintendent's role in economic development. The Lawrenceville superintendent said that he had thought about his role in community economic development and that it was his role to "make the school as good as it can be, where

people will either want to stay here or move in to go to school here." There is a major problem in rural communities in close proximity to urban areas as Lawrenceville is, and that is to have housing available for people. He felt some aspects of economic development were out of his control no matter what shape the school was in. Issues such as substandard housing, and the availability of acceptable housing for his staff are problems he cannot control or address. The general appearance of the community is also important to the attraction of development. He said:

> Just the way our town looks from the highway, you see a bunch of substandard houses that are not attractive. And that's the first impression that you give [of] our city, so there are so many other factors that are involved in economic development of our little community that I think are way beyond [my] control. So, yeah. I'm not sure, in our little city we could ever grow anyway, just because of a lot of other factors that are beyond anybody's control."

The school can and should be a drawing card to communities to enhance economic development, but housing must be available. He continued: "So from my standpoint, that's what I think my job is, is just trying to make our school as good as it can be and as attractive as it can be for people to go to school here."

Lawrenceville does not have an economic development board, and the superintendent said he would be willing to serve on one if they had one. He said, "Yeah, I am willing to do other things [serve on that board] but our town has not been very proactive in doing much of anything really." Superintendent 1 stated that he had not been approached by his board specifically concerning economic development, although they had talked of the need to bring something in to get people to stay there. The board

members have never specifically said anything about economic development and the school, but they have talked plenty about trying to do some things at the school that would make people want to stay here.

> For instance, we put in a new elementary playground and a courtyard at our elementary school and that made it more attractive. So, just from things that we can do for the physical appearance of our school, we have had a lot of favorable comments on our school from things like that, that made our school look better on first impressions that people would want to at least look to bring their kids to our school. So, our board understands the importance of that and has shared that with me.

The schools' role in fostering economic development. Perception of the economic influence that the entire school system has is that the school has a great effect on the reputation of the community. Both superintendents realized the potential for the community and damage to the community that a school district could cause. Superintendent 1 stated:

> Well, if you have a school that is consistently scoring low in TAKS scores and coming out in the papers as unacceptable, you are for sure not going to get parents to stay. So the perception of the school as being, if we were unacceptable, at an unacceptable level for TEA, it would make it so much easier for those parents to move on to another school district. Or at least live here and transfer their kids out to another school district. So I think, yeah you can have some really negative effects from the perception people have from your school district and then if your

school district is recognized as being a leader in academic settings it can have some really positive effects for you.

Perception of schools and communities. Superintendent 1 said: "Whoever is going to look at bringing a business in, I think that's going to be one big factor they look at the school system. What is the perception? Are people going to stay here to support everything we do?" Not only is the appearance of the physical plant important to perception, but it also impacts that of the community itself. He continued speaking to the importance of the looks of the city stating: "I think you have that factor I brought up before about what your town looks like from the highway. If it doesn't look good, people are certainly not going to want to stop to even take a look. So what do you do? Do you tell people to tear down the shanties?"

Superintendent 2

Management style. Superintendent 2 differed slightly and said his style was "Participatory and then eventually to the point of autocratic. You've got to get to that point." He said consensus does not always work: "Sometimes the consensus is not always right." He gave an illustration where the superintendent in another town put together a committee to hire the athletic director. "The problem with that is, and if they said this is the way you have to do it I'd have to say: I hire the athletic director [because] the athletic director comes directly to me with situations."

Transformation techniques. Superintendent 2 did say that change in his district was both styles, postmodern and modern, but approached from: "Positive, positive. On the norm it's going to be a positive. I think change is positive." He stated the necessity of acquiring facts of why the change is needed, thereby taking his opinion out of the

decision making process. “Well, first thing I would do is have as much facts of why this change, why it’s not an opinion change, but why it’s a necessity change. But eventually, there comes a point in time you make a decision.” He also talked about the difference between superintendents who were considered custodial or traditional as opposed to those who were more progressive and looked to change and to improve districts. He said that progressive superintendents are willing to take the arrows and the beatings for jumping out there and saying we are going to progress. “If you happen to be somebody that is vision oriented and so forth, your back is going to have lots of scars. Lots of them.” For example, there were potential legal issues concerning ethnicity involved with the mascot as it was presented and he wanted to head them off. He handled it autocratically, but “in a slow manner. We have done it just by removing it from things we do now so they don’t have the [mascot] name in it. That was not one that was discussed with anybody.”

Also important as a basis for positive change is the maintenance of the school itself. He continued, “Our maintenance and so forth that we do, grass being mowed and being watered and being edged, is an important thing for a school. And if you don’t do that you give an immediate [unfavorable] impression of that school.” Preparing for future bond issues and making the decisions that affect them, superintendent #2 felt that it was important to give the public the impression that the facilities are being maintained. He said “I think one of the things all of us as superintendents are, we are salesmen. Hopefully, we’re not just the custodians of what we’ve been given. If we are then we are overpaid and anyone could do our job.”

A major aspect that emerged from this superintendent regarding positive change

reflected his passion for including employees in his vision for the change. The Summerville superintendent remarked that a superintendent needed to have vision, dreams, and goals, and at the same time try to employ other people with those same visions. He said it was important to foster and bring those people, and you get everybody heading in the right direction. He gave the following illustration of including all stakeholders in the general vision of the district. A board member had an idea to have a technology-based whiteboard in all the classrooms. "That wasn't my vision, it was his vision, but did I make it happen? Yeah. There's not anyone that could do it, [effect positive change] by yourself." He stated that a superintendent would be ostracized from the community if he or she did not get input from people, "because they come in with these half-baked ideas and try pushing them through on people." Developing a very strong group of alliances will help make it all the way to the end [of the change needed].

Superintendent 2 said that he tries to [paint a picture] of what his expectations look like and then brings others along. Superintendent 2 continued saying that:

> It starts out with I will try to get a consensus on stuff by talking to the assistant supers, businessmen, and those that are going to be the most impacted, and say "give me your opinion on this, what do you think"? And I get as much information as I can. I hate to go into any decision without the data behind it.

He expects quality and is fortunate enough to be in a town like that. He said he had been

in districts and communities where quality wasn't the expectation but rather the custodianship of the kids. That community wanted me to "just make sure the doors were

open so [community members] had some place for our kids to go while [they] went to work."

The superintendent's role in economic development. Superintendent 2 had discussed his role specifically, and said his last evaluation addressed that he was an ambassador for the community. His board urged him to buy locally. He did have thoughts as to what the role of the superintendent and economic development was. He thought his role was to be involved in the community and to express to his principals, directors, and assistant superintendents the importance of being actively involved in the community. "It's not some place that we just came and were there for a day or two or three. We became part of the town and part of the community. And we're dependent on the community." Superintendent 2 said: "So it is necessary, vital, and extremely important in any community for the superintendent to have a very strong, positive rapport with the community, all aspects of the community."

The school's role in economic development. Superintendent 2 thought the role of the district was substantial in sustaining the town. "We are the entertainment for the community, whether it be sporting events and/or fine arts. Ya know, in Small Town USA, we are the focal point of all entertainment." Summing up the importance of a school to the economic viability of a community, he said: "First of all, without a school, you lose a community. Period. Any small town USA when the school goes, the town goes." Superintendent 2 spoke to the role a school has in bringing in economic development

> "There are three things if I am a business I am going to look at when I come to a community. First of all, what kind of schools do you have; Second thing is what

kind of a social life my employees can have in your community; And third thing, what does the community offer me to bring people in?"

Research Question #2 Summary of Findings

This section summarized the results of data gathered concerning research question #2 and the superintendents' perception of their management styles, transformational change techniques, and their role in economic development. Data were compared and contrasted to reveal insight to the similarities and differences of the superintendents in particular.

Superintendent 1 and Superintendent 2

Both superintendents felt the need to have an understanding of, and implementation plans for, different management styles and change techniques in their job skills. Understanding the community's expectations and the superintendent's relationship with community became apparent as a basic tenet for managerial success. Relational aspects within the communities became a reoccurring theme to affect successful management and effect change. The subthemes of belonging to civic activities and visibility, social and church interactions, and the longevity or history of the superintendent emerged. Comments ranged from the necessity to be involved in civic organizations to how being involved enabled the superintendent to interact with the business leaders of the community.

Community involvement. Both superintendents agreed with the importance of community involvement. Both superintendents belong to various civic groups such as the

Lions' and Rotary Clubs, which allows them access to business as well as other community leaders. Dues are paid for these superintendents by the districts. Superintendent 1 stated: "The main thing is the Lions Club. I participate in the Lions Club, and I have every year since I have been here. For about five years I was also in the Chamber of Commerce." Superintendent 2 agreed about the importance of belonging to civic clubs saying:

> Well, [I'm] involved -[and] some of our economic development directors have been members of the rotary club, which I see them in that activity. I've got three board members of the Lions club. so they see each other a lot and interact. We have an economic development board I associate with frequently. So it is necessary, vital, and extremely important in any community for the superintendent as well as other leaders in the school district that we have a very strong, positive rapport with the community, all aspects of the community.

Visibility. Visibility in the community and at school events was also important to both superintendents with the building of relationships. Superintendent 2 said "Approachability and visibility, I think that's important. You've got to be approachable. If you're not that, it's not going to work." Both felt that being seen not only added to the ease of working in the community but also helped build a trust across the town. Superintendent 1 added:

> Being visible and letting people get to know me and me getting to know them. That's the biggest key. I'm visible in a lot of areas, and accessible in a lot of areas so I can promote what is going on at the school.

Both superintendents attend most of the activities of the school.

Social interaction. The superintendents had somewhat different expectations as to social aggressiveness and interactions. Social interaction in a small community is difficult especially with those people a superintendent supervises. The superintendent deals with adult and student populations; however, when dealing with students, adults are also in the picture. Superintendent 1 always felt as if he had to be on guard, even at the golf course, because of historical relationships in the community that sometimes make it difficult for the superintendent to cultivate meaningful friendships that allow for true comfortability. Superintendent 1 said: [concerning social interaction]

> "Um, some. Because some I know [community members] from church. Some are on the school board. [But] no, no [cookouts or playing cards] I feel like you're always kind of on a guarded standpoint of some sort because people are always going to judge you one way or another. I play golf."

The reality is that relationships in small communities have deep histories that make it difficult for the superintendent to cultivate meaningful friendships that allow for true comfortability. Superintendent 2 also plays golf, but did not intimate that it was a non-accessible activity. He did not address problems with other social issues.

Longevity. An unexpected emphasis on this topic arose. Both superintendents gave detailed reasons as to why longevity and history matter. Superintendent 1 said that he had been there a long time, and he liked being known by most people. The superintendent's job is encompassed with the need to have relationships with all members of the community before problems arise. Longevity in a community allows relationships to be built in nonthreatening interactions so that when situations do come up, hopefully a

trust has been built to help remediate the issue effectively. Superintendent 2 commented on the powerbase he has accrued because of longevity.

> [I had a lot of these people as kids], especially those that are starting to be more of the [powerbase] in their mid to upper 30s and 40s. I had them in school. If they were in Summerville they were in my building when I was a principal. Busted a lot of them. I think mine is a longevity deal. The day before yesterday, I had a parent come in, concerned over a bus deal, well, I was her principal. I don't have a clue who this person is now but it doesn't matter. I'm her principal.

Both superintendents thought there was a need for the position of superintendent to have as long a tenure as possible. The dialogue revealed the necessity for the superintendent to actually build ownership in the school and community as opposed to just being a custodial superintendent, and to try to improve the school as opposed to just taking care of it for the time you are there. Superintendent 2 said he was not impressed by people who come in as a superintendent and be at a school two years then jumped to another. "They never had a history to build, they just may have gotten some good stuff off the last guy that was there." But he said if you go to a school district and stay "five, six, seven, eight, ten years, then if good things happen and so forth like that, then you can say 'look at what we did'."

Community Expectations of the Superintendent

Superintendent 1 said the community expects the superintendent to put in long hours. The hours are consistent throughout the year. Whenever something is happening or needs to be done, he felt the expectation was to be there, no matter what time of day or

even the day of the week, all year round. He said the only time he did not appreciate discussing school business was on the golf course.

> I guess the only time I resent it is when I'm on the golf course. Because I'm there to play and have fun and share the commradary with other people and compete. I don't mind too much [that] people talk to me in any other setting, but there is kind of a safe haven there that I really like to have that. If somebody starts doing that, I'll just tell them, "look I don't want to talk about school out here. I want to have some fun. So if it's something we need to talk about, let's talk about it after the round or come make an appointment with me," and most people respect that. I don't resent that but I think most people understand that's part of the job and that's the way it's going to be.

Superintendent 2 did not mention any concerns in this area.

Being a superintendent in a rural community in West Texas caused the position holders to regulate their actions according to community expectations. These superintendents agreed to the need for and understood the importance of having a general knowledge of the expectations his community had about the superintendent's role.

Both superintendents agreed that setting a higher example of personal standards was important. Honesty and integrity were important traits to exemplify to maintain employment as well as advance an agenda. Superintendent 1 specifically addressed the issue of drinking to excess, expressing that he was always being observed in the community, and that it was never a good idea to go out and overindulge. He stated that he has to be aware of where he is and what he is doing at all times, because the community expects him to be a role model for students, both professionally and

personally. Superintendent 2 spoke of respecting the community's values especially in regard to the faith community. "We [have] a church on every corner in Summerville. You don't infringe upon people of faith on that time. That is family church time."

Differences. The superintendents' only differences were in the areas of social interaction and economic development opportunities. From the nuances of the data, superintendent 1 did not feel comfortable with social interaction in his community outside of church while superintendent 2 was at ease with all aspects of the social infrastructure of his community even though it was not specifically addressed. Superintendent 1stated he had not talked about economic development with his board but that he would serve on committees or boards designated to address the economic issues of the community if there were any on which to serve. The superintendent from Summerville thought it was his role to be involved economically, even to the point of being directed by his board.

Similarities. Both superintendents utilized varying management and change techniques in situational contexts. The similarities revealed two superintendents who understand their roles in the communities. They participated in community activities and served on applicable boards. They both understood the importance of high moral character and the role they play in maintaining respect for the position they hold. Both superintendents felt that part of their job was to make their school the best they possibly could, to not only educate the students and serve the patrons, but to help attract businesses to the community.

Impact on Community

The data revealed that both superintendents felt strongly that being a contributing community member was crucial to not only the success of the school and smooth management, but to the community in general. Several community (chambers of commerce, economic development, even community evangelical) organizations have ex-officio seats on their boards designated for the superintendent of schools. These positions provide opportunities for the superintendent to serve organizations in leadership positions away from the business of the school. The contribution of civic responsibility, along with the attributes of high personal standards, effective leadership talent, and the possessing of a sense of loyalty and persistence were important to both of the superintendents interviewed.

Civic responsibility. The superintendents participated in community activities to effectively build relationships to provide trust. The trust allowed the leader to administer the school in a professional manner without the interference of micromanagement from the patrons. These superintendents became the education experts based on that trust.

Personal standards. The superintendent exhibits high personal standards to enhance the trust of the community. Understanding the expectations of the position becomes the key to performing the role successfully.

Leadership. Having knowledge of managerial and change techniques allows the superintendent to administer the school in a professional, calculative manner.

Stability. Longevity in the position allowed the superintendents to build relationships, understand histories, and affect change in a manner conducive to the expectations of the community. The superintendents, by maintaining longevity, began to

build their own histories in the community, resulting in stronger relationship. Again these stronger relational ties produced trust.

Research Question #3: How do members of the community perceive a connection between the superintendent's relational change (transformation) technique and economic development in the community?

The focus groups identified the perceived management style of their superintendents as combinations of modernistic and postmodern styles. The change techniques used were considered consensual and appropriate for the community norms. The focus groups appreciated the efforts of their superintendents being aggressive about change. Although it was not a frequent topic of discussion, superintendents and community members alike saw a need for the position of superintendent of schools to be an ambassador for community economic development.

Community members 1

Management and transformation techniques. The mayor in focus group 1 stated that their superintendent uses "a little bit of [all techniques], but I think he is very open to any influence." Focus group 1 members agreed that if you've got a superintendent who isn't involved, then he can't make a good choice on issues. The school board member in focus group 1 said:

> It will just blow your mind the way he is willing to stay up with the things he needs to do for change. Since he has been here, there have been lots of things thrown at him and he's done a really good job. It's the times we live in now; if

> you're not willing adapt a little bit and stay on top of it you're going to be out a job.

A major factor for successful change was the presentation, knowledge, and preparation of the superintendent. The focus group felt that the ability to have a plan for change is important. The willingness to adapt through the change process is also important. The school board member continued: "if you're not willing adapt a little bit and stay on top of it you're going to be out a job." Simply presenting oneself as a professional goes a long way to helping a change to take place. The banker from the community 1 said:

> I think he does all he can do. He has done a lot of work on the school, he tries to bring in the best aesthetic view, presents himself well, presents the teachers and coaches, and I think the kids, you know the presentation of them-I think he does a good job as far as that and being in the community.

Both focus groups felt that their superintendents would build consensus with the community to change a traditional aspect of the district. Members of focus group 1 stated: "If you don't do what the people tell you they want done and stuff like that, you aren't the community superintendent or mayor or whatever; you're just somebody up there doing what you want to do. If you can hear them, and then the vote goes against them, well then most people are alright with that." Both groups were satisfied with their change styles.

Value expectations. Adherence to high standards was a professional expectation. All interview subjects did agree on the basic tenets of integrity and honesty as expectations for a successful superintendent in a rural West Texas Community. As one

focus group member from community #1 commented, "Honesty, right or wrong, like it or not, honesty. He is a man of integrity. Our community expects it." The mayor from focus group 1 stated his expectation with: "I expect them to put out the product in a young person to be able to go out and be able to make a good living and pay their taxes and then come be a part of the community."

Superintendent's role in economic development. The focus group expectations for the superintendent's role in economic development had consistent thoughts. The board member from focus group #1 stated: "I don't know if we've talked about it in terms like that but I know that he is expected to keep the board informed and move forward". The mayor agreed saying "It's grown since he's been here. Like he said, just working together as a unit; the community and the school."

When asked if the superintendent should be concerned with economic development, banker 1 stated: "I think they should. I mean it is kind of their well being to what they are protecting by bringing stuff in. Yeah, I think it has got to be in the back of his mind."

Fostering economic development. A pastor from focus group 1 responded: **"**The school, it has to be [a part of economic development]. If you're going to talk about the school and the city being intermixed." When the subject of consolidation and the community without a school came up, the pastor of the group said: "If you don't have a school, I can tell you it won't take you very long till you won't have a community. Because I've seen school systems that have consolidated and gone to other places, and the towns don't last very long." But what responsibility does the school have to attract economic development? The mayor in the group said: "The school has to have a

responsibility and then the community has a responsibility. But as far as saying it's the school's responsibility to make everything work, it's not." Only those community members directly involved with community promotion responded. The members felt that the school and the community reflect and depend on each other. "It's important that if one of them excels and succeeds then the other one excels and succeeds. By the same token if they have a tendency to go down a little, it affects the other one a little." One member said, "I never really thought about promoting a school, where you would get somebody to come to the community because of the school. That's kind of a new idea to me, but I understand that happens around here now."

Future economic expectations. The responses to the perception of the economic viability of their communities and their expectations for the future were consistent across the focus groups. As the farmer in focus group 1 stated: "Hmm, I think it's going to be tough in our area. I think we are going to have to make some smart decisions, and we're going to have to watch, as far as the farmers' side. It's going to be tough." He also spoke to the importance of everyone working together that is so important to a small community. "We are going to need in our community; our city council, on all our boards and our associations, some young people that want to be a part of the community and look [at] our school." Businesses have been courted by community1, but few have decided to take root, just the family farms and supporting industries are all that are there. "We've been trying for a while to get businesses and things like that to come in but it's tough, it's hard." Banker 1 had the same take on the issue and the potential for growth and viability. He stated: "I think in this community it is hard, it is drying up, if it wasn't for the school the community wouldn't be here. It's basically the heart of the town. The

town will be here as long as the school is here." He was supportive of the superintendent though. "He has a great supporting cast of people to help. But I think it's going to keep getting worse, but as long as the school is still functioning, it will be here as long as they are here. "

Perception of schools and communities. This focus group was proud of their school and thought it produced a positive perception about the community. The pastor of the group said of the school: "It brings a positive attitude when you talk about the school in a smaller community. I think there is a positive cause and effect. You have people that really have a lot invested in the school." The school was touted as the center point of the community and that the things that happen at the school impact the community, either positively or negatively.

Community members 2

Management style and transformation techniques. Members of focus group 2 thought their superintendent's management style was: "more consensual unless he feels really, really, really strong about it." Also important is doing the due diligence to add credibility to the project. A board member from community 2 said that their superintendent always brings facts to support his need to change something and gets the word out to the community. This is important to add credence to the need for the change and to make sure everyone knows about the reasons for the change. He stated:

> Even down to the technology that they keep improving and changing out. That's good for our kids, but everybody in the country also knows about it and knows we

are on the cutting edge. When he brings change, he always brings research with the change he brings for the board to consider he knows about it and knows we are on the cutting edge.

Value expectations. Members of focus group 2 spoke to the aspect of attending church and maintaining a personal reputation. "It doesn't matter, you can say all day long that he can do what he wants to do on his own time, but if he is doing something bad then it is an image on the school." These focus groups thought that superintendents in West Texas, as well as their own superintendents, have the opportunity and necessity to speak to many different kinds of people with various backgrounds, professions, and education levels, usually at the same presentation or meeting. The ability to be able to communicate effectively to all of these people individually and collectively was considered a great asset. Members of focus group 2 brought up the talent of being political. Along with being a great communicator, the superintendent needs to have an "openness and be willing to listen and incorporate others' ideas and thoughts."

Superintendent's role in economic development. Members of focus group 2 agreed about the position being important, stating the following about their superintendent: "[He] is the first face to this community, many times when he is out around the state. When you have somebody that is respected and well thought of, then that brings creditability to where he is coming from. He has done a good job of not only representing himself but the school district and the whole community. I think the superintendent's reputation has a lot to do with your economic development." However, a board member of focus group 2 stated that: "I think the trustees [don't] necessarily follow the lead of the superintendent. But we like to think since we are a team of eight

that whether the idea comes from him or the board, it all ties into it being a community effort and supporting the community." Banker 2 had other thoughts: "I don't really recall [him doing] that. I'm not saying he doesn't, I just don't remember hearing that in a speech or anything."

Fostering economic development. In small school districts, the school and the superintendent become interchangeable as far as performance and reputation. However, the focus group members and the bankers, while aware of the multifaceted job of the superintendent of schools, had not considered that position to consciously bring in economic development. One member of the focus group did speak of the reputation of the superintendent having a lot to do with economic development. Conversely, the perception of the school itself held a great responsibility towards the economic development effort for the communities. An insurance agent in focus group 2 said: "The school system is probably one of the biggest draws we have as a community." The school districts' appearance, accountability ratings, and general reputation have a great amount of influence on businesses looking at communities in which to expand and bring employees. He continued,

> It definitely has an economic impact on this community. People are proud of the school, that is a draw to folks, and they will tell you that. The economic development folks, the real estate folks, they are proud of the schools. If the community is successful, the school is successful, because everyone in this community buys into the school. I'll tell ya, if they are thinking to move here versus a rural community right next door, they move here based on our school district. I have seen that quite a bit from the real estate end of it that customers do

> check out the school district because that is where their children are going to attend. I've had repeat customers that have moved out of the city and have came back and just acclimated to the school district. Our school district wins people moving into our community.

The board member from focus group 2 said: "The board is one, and I think we sell what he is selling to the community. We like to think that our board works as team, seven board members and a superintendent." However they were aware this could change when the superintendent did not have the input from stakeholders as to the expectations of her or his role in economic development. Trust lets the superintendent speak for the board and effectively do their work in this area.

Future economic expectations. Focus Group 2 was upbeat about future economic prosperity. The Chamber of Commerce director said they were banking on oil continuing to be a contributor to the economy. She reported 42 businesses opening last year and mentioned the German community that is economically conservative, diversified, and brings in lots of different industries. A local businessman thought that it was going to be tough because of the dependence on oil and gas over the next 1.5 to 2 years, but that the school and community were positioned for that uncertainty. Banker 2 said: "We've always had a good balance between ag and oil and gas, but losing our water for irrigation could really change that. We are looking at other technologies and trying to do some things to compensate for that."

Perceptions of schools and communities. Pride was a topic in the second focus group also, with members stating that eye appeal and the buildings are what people passing through town see: "it's pride." Perceptual issues were addressed in the second

focus group and they tied the school and community together. “It kind of reflects on the whole community if you have a school perceived to have problems, whether it be discipline or poor grades or what have you, people just assume those problems are reflected in the community as a whole.

Research Question #3 Summary of Findings

This section summarizes the results of data gathered concerning research question #3 and the communities’ perceptions of their superintendents’ management styles, transformational change techniques, and their role in economic development. Data were compared and contrasted to reveal insight to the similarities and differences of the focus groups in particular.

Community 1 and Community 2

Differences. One member of focus group 1 spoke that it was the job and responsibility of the superintendent to educate the students in the community, while the other group emphasized the political requirements of the job. The expectations for the future of the communities differed greatly. Community 1 was not very optimistic about the future of the community, while community 2 was much more optimistic.

Similarities. Both focus groups held the same views concerning their superintendents on perceived and actual expectations, such as community interaction and civic leadership. All mentioned attending church as an expectation as well as possessing integrity and being honest. Both focus groups also agreed as to the importance of the school in the procurement of economic development.

Impact on Community

School as an economic development tool. The focus groups felt that in small communities especially, schools are critical in economic development. Whether it was perception of the districts, the appearance of the physical plant, or the success of extracurricular programs, the school is the showcase and most influential ambassador of the community.

Emerging Themes

The emergence of specific themes derived from the study added depth to the work. The themes include: lack of knowledge of the change technique of Appreciative Inquiry; the superintendent's visibility in the community; personal traits of the superintendent; professional expectations of the superintendent; the school's impact on economic development; and finally, the importance of the school to the community.

Appreciative Inquiry

The change concept Appreciative Inquiry was not known to any of the respondents. The facilitator gave an overview of the technique and its three tenets as discussed here. The first concept of discovery was explained by the researcher as bringing people together to express the positive aspects happening as a basis to address change. The superintendents and the focus groups were able to provide examples of how they applied this concept once it was explained. The second phase of Appreciative Inquiry is called the dream phase. Again, the facilitator gave an explanation of the concept of including stakeholders in the planning process. The superintendents differed somewhat with superintendent 1 stating: "The community really does not offer a lot of input as a whole." Superintendent 2 gave an example of using 40 people to help with a

bond issue. His communities' focus group said "Regardless of the visiting he had, he couldn't have got it done without going out to those people and selling them on his vision." The final aspect of Appreciative Inquiry discussed was the design phase. The interviewer explained this concept as allowing stakeholders, after they have articulated their positive stories of what works and created their picture, to actually create a solution to the problem. Again the communities differed. The superintendent from Lawrenceville said he had worked there a long time, and it would be hard for him to change and use the design phase. The Summerville group brought up the bond issue again as an example of the dream phase and said the community group that was formed gave a recommendation directly to the school board.

Visibility

The members of the focus groups agreed it was important for the superintendent to support all organizations in the community. This allowed the school leader to know what people were thinking about all aspects of the town. The board president from Lawrenceville said, "I think he needs to be [community minded], that's the thing, you need to have a heartbeat of the community, it all works together but you have to know what the community wants and what the trustee wants." One member of focus group 1 summed up his group's thoughts: "If they are out there being a part of it then it shows. By being involved in the community he has an idea or pulse of what is going on and I think he's got a lot better chance of making the right decision." Of most importance was

the implication that if the superintendent was not involved in the community, he would not have the necessary information from which to make decisions.

Superintendents. Both superintendents were well aware of the expectations of being visibility from their communities. Being visible at community events, school events, and on the golf course was important. The main aspect of the visibility component was the interaction with the people of the community.

Personal Traits

Community. Both groups brought up integrity as a necessary personal trait. Members of focus group 1stipulated that honesty, integrity, leadership, and caring for kids were the most important dispositions for a superintendent to have. Another personal trait mentioned was the ability to communicate and to tell the truth.

Superintendents. Both superintendents expressed the realization that their personal lives and actions were important benchmarks concerning the level of trust they were afforded. The Lawrenceville superintendent summed up this aspect with "people expect you to be a total role model at all times for kids. I think parents can go out and drink but they expect something different of teachers and leaders of the school district."

Professional Expectations

Longevity. Living in the district long enough was important to communities. Members of focus group 1 stated the importance of longevity in the district allowing for relationships to be built while banker 2 said

> I've lived other places where you expect the superintendent to be somebody who is just going to come in for their last two years to get their income up to a certain

> level before they retire. I think there is different expectations in different communities and it is not that way here. If our superintendent wasn't the kind that he is I think we would get rid of him and get somebody to fit the expectations that are there.

Past performance and history helped these superintendents get the job, but present abilities, consistency, and the act of building a current history with the community allowed the superintendent to keep the job. If nothing else, this commitment to the community showed an interest and a sense of ownership in the community. A school board member of focus group 2 gave a succinct response to the issue of longevity and relationships stating: "Time builds the relationships, one way or another."

Change agent. The superintendents said that they were well aware of the change techniques that were successful in their communities. Both used a combination of modernistic (autocratic) and postmodern (consensual) change methods. Superintendent 1 felt that a combination of techniques was needed because, "It depends on what the issue is and you work differently on different issues. Some things you are going to feel personally strong about or not care about one way or another it depends more on what the issue is." Superintendent 2 said:

> It's their school, it's their kids, and it's their taxes. And we, as those that are working in the school district, must understand, and hopefully, we take a buying so that it's ours too, but we must always realize that we work for the community that we are serving and that's extremely important.

School's Impact on Economic Development.

Specific programs designed to add a positive perception to the communities and schools, as well as have an impact on economic development, were in use in both towns. These venues were seen as communicative tools to get the word out about success. The pastor from focus group 1 spoke to the issue that school districts had become very competitive and that you had to promote them now more than ever before. At the heart of the competition, is economic viability for both the school and community. Both schools used billboards, marquees, newspapers, and websites to get out the positive word about their districts. Radio was also mentioned by the focus groups to showcase athletic teams. Cable TV was incorporated in Summerville to communicate the positive aspects of the school. Even accountability ratings have become an important and visual perceptual tool used by school districts to extol academic excellence.

Superintendent 1 thought accountability ratings might have an influence on perception and help bring people to the community. He said: "If you had an exemplary district year after year then I think it might. Reality of working with 90% low-income kids, it's probably not going to happen here, but if you were in that [situation], then yeah." Superintendent 2 brought a different tack to school perception. He said "We have [a good perception], and I can't even tell you how many graduates we've had in the last 15 years that have become engineers themselves, it's a huge number."

A member of the second focus group said it this way, "I think you need to have the support of a community to have a good school. If you have a good school then you have people coming in and wanting to be a part of that." The perception of the school and the community itself is paramount to attracting and maintaining students. A member

of focus group 1 underscored that plight. He said "When the community is appealing, people want to live in that community. I think that's the battle we are fighting right now; I don't know how appealing our community or school are."

Reputation. The subthemes of superintendents' views concerning their schools' reputations within and outside of the community emerged from the data in discussions about perception, that is, community perceptions about their town and school, perception from those outside the community of the school and community, and specific initiatives, or programs that have the capability to influence that reputation to enhance perception and to attract economic development. One member of focus group 1 said: "Our school is good." Banker 1 believed the perception from outside their communities was all right. Banker 2 responded concerning his first perception of the district with: "Of course I checked the academic side of it prior to coming out here to interview, but once I came out here, met some of the people, and saw the facilities it just kind of finished the picture I think." The insurance salesman from focus group 2 said:

> goes back to we are not pulling up in a yellow dog when we show up to a game; we are pulling up in new Trailways and everyone says, "oooh they are loaded"! I think that is the perception. That can be a good one or a bad one. I've heard the analogy that we are the closest thing they can find out here to a private school. I hear that frequently and I think that has to do with our financial situation and the ability to implement programs that may not be able to get in most school districts.

The concept that sports, and particularly football, had an economic impact as a tool to influence reputation came up. Another member of focus group 2 thought their entire school program showcased the school saying that if you've ever lived anywhere

else you know, even if it was a poor school, it was known for its football team, but I think here it is more balanced. There isn't just one primary aspect to it. Members of focus group 1, however, said that basketball was what they were known for. Banker 1agreed that sports take the lead: "Basketball is big here, the sports are big. I'm not real familiar with a lot of [the other] stuff they do. I know their ag programs and extracurricular stuff is strong, you go to a basketball game, everybody is there." Members of focus group 2 said: "What we've got, the facilities, everything is nice, up to date, and maintained. I think other people see that it's not a perception but a reality, and I think it affects outside towns and we get compliments." They also alluded to outsiders' perceptions that their students were exemplary. "The behavior of our students – our kids do some pretty awesome things, but we don't typically do things some of the other high schools do [poor sportsmanship] when the competitors are in the gym or on the football field. If you go anywhere around here within a 50-60 mile radius, maybe further, they would trade with us in a heartbeat!"

Superintendents. The superintendent's perception of the community is important as it sets the climate in which the school and its management fit into the culture of the community. The responses of the superintendents as to perceptions of their communities and schools are in agreement, and both believe that how people perceive a school has a role in maintaining and bringing new economic development. The responses concerning the perceptions of their schools were somewhat different. For example the superintendent from Lawrenceville said there are "many other things that are not attractive about our town" while superintendent 2 responded with the comment that his town was one of the "crown jewels of West Texas."

Importance of the school to the community

A member of Summerville's focus group said:

If you don't have a school, I can tell you, it won't take you very long till you won't have a community. Because I've seen school systems that have consolidated and gone to other places and the towns don't last very long. When you lose your school you lose your town. A lot of times the school is the driving force in the community. Friday night for the football games or the basketball games, that's the place to be in the community.

The mayor from focus group 2 reported: "It's a social place for people to get together and visit. See some people they haven't seen since last Friday night and that whole setup." They also said that the fact of having such a good school system in town affected how neighboring communities thought of the entire community, that the school helped with recruitment for area business, and that when your school system is seen as really good, it sends a clear message "to anyone looking to come in that you care about your kids and you care about your future." It is, however, a reciprocating relationship between the school and the community. Members of the focus group from Summerville said it this way: You can't have a good school without the support of the community. You have to have the financial support, but you also need to have their blessing and backing. If you don't have the backing you're not going to have a successful school.

Summary

The data gathered through interviews and archival sources provided the information necessary to address the research questions. The rich data combined with the nuances of focus groups and one-on-one settings provided material pertinent to the study as well as the general area of school administration in rural communities. That rural setting impacted the study because at the time of this writing, the farming economy was challenging and the prospect of future oil and gas exploration was exuberant. For example, the case study revealed differences in community economic situations. The differences were apparent and consistent across the parameters of community. Lawrenceville interviews reflected a depressed sense of economic condition with a sole emphasis on farming, while Summerville respondents reported a broader sense of economic opportunity with oil and gas as well as farming. This economic prosperity and growth stimulated a sense of opportunity and pride at Summerville, which permeated the interviews and reflected a sense of an aggressive team working with clear vision. Lawrenceville, while also having intense communal pride, lacked that sense of urgency concerning economic development.

The archival data also reinforced the upbeat versus depressed natures of the communities. Summerville data revealed higher tax bases, teacher salaries, and wealth per student, whereas Lawrenceville data reported lower numbers in these areas. Newspaper articles were consistent between the two towns as to coverage of the schools and the positive nature of that coverage.

The data supported the belief that each school was the emotional, social, and collective center of the community. Each school was tied closely to the identity of the

community and the performance of that entity becomes the perceptual face to be put forth and received by those in and out of town. Both communities are fiercely proud their towns in general and specifically their school districts. Both are extremely pleased with the performance of, and the men, who were chosen to be their superintendents. The management and change techniques used by the superintendents were consistent, reflecting local expectations, values, and experience. The acceptance of their management and change techniques produced a sense of trust in the communities allowing the superintendent to administer the school with little or no interference.

Superintendents and community members spoke honestly to the components that give superintendents an advantage in handling change and producing an organization that would be an asset to the communities in the procurement of economic development. The assertion of the use of Appreciative Inquiry, by name, as a change technique proved to be futile. However, the use of the tenets of AI were recognized by those interviewed and reported in the data.

The superintendents in this study had a tremendously high standard to meet with expectations from both trustees and stakeholders. Solid relational building skills proved to be the key to such achievement, not only resulting in a communal trust placed in the leader, but a construction of perceptual strength and security needed to emphasize positive aspects of the school and affect the development of economic activity.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The literature is plentiful regarding the relationship of the superintendent to the communities he or she serves. However, what is lacking in the literature is a wide understanding of the relationship between the superintendent's position and the impact it may have on economic development. Study into the implications of management style and change techniques applied by that position toward the successful procurement of economic development for the community is lacking.

The study reported herein modeled a comparative case study technique comparing two communities, their superintendents, and archival data from the Texas Education Agency and other sources. Responses from the individual superintendents and community focus groups revealed the expectation that their schools be administered in a traditional or modernistic manner. As a backdrop against that expectation was the reality of actual management styles and change techniques used by the superintendents to place the schools in a position to help to attract economic development. Of specific interest to this study was the change theory known as Appreciative Inquiry, and its positive impact on economic growth.

Problem

The problem is the decline in steady employment opportunities in rural West Texas and the modernistic outlook of school boards and superintendents regarding the role of the rural school in economic development. This modernistic outlook does not lend itself to successful procurement of economic development in order to replace dwindling jobs. A byproduct of this employment issue is the decline of enrollment in the public schools in small and midsized rural communities of West Texas. The declining enrollment results in less state funding. That funding is calculated from enrollment figures provided by local districts. Dwindling enrollments mean less money for the schools, and that in turn places burdens on the district's ability to offer pertinent academic programs. The symbiotic relationship between the community and the school can be clearly seen. Declining enrollment is often a result of the lack of infusion of economic opportunities into small communities culminating in stagnant or declining employment opportunities for families.

Research Questions

After a review of the literature, the following research objectives and questions emerged for this study. First was the prevailing thought of the plight of traditional, modernistic, rural communities in the state of Texas, more especially in rural West Texas and the schools that serve them. Second was the importance of a viable public school district in these rural towns to maintain the community and to be a partner in the attraction of economic development. Third was the question of the importance of the position of superintendent of schools as leaders in the community, the expectations

placed on them, and their ability to be able to guide the change necessary to improve their districts and to promote the positive perception of their districts. And finally was the fact that little or no research was available on the topic of superintendents and economic development. The following research questions emerged as an interrogatory basis to guide the study of the problem:

1. How do superintendents practice relational organizational change (transformation) known as Appreciative Inquiry?
2. How do superintendents perceive a connection between their management style, their relational change (transformation) technique, and economic development in the community?
3. How do members of the community perceive a connection between the superintendent's relational change (transformation) technique and economic development in the community?

Relevant questions such as these and their interpretive responses and analysis are appropriate to ask about the phenomenon being studied (Marcus & Fischer, 1986). The interpretive responses reflected the knowledge and use of Appreciative Inquiry or similar change technique; the relationship of the superintendent with the community and community expectations; the perceived management style of the superintendent; the economic perception of the community and the superintendents' role in economic development; and the communities' perception of their school districts.

Methodology

The study incorporated the comparison of two communities in West Texas. The communities were chosen based on their rural locations and different wealth levels as

provided by the State of Texas. Utilized for the comparisons were archival data obtained from the Texas Education Agency.

Interviews of the respective individual superintendents as well as focus groups from each community added the insights to apply to the research questions. The focus groups represented the community and were knowledgeable about the economic situation and needs of the community. They also had varied relational situations with their local school districts and the superintendent. The researcher, for both superintendent and focus group settings, used 10 semi-structured interview questions and asked up to 15 additional questions until saturation was reached. The questions asked and the delivery of the interviews were adjusted to provide clarification to the inquiry. The superintendent interviews were held in closed setting, one in the superintendent's office and the other at a nearby Education Service Center. The focus group interviews were held in the respective communities in an open setting. All interviews were tape-recorded. The researcher utilized the audio recordings for review, and read transcriptions with the recordings for clarity. The researcher then coded the material using latent content procedures. For those data the researcher placed or *chunked* the responses into clusters providing themes and in some cases subthemes. These consistent themes allowed the researcher to construct a grounded theory from this baseline of phenomenological data.

Trustworthiness, Triangulation, and Transferability

Trustworthiness

The credibility of the findings and interpretations depends on careful attention to establishing trustworthiness. In qualitative research, the researcher becomes the primary

instrument for gathering data. Credibility in this research method hinges on the skill and competence of the researcher (Patton, 2002). Lincoln and Guba (1985) described prolonged engagement and persistent observation as components of trustworthiness. *Prolonged engagement* is defined as spending sufficient time at the research site while *persistent observation* is described as focusing on detail that is most relevant to the study. This study met the requirements by providing enough time in the interview process to assure saturation of the material. The physical aspects of the gathering of the data are essential to providing high levels of trustworthiness to the project. This study met this obligation by recording, transcribing, categorizing, and then applying the data to the research questions. The data were read for clarity and analyzed for relevance a minimum of four times before they were was synthesized into the study. Glesne (1999) also emphasized the continued importance of being aware of biases, and knowing that objectivity will assist you in producing more trustworthy interpretations. The researcher met this criterion by maintaining objectivity toward the participants and data throughout the process.

Bibliographic documentation assured strength for the structure of the study while distinct records containing all data were accumulated to maintain the integrity of the research. Citations were kept throughout the research and catalogued using the Endnote software.

Triangulation

Qualitative researchers rely on multiple methods to gather data to enhance trustworthiness (Glesne, 1999). The strength of using triangulation is that using multiple reference points enables the researcher to more accurately ascertain the objects exact

position (Newman & Benz, 1998). Triangulation has also been described as a process to determine and confirm reliability by using a combination of several data collection methods or data sources in the same design (Newman & Benz, 1998). The research reported herein incorporated the use of triangulation of archival data, one-on-one interviews, and focus groups to strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings.

Archival data comparison among communities

The archival data gathered produced a stark contrast in economic strength between the two districts. While each district was on solid financial ground, District 2 had revenue-per-student that was approximately 83% more than District 1 had. This added revenue enabled District 2 to enhance their campus appearance. At the time of this writing, preparation was underway for a new junior high, which, as the interviews revealed, attracted economic development and families to their rural setting. Conversely, the aspect of lack of revenue proved to be a detriment to District 1 as their physical plant, although well maintained, was not due for any updates in the near future. Also of importance was the difference in teacher pay. A substantial pay difference allowed District 2 the ability to attract the most qualified teachers, thereby enhancing the perception of the standard of education available in that community. Interviews substantiated District 2 as being proud of their schools and their staffs. Because of proximity to other communities, the teaching staff resided in the community. In contrast, location to a larger community did not bode well for District 1. Interviews corroborated that District 1 was proud of their schools and staff, but they did express the wish that they all lived in the community to help out.

The physical makeup of the two communities participating in the study was also different. District 1 had several boarded up businesses giving the appearance of a struggling economy while District 2 was adding businesses every week according to interview data.

Of interest was the fact that both schools maintained the same accountability rating across the years studied. Both school districts were academically acceptable according to the Texas Education Agency. That rating had little or no relevance to importance to economic development.

Transferability

The transferability of this work includes applications for superintendent preparation programs and seminars designed to provide insight into the rural superintendency. The literature analysis and research are applicable as a basis for further research on rural economic development issues and school district participation. However, as the study is qualitative, and different communities are capable of producing different results, these results may not be transferrable.

Limitations of the Study

While the research seeks to study the research-based source of Appreciative Inquiry change theory, it did not attempt to evaluate or prioritize the findings. The study also kept the focus on school districts within the parameters of topics focused on economic development and accountability ratings, as related to school success and positive perception. The superintendents taking part in this study were representative of

those from rural West Texas school districts, and their positions reflected typical responsibilities, decision-making capabilities, and experience levels required for the job. Their responses to inquiries are in no way inclusive of every action or reaction from all West Texas superintendents to all situations represented. The study did not attempt to draw any causal relationships between the change theory used by superintendents and the availability of research findings. Since the research was conducted by a sitting superintendent, possible bias of the data collected may be inherent. Berg (2004) cited Kahn and Cannell (1957, p. 62): "The role of the interviewer is determined in part by the expectations of others." Berg (2004) continued, "It is therefore within the capacity of an interviewer to affect (without biasing results) even the preconceived notions that subjects may have about the interviewer's role," (p. 98). The act of a school superintendent interviewing other superintendents or board members could very easily color the perception and the validity of the data. Other limitations to this study include the facts that the two towns represented may or may not represent other rural communities in West Texas; that this research lacked total immersion in the communities to gain an understanding of the issues; that this study represents a specific segment of time both for the study as well as the data collection resulting on a limited exposure of study; and the realization that the there are many factors not studied that determine economic development, which may or may not be influenced by the superintendent of schools.

Summary

Several publications have stressed the importance of the superintendent's relationship to the communities in which they serve (Kowalski, 1999). However, there is

a void in the literature concerning that relationship and the attainment of economic development for their communities. Even more obscure is the use of the relational change technique of Appreciative Inquiry by superintendents. This study focused on the relational aspects two superintendents had with their communities and how those relations affected the superintendents' ability to bring business interests into their communities. Also studied were the superintendents' management styles as to whether each type was progressive, traditional, or both and did a certain style enhance the schools' ability to help with community economic development. The basic focus at the onset was to ascertain whether the use of Appreciative Inquiry to promote positive change was applicable to the superintendent's ability to enhance economic development.

As the study took place, what became apparent was the knowledge that Appreciative Inquiry, as a change theory, was not a term known to the superintendents or the community. However various concepts of Appreciative Inquiry were being utilized, particularly the *dream* phase.

Research Question #1

How do superintendents practice relational organizational change (transformation) known as Appreciative Inquiry?

According to Kowalski (1999), from the time the position of superintendent was created to the first years of the 20th century, the main focus of the local district superintendent was implementing state curricula and supervising teachers. These modernist, traditional, ways of school management have led to perceptions of schools as being simply factories of educational outputs with the superintendents being reporters

and managers but not leaders (Konnert, 1990). Kowalski (1999) found that regardless of the size of the district, most formal job descriptions for superintendents are long and expansive and typically include a wide range of managerial duties, instructional leadership responsibilities, and analytical tasks. The modernist expectations have led some superintendents to simply maintain or serve as custodians of their districts. Holbeche (2006) said that culture represents the collective programming of mind, which distinguishes the members of one organization from another. This study's data reflected the thoughts of Holbech in that the superintendents knew that the maintenance of the traditional culture of their districts was important to their communities. The superintendents and focus groups spoke to the importance of successful academic endeavors, as well as athletic and aesthetic strengths. These and other positive student outcomes create a culture and tradition of flourishing and therefore a perception of success.

Custodian administrators simply want to maintain the status quo with little or no change. Communities have the expectation of tradition and maintenance, and the superintendent can easily survive with no effort. This modernistic approach to work constructs *mindsets* used by default to produce a vision of predictable expectation. Communities as well as school leaders have *mindsets* they bring to the table on which to base their expressions of ideas. These mindsets are the result of modernist paradigms whereby past information is taken to be truth with little room being afforded to the reception of new ideas. Modernistic paradigms, in turn, create social, economic, and organizational societies that make change difficult. Cultures are the result of these created

histories. However, needed change can and should move the culture forward into an ever sustainable unit.

Decision making and change management are inherent with the job of superintendent of schools. Choosing the mechanism of change becomes important. McKenzie (2003) stated: "Appreciative Inquiry addresses a system's needs but finds solutions in past successes. The model energizes a community, rather than overwhelming it with ineffective, unproven approaches" (p. 38). Appreciative Inquiry would allow the administrator to have that mechanism to build on what is already working in their organization to either comply to possible mandates or to simply improve the situation.

The superintendents and focus group members alike did not know of Appreciative Inquiry, but did use some of the techniques, specifically the design and dream phases.. A reason for this might be that Appreciative Inquiry is a postmodern concept, and these towns and their superintendents are thoroughly grounded in modernistic settings. As postmodernism challenges traditional norms of power and hierarchy (Shoho, 2005), it deconstructs traditional mindsets (Maxcy, 1994). These superintendents are aware of their roles in the bureaucratic structures of their districts and their communities. The focus groups were more apt to observe the superintendents' use of the concepts than the superintendents were themselves. The superintendents were much more tentative on their examples, but after some discussion, they tried to correlate the Appreciative Inquiry with other consensual change techniques. One superintendent said that he used appreciative techniques as a reward or acknowledgement but did not state using such to initiate economic change. He thought that because of his small staff, he had the responsibility to promote any type of changes or programs he felt the school needed. This reflects a

thorough grounding in modernistic thought rather than postmodernism, inasmuch as modernism approaches organizational change rather than conceptually thinking outside the knowledge base of the community. English (2003) argued that the knowledge base was "perhaps the most privileged trophy of all" as the knowledge base in communities is synonymous with the powerbase. Appreciative Inquiry on the other hand is a concept that looks to the future and dreams what could be not what has been done. It is the search through cooperative methods for the best in people, organizations, and the holistic environment in which they function (Watkins, 2001).

The other superintendent was able to make the connection of using techniques of Appreciative Inquiry to get a bond passed. He used relational as well as connectional aspects of language and tradition to articulate the change needed. The expectations expressed by the superintendents about the operations of their districts and their attempts to articulate the positive aspects is an important part of change strategy; however, specific applications to the change technique of Appreciative Inquiry were weak at best.

Vision. Senge (1990) expressed concern about visions of organizations not having the support of all the stakeholders. The lack of support by all involved produces a sense of division between two or more camps interested in the resolution of the issue at hand. Senge's analysis is not exclusive to company visions or mission statements. Any explicit direction or decision executed by management will produce the same results. What *might* alleviate possible divisions is consensual decision making when appropriate. Including all involved in a consensual type of decision-making such as Appreciative Inquiry provides a postmodern option for management. These superintendents acknowledged the importance of such actions.

Research Question #2

How do superintendents perceive a connection between their management style, their relational change (transformation) technique, and economic development in the community?

Wallace (1998) said concerning postmodern management: "The flexible organization, one that can respond quickly and effectively to shocks and surprises, demands a completely different style of management. The old top-down command and control will not work here because it takes too long" (p. 94). The study reported herein showed that these superintendents were aware that in today's arena of instant communication from any and all (both official and unofficial) the superintendent has to be flexible in his reactions to situations. These reactions and decisions may be made from both camps and those are judged within the situation at hand. For example, if the situation is of an emergency nature, an autocratic, modernist, or as the above quote says, 'old top down' decision would be entirely appropriate. In fact, it takes the least amount of time to execute. If the administrator has more time for study, then the postmodern, more consensual style of decision making has possibilities. Although the literature says very little about situational management style, the data revealed such flexibility to be an asset to the school manager.

The regulations of the State of Texas provide insight to the responsibilities of the superintendent from a legal basis. Local boards of trustees, in turn, adapt local policies or directives to provide parameters for operations. However, it is up to the superintendent to

implement the policies as dictated from the board. The direction chosen to affect the change is the superintendent's.

Shoho (2005) noted: "From its inception, the position of school administrator was designed to attract individuals who were willing to comply with a view of schooling that validated rather than challenged exiting norms" (p. 55). Superintendents coming into a job are expected to act, manage, and perform as they were hired to do. Norton (1996) said that superintendents must be aware of community power structures early in their tenure, and that it is important to know how school issues might be perceived by the power structure and who to talk with about issues requiring community support. The interviews concurred that it was important for the superintendent to understand the community and district before tackling big changes. Carter and Cunningham (1997) said that we need greater continuity at the top of the school district organization to sustain and nurture the continuous improvement process. As time went on in these communities, the superintendents were seen more as educational experts capable of having plans and expectations that deviate from the community expectations as they gained trust through longevity. This is a slow process that is more concerned with relationship building rather than management. Immersion into the community as a citizen is so important to building those relationships in a small town. After time, usually consisting of two years at a minimum, civic service, and a true effort to learn and take ownership in the community, then the superintendent can slowly begin to make the changes necessary to provide success and to move forward his agenda. These superintendents had to not only be aware of the established culture present in the school district before attempting to manage, but also be cognizant of the expectations the community places on the job of superintendent

of schools. The literature also supports this. Glass (1992) asked superintendents from all sized schools across the nation about their primary expectations from their boards. What was reported by the respondents was that they were expected to be general managers first, then have expertise in human relations skills, then instruction and curricular issues, and finally, have financial knowledge.

The issue of community involvement was evident throughout, as superintendent responses emphasized the importance of community relationships to increase organizational management efficiency. Community involvement allowed these superintendents to be immersed in not only the culture of the school but the entire community. Developing relationships is the key to effective management. Johnson (1996) said that superintendents who do not embrace the school division's relationship to local and state interests cannot hope to effectively lead their organizations. Membership in civic organizations, church attendance, and other visibility across the community and at ball games helped these superintendents to become part of the community and develop relationships. Holbeche (2006) wrote that developing the relational or social aspects of organizational culture develops during the course of social interaction. Social interaction produced the visibility the research reported was so important to success.

Being a role model was also important in these communities. Honesty and integrity were huge traits to possess as these West Texas superintendents strove to communicate and deal with boards and communities.

Longevity and history in the community and the school emerged as enhancing relationship building. The longevity of the superintendent is important to establishing continuity of programs, relationships, and trust. Carter and Cunningham (1997) state:

"Our nation's school districts must have more stable leadership, as do most of our private institutions; we need greater continuity at the top of the school district organization to sustain and nurture the continuous improvement process"(p. 242). Organizational change takes time. Dalton (1978) said that organizational change is, in fact a process whereby behavior patterns are adjusted over time. Both superintendents espoused the importance of longevity in helping to establish relationships, and maintain consistency. Both superintendents stated that it was important to have relationships in the community, established throughout that longevity, to effectively do their jobs.

Research Question #3

How do members of the community perceive a connection between the superintendent's relational change (transformation) technique and economic development in the community?

The perception of the superintendent and school in the community was important to the focus groups. The groups responded that the superintendent *was* the school. Whether at statewide meetings or at the football game, the superintendent was seen by the public as the face of the district. The reputation of the superintendent and his or her record in the community was important. Renihan & Renihan (1984) state: "The perception or image of the public school is determined by the feelings the public has accumulated over time as a result of what they have seen and experienced" (p. 145). The perception of the superintendent and the superintendent's job expectations in the community were important to the superintendent's understanding of the expectations for success. Answering the question in the community about superintendent's perception and attitude came only from the conscious interaction in the community by the

superintendent. Perception becomes a variable to the reality of success. Modernistic aspects of community expectations are factors that superintendents must understand and strategically deconstruct. Shoho (2005) posited: School administrators were designated as stewards of the communities in which they worked, and are charged with embodying and reinforcing the values of the power elites who hired them (p. 55). Balancing Shoho's comment as reality and the need for effective and progressive management was the challenge for these rural superintendents.

These superintendents were seen as leaders in the community by office alone. Superintendents of schools are considered to be persons of high motivation, education, and social skill and are seen to be a representative of the established status quo. They are tried in the elite and usually well-entrenched social segments of the small communities to prove their proficiency in all types of social as well as business situations. Czaja, 1997 stated

> In a rural district the superintendent will frequently be the individual with the most formal education. So who would be expected to have the most knowledge about communication, human behavior, and group dynamics? If there is any hope for unity or effective governance, the person who has the most skills, presumably the superintendent would build community support and intervene in conflict situations so that win-win situations are achieved.

Political savvy is expected and necessary to do the business of the superintendent.

Again, superintendents need to understand the culture of their communities and the expectations of their patrons. The communities asserted a strong need for high

expectations for the superintendents' to possess high standards of conduct. These superintendents had the insight to adhere to the standards of the community from personal habits and manners to going to church to help to establish trust within the entire community. Longevity and expertise were also important to maintaining employment and establishing a career along with past performance, history, image, and consistency.

That trust and confidence from the community allowed the superintendents a sense of security to be able to lead and do business in a manner that reflected each superintendent's comfortable, personal style of management. The style of management each superintendent used reflected his perception of the type of manager he was. That perception, in turn, dictated the trust necessary to move the district forward. Constant vigilance and protection of that trust was necessary. These superintendents were cognizant that they had to maximize opportunities to perform in all situations. However, that trust and chance to perform in such opportunistic settings requires not only a clear vision of successful outcomes for the district, but also the ability to grasp and understand the historical basis for the present. Becoming a part of the community and possessing integrity were deemed necessary to establish the trust.

These communities did expect their superintendents to attract economic development. As leaders in the community, they carry the unofficial moniker of cheerleader. Apart from the superintendent's expectations of attracting economic development, the perception of the entire district became important to the attraction of business. Although the districts had the same accountability ratings, superintendents realized the importance of TAKS scores. The focus groups agreed that the school district reputation was important.

The expectations of the community concerning the future of their town convey the perceived need for the school to be a major player in the development of economic development. Each community felt that the school was a major drawing card for people to move to their communities. The citizens of the communities were proud of their schools. Both of these schools were the identity and cultural bulwark of their communities, just as Emery (2006) noted: "Schools reflect and transmit the culture of their communities across generations, preserving its unique future" (p. 3).

Conclusions

The parameters of this study were narrow in scope providing insight into the relationship between rural superintendents, their management and organizational change styles, in particular the organizational change technique of Appreciative Inquiry, and its potential to impact economic development. The study explored organizational change techniques incorporated by the superintendents studied, their efforts to put forth a good perception of their districts, and the importance of the schools they served in the development of economic activity in their respective rural communities.

Although the towns were not alike economically, they each held a tremendous amount of pride for their communities and their schools. Their exceptations were the same for their superintendents as far as community visibility, integrity, expertise, and relational tendencies. Their performance, as far as state standards, were similar and their communities were happy with their individual and school district performance. The economic status and future of the towns did not impact the satisfaction with their superintendent. While future economic security and viability were concerns in both

communities, those anxieties did not diminish the pride they had in their schools and communities as well as their hopes for the future. Although the communities were on extreme ends of the economic picture, both their outlooks were positive.

Research Question #1 derived no data in reference to the use of the Appreciative Inquiry change technique. Administrators and focus groups attempted to extrapolate the tenets of Appreciative Inquiry to their experiences in using positive change technique however, specific references to Appreciative Inquiry were not established. Watkins (2001) reported that a strong leadership with vertical alignment centered around a common, positive vision for the organization; improving systems for recognition and rewards, and increasing organizational competence in how to facilitate and engage in appreciative discourse capitalizing on the intelligence, talents, and energy of the whole system. The data also held to this concept without identifying it as Appreciative Inquiry. Both communities considered their superintendents' leadership to be strong and have appropriate visions for their schools. These superintendents were very adept at recognizing their teachers' successes, and were open to different thought processes as far as their schools' management. These findings are all consistent with the literature.

Research Question #2 revealed the reality of very strong aspects of community/superintendent relational tendencies as providing the impetus of community building, more especially economic development. Superintendents spoke of the importance of the position of superintendent to be visible, involved, and to be a contributing part of the community, both in and out of the schoolhouse. Time is needed to build the necessary history to reflect competence, personal motive, and opportunity for performance. Carter and Cunningham (1997) argued that: "We need greater continuity at

the top of the school district organization to sustain and nurture the continuous improvement process" (p. 242). These opportunities for interaction, based on longevity, built the necessary relationships. These relational tendencies provide the trust, integrity, and communication venues to allow the superintendent and the community to work together in tandem. "Superintendents must be aware of community power structures early in their tenure. It is important to know how school issues might be perceived by the power structure and who to talk with about issues requiring community support" (Norton, 1996, p. 339). This working in tandem is essential to not only affective management, but with the building of relationships in various other settings away from the schoolhouse. When issues do emerge, the communicable relationship has already been established, and a resolution would be more easily achieved with less fallout. If the superintendent's view and that of the community are dramatically different, there will be trouble in the partnership. However, the astute superintendent will place himself or herself in situations to communicate and reciprocate that communication to clarify the perceived into actual communal expectations. Johnson (1996) reiterated noting that: Superintendents who do not comprehend and embrace their school's relationship to local and state interests cannot hope to effectively lead their organizations.

Superintendent expectations are very rarely written except for school board policy and job descriptions. These legal and policy frameworks are a very small part of the actual expectations. The act of attending church will not be in the school board policy manual; however, it was an expectation in these two communities. Coaching Little League, helping with Boy or Girl Scouts, and serving on countless boards and committees are other examples of unwritten expectations that these superintendents and

focus group members mentioned. Moral and ethical expectations, ranging from social habits to paying bills in a timely fashion, were also mentioned. Whatever the case, the data showed there are many more expectations within both of these communities than are on the contract, policy, or job description.

Measuring political capital against making unpopular decisions for the improvement of the education of all students is not incompatible. But too many unpopular decisions or decisions that have a polarizing effect on the constituents will eventually cost the superintendents. Take, for example, superintendents who come into jobs, and for necessary reasons, close schools or at the other extreme put together bond issues to house students and classes more effectively. Somewhat less economically viable, but still radical is the superintendent who needs to change an aspect of the school that is steeped in tradition. All are polarizing issues, but all are decisions that must be made.

Research Question #3 provided insight into the perceptions the communities themselves had about the superintendents and school responsibility regarding economic development. Community members concurred with the superintendents on areas of visibility and community interaction. Although the literature was moot on this issue, the data supported the importance of the superintendent and the school district both being at the table regarding community economic development.

Of interest was the perception of the community in regard to the future of their communities and the schools' role in the future. Although the communities studied, by design, were diametrically different as far as wealth, they were consistent with each other throughout, with their responses that there is an essential need for a school district to exist

and perform well to keep the their towns economically viable. Peshkin (1978, 1982) wrote about how vital a school is to the survival of rural communities. He noted that schools serve as symbols of community autonomy, community vitality, community integration and control, personal and community tradition, and personal and community identity. According to Peshkin (1978), "Viable [communities] generally contain schools; dying and dead ones either lack them or do not have them for long" (p. 161). The school is a benchmark for the community's wellbeing. The sense of cultural survival for the adult citizens is attributed to the school because of the activities that year after year build that tradition (Peshkin, 1978, p. 161). That sense of survival, as Peshkin calls it, rallies those in power to attempt to maintain their comfort level, the status quo. The literature and the data concurred.

Superintendents have an unwritten responsibility to be involved, or at least to have the knowledge, of economic conditions of the community. Chambers of commerce and economic development boards are prime opportunities to serve in positions of leadership as board members. These positions allow rural superintendents to not only to exhibit their leadership skills, but to also keep in touch with economic conditions and form relationships with business leaders. Realistically superintendents, because of their positions in the community, are expected to serve on these boards.

Community perceptions of themselves and the perceptions of neighboring towns have importance to the superintendent. That *picture* of the community carries into all aspects of school operations from procuring teachers, to recruiting students, to even the willingness of sports officials to call your games. The perception of the school becomes the perception of the community for outsiders. The perception constructed adds a basis

for the community itself, either positive or negative. Positive perceptions draw participants to the event, schools or even communities.

The conscious applications of strategies to enhance perceptions are being utilized by both communities. For communication, superintendent 1 talked about students taking folders home once a week. He said because they work well to get information out, our elementary sends out a weekly folder that goes to all parents. That's been part of our elementary school system for so long that it's where parents go for their information. Superintendents, in rural communities, have the biggest stage from which to work to enhance just about everything. They must be a part of the culture to enhance effectively.

Implications

This study was designed to determine whether or not rural West Texas superintendents and the schools they serve have any impact on economic development in their communities. The study provided insight into the need for superintendents to be actual members of the community to be able to cultivate the relationships necessary to affect their communities in a positive manner. It is the process of the decision making itself that can minimize the negative effects and allow the superintendent to live to play again.

Superintendents, to be successful in such a setting as rural West Texas, must possess a wide range of management techniques designed to be implemented in various situations. Again, modernistic, traditional styles of management as well as a more consensual postmodern style are to be appreciated in the superintendents' arsenal. Both traditional and progressive means to change and management enabled these

superintendents to guide their districts in directions to facilitate positive outcomes. Those outcomes, in turn, have the ability to affect the success of their schools. That success will then be a drawing influence to the attainment of new business as well as the retention of existing business. This will help to build a tax base that will ensure the long-term existence of the school district as well as increase much needed enrollment.

That conscious act of being visible in public is the choice of the astute superintendents. They realize the importance of being involved in the community. Being available to all aspects of the community, not for political reasons, but to procreate relationships is important in a small town.

The superintendent must understand that as much as you may feel that you are a part of the community and even consider it your hometown, and that your expertise and management are respected, you are still hired to run their school the way they want it run. Your job is to be the expert and advisor on the topic of education. Thompson (2006) stated that superintendents, when understanding their boards and communities, must realize that: "It's their school, their kids, and their money" when dealing with the final decision for change and action.

In today's climate of advertising and instant perception analysis, schools are lagging behind the curve. Advertising and perception construction have not been parts of school districts' mindsets because schools have been seen as serving all students in a particular locality. However, with the advancements of technology, students and families have the capabilities to be educated via the internet and other technological means. Also, school districts in areas being served with several other districts in proximity have new challenges to compete for students.

Rural communities and schools are having to compete for both citizens and students. Public relations have become an issue to attract both. Billboards, television and radio commercials, print media, and word of mouth have been used by communities and schools for years to bring the spotlight to them. The development of the internet has burgeoned the necessity to have web sites for both cheerleading for the school as well as communication with stakeholders. Schools of today are, more and more, communicating electronically with parents, some on a daily basis. Whether it is getting the word out about school closures due to weather or health issues, such as the H1N1 virus, schools, parents, and students are becoming adept at virtual touches. Teachers and parents can communicate via e-mail almost instantly, or at a time when phone calls are not practical, to enhance the education of the student. Parents can access their child's grades 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Having an up-to-date web site has become crucial for the creation of a positive perception in not only the community and region, but to the world.

Superintendents are hired to somehow keep the old and move on to the new. The culture in a community is not static, in fact it can be somewhat fickle. People want to be a part of a progressive movement while at the same time wanting the security of what has been the standard. Deal and Kennedy (1998) observed that: Cultures are the living, breathing manifestations of deeply held desires of people to do what is right. Cultures thrive on change just as much as they champion tradition and are always adapting to the change that takes place around them. Failure to adapt would be threatening and would be seen as a sign that the culture was falling behind. The reason cultures resist is because of the perceived danger to long-standing core values or widely accepted rituals. Deal and Kennedy are correct in their assessment of organizations but in particular of small towns

and their schools. Global communication has brought different expectations and ideas to small town citizens. The access to communication has transformed the rural mindset of traditional educational standards to a more progressive level, especially among younger parents. They know what is in the marketplace as far as the educational product is concerned and want those latest instructional techniques, resources, and facilities for their children. Deal and Kennedy are correct that cultures can and will change if the mechanism is correct, and the end result is one of attainment for the stakeholders.

School administrators are inculcated in these modernist paradigms of culture by way of experience (status quo jobs with unspoken requests to keep their campuses and districts the same) and training in administration classes that require little or no new thought to school management. Administrators have a need to understand from whence the community comes, and the modernistic structure supporting the thought pool, or mindset, of the small town. Deal and Kennedy (1998) reported: "The myth that culture resists change is deeply embedded in the psyche of many managers. Anytime problems arise in implementing some new initiative, the knee jerk reaction is to blame everything on the culture. Since the problem cannot be the manager or the brilliant initiative, what better whipping boy than the culture" (p. 35). Perhaps the issue is not with the culture, but with the approach to the desired change.

Postmodern school administrators must have a wide range of management techniques, both traditional and progressive, as situations are seldom similar and must be handled in different ways. According to Zander (1950), the main resistance factor is the nature of the change not being made clear to all the people who are going to be affected by the change. Zander is correct. Communication, both timely and accurate, allows the

superintendent to succeed in the change process itself and will enhance the chance for the change itself to come to fruition.

Superintendents need to understand the importance of the role they play in economic development and the viability of the town. For example, as they produce budgets and then execute them, they have the choice as to the vendors that are secured to provide the goods and services to their districts. Supporting local merchants provides business to the community as a whole, but also reinvests the tax dollars back into the community that has paid those tax bills.

Recommendations

The recommendations asserted by this research are the primary reason to do the study in the first place. The position of superintendent of schools in any community, but especially those of limited population, lends itself to be highly volatile as it tends to deal with the constituents most valued assets, that being their children and their money. To help assure the survival and success of superintendents in rural communities in West Texas as far as organizational change, community expectations, and economic development responsibilities are concerned, the following recommendations for study are asserted:

1. Examine a continued need for school administrators, particularly superintendents, to obtain further study of progressive or postmodern change management. This present study reported a need for the use of varied techniques for change and management. This expertise is usually gained

through trial and error and experience as opposed to instruction. Consequently, the veteran superintendents are usually the ones who possess these skills. More applicable training in superintendent-preparation programs is called for. This will allow the persons newer to the position to have the skills to have more options in their toolbox. Techniques such as Appreciative Inquiry have a valid necessity for study in superintendent-preparation programs and continuing education arenas.

2. As reported in the study, superintendents need to be aware of the culture they have signed on to serve. Communities and superintendents alike are charged with having the responsibility of making sure the marriage of the two entities will be productive and last. This is a tremendous task for the local board of trustees to procure the right person, but, as this study indicates, longevity of the superintendent is essential for the future of the school district.
3. Boards of trustees in small communities need to assert and communicate the importance of the role of the superintendent and of the school in economic development. Such communication will let the superintendent know that she or he has the responsibility of aggressively *selling* the school district in an effort to bring in the economic development needed to sustain both the school and the town.
4. There is a need in rural communities for all stakeholders to communicate on a regular basis to discus the economic condition of the area. These stakeholders include the administrative and elected positions of the city, county, hospital district, and schools. Others included should reflect all church denominations

as well as civic groups. Goals for community maintenance as well as improvement must be articulated to all the players in the community.

5. There is a need for further research into questions concerning the schools' role in economic development and the conditions resulting from school finance legislation, demographic tendencies, and socioeconomic status.
6. Superintendents have a responsibility to use their leadership skills and serve on civic boards in their communities. As members of these boards, they gain access to conversations about the economic health of their town. That knowledge, and the relationships built while serving, will allow them to understand their role in economic development and use their school to help enhance the stability of the community.

Final Thoughts

This study was designed to answer three questions regarding relational leadership by superintendents and economic development. One purpose was to ascertain the degree that superintendents use the change technique known as Appreciative Inquiry to positively produce change and enhance the perception of the district. The other purpose concerned the superintendent's role in creating a positive perception of the school and procuring economic development in a rural setting.

The use of Appreciative Inquiry was nonexistent in the schools and communities studied, however tenets of the technique could be recognized in situations the superintendents addressed. Buskirk (2002) spoke to the application of Appreciative Inquiry at a school in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The school had issues with workloads, staff morale, and performance. As the team from La Salle University conducted the

Appreciative Inquiry with a wide variety of stakeholders, the participants went about the process with an enthusiasm that surprised everyone. A depth of energy and excitement was evident as the group worked through countless interviews where the tenets of Appreciative Inquiry were used. They realized that as they appreciated their school and each other in a public setting, the articulating of positive thoughts about their school became more common. What mattered most was not the change itself, but the facilitation of the change model, to provide the opportunity to build relationships built on a positive foundation of social constructionism. Appreciative Inquiry has a great potential in schools as not only a change technique, but as a tool to strengthen relational components of management and operation. Communities have the opportunity to use Appreciative Inquiry as a means of community building, incorporating all the citizens to articulate their hopes for economic development.

After this research was written up, reflection on the study prompted this understanding. To be a successful superintendent in a small town in West Texas you cannot just tend to the schoolhouse. Your job is one of community builder. Community builder in that the position is on equal footing with other civic leaders in the community. To neglect such an understanding will alienate the superintendent and not allow him or her the opportunity to access the full potential of the position. This is a difficult role to perform because the job of school administrator requires making decisions that affect not only people's livelihoods, but also the current and future lives of their students and families. Those decisions are seldom popular in that a lot of the employees of a small district are related to at least one other family in town. You also directly influence the educational and extracurricular opportunities of all the students in a small town. Again, it

is rare that all programs have the perception of having been treated equally after decisions are announced. This is somewhat of a conundrum. Tough decisions will alienate one side or another leaving the losing camp with little good to say about you or your job performance. Nonetheless, the successful superintendent will be proactive in building relationships across all aspects of the community and therefore not only construct the trust necessary to survive but to successfully do the job at hand. In West Texas, that job involves not only the education of the children, but also the survival of his or her school district and ultimately the community. As data from the interviews reported: "Without a school, you lose a community. Period. In any small town USA when the school goes, the town goes."

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APPENDIX A

TEXAS EDUCATION CODE

Texas Education Code Sec. 21.046.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR CERTIFICATION AS SUPERINTENDENT OR PRINCIPAL.

(a) The qualifications for superintendent must permit a candidate for certification to substitute management training or experience for part of the educational experience.

(b) The qualifications for certification as a principal must be sufficiently flexible so that an outstanding teacher may qualify by substituting approved experience and professional training for part of the educational requirements. Supervised and approved on-the-job experience in addition to required internship shall be accepted in lieu of classroom hours. The qualifications must emphasize:

(1) instructional leadership;
(2) administration, supervision, and communication skills;
(3) curriculum and instruction management;
(4) performance evaluation;

(5) organization; and

(6) fiscal management.

(c) Because an effective principal is essential to school improvement, the board shall ensure that:

(1) each candidate for certification as a principal is of the highest caliber; and

(2) multi-level screening processes, validated comprehensive assessment programs, and flexible internships with successful mentors exist to determine whether a candidate for certification as a principal possesses the essential knowledge, skills, and leadership capabilities necessary for success.

(d) In creating the qualifications for certification as a principal, the board shall consider the knowledge, skills, and proficiencies for principals as developed by relevant national organizations and the State Board of Education.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 260, Sec. 1, eff. May 30, 1995.

APPENDIX B

BJA LEGAL

SUPERINTENDENT
QUALIFICATIONS AND DUTIES (LEGAL)
BJA (LEGAL)

The qualifications for Superintendent must permit a candidate for certification to substitute management training or experience for educational experience. *Education Code 21.046*

The Superintendent shall be the educational leader and chief executive officer of the District. *Education Code 11.201(a)*

The duties of the Superintendent include:
1. Assuming administrative responsibility and leadership for the planning, organization, operation, supervision, and evaluation of the education programs, services, and facilities of the District and for the annual performance appraisal of the District's

staff.
2. Except as provided by Education Code 11.202, assuming administrative authority and responsibility for the assignment and evaluation of all personnel of the District other than the Superintendent.
3. Overseeing compliance with the standards for school facilities established by the Commissioner under Education Code 46.008.
4. Initiating the termination or suspension of an employee or the nonrenewal of an employee's term contract. [See DF series]
5. Managing the day-to-day operations of the District as its administrative manager, including implementing and monitoring plans, procedures, programs, and systems to achieve clearly defined and desired results in major areas of District operations.
6. Preparing and submitting to the Board a proposed budget and administering the budget.
7. Preparing recommendations for policies to be adopted by the Board and overseeing the implementation of adopted policies.
8. Developing or causing to be developed appropriate administrative regulations to implement policies established by the Board.
9. Providing leadership for the attainment and, if necessary, improvement of student performance in the District based on the state's academic excellence indicators and other indicators as may be adopted by the State Board of Education or the Board.
10. Organizing the District's central administration.
11. Consulting with the District-level committee as required under Education Code 11.252(f).

12. Ensuring:
a. Adoption of a Student Code of Conduct as required under Education Code 37.001 and enforcement of that Code of Conduct; and
b. Adoption and enforcement of other student disciplinary rules and procedures as necessary.
13. Submitting reports as required by state or federal law, rule, or regulation.
14. Providing joint leadership with the Board to ensure that the responsibilities of the Board and Superintendent team are carried out.
15. Performing any other duties assigned by action of the Board. *Education Code 11.201(d)*
16. On a day-to-day basis, ensuring the implementation of the policies created by the Board. *Education Code 11.1512(a)*
The Board and the Superintendent shall work together to:

1. Advocate for the high achievement of all District students;
2. Create and support connections with community organizations to provide community-wide support for the high achievement of all District students;
3. Provide educational leadership for the District, including leadership in developing the District vision statement and longrange educational plan [see AE];
4. Establish Districtwide policies and annual goals that are tied directly to the District's vision statement and long-range educational plan;
5. Support the professional development of principals, teachers, and other staff; and
6. Periodically evaluate Board and Superintendent leadership.

APPENDIX C

BJA LOCAL

SUPERINTENDENT BJA
BJA (LOCAL)

In addition to responsibilities specifically provided by law or in the Superintendent's contract, the Superintendent shall:
1. Provide leadership and direction for the development of an educational system that is based on the needs of students, on standards of excellence and equity, and on community goals. Toward that end, the Superintendent shall:
a. Establish effective mechanisms for communication to and from staff in instructional evaluation, planning, and decision making.
b. Oversee annual planning for instructional improvement and monitor for effectiveness.
c. Ensure that goals and objectives form the basis of curricular decision making and instruction and communicate

expectations for high achievement.
d. Ensure that appropriate data are used in developing recommendations and making decisions regarding the instructional program and resources.
e. Oversee a system for regular evaluation of instructional programs, including identifying areas for improvement, to attain desired student achievement.
f. Oversee student services, including health and safety services, counseling services, and extracurricular programs, and monitor for effectiveness.
g. Oversee a discipline management program and monitor for equity and effectiveness.
h. Encourage, oversee, and participate in activities for recognition of student efforts and accomplishments.
i. Oversee a program of staff development and monitor staff development for effectiveness in improving district performance.
j. Stay abreast of developments in educational leadership and administration.
2. Demonstrate effective planning and management of District administration, finances, operations, and personnel. To accomplish this, the Superintendent shall:
a. Implement and oversee a planning process that results in goals, targets, or priorities for all major areas of District operations, including facilities maintenance and operations, transportation, and food services.
b. Monitor effectiveness of District operations against appropriate benchmarks.
c. Oversee procedures to ensure effective and timely compliance with all legal obligations, reporting requirements, and policies.
d. Ensure that key planning activities within the District are coordinated and are consistent with Board policy and applicable law and that goals and results are communicated to staff, students, and the public as appropriate.
e. Oversee a budget development process that results in recommendations based on District priorities, available resources, and anticipated changes to district finances.
f. Oversee budget implementation to ensure appropriate expenditure of budgeted funds, to provide for clear and timely budget reports, and to monitor for effectiveness of the process.
g. Ensure that District investment strategies, risk management activities, and purchasing practices are sound, cost-effective, and consistent with District policy and law.
h. Maintain a system of internal controls to deter and monitor

for fraud or financial impropriety in the District.
i. Ensure that the system for recruiting and selection results in personnel recommendations based on defined needs, goals, and priorities.
j. Organize District staff in a manner consistent with District priorities and resources and monitor administrative organization at all levels for effectiveness and efficiency.
k. Oversee a performance appraisal process for all staff that reinforces a standard of excellence and assesses deficiencies; ensure that results are used in planning for improvement.
l. Administer a compensation and benefits plan for employees based on clearly defined goals and priorities.
m. Encourage, oversee, and participate in staff recognition and support activities.
n. Oversee a program for staff retention and monitor for effectiveness.
3. Maintain positive and professional working relationships with the Board and the community. The responsibilities in this regard shall encompass the following:
a. Keep the Board informed of significant issues as they arise, using agreed upon criteria and procedures for information dissemination.
b. Respond in a timely and complete manner to Board requests for information that are consistent with Board policy and established procedures.
c. Provide recommendations and appropriate supporting materials to the Board on matters for Board decision.
d. Articulate and support Board policy and decisions to staff and community.
e. Direct a proactive program of internal and external communication at all levels designed to improve staff and community understanding and support of the District.
f. Establish mechanisms for community and business involvement in the schools and encourage participation.
g. Work with other governmental entities and community organizations to meet the needs of students and the community in a coordinated way.
To the extent permitted by law, the Superintendent may delegate responsibilities to other employees of the District but shall remain accountable to the Board for the performance of all duties, delegated or otherwise

APPENDIX D

SUPERINTENDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Superintendents:

1. How long have you been a superintendent with your present district?

2. What activities enable you to interact with the business community? Is your board supportive of your efforts in these areas?

3. What is your role in the creation of economic development in your community?

4. How do board members view the role of the superintendent concerning economic development?

5. How, if at all, does the perception of the school district effect economic development? Why or why not?

6. How do you promote the positive aspect of your school district?

7. Are you aware of the change technique called Appreciative Inquiry? If so, what is your opinion of it? If not, it is a change theory that incorporates articulating and emphasizing the positive aspects of the program in question. Do you use this technique at any time during the program change process?

8. Do you believe you can create an environment, or reality for you district? What reality do you create for your district?

9. What reality can you create that will enhance economic development?

10. Other aspects of Appreciative Inquiry include allowing stakeholders to "dream" about a system that "might" be in order to move the situation to affect change. Would you incorporate such a strategy for change? The design phase of Appreciative Inquiry allows stakeholders to actually create a solution to the problem from their perspective. Could you support such an activity? Why?

The following questions will be asked as time allows:

11. What aspects of "community" are important to you as a superintendent? Why?

12. What conflicts requiring your action have surfaced that have required traditional management resolutions during your tenure as superintendent.?

13. Were there expectations from the community to handle the situation in that manner? If there were, what were they?

14. How have you gained an element of trust in your community enabling you to interact with the power base?

15. How are you given direction from your board of trustees to enhance economic development?

16. How does your board promote the positive aspects of the district? Can they do more?

17. How do you affect positive change in you district?

18. Would you call your change management style autocratic, consensual or participative?

19. Do you incorporate all types of different insights in your decision making process? How do you encourage or discourage this type of discourse?

20. Explain how you would go about a change that your district needs to make but will meet with extensive obstacles because of tradition? Is there a need to consider tradition?

21. What is your mindset when you prepare to change? Is it positive? Neutral? Or negative?

22. What program works well in your district as far as public relations? What program is most effective?

23. What is your focus in this district? Academic? Financial? Extracurricular? Is it reality or a manufactured focus from outside influence?

APPENDIX E

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTION

Community members and board members (Focus Groups):

1.How long have you been a member of this community?

2.How does the success of the community impact the school and vice versa?

3. What is the economic forecast for your community in the next 5 years? 10 years? 15 years? On what do you base your assessment?

4.As community members, what expectations if any do you have regarding the role of the school in fostering economic development?

5. Do you expect this school district to be a viable one in the next 20 years? The next 50 years? Why? Why not?

6. Traditionally superintendents have only managed the school district. Do you think they should have more involvement with economic development or recovery in the district? Why? Why not?

7. Have you seen any changes in school leadership involvement with community economic development within the last 10-30 years? Please describe.

8. How does your superintendent approach changes to enhance positive perception of the district? How does your superintendent affect positive change in you district?

9.Are you aware of the change technique called Appreciative Inquiry? If so, what is your opinion of it? If not, it is a change theory that incorporates articulating and emphasizing the positive aspects of the program in question, Do you see merit in the use of this technique at any time during the program change process?

10. Other aspects of Appreciative Inquiry include allowing stakeholders to "dream" about a system that "might" be in order to move the situation to affect change. Do you see merit to work within such a strategy for change? The design phase of Appreciative Inquiry allows stakeholders to actually create a solution to the problem from their perspective. Could you support such an activity? Why or why not?

The following questions will be asked as time allows:

11.What role, if any will the superintendent play in keeping the school district and community viable for the next half century?

12. What direction from the community and the trustees does the superintendent receive concerning economic development?

13. What types of attributes does your superintendent possess enabling him/her to gain trust with the power base of the community?

14. What activities enable your superintendent to interact with the business community?

15. How does perception of the school district affect the ability of the community to enhance economic development?

16.What programs work well in your district and community as far as public relations? What program is most effective? What is the least effective?

17. What aspect of "community" is important for the superintendent to pay attention to?

18. How do you as trustees and community members promote the positive aspects of the district?

19. I noticed you mentioned ……. can you expand on that concept of positive promotion?

20. What is your focus on your school district? Academic? Financial? Extracurricular? Is it reality or a manufactured focus from outside influence?

21. During the superintendent's time in this community, what conflicts requiring his/her action have surfaced that have required his/her attention?

22. Were expectations from the community met regarding that situation and the manner in which it was handled?

23. Explain how the superintendent should go about affecting a change that your district needs to make but will meet with extensive obstacles because of tradition?

APPENDIX F

RESEARCH QUESTIONS, THEMES, AND CORRESPONDING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Research Question	Interview Question
1. How do superintendents practice relational organizational change (transformation) known as Appreciative Inquiry?	7,8,9,10,11,12,16,18,19,20,21,23
2. How do members of the community perceive a connection between the superintendent's relational change (transformation) technique and economic development in the community	1,2, 3,4, 5,6,7,,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16, 17,18,20,21,22,23,
How do superintendents perceive a connection between their management style, their relational change (transformation) technique and economic development in the community?	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,21,22,23
Themes from focus groups and	Interview Questions

supt. interviews	
The relationship of the superintendent with the community	11,12,13,14,17,23
Community expectations of the superintendent	2,4,5,11,12,13,14,17,20,22,23
The expected management style of the superintendent	3,4,5,21,22,23
The use of Appreciative Inquiry or its concepts	9,10,11,23
The economic perception of the community	2,3,4,5,6,7,11,12,15

APPENDIX G

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

James Taliaferro, Doctoral Candidate

JoAnn Klinker Ph.D. Chair

Lee Duemer Ph. D.

Doug Simpson Ph. D.

Superintendents Use of Appreciative Inquiry in Two Rural West Texas Communities

I. Rationale:

Small, rural communities are in trouble. "For at least a century, rural areas in the U.S. have been marked by a profound depopulation. In most cases, rural areas are losing economically and socially viable populations, tax bases, and essential services, such as schools, and retail establishments," (Lyson, 2002, p. 136) Rural communities in rural West Texas have for decades provided opportunities for families to enjoy a slower paced environment while at the same time providing opportunities to raise children in an atmosphere of, for the most part, a homogeneous and modernist train of thought. The modernistic thought process provides a basis for the maintenance of tradition. The trouble rests within the context that status quo is good, change is threatening to the "good" way of life, and the perception that traditional power structures and modernist mindsets have to remain static if these communities are to survive. As modernistic as these rural community structures are, the question remains as to whether or not a single public administrator can seriously affect such a community's economic development. These modernist, traditional, ways of school management have led to perceptions of schools and school superintendents as being simply factories and managers of educational outputs. The skilled administrator will set a process in place to test the meta-narratives, a process designed to change her/his organization through intentional interaction. Such interaction is designed to not only provide a forum for discussion, but also to articulate the consensus of thought to push forward the idea of economic viability through school success. This interaction creates a process by which stakeholders maintain their community tradition while changing their school. This proposed study is designed to determine to what extent the change technique of Appreciative Inquiry is being utilized to help produce the perception of a successful rural school and in turn enhance economic development. This study is necessary to establish a foundation of understanding concerning positive community perception, derived from a successful school, and the economic relationship realized. This study will enhance the literature addressing the place and effectiveness of

the superintendent in leading these schools and whether or not they incorporate postmodern change technique.

II. Subjects

Subjects are

1. Two practicing school superintendents from Regions 16, 17, or 18, representing the schools and communities of West Texas. These superintendents will be purposefully chosen to represent two types of districts: one is of a district with chapter 41 status in a community with strong economic development; the other superintendent will be chosen from a chapter 42 district serving in a community struggling with economic development.
2. Twelve adult members of their communities.
3. Two to three school board members from each district.

The subjects for the interview and focus group segment of the research will consist of people that have given their consent to be interviewed. All participants in the interview will take part in this phase of the study on a voluntary basis. Recruitment of these individuals will be purposeful and will utilize business people as well as superintendent recommendations to select those aware of economic development.

III. Procedures

School districts and communities for case study as well as individuals for the interviews and focus groups (Attachment C) will be purposefully selected to enhance the study. Information for the superintendents as well as board members will be derived from public information sources. After the communities and schools are chosen, the researcher will purposefully select members of the business community to interview. Community members, as well as school board members, will be selected on the basis of recommendations of the business community as well as the superintendent. These recommendations will be ascertained to assure those to be interviewed will have a working knowledge of the community as well of the pertinent information related to the study. The researcher will use the snowballing technique of selection to identify other potential participants for the study. The interview participants will be then be contacted through email. A copy of that email is included as Attachment A. If the contact is willing to participate, they will return their wishes by reply email. The researcher will then followup with a phone call to schedule interviews.

Confidentiality will be maintained through the following procedures. Written consent will be obtained prior to the interview process. The participants will be interviewed using a tape recorder with each of the interviewees being asked the same questions. The interview will be semi structured in nature allowing for expansion if necessary. Interviews will be approximately two-three hours in length with an additional follow-up interview of 2 hours if warranted.

Focus groups will be formed to enhance responses and also provide for convenience as well as time restraints. The focus groups will consist of two groups to provide clarity as

to responses from both groups. They will be placed into the two categories from the list provided by the superintendent. One group will consist of board members and the other will be community members. Focus groups will consist of 2-3 for board members and 10-12 for the community members. They will be held at a place of public access such as a public library or community center and will last no longer than two hours. The responses will be available for review and change if necessary. The focus groups will be recorded and the participants will be made aware of such. Focus group participants will be provided a consent form to sign indicating their willingness to participate.

Each interview participant will be numerically coded. The master list of code numbers will be for the investigators' eyes only. All persons who assist will be informed as to confidentiality and will agree to maintain that confidentiality. Participant names will not be used and they will not be identified other than as practicing superintendents and community members.

Subjects will not be placed at risk or incur discomfort from this study. Subjects may choose not to answer any of the interview questions and may cease the process at any time. The recordings and numerical codes will be maintained in a locked cabinet at the researcher's home for three years. After three years the recordings and codes will be destroyed. Benefits to the subjects are an increased awareness of their ability to influence positive change in their schools, communities, and areas of economic development.

IV. Adverse events and liability:

This research does not incur risks for the subjects.

V. Consent form:

All subjects will voluntarily agree to participate in this research through their written consent to be interviewed. All interviewees will participate in a consent process. A copy is included as Attachment D.

Attachment A

Recruitment Email
(copy the recruitment email letter)

Dear Mrs. Jackson,

My name is Jim Taliaferro and I am superintendent of schools for Slaton I.S.D. I am currently nearing the completion of a doctorate degree in the College of Education at Texas Tech University.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the study is to examine relational organizational change by the superintendent and its impact on the community and economic development. The study will test relational organizational change technique (the use of a consensual style of management) as a means of providing the desired school and community perception and articulate that perception's effect on economic development.

You were selected to participate in the focus group segment of the study because of your service to the community as a school board member as well as by being recommended by business leaders in town on the basis of your interest and expertise in community promotion.

HOW THIS INFORMATION WILL BE USED

The information provided from the focus groups will be used as a basis for the development of understanding of the relationship between schools and economic development for administrators and campus planning. The results of this study may be used to enlighten school leaders as to the importance of superintendent knowledge of economic development and its importance to community survival. It will also provide me with the necessary information to complete my dissertation.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary and your responses will be kept confidential. You will remain anonymous as data will be compiled and reported on as whole groups and subgroups such as administrators, community members, and board members.

If you are interested in participating in this study, I would truly appreciate your input. The information gained will be an asset to your community. Please simply reply to this email by February 3, 2009, and I will add you to the list and send you the schedule for the interviews.

Sincerely,

Jim Taliaferro
Superintendent, Slaton ISD

Attachment B

Recruitment Telephone Script
(include the telephone script if there is one)

The only use of the telephone is to confirm scheduling. No interviews will be conducted by telephone.

Attachment C

Interview Questions

INTRODUCTION

Say: My name is Jim Taliaferro and I am superintendent of schools for Slaton I.S.D. I am currently nearing the completion of a doctorate degree in the College of Education at Texas Tech University.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Say: The purpose of the study is to examine relational organizational change by the superintendent and its impact on the community and economic development. The study will test relational organizational change technique (the use of a consensual style of management) as a means of providing the desired school and community perception and articulate that perception's effect on economic development. The aspects of Appreciative Inquiry will be the theory used to test the responses of superintendents as to their strategies to bring positive change management to their districts, which can help the community to survive and grow. Little or no research is available on this subject providing ample opportunity for significance.

HOW THIS INFORMATION WILL BE USED

Say: The information provided from the interviews will be used as a basis for the development of understanding of the relationship between schools and economic development for administrators and campus planning. The results of this study may be used to enlighten school leaders as to the importance of superintendent knowledge of economic development and its importance to community survival. It will also provide me with the necessary information to complete my dissertation.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary and your responses will be kept confidential. You will remain anonymous as data will be compiled and reported as whole groups and subgroups such as administrators, community members, and board members.

Type of Interviewee: Superintendent

Interview Number (circle one) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Say: First, let me thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview. Without your help, I would not be able to gather all of the information that I need to complete my research.

Say: Before I begin with the questions, do you have any questions about this interview and how it will be used?

Say: Okay then, let's begin.

Superintendents:

1. How long have you been a superintendent with your present district?

2. What activities enable you to interact with the business community? Is your board supportive of your efforts in these areas?

3. What is your role in the creation of economic development in your community?

4. How do board members view the role of the superintendent concerning economic development?

5. How, if at all, does the perception of the school district effect economic development? Why or why not?

6. How do you promote the positive aspect of your school district?

7. Are you aware of the change technique called Appreciative Inquiry? If so, what is your opinion of it? If not, it is a change theory that incorporates articulating and emphasizing the positive aspects of the program in question. Do you use this technique at any time during the program change process?

8. Do you believe you can create an environment, or reality for you district? What reality do you create for your district?

9. What reality can you create that will enhance economic development?

10. Other aspects of Appreciative Inquiry include allowing stakeholders to "dream" about a system that "might" be in order to move the situation to affect change. Would you incorporate such a strategy for change? The design phase of Appreciative Inquiry allows stakeholders to actually create a solution to the problem from their perspective. Could you support such an activity? Why?

The following questions will be asked as time allows:

11. What aspects of "community" are important to you as a superintendent? Why?

12. What conflicts requiring your action have surfaced that have required traditional management resolutions during your tenure as superintendent.?

13. Were there expectations from the community to handle the situation in that manner? If there were, what were they?

14. How have you gained an element of trust in your community enabling you to interact with the power base?

15. How are you given direction from your board of trustees to enhance economic development?

16. How does your board promote the positive aspects of the district? Can they do more?

17. How do you affect positive change in you district?

18. Would you call your change management style autocratic, consensual or participative?

19. Do you incorporate all types of different insights in your decision making process? How do you encourage or discourage this type of discourse?

20. Explain how you would go about a change that your district needs to make but will meet with extensive obstacles because of tradition? Is there a need to consider tradition?

21. What is your mindset when you prepare to change? Is it positive? Neutral? Or negative?

22. What program works well in your district as far as public relations? What program is most effective?

23. What is your focus in this district? Academic? Financial? Extracurricular? Is it reality or a manufactured focus from outside influence?

Type of Interview: Community members and board members (Focus Groups):

1.How long have you been a member of this community?

2.How does the success of the community impact the school and vice versa?

3. What is the economic forecast for your community in the next 5 years? 10 years? 15 years? On what do you base your assessment?

4.As community members, what expectations if any do you have regarding the role of the school in fostering economic development?

5. Do you expect this school district to be a viable one in the next 20 years? The next 50 years? Why? Why not?

6. Traditionally superintendents have only managed the school district. Do you think they should have more involvement with economic development or recovery in the district? Why? Why not?

7. Have you seen any changes in school leadership involvement with community economic development within the last 10-30 years? Please describe.

8. How does your superintendent approach changes to enhance positive perception of the district? How does your superintendent affect positive change in you district?

9.Are you aware of the change technique called Appreciative Inquiry? If so, what is your opinion of it? If not, it is a change theory that incorporates articulating and emphasizing the positive aspects of the program in question, Do you see merit in the use of this technique at any time during the program change process?

10. Other aspects of Appreciative Inquiry include allowing stakeholders to "dream" about a system that "might" be in order to move the situation to affect change. Do you see merit to work within such a strategy for change? The design phase of Appreciative Inquiry allows stakeholders to actually create a solution to the problem from their perspective. Could you support such an activity? Why or why not?

The following questions will be asked as time allows:

11.What role, if any will the superintendent play in keeping the school district and community viable for the next half century?

12. What direction from the community and the trustees does the superintendent receive concerning economic development?

13. What types of attributes does your superintendent possess enabling him/her to gain trust with the power base of the community?

14. What activities enable your superintendent to interact with the business community?

15. How does perception of the school district affect the ability of the community to enhance economic development?

16.What programs work well in your district and community as far as public relations? What program is most effective? What is the least effective?

17. What aspect of "community" is important for the superintendent to pay attention to?

18. How do you as trustees and community members promote the positive aspects of the district?

19. I noticed you mentioned ……. can you expand on that concept of positive promotion?

20. What is your focus on your school district? Academic? Financial? Extracurricular? Is it reality or a manufactured focus from outside influence?

21. During the superintendent's time in this community, what conflicts requiring his/her action have surfaced that have required his/her attention?

22. Were expectations from the community met regarding that situation and the manner in which it was handled?

23. Explain how the superintendent should go about affecting a change that your district needs to make but will meet with extensive obstacles because of tradition?

Attachment D

Consent Form
Superintendents

You are being asked to be a part of a research project to called "Superintendents' Use of Appreciative Inquiry in Two Rural West Texas Communities."

This research project is a doctoral dissertation to be submitted as partial fulfillment for the degree of Ed. D. The researcher will be James Taliaferro, doctoral student. Mr. Taliaferro will answer any questions you have about the study. His address is 1307 Raleigh Street, Slaton, Texas, 79364. His phone number is (806) 828-4197. The research is under the direction of Joann Klinker Ph.D. Dr. Klinker is a member of the Education Leadership faculty at Texas Tech University. Her phone number is (806) 742-1997 ext. 238. For questions about your rights as a subject, or about injuries caused by this research, contact the Texas Tech University Institutional Review Board for the Protection

of Human Subjects, Office of Research Services, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas, 79409. Or you can call (806) 742 3884.

This proposed study is designed to determine to what extent the change technique of Appreciative Inquiry is being utilized to help produce the perception of a successful rural school and in turn enhance economic development.

The interview questions will be open ended in nature allowing for you to expand on your answer if you wish. It is beneficial to the study to answer all questions of the interview. However, if you do not wish to do so, simply inform the researcher of your wishes to skip a particular question or end the interview entirely.

The responses will be available for review and change if necessary. I will meet with you again and you will have a chance to look at the transcript and make any changes. I will contact you by email at such time the transcript is ready and I will be available in your community so you may review the transcript. The interviews will be recorded and the participants will be made aware of such.

The interview will consist of approximately 10-25 questions and will take about two or three hours to complete. An additional interview of two hours may be scheduled if warranted.

Each interview participant will be numerically coded. The master list of code numbers will be for the investigators' eyes only. All persons who assist will be informed as to confidentiality and will agree to maintain that confidentiality. Participant names will not be used and they will not be identified other than as practicing superintendents and community members.

Subjects will not be placed at risk or incur discomfort from this study. Subjects may choose not to answer any of the interview questions and may cease the process at any time. There will be no adverse action to those subjects that do not answer questions. The recordings and numerical codes will be maintained in a locked cabinet at the researcher's home for three years. After three years the recordings and codes will be destroyed. Benefits to the subjects are an increased awareness of their ability to influence positive change in their schools, communities, and areas of economic development.

The researcher and Dr. Klinker will see the transcripts of the interviews. They will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researchers home. Your answers will be put into a computer without your name.

Doing the interview is completely up to you. No one can force you to do it and you will not be adversely effected in any way.

Dr. Klinker will answer also any questions you have about the study. For questions about your rights as a subject or about injuries caused by this research, contact the Texas Tech University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, Office of

Research Services, Texas Tech University, and Lubbock, Texas 79409. Or you can call (806) 742-3884.

Your signature on this form indicates your understanding as to your role in the study.

This consent form is not valid after February 19, 2009.

Printed Name of Subject _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Consent Form
Focus Groups

You are being asked to be a part of a research project to called "Superintendents' Use of Appreciative Inquiry in Two Rural West Texas Communities."

This research project is a doctoral dissertation to be submitted as partial fulfillment for the degree of Ed. D. The researcher will be James Taliaferro, doctoral student. Mr. Taliaferro will answer any questions you have about the study. His address is 1307 Raleigh Street, Slaton, Texas, 79364. His phone number is (806) 828-4197. The research is under the direction of Joann Klinker Ph.D. Dr. Klinker is a member of the Education Leadership faculty at Texas Tech University. Her phone number is (806) 742-1997 ext. 238. For questions about your rights as a subject, or about injuries caused by this research, contact the Texas Tech University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, Office of Research Services, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas 79409. Or you can call (806) 742 3884.

This proposed study is designed to determine to what extent the change technique of Appreciative Inquiry is being utilized to help produce the perception of a successful rural school and in turn enhance economic development.

The interview questions will be open ended in nature allowing for you to expand on your answer if you wish. It is beneficial to the study to answer all questions of the interview. However, if you do not wish to do so, simply inform the researcher of your wishes to skip a particular question or end the interview entirely.

The focus group interview will last no longer than two hours. If needed a second focus group interview of no more than two hours will be convened. The responses will be available for review and change if necessary. I will meet with you gain and you will have a chance to look at the transcript and make any changes. I will contact you by email at such time the transcript is ready and I will be available in your community so you may be able to review the transcript. You will be recorded as a participant in the focus group. Focus group participants will be provided a consent form to sign indicating their willingness to participate.

The focus group session will consist of approximately 10-25 questions and will take about two hours to complete.

Each focus group participant will be numerically coded. The master list of code numbers will be for the investigators' eyes only. All persons who assist will be informed as to confidentiality and will agree to maintain that confidentiality. Participant names will not be used and they will not be identified other than as practicing superintendents and community members.

Subjects will not be placed at risk or incur discomfort from this study. Subjects may choose not to answer any of the interview questions and may cease the process at any time. There will be no adverse action to those subjects that do not answer questions. The recordings and numerical codes will be maintained in a locked cabinet at the researcher's home for three years. After three years the recordings and codes will be destroyed. Benefits to the subjects are an increased awareness of their ability to influence positive change in their schools, communities, and areas of economic development.

The researcher and Dr. Klinker will see the transcripts of the interviews. They will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researchers home. Your answers will be put into a computer without your name.

Doing the interview is completely up to you. No one can force you to do it and you will not be adversely effected in any way.

Dr. Klinker will answer also any questions you have about the study. For questions about your rights as a subject or about injuries caused by this research, contact the Texas Tech University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, Office

of Research Services, Texas Tech University, and Lubbock, Texas 79409. Or you can call (806) 742-3884.

Your signature on this form indicates your understanding as to your role in the study.

This consent form is not valid after February 19, 2009.

Printed Name of Subject _____

Signature _____

Date _____