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# Examining school culture in Southern Alberta

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**Examining School Culture**

**in**

**Southern Alberta**

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B. A. University of Lethbridge, 1978

B. Ed. University of Lethbridge, 1991

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### **Abstract**

Two hypotheses were considered within the confines of this study. In reference to the first, it has been demonstrated that the strength of perceived school cultures, when defined by meta-orientations, can be measured using culturally related constructs. While respecting the notion that cultures are living entities in a continual state of change, the researcher found the perceived extant school culture of Southern Alberta during the course of this study appeared to be mainly transformational in nature. From this study, a cultural meta-orientation matrix has been proposed. Should this description have validity for schools in Southern Alberta, and accepting the results of this study that the perceived working reality of school cultures is transformational in nature, both macro and sub-cultures wishing to work successfully with and within the extant school cultures would also be required to be transformational in order to achieve greater success.

Regarding the second hypothesis, this study measured perceived levels of acceptance or resistance to change through the use of an individual change index. This index suggests teachers and principals in Southern Alberta were somewhat resistive to change initiatives at the time this inquiry took place. It is the conclusion of this researcher that such resistance may be attributed to a "clash of cultures"; specifically, the Alberta Education transmissional culture causing conflict within the transformational school cultures.

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**Examining School Culture  
in Southern Alberta**

Introduction

*Inspiration*

Experience is a great inspiration for the development of this thesis. Experience also appears to be a significant theme in the research regarding school culture. My own experience regarding workplace culture began twelve years ago with the reading of Tom Peters and Robert Waterman Jr.'s book, *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies* (Peters & Waterman, 1984). Their words clarified the concepts of mission, vision, and workplace culture at a time when I was managing the programs at the local Y.M.C.A. The fitness industry was in the midst of competitive change and my task was to move an eighty-year old institution into the 1990's. That experience created an example of a collaborative workplace culture in which members shared the mission of quality through dedicated service. To many educators these words may sound like stock corporate jargon, yet today we find these same words being delivered as mandated directives from departments of education and school divisions throughout the world.

The experience of being involved in a strong workplace culture brought with it not only skills and abilities to cope with innovation but an embracing emotional connection to the people and the mission. The emotional connection continues strong with me today, and I sense this is the passion which continues to inspire. Fullan (1991) describes change to involve the emotions of loss, anxiety and struggle. My experience

supports his thoughts. A strong work place culture is also full of joy, excitement and celebration. The fabric of workplace cultures appears to be coloured by emotions.

Experiencing the presentation by Pam Robbins, *Using School Culture to Foster School Improvement* (Robbins, 1995) enlightened me to the metaphors of school culture which will be a driving force within this work. This opportunity exposed me to new authors on the subject of change, quality, improvement, and school culture as they relate to education. The names of Deal, Peterson, Fullan, and Sarason have become key figures closely linked with the area of school culture. In turn, through these authors' works my familiarity has grown with Canadian researcher Kenneth Leithwood and his study of school culture and teacher commitment.

My research has also permitted me to revisit the *quality movement* through the work of W. Edwards Deming (Latzko & Saunders, 1995). Acknowledged as the guiding force in the reconstruction and revolution of Japanese industry after World War II, Dr. Deming has influenced great changes within North American business. Education is now experiencing the challenges and emotions of change associated with a similar paradigm shift. Interestingly, Deming's principle of *profound knowledge* is resonant of Deal and Kennedy's (1982) metaphoric description of culture, later revised by Deal and Peterson (1990) for application to schools. Profound knowledge suggests leaders must understand the workplace culture and learn to manage this culture's ceremonies, stories, artifacts, and networks. These cultural managers need to realize there are

strong variables affecting the culture that are unknowable and unmeasurable. The fabric of work place culture appears to be woven from the ceremonies, artifacts, beliefs and values of the people within.

Deming's use of *management by planning* points out a concern that educators in Alberta must be aware of: no single, congruent plan is in place for the undertaking of change. That is to say, educational institutions and governance bodies are ill prepared for the changes which will take place. Personal and institutional past experiences with change initiatives and change agents play an important role in the success of current initiatives. Albertans and Alberta schools have never experienced anything similar to the current rate and quantity of change that challenge the fundamental structures, goals, and roles of education. A major purpose of this study is to provide a starting place for the development of plans for change within our schools.

## Literature Review

### Introduction

#### *Overview*

The examination of literature on the subject of school culture reveals vast amounts of opinion tied strongly to a series of recurring themes. Authors discuss values, beliefs, leadership, and effective change supported by the arguments of others writing in the same vein. The nature of the study of culture does not lend itself well to quantitative research due to the very murky and subjective dimensions of the phenomena.

Likewise, "there is no single comprehensive organizational theory that fully explains the complexity of the school as a social organization" (Shaw & Reyes, 1992, p. 295). Many authors have struggled with the challenge of defining this nebulous thing, school culture, and it seems that this is an appropriate place to begin this review. Four other sections will look at the literature regarding school culture as change agent, the metaphor of school culture, the role of leadership, and research regarding school culture.

### Search

#### *Method of Search.*

A search was initiated using the *ERIC* and *PsycLIT* CD-rom system. Key words such as "culture", "school-culture", "transformational leadership", "change", and "reform" were used both individually and in combination. The over two-hundred citations were then further reduced manually. Those which did not address the issue of school culture and/or change directly were discarded. (A number of articles use the term "school-culture" in a multi-cultural manner.) From this pool, approximately eighty

titles related to school culture were selected. A second review of titles and abstracts revealed only three quantitative studies, two theoretical perspectives and a great majority of opinion papers.

### Review

#### *Defining School Culture.*

Involving values and beliefs held by the cultural participants, school culture is a powerful force which can act to protect its participants from outside influences or propel its participants into change. Organizational culture, accepting that a school is an organization, is "the way we do things around here." (Bower, 1966; cited in Shaw & Reyes, 1992, p. 295). Many terms have been used in place of school culture including "climate", "ethos", and "saga". A new term, "micropolitics", is gaining currency although its specific definition is not always clear. Myresin (1927, p. 2) regarded, "culture not [as] a state or a condition, but a process; as in agriculture or horticulture we mean not the condition of the land, but the whole round of the farmer's year, and all that he does in it. Culture then is what remains of men's past, working on their present to shape their future."

Cunningham and Gresso (1995, p. 20-21) bring together a number of definitions including:

1. a body of solutions to internal and external problems which build into practice and assumption;

2. a product and a process involving patterns and assumptions;
3. a blueprint for living; and
4. learned behaviours affecting both the group and the individual.

While culture could be considered social glue or organizational blinders, Deal and Peterson (1990, p. 8) quote Schein's (1985) definition as culture being, "a pattern of basic assumptions - invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems. [These patterns have] worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems." The evidence of culture is expressed through the values and beliefs, heroes and heroines, rites and rituals, priests and priestesses, stories and myths, symbols and dress, clans and tribes, norms and practices, legacy and saga, customs and traditions and common meanings held by its members (Deal and Peterson, 1990).

Working from Terrance Deal's concepts, Gonder and Hymes (1994) attempted to discriminate between "climate" and "culture". They suggest that "climate refers to the short term, malleable aspects of the school's physical and psychological environment, and culture refers to the long term deeply embedded beliefs of an organization - the "feel" of a school; its myths and its moral code" (p. 10). Gonder and Hymes also observed that many studies have included beliefs and attitudes in studies of climate. These definitions suggest that studies doing so have actually



examined *both* climate and culture. While climate and culture are interrelated, they are different. By attending to the climate of schools, staff and students will be motivated to seek quality improvement. "Unless the culture changes, however, long-term reform will falter because the shared values necessary to sustain reform will not be held by those concerned " (Gonder & Hymes, 1994).

Stolp (1994) summarizes these many definitions of culture in stating,

...school culture can be defined as the historically transmitted patterns of meaning that include the norms, values, beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, traditions, and myths understood, maybe in varying degrees, by members of the school community. This system of meaning often shapes what people think and how they act (para. 5).

#### *The Value of School Culture as Change Agent.*

A significant body of rhetoric centres around the use and management of school culture as change agent (Fullan, 1991; Deal & Peterson, 1990, Saphier & King 1985). While school reform and change is nothing new, approaches to change and reform appear to have taken on five different styles (Deal & Peterson, 1990). Briefly, the *human resource approach* focuses on selecting the right people for the right job, training and competency, and worker needs. In schools this approach has been used to hire teachers to teach specific grades or subject areas. However, the approach fails to match beliefs and values of the teacher to those of the school as a whole. Further,

until recently, hiring staff was the role of central office personnel who had little relationship with the unique context of the school culture.

The *structural approach* to school reform has been one greatly used in the past as it evolves from the Tayloristic business approaches of top-down decision making. Characterized by defining clear roles, policies, and goals, structural approaches are enforced through mandating, measuring, and reorganization through restructuring. The style is linear in fashion resembling industry's design-make-sell assembly line. Schools involved with this approach may feel the results of mandated transmission-style decisions from outside the culture. As one example, low levels of trust regarding performance may lead to the installation of measurement tests of productivity; in other words, achievement tests.

Influenced by North America's enchantment with democracy, the *political approach* assumes that schools function best through working coalitions. Leaders operate from a plebiscite decision making stance with the intention of empowering staff. Overuse of this approach has resulted in extensive use of committees to make recommendations and decisions. Fisher (1994) contends this approach has led to increasing mediocrity and blurred accountability. Typically, the political approach is transactional in nature in that it is based on rewards for service rendered.

Charter schools, vouchers, open enrollment, and student choice characterize the *free*

*market - economic approach.* Transactional in nature as well, the free market approach is based on a consumerism model in which supply and demand will dictate improvement of services and cost. The human variable of the student complicates this approach since, unlike a series of automobiles outfitted with the same options, no two children require the same attention in order for them to achieve success. The actual cost of preparing one student for graduation may be significantly different from the next and the next. The free market approach fails to appreciate the difference between assembly line products and the unique nature of human beings.

The *school culture approach* assumes that teachers and students are strongly influenced by the morale, routines and conventions connected with their school. Using both assigned leadership (principal) and shared leadership (teacher-leaders), the school culture approach advocates reshaping the school culture to accommodate change. Leaders are encouraged to work with the beliefs and values held by the cultural members in a manner which compares those beliefs with expected change. By managing the culture, leaders can help lessen the gap between belief and change.

Cunningham and Gresso (1995) make a strong argument for the use of cultural approaches to create change within schools. They summarize many authors' intents when they state, "What we have learned from a long history of structural change is that it does not work!" (p.24). They suggest, "Structure will never change attitudes, abilities, interests or human spirit. More importantly, it will rarely change the culture

or result in improved school effectiveness" (p.24). Authors, Deal and Peterson (1990) support this argument noting, "What we know now strongly suggests that school culture is linked to productivity in terms of student test scores, teacher morale, turnover, motivation, collegiality and even public confidence and support" (p.12). Productivity, achievement, motivation and retention are the issues that have been targeted by parents and governments alike in their criticisms of the effectiveness of schools. It seems ironic that the approaches being advocated by these same external forces fail, in part, due to their continued reliance on structural changes.

Suggesting that educational innovations should not be seen as ends in themselves, Fullan (1991), provides a two-tier approach to change with implications for school culture. First order changes are minor in nature, affecting basic efficiency of operation and roles to improve education. Examples of first order changes might include a single change in subject curriculum, timetabling, or the introduction of a specific teaching style. During this century, most changes have been directed at improving what already exists. When reform seeks to change the fundamental ways in which cultural members perform their roles or requires a change in beliefs along with an adjustment of values, second-order changes are required. Fullan suggests most reforms have largely failed to date because they have failed to confront school reform from a cultural approach.

Rossman, Corbett and Firestone (1988) contend that three cultural change processes

are relevant to the study of school culture and change: "evolutionary processes, additive processes, and transformative processes" (p.14). The evolutionary process permits the introduction of new beliefs within a culture as old ones fade. There is no radical paradigm shift required by cultural members and acceptance may be wide spread or pocketed. When a norm, belief or value is suddenly introduced to a culture, an additive process to change is likely. Often the innovators have not taken into account the contextual environments and the changes become greatly modified if they are adopted. Since cultural change is rarely seen as a goal of most innovators, beliefs and values appear to be irrelevant to the change strategy. Mandated changes in a top-down management system typify this change process.

The third process, transformative, is often set off by trauma, discord or dysfunction causing members within the culture to deliberately change the culture. Here a multiplicity of forces are enacting on the culture at one time, similar to Fullan's description of second-order change. Further, cultural norms are being severely challenged. This closely resembles the state of education within the province today.

In sum, the evidence suggests that effective change related to school reform is strongly connected to the recognition and management of school culture. History has indicated that change can occur at different levels and that past practices of using non-cultural approaches to change involving paradigm shifts have not been successful.

*Elements of the Paradigm: A Metaphoric Description of Culture.*

In his 1982 book, *The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change*, Sarason (1982) attempts to bring together anthropology and education. He examines school culture through a process of sub-optimizing the system into principal, teacher, issues and goals. His review of studies develops a landscape of how the classroom appeared more than ten years ago. In his discussion of the goals of change in the classroom, he highlights the belief that the "teacher will be the agent of change" (p. 231). Sarason provides motivation for the purpose of this study in his statement:

The more I have read about and personally observed efforts to introduce change in the classroom, the more clear several things become. First, those who attempt to introduce a change rarely, if ever, begin the process by being clear as to where the teachers *are*; that is, how and why they think as they do. In short, they are guilty of the very criticism they make of teachers: *not being sensitive to what and how and why children think as they do*. As a result, teachers react in much the same way that many children do, and this is with the feeling they are both wrong and stupid. Second, those who attempt to introduce a change seem unaware that they are asking teachers to unlearn and learn. Third, if there is only one principle common to effort at change, it is that one effects change by *telling* people what is the "right" way to act and think. *Here, too, those who want change do exactly that for which they criticize teachers.* (p. 232)

Sarason describes the conditions in which the paradigm of educational change exists even today. That is to say, change efforts appear to continue to be implemented in ways which have routines or models associated with them. It is his first observation about "being clear as to where the teachers *are*" which stimulates this study. As Deal and Peterson (1990) point out, school leaders as cultural managers must begin the process of change by first clearly understanding the culture of the school; in other words the beliefs and values, traditions and history of its members.

Beginning by examining corporate culture Deal, along with author Allan Kennedy (1982), first compared culture's elements in metaphoric fashion. Using examples of corporate America, the authors identified heroes, rites and rituals, values, communication networks, tribes, and symbols as elements within a culture which the leader manages. In 1990, Deal and Peterson revisited culture in the context of schools and suggested that "the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture and the unique talent of leaders is their ability to work with culture" (p. 13). Their observational research revealed that school cultures contain:

1. norms, values, beliefs and history;
2. strong leadership;
3. informal communication networks;
4. priests and priestesses;
5. storytellers;
6. gossips;

7. spies, counter-spies and moles;
8. rites, rituals and ceremonies;
9. vision and mission; and
10. artifacts. (Sheive & Schoenheit, 1987, p. 6; Deal & Peterson, 1990, p. 17-18)

Additionally, the authors described the role of principal as a symbol of leadership rather than a proprietor of leadership. Metaphorically, the principal is a potter, shaping the school's heroes, rituals, ceremonies, and symbols; a poet, sustaining the image and values through story, motto and metaphor; an actor, presiding over the predictable and unpredictable social dramas; and a healer, tending to the transitions and change while recognizing the emotions attached to each. Deal and Peterson (1990) examined five case study schools exemplifying strong cultures typifying much of the research completed in the area of school culture. No research has been identified utilizing the metaphoric elements of culture as constructs for a study.

#### *Leadership and School Culture*

When schools are viewed from a cultural perspective, leadership becomes a prominent element. A substantial amount of qualitative and quantitative research has been completed regarding the nature of leadership and its impact on school culture. While this study does not purport to examine leadership as a unique dimension but rather as a contributing element of school cultures, some of the findings regarding leadership and school culture will be presented.



As mentioned earlier, it has been suggested that principals need to see themselves as cultural managers with a strong understanding of history, beliefs, norms, and values of the members of the culture. "We believe that the more principals understand about school culture and their roles in shaping it, the better equipped they will be to avoid the common pitfalls of change and reform" (Deal & Peterson, 1990, p. 32).

Sagor (1994) sees the principal as transmissional, transactional or transformational. He suggests that for schools in which second order changes are occurring, transformational leadership is most effective. There, principals act as a buffer between teachers and innovators and other distracting external demands. "Six factors contributed most heavily to a school's effectiveness: (a) strong administrative leadership, (b) clarity of goals, (c) a focus on resources for goals, (d) create a safe and orderly environment, (e) monitor learning, and (f) set high expectations" (p. 25).

Regarding the last point, creating expectations and challenge has been identified as a source of motivation regarding teacher commitment to innovation (Leithwood, Menzies & Jantzi, 1994). The "innovation" needs to be "perceived to be challenging but 'do-able' " (p. 44).

Extending Sagor's work, Janice and Jerry Herman discuss three leadership styles impacting on school culture. Contingency leadership, implies a style of leadership that "will make a wide variety of decisions based upon the conditions of the time" (p.

12). The decisions often reflect the political rather than the economic or moral rationale. If the leader is viewed as a power broker, a transactional leadership style is considered in place. A problematic feature of this style is that it assumes all people in power are of equal power. Finally, with reference to transformational leadership, Herman and Herman (1994) explain this style is personified in "one who empowers others and causes transformation or drastic and irreversible changes" to occur (p. 14). This style utilizes a broad shared leadership base through shared ownership of the changes and shifts in the beliefs of staff members.

Examining a large variety of organizations, Bass and Avolio (1993) provide seven factors for a leadership model that builds on the past 40 years of leadership research. Charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration are factors related to transformational leaders. Transactional leaders demonstrate the behaviours of contingent rewarding and managing-by-exception. A third leadership style is described as laissez-faire, suggesting that leadership is absent (p. 51-53). Bass and Avolio indicate research suggests "a more optimal profile of leadership is represented by a higher frequency of occurrence of behaviours associated with active transactional leadership (contingent reward) and transformational leadership...Thus leaders who display these behaviours more frequently are also generally viewed as more effective" (p. 53).

Recurring themes attached to leadership are vision and mission. Both terms are also

related to the transformational meta-orientation (Miller & Sellar, 1990). Fullan (1992) warns how visions that are not shared but determined solely by the leader can blind the leader. He asserts that short lived charismatic leaders that radically transform schools usually leave little legacy of transformation once they have gone. In creating shared visions or *provisional visions*, Fullan suggests eight guidelines for principals:

1. Understand the culture of the school before trying to change it;
2. Value your teachers: promote their professional growth;
3. Extend what you value;
4. Express what you value;
5. Make menus, not mandates;
6. Use bureaucratic means to facilitate, not to constrain;
7. Connect with the wider environment;
8. Promote collaboration; not cooperation. (p.20)

Fullan suggests caution in expressing values without imposing them as do many other authors. Deal and Peterson (1990) for example refer to the Chinese term, *wei-wu*: the delicate balance between inaction and undue force. Dow and Oakley (1992) concur with both Sagor's and Fullan's list of principles using synonymous terms. Their review of literature regarding leadership indicated the importance "strong leadership", "high expectations", and "positive, orderly climate" as factors contributing to effective schools (p. 35).

Deal and Peterson (1994) extend their concept of a delicate balance in more recent description of the "bi-focal principal" (p. 39-51). Integrating a more critical theory approach to leadership and school culture, the authors remark the role of the principal is woven together with paradoxes. Traditionally, North Americans viewed solutions to problems as choices between extremes. This polarization or dualistic thinking often failed to permit a third possibility or alternative which blends the qualities and richness of both poles. Deal and Peterson go on to suggest that, "change is not only a cultural transition. Both symbolic *and* technical considerations need constant attention and require frequent support " (p. 97). Therefore, strong school cultures should exhibit a balance of technical leadership and symbolic leadership. Likewise, a strong school culture might operate within the space between different orientations rather than being dedicated to one or the other.

Attempting to develop a profile of contemporary school leadership, Begley (1994) identifies "school culture management" as a key dimension. In defining the dimension, Begley suggests that the principal "creates and maintains a supportive school climate which is conducive to learning." In doing so, principals must give attention to the sub-dimensions of "school environment, decision making, and language and culture promotion" (p. 324).

In conclusion, leadership is both influential and indicative of school culture. Research suggests that effective, transformational leadership will likely be in place where a

school culture supporting change exists. Leaders working to change schools must understand the school's culture prior to beginning the change process. Necessary attention to culture, including climate, must be given when a new leader takes office or when major changes are being implemented.

#### *Research in School Culture.*

There has been surprisingly little quantitative research completed on the subject of school culture. *ERIC* and *PsycLIT* CD-rom literature searches produced over two hundred articles related to school culture. Of those, only five were quantitative studies. None of these studies have examined the existing culture of schools. Like the opinion and discussion papers on the topic, the studies assume school culture exists and that it affects other related elements such as teacher development, leadership, teacher commitment, and policy implementation.

The 1995 study by Richardson and Hamilton (1995) examined the effects of school culture on the process and results of staff development. Using two elementary schools as the environment for their work, the authors used qualitative research methods, recording the proceedings from meetings regarding changes at the schools. Analysis of the conversations led these researchers to conclude that the teachers move through three stages of staff development: introductory, breakthrough, and empowerment. School cultures which were less collaborative, lacking effective shared leadership, and shared beliefs required a longer introductory period. Congeniality, in place of

collaboration, was seen as a deterrent to the change process. It was further indicated that isolation and individualism often "prevented teachers from discussing ideas, which curtailed collaboration" (p. 380). In conclusion, the authors recognize traditional approaches to staff development involve a "transfer model [transmissional] wherein 'experts' inform teachers about methods mandated for classroom implementation" (p. 381). They suggest a "model of teacher change must consider school culture" if it is to be effective (p. 381).

Similarly, Fennel (1992) investigated organizational-cultural linkages' relationship to teachers' concern regarding policy implementation. The author noted the value of organizational-cultural linkages as serving to "coordinate the activities of individuals in organizations and the body that links organizational components" (p. 14). Using both a quantitative and qualitative holistic approach, the author selected one school division's schools as a population concluding that consistency of the central office administration needed to be assured in order to validate the organizational-cultural linkages. This study's outcomes indicate that: 1) teachers manifest the least resistance to innovation when they share the greatest amount of collaboration and communication; 2) teacher resistance is reduced when teachers are empowered; 3) teachers recognize "pseudo control" for what it is and therefore shared leadership efforts must be authentic.

Leithwood, Menzies, and Jantzi (1994) investigated leadership and school conditions

supporting teachers' commitment through their in depth investigation of related literature. Concurring with Hamilton and Richardson, the authors noted that teachers are reluctant to experience yet "another round of change" since most have been initiated in a top-down style (p. 39). It is interesting to note that the changes being discussed are of a first-order nature and that over time and repeated failings may take on the resistant inertia of second-order changes. Specifically, departments of education or school divisions which continually mandate poorly executed simple curriculum changes tend to lose the confidence and trust of teachers. Any future changes at this first order level will be resisted due to teachers' beliefs that the same quality of execution will occur. If this is the case, Fullan's (1991) comments regarding the need to utilize school culture to stimulate second-order changes may also be applicable to changes of a first-order nature. Leithwood, Menzies, and Jantzi provide four conditions necessary to support teachers' commitment to change. First, teachers must adopt personal goals to achieve change or improvement. The "staff's goals do not influence the actions of individual staff members" until those goals are internalized. The authors recognize four criteria related to motivating personal change which I have summarized as:

1. *Congruence*: the personal goals of the teacher must be congruent with the goals of the organization;
2. *Challenge*: the goals for change must be perceived as difficult yet achievable;
3. *Clearly concrete*: the changes desired are more likely to be embraced if

they are clearly presented in concrete terms similar to behavioral objectives teachers use in classroom lesson planning:

4. *Concise:* teachers' motivation will be enhanced if the goals for change are short-term framed in a larger, longer term context. (p. 44)

The authors also suggest that teachers must sense they have the *capacity* of accomplishing these goals. Feedback, vicarious experiences through comparative role models and verbal persuasion appear to enhance notions of efficacy. How teachers perceive the workplace, or *context beliefs*, also contribute to teachers' commitment. If they feel the school's goals and personal goals are congruent without one being dominant, that conditions permit them to accomplish the goals, that resources to support achieving the goals are available, and that a collegial collaborative climate exists to support risk taking, then innovation is more likely to take place.

*Emotional arousal* to the process was also noted as being of significant value.

Teachers' emotions help to establish a state of "readiness" and support in maintaining progress. It is suggested that the cultural manager's role is to provide feedback that supports and sustains appropriate emotions.

The study also recognizes out-of-school and in-school conditions affecting teachers' commitment to change. The out-of-school conditions involve those influential forces such as departments of education, central offices, and communities. These forces



must be seen as being supportive of change efforts by teachers. In-school conditions include the goals, culture, programs and instruction, policy and organization, and resources. A *transformational* leader is seen as the "most suitable for fostering teachers' commitment to change" (p. 54).

In concluding, authors Leithwood, Menzies, and Jantzi comment that resistance to change has traditionally been seen as a natural phenomenon of organizations that is inevitable and to be ignored by "those outside the classroom" since time will diminish its effect (p. 58). These authors suggest teachers will likely be more committed to change and innovation if attention is paid to their beliefs and values in a collaborative and challenging manner.

Marshall (1992) addresses those who attempt to empower teachers, restructure school or make principals "institutional leaders" in her examination of the chasm between the teacher and administrator cultures. To do so, the author uses constructs of *micropolitics* all of which relate closely to descriptions presented by Deal and Peterson (1990) and Sergiovanni (1990) with regards to culture, and Gonder and Hymes (1994) on the subject of school climate. Marshall (1992, p. 5-6) notes these as being:

distribution of power	constituency and coalition building
values conflicts	symbols manipulation
social domination	codes of conduct
diffusion of conflict	ideologies

allocation of values

boundaries and turf

decision making

The author's examination of these constructs produces both a caution and motivation for research. She states:

Altering culture is not a simple venture to be done mechanistically. *We must first identify the extant culture and discover its etiology and the critical functions it serves.* No reform, no matter how well intentioned, will succeed if it tears down the traditions and the sacred values of an existing and functioning culture. (p.21)

Marshall underlines Sarason's (1982) remark regarding "being clear as to where the teachers *are*" (p. 232). Her words that we must first identify existing school culture supports the central question of this study: What is the extant school culture in Alberta?

In their quantitative study of organizational values orientation and commitment, Shaw and Reyes (1992) took on the task of "examining aspects of the complexity of the school organization from a cultural perspective" (p. 295). Providing further proof to support this study, the authors indicate that little evidence has been established regarding school culture and suggest, "Empirical validations of common cultural features in school organizations may better inform the current reform efforts and help reduce educational faddism" (p. 295). The study of 104 randomly selected schools

utilized the Organizational Value Orientation Questionnaire as developed by the second author along with the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire<sup>1</sup>. The authors achieved an 83.6% response rate producing 377 usable responses. Evaluation of the data indicates that "elementary schools demonstrated higher levels of organizational commitment than did high schools" (p. 301). The implication of this study is that school administrators need to recognize the "considerable challenge involved in change or managing organizational culture in complex organizations like the public schools" (p. 301).

#### Summary

In summary, it is apparent that little quantitative evidence exists to support the theoretical claims of many authors. What little has been accomplished has been focused on relating teacher commitment to innovation within a cultural perspective.

The literature suggests the following:

1. School culture is commonly defined as patterns of meaning (paradigms) that include the symbolic elements of norms, values, beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, traditions, and myths. These paradigms shape what people think and how they act.
2. School culture, when managed effectively can be used as an agent of change as it embodies these paradigms.
3. School cultures must be addressed when second-order changes are

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<sup>1</sup>The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire was developed by Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979).

required. It is possible that after repeatedly failed first-order changes have been experienced, manipulation and management of the school culture may be the only alternative approach to change.

4. School culture resembles the metaphoric tapestry of a social system observed through ten symbolic elements.
5. School cultures less resistant to change appear to be managed by transformational leaders who demonstrate a vision and passion for the organization and its people.
6. Strong school cultures appear to be collaborative and innovative with a sense of commitment to the organization itself.

Support for this study was also found in the writing of the following authors: Sarason (1982); Marshall (1992); and Shaw and Reyes (1992). There is a call for the process to begin where the teachers are, to recognize the extant culture and there is need for quantitative assessment of the state of school cultures.

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## Purpose of Study

### Introduction

Change in education is inevitable. Often politically motivated, but sometimes introduced for sound educational reasons, curricular and organizational changes will be introduced periodically and teacher will be expected to implement them. Those who become "jaded" or react negatively can harm themselves and their students. Teachers who accept change and work to ensure that, from their point of view, the students benefit from new programs, will suffer less stress. If teachers can become actively involved in the adaptation and implementation of changes, at least at the school board level, then the experience can be quite satisfying.

- "Suggestions for Change" King and Peart, (1992, p. 185)

This quotation from the Canadian Teachers' Federation monograph, *Teachers in Canada: their work and quality of life*, characterizes two concerns this study intends to address. The first is the fact that change is not only inevitable but upon us constantly. Educational institutions, governance bodies and teachers' federations are ill prepared for these changes. This is evidenced in the second concern. The tone presented by King and Peart suggests teachers should roll over and lamely accept the changes. These authors suggest teachers, after suffering through numerous failed attempts at reform should not appear "jaded" or "react negatively" since, by so doing, they will only "harm themselves". These comments reinforce the Tayloristic view reformers

have taken toward schooling for the past ninety years. That is, resistance will be expected and rather than attempting to understand the resistance, it is easier to blame those who are resisting for any failings. It is worth reminding ourselves of Sarason's words, "If there is any one principle common to efforts at change, it is that one effect change by *telling* people what is the "right" way to act and think. *Here, too, those who want change do exactly that for which they criticize teachers*" (Sarason, 1982, p. 233).

### Proposal

#### *Overview*

This study proposes to identify and describe particular aspects of the extant school culture in Southern Alberta using the cultural constructs delineated by Deal and Peterson (1990). It is intended that this study will respond to certain needs identified in the literature review. This study will begin where teachers are, in that it will examine school culture in its existing state. Further, this study responds to the lack of quantitative evidence to support the vast theoretic pool of literature regarding school culture. Third, this study will provide evidence to support the process of school reform in a manner which respects the cultural perspective.

#### *Proposition #1: Using cultural constructs.*

Deal and Peterson (1990) identify ten elements which characterize strong cultures.

For example, "a strong culture is a system of informal rules that spells out how people

are to behave most of the time. A strong culture enables people to feel better about what they do, so they are more likely to work harder.” (Deal and Kennedy, 1982, p. 15-16) Using the ten symbolic elements of culture as delineated by Deal and Peterson (1990) as they relate to schools, I will create constructs relating to each of them. It is anticipated that patterns of response to the constructs will provide evidence into styles of leadership and culture. It is recognized that orientations toward strong transmissional, transactional, or transformational cultures may exist. Literature suggests that a strong transmissional culture is less likely to adopt innovation. Similarly, a strong transformational culture is more likely to accept the challenges innovation brings.

In gaining a clearer understanding of the orientation school cultures exhibit may educators and administrators with a valuable starting point in understanding and integrating processes of change. Should transmissional cultures dominate, school leaders would be advised to begin a process of cultural management prior to initiating change, particularly second-order changes (Fullan, 1991). Should transformational cultures exist, school leaders would continue to manage the schools’ existing culture in ways which support continuous improvement.

It is anticipated that as the evidence unfolds, the existence of each construct will be indicative of the school culture’s orientation. That is to say, a school which responds with little communication network, strong leadership found in one person operating in

a contingency manner, and minimal staff commitment to the school's mission may be demonstrative of a transmissional culture. If this is true, change efforts directed at improvement requiring a paradigm shift by the cultural members is unlikely to be successful. Therefore, the principal and superintendent would have to undertake cultural and structural changes related to the culture before considering innovation. Those changes could include replacing the transmissional leader with a transformational leader.

*Proposition #2: Examining extant culture.*

No qualitative or quantitative research has been identified that examines the extant culture. As Sarason (1982) and Marshall (1992) have highlighted, identifying a starting point for the discussion of school culture and change is needed. For those who would seek to initiate change in schools, knowing the state of school culture could save hundreds of hours of effort and thousands of dollars of innovation. Consider the human and financial savings that might be realized if it is first understood that the school's culture is resistant to change due to its meta-orientation. There is little point in spending time and money on specific innovations when the efforts required should be directed at creating a collegial, collaborative, empowered culture. Similarly, there is little point in wasting staff time and professional development funds on conflict resolution, collaborative team building, and mission statements for example, if these elements already exist in the culture.



*Proposition #3: Managing school culture for school change.*

Findings from this study may reinforce theory (Sergiovanni, 1992; Deal & Peterson, 1990; Fullan, 1991) and benchmark studies (Sagor, 1992; Deal & Peterson, 1993) that effective school change is a product of managing school culture. Specifically, it is anticipated that schools which demonstrate a success in cultural management are also involved in effective change and committed to continuous improvement.

*Contribution to the field of knowledge.*

There are two primary outcomes of this study which should contribute to enhancing the field of knowledge regarding school cultures.

- A. This study will provide knowledge regarding the extant school culture in Southern Alberta schools permitting school leaders to develop strategies for managing the both culture and effective change.
- B. This study will enhance the limited quantitative research available regarding school culture by making some attempts at cultural construct measurement.

## Method

### Theoretical Framework

#### *Definitions*

##### *School culture*

School culture may be defined as the integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thought, speech, action and artifacts as they relate to the school environment.

##### *School culture transmission*

School culture transmission may be defined as ways in which school culture is learned and transmitted from one generation to the next generation of cultural members.

##### *School culture elements as independent variable constructs*

"Tangible cultural forms embody or represent the ways of a people, or a classroom, or a school" (Sheive & Schoenheit, 1987, p. 6). The following elements act as independent variables indicating the presence of school culture.

1. **Shared Values:** Common norms, values and beliefs which cultural members embrace regarding the school and schooling. They are embodied in the common visions and the collective mission of the school community.
2. **Heroes:** Recognized individuals who embody and represent the school's core values.
3. **Leadership:** Perceived and exercised leadership as manifested in behaviour. Leadership can be categorized in three ways:
  - a. **Transmissional leadership:** Directing others through unilateral decision making characterized by a top-down style of authority.

- b. **Transactional leadership:** Leading through the distribution of rewards and incentives. This style is characterized by a democratic decision making process of committee and plebiscite.
  - c. **Transformational leadership:** The process of leading others through the utilization of intrinsic motivation and moral duty. This style understands and manages the common values, beliefs, norms and history of the followers and their institution.
4. **Rituals:** The "repetitive behavioral repertoire in which values are experienced directly through implicit signals" (Sheive & Schoenheit, 1987, p. 6). For example, students and staff unconsciously picking up waste paper found in halls may demonstrate the shared value for the tidiness of the work environment.
5. **Ceremonies:** "Occasions in which the values and the heroes are put on display, anointed, and celebrated" (Sheive & Schoenheit, 1987, p. 6). Graduations, football rallies and retirements exemplify ceremonies.
6. **Stories and Story tellers:** Stories are the specific examples of the school's values and heroes who succeed following the culturally defined norms. Storytellers are the historians who transmit this knowledge from generation to generation.
7. **Artifacts:** Concrete examples that exemplify the commonly held values. Trophies, yearbooks, parking spaces and furniture arrangements, are examples of artifacts that embody the school culture.

8. Informal cultural network: A collection of priests and priestesses, gossips, spies, counter-spies, and moles whose role it is to "reinforce and to protect the existing ways." (Sheive & Schoenheit, 1987, p. 6)

#### *Educational change*

Educational change can be considered as "any practice new to the person attempting to cope with an educational problem" (Fullan, 1991, p. 4). Central to this definition is that *understanding* has two components: *what* is to change; and *how* is it to change. The first component relates to the structures of organizations while the second relates to the norms, values and beliefs of organizations.

#### *Meta-orientations*

Meta-orientations are views or models which both describe and shape personal belief structures about the purposes and methodologies. For purpose of this study, three cultural meta-orientations regarding education are used which parallel the three leadership styles.

- A. Transmission Orientation: Sees the function of education is to transmit facts, skills, and values to students, staffs, and employees.
- B. Transaction Orientation: Sees the function of education is to create an interactive environment based on cooperation and pragmatic problem solving.
- C. Transformation Orientation: Sees the function of education is to teach humanistic and social change; teach environmental interdependency; and encourage transcendental growth. (Miller & Seller, 1990)

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*Basic assumptions*

1. *School cultures, regardless of their descriptions, exist.* In setting out to examine school culture one must assume that what is to be examined does in fact exist. Therefore, it can be postulated that:
  - a. school cultures are observable in part through measuring the tangible elements within them;
  - b. the behaviour of cultural members, characterized by some degree of consistency, is a function of general features of the situation in which it takes place;
  - c. the behaviour of cultural members relates to the tangible elements of school cultures; and
  - d. the extant tangible elements of school culture are indicative of the school's culture and its meta-orientation.
2. *School size has no relationship to school culture.* Shaw and Reyes (1992) were unable to confirm "any relationship between the differences in school size and differences in organizational culture" (p. 301). The implication of this finding permits a larger sampling of schools to occur.
3. *Cultural members' personal characteristics, such as age, gender, or experience have no relationship to school culture.* Again, Shaw and Reyes, (1992) failed to find a relationship regarding organizational culture and personal characteristics. The implication of this finding permits a broader sampling with reduced need for stratified or specified

random sampling to reduce the possible effects of personal characteristics on results.

4. *Resistance or acceptance to change is observable through reported teacher behaviour.* This assumes teachers can accurately recall incidents in which they either resisted a school related change or accepted a school related change. Therefore it can be postulated that:
  - a. reported teacher behaviour is a function of personal characteristics including their values and beliefs;
  - b. resistance is manifested in behaviour that rejects and discourages change;
  - c. acceptance is manifested in behaviour that encourages and undertakes change; and
  - d. the level of acceptance or resistance is indicative of the school's culture and its meta-orientation.

#### *Limitation of study*

Concatenated exploratory research has been a valued tool for sociological research (Stebbins, 1992). This study of perceived school culture clearly fits within the chain of longitudinal study begun by authors previously noted. Due to its exploratory nature, certain limitations reducing the probability of generalization were realized,

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namely:

1. *the limitation of the types of schools examined.* Only public and separate schools were identified for the purpose of this study. It was considered that private, charter, and reserve schools exist and operate for reasons other than those clearly established in the public domain. Those reasons might have influence on the school's perceived culture in a way not consistent with public domain schools. Further, it was felt the limited number of these types of schools would reduce the anonymity of results and produce an insignificant number of results for accurate sub-group analysis;
2. *the limitation of community influence.* While it may be logical to presume that the larger community's culture would influence the sub-culture of the school, this study's intended focus is on the principal's and teachers' perceptions of the school culture. This study did not seek to rationalize the extant school culture in relation to the larger community;
3. *the limitations of the survey instrument.* The fact that the survey instrument used in this study was developed in a concatenated fashion from the notions of other researchers, and has not been tested in a variety of fields, reduces the valid use of the results in a broader generalized manner.

Replication of this study and further exploration, using this or similarly constructed

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instruments, may well show further generalization of these findings.

### Hypotheses

Two hypotheses will be considered within the confines of this study.

#### *Hypothesis #1.*

School culture can be measured using culturally related constructs to demonstrate the nature and strength of the perceived culture's meta-orientation.

#### *Hypothesis #2.*

Measures of school culture will indicate the levels of acceptance or resistance to change.

### Approach to the Study

An exploratory descriptive study using a combination of both qualitative and quantitative assessments is proposed. Through the use of a summated rating Likert Scale and an open form questionnaire, data will be collected from both teachers and school principals.

#### *Population*

Within Zone 6 of Southern Alberta, a total possible sample of 167 schools was available. Of those, 12 schools were immediately eliminated due to their relationship or involvement in a federal administration program, private religious affiliation or distinct cultural affiliation. This was done in an attempt to maintain homogeneity regarding outside influences (Fennel, 1992). Three other schools were also eliminated due to the size of the staff. Schools with staffs numbering less than 4 were felt to be



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to small for the purpose of this study. Of the 167 original schools, 152 possible sites remain.

Considering 152 sites, calculations suggested that a population of 456 teachers ( $152 \times 3 = 456$ ) and 152 principals would combine to create a total population of 608 possible respondents.

### *Instrumentation*

Research has not produced evidence of any instrument which measures extant school culture. An instrument was designed with the following considerations:

1. a quantitative component based on a Likert Scale (4 point) to measure extant cultural variables.
2. a qualitative component to perform the duties of:
  - a. validating the quantitative component should it be necessary; and
  - b. providing for an expanded explanation of the extant cultural variables;
3. anonymity of respondents;
4. cultural characteristics:
  - a. urban/rural
  - b. size
  - c. type - elementary, junior high, high school

5. personal characteristics of respondents:
  - a. gender - male, female
  - b. teacher/principal
  - c. experience

### *Procedure*

The procedure for this study followed eight steps culminating in the reporting of the data. The table below details the procedure, action, and time frame.

Table 1. Survey Time Frame

Procedure	Action	Time
Research & Design Instrument	Double check for existing instrument possibilities. Select ideal design, develop questions and instructions. Design a letter of transmittal.	January, 1996
Pilot Instrument	Upon approval of Human Subjects Committee, use a randomly selected school from each of the school types, administer a pilot program.	February, 1996
Adjust Instrument	Utilizing results from pilot test, evaluate and adjust instrument.	February, 1996
Prepare & Deliver Final Instrument	Print and deliver final instrument along with instructions to the selected population using mail and inter-school mail where possible.	March, 1996
Mail out reminders	Produce and mail out a reminder to participants about completing and returning survey instruments.	March, 1996 (second week)
Recall Instruments	Ensure survey instruments are returned.	April, 1, 1996
Analysis of Data	Categorize and analyze results from survey instrument.	April/May, 1996
Report on Data	Summarize findings in report.	June, 1996

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### Summary

This chapter established the method of research. A theoretical framework was established using definitions and assumptions. Further, two hypotheses were described. Finally, the chapter describes the need for instrumentation to be developed and a procedure for implementing the study.

## **Procedures for Data Analysis**

### **Introduction**

#### ***Reasonable inference or conclusions***

Through the use of various descriptive statistics, data was be interpreted and correlated. The following approaches to this will be used:

1. frequency distribution and graphic representation of cultural constructs;
2. measures of central tendency of cultural constructs and dichotomous variables;
3. correlations between cultural constructs themselves, cultural constructs and the meta-orientation; and
4. inferential tests of data where appropriate.

#### ***Extraneous variables***

Consideration was given to extraneous variables influencing this study. While history, maturation, pre and post testing, interactions of testing and experimental treatments, and statistical regressions might not have an affect on this study, the variables regarding instrumentation, selection and mortality might. Attempts were made to reduce or eliminate the effects of these variables.

***Instrumentation:*** The instrument used was piloted and adjusted.

***Selection of population:*** It was anticipated the large sample population would reduce effects of selection.

***Mortality:*** It was anticipated the large sample population would reduce or

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eliminate effects of mortality regarding survey returns.

### *Reliability*

Since no evidence currently exists regarding the extant measures of school culture, comparative reliability is difficult to attain. While administrative procedures and errors can be controlled for, personal factors of the respondents can not.

Instrumentation reliability can be accounted for in the quantitative/qualitative approach to be used. That is, how respondents responded in the quantitative portion of the instrument should have paralleled the responses in the qualitative portion (Van Dalen & Meyer, 1966).

### *Validity*

In appraising both the instruments validity and the validity of the study a series of actions were followed. Content validity will be determined using a panel of experts to judge the extent to which the survey test items represented what it claims to measure. Construct validity, relating to the previously defined construct elements of a school culture plays an important role in ensuring validity. The definition of the constructs place limitations upon the generalization of statements. Internal validity was a point of interest when examining the relationship between school culture and change. Again, the extraneous variables were accounted for under reliability. The most significant source of effect regarding external validity was the reactive effects of the experimental procedures itself. If teachers or principals had placed little importance on the survey,

the test's validity would have been diminished. A persuasive cover letter was created to reduce this effect.

### Summary

This section has examined ways in which reasonable inference can be made from the data collected. Aside from the statistical manipulation of results, consideration has been given to the extraneous variables in an attempt to reduce or eliminate their effects. Further, factors of reliability and validity have been thought of revealing that attention must be paid to developing parallel reliability and construct validity through analysis of definitions.

## Results

### Introduction

The findings of this study will be presented after a brief review of the procedure and an overview of the results. Demographics, cultural meta-orientations, and response to change will be examined both separately and as they relate to each other.

### *Procedure*

A bank of sixty Likert-scale closed form questions, nine demographic questions, and four open form questions were developed relating to the descriptive characteristics of transmissional, transactional, and transformational organizations as suggested by literature, including authors Deal and Kennedy (1982) , Sagor (1994), and Miller and Seller (1990). A panel of five teachers reviewed the list and provided suggestions for refinement. A second panel of three academics reviewed the refined list for additional clarity. Based on the reviewers' advice, the questionnaire was then reduced to thirty-nine Likert-scale questions and one of the open ended questions was reworded for clarity.

The questionnaire was pilot tested using a small school staff of eight teachers. Many of their suggestions for improvements were integrated into the final document. The questionnaire and all cover letter materials were submitted to and approved by the University of Lethbridge's Human Subjects Ethics Committee.

Dissemination of the questionnaire was handled through either the inter-school mail

system or Canada Post. The instrument was distributed to 134 schools in Zone 6 of Southern Alberta. Directions for completing the questionnaire indicated that one was to be completed by the principal and three others were to be completed by teachers selected by the principal using the first letter of their first name in an attempt to develop anonymity. Each questionnaire was distributed with a non-identifiable return envelope which was to be sealed before being returned to the principal for collection in the bulk return envelope. Return postage was provided using an originating source metered postage marking, further removing the need for external point of mailing identifications. Returns were requested to be made within 15 days and an additional window of 30 days for returns was provided.

School kits, numbering 134, were created to make it easier for 134 principals and 402 teachers (total number = 536) to participate in this study. Due to the design of the distribution and retrieval system there was no opportunity to know the number of returns from a particular school or school division. A return rate of 47.01% (n=252) was achieved.

#### *Overview of the results*

Descriptive analysis of the results suggests support for the first hypothesis namely, that perceived school culture can be measured using culturally related constructs to demonstrate the nature and strength of the culture's meta-orientation. This study demonstrates that while all three meta-orientations co-exist within a school and school



systems, the culturally related constructs can indicate the strength of one orientation over another. Further, the results suggest that as a school culture moves to becoming more transformational in nature, it tends to move away from being transmissional. Transactional cultural behaviours and beliefs appear to exist in both transmissional and transformational cultures. Study results suggest that while all three meta-orientations can be shown to co-exist, a majority of both teachers and principals in this study perceive their school culture to be transformational in nature. Unlike previous studies that reported schools to be environments in which teachers are not empowered or integral in the development of organizational values and beliefs (Blase & Roberts, 1994), this study provides some indication that teachers are seeking to satisfy higher needs than those met at a transmissional or transactional level. Further, the analysis of particular questions regarding change produced an individual change index (I.C.I.) which when analyzed resulted in a sample change index (S.C.I.).

### *Demographics*

School type, size, teaching and administrative experience, respondents gender, professional and staff development opportunities, and professional evaluation were all demographic descriptors identified.

*Figure 1.* describes the six school categories and the number of respondents within each category. Nearly one half of the respondents work strictly in elementary schools.

Appropriately, considering two-thirds of the questionnaires were directed towards teachers, they represented 73% of the respondents (n=186). Teacher/principals represented 19.4% (n=49) and principals 6.7% (n=17). Considering the small response number of those solely employed as principals and the fact that teacher/principals are also principals, the results for these two sub-groups have been amalgamated.

Approximately 55% (n=137) of the respondents were female while 44% (n=112) were male. *Figure 2* depicts a comparison of the results of gender and employment responsibility. Most of the women who participated in this study were classroom teachers, whereas nearly half of the male respondents were also involved in administration.

School size was established using reported staff size. The mean school staff was 17.24 with a mode of 15 and a range from 5 to 60. Respondents also estimated the socio-economic status of the community they served. Where two categories were circled by respondents, the higher of the two was utilized for demographic analysis. Survey results indicate that the largest socio-economic group being served in Southern Alberta is lower-middle class (40.4%) with upper middle class being next (26.9%). A category titled "even blend" drew a 24.5% response.

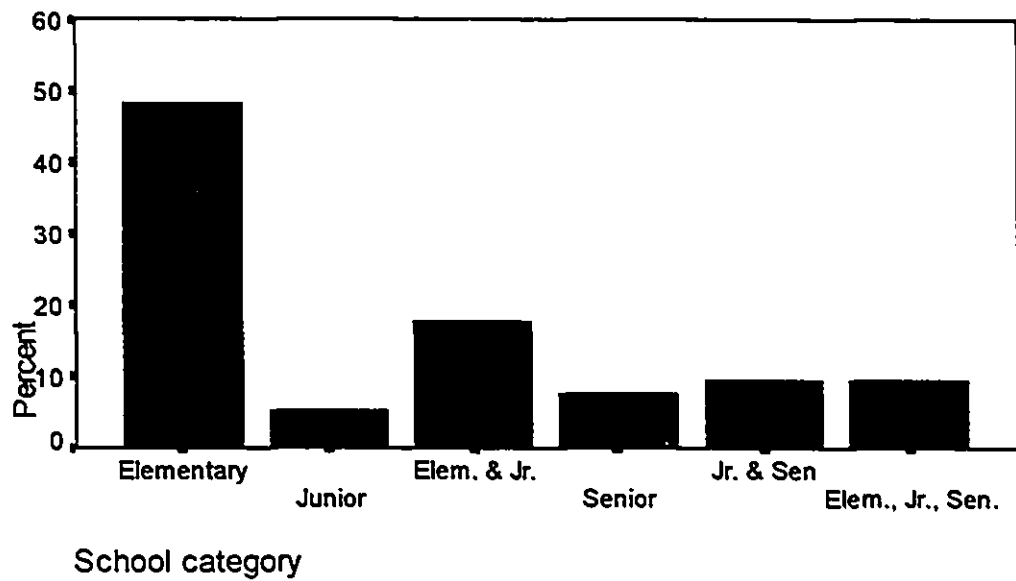


Figure 1 Percentage of categorized schools responding.

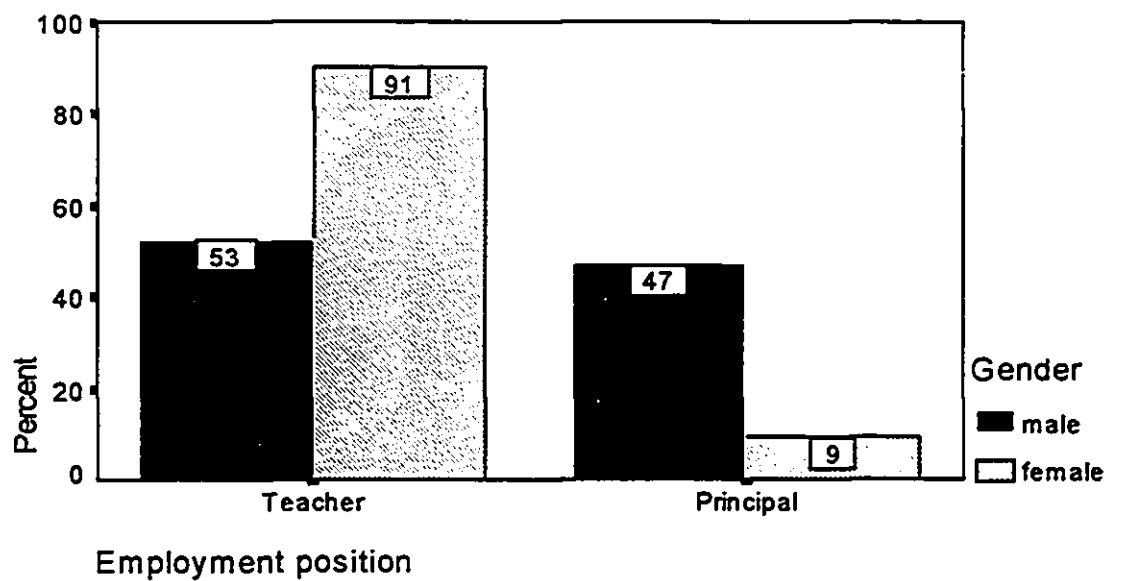
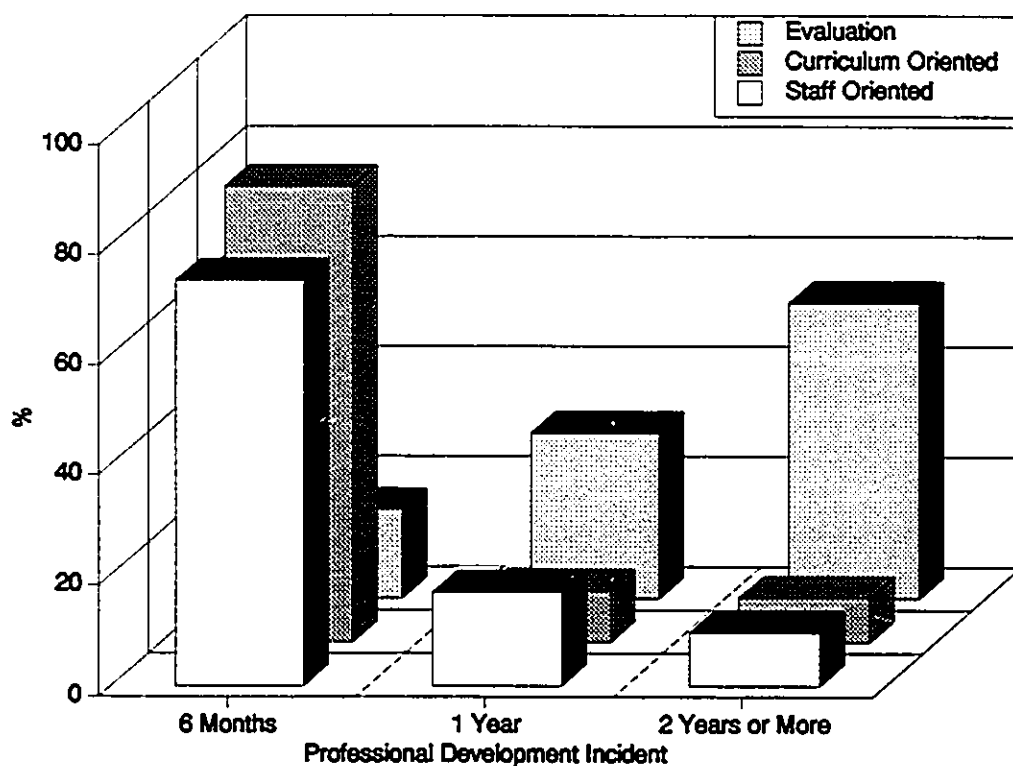


Figure 2 Percentage of respondents defined by gender occupying the role of principal or teacher.

Greater than 70% of teachers and principals have been involved with staff or professional development activities within the past six months. For the same time period, attendance to staff development, or activities in which a focus was given to staff concerns, collaboration, cooperation, function, and team work received a cumulative response of 73.5% while a cumulative response for the period of one year yielded a 90.4% response. Similarly, professional development activities of a curriculum nature were attended to by 82.7% (cumulative) within the past six months and 91.9% (cumulative) within the past year. *Figure 3* demonstrates the positive response regarding recent professional activities.



**Figure 3** Professional development activities response: Staff development (foreground), Curriculum (centre), and Evaluation (background).

Compared to professional activities, professional evaluations occur with much less frequency in respondents' lives. Only 16.1% of the respondents had received any type of professional evaluation within the past six months and 30.1% had received an evaluation within the past year (cumulative percentage = 46.2%). A majority of the respondents (53.8%) had not received a professional evaluation in the past two years. Information on evaluation was sought in this section of the study because it was expected that evaluation would be considered by respondents to be a component of professional development.

The questionnaire was intended to test the cultural constructs associated with the three meta-orientations. A score for each meta-orientation was established using the mean of the responses for those questions which related to the meta-orientation. For example, a respondent may have had a mean response to the 15 transformational questions of 2.35. To develop a more descriptive visual picture of the result, such a score was then transformed<sup>2</sup> by a multiple of 100. *Figure 4* exhibits the tabulated results of the mean scores of each of the cultural meta-orientations. Relating the results to the Likert-scale, a lower score in any one orientation would suggest that the characteristics of that orientation are "always" or "often" in evidence.

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<sup>2</sup> The statistical term *transformed* will not be used in this study in an attempt to reduce confusion. *Transformed* will be replaced by the synonym "converted." Both simple and complex data transformations or conversions have been noted as being helpful in making more obvious assumptions made from data (Ferguson, 1976).

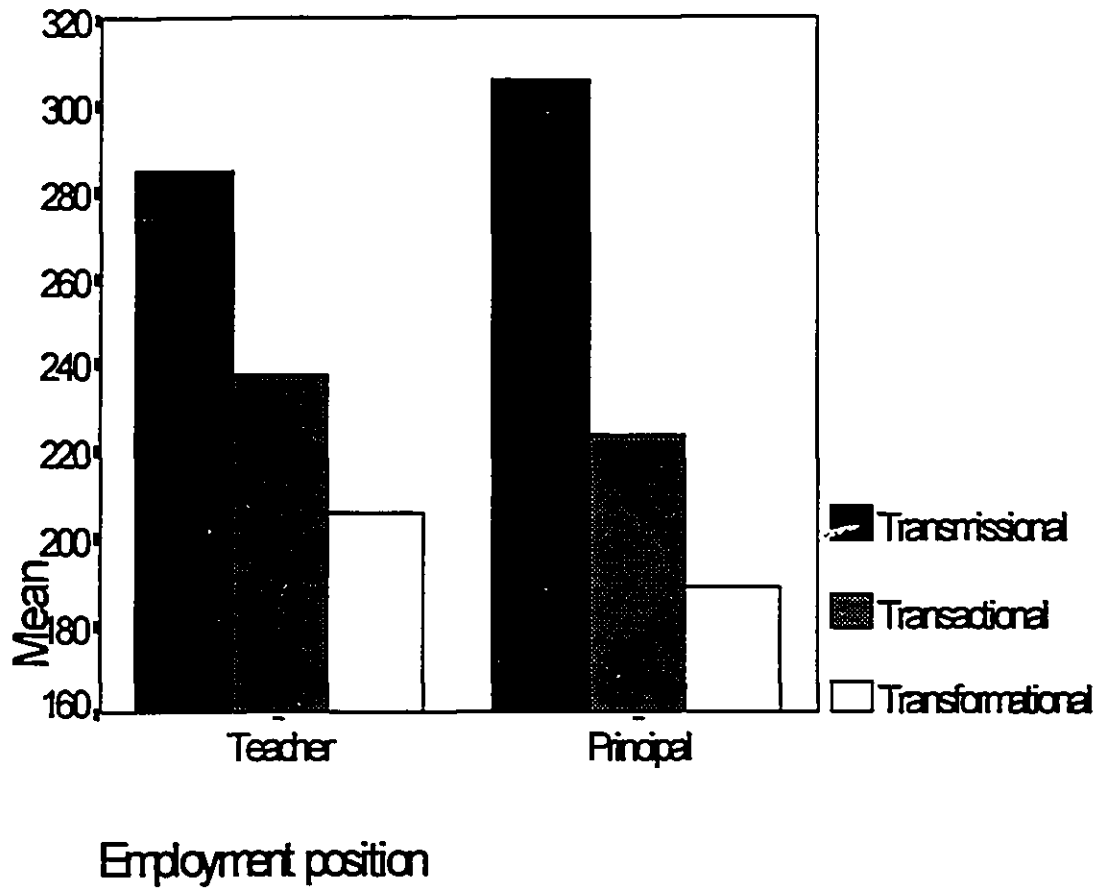


Figure 4 Mean scores of cultural meta-orientations described by employment position.

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*Review of each cultural meta-orientation*

The data for determining the presence of each cultural meta-orientations arise from 12 - 15 questions which explore characteristics of that meta-orientation. The converted mean results provide the basis for comparison of existing levels of each cultural meta-orientation.

The result of the transmission meta-orientation scores indicate a mean value of 290.61 (median = 290.91, standard deviation = 39.41). Considering the lowest score possible is 120 and the highest, 480, and that a low score indicates a positive affiliation with a transmissional culture, the mean suggests that teachers and principals tend to regard their cultures as transmissionally weak work cultures. *Figure 5* depicts the frequency of the transmissional scores. The plotting of the normal curve highlights the score in the 270 range. While this score is not particularly close to the low range of possible scores, the fact that it is one deviation from the mean suggests that scores created by teachers affect the distribution of the result. Looking back at *Figure 4*, this hypothesis is supported by the lower mean response of teachers and due to the fact that teachers outweigh principals almost 3 to 1 in this study. The mean score and standard deviation for the sub-group teachers was 285.16 and 40.56 respectively. For principals, the mean score and standard deviation was 305.82 and 31.57.

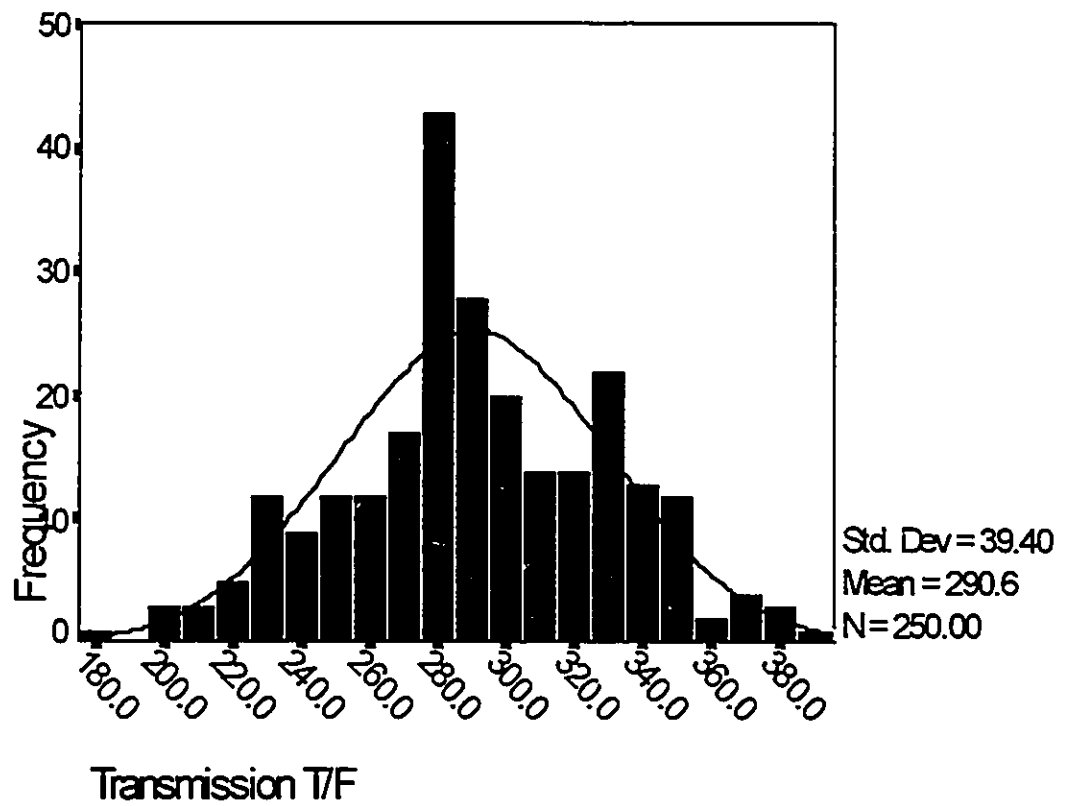


Figure 5 Frequency of transmissional meta-orientation mean responses.



Transactional score results were considerably lower for both teachers and principals. While the entire sample's mean score was 233.99, with a standard deviation of 34.91, teachers scored higher than principals with scores of 237.71 ( $SD = 35.79$ ) compared to 223.62 ( $SD = 30.23$ ).

Little difference is noticed between teachers' and principals' scores in the transformational category. The mean results for teachers were 205.95 ( $SD = 41.25$ ) and for principals, 189.09 ( $SD = 30.03$ ). Unlike the transmissional score results, plotting of the transactional and transformational frequencies demonstrated normal distribution.

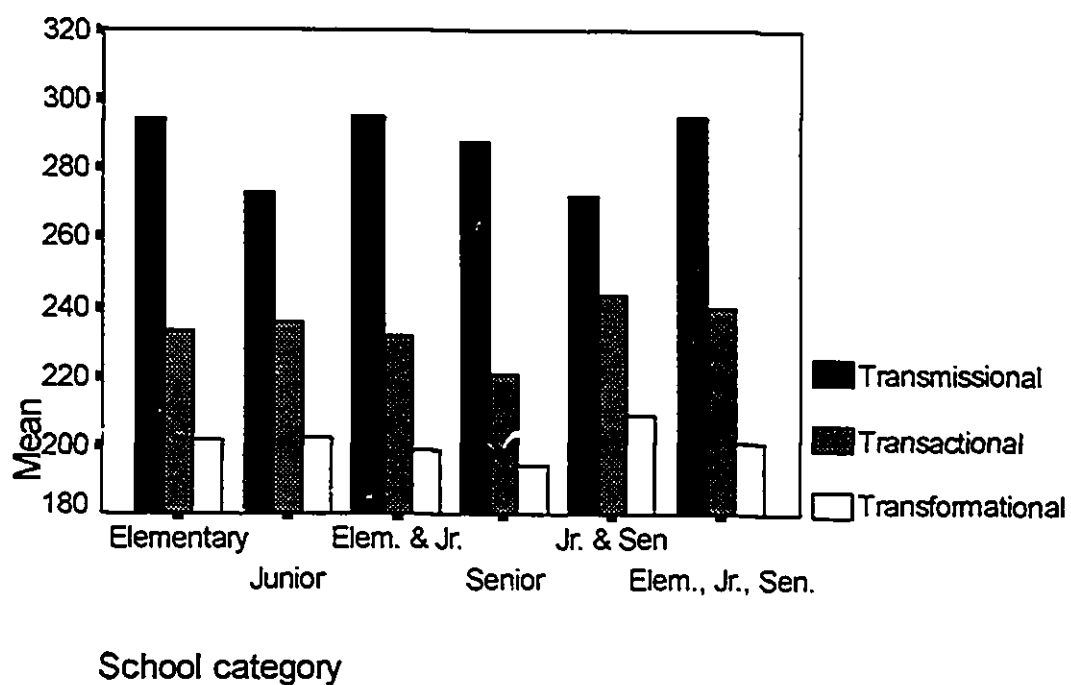
Scores analyzed by gender yielded comparatively similar results for both males and females. *Table 2* contains the mean and standard deviations for each sub-group. The most obvious difference is between the mean scores of the transmissional and the transformational orientations. These results reinforce this study's findings that school personnel reportedly perceive their cultures to be transformational in nature. Further, men reportedly perceive their cultures to be less transmissional than women by a greater margin. By a far less margin, men perceive their school cultures to be more transformational than women.

**Table 2.** Comparative mean scores of cultural meta-orientations defined by gender.

Transmissional Scores Entire Sample	Mean 291.05	Standard Deviation 39.41
Male	<b>294.15</b>	35.81
Female	<b>277.48</b>	42.12
Transactional Scores Entire Sample	Mean 234.12	Standard Deviation 35.01
Male	232.77	35.41
Female	235.25	34.77
Transformational Scores Entire Sample	Mean 201.64	Standard Deviation 39.26
Male	<b>197.87</b>	33.76
Female	<b>204.77</b>	43.17

n=247 of 252 (5 missing cases/2.0%)

Regardless of the school type in which people worked, respondents in all six categories reported similar perceptions regarding their culture's meta-orientation. Similar to the previous findings regarding gender and position, schools generally reported high transmissional mean scores, moderate transactional means scores and lower transformational scores. The transformational results for high schools show the lowest score and, while statistically weak due to the low sample number, this is less than the elementary score (*see Figure 6*. high school,  $\underline{M}$  = 194.41,  $\underline{SD}$  = 47.75; elementary,  $\underline{M}$  = 201.88,  $\underline{SD}$  = 40.58).



**Figure 6** Comparative converted means graph of meta-orientations as defined by school category.

*Table 3* contains the results of comparing the means of the three meta-orientations with incidence of curriculum oriented professional development. Whether or not people were engaged in curriculum professional development did not appear to affect the mean scores of their perception of their workplace culture to a large extent. A trend did appear suggesting that as teachers and principals were less engaged in participating in professional development activities they also perceived their culture to be more transmissional and less transactional and transformational in nature. However, the limited case numbers in two of the categories restrains the formation of any conclusions.

Similar results displayed in *Table 4* were obtained from the analysis of the cultural meta-orientation mean scores and staff professional development. As in the situation regarding curriculum professional development activities, a similar trend is evident with greater differences being reported.

**Table 3. Summaries of Transmissional, Transactional, and Transformational Meta-orientation Means by Levels of Curriculum Professional Development Inservice**

**Incident**

**Summaries of Transmission T/F  
By levels of Curriculum P.D. inservice**

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Label</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Cases</u>
For Entire Population			290.24	39.44	246
CURR.PD	1.00	within 6 months	291.48	40.37	203
CURR.PD	2.00	1 year ago	290.09	37.02	23
CURR.PD	3.00	2 or more years ago	277.87	31.15	20

Total Cases = 252

Missing Cases = 6 or 2.4%

**Summaries of Transactional T/F  
By levels of Curriculum P.D. inservice**

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Label</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Cases</u>
For Entire Population			234.06	35.10	246
CURR.PD	1.00	within 6 months	232.43	35.01	203
CURR.PD	2.00	1 year ago	238.42	35.71	23
CURR.PD	3.00	2 or more years ago	245.58	34.50	20

Total Cases = 252

Missing Cases = 6 or 2.4%

Summaries of Transformational T/F  
By levels of Curriculum P.D. inservice

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Label</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Cases</u>
For Entire Population			201.45	39.54	246
CURR.PD	1.00	within 6 months	200.18	39.96	203
CURR.PD	2.00	1 year ago	203.79	40.82	23
CURR.PD	3.00	2 or more years ago	211.57	33.49	20

Total Cases = 252

Missing Cases = 6 or 2.4%

**Table 4. Summaries of Transmissional, Transactional, and Transformational Meta-orientation Means by Levels of Staff Professional Development Inservice Incident**

Summaries of Transmission T/F  
By levels of Staff development P.D. inservice

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Label</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Cases</u>
For Entire Population			290.15	39.25	247
S.D.PD	1.00	within 6 months	293.53	38.36	183
S.D.PD	2.00	1 year ago	287.51	40.20	42
S.D.PD	3.00	2 or more years ago	267.09	38.28	22

Total Cases = 252

Missing Cases = 5 or 2.0%

Summaries of Transactional T/F  
By levels of Staff development P.D. inservice

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Label</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Cases</u>
For Entire Population			233.99	35.05	247
S.D.PD	1.00	within 6 months	232.39	33.66	183
S.D.PD	2.00	1 year ago	232.47	36.00	42
S.D.PD	3.00	2 or more years ago	250.19	41.73	22

Total Cases = 252

Missing Cases = 5 or 2.0%

Summaries of Transformational T/F  
By levels of Staff development P.D. inservice

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Label</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Cases</u>
For Entire Population			201.55	39.42	247
S.D.PD	1.00	within 6 months	198.13	39.32	183
S.D.PD	2.00	1 year ago	205.12	35.15	42
S.D.PD	3.00	2 or more years ago	223.12	42.17	22

Total Cases = 252

Missing Cases = 5 or 2.0%

A comparison of the mean scores by levels of evaluation also demonstrated results similar to those identified with curriculum or staff professional development activities. *Table 5* contains the results of comparing the means of the three culture meta-orientations with the incidence of past professional evaluations. Teachers or principals who had been evaluated in the past six months reportedly perceive their school culture to be more transmissional than those who had not been evaluated. Paradoxically, those same people also regarded their school cultures to be more transformational.

**Table 5. Summaries of Transmissional, Transactional, and Transformational Meta-orientation Means by Levels of Past Professional Evaluation Incident**

Summaries of Transmission T/F By levels of Professional Evaluation					
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Label</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Cases</u>
For Entire Population			290.83	38.83	247
EVAL	1.00	within 6 months	281.60	38.65	40
EVAL	2.00	1 year ago	290.46	39.07	73
EVAL	3.00	2 or more years ago	293.79	38.60	134

Total Cases = 252

Missing Cases = 5 or 2.0%



Summaries of Transactional T/F  
By levels of Professional evaluation

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Label</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Cases</u>
For Entire Population			233.99	35.05	247
EVAL	1.00	within 6 months	221.25	33.81	40
EVAL	2.00	1 year ago	234.79	36.60	73
EVAL	3.00	2 or more years ago	237.36	33.93	134

Total Cases = 252

Missing Cases = 5 or 2.0%

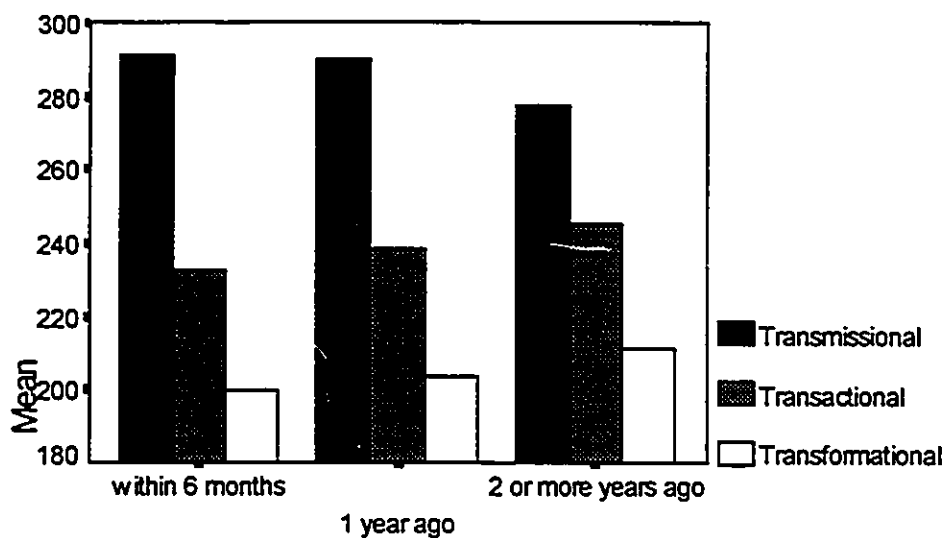
Summaries of Transformational T/F  
By levels of Professional Evaluation

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Label</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Cases</u>
For Entire Population			201.04	38.96	247
EVAL	1.00	within 6 months	192.47	41.86	40
EVAL	2.00	1 year ago	205.71	40.12	73
EVAL	3.00	2 or more years ago	201.05	37.26	134

Total Cases = 252

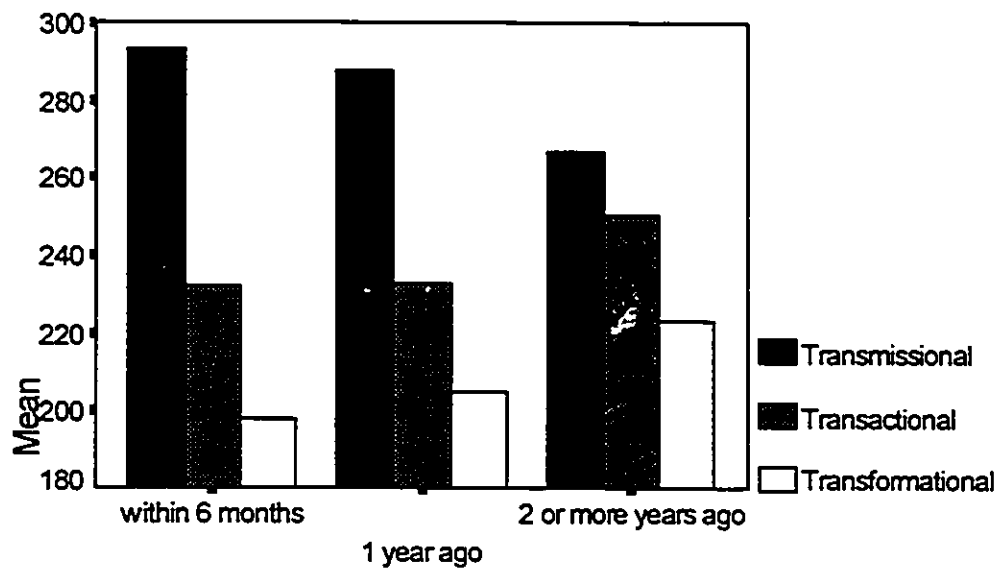
Missing Cases = 5 or 2.0%

Figures 7, 8, and 9 represent this data in an attempt to highlight the marginal differences that have been revealed in the previous three tables. Figure 7 contains the results of the comparative means of curriculum professional development incidents.



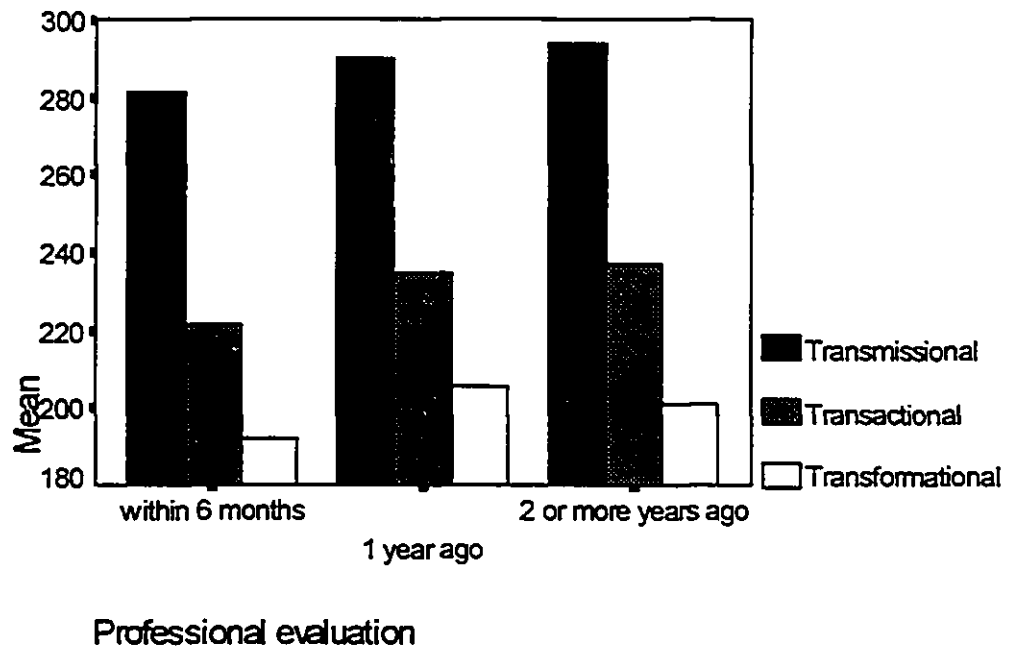
Curriculum P.D. inservice

Figure 7 Comparison of Transmissional, Transactional, and Transformational mean scores by levels of curriculum professional development incidence.



Staff development P.D. inservice

Figure 8 Comparison of Transmissional, Transactional, and Transformational mean scores by levels of staff professional development inservice incidence.



**Figure 9** Comparison of Transmissional, Transactional, and Transformational mean scores by levels of professional evaluation incidence.

An attempt was made to examine existing correlations between the three meta-orientation mean scores. Tests for correlation coefficients, including Pearson, Kendall, and Spearman failed to identify levels of significance regarding any combination at the .05 level. However, each meta-orientation did show a significant correlation coefficient at the .01 level when the Pearson analysis was used. *Table 6* presents the result of that test.

***Table 6*** Correlation coefficients for Cultural Meta-orientations

	Transformational	Transactional	Transmissional
Transformational	1.00	0.6526*	-0.5465*
Transactional	0.6526*	1.00	-0.2990*
Transmissional	-0.5465*	-0.2990*	1.00

\*significant at 0.01 level

Three scattergrams produce visual results of the relationship the cultural meta-orientations have. While none of the resulting graphs produces robust conclusions, trends are identifiable for further interpretation. The first, *Figure 10* shows the moderate negative relationship between transformational mean scores and transmissional mean scores.

*Figure 11* exhibits the positive correlation that Transformational mean scores have to

*Figure 11* exhibits the positive correlation that Transformational mean scores have to Transactional means scores. The  $r^2$  calculation of .4259 indicates a superior fit to the linear regression line than that demonstrated in *Figure 10* ( $r^2=0.2987$ ). Additionally, the positive correlation ( $r = 0.6526$ ) is evident.

*Figure 12* highlights the weak correlation that exists between Transactional means scores and Transmissional mean scores. The correlation ( $r = 0.2990$ ) and a weak  $r^2$  of 0.0894, suggests that no relation exists between these sets of data.

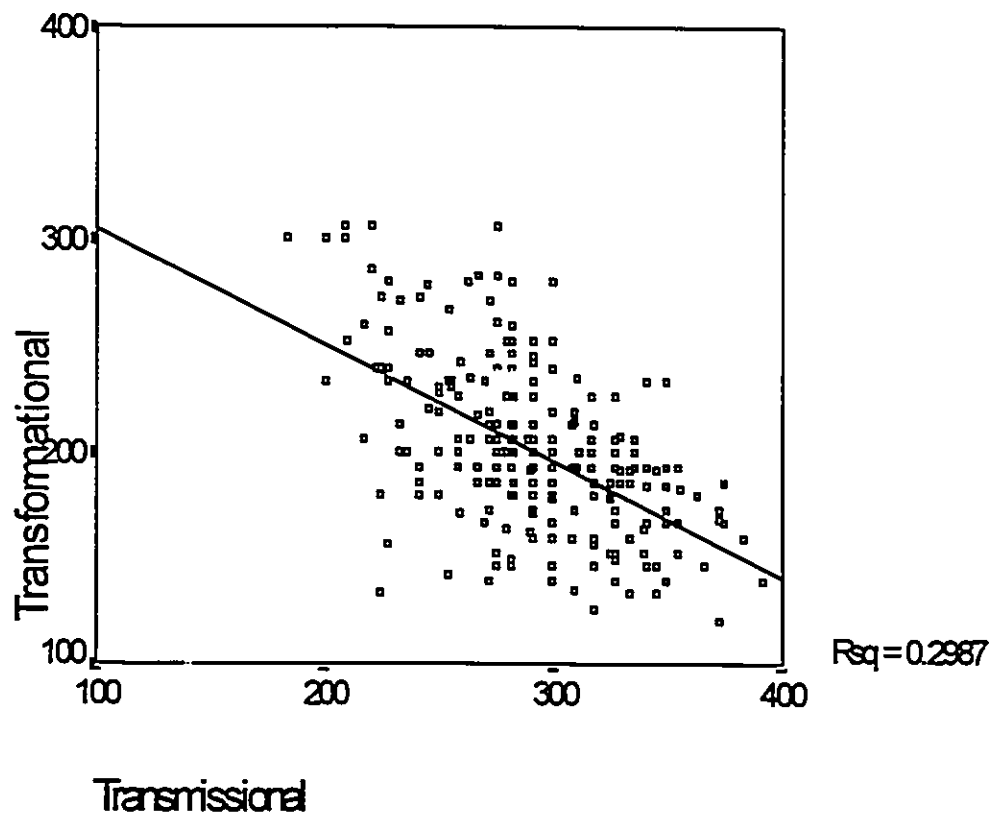


Figure 10 Relationship between Transformational and Transactional mean scores.

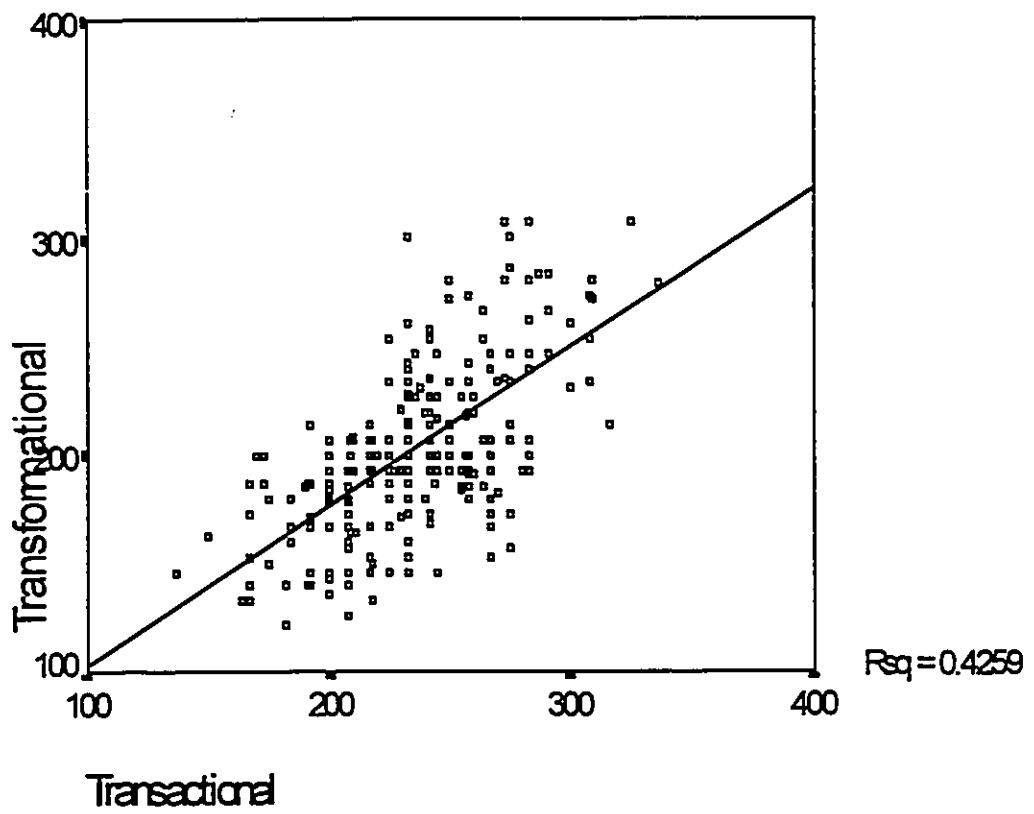


Figure 11 Relationship between Transactional and Transformational mean scores.



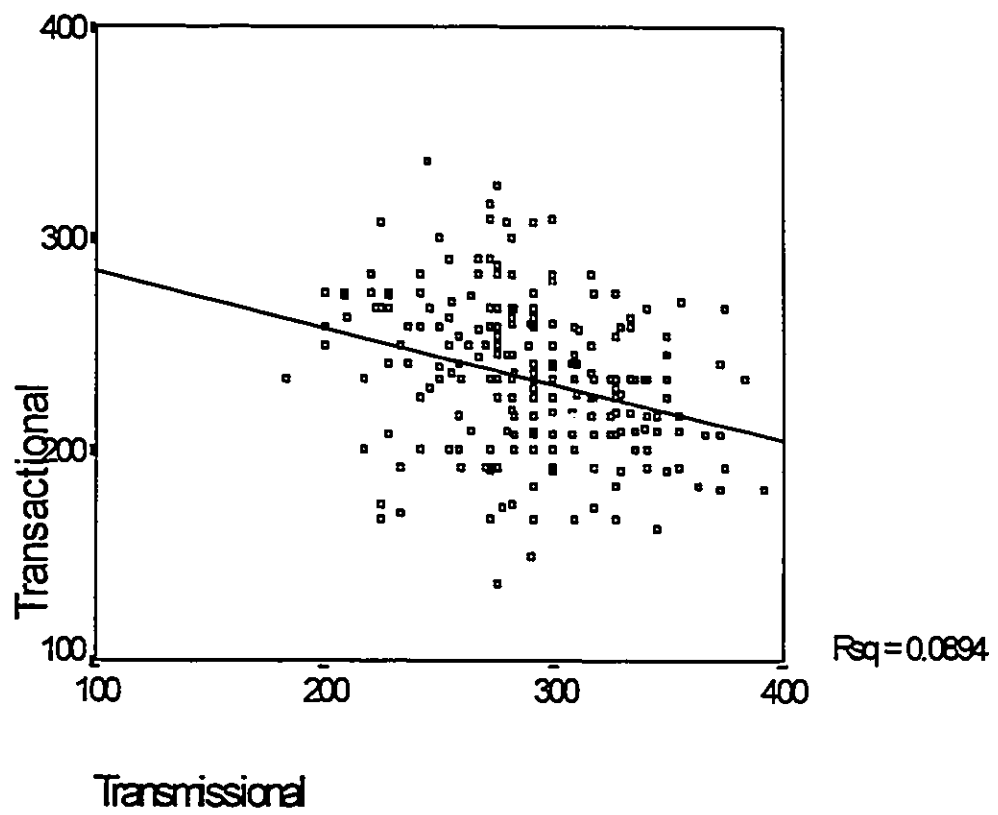


Figure 12 Relationship between the Transactional and Transmissional mean scores.

### *Change Index*

Through the use of three positively and three negatively worded questions regarding perceptions of change, a change index was calculated. The Likert-scale values for these questions were first recoded to an interval scale (Van Dalen, 1966). The positive questions were recoded from the usual 1,2,3,4 to 2,1,-1,-2. The negative questions were recoded from 1,2,3,4 to -2,-1,1,2. In this way, a respondent's very positive response to change would score a possible 12 while a respondent's very negative response to change could receive a score of -12. The positive and negative change scores for all individual cases were then calculated to find the individual change index (I.C.I.) and, subsequently, to identify the sample change index (S.C.I.)

*Figure 13* depicts I.C.I. frequency responses which formed a range of 13 (-9 to 4). The S.C.I. index was -2.667 (which is the I.C.I. mean,  $SD = 2.415$ ,  $Mdn = -3.0$ ). Both I.C.I. values of -2.0 and -3.0 occurred the same number of times ( $n = 54$  each) representing a cumulative 42.8%.

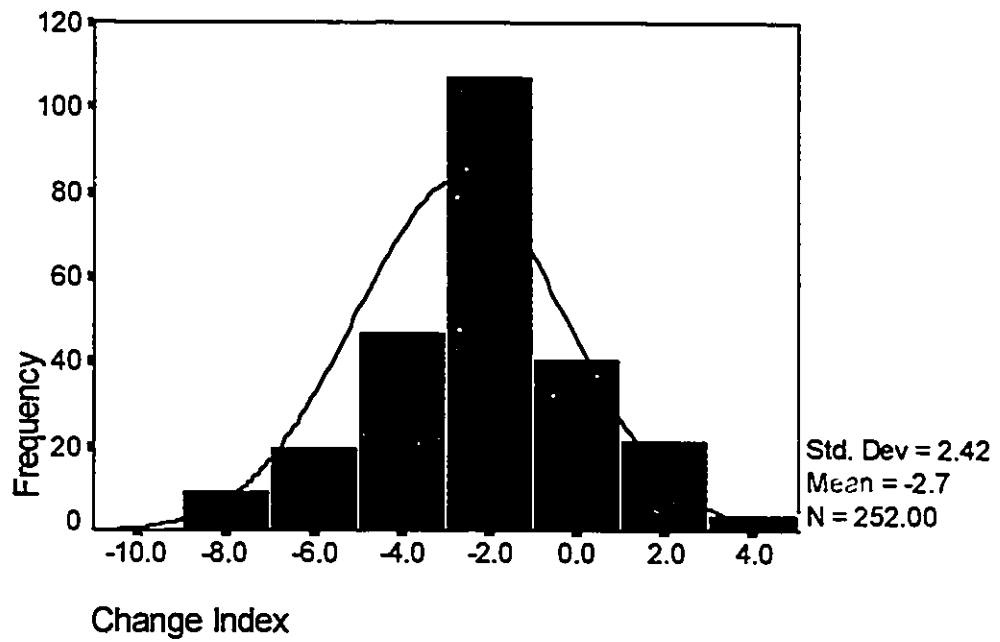


Figure 13 Histogram of Individual Change Index frequencies.

*Change and Meta-orientation results*

Three correlations were examined to determine what relationship might exist between *change* and the *cultural meta-orientation*. The weakest correlation coefficient resulted from the analysis of I.C.I. and transmissional mean scores ( $r = .4702$ , significant at .01). A moderate negative correlation was found between I.C.I. and transactional mean scores ( $r = -0.5937$ , significant at .01). The strongest correlation was identified between I.C.I. and transformational mean scores ( $r = -0.6462$ , significant at .01). *Figures 14, 15, and 16* depict graphically these results respectively. Best fit lines have been added to help visually suggest any positive or negative trend.

As is to be expected with a strengthened correlation coefficient, the I.C.I. vs. Transformation mean score results produced a superior coefficient of determination ( $r^2 = 0.4759$ ) suggesting a greater linear relationship between the two variables.

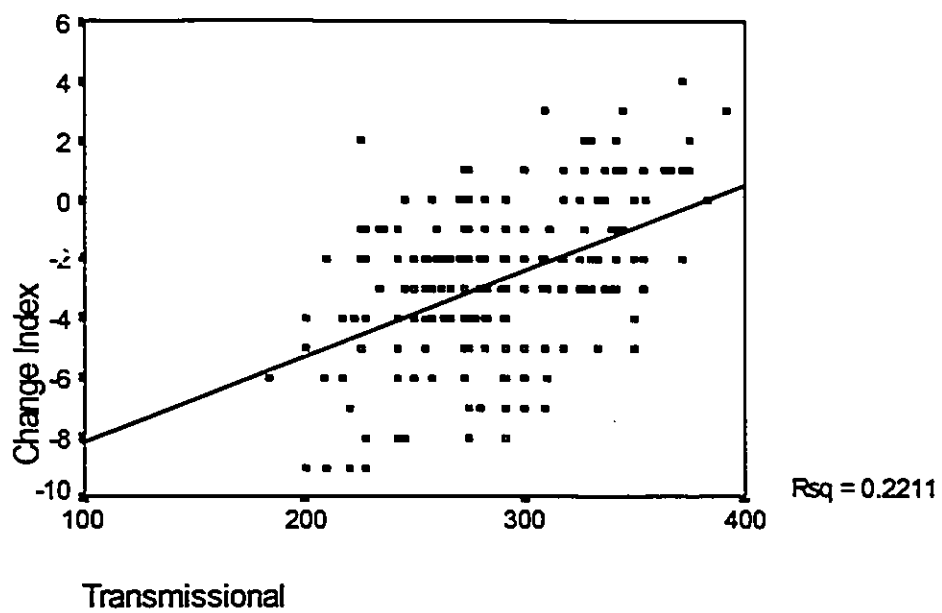


Figure 14 Correlation scattergram of Individual Change Index results by Transmissional mean scores.

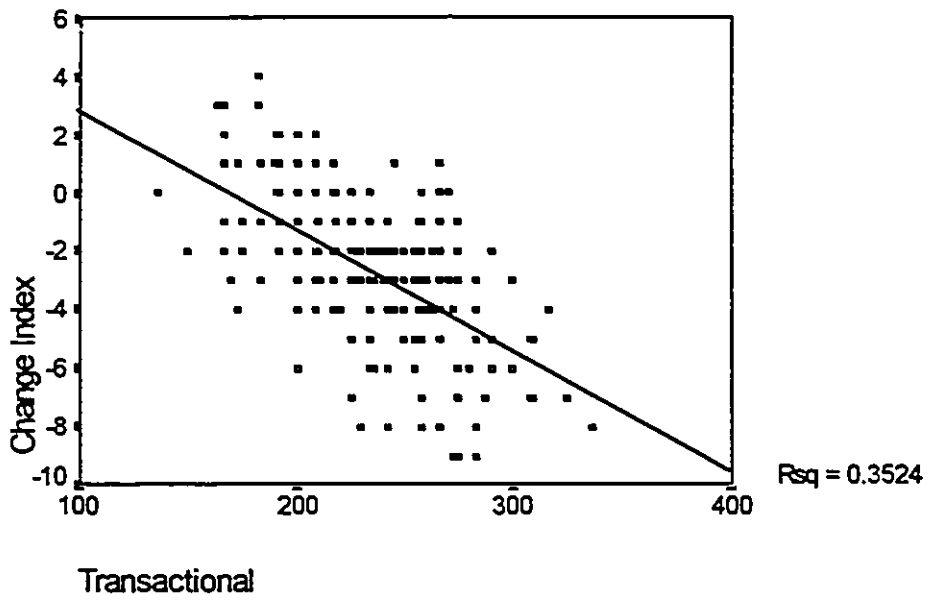
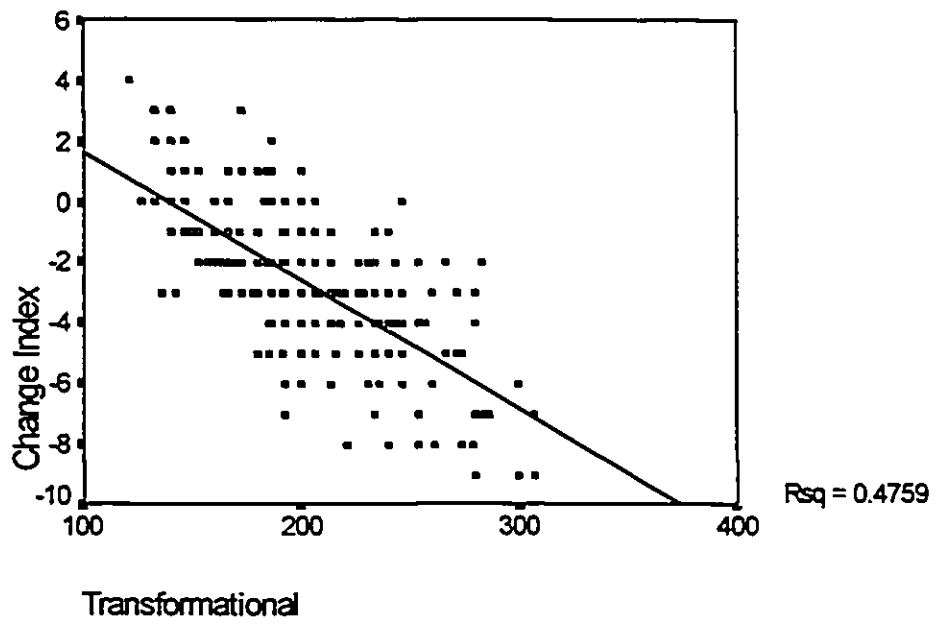


Figure 15 Correlation scattergram of Individual Change Index results by Transactional mean scores.



**Figure 16** Correlation scattergram of Individual Change Index results by Transformation mean scores.

## **Discussion**

### **Introduction**

The discussion of the results will focus on eight points of interest drawn from this study. In order to establish a sense of rationale and purpose, the relationships between the transmissional, transactional, and transformational meta-orientations will be discussed. Gender, school position, and professional development activities and meta-orientation will also be discussed. The inconsistent results regarding change perceptions and meta-orientation will be examined and, finally, some commentary regarding the impact of these results will conclude this chapter.

### **Meta-orientation Relationships**

Perception and reality are two different concepts. This study has focused on the perceptions people have of their working realities. It cannot be over-stressed that there may be a distinct and identifiable difference between how we perceive our working reality and what is in fact *the* working reality. This being the case, the results of this study may indicate more what teachers and principals wish their working realities would be like rather than how they really are. The comparative discussion regarding the three cultural meta-orientation results provides a primary source of information regarding this notion.

Nearly 100 converted mean points separate the entire sample scores regarding Transmissional and Transformational responses (see *Results: Table 2*). The lower mean score suggests a greater affiliation to that particular orientation. Therefore,



generally, teachers and principals in Southern Alberta perceive their working realities to be more transformational in nature than transmissional. They appear to consider their schools to be more collaborative, with a shared leadership style, and a sense of continuous learning surrounding the organization. Examination of the frequency of responses (see *Results: Figure 5*) suggests the majority of this sample group tend not to associate transmissional behaviours and beliefs with their schools, claiming that these are "seldom characteristic" or "not characteristic" of their working realities.

Rossman, Corbett and Firestone (1988) may provide some explanation for this result. They suggest that the transformational process is often set off by trauma, discord or dysfunction, creating a context in which reception to change may be regarded as the only solution. Recent school reform initiatives, including site-based management, may be creating a sufficient level of trauma within schools to cause this reaction and perception. The reform initiatives, clearly "second-order" in nature regardless of their implementation meta-orientation, would require teaching professionals to respond from within one or a combination of the cultural meta-orientations (Fullan, 1991). This suggests and supports the notion of congruent behaviour needing to exist in order for change to occur (Deal & Kennedy, 1993). Further, many authors propose that within any organization and change initiative relationship there exists the implementation meta-orientation and the working culture meta-orientation. For example, much literature (Fullan, 1991; Leithwood, Menzies, and Jantzi, 1994; Fennel, 1992) has focussed on the type or style of implementation the change initiative has taken and the

reaction teaching professionals have had to that initiative. For the most part, as summarized by Fullan (1991), initiatives that appear to be transmissional in nature have tended to fail. One explanation for this held that transmissional initiatives were not acceptable to the affected public and it was thought, therefore, that the nature of the initiative would require changing to fit with the perceived working culture meta-orientation. By knowing both the implementation culture meta-orientation and the working culture meta-orientation of a target group, it may be more possible to predict if proposed changes will be effective. This study was able to identify a perceived working culture meta-orientation. It may follow, therefore, that there needs to be congruence between the implementation meta-orientation and the working culture meta-orientation before the kinds of changes that have been attempted recently in Alberta can be successful. Extending this, there appear to be two dynamic change variables, each with its own unique culture, which could be broadly described as the culture of a provincial department of education and the culture of a particular school. Should the department of education be grounded in a transmissional cultural paradigm and initiate a change reflective of that orientation, only those schools with cultures that are also congruent to the department's style will likely have success in accepting the change initiative.

The extant school culture perceptions captured in this study clearly describe Southern Alberta schools as being mostly transformational in nature. If the connections between implementation culture meta-orientation and working reality culture meta-orientation

are valid, it would be reasonable to suggest that any change initiative should be presented from the transformational perspective. Failing that, two different outcomes are possible. The first, described by Fullan (1991) would be failure of the initiative due to the fact that cultural congruity could not be established. The second, and historically proven to be least likely, would be that one of the two cultures would change its meta-orientation to become congruent with the other.

The notion of congruence of organizational cultures as a prerequisite for change to occur successfully should be of interest to educational leaders at all levels since it would affect not only the meta-cultures of departments of education and school systems but the macro or subcultures within school divisions and micro-cultures of schools themselves. This theme is pursued further in the sections of this chapter dealing with school position, gender and meta-orientation.

Based on the evidence of transactional mean scores and their correlation to both the transformational and transmissional mean scores, it would appear that transactional behaviours and beliefs will coexist with the other cultural meta-orientation behaviours. As pointed out by the extensive research of Bass and Avolio (1993), "transformational and transactional leadership can be either directive or participative, democratic or authoritarian" (p. 65). Simply stated, regardless of whether the leadership is

autocratic (Hersey, 1984) or shared<sup>3</sup>, people will tend to demonstrate cooperative behaviours and work in situations where rewards are evident. Different cultures offer different rewards. For example, transmissional style meta-orientations have often used position, finance, or material rewards while, in contrast, transformational style meta-orientations frequently focus on intrinsic rewards.

#### *Sub-groups and Meta-orientation*

The phenomenon of congruent cultural meta-orientations becomes evident in an exploration of comparative results of teachers and principals. While both teachers and principals perceived themselves and their working realities to be considerably more transformational than transmissional, more principals appear to perceive their school's culture as being slightly more transformational and less transmissional than do teachers. To some degree this can be explained by the nature of the jobs of these two groups. First, principals tend to be considered more empowered than teachers in change efforts and, therefore, might see themselves more clearly in an environment that is rich with collaboration and empowerment. Teachers, on the other hand, might see themselves to be in a working reality that is more reactionary to outside forces, creating a need to be cooperating constantly with others.

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<sup>3</sup>The concept of shared leadership is arrived at from the behavioral activity of articulating shared organizational values (Deal & Kennedy, 1994) coupled with formal and informal strategies to encourage open involvement in decision making (Blase & Roberts, 1994).

One alternative explanation of this outcome is that principals may be reporting back that which expected. Notions of promotion of self-development, presentation of optimistic and attainable visions, and the espousing of a joint mission are behaviours school superintendents and departments of education expect their principals to be exhibiting. It follows that principals could report those behaviours even if they are nonexistent. The fact that this study attempts to measure the meta-orientation of the school, and not the leader, diminishes but does not exclude this explanation.

Regarding the accuracy of teachers' perceptions of their school culture, a comparison of what Bass and Avolio (1993) describe as transformational leadership and the traditional role of the teacher reveals strong similarities. Bass and Avolio write, "inspirational leaders were seen to be highly directive in their means and methods. The intellectually stimulating leader challenged his or her followers, and the individually considerate leader could rise above the demands for equality from his or her followers to treat them differently according to their different needs for growth" (p.65). The characteristics described here of transformational leaders are also descriptive of many educators' views of good teaching. Therefore, like principals, teachers may have been reporting those behaviours which were expected rather than those that were most frequently exhibited.

Approaching these finding from yet another angle, the response by teachers may be sound if one is to believe teachers hold the notion of transformationalism as a vestige

of hope within a larger transmissional environment. Teachers may be exercising the limited empowerment they have within the isolated classroom setting in such a manner that it embodies the characteristics of transformationalism described previously by Bass and Avolio (1993).

The high incidence of professional development inservice may provide yet a further support for the soundness of these findings. During the past two years, both staff and curriculum professional development activities, to a greater or lesser extent, have been focussed on collaborative action, mission and vision building, and meeting students' individual needs. It is possible that teachers are internalizing these themes to a "task/consequence" level of innovation (Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 1987). That is, teachers have moved from a position of not being aware of transformative behaviours to a point of personal internalization and understanding. This study does not suggest that there has been an attempt to measure the implementation of any of the meta-orientations, merely their perceived existence.

The comparison of the differences in mean scores shows that there is a difference of 10.37 between the transactional mean scores for principals and teachers, suggesting that both sub-groups perceive their cultures in relatively similar ways when it comes to being cooperative, reward motivated, and democratic. However, a difference of 20.66 exists between the sub-group mean scores regarding transmissional perceptions, indicating teachers perceive their school culture to be slightly more transmissional in

nature. Similarly, a difference of 16.86 separates the transformational mean scores. These differences will support a later discussion regarding the correlation of the three cultural meta-orientations.

### *Gender*

Effective schools appear to be those that are transformational in nature, demonstrative of strong values and beliefs, lifelong learning, individual empowerment, collegial-collaborative relationships, openness, and vision (Cunningham and Gresso, 1995). Fullan (1991) also provides benchmark levels of involvement of males and females in the teaching profession reporting women make up 69% of the teaching force and about 25% of administrations (Fullan, 1991). Results from this study compare favourably to those findings with 67% of the respondents being women while 19.7% of school administrations contain women. This may be a bit misleading however, because the global picture of the teaching profession, only 9.5% of all women in this study are working at the administrative level. Of all male respondents, 47.3% report being involved with administration (see *Results: Figure 2*). This study reveals a disparity between the perceptions of men and women regarding both transformational and transmissional mean scores. Men perceived their school's culture as being less transmissional and more transformational than women. Within this study, substantially more men are in the position of principal than women, and inversely, more women perform the role of teacher than men. Therefore, the evidence would further support the notion of differences in the implementation meta-orientations and working reality

meta-orientations. In this instance, male principals perceive their school's meta-orientation to be less transmissional while female teachers perceive their schools to be more transmissional. Within schools then, it could be expected there would be resistance to change due to incongruent perceptions of male administrations and female teachers. Yet as Fullan (1991) has noted, "as a group women are more likely to evidence behaviour associated with effective leadership" (p. 163). Moreover, given a strongly perceived extant transformational school culture combined with the idea that women do demonstrate behaviours associated with effective leadership similar to those associated with transformational cultures, it could be argued that many of the schools represented in this study are experiencing the positive effects of those behaviours regardless of whether the women are in a recognized positions of authority or not. As well, it may be possible that the meta-orientations of teachers who are women are responsible for the success of many change initiatives even in some contexts in which a certain lack of congruity exists. Bass and Avolio (1993) support this suggestion noting, "we have been able to observe and measure transformational leadership at all levels, even at the lowest organizational levels of supervision and among nonsupervisory project leaders, as well as among student leaders" (p. 54).

#### *Professional Development Activities*

Professional development activities were examined in three domains. Activities which focused on curriculum issues were reportedly well attended in the past six months and year as were issues focussing on staff development. In fact it is difficult to determine



if the recent incidence of professional development activities has any significant effect on perceptions of school culture simply because so few cases (less than 10%) had reported lacking inservice activities during that time frame. That said, a difference of values did exist in respondents' mean scores suggesting a more detailed study of the relationship between incidence of professional development activities and school culture perceptions would be warranted. This study suggests that the more recent the professional development incidence opportunity is, the less transmissional and transactional, and the more transformational people perceive their school culture to be. This would support suggestions by Fennell (1992) that teachers are less resistive to change when they are part of the process of implementation.

On a less positive note, more than 50% of the respondents had not received a professional evaluation "within 2 or more years." However, as one administrator pointed out, due to cycling of evaluations within schools, this may not be necessarily alarming. One specific question dealt with whether school divisions were using results from achievement tests and summative teacher evaluations as a means of achieving greater teacher accountability. Respondents for this question only were instructed to leave the question blank if the process were unknown to them. A surprising 45.4% selected the "unknown" response. This individual result coupled with the fact that the majority of respondents have not received a professional evaluation within the past two years (a period during which significant restructuring has taken place) might point to a concern regarding the level of trust teaching professionals may be feeling towards their

supervisors. The lack of professional feedback coupled with an unknown formula for accountability may be producing some professional anxiety which, in turn, could be contributing to lowered levels of trust between teachers, principals, and school officials. Since trust was identified as an aspect of effective schools, it is possible that less than appropriate evaluation practices may be having a negative effect upon schools in general.

#### *Correlation of Perceived Cultural Meta-orientations*

The foundational question of this thesis, namely, Can extant school culture be measured using cultural constructs?, has been partly answered by the results of this study. Literature, theory, and particular study findings suggest that as school cultures move away from being transmissional they move more toward becoming transformational. In doing so, they take on and discard elements of a transactional culture.

In the correlation of transmissional and transformational mean scores, (see *Results: Table 5*) a negative relationship exists, suggesting that as teachers and principals perceive their culture to be more transformational, they also perceive it to be less transmissional. The negative relationship shows the dichotomous nature of these two orientations typified by the behaviours and beliefs held by those supporting one or other cultural orientation. There is an apparent dichotomy between such things as autocratic leadership and shared leadership, congeniality and collegiality, mandated

organizational learning and continuous organizational learning.

The positive correlation between transformational and transactional mean scores suggests the notion of complimentary coexistence. This study supports findings of Bass and Avolio (1993) who suggest "there is clearly some overlap" (p. 65). While some aspects of culture are more empowering than others there is no intention to suggest the exclusive dominance of transformational behaviour. For example, the transactional organizational behaviour of learning through reactive measures is less effective and therefore less empowering than the process of seeking continuous quality improvement. However, the transactional belief in cooperative acts supports behaviours of transformational collaboration resulting in a positive coexistence of both meta-orientations. As suggested by Deal and Kennedy (1994) in their discussion of *wu-wei*, or a middle ground, the Taoist notion that the whole is seen as being greater than the sum of the parts is surely applicable to this correlation.

Finally, there appears to be little correlation between transmissional and transactional scores, suggesting that no common ground, positively or negatively, exists between these two orientations. This may be useful in helping to explain the influence of implementation cultural meta-orientation and working reality cultural meta-orientation upon the change process. Should one of these be of a transmissional nature, and the other of a transactional nature, profound incongruity would exist. For example, a principal who perceives the school's culture and administrative team to be

transactional might experience organizational dysfunction should the staff perceive their working reality as being transmissional. Such a principal would be attempting to work with cooperative groups and exercising democratic decision making, while the staff might see themselves as congenial co-workers, isolated, wanting someone to take charge. In this situation, it is difficult to imagine one group redefining itself in favour of the other. The relationship might be further complicated by the reactionary style of organizational learning commonly demonstrated by transactional meta-orientation cultures and leaders. This behaviour frustrates those transmissionalists who believe decisions should be mandated through advance policy making. The incongruity may be revealed in the buffer cultures create to protect those within from distracting external demands.

Unlike the transmissional-transformational relationship which clearly identifies the dichotomous aspects permitting cultural members to acknowledge differences, or the harmonious transactional-transformational relationships which are supportive of each other, the transmissional-transactional relationship appears to be a collage of confused and competing beliefs and values which could ultimately construct barriers. A matrix is suggested regarding the relationship the implementation and working reality cultural meta-orientations may have with one another (*Table 7*).

A change index was developed to measure teaching professionals perception of how change is being responded to within their school culture. The six questions used

produced a positive or negative mean result or individual change index (I.C.I.). The examination of the frequency of individual change index scores results in a sample change index. This study suggests that teaching professionals perceive extant change slightly negatively ( $M = -2.7$ , see *Results: Figure 13*). While at first this may appear to be a contradiction of teaching professionals' perception of their cultural meta-orientation, Chin and Benne (1976) note that planned changes are those "in which attempts to bring about change are conscious, deliberate, and intended, at least on the part of one or more agents related to the change attempt" (p.22). Essentially, their change agent is operating within an implementation cultural meta-orientation. The system to which the change is being directed is the working reality cultural meta-orientation. Chin and Benne further point out the value of knowledge regarding the system to be changed, remarking that "as attempts are made to introduce these *new*

**Table 7. The comparison of two cultural meta-orientations.**

		Implementation Cultural Meta-orientation			
		Transmissional	Transactional	Transformational	
Working Reality Cultural Meta- Orientation	Transmissional	congruous & receptive to implementation	conflicting & confused resistive to implementation	clearly dichotomous opposition	
	Transactional	conflicting & confused resistive to implementation	congruous & receptive to implementation	harmonious coexistence with limited implementation success	
	Transformational	clearly dichotomous opposition	harmonious coexistence with limited implementation success	congruous & receptive to implementation	

*thing technologies* into school situations the change problem shifts to the human problems of dealing with the resistance, anxieties, threats to morale, conflicts, disrupted interpersonal communications, and so on, which prospective changes in patterns of practice evoke in the people affected by the change" (p. 22). The term "new thing technologies" is intended to encompass a wide variety of innovations. Based on what Chin and Benne have concluded, the teaching professionals in this study may be perceiving change efforts negatively because the change agents are using methods which are grounded within their own cultural meta-orientation. The resistance, conflicts, and disruptions of the human elements involved with change may be a result of incongruent cultural meta-orientations rather than the change initiative itself.

Correlations of individual change indices and cultural meta-orientation perceptions provide considerations for change agents and their publics alike. This study demonstrates that as teaching professionals perceive their school culture to be more transmissional they also perceive change to be more negative. Alternatively, as their perceptions of school culture became more transactional or transformational, change was regarded more positively. These findings support the previously described matrix of cultural meta-orientation interactions in that like-implementation and working reality cultural orientations would be expected to demonstrate similar responses to change. Transactional-transformational couplings would be expected to be less resistive to innovations while transactional-transmissional or transformational-transmissional

couplings would likely be resistive to the planned innovations, resulting in dysfunctional failure.

*Study Findings and Their Possible Impact on Education.*

This study's examination of extant school culture has provided insights for teachers, principals, school division administrators, and provincial educational authorities on the matter of how teaching professionals perceive their school cultures. Results clearly indicate that teachers and principals alike regard their school cultures to be collaborative, continuous learning communities with internal leaders that model values and beliefs congruent with the schools' missions. The overwhelming majority of these educational professionals are remaining current with professional development practices involving curriculum and staff development. While concerned about how change is being implemented, these professionals appear to be open to initiatives that reflect the values and beliefs they hold true and that are supported by their cultural meta-orientations. Study results also suggest that supervisory personnel should examine current practices regarding professional evaluation and clarify the purpose and the process of evaluation so that the behaviour can be made a more trusted professional activity.

It is indicated by the findings of this study that those who find themselves in a position of "change agent" would be encouraged to understand their own cultural meta-orientation before proceeding to initiate a planned change. To recognize any



incongruity between one's implementation cultural meta-orientation and the working reality cultural meta-orientation to be affected might require examination, assessment and possible transformation before the implementation of the innovation might be successfully achieved.

Finally, this study's revelation that the extant school culture of Southern Alberta is primarily transformational provides the knowledge that a sound foundation exists for continuous quality improvement within a caring and collaborative environment. School leaders at all levels must recognize the strength of this culture and begin the practice of respecting that which exists.

## Conclusion

Two hypotheses were considered within the confines of this study. In reference to the first, it has been demonstrated that the strength of perceived school cultures, when defined by meta-orientations, can be measured using culturally related constructs. While respecting the notion that cultures are living entities in a continual state of change, the researcher found the perceived extant school culture of Southern Alberta during the course of this study appeared to be mainly transformational in nature. From this study, a cultural meta-orientation matrix has been proposed. Should this description have validity for schools in Southern Alberta, and accepting the results of this study that the perceived working reality of school cultures is transformational in nature, both macro and sub-cultures wishing to work successfully with and within the extant school cultures would also be required to be transformational in order to achieve greater success.

Regarding the second hypothesis, this study measured perceived levels of acceptance or resistance to change through the use of an individual change index. This index suggests teachers and principals in Southern Alberta were somewhat resistive to change initiatives at the time this inquiry took place. It is the conclusion of this researcher that such resistance may be attributed to a "clash of cultures"; specifically, the Alberta Education transmissional culture causing conflict within the transformational school cultures.

The findings of this study support much of the theoretical, qualitative and quantitative work that has preceded it. Through its descriptions of implementation and working reality cultural meta-orientations requiring congruence, this study supports the notion that cultures can act as a buffer, protecting the members within from change (Sagor, 1994). The examination of comparative change indices and cultural meta-orientations provides additional evidence that teaching professionals are less likely to resist change if they are members of a transformational school culture (Fennel, 1992). The proposed relationship matrix of implementation and working reality culture meta-orientation demonstrates the need for congruence of values, beliefs, and goals in order for successful change to occur (Leithwood, Menzies, & Jantzi, 1994).

Much of the literature, as well as this study, suggests that "unless the culture changes...long term reform will falter because the shared values necessary to sustain reform will not be held by those concerned" (Gonder & Hymes, 1994). This statement assumes that it is the working reality culture's responsibility (namely the school's) to be the culture requiring change. This study suggests a review of this notion and recognizes that school cultures, presently in a transformational meta-orientation, are well positioned to accept innovation and reform should those efforts be implemented in a fashion that is congruent to their cultural beliefs, values, and goals. It is not necessarily the innovation that produces resistance, but rather the manner in which it is implemented. Change-promoting theorists, themselves products of top-down transmissional style leadership, may have overlooked the fact that they were continuously suggesting the school's working reality culture requires transformation to

be congruent with the reforming implementation culture meta-orientation. Sarason speaks of this when he remarks, "If there is only one principle common to effort at change, it is that one effects change by *telling* people what is the 'right' way to act and think" (p. 232). By clearly demonstrating Sarason's first concern regarding school reform, namely, "being clear as to where the teachers *are*," this study suggests that for change to be effective, cultural meta-orientations of both schools and reform forces must be examined and that those cultures that are innately incongruent must "unlearn" and "learn" before attempting to teach the other the "right" way (p. 232).

This study has contributed to the quantitative knowledge of extant school culture in Southern Alberta. It offers researchers, teachers, administrators and school authorities a point of departure for ways of managing school cultures that will enhance educational programs. In a concatenated exploratory fashion, this study has attempted to link theory and evidence of other researchers to a point which numerous future investigations may wish to proceed from. Additionally, it has provided quantitative support for broadly accepted theory and qualitative research. Before generalizations regarding extant school culture can be made there remains the need to examine alternative explanations for results, through additional qualitative and quantitative studies, and to clarify questions regarding expected and existing school cultures.

The goal of this study was to provide a starting place for the development of plans for change within school. I believe this goal was achieved. It remains the responsibility

of all teachers, principals, administrators, and school authorities to move forward with this knowledge in a meaningful way that will contribute positively to the future of education.

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**Appendix A**

**Survey Questionnaire**

## SCHOOL CULTURE QUESTIONNAIRE

*Please complete those descriptions that apply to you.* After completing the survey, please place it in the return envelope provided and seal it to ensure confidentiality. Pass your sealed envelope to your principal for return in the school mailing envelope. *Thank you.*

Our school provides classes at the following level(s):

Elementary  Junior High  Secondary

My position in school is: Teacher  Teacher/Principal  Principal

Total personal years of teaching experience: \_\_\_\_\_ Years as a principal: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: male  female  Our school is: urban  rural

My school staff (teachers & administrators) size is: \_\_\_\_\_

I estimate our school community's socioeconomic-economic status to be:

low  lower middle  upper middle  upper  even blend   
 <\$20K      \$21K-\$40K      \$41K-\$60K      \$60K+

The last curriculum based professional development event I attended was:

within 6 months  1 year ago  Two or more years ago

The last professional development event I attended that focused on teacher/staff development was:

within 6 months  1 year ago  Two or more years ago

The last time I received a professional evaluation from my supervisor was:

within 6 months  1 year ago  Two or more years ago

**Circle the number you believe that best describes your school presently.**

Question	Always characteristic	Often characteristic	Seldom characteristic	Not characteristic
1. The mission statement of our school is posted for everyone to see.	1	2	3	4
2. The principal models the mission of our school in his/her actions.	1	2	3	4
3. Teachers receive <i>perks</i> for services provided to the school.	1	2	3	4

Question	Always characteristic	Often characteristic	Seldom characteristic	Not characteristic
4. Teachers make the decisions regarding our schools curriculum.	1	2	3	4
5. The principal provides our school with inspiration.	1	2	3	4
6. Staff meetings tend to be <i>rubber stamping</i> of previously made decisions.	1	2	3	4
7. At our staff meetings we vote on every issue.	1	2	3	4
8. Our school's mission statement and my mission as a teacher are similar.	1	2	3	4
9. If staff members wanted to initiate a change, it would most likely be supported by our administration.	1	2	3	4
10. The handicapped, visitors and guests have the most preferred parking spaces at our school.	1	2	3	4
11. What our superintendent and school division <i>say</i> and <i>do</i> are two different things.	1	2	3	4
12. If staff members want to initiate change, it would most likely be blocked by other staff members.	1	2	3	4
13. Concerns about school quality and improvement are voiced by our principal.	1	2	3	4
14. We find out more about our school from gossips than from administrators.	1	2	3	4

	Question	Always characteristic	Often characteristic	Seldom characteristic	Not characteristic
15.	The move to site-based management is regarded as positive.	1	2	3	4
16.	Changes are being forced on our school by administrators.	1	2	3	4
17.	Risk-taking by teachers is supported by everyone at our school.	1	2	3	4
18.	Our school spends more time and energy on administrative "business" than real teaching.	1	2	3	4
19.	Textbooks are used as the focus of curriculum content.	1	2	3	4
20.	Concerns of teachers are receiving only lip-service by administrators.	1	2	3	4
21.	If a teacher has a teacher-student-parent problem, the administration is supportive of the parents.	1	2	3	4
22.	We seem to always be reacting to crisis rather than taking a proactive position.	1	2	3	4
23.	Our professional development sessions focus on how teaching methods affect students' thinking processes.	1	2	3	4
24.	Our school division is using achievement test results and summative teacher evaluations for teacher accountability. (If unknown, leave blank.)	1	2	3	4

	Question	Always characteristic	Often characteristic	Seldom characteristic	Not characteristic
25.	Our principal visits my class to provide <i>coaching</i> feedback about my teaching afterwards.	1	2	3	4
26.	Our school has a history of innovative change.	1	2	3	4
27.	The changes being undertaken by our school meets our school's needs.	1	2	3	4
28.	After identifying needs related to a problem or change, our school then sets objectives to be met.	1	2	3	4
29.	Problem solving tests are used for student assessment.	1	2	3	4
30.	Teachers in our school are teaching to the achievement tests.	1	2	3	4
31.	The reasons for change are not clearly defined for teachers.	1	2	3	4
32.	Our principal acts as a buffer between outside forces and teachers.	1	2	3	4
33.	Our staff shares responsibilities for successes and failures.	1	2	3	4
34.	Our school promotes community support.	1	2	3	4
35.	Our school evolves and adapts continuously.	1	2	3	4



Question	Always characteristic	Often characteristic	Seldom characteristic	Not characteristic
36. Memos are the primary method of communication between teachers and administrators.	1	2	3	4
37. Our school <i>sells its self</i> to the community.	1	2	3	4
38. In our school's curriculum we are developing inquiry skills that facilitate democratic decision making.	1	2	3	4
39. Our staff works together to identify solutions to school problems.	1	2	3	4

**Please complete the following in your own words.**

I. A few things that happen routinely or "like ritual" every day at our school are....

II. Innovations are viewed by our staff members as....

***Please turn to the last page...***

III. I think the real core value of our school is...

IV. The vision of our school is...

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*Thank you*  
for participating in this survey.  
Place the completed form in the envelope provided and seal  
to ensure confidentiality. Return your sealed envelope to the  
principal to be included with others from your school for  
return.

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**Appendix B**

**Survey Cover Letter**

**SCHOOL CULTURE SURVEY**  
**UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE**

April 16, 1996

Dear Colleague:

The past two years have seen dramatic changes in Alberta's education. Research indicates that positive, beneficial changes are related to a school's culture.

Through a random process, I have asked your principal to share with you a confidential, written questionnaire regarding your school's existing culture. The questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary. By completing and returning this questionnaire, you grant permission for the use of your anonymous responses in the write up of this research and future dissemination of the results. Due to the confidential and anonymous nature of this study, individual, school or district results will not be generated. Questions regarding the completed study can be directed to myself after August 1, 1996 at 329-0242.

Upon completion of the questionnaire, place it in the envelope provided and seal it to ensure confidentiality. **Please return the completed forms before April 30, 1996.**

I would like to thank you in advance for your participation. Your responses will help to develop a clearer picture of our schools' culture as it impacts of leadership and change.

Sincerely,



Khym Goslin, B.A., B.Ed.  
Graduate Student