

A CASE STUDY OF THE ANNEXATION OF SCHOOLS INTO AN URBAN /
SUBURBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT: A DESCRIPTION OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

A Dissertation by

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DEDICATION

To Becky, my wonderful and loving wife, who gave me an incredible amount of support during the process of getting my doctorate. To my children, Jordyn, Dawson, Dayne, and Jayden, who did their best to understand why Dad was gone every Wednesday and were patient when Dad couldn't come outside to play because "he is working on his paper"

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examined the perceptions of stakeholders who lived through the annexation of Western Independence and Sugar Creek from the Kansas City Missouri School District into the Independence School District. Data collection methods included: semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, blogs, and document review of legal proceedings. Interviews were completed with key members in the community who played a large role in the annexation occurring. Focus group interviews were completed with students, teachers, and parents who had interactions with the Kansas City School District prior to the annexation and then with the Independence School District after the annexation was completed.

Data was analyzed using multiple techniques. This included content analysis, major and sub-theme coding, and historical context analysis. Three findings emerged from my study on the organizational culture of the annexed schools: (1) Community involvement in the annexation proceedings and subsequent desire to stay actively involved in the continued growth of the affected schools; (2) School staff and students developing a culture intended to meet higher expectations required by the Independence School District; and (3) The Independence School District having a systems approach that made it possible to absorb 2600+ students and see dramatic growth in performance and stakeholder satisfaction.

The findings from this study suggest that further research may be important. The annexation that occurred may be used as a blueprint to offer alternative ways to improve historically low-performing school districts.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), signed into law in 2002, created a federal system of accountability measures for schools and districts designed to encourage improvement in academic achievement (United States Department of Education, 2004). As a result, performance and accountability have moved to the forefront of the focus in schools, especially urban schools. Yearly progress is measured for each school according to guidelines established by NCLB and is set state by state. The guidelines for yearly progress often include attendance rates, graduation rates, and scores on high-stakes tests in math, reading, and sometimes other subject areas as well. Schools that do not attain adequate yearly progress (AYP) or do not obtain a high enough annual percentage of improvement on state tests face sanctions; these sanctions are designed to ensure that necessary state-mandated targets are met in the next school year (United States Department of Education, 2009).

Prior to the NCLB legislation, many attempts had been made to improve historically low-performing schools and school districts, but those measures, either federally or state mandated, had not made notable results (Fullan, 2000). Efforts prior to NCLB focused on input or on what is called front-loading programs; that is, emphasis was put on creating new programs for schools with federal dollars without always evaluating if the new programs were effective. NCLB put the emphasis on accountability and the results of students' and schools' performances. If performance standards are not met, then the assumption is that teachers and school leaders are not doing their jobs. Additionally, public scrutiny of schools' performances in newspapers, in public forums, or on the internet is a part of the mandate and, as such, brings a certain amount of shame or loss of pride if the annual yearly progress is not met (DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009).

NCLB legislation requires that scores on state-mandated tests in reading and math must increase incrementally each year for each grade from third grade on. As the minimum scores needed to pass the standardized tests increase towards the 2014 goal of 100% proficiency, many schools and districts discover that they are falling behind their academic performance and progress goals. As standards and the pressure to perform increase, some schools face the need to restructure (Mac Iver, 2007).

This dissertation focused on the state of Missouri, where schools or districts that have not attained AYP for six consecutive years must turn to restructuring in order to improve.

Restructuring is a process used to change the structure of a school; it may result in any or all of the following sanctions: The school's operations are taken over by the state; an outside agency is contracted to operate the school; or all staff and administrators are replaced in the school.

While there are many social and political implications to consider when restructuring schools, this research examined the annexation of schools to a neighboring district, which is an alternative to restructuring. More specifically, the organization and culture of the annexed schools were studied as a way to understand the schools' performance and to understand if this decision has benefitted the school population.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandates did not require the restructuring of the schools identified in this study. However, many changes made in the schools were reminiscent of restructuring. Most notably, nearly all staff and administrators were released from their positions and given the opportunity to interview for their positions. These measures took place due to the academic decline of district schools and the community's desire to improve their children's education. Through the vote of patrons within the Independence and Kansas City, Missouri school districts, the community forced the annexation.

This study looked at how a poorly performing school district was forced into annexation with a neighboring high performing school district as a way to improve its schools. Stakeholders were part of the annexation process to better understand the issues behind the annexation and the perceptions of those directly involved. These interviews also ascertained if this could be an alternative for other urban school districts considering restructuring in their own schools.

Background to the Study

Headlines from the May 3, 2000 edition of *The New York Times* (2000) read “‘F’ for Kansas City Schools Add to the District’s Woes.” According to Johnson (2000), the Kansas City, Missouri School District (KCMSD) had spent more than \$2 billion over two decades to improve the school district but had recently lost its accreditation due to poor performance. The school district failed to meet eleven performance standards, including academic performance, attendance rate, and graduation rate. Clinton Adams, a parent of a student in the district, said the loss of accreditation was “stigmatizing and embarrassing to the students and staff at the school” (Johnson, 2000, p. 14). The Kansas City, Missouri School District’s poor performance and desegregation efforts led patrons to seek change.

Charles Dumsky, former mayor of Sugar Creek, stated, “the Kansas City School District was recognized as one of the finest school districts in the country” (Dunlap, 2010, p. 27). This changed once the district became embroiled in a desegregation lawsuit in the 1970s. The Kansas City School District began busing local students to schools miles away in an attempt to reduce segregation in the district. The busing was not forced but occurred due to the magnet school model for students. Schools were no longer neighborhood schools. Dumsky admitted, “there was lots of animosity...they wanted to go back to the neighborhood school model” (Dunlap, 2010, p. 95).

Ciotti (1998) noted that KCMSD failed to pass needed tax increases 19 times between 1969 and 1989. While “white flight” occurred in the city, the ability of the district to approve a tax increase diminished. Voters, a majority of whom did not have students in the district, would not support improving facilities in schools that performed poorly. Following the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling banning separate-but-equal schools, the Kansas City School District’s enrollment dropped from 70,000 to 36,000 students (Ciotti, 1998). A large reason for the drop in enrollment can be attributed to the Kansas City School District losing its accreditation and the subsequent emergence of charter schools within the district boundaries (Johnson, 2000). The composition of the schools changed from three-fourths white to three-fourths minority.

Rick Hemmingsen, chief executive of the Independence Chamber of Commerce, said “The market value [on houses in the Kansas City School District] was 20% lower than identical houses across the street in the Independence School District” (Dunlap, 2010, p. 152). Young families, both black and white, stopped moving into these neighborhoods, and houses sat vacant or were converted into rental property. Bob Spradling, the pastor of a church within the annexed area, stated that many people did not want to live in the neighborhood. Those who could move out, did so at the first opportunity. Black and white members of his congregation told him that they were moving out because they wanted to put their children in another school district. The neighborhoods in Western Independence witnessed an economic decline while the crime rate began to rise. Rick Sutcliffe, former Major League baseball player and alum of the neighborhood high school, Van Horn, said he sometimes “wondered if [he] was at Van Horn or at a prison” (Dunlap, 2010, p. 143). Fearing possible disruptions, the Kansas City School District administration canceled school social events, activities, and some athletic events were eliminated (Dunlap, 2010).

In addition to poor academic performance, the stigma of a decade-long desegregation lawsuit was fresh in the minds of community members. The segregation occurred due to years of shifting demographics from a majority white to a majority African-American student population. In 1985, a federal judge seized partial control of the Kansas City School District on the grounds that it was a segregated district, that it continued to perform poorly, and that its facilities had fallen into disrepair. Over the next twelve years, more than \$2 billion dollars were spent on the district in an attempt to end segregation (Thompson & Davis, 2004).

Faced with voters unwilling to approve bond or levy increases, the school district brought a suit against the state of Missouri. They alleged that the state, surrounding school districts, and various federal agencies had caused racial segregation in the district. The Kansas City School District's original goal was for a judge to consolidate suburban districts with the Kansas City School District (KCMSD). This combined district would then be divided into smaller districts with mandatory busing. This busing plan would redistribute students to make the KCMSD schools and the suburban schools racially balanced. Federal Judge Russell Clark dropped the federal agencies from the case and made the Kansas City School District a defendant rather than a plaintiff because he felt the Kansas City School District was partially responsible for the lack of integration within its own boundaries. The suburban school districts were ultimately dismissed from the case, as well (Ciotti, 1998; Davis, 2004).

When a judge finally ordered the state to stop paying desegregation money to the school district, the KCMSD was less diverse in 1997 than when the desegregation case was first filed in 1977. Whereas the district had all the material resources imaginable, the racial make-up of the schools did not change and, in fact, became less diverse. The percentage of African-American students increased while white students continued to leave the district. The district had spent

more money per pupil during this time than any of the 280 major school districts in the country (Ciotti, 1998). The influx of desegregation money from the state of Missouri and the federal government had ballooned the school's budget from \$125 million in 1985 to \$432 million in 1992 (Missouri Department of Education, 2010a). Even with the additional funds available to the schools, performance continued to lag behind their suburban counterparts, and desegregation was headed in the wrong direction. While the students enjoyed some of the best facilities in the nation, the academic performance of those same students had not improved, and the achievement gap between black and white students remained unchanged (Ciotti, 1998).

Western Independence and Sugar Creek residents of all races started to ask why their schools were in decline, especially when they could look across the street and see neighborhoods and schools that were improving. While the Kansas City School District continued to struggle with accreditation issues, the Independence School District was accredited with distinction from the state of Missouri. A grassroots effort by residents within Sugar Creek and Western Independence started with the hope of forcing an annexation of schools from Kansas City to Independence (Dunlap, 2010). Instead of waiting for the district or state to restructure as a result of NCLB, the patrons of Sugar Creek and Western Independence took action into their own hands. Senator Victor Callahan, Missouri State Senator for the 11th District, ran his re-election campaign on the platform of improving education within Sugar Creek and Western Independence. Refer to appendix document A as a reference to the area proposed to be annexed.

Upon his successful re-election, he created a taskforce to look at the viability of forcing the annexation of these schools. A task force survey of 2,400 respondents within the boundaries of Independence showed that 94.6% supported the exiting of schools from KSMSD (Dunlap, 2010). These results prompted Senator Callahan to introduce legislation that would allow the

Independence and Kansas City school district patrons to vote on the annexation. Senator Callahan stated, “The history of the Kansas City School District has been a tragic one. It is filled with chapters of incompetence and mismanagement, chapters of the abuse of taxpayers’ dollars, chapters of lawsuits and chapters of poor education” cited in Dunlap (2010, p. 46).

When the final votes were tallied on November 6, 2007, 84% (10,173 votes) of the voters in the Independence School District and 65% (13,576 votes) in the Kansas City Missouri School District voted in favor of the annexation. With this vote, more than 2,600 students became a part of a new school district overnight (Dunlap, 2010). Please refer to appendix document B to see the current school district boundaries after the annexation occurred. The annexed schools consisted of Van Horn High School, Nowlin Middle School, and six elementary schools (Three Trails, Fairmount, Anderson, Mount Washington, Korte, and Sugar Creek). Anderson Elementary had not been operational since 2000, and Mt. Washington was closed, with its students divided between Korte and Fairmount Elementary schools, due to its non-compliance with ADA accessibility.

The influx of students changed the Independence School District’s enrollment from 10,707 students to 13,128. The Kansas City School District’s enrollment subsequently dropped from 22,478 to 17,677 (Missouri Department of Education, 2010a). The annexation changed district boundaries, students, and employees and represented a new way to improve schools. With one vote, children who previously attended the Kansas City School District were now part of the Independence School District. This vote had the potential to change the landscape of public education and the way in which urban reform efforts were viewed in these neighborhoods. Rather than restructuring the schools according to NCLB guidelines, a new way of restructuring was now in place: split an urban district into smaller pieces and “give” slices to adjoining

districts to see if this will enable academic improvement. The reform efforts in Kansas City are uncommon to reform efforts that have been attempted in other urban school districts throughout the country.

Urban District Reform

Urban districts have been the primary focus of accountability and reform efforts under NCLB. These districts have disproportionate percentages of students who are historically in danger of being unsuccessful in school. Students in these schools are more likely to live in poverty, to come from single parent homes, to have been exposed to violence, and to have experienced other issues that have been shown to lead to a greater risk of negative academic achievement (Stringfield & Yakimowski-Srebnick, 2005) and predict low school performance (Blanchett, Mumford, & Beachum, 2005; Hess, 2003).

With the increasing achievement gap between urban schools and their suburban counterparts, restructuring has been used as an option to improve performance (Orr, Berg, Shore, & Meier, 2008). Restructuring has become a key component of high stakes accountability reforms. Neither the origin nor the history of school restructuring as a remedy for low-performing schools has been well documented (Rice & Malen, 2003). Cities such as Cleveland, Chicago, Detroit, Denver, Milwaukee, and Washington D.C. have tried different approaches to restructuring low-performing schools. Attempts to improve performance have included district take-over by local governance (e.g. mayor or city council), various models of comprehensive school reforms, vouchers, instituting mandates required by NCLB, and restructuring entire schools (Orr, et al., 2008; Sunderman, 2001). These extensive and seemingly desperate measures are controversial, and it is still not clear whether these measures are an effective means of

improving urban school district performance (Boyd & Cibulka, 2003; Daly, 2009; Marks & Nance, 2007).

School restructuring is an approach to education reform that is grounded in the assumption that improving low-performing schools requires an upgrade in the personnel at those schools (Orr, et al., 2008). Those who promote restructuring assume that schools will improve with an infusion of new human capital and that this will result in a change in organizational performance. Human capital refers to the stock of skills and knowledge that increase value and performance to an organization. The quality of human capital may be affected most directly by changes in the make-up of existing staff positions, while the quantity is most directly altered by the addition or subtraction of positions (Rice & Malen, 2003).

The viability of restructuring as a mechanism to turn around low-performing schools pivots on these measures and assumptions, and thereby stimulates and sustains major and meaningful improvements in organizational programs and practices (Rice & Malen, 2003). Theoretically, restructuring reforms can be affected by both the quality and the quantity of human capital.

Research Problem

The premise of No Child Left Behind and various other educational mandates is that schools will improve performance once those mandates are integrated into policy. If gains are not realized for six consecutive years, NCLB requires schools to take the most severe intervention (restructuring) as a method to “fix” failing schools. However, research has shown that restructuring in urban districts has little success in bringing about lasting and substantial change in a school (Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Blanchett, et al., 2005; Hess, 2003; Lauen, 2009).

Once restructuring is instituted, there are several potential reasons for a school's performance not to improve. Some of the reasons might include a persistent culture of low performance and apathy that lingers regardless of a change in staff; also, the large size of the restructured district can inhibit true change. The length of time required to implement programs is another potential reason for consistent poor performance. Programs are brought to effect change by one administrator, but may be dropped before measurable changes in student performance can occur. Teacher and student apathy due to years of underachievement are also thought to play a role (Mintrop & Sunderman, 2009).

According to NCLB guidelines, parents can remove their students from a low-performing school and place them in higher performing, neighboring schools. Often times, only students whose parents cannot afford to place them in higher-performing districts are left in urban under-performing districts, therefore perpetuating the cycle of socio-economic segregation (Malen, Croninger, Muncey, & Redmond-Jones, 2002; Mintrop & Sunderman, 2009; Rice & Malen, 2003). As seen from the actions of community members in Kansas City and Independence, Missouri, another solution to traditional restructuring was attempted. The residents took a historically low-performing urban school district and requested the school district break it into smaller pieces. These pieces would then be absorbed into neighboring districts, leaving only a core set of schools in the urban district. Ideally, the smaller size would allow for increased performance. Analyzing the events that led to the annexation and perceptions of these stakeholders since the process has occurred may lead to a greater understanding of how this process can be replicated in other urban districts.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the change in organizational culture as expressed by participants of the annexation. The perceptions of those stakeholders affected by the annexation at the school level were closely scrutinized. Firsthand interviews and observations were used to determine if an improvement in culture occurred and, if so, whether it is advisable to consider this as a model for other districts, based on the results.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study have been chosen to help determine the perceptions of those involved in the annexation, their beliefs about the capacity for improvement in the schools prior to the annexation, and their beliefs following the annexation about the potential for continued improvement. The following research questions will guide the study:

1. How did stakeholders arrive at the decision to seek annexation?
2. How do stakeholders describe the changes in the schools since the annexation?
3. How do the stakeholder's perceive the possibility of using the annexation as a model in which to improve urban education in other school districts?

Overview of Theoretical Framework

The framework used for this study describes organizational culture and provides a comprehensive way for viewing the study. The framework is intended to facilitate the understanding of how districts can leverage their capacity to improve, despite a history of poor performance. Bolman and Deal (2003) have developed four frames of organizational culture: structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. *Organizational culture* refers to the prevailing beliefs, both tangible and intangible, that exist within an organization (Schein, 2004). Understanding these beliefs can help us understand what can occur by raising expectations for students and changing the overall culture of schools. The established norms and beliefs within a

school district constitute organizational culture, while *school culture* refers to the stable underlying meanings that shape how those within a school behave and act (Eilers & Camacho, 2007). This framework gives us insight into the conditions that are needed to form positive relationships between schools, districts, and communities and to foster student success.

Significance of the Study

Federal and state mandates require that all students are 100% proficient on math and reading tests by 2014. The Kansas City, Missouri School District failed to receive accreditation from the state of Missouri in 1999 (King, 1999) and, to date, is only partially accredited. To further complicate matters, Kansas City, Missouri (KCMO) students performed significantly lower than their counterparts from Independence prior to the annexation. On the 2006 reading assessment, only 20.2% of KCMO students were scored as proficient or above on the state assessment; however, 48.1% of Independence School District (ISD) students earned proficient or above scores. KCMO students also did not meet AYP in math that year (only 18.4 % of students were scored as proficient or above), while 48.0% of Independence students were scored as proficient or above (Missouri Department of Education, 2010a).

Some districts like KCMSD have spent decades attempting to improve their educational system to no avail. Many districts fail to meet educational goals set by their city, state, and federal governments, alternative methods to increase student performance are being sought by school, state, and national officials (Mintrop & Sunderman, 2009). This study will provide additional empirical research that can suggest an alternative option to restructuring. By speaking with the stakeholders who took matters into their own hands and annexed their schools to another district, this research discusses and explores the ideas generated by the public itself and to create a dialogue around previously uncharted ways to improve urban and suburban schools.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 includes the background of the proposed study, the problem to be studied, the purpose of the study, research questions, a brief explanation of why the particular theoretical framework was used, and the significance of the study.

Chapter 2 consists of the literature review. This review is broken into a history of No Child Left Behind legislation, potential reasons for urban underachievement, restructuring and reconstitution attempts, and the context of reform efforts prior to the implementation of NCLB. The theoretical framework and perspective that inform the study are also included.

Chapter 3 provides information related to the methodology to be used in the study. This includes research design, case study justification, the researcher's positionality, the research site and participants, data collection methods, and data analysis. A summary of the research quality, research design, and methodology will conclude Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 consists of the data analysis and findings. The information gained from the individual interviews, focus group interviews, and document review was analyzed and formed the basis for four major themes. These themes are based upon Bolman and Deal's (2003) framework of organizational culture. The structural framework was further broken down into subthemes consisting of bussing and the elimination of neighborhood schools, hierarchy of power, and schools as part of the community.

The human resource framework is the second major theme and consisted of expectations for success, valuing employees, positive relationships, and student opportunities as sub-themes. The symbolic major framework had sub-themes of school safety, facilities, and opportunity. The final framework dealt with the political realm and had sub-themes of individuals having no voice

in the schools, faith-based alliance, community allies, and racial harmony. Each of these major and sub-themes helped to give insight into the perceptions of the annexation. This framework gave a structural basis to report the conclusions and recommendations regarding the annexation.

Chapter 5 consists of the conclusions and findings gleaned from the research. Three major themes emerged from the information gathered. The importance of community involvement and the ability to gain a grass-roots support for the annexation, the change in culture of the schools affected by the annexation, and how both district's system approach differed and played a role in perceived failures and successes.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following sections are a review of literature as they relate to urban reform efforts. For the purpose of my dissertation, I have chosen to use an organizational and school cultural framework developed by Bolman and Deal (2003) as the theoretical basis for which to interpret the perceptions of the stakeholders associated with the annexation. Different aspects of culture are sometimes used synonymously, such as organizational culture, school culture or code, and the culture of teachers. These analytical instruments help to define the distinctive character of a school and the educational organization as a whole (Shatkin & Gershberg, 2007). The framework developed by Bolman & Deal (2003) gives an overarching, encompassing framework that works with these varying aspects of organizational and school culture.

Organizational Culture

There has been an interest in, and further understanding of how humans behave in organizations. One observation may be that a clear definition of organizational culture had been needed, but on the other hand, there can also be the belief that it is impossible to provide a generic, universal definition of organizational culture (van der Westhuizen, Oosthuizen, & Wolhuter, 2008). Schein (2004) states that culture in an organization is an abstraction, yet the forces are powerful and that we must understand these forces or we will succumb to them. Schein also suggests that members having a shared history are a critical defining characteristic of culture. The fact that organizational culture has been a subject of considerable academic debate testifies that culture as a concept is important. Culture implies some level of structural stability in a group. To say that something is *cultural* implies that it is not only shared, but also stable. It is important to remember that culture survives, even when some members of an organization

depart. Culture is hard to change because group members value stability; it conveys meaning and predictability (Schein, 2004).

One of the main themes of school effectiveness and school improvement research in recent years has been the way in which organization and school culture affect school improvement (Ellett & Teddlie, 2003). Recent literature reviews aimed at identifying the characteristics of effective schools recognize a productive school climate and organizational culture as key components (Borman, Hewes, Overman, & Brown, 2003; Eilers & Camacho, 2007; Ellett & Teddlie, 2003). This supports the idea that, for increased academic performance to occur, an understanding of the school culture has to be part of the discussions.

School Culture

A school's culture can be an important piece to the puzzle that either helps or hinders a school's ability to improve. School culture is often difficult to define and even harder to detect; nonetheless, it is still a pervasive element in schools. Culture can reflect the mindset of, "the way we do things around here." Deal and Peterson (Peterson & Deal, 1998) stated that school culture is an invisible, taken for granted, set of beliefs that give meaning to what stakeholders say and do. A deeper symbolic language and expressive actions is reflected in the structure of the organization (Schein, 2004). Culture can consist of stable underlying meanings that shape how stakeholders behave and act over time (Vera, 2007). Ironically, the only ones who fail to recognize what their particular culture structure is are those who are within the organization itself. Finnan (2000) stated that fish were the last creatures to discover water, even though they had never known any other existence than to be surrounded by it. This same argument could be made about school culture. Teachers and students take part in a cultural context that influences every part of their school existence, yet often do not understand or cannot define what is

occurring around them. Culture is “norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals built over time” (Peterson & Deal, 1998, p. 28). This culture is what guides, directs, and forms the basis for decisions by students and school personnel. School culture is an ever-changing reality that is shaped by the relationships and interactions with others based on reflections of the world and life in general (Finnan, 2000).

In a study of urban schools, Anyon, (1995) identified three factors that halted school improvement efforts. These factors were a socio-cultural difference among the stakeholders in the school, an environment that was abusive, and an expectation of failure by the educators within that building. These three combined factors create a culture in which reform is nearly impossible. Anyon’s identified factors are important to the discussion, as they speak to possible reasons why historically low-performing schools fail to improve. Continued efforts to reform these schools have failed due to the values and established norms as indicative of negative perceptions, low socio-economic status, and abuse in the school community.

Anyon stated the school’s expectations and values need to be changed, which then would allow for culture to improve, and thus reform efforts could occur. Donahoe (1997) reinforces this notion with the statement that “if culture changes, everything changes” (p. 245). The literature shows that for educational reform to occur, the culture of the school must be conducive for positive change. Further research stated that school and organization culture might also act as a barrier for school improvement. The label of being a failure to a school’s staff encourages “deficit thinking” about poor, minority students (Garcia & Guerra, 2004). Garcia and Guerra (2004) argued that reform efforts fail because staff beliefs block their abilities to examine personal assumptions and to search for unique solutions that may bring about lasting change in their schools. Ineffective organizational norms and beliefs, such as blaming the children and

communities, rather than focusing on what can be controlled within the walls of the school, limit the sense of efficacy. These beliefs keep consistently low-performing schools from improvement (Orr, et al., 2008).

While school culture certainly has an effect on each building, the organizational culture has a far-reaching effect that pervades the entire school district. Organizational culture impacts the power structure of each school; that is, how employees are viewed and treated, how politics impact day to day operations, and what symbols are used and how they convey meaning to those entering particular buildings (Lee G. Bolman & Deal, 2003; Schein, 2004).

Framework of Culture

Bolman and Deal (2003) divide organizational culture into four frames or perspectives. Included in this are structural, human resource, political, and symbolic frames. These frames are a set of ideas or assumptions that stakeholders apply, knowingly or unknowingly, to a particular organization. Bolman and Deal go on to say that frames are “windows, maps, tools, lenses, orientations, and perspectives because all of those images capture part of the ecumenical idea we want to convey” (p. 12). Bolman and Deal (2003) created the frames to form the foundations of human actions and thoughts in organizations, including school districts. They suggest that players subconsciously use these frames when deciding how to react to situations and how to interpret what is occurring within the organization. Like a map, these frames were used as a tool for navigation of the organizational culture of the schools that were part of the annexation. The first of these frames is intended to look at the structural aspect to the annexation.

Structural Frame

Thinking of organizational culture in terms of its structure is one of the oldest and most common ways in which to examine culture. Often times when asked to describe or quantify a

workplace in terms of its structure, we will see an organizational chart. Schools, like businesses, have a structural component. There exists a hierarchy of influence and power in a school system. A structural perspective is a formal pattern of roles and relationships. These patterns are intended to maximize efficiency and accommodate collective goals and individual differences (Lee G. Bolman & Deal, 2003).

The structural influence is a blueprint for formal expectations and exchanges among the employees of an organization and the external constituencies, such as the parents and local businesses. The structure can supplement or constrain what an organization can accomplish (Lee G. Bolman & Deal, 2003; Salmonowicz, 2007). In a school district, the structure of the organization has a profound effect on how situations are handled, the timeliness in which they are handled, and who is the primary point of contact for the situation. The structural frame looks beyond individuals and focuses on the organizational roles, functions, and units. Examination of the structural component is important for organizations. Doing so helps ensure that efficiency is realized by properly guiding energy and resources (Vera, 2007). While structural components are designed to minimize problems and maximize efficiency, the human resource component of organizations emphasizes the importance of changing and improving the organization through the people within that particular organization.

Human Resource Frame

The human resource frame is based around the characteristics of people and organizations and how they shape what each does for the other. Organizations need the energy, efforts, and skill sets of their employees and constituents. Conversely, people need the organization for the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards they offer. While one needs the other, their needs do not always align (Lee G. Bolman & Deal, 2003). When there is lack of alignment between the needs and

wants of either the organization or the people, one or both may suffer. Individuals may actually reduce their efforts or possibly work against the organization if a good relationship does not exist. The human resource frame is primarily about building human characteristics that help meet the organizational goals. This often refers to skills, individual competencies, and/or gaps in knowledge (Eilers & Camacho, 2007). The focus is on the needs of the people within an organization and the assumption the organization performs better when human needs are met.

Political Frame

While the human resource frame is based around human needs, the political frame is concerned with the positioning that occurs to help ensure particular agendas. A school district does not operate in a vacuum; therefore external influences do have an effect. Key decision makers often do not have an apparent connection to the school district, but their influence is unmistakable. This is the case with the annexation; consequently, the political frame is important to study.

For someone who does not understand the inner-workings of a school district, it may appear the organization is one that is controlled by an organizational structure that sets goals, hires and manages employees, and ensures the pursuance of the right objectives (Lee G. Bolman & Deal, 2003). Although this may be true, a political frame views situations from a different vantage point. Players (school board, business leaders, teacher unions, politicians, labor groups, etc.) have positional power, not only within the school system, but also in the community. Negotiation occurs and power structures are set by the emerging interest groups. Goals, organizational structure, and policies emerge as part of an ongoing process among the interest groups to gain power. There is an assumption that different constituencies compete for scarce resources and power. Time is spent building a power base, negotiating compromises, and

networking in hopes of realizing their ultimate goals (Lee G. Bolman & Deal, 2003). To summarize, this political aspect of school organizations can facilitate an understanding of what occurs, especially behind the scenes. This aspect of the framework was especially important in analyzing the annexation in Western Independence. Whose agenda was served, whose voices were heard, and whose voices were ignored are important questions to be answered. The fact that it took a legislative act for a vote to enable the annexation to occur implies a political influence was present. While the first three frames are tangible, the symbolic frame is not as concrete and rational. The symbolic frame is often steeped in traditions and can be difficult to quantify (Lee G. Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Symbolic Frame

In contrast to viewing organizations through rationality and objectivity, the symbolic frame views an organization through myths, symbols, and rituals (Lee G. Bolman & Deal, 2003). Symbols and culture are developed within the organization to instill a sense of commitment and pride. Great attention is paid to creating stories, myth, and other symbolic items that give a tangible sense of meaning to an organization. The symbolic frame is one in which the complexity and ambiguity of an organization is reduced to a simpler form through the use of symbols. This helps to bring a sense of clarity to the organization. An example of this would be the mission statement of a school that helps to reduce all of the complex inner-workings into one or two sentences.

Tangible manifestations of organizational culture are verbal, behavioral, and visual (van der Westhuizen, Mosoge, Swanepoel, & Coetsee, 2005). Verbal manifestations have a bearing on the communication or conveyance of information via word of mouth by members of an organization. Behavioral manifestations include rituals, ceremonies, traditions, discipline, and

the manifested leadership by members of the management team of a specific organization. Finally, visual manifestations may also refer to the physical facilities and symbols of an organization (van der Westhuizen, et al., 2008). Van der Westhuizen's term *tangible foundations* are similar to Bolman and Deal's symbolic frame. Beliefs can be defined as the cognitive visualization of members of an organization of the involved environment in which they function. Whether members of an organization have a favorable or unfavorable impression of the organization influences the effectiveness of the organization. These impressions often times form the basis for the culture of a school. As previously noted, a positive culture is one factor needed to improve schools. There are many thoughts as to why urban schools have not improved at the rate needed and what needs to be done to change this.

Schools As Part of the Community

Urban schools have attempted various solutions to integrate their schools, while at the same time, improving performance. These attempts can often lead school districts to move away from the neighborhood school concept. While bussing can have positive societal benefits, an erosion of school and community connections occurs, particularly in low-income minority communities (Glaser, Vinzant-Denhardt, & Hamilton, 2002). Along with bussing, urban school districts often have to compete with charter schools due to their lack of academic performance. Charter schools are a creation steeped in the thought that parents and students know what is best for their education. It is an attempt to make the educational system more responsive to needs of families and a way in which to increase public confidence (Glaser, McCarthy-Snyder, Stevens, Gile, & Young, 2005). Magnet schools are district-run schools that have an educational theme associated with that particular school. Examples of magnet schools would include science,

performing arts, engineering, and vocational based schools. Students are transported throughout the district to particular magnet schools that fit the needs and wishes of the students and parents.

The neighborhood school's position as a hub within the community began in the 1930's. The school was the center of community recreation, holiday celebrations, adult education, and many other community events. These events created a strong connection between student, family, and school. A belief persists that to reduce the achievement gap, this connection between the school and community is needed (Crowson, Smrekar, & Bennett, 2010). Schools require complementary efforts from the community to strengthen capacities and supports within the family and school. Neighborhood schools do provide the capacity to support and strengthen bonds between schools and communities, but depends on two major factors. The first is a willingness by the school district to invest disproportionately in low-income schools to close the achievement gap. The second is for low-income communities to provide leadership that recognizes cultural differences exist, but still pursue educational quality (Glaser, et al., 2005).

Potential Reasons for Urban Underachievement

There is a belief that if the standards of accountability for states, schools, and school districts increase and parents are provided more flexibility in choosing which schools their child(ren) would attend, then increased performance will be attained (Datnow, 2000; Murphy & Datnow, 2003). Although there has been an improvement in the performance of many school districts, urban districts have not improved at a rate required to comply with the mandates for performance as stated in the NCLB legislation (Mintrop & Sunderman, 2009). There are several reasons one can speculate why this has happened. One potential explanation why these districts have not improved is due to their size. The massive number of children in many urban districts inhibits the chances to effectively improve performance. As districts become larger, a disconnect

grows from the central office to the schools on what is needed to improve performance (Rice & Malen, 2003).

A second reason cited as to why many urban districts lack credibility within their community is repeated low performance. Schools have performed poorly for so long, a self-fulfilling prophecy of under-achievement occurs (Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Orr, et al., 2008). Even the best programs and interventions will take so much time to implement that decades could pass before improvement will occur. There is a belief that a culture of futility within the district by teachers and students alike has taken hold. This apathy breeds deeply embedded feelings that no matter what is done, the results will always be the same (Rice & Malen, 2003).

Rhim (2007) stated that interventions will fail in low-performing urban districts because parents that have the financial means to place their child in private schools will do so. In turn, the best and brightest students are taken out of schools that desperately need to keep their most talented pupils. The students left in some underperforming urban schools are those whose parents do not have the means to escape. Those students may be the ones who cannot improve without great effort and financial resources (Mintrop & Sunderman, 2009). Much of the burden associated with race and education has fallen on urban public schools. These urban schools are trying to improve societal divisions while facing a concentration of students who live in poverty and face the greatest educational obstacles. Middle and upper income families are migrating to the suburbs, taking with them the students who are most likely to be academically successful (Glaser, et al., 2005). Those within the school see the constant movement of students and staff in urban schools. If students and staff have a pervasive belief they are destined to fail, then this cultural belief can be as strong a pattern to break or change as the fact of the low performance itself (Mintrop & Sunderman, 2009).

Context of Urban Districts

Public education in the United States is governed by a tradition of local control. The state typically institutes broad learning standards, sets policies, and oversees student performance; but the daily operation of the schools rest in the hands of the local school district (Datnow, Borman, Stringfield, Overman, & Castellano, 2003). This desire for local control has roots to an era that harkens back to a time of predominantly rural districts and of one room schoolhouses. As rural districts consolidated with neighboring school districts, community districts began to grow. One community consolidated with another and from these larger communities or urban districts became the norm (d'Entremont & Huerta, 2007). The tenants of local control have survived and adapted as the school systems themselves changed under each of these new circumstances. Local control is believed to be more effective and efficient than policies handed down by large bureaucracies (Shatkin & Gershberg, 2007).

During the early 20th century, local control diminished, with many cities establishing separate governing bodies to help avoid abuse and corruption and also to interact with local politicians (Hunter & Bartee, 2003). Politicians at all levels have begun to exert a greater authority over urban school districts. “The fact that these states are legally responsible for maintaining public education makes it possible for them to execute school takeovers” (Hunter & Donahoo, 2003, p. 7). This higher level of interactions has made urban public education a political and hostile environment for many schools. In these instances, the political frame has especially proven a growing aspect of the urban school context.

States now have much greater control over the day-to-day operations of schools as they now have the power to take over these schools. Simply assuming control, instituting voucher programs, or the reduction of site-based management has not solved the financial or academic

problems faced by schools. Cities such as Detroit, Chicago, Washington D. C., Milwaukee, and Baltimore are a testament to this fact (d'Entremont & Huerta, 2007; Hess, 2003; Hunter & Donahoo, 2003). This loss of local control, coupled with mandates of NCLB for high academic performance, has created situations in which schools are often left under the direction of states when they do not perform well. The state led control has a history in both pre and post NCLB legislation.

Reform Efforts – pre NCLB

To fully understand the situation schools and districts are facing in relation to NCLB, it is important to look at a brief history of school improvement efforts prior to the enactment of NCLB. This argument is built from the summative work of Murphy and Datnow (2003) and their premise that discussion, implementation, and analysis of educational reforms have dominated education in the United States since the report, *A Nation at Risk* was published in 1983. Murphy identified school improvement attempts as occurring in waves, with each wave consisting of identifiable trends. His findings were synthesized into an explanation of a fourth wave of reform efforts that began with the implementation of NCLB.

The impetus to the first wave of reform (1982-1986) was a crystallization of the belief the United States was losing its competitive economic edge to other industrialized nations. Reformers attributed the rapidly declining economic status of the United States to the failure of the educational system to properly educate American youth, and they worked to identify the conditions in schools that caused this state of affairs (Murphy, 1990).

Recommendations from the first wave of reform mainly consisted of calls for centralized controls and higher standards. Much of the first wave reform sounds eerily similar to the tenets in No Child Left Behind legislation. The model stressed policies that tied closely to specific

resource allocations and the use of these resources to improve performance. Performance measurements were used that focused on raising test scores. Educators were told how to teach and raise the quality of instruction (Murphy, 1990). This first wave approach is similar to the current practice of specifying particular instructional models to use.

Murphy (1990) referred to the next round of reforms as the second wave. Wave one reforms were quickly criticized by educational scholars and professionals due to their lack of accountability coupled with perceived flaws in governance structure. The second wave of reforms called for a major restructuring of the educational system, finding the earlier reforms inadequate in their attempts to bring about change. These reformers clamored for fundamental revisions in the organization and governance of schools, rather than focusing on instructional improvement. Improvement was seen as a school function, not a district one. Education critics in this group believed that continued repairs of the old system were not only unlikely to push schools to their desired destination but might have been counterproductive.

Second wave proposals were grounded in the belief that educational problems could be managed by adapting the structure of the schools and the system in itself was a main factor in the lack of school improvement. Reformers in the earlier era called for change mandated from above, the second reform wave capitalized on the energy and creativity of individuals at the school level to effect change. Those reformers who believed the antiquated structure of schools to be the main problem of education, proposed more radical solutions than did previous reformers. Those wanting change believed the current educational system could be fixed, but should be done at the district level (Murphy, 1990).

Key elements were identified as important to successfully restructured schools. Those components, as identified by Murphy (1990), included changes in organizational structure,

changes in governance structure, redesign of teacher work, reallocation of resources, and improvements in the processes of teaching and learning. During wave two, an important component was the restructuring of districts in a way that decentralized and deregulated. Murphy (1990) stated that school reform was characterized by knowledge about the importance of decentralization in successful corporations, unrelenting attacks on the bureaucratic school structure, and heavy criticism of top-down, prescriptive methods of implementing change. Schools were increasingly being promoted as a unit of decision-making. This notion of individuals in a particular school as the decision makers lends itself to Bolman and Deals (2003) human resource frame. This frame states that organizations perform better when individual needs are met. Bolman and Deal (2003) suggest this can be better accomplished when reform is a school function, rather than one mandated from central office. As schools assumed more responsibility for decisions, school districts spent less time controlling and directing school activities and more time fostering development and meeting needs at the school level, with a strong emphasis on site-based reform (Malen, et al., 2002). By 1990, this piecemeal effort to restructure schools was replaced by comprehensive strategy of systemic reform (Boyd & Cibulka, 2003). This then brought about a third wave of reform efforts.

Boyd and Cibulka (2003) refer to the third wave as systemic reformers who tried to maintain the vast accountability movement. This occurred with state academic standards and high-stakes testing. Despite years of innovation, school reform efforts lagged in the early 1990s. Because of lags in performance, policy makers re-conceptualized reform with an emphasis on aligning components of the system. This alignment encompassed curriculum and performance standards, professional development, district and school policies, and instructional programs.

Driving this system of accountability for results, states were ranked and classified by their results (Marks & Nance, 2007).

No Child Left Behind – The Fourth Wave

A fourth wave of reform is now occurring since the inception of NCLB. Included in these reform efforts is a focus on changes in the school governance structure. Examples of governance structure are school choice and the privatization of schools. Three leading approaches to “rescuing” urban school systems include systems reform, increased mayoral influence, and external intervention (Boyd & Cibulka, 2003). Although these approaches were cited by Boyd prior to the enactment of NCLB, they continue to dominate reform efforts in public education, but are now federal mandates, rather than being locally implemented ideas.

The major theme within all reform efforts was the impact organizational culture had on the capacity for improvement. Restructuring, thought to be a solution for poor performance, can often times have a negative effect (Malen, et al., 2002; Rice & Malen, 2003; Salmonowicz, 2007). This in large part can be attributed to the school culture becoming increasingly negative. Changing governance structures, aligning curriculum, and the ideas of the earlier waves of reform did not always consider the population of the school or the school context (Malen, et al., 2002). Increasingly, awareness of the school culture and context has become a part of the school restructuring conversation.

On January 8, 2002, President George Bush approved reform initiatives by endorsing the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. NCLB subscribes to reform philosophies that inherently equate student success with the mastery of educational standards as determined through standardized assessments. NCLB approaches schools as though they were factories with inputs and outputs, meaning that irrevocably, the implementation of best practices will produce

improved results (Hunter & Bartee, 2003). A school's progress is measured by standards that are prescribed by the federal government and adjusted by each state to fit its needs. The standards consist of separate, measurable annual objectives for achievement within five categories of students: all students, racial/ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and students with limited-English proficiency. Progress is measured with annual tests aligned to state standards, with a goal of 100% academic proficiency for all students by 2014 (Salmonowicz, 2007).

According to the Missouri Department of Education (Missouri Department of Education, 2010b), NCLB has four different principles to increase educational outcomes in schools. The first principle is that states will be held to higher standards. Improvement on standardized tests in areas of reading, math, and science are required. Schools are required to improve their performance and the performance of all students. These students and those in their respective sub-groups will meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) standards. Those schools unable to meet AYP will face sanctions.

The second principle of NCLB is that schools and states will be provided an allocation of money to help meet the needs of children performing below academic standards. Schools and states will then have more flexibility in determining the way in which the money is allocated so the best results may be obtained.

The third principle relates to how the allocation of financial resources will be used to improve the schools. Funds received by schools and states are to be used on research-based programs that have a proven track record of improving student learning.

The final principle of NCLB states that parents will have the right to choose a school in the event the school their child attends does not meet AYP. The parent has the option of

transferring the child to a charter school or another school within the district that is currently not targeted for improvement. Tutoring, summer school, and other educational services must be provided to children who attend a school not meeting NCLB mandates (Missouri Department of Education, 2010a).

Raising the overall achievement of the educational system and closing the achievement gap is an enormously complex problem. NCLB is a policy answer in which a combination of quotas and sanctions are believed to produce the desired results. Corrective action and restructuring options may work in certain situations but do not appear to work consistently and are often accompanied by negative side effects. These side effects include a large turnover in staff, leaving few with institutional knowledge; a greater focus on test-taking strategies, rather than educational objectives, and the perceptions of a particular school as a failure (Mintrop & Sunderman, 2009). These negative side effects can inhibit the school's culture, thus having the opposite intended results, which is improved student performance. Without this improved performance, the clock begins on restructuring and ultimately the reality that reconstitution may occur.

Restructuring – pre and post NCLB

Historically, one of the checks and balances of our federal system has been shared authority among units of government. This establishes that no branch shall have too much power and its intent is to prevent abuse by the majority. Special circumstances arise when a lower level of government such as a school district appears to need intervention by a higher level power, due to perceived failure. State identification and intervention in low-performing schools represents an example of this oversight. Because states have a constitutional responsibility for public education, they have an obligation to ensure that standards of performance are being met (Boyd

& Cibulka, 2003). While increasing graduation requirements, extending the school year, and other ancillary programs appeared, they did not lead to fundamental alterations in the nature of classroom practices or to student achievement (Boyd & Cibulka, 2003). It was argued by O' Day and Smith (1993) that the way to spur reform in schools was to improve the centralized elements of the system. This systemic approach was directed at the "administrative, governance, resource, and policy barriers to effective schooling in the USA" (p. 87). They went on to argue that its application of improvement would primarily be instituted at the state level and that the federal government should not mandate how schools use a systematic approach for their improvement. This perceived obligation set the stage for state and local governments to use their authority to mandate the restructuring of schools. Repeatedly, school improvement was seen as a structural issue, a la Bolman and Deal (2003).

Reformers believed accountability would be the driver behind systemic changes, which include core assumptions based on the systems approach (Murphy, 1990). The first of these assumptions is that fragmentation in the effectiveness of school policies represents a failure to design a tightly interlocking policy system. It is the administration's duty to balance between *top-down* and *bottom-up* approaches to reform the policy system. A second assumption of the system reform approach is that the basic institutional framework for public schools should remain intact. Direct political oversight from elected officials is limited, thus the governance arrangement concerning political and fiscal control are not questioned (Boyd & Cibulka, 2003). In some communities, external intervention teams were established as a way to provide oversight as restructuring occurred in schools.

External intervention required outside expertise to restore performance. Conversely, systems reform held the belief that the key problem to reform was a fragmentation of the policy

system. An alignment of separate policy strands and subsystems was believed to bring out the desired outcomes in systems reform. It was thought that new authorities and/or structures were needed to provide oversight when external intervention governance structure model was used. With systems reform, the new governance will make the system more rational and improve capacity for goal achievement (Boyd & Cibulka, 2003). This struggle between systems reform and external intervention led to philosophical differences of how to implement restructuring.

Restructuring vs. Reconstitution

Restructuring and reconstitution are often thought of as the same thing, but they are distinctly different. This misconception relates back to the vocabulary used pre-and post-NCLB and also with current vocabulary used from state to state. Prior to NCLB, when a school faced sanctions, it was said to be in restructuring. Restructuring typically consisted of various educational strategies that were implemented in an attempt to improve performance. If restructuring efforts were not successful, schools would then be reconstituted. Reconstitution meant that schools were required to dismantle the system and replace the current staff. Post-NCLB has changed this terminology and methodology, and corrective action is now the first step of sanctions. Restructuring now is the replacement of personnel, and was formerly referred to as reconstitution. This language also varies from state to state. For the purposes of this dissertation proposal, the post-NCLB language will be used while referencing school improvement efforts. This is done to keep consistency in terminology used by Bolman and Deal (1994, 2003) and Murphy (1990). Restructuring is now the process undertaken by schools as they implement strategies to meet the proficiency target set by NCLB and reconstitution is the replacement of the school's internal organization, that is, overhauling staff and administration in an attempt to improve performance.

Steps to Restructuring

Once schools are unable to meet performance standards, they are placed into the cycle of restructuring. Not attaining Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for four or more years causes a school to be identified for corrective action. This begins the process of reducing site-based management of the schools. According to the Missouri Department of Education (Missouri Department of Education, 2010b) there are two steps to the restructuring process. The first step has the local educational agency (LEA) prepare a restructuring plan. This plan is implemented after a school does not attain AYP for two consecutive years. The restructuring plan then gives the school an additional two years to improve performance before corrective action begins. If a school again fails to meet AYP, the corrective action process begins. Once on a corrective plan begins, Title I funds require that notification of parents and teachers of the school's status is required by the beginning of the academic school year. School choice options and supplemental educational services (SES) are also required to be implemented. This is done while necessary arrangements to carry out one of the alternative governance arrangements is prepared (United States Department of Education, 2009). According to the United States Department of Education (United States Department of Education, 2009), there are alternative educational arrangements that may be considered by the LEA to address restructuring efforts. These restructuring plans are typically implemented by the LEA, (i.e., district administration), in an attempt to improve performance, thus avoiding reconstitution. An LEA typically is given latitude by the state department of education and federal government on which interventions will be used in the targeted school (Mintrop & Sunderman, 2009). Although latitude exists, some form of external oversight is put into place. This oversight generally bears a heavy burden of proof because it upsets the normal functioning of institutions and disrupts local control. The political support for

external intervention is often fragile (Daly, 2009). It calls for an oversight body to bring expertise to a failing school or school district, which in theory will help it to improve (Paletta, Stillings-Candal, & Vidoni, 2009).

Models for Restructuring

One such oversight intervention option is when a public school begins operation as a charter school. Charter schools typically operate outside the current policies of the school district. They are more prevalent in urban areas and exist due to state legislation permitting their establishment (Hunter, 2009). Often times, these charter schools are operated by profit or not-for-profit companies that provide services to the district and are paid through a per-pupil allocation from the district's state and federal funds. This kind of solution is an example of how an alternate governance structure can be offered as a solution for school restructuring.

Similar to the charter school option, a district may also contract with a private company that has been effective in improving similar schools. This contract is between the school district and the private company to provide training, which is then intended to help improve academic performance. This training ranges from a needs assessments of the school to intense interventions on curriculum and instructional practices (Paletta, et al., 2009).

The local education agency (LEA) may increase control over the day-to-day operation of the failing school. Although not reconstituted, the building based governance of the school is reduced in a way that lessens the amount of decision making done by the school in question. This increase in monitoring, control, and oversight by the LEA reduces the amount of site-based management. Under the direction of the central office, the schools may reopen with a new staff and/or focus in a particular area such as the arts, math and science, or dual language (Paletta, et al., 2009). Often times, these schools are referred to as magnet schools or learning academies.

A school district has considerable latitude in how to configure schools in its attempt to improve performance. The dissolving or pairing of schools and placing the children in other sites within the district may occur. An example of this is when all K-3 students are sent to one school and grades 4 – 6 students are sent to another school. A similar alternative is to expand or narrow the grades served by the failing school. For example, reducing a K – 8 school to a K – 5 elementary school (Missouri Department of Education, 2010b). All of these models are the steps that can be taken prior to reconstitution.

Reconstitution – Solution of Last Resort

Reconstitution is thought of as a mechanism for improvement of schools that continue to not meet adequate yearly progress. They are in the final and most severe phase of restructuring. Reconstitution is not a new concept that occurred since the inception of NCLB, but as previously noted, the terminology has changed. Urban districts have used reconstitution in many instances as a “last-chance” effort to improve school performance. Reconstitution reforms, by definition and design, deliberately disassemble professional networks in hopes that a more productive school will be forged. This premise relies on the belief that more talented teachers and administrators will be willing to work in the reconstituted school (Malen, et al., 2002). Reconstitution is, to varying degrees, a public indictment on the professional capabilities and commitments of educators. Even when couched, as a redesign effort and presented as a real opportunity to overhaul and improve public schools, a negative perception often accompanies the reconstitution efforts. The reform signals that school staffs, rather than district inadequacies, state shortcomings, broad social forces, or a host of other factors are the proximate cause of a school’s low performance (Rice & Malen, 2003).

Schools that are low-performing are traditionally not stable in their staffing, but are volatile and always are reconstituting in an unplanned way (Hess, 2003). Turnover in district administration is more prevalent in low performing districts and there is often a revolving door of teachers in these schools. Urban schools are often staffed by teachers and administrators who leave once they gain the tenure to be transferred to a higher-performing school in the district. It is often less of a question on keeping their feet to fire as it is to letting them get their feet wet in the first place (Mintrop & Sunderman, 2009).

While reconstitution brings new individuals into low-performing schools, more capable and committed staff may not be readily available. Reconstitution may weaken rather than strengthen teacher expertise, certification, and other indicators of staff capacity. Brought on by the slogan of a “new opportunity;” reconstitution may actually undermine commitment. The traditional model of reconstitution in which teachers and administrators were required to re-interview for their jobs led them to feel “disrespected” and “humiliated.” The change in staff was viewed “as a blanket indictment of teacher competence and commitment” (Malen, et al., 2002, p. 122). Many teachers who are viewed as outstanding may leave because they felt insulted and are apprehensive about what was occurring in their schools. These reforms assume that teachers and administrators are responsible for the low performance without taking into account the underlying issues of poverty, student mobility, and other issues that shape the lives and learning opportunities of the children attending the schools. Reconstitution does not address these socioeconomic realities (Rice & Malen, 2003).

Reconstitution may be able to realize its ultimate goals if districts can incorporate incentives that attract and retain experienced administrators and master teachers. Districts must grant staff time to develop ways to reorganize the school to better fit student needs, as well as

better dedicate financial and human resources. Even with these support mechanisms, the disruption and stigma of being reconstituted may still not be enough to overcome (Malen, et al., 2002). The organization culture often times survives, even with the turnover in staff.

Restructuring and Organization Culture

It is important to note that when full blown restructuring occurs (i.e. reconstitution), all Bolman and Deal (2003) frames are applicable. The structural frame is most obvious as the organizational structure changes due to a restructuring of staff. A premise behind restructuring is that more talented teachers and administrators will induce positive change not realized with the previous staff (Rice & Malen, 2003). The human resource frame states that organizational performance is based upon the ability to meet the needs of the employees who in turn meet the organizational goals (Lee G. Bolman & Deal, 2003). With a large overhaul of staff, the symbolic frame may also change. Staff members who have been with a school for some time create a series of rituals and symbols that communicate what is important in a school. The previous three frames are then often times influenced heavily by the political frame (Lee G. Bolman & Deal, 2003). With a large upheaval of staff and widespread change, those with positional power have to once again find a *pecking order* in which to operate. The separate interest groups begin the process again of networking in hopes of developing their power base within the school setting (Porfeli, Wang, Audette, McColl, & Algozzine, 2009).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this research design chapter, case study methodology is explained in detail. This study is designed to examine the culture of the schools affected by the annexation and the perception of the stakeholders involved through Bolman and Deal's (2003) framework. This chapter provides information about the research participants and describes data collection and data analysis methods. In addition, this chapter includes information about the audit trail, describes the delimitations of the study, addresses research quality, and discusses the positionality of the researcher. It concludes with a summary of the methodology used.

Research Design

A qualitative case study design was used to describe the perceptions of key stakeholders who were a part of the annexation of schools from the Kansas City, Missouri School District into the Independence School District. The qualitative case study design helped me better understand the processes involved and the results of this action. Merriam (1998) suggested "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meanings people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 6). The purpose of this study is to provide insights into the organizational culture of the schools, both pre- and post-annexation.

Qualitative research allows the researcher to explore participants' experiences and to gain a deeper understanding of those involved through natural interaction. Throughout qualitative studies, different themes can emerge, thus allowing concepts to change (Stake, 1995). According to Garman (1994), qualitative research has many characteristics that lead to rich data that provides insight into the positions held by participants. Conducting interviews, reviewing

artifacts, and carrying out observations can facilitate a study that goes beyond the statistical analysis of a situation. According to Creswell (2007), case studies are used in many professions to help researchers understand situations that are unique and cannot be easily summarized. This case study provides insight into occurrences that took place during the annexation.

Qualitative Case Study

The research in this dissertation was conducted through a case study methodology. This was the most appropriate methodology because of the particularistic nature of the annexation of the KCMSD schools. Merriam (1998) states that case studies are “particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic” (p. 28). The events and feelings are very specific in nature and give a multi-faceted account of the school annexation. Describing the perceptions of the stakeholders who participated in or watched the annexation process gave further insight into unresolved feelings about the annexation; it also helped ascertain whether future annexations of this type can be feasible and implemented with success.

This case study is descriptive; participants were asked to describe their experiences from the annexation proceedings and the subsequent effects on their education and personal lives. It is also heuristic; the case study attempted to explain why they considered the annexation to be a success or a failure. A heuristic case study attempts to explain the cause of a problem, to discuss why a situation was or was not successful, and to consider alternatives not chosen (Merriam, 1998). I believe this approach is especially applicable to the annexation as educators seek a *common sense* approach to improving urban schools. The evaluation, summarization, and corresponding conclusions allow this study’s findings to be applicable to other situations (Merriam, 1998). The heuristic nature of this case study provides readers with insight into the

qualities that encourage or hinder the successful integration of schools into another school district.

This case study is bounded by several contexts: the participants themselves and their unique experiences related to the annexation; their positions or functions in the district; and which school they enrolled a child in, taught at, or attended. A primary concern of the study has been to document participants' perspectives on the unique situations they saw or took part in during the annexation process. Stake (1995) argued, "Qualitative research tries to establish an empathetic understanding for the reader, through description, sometimes thick description, conveying to the reader what the experience would convey" (p. 67). The desired result of a narrative text is to describe what each participant experienced and what subsequent implications arose from these experiences, which is a goal of this study.

Researcher Positionality

In addition to paying attention and drawing conclusions from participants, it is important that researchers disclose their positionality as it affects the conclusions they draw. All researchers have great privilege and obligation: The privilege to pay attention and the obligation to make conclusions drawn from those choices meaningful to colleagues and clients (Stake, 1995, p. 49).

I have been a public school practitioner for fifteen years. I have spent seven years in the classroom and the other eight in an administrative role. These administrative roles have included being a building principal, a district superintendent, and now a deputy superintendent within the district being studied. This topic interests me a great deal because I have always been interested in ways in which a school can improve its performance. As a new administrator in the district

involved in the annexation, I can see that the results of the annexation are still very apparent and play a large part in the schools in question.

This study is also of interest as the Kansas City School District and a great number of other urban school districts continue to struggle with their image, performance, and financial situations. If annexations become a common practice, it could have a dramatic impact not only on the Kansas City School District but on other historically underperforming urban school districts, as well. Funding for schools is traditionally tied to the number of students served within that district. As students leave a district, so do the financial resources tied to their attendance.

Qualitative research uses human beings as the instruments to understand the social, cultural, and political intricacies of the situation. As an administrator, I need to know these issues to carry out my duties to my school and to the community it serves. The pros and cons of this situation are vital to my position. The potential personal biases of the researcher are unavoidably embedded within the research; however, the benefit of this study to the immediate community and to the larger community of administrators in urban school districts far outweighs the risk of personal biases. Quality research is dependent upon many interpretations by participants and researchers (Merriam, 1998). The power differential between myself and those being interviewed may have jeopardized my ability to obtain accurate and honest information. It is important to consider that the researcher is currently an administrator within the Independence School District.

Research Site

This study was situated in the Independence School District and, in particular, the Van Horn feeder system of schools affected by the annexation. The Independence School District is an urban/suburban school district east of the Kansas City Missouri School District. The schools

affected by the annexation include Van Horn High School, Nowlin Middle School, Korte Elementary School, Three Trails Elementary School, Sugar Creek Elementary School, and Fairmount Elementary School.

Participants

Voluntary participants were asked to take part in the case study based upon their knowledge of the annexation process and its effects. All participants were informed that information they gave would remain anonymous and be verified with them before inclusion in the final document. Teachers, high school students, parents, and community members were asked to give their accounts and perceptions of the annexation and how student achievement changed due to the annexation process. An attempt was made to gather a cross section of participants to give an accurate representation of the annexed area. Ethnicity, socio-economic status, and longevity in the district are important considerations for this study because they are referenced as possible causes for poor performance among urban school districts. The sample for this study only included stakeholders who had knowledge of the culture in the district and schools, both pre- and post- annexation.

Students.

As a means of gaining the student perspective on the annexation, a focus group comprised of high school students was formed. A total of six students participated in the focus group. Four participants were female and two were male. All students were enrolled continuously at Van Horn High School during their secondary educational years. This allowed me to only invite those students who attended Van Horn High School for at least two years when it was under the control of the Kansas City School District and who are currently attending Van

Horn. The current high school principal was consulted to gain access to students who would be good focus group candidates.

Teachers

Certificated teachers who were former employees of the Kansas City School District and are now employed by the Independence School District comprised another focus group. The Independence School District's human resource department provided the names of individuals who fit these criteria. This focus group consisted of five teachers who currently teach at Three Trails Elementary School. All focus group participants were female and varied in age and teaching experience. The participants were chosen from the same school in an attempt to get a better perspective of the culture that previously existed within that school and the culture that now exists once the annexation was completed. It is important to note that the principal at the school was replaced two years after the annexation occurred. That principal stayed at the school after the annexation occurred, therefore being an administrator in both the Independence and Kansas City School District. This is important to note because a theme emerged during discussions that teachers did not feel they were part of the Independence School District. They felt this was in part because leadership did not change in the change after the annexation occurred.

Parents.

I recruited a focus group of parents whose children attend Korte Elementary School, which was annexed from the Kansas City School District into the Independence School District. These parents provided a unique perspective on the apparent differences between the two school districts. I consulted principals within the affected schools to find parents who would be good candidates for the focus group. Similar to the reasoning stated with the teachers, I sought a focus

of group of parents whose children attended the same school to gain a perspective on the change of culture at the school; if in fact it did change.

Interviews.

Interviews were conducted with the superintendent of schools, a minister in Western Independence; a Missouri Senator who introduced the mechanism to allow the annexation vote; the attorney who represented the Independence School District in legal matters pertaining to the annexation, and a teacher who taught at two different schools annexed into the Independence School District. The purpose of these interviews was to obtain an adequate description of the background and motives behind the annexation. There are many hidden details that do not appear in the public record, newspaper accounts, or in school documents. The interviews helped gain insight into issues related to the annexation that were not initially apparent. Due to the unique details that each interview contained, interview comments were not recorded anonymously unless anonymity was requested by the subject. These individuals had a strong influence on the events that led up to the annexation. Their actions were key in providing momentum for the annexation to occur. Because of their strong influence on the annexation proceedings, they are referred to as change agents.

Data Collection Methods

The process of collecting data occurred during the fall and winter of 2010. The data was gathered with the permission of the participants and followed guidelines set forth by and in compliance with Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines. Qualitative case study methods were used to collect the data. Multiple data sources were used to collect information as a means of ensuring fidelity throughout the process (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Information was taken from three primary sources: semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and document review. I

have a position of authority within the school district, so careful attention was made to ensure confidentiality. It must also be noted that individuals may not have felt comfortable being forthright in their comments about the Independence School District, so a blog site was established to allow for comments to be made in an environment that the respondent will not feel threatened. No comments were entered on the blog site by the participants.

Semi-structured Interviews

The use of interviews is common in qualitative case study research. This approach gives the researcher an inside perspective on the issues being studied (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Because interviews involve interaction, they create relationships that can help a researcher to understand, rather than simply explain, a phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 1995). Interviews were semi-structured; this format provided structure to the questioning process while allowing me the flexibility to engage in conversations that provided a deeper insight into the annexation. Because I treated the respondent as an equal, the interviews were more reliable and honest. Personal feelings were gleaned from the interviews, which resulted in a more realistic account of the annexation. Traditional interview techniques do not allow for this flexibility as the researcher sticks to a scripted set of questions, without allowing for researcher follow-up questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 1995). Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to ask for clarification and capture the experiences of participants who were part of the annexation. This was especially helpful since the annexation occurred more than two years ago.

Interviews consisted of those individuals who had the most intimate knowledge of the history and political implications of the annexation. The researcher conducted the interviews at sites convenient for the individual participants. All interviews were taped using a digital audio recorder and lasted approximately an hour. These interviews were transcribed and made

accessible for participant review. Participant review of the information gathered is considered an important method for validating information gathered by the researcher (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Validation of interview materials also provides data for further investigation. Handwritten notes were taken during the course of the interviews to give further clarification to questions and as personal notes to indicate when further investigation may be needed. The interview questions were designed to gather information consistent with the first research question. The interviews were completed prior to any focus groups occurring. The rationale behind doing this was to uncover additional questions for focus group participants that may have not been apparent prior to the interviews. The interview protocol and sample questions are included in Appendix C.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were used as an additional method of gathering information. Focus groups are a type of interview that occurs with a small group of participants and focuses on a particular topic. Focus groups allowed participants to hear perspectives from others who were affected by the annexation. The social context of the setting can often elicit responses that would not have occurred in a traditional interview setting (Patton, 2002). Three distinct focus groups of five to six participants apiece were utilized.

One focus group consisted of high school students who attended Van Horn High School when the annexation took place. They were part of the former Kansas City School District but are now attending the Independence School District. This focus group had six participants and lasted approximately an hour and fifteen minutes. A second focus group consisted of parents who had students enrolled in grade school during the annexation process and now attend Korte Elementary School as fifth grade students. This focus group was done at the First Methodist Church in Western Independence. It had six participants and lasted approximately an hour. The

final focus group consisted of teachers who previously taught in the Kansas City School District at Three Trails Elementary School and made the transition with the school to the Independence School District. All focus groups were conducted in a non-threatening environment to help elicit the most accurate accounts of events that transpired. Once the focus groups were completed, follow-up interviews took place to provide clarification about issues that arose.

The community implications of the annexation and the changes to the community's culture were best gathered in the focus group. This interaction among participants brought up emotions and topics the researcher would not have thought to ask in an individual interview setting. Focus groups were useful because they stimulated talk from multiple perspectives during the conversation between the participants. The one problem that may arise with this method is that some participants may be too embarrassed to share their views in front of the group (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). One participant who was asked to participate in the focus group declined, but did agree to participate in a semi-structured interview. As with the interviews, a digital recorder was used and the participants had the option to obtain a transcript of the focus group interview.

The researcher took into account that events the participants were recounting occurred two or more years ago. Much of what was gleaned from the interviews and focus groups are cultural memories. Brockmeier (2002) stated cultural memory is comprised of knowledge, practical experiences, moral values, and aesthetic values. The narrator's self-positioning and his or her positioning of others during the annexation plays a role in the accounts provided. This was taken into account by the researcher, thus making the triangulation of data and document review even more important to ensure the validity of the information gathered (Rowlinson, Booth, Clark, Delahaye, & Procter, 2010; Rubin, 2006).

The focus group questions were intended to address research question two and three. The answers to the research questions were used to gain information regarding the organizational and school culture pre and post annexation. This information was analyzed to give more information about the change of organizational culture through the lens of Bolman and Deal's (2003) four frames of organizational culture. The focus group protocol and sample questions are contained in Appendix D.

Blogs

There has been a significant increase in the use of web-based applications such as blogs as a way in which to gather information. They can be used as a means to “encourage rich interactions where a participant reflects on comments made by other participants” (Castanos & Piercy, 2010, p. 948) The personal nature of blogs allows for opportunities to collect thoughts and feelings that may not have otherwise been attainable (Chenail, 2008). I felt that a blog would be beneficial due to the power difference between the participants and me. Castanos and Piercy (2010) state that participants find it easier to discuss certain issues online, rather than in person. Sensitive issues can be discussed without the fear of shame or having views scrutinized when commenting on potentially politically dangerous or sensitive topics. A blog was intended to allow participants the ability to be *free* in expressing their views about the annexation. The blog was available to all individuals who were selected to participate in the teacher focus group. Questions used during the focus group interviews were duplicated on the blog, thus allowing the researcher to get more data regarding those topics. A site was created on blogger.com, which allowed the researcher to control access to who was able post on the blog site. Unfortunately no focus group participants took part in the blog. This was a source of follow up communication with the participants on why they did not use the blog. The reasons given were that participants

felt comfortable during the focus group interviews and they did not feel the need to offer more information.

Document Review

The researcher reviewed numerous documents throughout the case study. These documents included, but were not limited to, board of education minutes, court findings, filed legal briefs, newspaper articles, and legislation filed to initiate the annexation. According to Merriam (1998), using documentary material is similar to using interviews and observations. The data collection is guided by questions, hunches, and emerging findings. This allows for the accidental uncovering of data that would not have occurred in an interview or focus group setting. The annexation generated numerous documents because it made national headlines and continues to be a source of potential litigation.

Documents are part of the process of inductively building categories in qualitative case studies. Once documents have been located, they must be checked for authenticity. Documents reported to be objective may contain biases that the researcher is not aware of. Although there are limitations to documents, they are a good source of data and may be the only way of studying certain problems (Merriam, 1998). Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that it is a researcher's responsibility to be aware of any biases he or she may have and to also maintain a methodological integrity when disseminating data and subsequently performing data analyses.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research can generate a huge amount of data, so it is important to have the data organized in such a way that allows for timely analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 1995; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Data analysis should be conducted immediately after collection or simultaneously with the data collection (Merriam, 1998). Stake (1995) suggested data is always

being interpreted since qualitative research is a reflective process. He argued that the researcher should be committed to the reevaluation process and should continuously re-interpret his data.

Microsoft Excel was used to code and subsequently analyze the collected data. The codes used were determined by the information gathered during the course of the interviews and focus groups. Units of data were sorted based on whether the respondent was a student, parent, or community member. These data units were broken down into small units that fit into thematic patterns based around the work of Bolman and Deal (2003). These themes emerged from the collection and subsequent filtering of comments made by respondents during the course of the interviews and focus groups. Creswell (2007) suggests that the process of *winnowing* data may be used so that all the collected data is not incorporated into the study; not all of this information was necessary, and this method made the interpretation of data more manageable.

Research Quality

Researchers want to ensure that data they produce is valid and reliable. Both the producers and consumers of the research want to be assured the findings are credible and can be trusted (Merriam, 1998). To ensure quality data, methods described by Merriam were used to help promote the integrity of the data collected. These strategies included the triangulation of data, member checks, peer review of the data, acknowledgement of the researcher's position, and the use of rich descriptions (Merriam, 2002).

Triangulation refers to the use of multiple sources of data and of data collection methods to confirm the emergence of data. Data was gathered in the form of interviews, focus groups, and documentation review. This information was gathered from several diverse groups, all of whom have different vantage points in the annexation. Patton (2002) stated triangulation increases the reliability and validity of data compiled during the course of a study. The collection of data from

the district office, individual schools, and community members in the form of focus groups, interviews, document reviews, and field notes allowed me to establish the credibility and dependability of the data. It also made the data more transferable, which will allow for future research into the subject.

Information may be further triangulated through the use of member checks (Patton, 2002). Member checks were used to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected. Member checks occur when data is taken back to the participants for review. Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted if an investigator reports that his or her findings are actual representations of participants' realities, it is essential that those participants be given the opportunity to react to their data. This is done to ensure the data is correct and taken in the proper context. Member checking also allows participants to clarify their responses, correct misinterpretations, and provide new information. A review of the findings is an additional step to ensuring the trustworthiness of the data. Those taking part in the information-gathering process were asked for permission to contact them again if more information was needed. Contact information was gathered at the time of the initial interviews and focus group sessions to allow for future correspondence.

Peer review occurred as I discussed the study's progress and findings with cohorts and professors. Their input was utilized to ensure congruency existed between the emerging themes and the raw data, thus making the researcher's tentative interpretations more reliable. This helped to reduce any researcher bias that may have interfered with the study. My current position as an administrator of the Independence School District was reported to limit its effects on data collection. Patton (2002) stated that to ensure credibility, researchers must report any personal or professional information that could affect data collection, analysis, or interpretation.

The use of a qualitative case study method was intended to provide rich descriptions. The richness of this description contextualized the study so readers can determine if their situation closely resembles the case study and whether they could transfer the study's findings to their own use. A good study is one in which data is systematically and ethically assimilated so that its findings are trustworthy (Merriam, 1998).

Audit Trail

An audit trail was used to establish the trustworthiness of the study's data, since the interviews, artifacts, and other means of gathering data are the basis of the analysis. Creswell (2007) suggested an audit trail helps an auditor determine the trustworthiness of the study and leads to the data's dependability and confirmability. I maintained a file of all documents used in the study; this file included consent forms, field notes, transcripts, documents reviewed, interview and focus group audio files, and the database of *winnowed* data.

Transferability

Transferability of the research is enhanced due to the descriptive nature and purposive sampling of the interviews and focus groups (Wilmore & Erlandson, 1993). Patton (2002) argued that an important part of qualitative research is providing a rich context of information from which knowledge can be gathered. Purposive sampling was used to gather key individuals with intimate knowledge of the annexation. Detailed contextual information regarding the conversations was included in the field notes, thus facilitating transferability of the research.

The dependability of the data was insured by using established qualitative research techniques. Interview and focus group transcripts, segregated data, documents, and field notes were maintained for audit trail purposes. Findings were shared with the participants involved in

the study, and each individual was asked to reply to the findings to ensure that quotes and other information were not taken out of context.

Limitations

The research was limited by the relatively small number of individuals included in the focus groups and interviews who had intimate knowledge of the annexation. These limits ensured the authenticity of the information and helped me complete the study within a reasonable amount of time.

The amount of time that has lapsed between the pre-annexation events and the present is another limitation. The more time that passes between events increases the likelihood that information will be distorted by outside influences. By the time the interviews are conducted, more than two years had passed since the beginning of the community's annexation discussions.

Although there are limitations to the study, the knowledge gained by the study far outweighs any limits. The plight of underachievement in urban public schools continues to be an issue. This research may allow for future study into alternative methods of improving academic performance in urban settings and alternatives to traditional restructuring techniques associated with No Child Left Behind.

Summary

Chapter 3 of the dissertation explains the research design and methodology that was used for this study. This qualitative case study sought to describe the shifts in organizational and school cultures that occurred in the annexed schools and how these cultures played a part in their prior and current performance.

The qualitative design and methods described in this chapter allows the reader to judge the validity of the research. To discover the perceptions of those involved in the annexation,

voluntary participants took part in interviews and focus groups. Purposive sampling was used to select participants. Microsoft Excel was used to classify and organize the extracted comments and determine themes. The themes emerged, were disaggregated, and subsequently unitized based on Bolman and Deal's (2003) concept of school culture. Research credibility was established using strategies such as triangulation of data, member checks, peer review of the data, validation of the researcher's position, and the use of rich descriptions. An audit review helped to ensure that the documents used were dependable and credible. Finally, the delimitations of the study are described.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Chapter four provides an in depth analysis of the findings collected during the course of this case study. Insight into the perceptions of stakeholders involved in the annexation of a portion Western Independence into the Independence School District was discovered during the course of the focus groups interviews, individual interviews, and examination of court documents from the annexation proceedings. Separate focus groups were performed with parents, teachers, and high school students. Individual interviews consisted of key *change agents* in the annexation process. Each of these change agents had considerable insight about the behind the scenes dealings of the annexation. Court documents, including pre-trial depositions, court proceedings, and legal filings were used to give further clarification to issues that arose prior to the vote on the annexation and conflicts that occurred during the court case.

Each theme is further categorized into how the annexation affected each of the groups. These groups consisted of the following: the change agents who were key to the annexation occurring, parents whose children attended Korte Elementary both pre and post annexation, teachers who currently teach at Three Trails Elementary School and did so for both the Kansas City and Independence School Districts, and seniors at Van Horn High School that were part of the transition from the KCMSD to the ISD.

The information gathered is divided into Bolman and Deal's (2003) primary framework of organizations, divided into four categories; the structural, human resource, political, and symbolic frameworks. These four categories are used to navigate and explain the organizational culture of the schools both post and pre-annexation. Each aspect of the framework is then further analyzed into themes. The structural framework consists of the two major themes. The first

emergent theme was the prevalence of bussing in the Kansas City School district, which eliminated neighborhood schools. The second theme, an absence of connectivity between the annexed schools and the community, relates to the loss of neighborhood schools in Western Independence.

The human resource framework is divided into three distinct themes. The first being an increase in opportunities for children attending schools within the Independence School District. This was compared and contrasted to opportunities these same children had while attending the Kansas City School District. The relationship the community, students, and families have with the annexed schools is another major theme. A strong relationship was prevalent between the students at Van Horn High School and their current teachers. The final theme under the human resource framework is the increased expectations for students, staff, and the surrounding neighborhoods once the annexation occurred.

The political framework is divided into two major themes. The first theme, the lack of a voice in decision-making, directly ties to the research question on why the voters chose to seek annexation. The sense of racial harmony during the process and relatively small impact that race had on the proceedings is the second emergent theme under the political framework. I expected to find antagonist feelings within the African-American community due to the annexation. This theme gives particular insight into the sense of hopelessness that many of the families felt prior to the annexation.

The final and most compelling framework deals with the symbolic nature of the annexation. The symbolic framework was divided into two distinct themes, the feelings of a lack of safety within the schools and the condition of the facilities that students attended prior to the annexation. Each stakeholder group had surprisingly different views on what was symbolic to

them as parents, community members, and students when the annexed schools were part of the Kansas City School District and then what symbolized these same schools under the Independence School District.

A final theme emerged that did not fit one particular Bolman and Deal (2003) framework, but rather was encompassed by all four of the frameworks. This theme was that stakeholders within the annexed schools did not fully feel they had been accepted into the Independence School District. Even entering the third year of being part of the school district, they felt those within the community and school system still viewed them as lower level contributors to the district. These comments were especially prevalent among the students and faculty who took part in the study.

These themes of the findings are organized to answer the following research questions.

1. How did stakeholders arrive at the decision to seek annexation?
2. How do stakeholders describe the changes in the schools since the annexation?
3. How do the stakeholder's perceive the possibility of using the annexation as a model in which to improve urban education in other school districts?

Structural Framework

The use of the structural framework for organizational culture is one in which those involved in an organization implement a process or structure that attempts to solve issues at hand. These steps would include clarifying organizational goals, managing the external environment, developing a structure to accomplish goals, distinguishing lines of authority, and focusing on tasks, facts, or logic rather than human elements to decision making (L. G. Bolman & Deal, 1994; Lee G. Bolman & Deal, 2003). The structural frame emphasizes the importance

of formal roles and relationships. One theme that emerged as it relates to structure is the impact bussing had on the annexed schools and how it fragmented the community.

Bussing – Elimination of Neighborhood Schools

The desegregation case affecting the Kansas City School District had a great impact on the schools within the district. Many students no longer attended their neighborhood schools. Students were bussed throughout the district in an attempt for racial integration in its schools. The bussing was in conjunction with the school district's initiative of introducing magnet schools to the district. Due to the large bussing efforts, the research found a lack of community connection to the schools. With children attending schools a great distance from their home, involvement of parents in the school declined and the neighborhoods felt little connection to the schools.

Change Agents. The issue of bussing played a major role in the dissatisfaction of community members in Western Independence. Bob Spradling, pastor of Maywood Baptist, and a highly regarded clergyman in Western Independence stated, "The real problem with the KCSD was perceived when school bussing took place. This is a very sensitive topic." Families were not afforded the ability to send all of their children to the same school. Pastor Spradling went on to tell about a family who attended his church and contended with bussing issues,

There was one family who had three grade school children and they all three went to a different grade school. They had three different busses who picked up their children from the same house. They tried to get assistance from the KCSD, but were told no, "this is the way it is going to be". There were three busses taking their three children to three different elementary schools.

According to those interviewed, bussing fragmented the community and reduced the ownership felt by the parents and children in their schools. A community member commented, "What we did with forced bussing was tearing up both [black and white] communities. The urban core of KC was fragmented because they no longer had neighborhood schools. Our fringe suburban schools, fringe of the urban core, first tier cities; we were also fragmented because our students who were fractured from the relationship."

While KCMSD bused students in an attempt to end desegregation, community change agents also felt it was used as an excuse to not improve the school district. According to Steve Mauer the desegregation case loomed like a "ten thousand pound gorilla" on any efforts to enact real change in the district.

Steve Mauer, the attorney who represented Independence in the annexation case commented about Kansas City's use of past desegregation cases, "Their threat has always been that if you do anything to impact our district, you're going to screw up our desegregation efforts and you are going to get sued in federal courts." The KCMSD and their board also made claims that the annexation would cause further segregation by taking non African-American students out of their district, thus increasing their black population further.

The issue of bussing, decades of desegregation efforts, and the abysmal academic performance of KCMSD students led parents, students, and teachers wanting a way out of the school district. Dr. Jim Hinson, superintendent of the Independence School District commented on stakeholders' decision to seek annexation, noting that parents and children "didn't want to attend that [Kansas City] school district. The Kansas City School District was so poorly operated for several decades. It really caused a fever pitch that they wanted out."

Parents. Children were not required to attend magnet schools and could attend a quasi-neighborhood school if they wished, but as one parent stated, “Kansas City underperformed everywhere. If they [the children] were to get a good education, a magnet school was the only real solution.” Another parent quickly pointed out, “There were waiting lists to get in and who wants their child on a bus for over an hour each day?” To echo these statements, another parent said, “We have great neighborhood kids. Why not keep them together. I wanted a sense of neighborhood.”

While bussing was seen as a way in which to comply with desegregation, schools were no longer part of the fabric of the community. Few of the parents interviewed knew much about the history of desegregation in the Kansas City district. One African-American parent stated, “This [annexation efforts] wasn’t about black or white, it was about my child getting a better opportunity than what I had.” This parent stated he lived through the racial tensions during the desegregation case in the 1970’s. He stated, “We [blacks] weren’t any better off after the desegregation case than we were before. We only had nicer buildings that they [KCMSD] didn’t care for.” I asked what he meant when he said the schools were not cared for and he stated that new facilities were built, but were not maintained. “It looked great to build new schools but no one thought about how to keep them nice when the money was gone.” A parent commented that you only had to look at the recently closed schools to see how far many of the buildings in the district had decayed over the years.

While talking about magnet schools, one parent stated, “The thought of bussing my child across town was something I wouldn’t stand for. It made no sense when a school was just down the street.” While parents had a strong view about busing, the teachers at Three Trails had a

different view because they were the recipients of high performing kids due to their status as a science magnet school.

Teachers. One year prior to the annexation, Three Trails Elementary school housed the gifted program for the Kansas City School District and was a science based magnet school. Due to this, the most gifted and talented students for the KCMSD were bused to Three Trails each day. The teachers viewed busing in a much more positive light than did parents because their jobs as one teacher stated, “were much easier than they are now that we are a neighborhood school.” Another teacher commented, “If everything had stayed status quo with KC, I liked the way it was.” The staff’s view on the busing had more to do with the clientele they served than desegregation and the effect on the community.

The teachers did agree that busing students provided a greater sense of community within the school, as one acknowledged, “I think we see more of that [school involvement] and we see more of a feel of community. That is something that was missing because they [neighborhood students] weren’t here.” Since most neighborhood students did not attend Three Trails, a connection did not exist between the school and the area in which the building was located. This theme of schools not being a part of the community emerged during the course of discussions.

Schools as Part of the Community

Schools are often times thought of as the life-blood and social center of a neighborhood (Elliott, Huai, & Roach, 2007). Kansas City used a magnet school format within its school district as a way in which to give parents options on schools to send their child. In doing this, very few children actually attended a school that was in close proximity to where they lived.

Change Agents. During his interview, Senator Victor Callahan commented on how those in Independence lost a sense of identity when the schoolchildren were not from the

neighborhood. When asked to clarify what they meant by this, he stated, “Schools are something you should have pride in. As a magnet school, parents didn’t want to drive across town to attend activities. A school should be the fabric of the community.” Without neighborhood children in the schools, there was little connection between the schools and the community. Bob Spradling said a patron in the community approached him after the annexation and this elderly woman told him, “I missed the time that I was able to walk to the schools, watch a school play in which I know the kids who are performing. We fixed that now, huh.” From the conversation with Mr. Spradling, it was clear that individuals who played an active role in getting votes for the annexation were very proud of their involvement.

Prior to the annexation, several private and parochial schools were operating in Western Independence as an alternative for parents to send their children to Kansas City School District schools. Even though the local clergy knew the annexation would possibly close their church’s schools, they still supported the annexation because they felt it was in the best interests of the community. They were willing to sacrifice their own schools for the larger good. Steve Mauer stated, “Even though they [private school providers] clearly knew that I’m going to have a big decrease in my enrollment and might have to close, that’s okay because it’s the best thing for our community.” Bob Spradling, whose own small parochial school closed due to lack of enrollment stated, “The school district provided us an opportunity to come as a community and work side by side on a common goal.” This desire of the community to connect with their local school was reiterated by every group who participated in the research project.

An important aspect of getting the community involved as soon as Independence took over the schools was the Extreme School Makeover held during the first summer after the annexation vote. Dr. Hinson stated that over 3000 volunteers showed up to help clean up the six

annexed schools during Extreme School Makeover. This took an amazing amount of coordination from the district and volunteer leaders at each building.

That [Extreme School Makeover] was a tremendous message to the people in those neighborhoods and the kids that it was a new day. The expectations are going to be high, but we're going to take care of you and provide good things to you. I think it was a very significant issue in turning around the expectations of our kids and the community.

Parents quickly took notice of the changes being made and the promises that were kept.

Parents. Following the annexation and the Extreme School Makeover event, families felt they were a part of the school and the notion that the school was a part of the community resonated strongly with the parents. Comments such as “incredible,” “We felt like we belonged from the first day,” and “To see all of the volunteers come paint the schools was amazing” were heard from parents when asked to describe the community involvement. One parent stated, “I’m only sad because my two oldest never had the same opportunity to go to school with her neighborhood friends.” One parent, while talking about a friend who was active in soliciting signatures for the annexation petition stated, “My friend Amy said she couldn’t afford to move, so the only way out for her children was to change who ran the schools. That’s why she got people to sign, to take back our schools.”

The inability to volunteer at the former KCMSD schools was referenced several times by parents. One parent said, “The principal said there was too much red-tape to have volunteers...I felt unwanted.” Another parent quickly responded, “Dr. Mallams [principal at Korte] greets us at the doors and is happy to have us in the building. I helped landscape during Project Shine this summer.” Project Shine is the yearly follow up to Extreme School Makeover. To maintain the investment the community feels in the schools, volunteers help beautify facilities within the

district over a weekend each summer. The closeness the parents felt to the school was evident as they spoke about their ability to help anytime they could, though most said their work schedules would not permit this to happen.

Teachers. The teachers interviewed for this case study previously taught at Three Trails when it was a magnet school for the gifted. Although teachers previously enjoyed having the top students every day in their classes, they knew it was not the best situation for the community as a whole. One teacher stated, “Very few of my kids lived close to the school, most were bussed.” In affirmation, another teacher said, “some were on the bus for an hour just to get here. We didn’t have closeness without community involvement.” A teacher, speaking about the school before annexation, then stated, “It [sense of community] was something that we had to really work at, building that feeling of unity.” While commenting about the differences from community involvement then compared to now, one teacher commented, “no one ever showed up for it [school activities] unless you bought lots of pizzas.” Another teacher quickly chimed in on this year’s back to school night, “We had massive amounts of parents. It was amazing.” In the view of the teachers, the community involvement would not have occurred had it not been for the annexation.

While the structural framework deals with formal roles and relationships, the human resource focuses on person-to-person interaction to establish culture. The human resource framework was significant in the annexation due to the complex way in which relationships among the stakeholders was developed. These relationships allowed the annexation vote to pass and helped establish a strong interest in helping the new schools be successful.

Human Resource Framework

The human resource framework views people as the most important piece to an organization. The emphasis is upon supporting constituents and empowering them with the ability to institute change. Participation in decision-making is deemed important.

Professionalism and enhanced opportunities for those within an organization are paramount to success in Bolman and Deal's human resource framework. Student opportunities, positive relationships, and an increase of expectations were themes that emerged and classified under the human resource framework. Each stakeholder group had their own perceptions of how the annexation changed their lives and what their continued expectations were.

Student Opportunities

The researcher had an opportunity to visit with many individuals and groups during the course of this dissertation. The most prevalent theme that emerged as a benefit from the annexation was increased student opportunities. This not only came from students, but parents and community members as well.

Change Agents. As Victor Callahan stated, "There is no comparison to then and now. What was once seen as an abyss, the kids and community now see as an endless opportunity." The annexation was seen as a way to improve generational poverty. For example, while talking about what the annexation meant to those within his congregation Bob Spradling stated, "I had people who came in here who were supporting the boundary change who said that no one from my family has graduated from high school. They have all got a GED." In addition to increasing educational opportunities, the annexation gave students more extracurricular options. Pastor Spradling went on to talk about the clubs, activities, and sports kids can compete in now. Before the annexation, "The perception was that they could not have afterschool activities at Van Horn

with KC because teachers wanted to leave when the bell rang.” Spradling noted school’s staff response now, stating, “I watch teachers and administrators who are there twelve hours a day and giving that kind of effort. Kids are going to benefit from it.” The change agents saw the annexation as a way in which to improve the community by empowering the people the schools served by increasing opportunities. The parents relayed a much more personal view of how the annexation improved their own children’s chance to succeed.

Parents. During the course of the focus group, a Hispanic mother stated, “I was scared what would happen when my child had to enter junior high. I knew that I was going to lose my son.” I told her that I did not understand what she meant by lose her son. She went on to say that her older son is in jail because “he felt like there were no options. My other kids have an opportunity to improve themselves. There were no clubs or sports to help guide my oldest.” An African American parent stated that his son had a higher chance “of winding up in prison than graduating from Van Horn High School” prior to the annexation. Another parent chimed in “we all have stories about kids getting lost in KC. Now I feel my child can get an education and I don’t have to look to move just to keep them from going to a bad school.” As one parent summed up the annexation, she stated, “Until you have children and you feel like there is little hope for their future because of where they go to school, you can’t understand what we went through.” The comments of hope and optimism were prevalent throughout the parent interviews. A similar theme emerged when students spoke of their school experiences since the annexation occurred.

Students. Every student talked about the opportunities they have now since the annexation occurred. Interestingly, they were not happy about the annexation occurring when it was first announced. “I remember in KC when they were talking about the annexation. I wasn’t

too happy about it. I thought it was so stupid” was a comment from one student. She went on to say, “If I was with KC, I wouldn’t be doing a lot of the stuff I’m doing because the opportunity wasn’t there for me.” A fellow classmate echoed this statement when she said, “Independence gave us the opportunity to own the school. They let us have the pride, have the ability to have the pride in what we were doing. I don’t think we had any of the groups or clubs I was involved in.”

Prior to the annexation, many school activities had been suspended by the Kansas City School District due to safety concerns. Students were not given the opportunity to participate in school plays, student council, debate, and some athletic teams due to a lack of funding, lack of facilities, or a lack of willingness to participate. Even though they were still attending the same school, students immediately noticed a change. For example, a student commented about walking into Van Horn High School after the annexation, “I remember the first day sophomore year walking in and it felt like a more positive atmosphere in a way.”

While opportunities were cited by all groups, new relationships formed were discussed extensively. These relationships were grounded in feelings that people cared if they succeeded.

Relationships

During the course of the focus groups, the role of positive relationships was a significant theme with two groups. The students commented that some KCMSD teachers were important to their early success, but not to the extent of their current teachers. “All the teachers weren’t bad in KC, but there were a lot who didn’t care” was a comment heard from a student.

The parents referred to the relationship they had with staff and in particular, the school principal. Parents focused on feeling welcome in the school and how they were kept informed of issues that involved their children. The students focused more on a feeling of support and caring

from their teachers. The students noted how their current teachers play a major role in their lives. This involvement often times extended beyond the typical school day and gave them a sense of stability in their lives.

Parents. During the course of the focus group, parents commented about the approachability of their current principal, Dr. Mallams. One parent stated, “Dr. Mallams make Korte so inviting. He’s always out front welcoming our kids into school.” “It feels like a partnership between us and the teachers” was another comment from a parent. While talking about the differences between Kansas City and Independence, parents said they liked Korte prior to the annexation, but it was more business-like than now. One parent explained, “I think the teachers cared before, but they left as soon as the bell rang [at the end of the day].”

Prior to the annexation, Korte did not have a parent-teacher organization. One parent stated, “Our PTA is strong now. I love getting together with the other parents.” Following that comment, another parent stated, “I feel like I’ve gained friendships with teachers and other parents. That never happened before.” Other opportunities outside of the PTA are also available to parents and students. “My child is in the student council. We have skating parties and trips for kids now.” The parents had very positive comments relating to relationships with the school district. This sentiment was extremely prevalent when talking to the students at Van Horn High School.

Students. I was surprised that relationships were the most mentioned aspect of the annexation. Students gave several instances of how important their current teachers are in their lives. One student commented, “I just love the teachers here and how they treated us and how much they care.” He went on to state that when his Dad was laid off from his job, Ms. Cline,

one of his teachers, gave him \$20 for a birthday gift because she knew he his family could not afford to give him a gift. He believed the teachers as his school “would do anything for you.”

Van Horn students felt the teachers are more caring than when the school was under Kansas City’s control. One student commented, “There was a handful of teachers that cared. Even they didn't take pride in the school itself.” Another student went on to comment, “It felt like relationships and feelings weren’t there whatsoever and that was it. It didn’t feel human.”

When asked to contrast how “school” was under the KCMSD and then Independence, one student said, “I have to say the feeling of it. In KC, it was more bland. You step in the building [now] and feel that teachers care, that people care. You don’t fly under the radar here.” The researcher asked if each of the participants could give an example of the contrasting styles, freshman orientation was mentioned. “When we welcome the freshman, we’re family here...we line up and welcome them individually as they walk [by]. They have to pass by every one of us and have to get to know us as they go.”

Each of the students in the focus group, except for one, took honors courses together during their freshman year and was not in the same general classes as the regular students. Consequently, they had a different perspective on what occurred in the hallways and the relationships formed. Although the focus group participants viewed their relationships with teachers better than a typical Van Horn student, they mentioned a difficult transition to their sophomore year. “We didn’t deal with a lot destructive behavior that other classes did ... it [sophomore year] was kind of harder. The transition of letting your guard down.” Students were not accustomed to having adults show a genuine concern for their learning. Several students did not feel safe while the school was under the control of the KCMSD. In addition to feeling safer, students stated that it took time to understand it was okay to allow someone to help them. A

student chimed in, “You’re so used to not getting help [from teachers] that you don’t know how to react when people are there for you.”

While talking about the relationships formed, the difference in expectations from their teachers was apparent. The theme of increased expectations was touched on by each group that participated in focus groups and individual interviews.

Expectations

The idea of increased expectations has been given as a reason for increased student performance since the annexation occurred. During the course of collecting data, each group cited a change in expectations for students, parental involvement, and teacher performance.

Change Agents. When asked to tell what each change agent felt made the difference once the annexation was completed, expectations was cited. “They [Western Independence stakeholders] understand the expectations of the Independence School District are certainly different than what they had experienced in the Kansas City School District,” commented Jim Hinson. When asked to clarify what they meant by having greater expectations, Steve Mauer stated, “have [ing] to fit and comply by all the same rules and expectations and you’re going to get all the benefits and all the things that come with that quality education. It was a two way street.”. Students who were a part of the annexed schools were expected to perform at the same level as the other schools already in the district. The same curriculum was used, professional development was consistent between the schools, and similar levels of conduct were expected from all students. The level of expectations was visible when the Independence School District opted to include the newly annexed school’s test scores for accreditation purposes. The Missouri Department of Education had given ISD the option of not including the assessment scores from the newly annexed school into the final results when calculating the district’s accreditation with

the state. Even when factoring in the scores of the annexed schools, the district again attained the highly coveted Distinction in Performance rating. This is the highest level of performance from the Missouri Department of Education.

What was expected professionally of employees was brought up by Jim Hinson, “What we found out during our interview process was that there were a number of teachers that were teaching in these buildings that we didn’t feel were the right people to be teaching for us in Independence.” Teachers were expected to perform at a higher standard and express added professionalism than they were previously. When asked to further elaborate on what the Independence School District found when looking at personnel decisions by the KCMSD he commented, “Incompetent or ineffective teachers or administrators, they just moved them to another building. Sometime these schools in Western Independence were part of that dumping ground.”

Bob Spradling went on to comment about contrasting expectations of the two districts and attributed the change to, “the leadership, the willingness to terminate a teacher that is ineffective. All the management issues that come with a good system.” When asked about changing expectations, parents explained how grateful they were that their child was expected to succeed.

Parents. Expectations relayed by each district for student behavior and parental support were discussed. Parents believed little was done by KCMSD to ensure that high expectations were shared by all stakeholders, but that attitude changed when the schools became part of ISD.

One example parents brought up was the follow up of the staff at Korte. If elementary students missed school, parents were contacted to ask why this was occurring. This level of concern did not happen before the annexation. A parent shared how now, “If my child is gone,

they're calling to find out why." Attendance is valued and important now compared to past practice. The same parent went on to say, "Some parents don't get their child to school; that's not accepted now." When asked what occurred prior to the annexation, parents talked of students missing large amounts of school. "Friends of mine didn't get their kids to school like they should have. The SRO's [school resource officers] check now if kids miss school. Parents talk about it."

Parents had differing perceptions about ISD's expectations for high academic performance. Some expressed negative comments about the increased amount of homework and reading expected by teachers. A parent stated, "My daughter's teacher wants her to read 45 minutes every night. That's not reasonable to me". Another parent quickly defended the district when she said, "That is a lot, but reading is important ... we have to think differently now about what our kids have to do."

Parents overall felt student behavior was better in the annexed schools and they understand a higher standard of expectation for student discipline was being applied. "The halls and classrooms are a lot quieter now" and "It seems like we get much more communication if there are classroom issues" were comments stated when asked about how the schools operate since the annexation. One parent went on to say, "Teachers expect kids to behave. You can't learn if you are out of the classroom [for disciplinary reasons]." Another parent, who admitted her child had behavior issues in the past stated, "I don't always agree with the discipline [done by the school after the annexation]. What was fine before isn't now...higher standards now."

Students. The level of expectations increased for all students in the annexed schools. The students continually stated how different expectations were at Van Horn post annexation. A male student who struggled his freshman year and thought about dropping out said, "You have to

succeed here.” Another student quickly stated that earlier in the day, students who were struggling in school had mandatory tutoring. “Today, we had pull-outs. I helped tutor the whole day today with math. With kids who were failing. Failing is just not an option.” When asked what it was like their freshman year, a student commented, “In KC you could fail every single class ...The expectations now are that if you are going to live life, you had better take care of your business. In KC it was like you’re just here.”

One student posed this question to the rest of her classmates, “How many kids went through KC and didn’t have someone to help make that decision [to be successful] for them? Here, you don’t get that choice.” Those within the group agreed they would have been successful whether the annexation occurred or not because of their self-motivation. Several felt the annexation made the most difference to students who would have been on the borderline of being successful or those who would have missed school because no one forced them to attend. “We’ll make it ...if we were in KC most wouldn’t.” Another commented that many of her friends who were not part of the area annexed that attended Van Horn no longer attend school. “I felt we left them behind. They would have made it if they were here and they knew someone cared. Expectations matter.”

Political Framework

The political framework is important because interest groups constantly vie for a limited amount of resources within an organization. A successful organization understands the internal conflicts, recognizes major constituencies, develops power bases, and uses this power carefully. The organization must create a culture in which different groups are able to see what they have in common and help identify external “enemies” they can fight together. Ross and Gray (2006)

stated that schools are political entities in which members devise micro-political strategies to achieve objectives.

During the annexation process, numerous groups had a vested interest in the annexation being successful. Three significant political themes emerged from the interviews and document review process. These themes included a lack of perceived power of the constituents living in Western Independence with the Kansas City School District, the community and faith-based community playing a substantial role in getting the annexation on the ballot, and the lack of racial tensions associated with the proposal of the annexation.

Racial Harmony

Throughout the annexation, the Kansas City School District used former desegregation lawsuits as the reason why the annexation could not occur. The KCMSD alleged that taking the Western Independence schools out of their district was being pushed by individuals who wanted to attend a district with less diversity. I expected to find a great deal of information about a racial aspect to the annexation proceedings, but found that those interviewed believed race was not an issue from their point of view.

Change Agents. When asked about race being an issue in the annexation Dr. Hinson stated, “People in the community, both communities - KC and Independence - did not buy into the race issue.” The fact that the NAACP, Urban League, and the African American Chamber of Commerce did not take a stance of opposing the annexation helped to ease any potential racial divide. Steve Mauer commented on the racial issue and his handling of the court case.

I didn't do a head count and say I'll represent this child because they are white and not represent you because you are black. If you lived within the boundaries of the annexed area, you were going to get to move. It was all about geography and not about race.

Bob Spradling commented that when the annexation first was talked about, many of his Kansas City African American pastoral colleagues did believe the annexation was due to race. The potential for racial upheaval was mitigated when several Independence African American pastors ultimately supported the annexation. When asked how this happened, Bob Spradling said, “It was helpful that pastors in Western Independence who are also African American understood that this was not a racial issue. They understood that it was an issue of opportunity.” He later went on to say, “If you have the leader of a predominantly African American church standing up in front and saying ‘No no no, this needs to happen.’ It just blunted a whole lot of that argument.”

Parents. When parents were asked how race played into the decision to annex, most said it was not an issue. An African-American parent discussed how some of his [black] friends talked about it as a racial issue. “I finally told them, I don’t care about race. I don’t want my kid going to Kansas City. If KC was better we would be there.” Several of the white parents did say they wondered how Korte would look after the annexation occurred. A white parent stated, “I admit that I thought about not having as many black kids in my son’s class. It seemed like many of the problems that I heard about were from black kids...I’m not proud of [thinking] that.”

The African American parent went on to say that many of his son’s black classmates could no longer attend Korte because of the change in boundaries. “Those parents are still upset they can’t go to Korte ...some moved houses to be able to come back [to school at Korte].” The parents did state there seems to be more diversity in the classrooms since the annexation first occurred. “It seems there are more black and Mexican students in the classes and that’s good ...we all need to get along.”

Students. When the students at Van Horn High School were asked about the racial component of the annexation, they did not connect a racial issue to the reasoning behind the annexation. Students noticed how many fewer African American kids attended Van Horn post annexation. One stated, “During that first year I asked, where did all of the black people go?” Another student commented, “Our freshman year, I remember it was very diverse. You had the same amount of Hispanics, Caucasians, and African Americans. I know when it transferred over, a lot of my Hispanic and African American friends stayed in KC”. The lone African-American participant in the focus group stated, “Over the next two years it has filtered in more. It’s become more diverse...Doesn’t bother me because I’m getting what I need to succeed.”

No Voice in Decisions

While interviewing each of the stakeholder groups, the question was posed about their ability to enact change prior to the annexation. Each group felt they had no voice in bringing about significant change, especially when approaching the KCMSD administration. This lack of a voice caused a large amount of frustration and led to those vested in the schools and community to seek the annexation.

Change Agents. A lack of involvement by the KCMSD in the schools in Western Independence was cited by the change agents. There was no avenue for stakeholders to enact real change in the schools. The KCMSD would not listen to any plea to improve conditions in the schools. To illustrate, Victor Callahan made this comment about Western Independence’s lack of influence, “The election itself was that this would be an opportunity for those who never really had a voice in the district to express their desire for change.”

After the annexation was approved by a vote of the people, an arbitrator was appointed in an attempt to get the KCMSD and the ISD to agree to terms. An assistant superintendent was

giving a tour of the schools to the arbitrator and got lost. She did not know where her own schools were located. According to Steve Mauer, who was also on this tour, “I asked the arbitrator, „do you want me to show you where her school is?’ I swear, there was nobody from Western Independence that could motivate the Kansas City School District.” Even though the KCMUSD was fighting the annexation, they did not know where their own schools were located, which communicated little confidence in their leadership.

Parents. A question was posed to the parents about their ability to voice concerns about educational issues with the KCMUSD. What followed was laughter from several of the parents. “They couldn’t care less what we had to say,” commented one parent. I asked if they could give more clarification on what they meant by this. Another parent stated that she went to the [former] principal about issues and was always given the same answer, “We’ll see what they say in central office. I can’t make that decision.” Frustration with the lack of building level autonomy and how unresponsive central office was to community concerns was evident. One parent stated, “We were too far East for them to care. Korte wasn’t a magnet school so we weren’t a priority.”

The parents talked about the neighborhood declining for decades prior to the annexation. One lifetime resident of the area said, “This used to be a great part of town when I was a kid. Nice houses, good neighborhoods.” Another parent then said, “We’re looking more like KC than Independence. Businesses shutting down and houses run down.” The conversation shifted to them having a voice with the city of Independence. “Before the annexation, we really weren’t part of [the city of] Independence. You only have to look at where the nice part of town is. We weren’t important to them.” During further questioning, it was brought up that people were now moving back into the neighborhood. “There isn’t much for stores, but people are moving into

the vacant homes now,” stated a parent. “The city seems to care about us more since the vote” was another comment made. The sense of not having the ability to have their concerns considered by the KCMSD or the city of Independence was evident during the conversations with the parents.

Stakeholders were optimistic about the future of the community and district. They felt they are now heard by the Independence School District and City of Independence now. This optimism was tempered by cautiousness from the parents and was evident in the comment, “Let’s talk in five years when the newness [of the annexation] wears off. They [Independence School District] kept their promises with the bond. The community has a long way to go.”

Teachers. The teachers were posed a similar question about having a voice in their school while part of the KCMSD. Interestingly, a similar response of laughter erupted from the staff. “You wouldn’t go downtown [to central office] at all. You didn’t want to. There would usually be a backlash on you” commented one teacher. The teachers went on to speak of how their former principal was well connected at central office, but the school still did not have a voice in the district. Similar to a quote from a parent, one teacher added, “We were an eastern KC school. Our input was valued very little.” Teachers felt that eastern Independence schools were not fully accepted by the Kansas City School District because they were not part of the district’s urban core.

When asked about how this compared to what they currently experience in the Independence School District one teacher said, “[Central] Office here, their behavior is totally different. When you go to the Independence office it’s like there are people there who welcome you and they are smiling. If you went to KC it was like checking into a prison.” The teachers discussed how the employees turned over so frequently in the KCMSD central office that they

never knew who to speak to for answers. This continual turnover in personnel in the central office, coupled with a sense of no one with authority caring about teacher concerns, caused a great amount of bitterness with the staff.

Symbolic Framework

The symbolic framework is important, as it often is the first impression an organization conveys. People will give loyalty to an organization that has a unique identity and makes them feel what they do is important. Symbolism is important because it is a way in which to communicate the organization's mission. Symbolism can take the form of something concrete such as an object, people in the organization, or mission statements; but intangible items such as feelings, thoughts, and past practices can also symbolize a school or organization (Lee G. Bolman & Deal, 2003). Three primary themes emerged that related to the symbolic framework. These included school safety in the annexed schools, the condition of the buildings, and a lack of belonging experienced by those who were in the annexed schools.

School Safety

Questions about school safety were not specifically asked during the questioning of the groups, but the topic did emerge as a theme when the researcher asked what symbolized the Kansas City School District. The prior existence of metal detectors and security measures and then their subsequent removal was a significant topic of conversation. The one group that did not address school safety was the teachers. This is attributed to a lack of security measures such as metal detectors at the elementary school level.

Change Agents. The change agents in the annexation spoke of the security measures that were in place while Van Horn High School was controlled by the KCMSD. When asked about the presence of security at Van Horn, Independence superintendent Jim Hinson commented,

“The security that was put into place I think was false security, was punitive security... They really just wanted to use a punitive system to keep kids contained as much as possible.” Once the ISD took control of the buildings, the metal detectors were removed from the school. Several of the change agents made an analogy of Van Horn to a prison. Senator Victor Callahan chuckled when he said, “Van Horn was like a prison. Probably airports would be envious of security at some KC schools. Guantanamo would be envious of their security, and all of that is gone.”

Pastor Bob Spradling talked about how many kids who were part of his congregation did not feel safe while attending Van Horn. He stated that school safety and the animosity between the races was a source of conversation between him and his African American pastoral colleagues. “I have heard stories of kids who would not go to the lunchroom, not go to the restroom all day long. They were truly in fear of their safety because of the blending of different races.”

While the annexation was not about race, school safety certainly was. While conducting the research, I found it interesting that many of the same kids currently attend Van Horn as did before the annexation. Security measures were lessened once the ISD took control over Van Horn, but the perception of the school being unsafe was reduced. This phenomenon could be an interesting follow-up study to determine if heightened security measures actually lead to more incidents of negative behavior.

Parents. The parents of the elementary students spoke of a lack of school safety as a symbol of the KCMSD. All said they felt their child was safe while attending Korte Elementary, but they did comment on gang signs showing up on the school from time to time. Their real concern revolved about having their children move on from Korte to Nowlin Middle School and

then on to Van Horn High School. “I would have moved or sent my child to a magnet school before having them go to Nowlin.” Another parent quickly commented, “I can’t afford private school, but my children wouldn’t have been safe before [the annexation]. Don’t know what I would have done.” I followed up with questions about their thoughts on school safety now that the annexation has occurred. All commented they were more comfortable now, but still had some concerns. As one parent stated, “I think you’re always worried when they [your children] move to junior high. It’s better now, but more still needs to be done.”

Students. When asked what symbolized Van Horn under the KCMSD, four students in unison said “metal detectors.” When asked about the metal detectors, one female student said if the guards thought you were a good kid, you did not even get checked. Other students found ways to subvert the presence of security personnel and metal detectors. A student shared, “Kids were putting weed, drugs, and cell phones in books they cut the pages out of.” Laughing, another student said, “It’s funny how you get a safer feeling when you come in the building [now] when there are no more metal detectors. The metal detectors were here to help keep you safe.”

Throughout the entire process of collecting data, one particular quote stuck out over all the others. One student recalled the following memory of Van Horn prior to the annexation, “Over the library entrances there was this giant banner that says KCMO, *A Great Place To Learn*. I just remember waiting in line, staring at this banner and thinking what a lie. I don’t learn anything here.” All of the students agreed that a culture persisted where students did not feel safe under Kansas City, but that changed when they started their sophomore year as part of the ISD and the metal detectors and security force was removed.

Facilities

The greatest surprise for me was what students did not say regarding facilities upgrades. Van Horn High School was the recipient of more than \$12 million in improvements once the annexation was finalized. Included in these improvements was air conditioning throughout the school, a turf football field, rubberized running track, and a new front entrance to the school. The students focused very little on these physical plant improvements; instead, they focused on the relationships with their teachers. While interviewing the other three major constituencies, facilities were cited as a large symbol of the annexation.

Change Agents. All participants in this group spoke about how the building improvements symbolized a new beginning for the annexed schools. For example, when Superintendent Jim Hinson spoke of the bond issue and the improvement to the facilities of the schools in Western Independence, he put the improvements not in the context of brick and mortar, but one of “keeping promises.” He elaborated,

They [annexed schools] were ignored and weren’t cared for at all. Whether it be the physical structure of the building or the faculty and staff where people were just placed there to serve out their time. I think the symbol was failure and really deteriorated educational system, dilapidated buildings.

Senator Victor Callahan reflected on his first walk-through of Van Horn after the annexation, “You walked into Van Horn and they have this insane asylum blue-green color on the walls. This institutional color on the walls. You walk in now and the walls are painted the school colors. What a novel idea.”

Bob Spradling, who led a group of men during Extreme School Makeover (ESM), commented what symbolized the KCMSD to him was “Broken lockers. Restrooms stall doors

that are broken and non-existent.” He said that he and four other men spent two weeks doing nothing but taking staples out of walls so they could be painted prior to ESM.

Parents. Excitement was evident when the parents talked about the facilities now at Korte. “We actually have AC,” was a parent’s comment when asked about what symbolized Korte under ISD. Each spoke of how great Van Horn looked and how clean the buildings now were. A parent stated she participated in the Extreme School Makeover the first summer after the annexation. “I was sick to my stomach after helping clean the cafeteria. How they could think that was okay to have kids eat in!” When asked what other parents experienced in terms of facilities one comment was that the KCMSD had “No pride. Not in the buildings, not in learning, not in people.”

Four of the parents stated they had participated in Extreme School Makeover or Project Shine since the annexation. It was evident that each took pride in the condition of the schools. “It matters when you have a hand in what’s happening” was a comment from one of the parents. “We expect better now” was a comment from another parent in what they believed the school’s facilities should look like.

Teachers. The teachers did not make many comments relating to symbolism as it concerned facilities. One comment cited several times, however, was how nice it was to have air conditioning. “Right after the annexation we had air conditioning, even if it was only window units.” Another teacher said, “Nineteen years I taught in this building and we never even had window units until Independence took over. Since the bond passed, we have central heat and air. Much better learning environment.”

Teachers related one negative issue concerning facilities. “We used to have lots of computers [prior to the annexation]. They [ISD’s technology department] came in and took all

of the computers out.” When I asked why this occurred, the teachers commented that it was to keep equity in the district. It was perceived that the newly annexed schools had more computers per pupil than other Independence elementary schools. “Now it’s unequal because we don’t have the same resources as the other schools. I miss my computers,” lamented one teacher.

The lack of technology brought up a theme that I asked several probing questions about. This theme was that teachers in the newly annexed schools felt they did not belong to the Independence School District and still felt more like a Kansas City elementary school. This lack of belonging was discussed by teachers as well as students at Van Horn High School.

Sense of Belonging

One particularly interesting theme emerged in this study, but did not fit under any one particular Bolman and Deal framework, was a feeling of being looked *down upon* or not fitting in by those within the Independence School District. Those feelings expressed by the teachers and students were attributed to conversations from other students in the school district, community members, and colleagues who taught at other schools within the district.

Teachers. The teachers at Three Trails Elementary School were unique among the annexed schools because they are all currently teaching in the same building and in the same positions as they were prior to the annexation. In addition, they still had the same principal post annexation as they had prior to the annexation. These teachers felt they never fully left the Kansas City School District. This led many of them to feel like they were not truly part of the Independence School District. One teacher commented on this, “I kept thinking, this is just like it was in KC. I thought I left KC. Nothing has changed.”

Along with feeling there were not significant changes in their building after the annexation; the teachers stated that many within the community believed they were inferior to

ISD teachers because they taught in the Kansas City district. One teacher commented on her feelings of not being accepted, “We were good in KC and you [ISD] think we’re terrible.”

The teachers feel they are slowly being more accepted. An unfavorable labeling still occurs in which children, teachers, and schools are negatively referred to as being from “Western Independence.” One teacher recalled being at a meeting and made this comment about her colleagues “They looked at this like, you’re one of them [Western Independence teacher].” Another teacher then stated, “When will we stop being classified as Western Independence? I’m not KC, I’ve been Independence for three years now. I resigned. I’m no longer there.”

Feelings of lack of acceptance were not unique to the teachers. These same comments about not feeling accepted within the district were echoed by the students at Van Horn High School. They not only felt unaccepted by those within the ISD, but also by their former classmates who were not able to transition to Van Horn after the annexation because they did not live within the city limits of Independence.

Students. I did not specifically ask students about their thoughts on being accepted into the ISD, but it did arise as a theme while discussing the annexation. Feelings of great satisfaction with the ISD were tempered by feelings of sorrow that former friends could not come to school at Van Horn. Feelings of not being accepted by kids from the other two high schools within the district, Truman High School and Chrisman High School were also discussed.

One student commented on how she felt torn about the annexation, “I felt so bad for most of my friends who were in KC because they couldn’t come here. I felt horrible in the fact that they were going to miss out on something great.” The sense of not knowing exactly where they belong was an issue with the students. Some felt they were not entirely accepted into the ISD and others felt they would never be accepted again by their former friends who could no longer

attend Van Horn High School. One student commented on feelings of un-acceptance, “You got it from both sides. You got it from Independence and from kids in KC.” A third student also felt he was not accepted and stated, “With Independence, you were still KC kids. So you were still little hoodlums and weren’t really understood.”

The feelings of not being accepted were often times expressed in ways the Van Horn students perceived as kids from other ISD high schools being fearful of kids from Van Horn. “[I] look at their faces and see how terrified they are of being here. I’m not going to walk up and shoot you. It’s okay. I’m handing out my hand to shake yours, not taze you.” This lack of acceptance drives them to outperform their rival schools in the district. “It’s a chance to prove them wrong. They come in and we show them. I get gratitude out of that.”

When asked if they were accepted by those within the community, the students felt they were. They [adults] seem to be more understanding...we’ve had a lot of positive media over the last three years. They are like oh, you’re doing some really positive things. We have a conversation about how positive VH is.”

One student did say that some teachers acted surprised at the level of performance of the Van Horn kids. “A lot of the teachers thought these kids weren’t taught crap. They aren’t going to know diddly-squat.” This annoyed the students during the first year after the annexation, because teachers held low expectations of them.

Even with the feelings of not being accepted that occur from time to time, the students said they would not change what has occurred since the annexation. Acceptance by their peers at Truman and Chrisman High Schools is occurring, but feelings of not belonging do persist. Time may be the answer for these students to feel totally included in the district. Comments about having “Falcon Pride” were used quite often during the focus group. One quote seemed to sum

up the annexation “We were lost, but now we’re found. Thank God for Independence because now a lot of us have a chance to be something more.”

Chapter 4 provided a review of the case study findings. These findings were a result of information gathered during interviews, focus groups, and an examination of court documents from the annexation proceedings. The chapter began with an analysis of findings as they related to Bolman and Deal’s (2003) four categories of a framework for organizations. These categories included the structural, human resource, political, and symbolic.

The four aspects of the overarching framework were used to explain the organizational culture of the area annexed by the Independence School District. The findings presented strong positive feelings about annexation. This included a feeling that affected schools are now a part of the community, greater student opportunities, rich relationships, and an increase in academic expectations. A prior lack of voice in decision making, poor school safety and school facilities when the schools were under control of the Kansas City Missouri School District were prevalent in the discussions. A negative feeling about the annexation did emerge because some stakeholders did not feel fully accepted into their new district. These findings provide a transition to Chapter Five in which conclusions and implications are discussed.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter five presents the conclusions, implications for future research and practice, and recommendations for districts contemplating an annexation. The following sections are a result of the analysis and synthesis of information gathered during interviews, focus groups, and the review of legal documents that were presented in the findings. The conclusions are viewed through the lens of organizational culture (Lee G. Bolman & Deal, 2003) with a specific focus placed on what enabled the Independence School District (ISD) to successfully navigate the annexation process. In this conclusion, I present how Bolman and Deal's framework for organizational culture helps explain the data in the annexation process described in this study. Following the conclusion section, implications for future research and practice are discussed. Recommendations and a summary of the study concludes chapter five.

Conclusions

Organizations can unknowingly make decisions based on assumptions or incorporate ideas about how tasks should be completed without carefully considering the consequences of their actions. These assumptions play a significant role in creating a culture within an organization (Schein, 2004). Bolman and Deal's (2003) organizational framework, divided into four categories, including the following: structural, human resource, political, and symbolic; provide a lens to understand the forces at work during the annexation process studied in this research. It also helps explain how similar results could be considered or replicated. In this district, to successfully navigate a proposed boundary change that occurred due to the annexation, many integral pieces were required to fall into place. Two significant conclusions are apparent from the findings. The first conclusion is that the annexation was successful

because the community played an active and leading role in the annexation proceeding.

Community involvement in the annexed schools did not cease when the vote was finalized.

Three years after the initial annexation, the community continues to be actively involved with the annexed schools, thus creating a sense of ownership and connectivity between the community and its schools.

The second conclusion was the noticeable change of culture for those associated with the annexed schools. This change of culture permeates every aspect of the school and among every level of stakeholder. Parents now can reasonably expect their child to receive a better education; students have increased educational opportunities; community members can realistically anticipate the area will have an economic turnaround; and teachers feel they are respected and valued as an employee.

Community Involvement in Schools

To fully understand how important community involvement was to the annexation being successful, we need to recognize the complete lack of engagement the Kansas City Missouri School District (KCMSD) had within the neighborhoods that were annexed. Research has shown that complementary efforts from the community are needed to strengthen and support schools (Glaser, et al., 2005; Glaser, et al., 2002). Without this mutually inclusive relationship, communities and schools are not able to reach their full potential (Berends, 2000). In this study, the research showed that the KCMSD showed little interest in using community resources available to them, and often times alienated constituents by dismissing their concerns. Attempts by the community to volunteer in schools or to have any role in the schools were rebuffed by the district. Stakeholders, especially parents and community members, felt they had no platform in which to express their concerns or to enact change.

Human resource frame. Individuals within an organization are viewed as the most important piece to its success in the human resource framework. Participation by stakeholders in the decision-making process is highly valued (Lee G. Bolman & Deal, 2003). Participatory partnerships between the community and the KCMSD did not exist prior to the annexation. Repeated attempts by teachers, parents, and community groups to improve the schools were rebuffed by the central office. Stakeholders in Western Independence felt they had no voice in matters affecting their schools. Parents stated that when they attempted to talk to anyone about problems at the schools they were referred from one administrator to another and nothing was ever done.

The annexation's successful vote was ultimately a grass-roots effort by community leaders. Community members went from house to house getting the necessary signatures to put the annexation on ballot for a vote. Stakeholders took this action because they viewed the annexation as a way to improve the education of children, decrease community blight, and show they now had a voice in their future. A vital piece to rallying support within community for the annexation process was the inclusion of the faith-based community. Had it not been for faith-based individuals such as Pastor Bob Spradling and the use of their infrastructure within the community, the annexation might not have materialized. They used their influence and the pulpit to encourage parishioners to seek a better future for their children and community. While the KCMSD did not seek counsel from those within the community, the ISD embraced the opportunity to partner with the community. Volunteer events organized by school leaders such as Project Shine, Extreme School Makeover, and Youth Friends flourished in the Western Independence schools. Individuals felt a new sense of duty to help the schools once the

annexation occurred. Community - school partnerships provided a positive outlet to express their gratitude and satisfaction to the ISD.

Organizations need the skill sets of their employees and constituents to ensure success. These same people also need the intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction of knowing they made a difference in the organization (Lee G. Bolman & Deal, 2003). The KCMSD showed little interest in ways to leverage community contributions, while the ISD embraced the community's willingness to help. This mutual relationship strengthened a sense of community within the schools.

Structural frame. Formal expectations and exchanges occur between employees of an organization and external constituencies. These symbiotic interactions provide a structure for the organization and establish a system within which power is channeled and of how problems are resolved (Lee G. Bolman & Deal, 2003). Similar to the human resource frame, the structural frame provides a backdrop of how the community was often at odds with the central office in the KCMSD. The central office was viewed as an adversary to improvement in the Western Independence schools, rather than as an agency of advocacy or working within a partnership. Bureaucratic layers impeded any sense of the community being a partner with the schools. In contrast, the central office administrators of the ISD are visible within the annexed schools and at community events. The teachers, community, and students view ISD favorably and feel the structure of the district lends itself to a closer relationship with the community as a whole.

Before the annexation, large numbers of students were bused as a way to desegregate the schools and provide a racial balance in the schools. The abundance of children being bused in and out of the neighborhood caused a lack of community within the schools. With the

completion of the annexation proceedings, the affected schools were once again neighborhood schools.

Western Independence's yearning for neighborhood schools, coupled with the poor performance of the schools while under the control of the KCMSD, were the key issues that led to an initiative for the annexation vote. This change of organizational structure allowed the community to once again become involved in the now annexed schools. Community involvement continues to be vital for long-term growth of the schools and was an integral reason the \$85 million bond issue passed in November of 2009. The bond issue was in part due to a promise to those in the annexed area that their schools would be of the same quality, both educationally and facility-wise, as the other schools in the Independence School District.

Political frame. Negotiation occurs continually within an organization as constituencies vie for competing resources. Successful organizations navigate this political arena in an attempt to improve productivity, increase worker satisfaction, and ultimately increase the capacity for mutual gains by both parties (Lee G. Bolman & Deal, 2003). The KCMSD failed to fully understand the political power of certain individuals in the community of Independence. Since the community approached lawmakers to facilitate the annexation process with a legislative act to enable the vote to occur, a political framework is a relevant lens for viewing this process.

Moving beyond the obvious political events that occurred surrounding the annexation vote, more subtle political events happened behind the scenes. This can be characterized not so much by what happened as by what was not occurring. An outside observer would think the NAACP, the African-American Chamber of Commerce, or other African American organizations would want to maintain the racial balance offered by bussing. The fact that the NAACP, Freedom Inc, and the African-American Chamber of Commerce either refused to take a

stand against the annexation or even openly endorsed the annexation spoke volumes about the lack of political allegiance to the KCMSD and the efforts of its school districts. Decades of abysmal performance, loss of accreditation, and the squandering of public funds on the desegregation case left the KCMSD little political capital. While this political capital was lacking for the KCMSD, Western Independence had found a very strong ally in Missouri State Senator Victor Callahan. He made the annexation his number one priority during his re-election campaign. Without the concerted efforts of a few key individuals, the annexation would have continued to be an issue that everyone talked about, but wasn't possible to occur because of legislative roadblocks.

Symbolic frame. General perceptions of the KCMSD were extremely negative prior to the annexation and these perceptions continue to exist. A school's performance often times is hard to characterize beyond test scores. The complexity of an organization can be understood more plainly by the simple manifestation of an unspoken symbol or symbolic action (Lee G. Bolman & Deal, 2003). The condition of the schools was often cited by community members as being deplorable. While the KCMSD put few resources into the schools in Western Independence, the ISD took the opposite stance. Extreme School Makeover (ESM) was initiated in an attempt to improve the facilities immediately after the take-over of the schools. More importantly, the ISD saw ESM as a way to engage the community and rally support for the schools. Volunteers took a great deal of ownership in the schools when they took time out of their own schedules to participate in school clean-up efforts. The ISD viewed the community as key contributors in not only the educational process, but in the facilities transformation.

The symbolic gesture of taking neglected buildings, using community volunteer manpower, and subsequently painting and cleaning them cannot be understated. The community

felt much more vested in the successful transformation of the schools. This symbolic gesture of helping the school facilities was continued in subsequent summers when Project Shine was started as a way for community volunteers to continue their involvement in the schools. The community, with their own hands, did more to transform the culture of their school than the millions of dollars funneled to the KCMSD for school improvement. Facility renovations were not effective without also changing the feeling at the school.

In November, 2009, an \$85 million bond issue was passed in the ISD. A significant amount of bond funds were used to improve facilities in the recently annexed schools. The district wide passage meant that voters throughout the district decided it was important to bring Western Independence schools to the same facility level as schools in Eastern Independence.

The passage of the bond issue symbolized a great deal to those in Western Independence. Most importantly it was a statement to the community that they were part of the district and a monetary commitment was being made to improve their facilities. While the past had been characterized by feelings of being “the stepchildren of the Kansas City school district,” promises were being kept by the ISD.

The success of the annexation was contingent on two important factors. One factor is the renewed community involvement, while the other being a shift in school culture. A positive change in school culture allows for lasting improvement (Schein, 2004).

Change of School Culture

Organizations are complex, ambiguous, and deceptive. These characteristics explain why it is difficult to understand, manage, and enact lasting change (Lee G. Bolman & Deal, 2003). Creating a culture in which high performance is the norm, rather than the exception is what all

organizations strive to emulate. Positive expectations for all stakeholders are essential to ensure substantive growth (Borman, et al., 2003).

Human resource frame. Abraham Maslow (1954) created one of the most influential theories about the needs of human beings. These needs start with the most basic of needs, physiological. Once these needs are met, humans proceed to each hierarchical level. These levels include the need for safety, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. To create a culture of positive expectations for an organization, it is paramount that individuals feel their needs are met at each level (Lee G. Bolman & Deal, 2003). The human resource frame is an especially important aspect of a school culture as the culture of an organization is created and sustained by the human participants.

Students, parents, and teachers did not experience a sense of belonging while they were a part of the KCMSD. High teacher turnover and the prevalence of busing inhibited connectivity to the schools they worked in or attended. This lack of connectivity, coupled with teachers, students, and families not feeling valued or having the ability to reach their full potential created an atmosphere of low expectations. Once the annexation process started, stakeholders experienced a change of expectations. A heightened sense of belonging occurred when teachers and the schools took an active role in monitoring progress of students. Employees and students are now treated with trust and believe they were worthy of the added benefits of belonging to the ISD. Students have been given greater opportunities to participate in activities and meaningful relationships have been formed. Being unsuccessful is no longer an option for students and parents are expected to be part of the educational process. Prior to the annexation, human potential and resources was noticeably absent. The annexation process showed how powerful and important this frame can be when harnessed and directed.

Structural frame. The structural frame is most often associated with an organizational chart and how situations are handled (Lee G. Bolman & Deal, 2003). By creating a sequential chain of command between teachers, building administrators, and central office; an increased level of expectations was relayed. Rather than feeling shut down or ignored, teachers and parents experienced positive interactions when dealing with the central office. They felt welcomed and believed their problems would receive the appropriate amount of attention.

A systems approach for improvement was created in each school, where input was sought from the community in order to include their voice in the decision making processes and policy development. Newly annexed schools created a school improvement process that addressed both educational and facility issues unique to that school. Once decisions were made, feedback from the multiple layers of stakeholders continued to inform the decision-making processes. Interventions were implemented that allowed children to be successful. An integrated support system for academic success was essential to improving performance and ultimately led to an improvement of the culture in the schools.

Political frame. Organizations are arenas for internal politics. External political agents with their own agendas impact the culture within affected schools. The nature of the arena determines what items are set as priorities and which agendas are discarded (Lee G. Bolman & Deal, 2003). The generally held belief was that the KCMSD was out to serve the interest of adults and not kids. Poor teachers were nearly impossible to remove and were transferred from school to school. Western Independence was often viewed as the dumping ground for poor teachers in the KCMSD.

Political agents were able to use historical poor performance of the KCMSD to push the annexation to a vote. The political power of key stakeholders has created a culture of optimism

in Western Independence. Since the annexation, economic activity has increased, school enrollment continues to grow, and home values are rising. While the political frame does not have a direct impact on a school's culture, it did allow stakeholders to navigate the political process. This successful navigation gave those affected a belief that they could enact positive change in their community and change a harmful and unsupportive culture.

Symbolic frame. Every group was consistent in two items they believed symbolized the KCMSD, metal detectors and poorly maintained facilities. Bolman & Deal (2003) state that symbols can instill a sense of commitment and meaning to an organization. Conversely, when the symbols are negative, they allow a culture of low expectations to infiltrate an organization. The focus is no longer on positive attributes of the organizations, but is centered on situations that evoke contempt or complacency (Elliott, et al., 2007). In this community, a negative symbol was the middle and high schools in the KCMSD had metal detectors and strict security measures. This form of security was often times viewed as punitive and not in existence for student safety. When the ISD completed the annexation process, nearly all security measures were removed, including the metal detectors.

Students believe that a greater expectation for student conduct exists in the ISD. An increased focus by the teachers and administration to build relationships with students is stressed. While the student body remained relatively unchanged, the security measures were lessened. Even with the reduced security, student discipline problems decreased. Many of the behavioral problems in the Western Independence schools could possibly be associated with a low level of expectations by the KCMSD.

The poor condition of the buildings was the other item that stakeholders viewed as symbolic of the KCMSD. These conditions created a culture of apathy by students and parents.

Prior to the annexation, many of the students had never been in classes where the books were not damaged with graffiti or attended a building that was properly heated and air conditioned.

Students, parents, and community members exhibited pride in their newly renovated buildings and stated that it showed how committed the community and school district was to their success. Positive symbols included the millions of dollars of repairs to the schools, the planned building of a new elementary school in Western Independence, and the purchase of new athletic uniforms, library materials, and updated landscaping on all of the annexed schools.

Implications for Policy and Practice

This study provides research that gives a first-hand account of successes and challenges associated with the annexation of schools formerly in the KCMSD. The research provides discussion points for communities to consider, if they wish to explore a similar annexation of schools is provided. Findings from this study could also be applied to school districts that are considering consolidation. This case study focuses on the possibility that a similar annexation process could be a solution to improve historically low performance in urban school districts.

As mandates for school performance continues to climb in response to NCLB, alternative methods to increase results are sought. Magnet schools, charter schools, school vouchers, and supplemental educational services are gaining momentum as a way to improve student learning (Fullan, 2000). By 2014, all children will be expected to perform at grade level (United States Department of Education, 2004). If this is not accomplished, schools will face sanctions. This study can serve as an effective model for other communities who wish to improve their educational opportunities.

For an annexation to be successful, there are several things that made the transition easier. Five items were identified as having significant implications to the annexation being

perceived as a positive event. The most important was the capacity of the district's leadership to navigate the political, symbolic, structural, and human resource elements that were present. This navigation was accomplished by enlisting leaders in the community to ensure all parties were listened to and had a chance to voice their concerns, frustrations, and opinions.

Dr. Jim Hinson, superintendent of the Independence School District, had established himself within the Independence community and was respected for his ability to “get change done while still not alienating those around him.” He had assembled an accomplished group of directors and administrators who were capable of undertaking a large project such as this. This group of individuals introduced a systems approach to including the newly annexed schools into the district. These systems included the systematic hiring of staff to staff the schools, a thorough assessment of facilities and their needs, and financial modeling to project needed resources to accomplish the transition.

The district's leadership capacity, coupled with the continued academic success of the ISD, resulted in a large achievement gap between the KCMSD and the ISD. This gap provided the backdrop for the annexation to occur. One key point that could not be disputed was that the KCMSD had a long and ugly history of poor academic performance. This was the key implication that led to the annexation.

Two additional items allowed for the annexation to occur. The boundary area to be annexed was easy to define. Area that was within the city limits of Independence and Sugar Creek were designated as the annexation area. This eliminated a parceling of lots as a determination of who would and who would not be included in the annexation proceeding. This simplified the annexation process.

A lack of organized opposition outside of the KCMSD also eliminated potential problems. Parents, the business community, newspapers, and civic leaders supported the annexation attempt. Had an organized resistance occurred, especially one centered around racial equality, may have fractured the community. All stakeholders identified the annexation as an educational issue, not a social or civic issue. While the KCMSD attempted to use the desegregation case as reason to oppose the annexation, this never gained any substantial support and was ultimately dismissed by patrons in Independence and Kansas City.

There are continuing implications that have occurred and continue to occur due to the annexation. Students feel they now have opportunities, the Western part of Independence is experiencing an economic and population growth, and a sense of hope abounds. For entities that are considering an endeavor of this magnitude, a series of recommendations are presented to help navigate the process. These recommendations are a compilation of comments made from stakeholders as they discussed their experiences. This is not meant to serve as a “how to” on annexation proceedings, but allows for reflection on what worked well and what did not.

Recommendations for Future Annexations

There were four major recommendations that emerged during discussions with stakeholders. These themes provide insight into feelings discussed during the interviews as to why they felt the annexation was a success and in some cases, where the district fell short in making the annexation a seamless process.

Engage the community. There was no greater ally in the annexation proceedings than the community itself. Community leaders need to be identified, consulted, and enabled in the process. Allowing stakeholders to feel like the annexation was “being done for them, rather than done to them” is an important element. Pockets of resistance may exist, but if input is sought

and insightful reasoning is presented for an annexation, the chances for success increase exponentially. The only way for a successful marriage is if both parties feel they are getting a benefit from the union. The same reasoning applies in an annexation attempt.

Engrain the district's culture. As stated in the literature review, culture is the mindset of “how we do things around here.” A standard set of norms must be established by the receiving district. These expectations must be relayed to the incoming students, staff, and community. It must be done in a caring way that does not alienate those you are partnering with. Two of the schools that were annexed kept the same principal that was in place prior to the annexation. This hindered the growth of the schools and did not allow for a change of culture in those buildings. It is best to change leadership in newly acquired schools by either hiring a new leader in the affected building or transferring that leader to a school within the receiving district that has an established district culture.

Upgrade staff and create efficiencies. Once the annexation occurred, all staff members in the annexed buildings were given the opportunity to interview for jobs within the ISD. What ultimately occurred was the opening of 250 jobs that needed to be filled. This allowed the district to start from scratch in buildings. Staffing efficiencies occurred by moving existing staff from current buildings. Teachers who were already in ISD schools were given the opportunity to request transfers to the newly acquired buildings. Many sought transfers because they deemed the annexation as a once in a lifetime opportunity to be part of a historic change. Principals were granted significant leeway in molding a staff that best fit the needs of the school and surrounding community.

Create a sense of belonging. The one negative aspect felt by many of the stakeholders was they felt a lack of acceptance by the ISD. While this feeling of being an outsider is

lessening, it still exists. Schools are often referred to as “the Western Independence Schools” and done so with a negative connotation. To help ease the transition, annexed schools need to feel as if they are equal to the existing schools. By providing them with the same level of facilities, professional development, and staffing ratios will help ensure their success and sense of belonging. Additional ideas to include them in the district would be to hold district wide meetings in the annexed schools so colleagues interact with the entire school staff. Much of the sense of separation is a perception that will take time to subside, but must be accelerated by inclusion from central office.

Summary

In summary, the schools in Western Independence experienced a substantial change in organizational culture. Much of the cultural shift is credited to the involvement of the community in the annexed schools and the leadership capacity of the Independence School District. Whether the replication of the annexation occurs in other urban districts remains to be seen. Western Independence was fortunate because many events occurred that allowed the annexation to proceed. Had it not been for the foresight and courage of individuals such as Dr. Jim Hinson, Senator Victor Callahan, Steve Mauer, Pastor Bob Spradling, and a host of other individuals who remain unnamed, the annexation would not have been possible. The ISD was able to leverage an outpouring of community support into the successful passage of a bond issue that helped to update facilities throughout the school district. These series of events continue to provide a sense of optimism within the affected area. Student populations continue to rise and an economic turnaround is slowly occurring. While the annexation was not a perfect process, it has created a turnaround that can best be described as awe-inspiring. What the future holds for this community is anyone’s guess, but one thing for certain is there is now hope. A statement from a

student at Van Horn High School seems to summarize the community's feelings as found in this case study: "You never know somebody didn't care about your present until you find someone who takes the time to care about your future."

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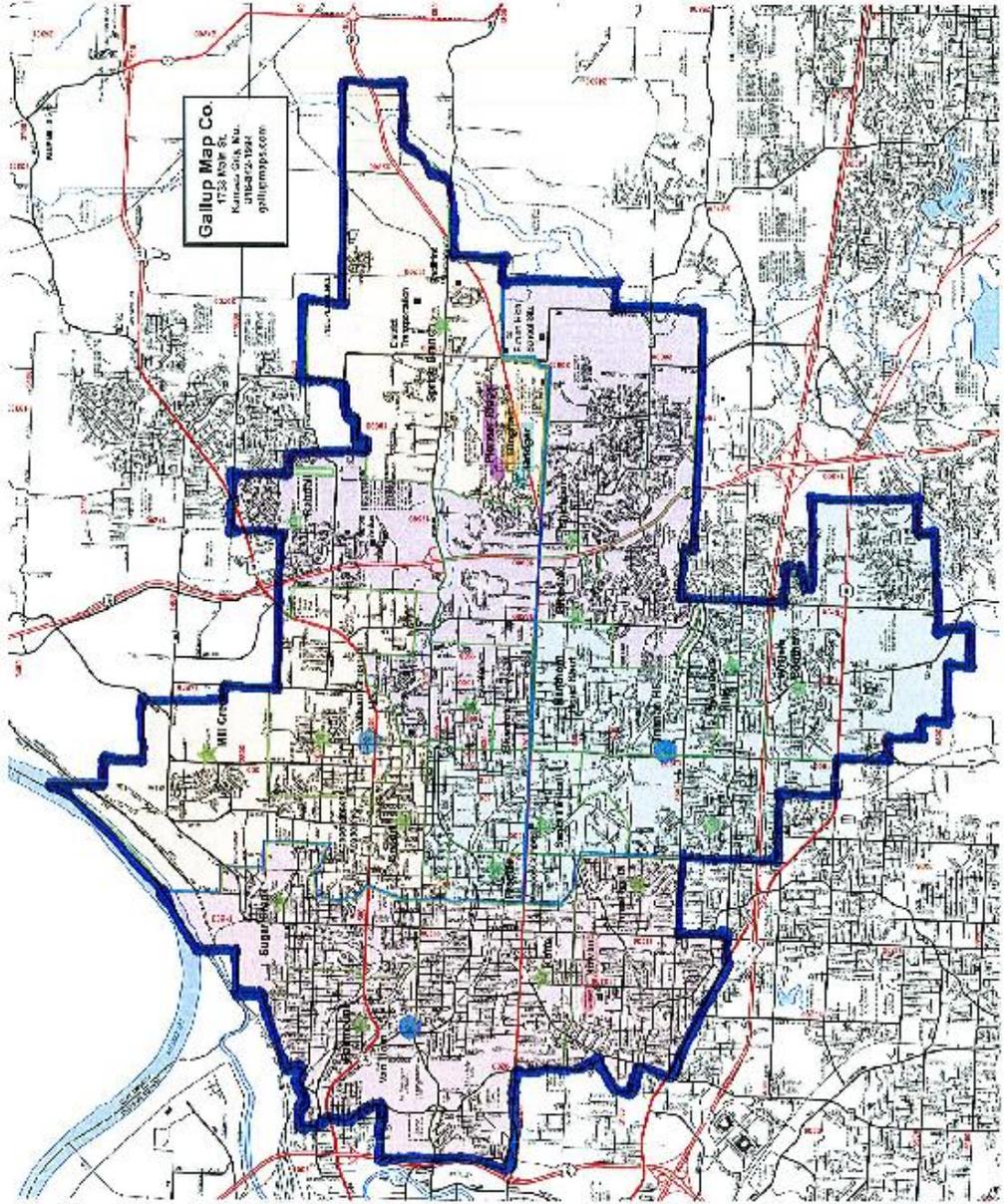
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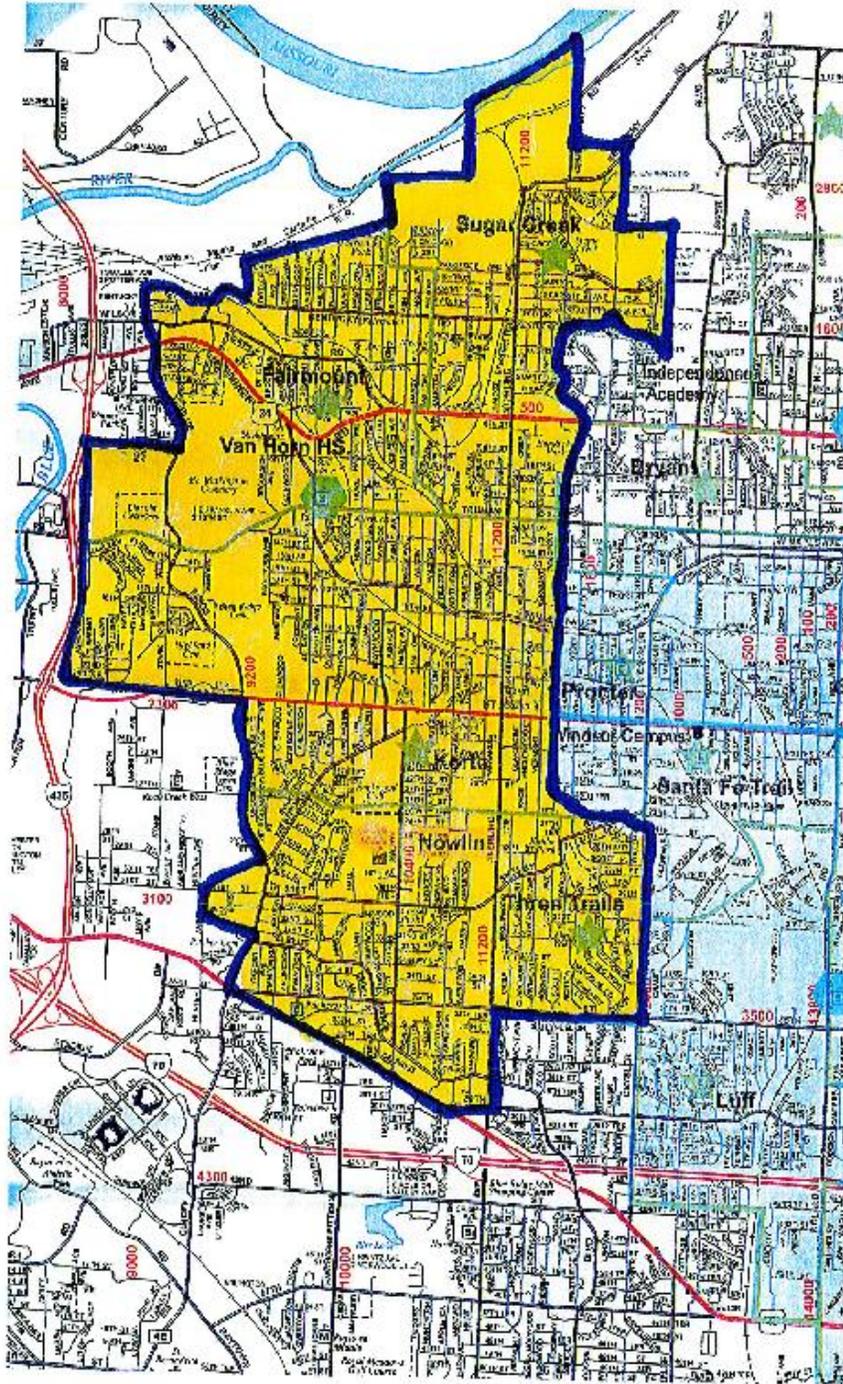
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INDEPENDENCE SCHOOL DISTRICT BOUNDARY MAP



APPENDIX B: ANNEXATION AREA BOUNDARY MAP



APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND QUESTIONS

Wichita State University - Educational Leadership Department

STUDY: A Case Study of the Annexation of Schools into an Urban / Suburban School District:
A Description of Organizational Culture Changes

Note: Interviews will occur before focus groups. The information gathered from the interviews is designed to address research question number one.

PROTOCOL #1 FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Date of Interview | |
| Location of Interview | |
| Participant's Name and Title/Role | |
| Interviewer's Name | |

Introduction and Ground Rules

Hi, my name is Dale Herl. Thank you for agreeing to talk with me about your perceptions of events that occurred in regard to the annexation of schools from the Kansas City Missouri School District to the Independence School District. I am a doctoral student from Wichita State University and would like to study the perceptions of stakeholders regarding the annexation of schools. This interview should last approximately one hour. Although I will ask some questions to guide the discussion, this is meant to be a semi-structured interview with possible follow-up questions. Please remember we are interested in benefits as well as challenges.

Before we begin I would like to share a few procedures for this conversation. Although we will be on a first name basis today no names will be used when we report the results of this session. You can be assured of confidentiality. With your permission I would like to tape-record our session today so that I will be able to more carefully listen to your responses. The tape will only be used for the purpose of note taking and transcription and will be destroyed following the completion of the study.

You can refuse to answer any question or to stop the interview at any time. Withdrawing from the project will not result in any negative consequences for you.

You have been provided a copy of the consent form that you signed. I have some extra copies if necessary.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

(Turn on the tape recorder, identify the interview, location, and date.)

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Please state your name and current occupation.
2. What do you believe led to the decision for voters to approve the annexation of schools?
3. What are the most common comments you heard about the annexation, both positive and negative?

4. What sort of impact has the annexation had on the community?
5. What are the differences in the schools since the annexation occurred?
6. What structural changes have you seen occur? This would include both tangible (i.e. buildings, staffing) and intangible (i.e. hierarchy of power, organizational chart)
7. How has the annexation changed the structure of the Independence School District and / or the community?
8. How has the relationship between the community / students / staff changed from the KCMSD to the ISD?
9. What human resource changes have you seen occur? What human needs have and have not been met through the annexation?
10. What were the political changes that occurred with the annexation? Who were the “power / political” players in the schools prior to the annexation as compared to now?
11. Where was political capital gained or lost due to the annexation?
12. What were the symbolic changes that have occurred since the annexation? What symbolized the schools while part of the KCMSD and what symbolizes them now?
13. What was important symbolically in the school prior to the annexation and what is important symbolically now?
14. Is there anything that I haven’t asked that would help me understand the annexation?

APPENDIX D: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL AND QUESTIONS

Wichita State University - Educational Leadership Department

STUDY: A Case Study of the Annexation of Schools into an Urban / Suburban School District:
A Description of Organizational Culture Changes

Note: Focus group interviews will occur after the semi-structured interviews. Questions are designed to answer research questions two and three.

PROTOCOL #2 FOR FOCUS GROUPS

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Date of Interview | |
| Location of Interview | |
| Participant's Name and Title/Role | |
| Interviewer's Name | |

Introduction and Ground Rules

Hello and welcome to the focus group. Hello, my name is Dale Herl. Thank you for agreeing to talk with me about your perceptions of events that occurred in regard to the annexation of schools from the Kansas City Missouri School District to the Independence School District. I am a doctoral student from Wichita State University and would like to study the perceptions of stakeholders regarding the annexation of schools. This interview should last approximately one hour. Although I will ask some questions to guide the discussion, this is meant to be a semi-structured interview with possible follow-up questions. Please remember we are interested in benefits as well as challenges.

Before we begin I would like to share a few procedures for this conversation. Although we will be on a first name basis today no names will be used when we report the results of this session. You can be assured of complete confidentiality. With your permission I would like to tape-record our session today so that I will be able to more carefully listen to your responses. The tape will only be used for the purpose of note taking and transcription and will be destroyed following the completion of the study.

You can refuse to answer any question or to stop the interview at any time. Withdrawing from the project will not result in any negative consequences for you.

You have been provided a copy of the consent form that you signed. I have some extra copies if necessary.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

(Turn on the tape recorder, identify the interview, location, and date.)

SAMPLE FOCUS GROUPS QUESTIONS:

Please state your name and connection to the school district.

1. What is your opinion about the annexation?
2. What are the most common comments you hear about the annexation, both positive and negative?

3. How has the annexation changed your life?
4. What is it like to be a part of the Independence school system since the annexation occurred?
5. What are the differences in the schools since the annexation occurred?
6. What structural changes have you seen occur? This would include both tangible (i.e. buildings, staffing) and intangible (i.e. hierarchy of power, organizational chart)
7. Are issues that arise in school handled differently now than how they were under the KCMSD?
8. How was “school” like under KCMSD compared to what it is like now?
9. What human resource changes have you seen occur? How have interpersonal and individual relationships changed?
 - a. Student to Student; Teacher to Student; Administration to Student, Administration to Teacher, School to Community
10. What were the political changes that occurred with the annexation? How has the power structure changed?
11. Who has the power in the school now compared to pre – annexation times?
12. What were the symbolic changes that have occurred since the annexation? What symbolized Van Horn when it was under KCMSD compared to what symbolizes it now?
13. What was important to the KCMSD?
14. What is important to the ISD?
15. Is there anything that I haven’t asked that will help me understand how the culture has changed in the schools affected by the annexation?

APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Case Study of the Annexation of School into an Urban / Suburban School District 2010 - 2011 Consent Form (Adults)

PURPOSE: You are invited to participate in a study of changes of organizational and school culture that may have occurred with the annexation of schools from the Kansas City Missouri School District (KCMSD) to the Independence School District (ISD). I hope to learn of perceptions about the annexation that are held by current stakeholders who have an intimate knowledge of the annexation.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION Approximately 28-30 individuals will be asked to participate in the study, which will consist of focus groups, semi-structured individual interviews, and a blog site. You have been selected to participate based on your knowledge of events surrounding the annexation of schools from the KCMSD to the ISD. You will be placed in one of three focus groups along with up to seven other participants, or be selected as one of four individual interviews if you are a teacher, parent, current or former student, or administrator.

EXPLANATION OF PROCEDURES: Your participation will consist of either a semi-structured focus group with other current and former students, administrators, teachers or parents, or a semi-structured interview. Each will take approximately one hour or less and will be conducted over a period of a few weeks, at a mutually agreed time and location. The researcher will digitally record the interviews and focus groups for later transcription and analysis.

DISCOMFORT/RISKS: During data collection, you are encouraged to be open in your responses with the researcher. Comments will be confidential. The process and research results lead to a non-threatening study for participants. There are no anticipated risks to you, and your participation is entirely voluntary.

BENEFITS: Benefits for the participants will include a deeper understanding of what research shows are components of organizational and school culture. All participants may benefit from having an opportunity to be heard regarding their views on the annexation process. The findings of this study may lead to other potential solutions for urban academic under achievement, one solution could be the annexation of historically poor-performing schools into another school district. Most importantly, the study may add to the existing literature of potential solutions to improving organizational and school culture.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Any information obtained in this study in which you can be identified will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

REFUSAL/WITHDRAWAL: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with the Independence School District or Wichita State University. If you agree to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

CONTACT: If you have any questions about this research, you can contact Dr. Jean Patterson or Dr. Jo Bennett at: (316) 978-6140, jean.patterson@wichita.edu and jo.bennett@wichita.edu Educational Leadership Department, Wichita State University, Wichita 67260-0142. You may also contact Dale Herl at: (816) 914-2778, dale_herl@indep.k12.mo.us. If you have questions pertaining to your rights as a research subject, or about research-related injury, you can contact the Office of Research Administration at Wichita State University, Wichita, KS 67260-0007, and telephone (316) 978-3285.

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have voluntarily decided to participate. You may have a copy of this Consent Form.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

APPENDIX F: PARENT / GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Case Study of the Annexation of Schools into an Urban / Suburban School District
2010-2011 Consent Form (Parent/Legal Guardian)

PURPOSE: Your child is invited to participate in a study of changes of organizational and school culture that may have occurred with the annexation of schools from the Kansas City Missouri School District (KCMSD) to the Independence School District (ISD). I hope to learn of perceptions about the annexation that are held by current stakeholders who have an intimate knowledge of the annexation.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION: Approximately 28-30 individuals will be asked to participate in the study, which will consist of focus groups, semi-structured individual interviews, and a blog site. Your child has been selected to participate based on his or her knowledge of events surrounding the annexation of schools from the KCMSC to the ISD.

EXPLANATION OF PROCEDURES: Your child has been selected to participate in a semi-structured focus group interview with up to 7 other current and former Van Horn High School students. The focus group interview will take approximately one hour or less and will be conducted at the school at an agreeably mutual time. The researcher will digitally record the focus group for later transcription and analysis.

DISCOMFORT/RISKS: During data collection, your child will be encouraged to be open with his / her responses to the researcher. Comments will be confidential. The process and research results lead to a non-threatening study for participants. There are no risks anticipated to the participants, and your child’s participation will be voluntary

BENEFITS: Benefits for the participants will include a deeper understanding of what research shows are components of organizational and school culture. All participants may benefit from having an opportunity to be heard regarding their views on the annexation process. The findings of this study may lead to other potential solutions for urban academic under achievement, one solution could be the annexation of historically poor-performing schools into another school district. Most importantly, the study may add to the existing literature of potential solutions to improving organizational and school culture.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Any information obtained in this study in which your child can be identified will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

REFUSAL/WITHDRAWAL: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your child’s decision whether or not to participate will not affect your child’s future relations with the Independence School District or Wichita State University. If you agree to allow your child to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw him or her from the study at any time without penalty.

CONTACT: If you have any questions about this research, you can contact Dr. Jean Patterson or Dr. Jo Bennett at: 978-6140, jean.patterson@wichita.edu and jo.bennett@wichita.edu Educational Leadership Department, Wichita State University, Wichita 67260-0142. You may also contact Dale Herl at 816-914-2778, dale_herl@indep.k12.mo.us. If you have questions pertaining to your rights as a research subject, or about research-related injury, you can contact the Office of Research Administration at Wichita State University, Wichita, KS 67260-0007, and telephone (316) 978-3285.

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have voluntarily decided to participate. You may have a copy of this Consent Form.

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian

Date

Investigator Signature

Date

APPENDIX G: STUDENT ASSENT FORM

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT ASSENT FORM

I have been informed that my parent(s) have given permission for me to participate, if I want to, in a study concerning my perceptions of the organizational and school culture of schools who were annexed into the Independence School District. My participation in this project is voluntary and I have been told that I may stop my participation in this study at any time. If I choose not to participate, it will not affect my grades in any way.

Name _____ Date _____