

THE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS
WITH A BACKGROUND IN SCHOOL COUNSELING

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ABSTRACT

The school superintendency is an ever-evolving position. The skills needed to be an effective superintendent are varied and far-reaching. Since the inception of the superintendency, the position, most often, has been filled by former teachers. However, individuals from diverse backgrounds possessing a variety of training are being hired to lead school districts. At present, former school counselors are underrepresented in the superintendency despite having similar skill sets as those possessed by many effective superintendents. The purpose of this study was to explore the advantages and disadvantages of ascending to the superintendency with a background in school counseling. Findings demonstrated that the advantages of counseling experience far outweighed the disadvantages. Results showed that 100% of study participants believed the counselorship was an advantageous pathway to the superintendency, while only 17% deemed teaching experience as more beneficial than counseling experience. Three participants viewed the counselorship as a “logical” or “ideal” pathway to the superintendency. The non-superintendent participants in this study noted that their superintendent used counseling skills on a daily basis, and believed that the superintendent’s leadership style was greatly influenced by their counseling background. The superintendents who participated in this study were viewed as instructional leaders despite not having teaching experience or having served only briefly as a classroom teacher. The superintendents in this study admitted their areas in need of improvement, sought assistance from experts, and regularly made efforts to continue their education. Given these results and the findings that suggest that there many similarities in the skills utilized by effective school counselors and effective superintendents, school districts and their boards of education should consider former school counselors for vacant

superintendencies. In addition, superintendent preparation programs may wish to include more counseling and interpersonal skills in their curricula.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables.....	i
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Background and Overview of Prior Studies	1
Research Problem	11
Research Questions	11
Significance of the Study.....	12
Definition of Terms	13
Limitations and Delimitations of the Study.....	13
Summary.....	14
Chapter 2: Literature Review	15
Effective Superintendents.....	15
Collaboration and communication.	17
Ethics.	19
The evolving role of the superintendent.	20
The superintendent of the future.....	21
Pathways to the Superintendency: Traditional and Non-Traditional	23
A 21 st Century Conundrum: A Presumed Shortage of Superintendents	26
School Counselors as Leaders	32
School counseling skills which relate to the superintendency.	36
Group counseling and its implications on the superintendency.	37
Leadership Frames of Counselors and Superintendents: Bolman and Deal’s Perspective.....	39

Researchers' use of Bolman and Deals' Four Frames of Leadership.....	40
Leadership orientations (self) survey.	43
Summary and Implications.....	44
Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology	46
Research Design	46
Population and Participant Selection.....	48
Assumptions	50
Instrumentation.....	50
Pilot Study	53
Interview Preparation	53
Data Collection Procedures	55
Data Analysis.....	56
Researcher Bias	58
Validity	60
Reliability	62
Summary.....	63
Chapter 4: Data Analysis.....	65
Profile of Superintendent Participants.....	65
Superintendent Sally Palmer.	66
Diamond Point Central School District.....	66
Superintendent Jerome Forbin.....	67
Smithsville Central School District.....	67
Ascending to the Superintendency with a Background in School Counseling	69
Research Question 1: What are the perceived advantages and disadvantages of accessing the superintendency with a background as a school counselor?	69

Research Question 2: How has a background in school counseling molded the leadership style of the superintendents who participated in this study?.....	97
Research Question 3: What counseling skills do these superintendents utilize in their daily duties?	110
Research Question 4: To what degree is a lack of/limited traditional classroom teaching experience an impediment to effectiveness as a superintendent?	119
Research Question 5: In what ways have these non-traditional superintendents compensated for their lack of/limited experience in traditional classroom teaching experience?	131
Concluding interview question.....	138
Bolman and Deal’s Leadership Orientations Survey.	140
Chapter 5: Summary, Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations	142
Summary of Findings	143
Prevalent Themes	150
Conclusions	151
Recommendations	156
Recommendations for Future Study.....	159
References	162
Appendices	172

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: School District and Participant Pseudonyms	55
Table 2: Career Pathways of Superintendent Forbin and Superintendent Palmer	68
Table 3: Bolman and Deal's Leadership Orientations Survey Results	146

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background and Overview of Prior Studies

Literature indicates that most school superintendents begin their educational career as classroom teachers, spending, on average, between seven and ten years in that role prior to pursuing leadership positions (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, Ellerson, 2011; Mertz & McNeely, 1988; Young, 1999). Limited research has been conducted regarding former school counselors ascending to the superintendency (Benson, 2006; Bogotch, 1995; Young, 1999). In their 2010 decennial study of school superintendents, Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, and Ellerson (2011), found that only 1% of superintendents began their careers as school counselors. Kowalski et al. (2011) also noted that only 7% of school superintendents served as a school counselor at some point during their career.

From other studies, researchers have found a lack of candidates for the superintendency (Beaudin, Thompson, & Jacobson, 2002; Fusarelli, Cooper, & Carella, 2002; Glass, 2001; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Sharp, Malone, & Walter, 2002; Terranova, Rogers, Cattaro, Copel, Fale, Fiore, Goldring-Ford, Ike, Rice, & Zseller, 2009; Wolverton, 2004). Given this fact, some scholars believe that school districts and their boards of education must give non-traditional superintendents consideration for the position (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Hernandez, 2010; Lofton, 2010; Quinn, 2007; Usmani, 2010).

Non-traditional superintendent has many definitions. In this study, the term non-traditional superintendent is defined in three ways. One describes superintendents who, prior to the superintendency, did not have a career in the field of education. This includes former business, government, and military leaders altering their career to serve as a superintendent of schools (Mathews, 1999; Usdan & Cronin, 2003; Kowalski & Bjork, 2005; Quinn, 2007;

Duckworth, 2008; and Sanchez, 2008). A second definition of non-traditional superintendent is an individual who did not hold building-level administrative positions, specifically the principalship, prior to obtaining a superintendency (McDade, 1981, Mertz & McNeely, 1988; Burnham, 1989; Pino, 1997; and Young, 1999). The third definition of non-traditional superintendent is the district leader who has a background that is primarily comprised of school counseling rather than classroom teaching experience. This final definition has not been written about in detail and is the primary focus of this research project.

A wealth of previous research focuses on non-traditional superintendents with backgrounds in business, law, politics or the military (Duckworth, 2008; Hernandez, 2010; Lofton, 2010; Mathews, 1999; Quinn, 2007; Sanchez, 2008; Usdan & Cronin, 2003; Usmani 2010). As the roles and responsibilities of superintendents evolved during the twentieth century and continue to expand in the twenty-first century, the skills necessary for superintendents to effectively lead continues to grow. These skills include developing a vision, active listening, communication, individual and group counseling, community relations, problem solving, and decision making (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Hernandez, 2010; Lofton, 2010; Usmani, 2010; Wilmore, 2008). Many of these skills are included in the curricula of school counseling preparation programs (Hayes & Paisley, 2002). The skills of school counselors and the training they receive directly correlate to many of the abilities twenty-first century superintendents and researchers deem necessary to lead school districts (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Dollarhide, 2003; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Hayes & Paisley, 2002; Hoyle, Bjork, Collier & Glass, 2005; Konnert & Augenstein, 1995; Lofton, 2010; Stone & Clark, 2001; Wilmore, 2008). As such, despite the lack of classroom teaching experience, the transition from counseling to the superintendency seems plausible. The question remains, can these non-traditional

superintendents lead school districts as effectively as those who followed a traditional career path? This study looked at the leadership methodologies employed by former schools counselors who now serve as superintendents. This study attempted to discern the counseling skills employed by the superintendent participants and to determine the advantages and disadvantages of having school counseling as their experiential foundation.

In any superintendent search, a school board attempts to determine if the candidates' skills, vision, and leadership style align with the needs of the school district and, often times, a deeply entrenched mission (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). Logically, the appointment of a new superintendent occurs only when a candidate possesses the competencies, experiences, and knowledge base required to lead the school district forward. In nearly every circumstance, superintendents are appointed because they have distinctive characteristics sought by a board of education or offer a unique approach to leadership (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Wilmore, 2008). As a result of the nature of their training and their position, those with school counselor training and experience provide viewpoints and have acquired proficiencies in areas that many teachers have not, including active listening, interpersonal skills, data analysis, goal setting, problem solving, empathy and post-secondary planning (Mason & McMahon, 2009; Reynolds & Cheek, 2002).

A number of superintendents, who have no experience in the field of education, have proven to be successful school district leaders (Duckworth, 2008; Hernandez, 2010; Lofton, 2010; Sanchez, 2008; Usmani, 2010). After his gubernatorial career in Colorado ended, Roy Romer went on to become the superintendent of schools in Los Angeles (Quinn, 2007). John Sanford, a former military leader, served as Seattle's superintendent until his untimely death in 1998. He was succeeded in the position by financier Joseph Olchefske (Usdan & Cronin, 2003).

At the end of the twentieth century, San Diego Unified School District selected attorney Alan D. Bersin as its chief executive officer (Mathews, 1999). At present, numerous major cities including Boston, Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia have had individuals from a field other than education serve as superintendent of their public schools (Mathews, 1999; Quinn, 2007; Usdan & Cronin, 2003; Usmani, 2010). These individuals have shown that those who are willing to learn from others, lead with integrity, and strive for greatness can be effective educational leaders (Quinn, 2007). In large, urban school districts, non-traditional superintendents have been hired to lead change initiatives and provide a fresh look at policy, governance, and instruction (Sanchez, 2008; Usmani, 2010). By not being entrenched in some of the various preconceptions of teaching and learning, non-traditional superintendents can approach the superintendency with unique perspectives and strategies to increase student achievement (Duckworth, 2008). While non-traditional superintendents may never fully develop the conventional competencies of their traditional counterparts, they can develop an advanced understanding of pedagogy and, depending upon the size and structure of the school district, rely on the expertise of others within the district to advance instruction (Duckworth, 2008; Usdan & Cronin, 2003; Sanchez, 2008).

The majority of school superintendents are former secondary level classroom teachers (Kowalski et al., 2011; Mertz & McNeely, 1988; Young, 1999). The literature also notes that far fewer school counselors have become superintendents than their teacher colleagues (Benson, 2006; Burnham, 1989; Kowalski et al., 2011; Winter, Rinehart, Keedy, & Bjork, 2007). This is perplexing, given that much of the training school counselors receive and a number of the competencies they develop are directly related to the superintendency. Empathy, humanism, active listening, individual and group therapy, problem solving, decision making, data analysis,

open communication, career planning, organization, coping assistance, community relations, short-term and long-range planning, are all skills that many school counselors possess and are also possessed by numerous effective superintendents (Brunner, 2002, Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Chan et al., 2001; Dollarhide, 2003; Hoyle et al., 2005b; Janson, Stone, & Clark, 2009; Lofton, 2010; Usmani, 2010). These abilities could nullify the lack of traditional classroom teaching experience school counselors may have, and help former counselors become effective superintendents.

While the value of instructional leadership cannot be denied, those educators with a background in school counseling possess unique skills, foreign to some traditional classroom teachers (Dimmitt, Carey, & Hatch, 2007). In an era in which superintendents are tasked with improving graduation rates and leading programs to adequately prepare students for their post-secondary lives, those with a school counseling background are familiar with strategies to boost academic achievement and provide students with a solid foundation with which to succeed in life after their secondary education is completed (Reynolds & Cheek, 2002; Stone & Clark, 2001). In their position, school counselors have the opportunity to work with numerous stakeholders, developing working relationships with, among others, students, parents, faculty, staff, administration, community members, public officials, and collegiate and military representatives (Stone & Clark, 2001). Those with a background in teaching may not have the varied experiences in multiple educational realms as do many school counselors (Dollarhide, 2003; Dollarhide, Gibson, & Saginak, 2008; Hayes & Paisley, 2002; Janson et al., 2009). These skills possessed by school counselors may be attractive to school boards who desire superintendents to be innovators and strong leaders, rather than simply well versed in pedagogy (Hoyle et al., 2005a; Reeves, 2002).

Many contemporary superintendents, be they traditionally trained as teachers and principals or those with non-traditional experiences, are emulating the leadership models employed by chief executive officers in the business and military sectors (Collins, 2001, Reeves, 2002; Scharmer, 2009; Usdan & Cronin, 2003). Collins' (2001) transformational book *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap... and Others Don't*, and Scharmer's (2009) *Theory U: Leading From the Future as it Emerges* are two books which review the leadership methodologies of business executives, yet the tactics described in these books are transferrable to education and educational leaders. Organizational skills, distributed leadership, time management, open communication, and the leadership of change efforts are lessons Collins (2001), Scharmer (2009) and several other authors discussed related to the corporate world, but are being utilized by leaders of public education (Brunner, 2002; Lofton, 2010; Mathews, 1999; Quinn, 2007; Usdan & Cronin, 2003; Usmani, 2010).

While many superintendents with non-traditional backgrounds in law, military, and business have proven to be effective (Duckworth, 2008; Hernandez, 2010; Lofton, 2010; Quinn, 2007, Sanchez, 2008; Usmani, 2010), the effectiveness of former school counselors serving as superintendents has yet to be fully examined. To study if those with a background in school counseling can be effective superintendents, the researcher first reviewed the competencies possessed by traditional superintendents whom have been deemed effective. Due to their training, experiences and, possibly, simply their personality, one can deduce that superintendents who are former school counselors may have a different leadership style than those whom are former teachers.

Carter and Cunningham exclaimed, "Today's superintendents deal with forces and incidents that are far more complex and threatening than those of their predecessors" (1997, p.

3). Carter and Cunningham (1997) continued by stating that district leaders are expected to lead rapid reform initiatives and, in some school districts, face pressures and obstacles that may be overwhelming and even insurmountable. Kowalski et al. (2011) and Usmani (2010) noted that the superintendency has always required numerous skills and abilities, and this has never been more evident than at present in the twenty-first century. To be effective, district leaders must fully understand the issues that confront their school districts and education on a global scale (Usmani, 2010).

The most successful superintendents tend to be experts in communication, and are able to develop a vision that addresses the needs of students as well as the school community (Hoyle et al., 2005b). These leaders are also skilled in educational law and the political landscape. In addition, they are financially aware, and willing to take calculated risks for the betterment of their district (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000). The most effective superintendents are able to empower staff members to provide students with the best learning opportunities possible (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000). Integrity and perseverance are virtues that help superintendents overcome adversity (Houston & Eadie, 2002; Hoyle et al., 2005b; Kowalski, 1999). While these unique skills are difficult to learn, none of them are necessarily specific to those superintendents whom have a background in teaching (Reynolds & Cheek, 2002; Steen, Bauman, & Smith, 2007). As such, even in a time when the superintendency relies on leadership abilities more than management skills, it is necessary to review how those with a school counseling background function in the superintendency (Hoyle et al., 2005a; Hayes & Paisley, 2002; Stone & Clark, 2001; Wilmore, 2008).

In the era of a global economy, superintendents are now charged with strategic planning, goal setting, and motivating a multitude of constituents to achieve to the best of their ability

(Konnert & Augenstein, 1995). In their ever-growing roles and responsibilities, school superintendents are expected to be innovators, supporting and using modern technologies to enhance student learning (Fusarelli et al., 2002; Sanchez, 2008). This task becomes increasingly challenging if superintendents themselves are not technologically savvy and knowledgeable of contemporary products and future possibilities (Sanchez, 2008). At the same time, collaboration is a must (Duckworth, 2008; Usdan & Cronin, 2003). Superintendents cannot be experts in every educational subset. It is imperative for school district leaders to seek the input and advice of employees and various stakeholders in an effort to make informed, logical decisions that will often impact the entire school community for numerous years. Superintendents must be willing to learn from others, including their faculty and staff, peers from other school districts, and chief executive officers from other factions of society (Houston & Eadie, 2002; Duckworth, 2008; Wilmore, 2008).

From the literature, it can be deduced that practicing superintendents and those who aspire to the position with a counseling background possess distinctive skills, particularly in interpersonal relations (Janson, 2009; Janson et al., 2009; Konnert & Augenstein, 1995; Mason & McMahon, 2009; Mathews, 1999). School counselors who aspire to the superintendency must be willing to seek training and gain knowledge in areas of instruction, classroom management, teacher evaluation, and general pedagogy. Non-traditional superintendents can obtain this training by reading scholarly materials, taking classes, attending seminars, workshops, and conferences, and, possibly most productively, by engaging in dialogue with faculty and superintendent peers (Duckworth, 2008; Quinn, 2007; Sanchez, 2008; Usmani, 2010). There are virtually limitless opportunities to strengthen one's leadership skills (Kowalski & Bjork, 2005; Usmani, 2010). The most effective educators, including superintendents, are life-long learners,

who continue to broaden their knowledge base in an effort to translate their efforts into student achievement (Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999; Wilmore, 2008). It is imperative for superintendents to develop defined goals for both themselves and the school district they lead. The typical result is the continued improvement of the superintendent as an educator, as well as the enhancement of the district they lead (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Sullivan & Shulman, 2005).

Aspirant superintendents can engage in numerous types of formal education and training, as well as informal preparation (Lofton, 2010; Quinn, 2007; Sanchez, 2008). The possibility of a mentorship for those aspiring to the superintendency should be explored by boards of education and educational leadership preparation programs. During the mentoring experience, prospective superintendents can seek advice from practicing superintendents who have experienced the challenges and nuances of the position (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006). Even more informally, superintendent candidates can casually, yet carefully, observe various superintendents, with whom they may interact, determining their strengths and areas in need of improvement (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006; Hoyle et al., 2005a). Professionals of any sort often learn a great deal from examining others in action (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006). It is important to develop an understanding of the intricacies of superintendent/school board relationships, interactions with unions and, as a whole, the politics involved in the superintendency (Houston & Eadie, 2002; Kowalski, 1999). Aspirant superintendents can and should emulate the most effective and well respected school district leaders in the field (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Usmani, 2010).

Irrespective of one's background, effective superintendents are able to learn from their mistakes, constantly evolve, and never rest on past successes (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

While superintendents will always have areas in need of improvement, it is essential that these weaknesses do not impede personal growth and school district development (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995). Superintendents must be self-reflective and transform their leadership approach based on the input, feedback, and suggestions of others (Duckworth, 2008; Usmani, 2010). Ultimately, superintendents must be aware of and respectful to the unique needs of all stakeholders in the district they lead (Mathews, 1999; Monahan, 1973). It is vital for educational leaders to develop working relationships with all constituents (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Houston & Eadie, 2002; Kowalski, 1999). This is not to say that superintendents are able to please everyone at all times (Hoyle et al., 2005a). That is an unrealistic goal. However, relationships should be based on mutual respect and the over-arching goal of providing students with as many opportunities for life-long success as possible (Brunner, 2002; Hoyle et al., 2005a).

Regardless of their training and background, school superintendents face numerous challenges in the twenty-first century, including financial struggles, increased accountability for student achievement, amplified attention from local media, and constituents lacking confidence in district operations (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Lofton, 2010; Sanchez, 2008; Usmani, 2010). While the number of non-traditional superintendents has increased over the years, few superintendents possess a background in school counseling (Mertz & McNeely, 1988; Terranova et al., 2009; Young, 1999). The literature indicates a distinct shortage of qualified candidates for the superintendency throughout the United States (Beaudin et al., 2002; Glass, 2001; Terranova, 2009; Wolverton, 2004). Given this shortage of candidates and the similarities in skills of effective school counselors and school superintendents (Dollarhide 2003; Hoyle et al., 2005b; Reeves, 2002; Reynolds & Cheek, 2002; Stone & Clark, 2001; Wilmore 2008), it is possible that school counselors can fill this void and become effective school district leaders.

Research Problem

The researcher explored if and how superintendents with a background in school counseling incorporate counseling skills into their leadership style. The researcher also explored the advantages and disadvantages of coming to the superintendency from a school counseling background. The researcher sought and analyzed the perceptions of study participants (school board members, principals, business officials, and school counselors) who work in close conjunction with their superintendent. The researcher explored the leadership style of the superintendents with a background in school counseling who participated in this study. To aid in meeting this objective, the researcher utilized Bolman and Deal's (1988) Leadership Orientations survey. This survey tool was completed by the two superintendent participants. The researcher explored from which frame the superintendents with a background in school counseling are most comfortable leading.

Research Questions

The following research questions served as the basis for the investigator's inquiries and the collection of data:

1. What are the perceived advantages and disadvantages of accessing the superintendency with a background as a school counselor?
2. How has a background in school counseling molded the leadership style of the superintendents who participated in this study?
3. What counseling skills do these superintendents utilize in their daily duties?
4. To what degree is a lack of/limited traditional classroom teaching experience an impediment to effectiveness as a superintendent?

5. In what ways have these non-traditional superintendents compensated for their lack of/limited traditional classroom teaching experience?

Significance of the Study

Limited research has been conducted regarding superintendents who possess a background in school counseling as opposed to traditional classroom teaching (Benson, 2006; Bogotch, 1995, Kowalski et al., 2011). The researcher inquired if the training and experiences of school counselors translates to effective superintendencies. The researcher attempted to discover the advantages and disadvantages of ascending to the superintendency from the school counseling career path. The researcher also attempted to ascertain how superintendents with a background in school counseling utilize counseling skills in their daily duties, as well as, how their background influenced their leadership style. In addition, this research is meaningful as the literature suggests that the number of aspirant superintendents with a teaching background has decreased in recent years. Thus it is likely that the position will increasingly be filled by those with non-traditional backgrounds and training (Beaudin et al., 2002; Brunner, 2002; Chan, Pool, & Strickland, 2001; Fusarelli et al., 2002; Hernandez, 2010; Hoyle, English & Steffy, 2005; Kowalski & Bjork, 2005; Lofton, 2010; Sharp et al., 2002; Usmani, 2010).

Learning how superintendents with a background in school counseling lead and use their counseling skills will allow aspirant superintendents with similar training and career paths to determine the advantages and disadvantages of ascending to the superintendency from the counselorship. This research should provide superintendents of any background and aspirants to the position with knowledge regarding how to employ counseling strategies and skills in their leadership style. The superintendency is ever-evolving (Brunner, 2002; Carter & Cunningham,

1997; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000); thus the competencies required to be most effective, including skills related to school counseling, should be enumerated and discussed in detail.

Definition of Terms

School leaders: Individuals serving in the role of school administration, most typically assistant principals and principals.

District leaders: Individuals serving in the role of school district administration, most typically assistant superintendents and superintendents.

Leadership style: The manner and approach a leader uses to provide direction, implement plans, and motivate stakeholders.

Non-Traditional Superintendent: Superintendents who have a background, which is primarily comprised of school counseling experience rather than classroom teaching experience.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

This study was limited to the perspectives, opinions, and perceptions of the non-traditional superintendents, principals, business officials, school counselors, and board of education members who participated in this study. It must be considered that the participants' responses to interview questions may not be entirely candid, so as not to upset or offend the superintendents who participated in this study. Also, responses may have been limited or altered due to a lack of familiarity with the researcher. In addition, the inability of the researcher to determine the extent to which the superintendents' counseling experience molded their leadership approach, as compared to their previously held administrative positions, specifically the principalship, was one limitation in the data analysis.

The study was delimited in that it focused only on non-traditional superintendents with a background in school counseling. The sample size was small, and thus the findings cannot be

generalized to all superintendents who are former school counselors. In addition, the superintendents studied led rural districts and may have divergent viewpoints and experiences than those serving in suburban districts or urban settings with large student populations and a multitude of employees. Additionally, the data were primarily gathered from face-to-face and telephone interviews. The conclusions in this study were drawn from this data, not from witnessing the superintendent at work within their respective districts, observations of faculty or a review of student achievement data.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher provided an overview of previous studies related to the school superintendency and indicated several of the career paths of superintendents. The researcher noted that limited research has been conducted regarding superintendents with a background in school counseling. In addition, the researcher stated the research problem addressed by this study and introduced the research questions which framed the study. The significance of the study was stated, a definition of terms was provided, and limitations and delimitations of the study were noted.

In Chapter Two, the researcher reviews literature that pertains to effective superintendents, non-traditional leaders, school counselors serving as leaders, and the counseling skills that relate to the superintendency. As is noted in Chapter Two, the literature indicates that the school superintendency has moved well beyond managing and is far broader than instructional leadership.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents research regarding the connections between the position of school counselor and superintendent. However, research specific to school counselors becoming superintendents is limited. In an effort to understand if school counselors can become effective superintendents, a wealth of books, dissertations, journal articles, studies, and scholarly papers were reviewed. The literature focused on the themes of the evolving role of the school superintendent, pathways to the superintendency, as well as the skills effective superintendents and successful school counselors possess. Strong skills in communication, problem solving, motivation, and decision making, as well as varied career experiences were consistent topics throughout the literature regarding effective superintendents (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Hoyle et al., 2005a; Lofton, 2010; Usmani, 2010; Wilmore, 2008). The literature suggests the leadership skills of effective superintendents are strikingly similar to the skills utilized by school counselors (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Dollarhide, 2003; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Hayes & Paisley, 2002; Hoyle et al., 2005b; Konnert & Augenstein, 1995; Stone & Clark, 2001; Wilmore, 2008).

This chapter contains six distinct sections: (a) Effective Superintendents; (b) Pathways to the Superintendency: Traditional and Non-Traditional; (c) A 21st Century Conundrum: A Presumed Shortage of Superintendents; (d) School Counselors as Leaders; (e) Leadership Frames of Counselors and Superintendents: Bolman and Deal's Perspective; (f) Summary and Implications.

Effective Superintendents

For the past 150 years, the efforts of effective superintendents have improved the lives of children and school community stakeholders (Burnham, 1989; Carter & Cunningham, 1997;

Lofton, 2010; Sanchez, 2008; Usmani, 2010). Literature spanning the last forty years indicates that superintendents who establish clear and achievable goals, listen to constituents, excel at communicating, motivate stakeholders, and utilize distributed leadership strategies are the most effective leaders (Beaudin et al., 2002; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Duckworth, 2008; Hernandez, 2010; Monahan, 1973; Murphy, 1994; Reeves, 2002; Sanchez, 2008; Usmani, 2010).

Despite the fact that the vast majority of school superintendents in the United States began their career as classroom teachers (Benson, 2006; Burnham, 1989; Kowalski et al., 2011; McDade, 1981; Mertz & McNeely, 1988; Pino, 1997; Young, 1999), the skills employed by effective superintendents seem to be analogous to many of those employed by school counselors (Dahir, Burnham, & Stone, 2009; Dimmitt et al., 2007; Dollarhide, 2003). Although limited research exists regarding former school counselors who have become superintendents, one can see distinct commonalities in the two positions, including similar skills needed to be effective in both positions, such as interpersonal skills, communication, problem solving, decision making, motivation, and community relations (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Dollarhide, 2003; Hoyle et al., 2005b; Janson et al., 2009; Lofton, 2010; Stone & Clark, 2001).

Four years prior to the introduction of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, Carter and Cunningham (1997) wrote about the need for superintendents to collaborate with stakeholders to set goals that can be measured and serve to increase faculty and administrator accountability. A school district is only as effective and successful as the school community within which it operates (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Houston & Eadie, 2002; Wilmore, 2008). As a result, superintendents must involve parents, residents, business owners, and government officials, among others, in the effort to provide progressive and meaningful learning opportunities for all students (Usmani, 2010; Wilmore, 2008).

Collaboration and communication.

District leadership cannot be an individualistic pursuit, as superintendents should seek the input of colleagues, board members, and residents in hopes of resolving issues regarding the community's perceptions and viewpoints of the district and its leader (Hoyle et al., 2005a). The school community must be able to trust the direction in which the superintendent is leading the district (Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999; Houston & Eadie, 2002; Waters & Marzano, 2006).

In the superintendency, there is an ever-expanding need for distributed leadership, establishing goals in a collaborative manner (Duckworth, 2008; Usmani, 2008; Waters & Marzano, 2006). Members of superintendents' cabinets are expected to hold specialized positions, including leaders of areas such as curriculum and instruction, and professional development (Duckworth, 2008; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Hoyle et al., 2005a; Usdan & Cronin, 2003; Usmani, 2010). A team approach to leadership can be effective in districts large and small (Sanchez, 2008; Usmani, 2010). "People skills" and "sophisticated collaborative leadership" are requirements for all superintendents, as school district leaders are ultimately responsible for the success of youths, academically and otherwise (Usdan & Cronin, 2003, p. 19).

Sanchez (2008) discovered that superintendents employed a distributed leadership approach in her study of superintendents coming to the position from non-educational backgrounds. These superintendents matched their leadership style with district needs, political power, "change agency", and accountability (Sanchez, 2008, p. 161). Superintendents who practice distributed leadership provide constituents with autonomy, but are knowledgeable of all district operations, and are able to lend insight and take responsibility for all policies and procedures (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Janson et al., 2009; Sanchez, 2008).

While significant to their success, superintendents' astuteness, work ethic, and charisma cannot always overcome the immense job responsibilities and internal pressures to implement change (Bogotch, 1995; Scharmer, 2009). Superintendents must be able to work well with other constituents to meet objectives and overcome the challenges associated with change leadership. Distributed leadership allows for multiple perspectives to be considered and varied viewpoints to be taken into account (Janson et al., 2009). In addition, it allows for roles and responsibilities to be specialized, which permits leaders to develop an expertise in specialized areas, rather than a simple proficiency in numerous realms (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Janson et al., 2009; Sanchez, 2008; Usmani, 2010).

Typically, the communication abilities of superintendents are accurate predictors of their success (Burnham, 1989; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Durocher, 1995; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Hoyle et al., 2005b; Quinn, 2007). The most effective superintendents excel at communicating, actively listen to constituents' perspectives, and take their viewpoints into consideration when establishing a district's mission, vision, and goals (Brunner, 2002; Wilmore, 2008). Hoyle, English, and Steffy (2005) noted the importance for superintendents to possess proficiency with interpersonal relations. These skills can be fostered and enhanced through repetition and critique from colleagues (Hoyle et al., 2005b). It is imperative for superintendents to be able to articulately make points, discuss action plans, and support stakeholders (Hoyle et al., 2005b).

Superintendents must be "open to multiple perspectives that could contribute to their understanding of current and future pluralistic contexts" (Brunner, 2002 p. 422). According to Brunner (2002, p. 425), a "new conceptualization of the superintendency" includes employing leadership strategies that are anchored in respectful, caring relationships with stakeholders. In

addition, the twenty-first century superintendent should focus on social justice and equity to ensure that all stakeholders, particularly students, have equal opportunities for success (Hoyle et al., 2005b; Wilmore, 2008). With these methodologies in place, the contemporary superintendent has evolved into a leader who works well with others and communicates effectively to meet the ever-changing needs of pupils and communities (Duckworth, 2008; Usmani, 2010). The seemingly simplistic primary objective of the most effective superintendents is to improve the academic, social, and extracurricular achievement of children (Bogotch, 1995; Brunner, 2002). Superintendents' actions and decisions should reflect this goal, which can be more easily met through open communication and collaboration with numerous constituents throughout a school community (Brunner, 2002; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Usmani, 2010).

Ethics.

As a superintendent, ethical behavior should be paramount to personal accomplishments and even the success of the school district (Hoyle 2005a; Konnert & Augenstein, 1995). Staff and students cannot be expected to display moral conduct when their leaders are engaged in dishonest, unethical behavior themselves (Hoyle et al., 2005a). Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, and Glass (2005) cited findings that suggested some school superintendents viewed ethical operations as insignificant to their school districts, and led in ways that placed the utmost importance on either financial stability or student achievement at any cost. Using corrupt management tactics and looking past the ultimate goal of helping to ensure the well-being of all children may lead to the termination of deceitful superintendents (Collins, 2001; Hoyle et al., 2005a; Wilmore, 2008).

If superintendents place their personal welfare as a greater priority than the success of the district's students, the objective of appropriately preparing students to live as democratic citizens

is jeopardized (Reeves, 2002). Hoyle et al. (2005a) noted that ethical superintendents are able to lead with morality despite pressures from some stakeholders to lie, cheat, and steal. Self-reflection can be a helpful tool for the superintendent to determine their own success, or lack thereof, when striving to lead ethically (Beaudin et al., 2002; Hoyle et al., 2005a).

As an individual who is constantly under a microscope, it is imperative for superintendents to model professionalism, in and out of the office (Usmani, 2010). When superintendents make a mistake, however grand or minute, they must admit their wrongdoing, provide an explanation, and request forgiveness (Hoyle et al., 2005a). If at all, such an error should only occur once, with the superintendent and district then able to move forward, better for having endured the tribulation (Hoyle et al., 2005a).

The evolving role of the superintendent.

In the 1990s, school reform efforts began in earnest throughout the United States. This included restructuring the role and responsibilities of the superintendent to meet students' increasingly varied needs (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Hoyle et al., 2005b; Peterson & Klotz, 1999; Wilmore, 2008). During the last few decades of twentieth century and into the first two decades of the twenty-first century, the school superintendent has evolved from a hierarchical boss and manager, to an instructional leader, problem solver, master communicator, and motivator (Benson, 2006; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Hoyle et al., 2005b; Kowalski et al., 2011; Usmani, 2010). While a familiarity with public education is beneficial, superintendents regularly employ leadership skills that relate as much to the private sector, specifically the business world, as they do to the field of education (Duckworth, 2008; Quinn, 2007; Sanchez, 2008; Usmani, 2010). Among those skills are motivational leadership, team-building, politicking, and long-range planning (Collins, 2001; Quinn, 2007; Reeves, 2002).

The literature further indicates that many of the skills school counselors are trained to use – active listening, empathy, collaboration, communication, goal setting, coaching, and individual and group counseling – are also expected from twenty-first century superintendents (Dollarhide, 2003; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Hernandez, 2010; Hoyle et al., 2005a; Johnson, Rochkind, & Ott, 2010; Lofton, 2010). The literature suggests that, with the evolution of the responsibilities and expectations of the school superintendent, school counselors could become effective superintendents.

Hodgkinson and Montenegro (1999) and Murphy (1994) noted the need for more clearly defined roles and articulated responsibilities of school superintendents. Murphy (1994) gathered data on the changing role of the superintendent by surveying district leaders in Kentucky. Many superintendents indicated that, as part of the evolution of their role, they were involved in, “developing community” and “coaching from the sidelines” (Murphy, 1994, n/p). Murphy (1994) found that superintendents’ restructured responsibilities included increasing opportunities for parental involvement and input in schools, and lobbying to regain local control over curricula, pedagogies, and methodologies. Despite the roles of superintendents having changed over the years, it remains important for superintendents to possess knowledge of teaching and learning (Duckworth, 2008; Murphy, 1994; Usmani, 2010). Student achievement occurs on a much grander scale when district leaders are knowledgeable about pedagogies and support faculty with ambitious, yet realistic goals (Duckworth, 2008; Murphy, 1994; Sullivan & Shulman, 2005; Usmani, 2010).

The superintendent of the future.

Paul D. Houston, the former Executive Director of the American Association of School Administrators, in the foreword to Carter and Cunningham’s *The American School*

Superintendent (1997, p. xi), asserted that, “Superintendents search for the best possible futures for our children.” Houston continued, “But while the American school superintendency is one of the toughest jobs in America, it is also one of the most rewarding (Carter & Cunningham, 1997, p. xi). Carter and Cunningham (1997) assessed education on a global scale, and declared the need for superintendents to determine organizational shortcomings and lead change to reform schools and districts that are not evolving at the same rate as society.

Sharp, Malone, and Walter (2002) assessed the current state of the superintendency, including job satisfaction and the pressures associated with the position. The data collected by Sharp et al. (2002) indicated that most superintendents enjoyed their job, with 86% rating their job satisfaction as either “high” or “very high” (p. 14). Kowalski et al. (2011) found that 69% of their study participants were “very satisfied” with their career choice. Related to the findings of Sharp et al. (2002) and Kowalski et al. (2011) regarding positive job satisfaction statistics, Chan, Pool, and Strickland (2001) discovered that more than three-quarters of the superintendents who participated in their study responded that they “only occasionally, rarely or never experience stress” (2001, p. 7). When Sharp et al. (2002) inquired if the current superintendents would, in retrospect, still become a superintendent over 93% stated they would choose the position again. In their study of superintendents, Kowalski et al. found that, “The vast majority are pleased with their career choice as evidenced by the fact that a high percentage would again seek to occupy the same position if given a chance to relive their careers” (2011, p. 44).

Peterson and Klotz (1999) surveyed sixty-six superintendents and their respective board of education presidents, and found the two groups had similar perspectives on the skills and qualities needed for superintendents to effectively lead school districts. The school board presidents rated curriculum development as significant in their evaluation of superintendents’

effectiveness; 7.5% higher than deemed by the superintendents themselves (Peterson & Klotz, 1999). Board presidents indicated that unsatisfactory curriculum development is the most common motive for superintendent dismissal (Peterson & Klotz, 1999). Many school boards expect superintendents to lead improvement initiatives (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995; Kowalski, 1999; Peterson & Klotz, 1999). Those with a school counseling background have experience with such initiatives, as counselors regularly work to develop new courses (Dollarhide, 2003; Janson et al., 2009). Conversely, counselors may have limited experience in writing or reorganizing curriculum (Dimmitt et al., 2007). The effectiveness of superintendents with a background in school counseling may depend, in part, on their ability to engage in curriculum development and their knowledge of instructional matters.

Pathways to the Superintendency: Traditional and Non-Traditional

A number of researchers found that the vast majority of the superintendents they studied possessed a background as a classroom teacher (Chan et al., 2001; Farmer, 2007; Grubb, Leech, Gibbs, & Green, 2002; Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999; Kowalski et al., 2011; Winter et al., 2007). In addition, the literature indicated that most school superintendents served as principals at some point during their career (Farmer, 2007; Kowalski et al., 2011; Mertz & McNeely, 1998; Terranova et al., 2009; Winter et al., 2007). The data presented by Chan et al. (2001), Grubb, Leech, Gibbs, and Green (2002), Hodgkinson and Montenegro (1999) and Kowalski et al. (2011) regarding the various routes to the superintendency indicated that most superintendents followed one of two primary pathways to the superintendency: “teacher>principal>superintendent” or “teacher>principal>central office administrator>superintendent” (Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999, p. 12). Kowalski et al. (2011) and Terranova, Rogers, Cattaro, Copel, Fale, Fiore, Goldring-Ford, Ike, Rice, and Zsellar (2009) found that the majority of superintendents were not

internal candidates, those individuals who were already district employees prior to assuming the superintendency.

Chan et al. (2001), Farmer (2007), Grubb et al. (2002), Hodgkinson and Montenegro (1999), and Mertz and McNeely (1988) did not indicate if “teacher” simply referred to traditional classroom teachers or if those serving as school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, and other pupil personnel services positions were included in that classification. In Benson’s (2006) case studies of five female superintendents in rural Missouri school districts, one of the women studied served as a counselor prior to becoming a superintendent. However, that individual had numerous years of classroom teaching experience prior to her school counseling position. Benson’s (2006) dissertation, Bogotch’s (1995) journal article, and the American Association of School Administrators’ decennial study of superintendents conducted by Kowalski et al. (2011), were the only pieces of literature this researcher was able to access that directly noted former school counselors ascending to the superintendency.

The literature indicated that the secondary school principalship is the most common administrative pathway to the superintendency (Beaudin et al., 2002; Benson, 2006; Burnham, 1989; Chan et al., 2001; Farmer, 2007; Grubb et al., 2002; Kowalski et al., 2011; Mertz & McNeely, 1988; Terranova et al., 2009; Young, 1999). Research showed that superintendents in New York State are, “three times more likely to enter the superintendency from a high school principalship than an elementary principalship” (Terranova et al., 2009). On average, superintendents teach for seven to ten years, then serve as principals for approximately the next ten to twelve years of their career, and choose to conclude their career in the superintendency (Beaudin et al., 2002, Burnham, 1989, Glass et al., 2000; Grubb et al., 2002, Kowalski et al., 2011; Sharp et al., 2002; Winter et al., 2007). Benson (2006), Farmer (2007), Glass and

Franceschini (2007) Grubb et al. (2002), Kowalski et al. (2011), Mertz and McNeely (1988), and Terranova et al. (2009) each found that superintendents tended to be white males. On average, superintendents are approximately fifty-two years of age, served as middle school or high school principals, and earned a bachelor's degree in secondary education (Benson, 2006; Farmer, 2007; Glass et al., 2000; Kowalski et al., 2011; Terranova et al., 2009). Kowalski et al. (2011) and Terranova et al. (2009) did note the number of female superintendents has grown greatly in the last twenty years. Specifically, only 8% of New York State's superintendents were female in 1991, compared to females accounting for 30% of New York's superintendents in 2009 (Terranova et al., 2009).

There has long been debate regarding which positions most effectively prepare superintendents for the chief executive officer position (McDade, 1981; Mertz & McNeely, 1988; Pino, 1997; Usmani, 2010; Young, 1999). Burnham (1989, p. 4) conducted a quantitative study of 93 United States superintendents whom were deemed "effective" using the criterion of the National Association of School Boards. From this study, Burnham (1989) concluded that a higher percentage of effective superintendents attained the position via a non-traditional career path than a traditional path. Burnham (1989) defined a non-traditional path as one that did not include a principalship, but instead featured a stint in central office administration. In his study of California's superintendents, Young (1999) also found central office positions, specifically, assistant superintendencies, were predictive of longer tenures in the superintendency, increased proactive leadership, and greater board of education support.

Burnham's (1989), Glass and Franceschini's (2007), Pino's (1997), and Young's (1999) findings suggest that central office positions are especially beneficial to the preparation of the superintendent. The district-wide duties of central office administrators, often times, prepare

leaders for the superintendency in a more universal manner than the principalship and other building-level administrative positions (Burnham, 1989; Young, 1999). The responsibilities of assistant superintendents, including specialists in the areas of finance, curriculum development, instructional leadership, and teacher evaluation, train educational leaders for the varied facets of the superintendency (Benson, 2006; Burnham, 1989; Young, 1999).

There are numerous pathways to the superintendency and none has definitively proven more effective than another (Kowalski et al., 2011; McDade, 1981; Mertz & McNeely, 1988; Pino, 1997; Young, 1999). In part, this study attempts to address the lack of literature regarding the school counselorship as a pathway to the superintendency.

A 21st Century Conundrum: A Presumed Shortage of Superintendents

The school superintendency is a position that few individuals are willing to pursue (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Hoyle, 2005b; Wilmore 2008). A contemporary issue in the field of educational leadership is that fewer candidates are applying for superintendencies, despite more individuals being certified for the position than ever before (Beaudin et al., 2002; Glass, 2001; Terranova et al., 2009; Wolverton, 2004). Beaudin, Thompson, and Jacobson (2002) and Kowalski et al. (2011) noted that the job responsibilities of educational leaders increased dramatically over the latter half of the twentieth century, continuing into the beginning of the twenty-first century. Sharp et al. (2002) stated, “superintendents of public school districts hold one of the toughest jobs in the nation” (p. 3). Challenging work conditions and perceptions such as the one noted by Sharp et al. (2002) may help to explain the contemporary lack of interest in the superintendency.

In 2002, Beaudin et al. asserted:

The effective public school administrator is expected to be a visionary, communicator, facility manager, team-builder, disciplinarian, supervisor, problem-solver, legal expert, fiscal administrator, politician, fund-raiser, in addition to being a school or district instructional leader, -- and is held accountable for the effective execution of each distinct aspect of the job. (p. 7)

This exhaustive, but not necessarily comprehensive list of roles, duties, and responsibilities can certainly be viewed as daunting by any individual considering a career move to the superintendency.

Beaudin et al. (2002) noted that, due to the retirement of educational leaders from the post-World War II baby boom generation, approximately 35,000 new principals will be needed in the first quarter of the twenty-first century. In addition, Beaudin et al. (2002) estimated that 8,000 of the 14,000 public school districts in the United States would conduct superintendent searches during the first decade of the twenty-first century. As such, those with the desire to lead and who possess the skills needed to be effective or the willingness to learn these skills, should view this data as encouraging, as superintendencies will be available during the second decade of the twenty-first century (Beaudin et al., 2002; Glass, 2001; Wolverson, 2004).

Leaders must be recruited and developed for the rigors of the superintendency (Beaudin et al., 2002; Chan et al., 2001; Fusarelli et al., 2002; Hoyle et al., 2005b; Quinn, 2007; Sharp et al., 2002; Usmani, 2010). Administrators who deem an educator to have leadership potential should discuss this with the candidate and begin the grooming process (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006). This may include school counselors as prospective superintendents.

To help determine why educators pursued leadership certification and positions, Beaudin et al. (2002) administered a survey to 731 of Connecticut's current administrators and 527 of its

teachers whom had received administrative certification at the end of the twentieth century and into the first year of the twenty-first century. When asked what attracted them to positions of leadership or to pursue certification, both groups listed “Commensurate Salary/Benefits” as the primary lure to the position (Beaudin et al., 2002, p. 25). Also cited as an attraction were a “New Challenge” and “Professional Growth” (Beaudin et al., 2002, p. 25).

Snapshot 2009 is a report from The New York State Council of School Superintendents (NYSCOSS) triennial study of the school superintendency. The research conducted for *Snapshot 2009* found that “On-the-job Experience” gave new superintendents the motivation to apply for their first superintendency (Terranova et al., 2009, p. 26). “Mentoring from Fellow Professionals”, “Academic Preparation”, “Encouragement from Colleagues”, and “Encouragement from Family” were also listed as key motivating factors for those who applied for their first superintendency (Terranova et al., 2009, p. 26). The superintendents who participated in the most recent NYSCOSS study noted that the greatest “incentives” for applying to their first superintendency were “a desire to take on greater challenges” and “having greater influence on the lives of children” (Terranova et al., 2009, p. 27).

When naming deterrents to the position, the two parties in the Beaudin et al. (2002) study mentioned “Inadequate Salary/Benefits” as the chief reason for not taking a leadership job. Also included as reasons not to pursue the superintendency were “Longer Day and Hours” and “Negative Political Climate” (Beaudin et al., 2002, p. 25).

When asked why they were hesitant to pursue their first superintendency, those who participated in the 2009 NYSCOSS study noted “The Scope of the Role”, “Spousal Considerations”, “Loss of Job Security”, “Having School-aged Children”, and “Cost of Living Consideration” as the major deterrents (Terranova et al., 2009, p. 27). New York State

superintendents also noted they were reluctant to pursue their first superintendency because they were “not ready to leave the principalship”, and that they enjoyed being with students and appreciated the focus on student learning that the principalship requires (Terranova et al., 2009, p. 28).

The findings of Beaudin et al. (2002), which indicated that fewer educators are applying for the superintendency in the state of Connecticut, mirror those throughout the United States, as noted by Winter, Rinehart, Keedy, and Bjork (2007). The principals surveyed by Winter et al. rated their capability to become a superintendent as “moderate”, but their probability of pursuing the district leadership position as “low” (2007, p. 49). Much like Beaudin et al., (2002), Glass (2001), and Wolverton (2004), Winter et al. (2007) asserted that, “Such limited attraction to the superintendency among principals may result in inadequate applicant pools for superintendent vacancies in the future as the ‘baby boom’ retirements escalate” (Winter et al., 2007, p. 49).

The increasing need for superintendents to relocate to assume a new position was a predicament noted by Fusarelli et al. (2002), and cited as a reason why many qualified superintendent candidates may choose not to pursue the position. Throughout the literature, a majority of the superintendents indicated that they preferred to remain in their current position rather than take a new job in another school district (Chan et al., 2001; Fusarelli et al., 2002; Sharp et al., 2002). Winter et al. (2007) found that principals viewed superintendent job security, or lack thereof, as a major deterrent to pursuing district leadership. Few leaders wished to relocate themselves and their families, and, more so, should their contract not be renewed, risk being unable to find another position (Beaudin et al., 2002; Fusarelli et al., 2002; Monahan, 1973; Winter et al., 2007). An additional factor in superintendents’ desire to remain in one

district or, at the very least, within the same state, is that pensions are not always transferrable between states (Fusarelli et al., 2002; Winter et al., 2007).

It is well documented that large, urban school districts are in need of superintendents (Duckworth, 2008; Mathews, 1999; Quinn, 2007; Usdan & Cronin, 2003; Sanchez, 2008; Usmani, 2010). These districts experience a great deal of superintendent turnover, in part, due to the numerous challenges that face district leaders in urban areas (Quinn, 2007; Sanchez, 2008; Usdan & Cronin, 2003). The superintendents surveyed by Fusarelli, Cooper and Carella (2002) stated that most superintendents preferred positions in suburban districts and were least interested in opportunities in large, urban districts. Only 31% of those participating in the survey conducted by Fusarelli et al. (2002) expressed an interest in working in large, urban districts. As a result, recruiting and hiring high quality candidates in large, urban districts may become increasingly challenging in the years to come (Fusarelli et al., 2002; Sanchez, 2008; Usmani, 2010).

Beaudin et al. (2002), Glass (2001), Terranova et al. (2009), and Wolverton (2004) noted that the shortage of superintendent candidates is not simply limited to large, urban districts. On the contrary, it is an issue throughout the United States in school districts of virtually every size and structure. While the roles and responsibilities are vastly divergent, effective school counselors could transfer the knowledge and skills they possess regarding interpersonal relations, teaching, learning, and leading to the superintendency (Benson, 2006; Burnham, 1989; Hoyle, 2007; McDade, 1981; Pino, 1997; Young, 1999). The shortage of qualified candidates to the superintendency could be diminished if more school counselors are considered for the superintendency and encouraged to pursue the position.

Winter et al., (2007) looked at the recruitment process for superintendents, particularly that of preparing principals to become district leaders. In their research, Winter et al. (2007) surveyed United States' principals to determine their certification and ascertain their interest in pursuing the superintendency. Of the 587 principals surveyed, only seventy-two possessed superintendent certification and the vast majority did not plan to obtain certification. Similar to the findings of Beaudin et al. (2002), the vast majority of individuals surveyed by Winter et al. (2007) who did possess superintendent certification for five years or more had not yet assumed the position of superintendent. To address the lack of interest in Kentucky's superintendencies, many districts adopted professional development opportunities, including internships, for potential leaders early in their career (Winter et al., 2007). The increased administrative internships and professional development aimed towards preparing educators for leadership positions throughout Kentucky, led to an increased number of candidates for the superintendency in the state (Winter et al., 2007). The research of Winter et al. (2007) indicated that internships and field experience opportunities were effectively utilized to accurately present both the positive and negative aspects of the superintendency. To further attract superintendent candidates, Winter et al. (2007) suggested that superintendent certification programs should accentuate the higher salary most superintendents earn compared to principals, as well as the ability to create and revise policy.

The recruitment of capable and eager district leaders is essential to furthering student success and academic achievement (Beaudin et al., 2002; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Glass, 2001; Hoyle, 2007; Hoyle et al., 2005b; Winter et al., 2007; Wolverson, 2004). As Winter et al. (2007) declared regarding superintendent candidates, "It is only through successful recruitment

that school districts can obtain the leadership needed to address the challenges faced by schools in this era of high-stakes-accountability and school reform” (p. 51).

School Counselors as Leaders

School counselors are often viewed as leaders by school personnel and students as a result of their involvement in quasi administrator duties (Janson et al., 2009; Mason & McMahon, 2009; Stone & Clark, 2001). While there is a distinct lack of research regarding school counselors becoming superintendents, a wealth of data has been collected about counselors serving as non-administrative leaders within their respective schools and districts (Dollarhide, 2003; Dollarhide et al., 2008; Janson, 2009; Janson et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2010; Mason & McMahon, 2009; Stone & Clark, 2001). For decades, school counselors have been trained to collaborate with numerous stakeholders, including district leaders, principals, teachers, students, parents, business leaders, and other community members (Janson et al., 2009; Stone & Clark, 2001). Likewise, effectively interacting with constituents is a primary skill that superintendents must possess (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Hoyle, 2005b; Kowalski & Bjork, 2005). School counselors can utilize their formal training to lead and transform schools, helping to increase student achievement at all grade levels and effectively prepare students for their post-secondary lives (Janson et al., 2009).

Many school counselors are expected to serve as leaders within their schools and most of those earning degrees in school counseling in the twenty-first century are being trained to do so in their graduate study (Dollarhide, 2003; Hayes & Paisley, 2002; Johnson et al., 2010; Mason & McMahon, 2009). However, the findings of Mason and McMahon (2009) indicated that the leadership skills being taught in school counselor preparation programs do not yet correlate to the counselors’ work. The leadership roles and responsibilities of school counselors remain

largely undefined (Dollarhide, 2003; Janson, 2009), which may begin to explain why so few school counselors become superintendents.

In Mason and McMahon's (2009) study, counselors' leadership practices were examined. As some might predict, the counselors who were older, had more professional experience, and long tenures at their current school of employment, reported higher scores on the Leadership Practices Inventory Self Instrument (LPI) utilized by Mason and McMahon (2009). However, Mason and McMahon (2009) had hypothesized that individuals earning their school counseling degree in the year 2003 and after would report higher scores on the LPI because the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) has placed a great deal of emphasis on leadership skills, and many counselor preparation programs utilize ASCA frameworks in their curricula. Mason and McMahon's (2009) findings prompted them to question why the less experienced counselors reported lower leadership proficiency. Was this due to a lack of effective leadership training in their counselor preparation programs or, simply, did the more experienced counselors' age and years of experience allow them to feel more comfortable in their role, thus understanding how and when to apply leadership skills in their position? Mason and McMahon's (2009) study raised, but did not answer, this thought-provoking question.

Also looking at leadership roles of school counselors, Janson, Stone, and Clark (2009) focused on distributed leadership "stretched" across numerous school personnel, including counselors (p. 98). Distributed leadership, and the development of a fortified school community, can have a positive effect on student achievement (Beaudin et al., 2002; Janson et al., 2009; Reeves, 2002). School counselors can become natural leaders, in part, due to their unique training in human relations, problem solving, and decision making, as well as their access to student information and assessment data (Janson et al., 2009). Their ability to interpret these

data appropriately is a skill set that may help counselors to become effective leaders (Dollarhide, 2003; Janson et al., 2009; Reynolds & Cheek, 2002). Also related to educational leadership, school counselors are often part of teams which develop policy, formulate curricular changes, and perform tasks such as master schedule creation (Janson et al., 2009).

Much like educational administrators, the roles and responsibilities of school counselors are varied and far-reaching (Dahir et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2010; Stone & Clark, 2001). The literature consistently stated that school counselors often serve as quasi building administrators, holding roles and completing tasks that are often presumed to be the responsibility of principals (Dollarhide et al., 2008; Janson, 2009; Mason & McMahon, 2009; Reynolds and Cheek, 2002; Steen et al., 2007). Looking at the relationship of school counselors and principals from a different perspective, Stone and Clark (2001) reviewed the relationship between the two parties.

School counselors' roles in reform efforts are rarely enumerated and have long been ignored (Stone & Clark, 2001). Stone and Clark (2001) suggested that this should no longer be the case, given that counselors often lead initiatives focused on improving student achievement. School counselors, at their core, are student advocates, lobbying for the best teaching and learning opportunities possible (Dollarhide et al., 2008; Janson, 2009; Reynolds & Cheek, 2002). As such, superintendents, principals, and counselors are allies in the pursuit of increased student achievement and improved post-secondary preparation (Stone & Clark, 2001).

School counselors and administrators are both afforded the opportunity to interact with numerous stakeholders and to lead constituents, schools, and districts in, ideally, a progressive direction (Hoyle et al., 2005b; Janson, 2009; Stone & Clark, 2001). Superintendents, principals, and counselors must always think and act with students' best interests in mind. Another parallel between school counselors and educational leaders is the need for both groups to develop an

expertise in interpersonal skills (Dollarhide, 2003; Johnson et al., 2010; Kowalski, 1999; Peterson & Klotz, 1999). To be of maximum value to students and colleagues, neither counselors nor administrators can isolate themselves in their respective offices (Dollarhide, 2003; Stone & Clark, 2001; Wilmore, 2008). Stone and Clark (2001) asserted that both counselors and educational administrators should be proficient communicators, enjoy aiding students and their families, and effectively educate the entire school community regarding educational issues and reform initiatives.

School counselors and educational leaders should partner in the analysis of data and the informal evaluation of student and faculty strengths and areas of weakness (Mason & McMahon, 2009; Stone & Clark, 2001). Counselors and administrators must use data to determine educational inequities, such as the lack of females in science, mathematics, and technology courses (Janson et al., 2009, Stone & Clark, 2001). When such inequalities are discovered, counselors and administrators should take action to reverse these issues and equalize operations (Stone & Clark, 2001). The professional objectives of school counselors, principals, and superintendents are similar in that each party is attempting to provide students with ample opportunities to succeed in the present and the future (Dollarhide, 2003; Dollarhide et al., 2008; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Hayes & Paisley, 2002; Hoyle et al., 2005a; Hoyle et al., 2005b; Janson et al., 2009; Reynolds & Cheek, 2002; Wilmore, 2002). By combining forces with administrators and by becoming leaders themselves, counselors can lead schools and districts which focus on positive relationships, student preparedness, and achievable goals (Stone & Clark, 2001).

School counseling skills which relate to the superintendency.

Can school counselors become effective school superintendents? This question has not been fully researched and, thus, there is no definitive answer. The literature does indicate that the skills counselors employ on a daily basis are similar to those required of effective superintendents (Dollarhide 2003; Hoyle et al., 2005b; Lofton, 2010; Reeves, 2002; Reynolds & Cheek, 2002; Stone & Clark, 2001; Wilmore 2008). Reynolds & Cheek (2002), Steen, Bauman, & Smith (2007), and Perusse, Goodnough, and Lee (2009) each noted that effective school counseling programs emerge only when a viable, supportive working relationship exists between administrators and counselors. Given this fact, and the presumed transferability of skills and practices between the counselorship and the superintendency, one must question why so few counselors pursue the position of superintendent of schools?

In one of the few pieces of literature to address a superintendent with a background in school counseling, Bogotch (1995) noted the unique experiences of a female superintendent in the Southeastern United States. Bogotch stated, “Kathleen Connors’ professional and educational backgrounds are not typical of most district superintendents” (1995, p. 14). Connors’ experience, “was primarily in counseling, school psychology and special education” (Bogotch, 1995, p. 14). Connors taught for only one year (in a self-contained classroom setting) and lacked any building level leadership experience (Bogotch, 1995). Bogotch (1995) noted that Superintendent Connors found her counseling and special education background invaluable, as skills learned from her experiences in these roles apply to all students. Connors demonstrated that an individual with a background in school counseling can be effective as a superintendent (Bogotch, 1995).

Schools counselors and superintendents are held accountable for student achievement despite both parties rarely being directly involved in student instruction (Dollarhide, 2003; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Sullivan & Shulman, 2005). School counselors can help increase student achievement via study skills enrichment programs for students (Webb & Brigman, 2007). Counselors can then analyze student data, including the grades and test scores of students whom have participated in counseling sessions (Dollarhide, 2003; Reynolds & Cheek, 2002). Ideally, the students who are counseled in study skills development will earn higher grades than they would have without this training (Reynolds & Cheek, 2002).

Group counseling and its implications on the superintendency.

Group counseling is a skill that many counselors utilize, which can be transferred to leadership roles and positions (Dollarhide, 2003; Reynolds & Cheek, 2003; Stone & Clark, 2001). Whether it is with school board members, the administrative cabinet, or department chairpersons, superintendents often facilitate meetings similar to the group counseling sessions school counselors' lead (Houston & Eadie, 2002; Hoyle et al., 2005b; Kowalski, 1999). Conducting group counseling can be a wise use of counselors' and educational leaders' time, as it is a method of communicating with multiple individuals simultaneously (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Kowalski, 1999; Shechtman, 2002; Steen et al., 2007). In addition, Shechtman (2002) asserts group counseling fosters collaboration between individuals who might otherwise not connect, and can be utilized as an effective problem solving tool. Be they students or chief school constituents, participants in group counseling can develop working relationships with peers that benefit individuals and the school community as a whole (Kowalski, 1999; Perusse, Goodnough, & Lee, 2009; Steen et al., 2007).

The dynamics of a group may be unpredictable, but an effective group facilitator is able to lead a collection of individuals to make the experience rewarding for all participants (Perusse et al., 2009; Steen et al., 2007; Webb & Brigman, 2007). Perusse et al. (2009) asserted that counselors and group leaders must be able to gain an understanding of the complexities of the group members and their lives. In an effort to help ensure positive outcomes, group facilitators must know the participants well. Goals and objectives should be developed with the input of the group members (Shechtman, 2002; Webb & Brigman, 2007). The progress toward reaching those aims must be evaluated on a regular basis, and adjustments made as needed (Perusse et al., 2009; Steen et al., 2007). When group leaders are well prepared, those objectives serve as guidelines for each counseling session, dictating the direction of the session in regards to short-term and long-term goals (Perusse et al., 2009; Shechtman, 2002; Steen et al., 2007; Webb & Brigman, 2007).

To be more effective, the design of counseling sessions and objectives of meetings must be clear, concise, and applicable to all participants (Perusse et al., 2009, Shechtman, 2002, Steen et al., 2007). Superintendents regularly use a form of group counseling as a conflict resolution tool with disgruntled board members, clashing faculty members, or embattled members of the leadership cabinet (Chan et al., 2001; Houston & Eadie, 2002; Kowalski, 1999; Shechtman, 2002; Webb & Brigman, 2007). Brunner noted the importance for superintendents to engage in “proactive listening, which includes hearing things that one does not want to hear” when using group counseling strategies (Brunner, 2002, p. 425). The active-listening superintendent of schools must use open-ended questions when problem solving and seeking the input and feedback of stakeholders (Brunner, 2002).

The skills and practices utilized by school counselors in their work with students, teachers, parents, administrators, and other constituents apply to positions of educational leadership, specifically, the superintendency (Dollarhide, 2003; Hoyle et al., 2005a; Hoyle et al., 2005b; Kowalski, 1999; Stone & Clark, 2001; Webb & Brigman, 2002). The counseling skills of displaying empathy, effective planning, active listening, group counseling, human relations, clear communication, data analysis, prudent decision making, and timely problem solving are all required of superintendents (Goodman & Zimmerman, Hayes & Paisley, 2002; Konnert & Augenstein, 1995; 2000; Sanchez, 2008).

Leadership Frames of Counselors and Superintendents: Bolman and Deal's Perspective

Bolman and Deal's (2008) Four Frames of Leadership – structural, human resource, political, and symbolic – model was used to help assess the leadership approach of the superintendents with a background in school counseling who participated in this study. Bolman and Deal (2008) suggested that each leader may view situations and challenges through divergent lenses and concluded that it can be beneficial for leaders to look at issues from multiple frames simultaneously. Thus, leaders should make conscious efforts to broaden their perspectives and be as flexible as possible (Bolman & Deal, 2006; Bolman & Deal, 2008).

The structural frame views an organization (school) as a social entity, not simply a group of individuals. This frame concentrates on the achievement of collective goals, and the specialization of roles and responsibilities (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

The human resource frame views the organization as a family comprised of individuals with unique needs, abilities, and limitations. Leaders who operate from the human resource frame attempt to coalesce the needs of the constituents with the needs of the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Such leaders understand that, “Both individual satisfaction and

organizational effectiveness depend heavily on the quality of interpersonal relationships" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 187).

Competition, power, and persuasion are the keystones of the political frame. Bolman and Deal (2008) used the jungle as a metaphor to show that leaders operating from the political frame often employ a survival of the fittest approach. This is conceptualized by the realization that results must be produced despite limited resources (Bolman & Deal, 2006; Bolman & Deal, 2008). Those leading from the political frame accept that stakeholders will have divergent desires and values, but these leaders do not allow this fact to impede objectives from being met.

Leaders utilizing the symbolic frame are likened to wizards; those who are able to lead and encourage by employing rituals, sharing stories, and participating in ceremonies (Bolman & Deal, 2006; Bolman & Deal, 2008). In the symbolic frame, the constituents come together as a single unit through their involvement in these events, as well as their association with "spiritual" symbols and concepts (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 407). These leaders often reference the historical context of the organization or speak of an idyllic future to motivate stakeholders to achieve success (Bolman & Deal, 2006).

Researchers' use of Bolman and Deals' Four Frames of Leadership.

Dollarhide (2003) used Bolman and Deal's frames to evaluate the leadership contexts of school counselors, not as they applied to counselors who became educational administrators, but rather in the leadership responsibilities counselors assumed within their school(s) and district. Dollarhide noted, "With an awareness of the leadership contexts, plus courage, commitment, creativity, and faith, school counselors can transform their school counseling program" (2003, p. 307). School counselors who are involved in the development of a "comprehensive school counseling program", typically, have experience with structural leadership (Dollarhide, 2003, p.

305). Establishing a counseling program at the secondary level entails, among other things, intensive planning, restructuring of individual and group counseling methodologies, study skills enrichment, post-secondary planning, and career counseling (Dahir et al., 2009, Dimmitt et al., 2007). The skills required to develop and implement such a comprehensive program could be transferred to the superintendency in terms of leadership, goal setting, problem solving, and establishing a vision and mission (Carter & Cunningham, 1997, Hoyle et al., 2005b; Pino, 1997; Reeves, 2002; Wilmore, 2008).

The human resource frame focuses on the basic needs of people and the relationships that can help to satisfy these requirements (Bolman & Deal, 2008). School counselor leaders who operate from this frame “believe in people” and are able to “communicate that belief” both verbally and in writing (Dollarhide, 2003, p. 306). Use of the human resource frame indicates that the leader supports stakeholders and, in turn, constituents are motivated and develop confidence in their own abilities (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Dollarhide, 2003). Leaders operating from the human resource frame empower others to strive for success (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Dollarhide, 2003). Superintendents who lead with this frame in mind promote collaboration, display a willingness to work towards common goals, and may view constituents as family (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Bolman and Deal’s (2008) political frame relates to the, “distribution of power within the building and district” (Dollarhide, 2003, p. 306). This frame may be one that leaders with a school counseling background regularly operate from, as counselors are trained to advocate for equality (Dollarhide, 2003; Hayes & Paisley, 2002; Janson et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2010). In this context, distributed leadership can be a goal. Leading from the political frame allows educational leaders to assess their relationships with numerous constituents in an effort to

accurately determine the needs of these stakeholders, with the ultimate objective of increasing the opportunities students have for success (Bolman & Deal, 2006; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Dollarhide, 2003). To move school districts forward, superintendents operating from the political frame should be keen negotiators, able to wisely and effectively use persuasion to garner the stakeholders' support (Bolman & Deal, 2006; Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Symbolic leadership constitutes the use of metaphors, stories, and rituals in an attempt to inspire the organization to achieve greatness (Bolman & Deal, 2006; Bolman & Deal, 2008). Some individuals with a background in school counseling may feel comfortable leading from this frame, as many counselor preparation programs train future counselors to understand the symbolic nature of the experiences of their counselees and put them into context (Dollarhide, 2003; Hayes & Paisley, 2002). In the symbolic frame, leaders are expected to create and articulate a meaningful vision for the organization. Leaders are then able to relate rituals, ceremonies, and anecdotes to specific and comprehensive aims in an attempt to inspire themselves and others (Bolman & Deal, 2006; Dollarhide, 2003).

Superintendents, and those who aspire to the position, should be able to function adequately in each of Bolman and Deal's (2008) four leadership frames (Ward, 2006). Bolman and Deal (2008) posited that each frame is equally important and none provides a more imperative element of leadership than the others. "People, power, structure, and symbols" are requisite components of any successful organization, school districts being no different (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 20). Many of the most effective leaders are able to extract the applicable facets of each of these four lenses to develop a "holistic framework" of leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 20).

Leadership orientations (self) survey.

In an effort to determine which frame most closely corresponds with individuals' leadership style, Bolman and Deal (1988) developed the Leadership Orientations (Self) Survey. This six question survey is used to rate leadership orientations. Utilizing Bolman and Deal's Leadership Orientations (Self) Survey instrument, as well as interview responses, Durocher (1995) and Ward (2006) collected data from superintendents deemed to be effective school administrators. Durocher (1995) and Ward (2006) found that the human resource frame was the most "predominate" (Durocher, 1995, p. 2) frame used by both male and female superintendents. Durocher (1995) concluded that the structural frame was, on average, used least by the superintendents she studied. Conversely, 93% of the participants in Ward's (2006) study designated the political frame as their least preferred.

Explaining her finding that the human resource frame was used most consistently by her study participants, Durocher stated, "This may be due to the fact that those who enter the field of education are supportive and believe in fostering participation and involvement" (1995, p. 111). Durocher (1995) referenced eight other studies in which the human resource frame was found to be the dominant leadership frame. As a reasonable explanation for these results, Durocher wrote, "The education received in preparation for the field of education, especially the focus on human needs within the organization, may also account for the high mean score for the human resource frame" (1995, p. 111-112). In addition, more than 45% of the participants in Durocher's (1995) study indicated that they used three or four frames regularly in their leadership approach. Durocher (1995) posited that the participants in her study may have earned the distinction as effective, in part, due to their ability to utilize multiple frames of leadership. Also of note was that the superintendents who participated in Ward's (2006) study indicated that they are likely

to change leadership frames during various decision making processes, and as needed during their superintendency.

Summary and Implications

Despite the lack of literature regarding school counselors who become superintendents, the peripheral literature indicates that the skills counselors possess can be related to the superintendency. The similarities in skills needed for success in the positions of superintendent and school counselor are prevalent in the literature (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Dollarhide, 2003; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Hayes & Paisley, 2002; Hoyle et al., 2005a; Konnert & Augenstein, 1995; Stone & Clark, 2001; Usmani, 2010; Wilmore, 2008). Both parties need to be flexible, effective verbal and written communicators, student and teacher advocates, as well as possess the ability to develop positive working relationships with numerous stakeholders (Brunner, 2002; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Duckworth, 2008; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Lofton, 2010; Peterson & Klotz, 1999; Reynolds & Cheek, 2002; Sharp et al., 2002; Usmani, 2010; Webb & Brigman, 2007). Superintendents regularly find themselves counseling faculty and staff, administrative team members or the school board (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Houston & Eadie, 2002; Peterson & Klotz, 1999; Sullivan & Shulman, 2005). This conclusion provides direction for school counselors who aspire to the superintendency.

Ultimately, as should be the case with all educators, school counselors and superintendents share the role of student advocates (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Hayes & Paisley, 2002; Johnson et al., 2010; Usdan & Cronin, 2003; Wilmore, 2008). Both parties must keep the diverse needs of students in mind when making decisions that can and will impact the remainder of a child's life. This responsibility is immense, but can be accomplished by

operating ethically, using knowledge, integrity, and empathy as the framework for one's actions (Houston & Eadie, 2002; Hoyle et al., 2005b; Kowalski, 1999).

While several researchers (Burnham, 1989; Duckworth, 2008; Farmer, 2007; Hernandez, 2010; Kowalski et al., 2011; Lofton, 2010; McDade, 1981; Mertz & McNeely, 1988; Pino, 1997; Sanchez, 2008; Usdan & Cronin, 2003; Usmani, 2008; Winter et al., 2007; Young, 1999) have studied the career paths of superintendents, none have specifically researched superintendents who are former school counselors. Also literature is lacking regarding how superintendents who are former school counselors use counseling skills in their leadership. In addition, minimal literature analyzes the implications of ascending to the superintendency with this non-traditional background.

Leadership skills in the areas of communication, community relations, problem solving, motivation, finances, technology, law, and politics have been deemed vital by numerous researchers (Brimley & Garfield, 2005; Carter & Cunningham, 1997, Chan et al., 2001, Fusarelli et al., 2002; Hernandez, 2010; Lofton, 2010; Peterson & Klotz, 1999; Sullivan & Shulman, 2005). The shortage of superintendents discussed in the literature (Beaudin et al., 2002; Hoyle et al., 2005b; Fusarelli et al., 2002; Glass, 2001; Terranova et al., 2009; Usdan & Cronin, 2003; Wolverton, 2004), the presumed transferability of school counseling skills to the superintendency (Perusse et al., 2009; Reynolds & Cheek, 2002; Shechtman, 2002; Steen et al., 2007), and the fact that many counselors serve as leaders in their respective schools (Dollarhide, 2003; Dollarhide et al., 2008; Janson et al., 2009; Mason & McMahon, 2009), suggests that school counselors could become effective superintendents.

Chapter Three includes a description of the methods used to collect and analyze the data found in this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a description of the research design and methodology which was used to gather and analyze data related to superintendents who are former school counselors. This chapter contains twelve distinct sections: (a) research design; (b) population and participant selection; (c) assumptions; (d) instrumentation; (e) pilot study; (f) interview preparation; (g) data collection procedures; (h) data analysis; (i) researcher bias; (j) validity; (k) reliability; and (l) summary.

Research Design

This qualitative study was designed to attain insight into the counseling skills used by former school counselors serving as school superintendents. The study also investigated the superintendents' perceptions of their leadership style and efficacy, as well as stakeholders' perceptions of these non-traditional superintendents' leadership approach. The study was interpretive, as the researcher attempted to find meaning in the participants' verbal answers to interview questions (Mason, 1996; Sanchez, 2008).

The purpose of this study was to analyze the professional experiences, both pre-service and in-service, of these non-traditional superintendents, and to discern the opinions they and their constituents hold regarding the use of counseling skills in the superintendency. A qualitative, case study research design and methodology was utilized as the researcher attempted to obtain detailed insight into the leadership style(s) of these superintendents.

The research questions necessitated in-depth and specific answers, which dictated the use of a qualitative, case study methodology (Mason, 1996; Patton, 1990). While the researcher saw similarities in the skills needed to be effective in the counselorship and the superintendency prior to conducting this study, he attempted to use research questions which allowed for themes to

develop rather than hypotheses to be generated (Creswell, 2009). A quantitative methodology, typically, requires that a primary variable and a statement of explicit hypotheses be identified prior to data collection (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 1990). It has been determined that the development of hypotheses found in quantitative studies may limit responses and force data collection into specified analysis classifications (Creswell, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). The researcher aspired to gain a clear understanding of the strengths and shortcomings of the leadership style of the superintendents studied. In the attempt to determine how these non-traditional superintendents lead their respective school districts, the qualitative approach allowed the researcher to engage in dialogue with the participants to determine their perceptions and address these viewpoints (Patton, 1990).

Creswell (2009) noted that qualitative research methods, more so than quantitative studies, allow the investigator to explore subjects in greater detail and discover commonalities in responses prior to drawing conclusions. This qualitative study aimed to find anticipated, as well as unexpected, patterns in the answers provided by the superintendents and their constituents. The expressive narratives provided by each participant were vital in the researcher's establishment and evaluation of these patterns (Creswell, 2002; Creswell, 2009; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2006; Patton, 1990). The researcher also used direct quotations from participants in an attempt to reveal the detail of respondents' experiences, their emotions, and perceptions (Creswell, 2009; Myers, 1995; Patton, 1990). By using a qualitative methodology, themes emerged in the participants' responses that were later analyzed (Creswell, 2002; Patton, 1990). The qualitative study provided enough structure for superintendents and constituents to comprehensively respond to questions regarding their experiences and viewpoints (Gall et al., 2006).

Population and Participant Selection

Purposive sampling is defined as selecting participants who fit criterion, and who hold characteristics which the researcher intends to study (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 1990). In this study, the researcher sought input from a narrow target group (superintendents who served as school counselors). As a result, purposive sampling was conducted prior to data collection. The participants were selected because of common characteristics (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 1990). Specifically, the two superintendents selected and interviewed for this study are each former school counselors. Superintendent Palmer served briefly as a special education teacher at the beginning of her career. Superintendent Forbin had no classroom teaching experience.

Two school board members were interviewed in each of the districts which these superintendents lead. Also, two administrators (a principal and the business official) in each of the two districts were interviewed. In an effort to determine the specific counseling skills utilized by these superintendents, one school counselor was interviewed in both districts. The individuals interviewed possessed first-hand, in-depth knowledge of the counseling skills used by the superintendents in their daily duties, and provided insight into the superintendents' leadership style as it related to their counseling background. All individuals interviewed in this study were volunteers and understood that they would be provided with pseudonyms. They also knew the data collected would remain confidential. Individual participants are not identifiable by data descriptors.

Purposive sampling was employed for two reasons. First, the researcher attempted to learn from the non-traditional superintendents' experiences and beliefs, as well as the perceptions of the constituents with whom they work and lead. Secondly, in the 2010-2011 school year, there were only twenty superintendents in this particular Mid-Atlantic state who

served for at least one school year as a school counselor. The researcher obtained this data from phone conversations and email exchanges with employees of the state's education department (J. Bercharlie, personal communication, July 9, 2010; C. Mitchell, personal communication, November 16, 2010). As a result, the population size was limited from which to sample.

In an attempt to ensure that demographic factors did not have a significant impact of the experiences and perceptions of the respondents, the superintendents selected to participate in this study each led districts with similar demographics and enrollments (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 1990). Information regarding the school districts and their demographics was gathered from interviews with the superintendents and by reviewing publically available information via the school districts' website.

The two superintendents led rural districts serving 362 and 621 students respectively. In both districts, a principal and the business official participated in the study. The administrators interviewed had administrative experience of at least seven years. In Diamond Point Central School District, School Counselor Amy Clifford, an eighteen year veteran, served as the lone counselor working with elementary and secondary students. Conversely, in Smithville School District, School Counselor and study participant Carolyn Hart, a thirteen year veteran, worked with students at the secondary level, while a colleague worked with elementary students. The school board members who were interviewed have each served their respective district for at least eight years and up to twenty years. From this case study approach, an inferred list of leadership competencies for these superintendents with a school counseling background was developed. It is the intention of the researcher for this list to be used to further study non-traditional superintendents who possess a background in school counseling and those aspiring to the superintendency.

Assumptions

The researcher made the following assumptions regarding the methodology used in this study: (a) the interview questions crafted for the superintendents, administrators, school counselors, and school board members were effective tools in collecting pertinent data for this study; (b) all participants may not have candidly answered each question in an attempt to not offend their superintendent; (c) the perspectives provided by these respondents, from which conclusions were drawn, were presented by well-informed participants, and were thus meaningful and valid. It is also assumed that the administrators, school counselors, and school board members participating in the study have an understanding of the leadership style and practices of their respective superintendents. Finally, the researcher assumed that the superintendents were able to accurately state their perceptions regarding the superintendency and its relation to their background in school counseling.

Instrumentation

To gather data, the researcher utilized a qualitative instrument. Prior to the interviews, the two superintendents completed a demographics survey regarding their education and career path. Also, the superintendent participants responded to Bolman and Deal's (1988) Leadership Orientations (Self) Survey to help determine the superintendents' leadership style based on Bolman and Deal's Leadership Frames.

Patton (1990) and Richards (2009) stated that the purpose of interviewing research participants is to discover what they think, believe and feel. Ideally, open-ended interview questions allow the researchers to gain in-depth vantage points from individuals that quantitative research might not allow. In addition, Patton (1990) noted that, often times, researchers are not able to find answers to their inquiries simply from observations. Thus interviewing persons was

the chief strategy to gather perceptive data. Patton (1990) revealed three fundamental interview approaches to collecting qualitative data – conversational interview, an interview guide approach, and a regulated, open-ended interview. Each of these three approaches requires varying preparation, theorizing, and instrumentation (Patton, 1990; Richards, 2009).

An informal, conversational interview is based on unscripted questions, which are asked spontaneously within the flow of the dialogue between interviewer and participant (Creswell, 2009). In this methodology, respondents may not even realize that they are being interviewed as the technique is often used as part of an observational study (Creswell, 2009).

An interview guide approach includes the pre-interview development of an outlined template of questions that encapsulate an issue the researcher wishes to learn more about. Such a guide serves as a checklist, which can be utilized to determine if all pertinent topics have been covered by the conclusion of the interview. Patton (1990) noted that while the guide serves as a framework for the interview, it does not dictate the sequence of the questions which are asked, nor are there standard questions to which each respondent is to reply.

Patton (1990) explained the standardized, open-ended interview as a deliberately crafted collection of questions that are worded and sequenced in an effort to ensure that each respondent is answering the same questions in identical order as their peers. In this study, standardization was helpful when coding the participants' replies and distinguishing themes in these responses (Patton, 1990).

While the other two methodologies mentioned above were carefully considered by the researcher, the data for this study were gathered from standardized, open-ended interviews. The interviews, each lasting approximately forty-five minutes to one hour, were conducted in January and February 2011. The instrument and questions for the interviews were predetermined. Each

respondent was provided with equal opportunity to reflect upon the questions and to provide an answer for each inquiry. This process helped to ensure that consistency was maintained in the collection of data. The interview instruments were closely followed. The researcher attempted to not stray from the interview instruments unless the researcher needed the respondent to provide clarification to a particular answer or further detail regarding a response. In such situations, the researcher asked non-scripted, follow-up interview questions. The need for follow-up questions only developed a handful of times during the twelve interviews.

All twelve participants in this study were interviewed individually by the researcher. Ten interviews were conducted in person and two (one in each school district) via telephone. All interviews were audio recorded. The questions for the interview sessions with superintendents, administrators, school counselors, and members on their respective boards of education were crafted with the goal of determining if and how these superintendents used their counseling background to assist them in their leadership of the district. The researcher attempted to determine the advantages and disadvantages of coming to the superintendency with a background in school counseling.

Four unique interview question sets were developed and used with each of the four groups of participants (see Appendix C). The twelve question interview instrument for the superintendents asked the participants to reflect upon their career path, their desire to become district leaders, their experiences in the superintendency and how they utilize counseling skills in their leadership style. The ten question interview instrument for administrators allowed these leaders to describe the leadership style of their non-traditional superintendents. Since counselors possess thorough knowledge of counseling skills, the ten question interview instrument for the respective school counselors attempted to identify specific counseling skills utilized by

superintendents. The ten question interview instrument for school board members asked the board members to identify and analyze the counseling skills used by the superintendents in their leadership of the district, and to help determine why these superintendents were hired for the position.

Pilot Study

Upon completion of the standardized, open-ended interview guides, and prior to commencing the actual study, the researcher conducted a pilot study in early January 2011. Voluntarily participating in this pilot study were one superintendent, one principal, one district business official, one school board member, and one school counselor, all of whom are stakeholders in the school district where the researcher is employed. The superintendent who participated in the pilot study was not a former school counselor, but addressed the questions as if he had a background in school counseling and offered suggestions to strengthen the questions that did not specifically relate to counseling. The volunteers for the pilot study did not otherwise participate in this research. This pilot study was conducted to determine if the questions were clear and relevant. Also, the pilot study helped to establish the length of time needed to complete the interviews with each participant

Interview Preparation

Prior to conducting research, the investigator contacted potential superintendent participants via telephone and email, requesting them to participate in the study. A written and verbal overview of the study was provided to all participants, including an explanation of the study's purpose and the methodology that would be used to collect data. The researcher explained, from his perspective, the potential value of the study.

The superintendents assisted the researcher in scheduling interviews with the other constituent participants. Specifically, the superintendents in both districts were especially instrumental in helping to arrange the meetings with the board members. While it was anticipated that not all respondents would be entirely eager to participate in this study, the researcher was pleased to find that each individual was gracious with her/his time and provided a wealth of useful data.

Once the researcher obtained the respondents' initial acceptance to participate in the study, the researcher sent each a formal letter of introduction, along with relevant information and paperwork addressing the study. Included in this packet of information were the interview questions (Appendix C) and the Informed Consent Form (Appendix B). The researcher also informed the participants how the audio tapes recorded from each interview, as well as any documents collected, would be stored and disposed of once this research report was completed. The participants were made aware of the proposed personal benefits and risks associated with their participation in the study

All respondents volunteered for the study and were guaranteed confidentiality. The participants and districts were assigned pseudonyms (Table 1).

Table 1

School District and Participant Pseudonyms

School District	Participant	Position	Date Interviewed
	Sally Palmer	Superintendent	January 13, 2011
	Michael Holdsworth	Board Member	January 13, 2011
Diamond Point Central School District	Donna Mydland	Board Member	January 13, 2011
	Phillip Gordon	Principal	February 8, 2011
	Brent McConnell	Business Manager	January 13, 2011
	Amy Clifford	School Counselor	January 13, 2011
	Jerome Forbin	Superintendent	January 19, 2011
	Jon Gadiel	Board Member	January 19, 2011
Smithville Central School District	Brad Parish	Board Member	January 19, 2011
	Eliza Hunter	Principal	January 19, 2011
	Candice Kuroda	Business Manger	January 24, 2011
	Carolyn Hart	School Counselor	January 19, 2011

Data Collection Procedures

For this study, twelve individuals – two superintendents, a principal and business official in both school districts, two school board members in both school districts and one counselor in both school districts – participated in one-on-one interviews. Data were collected via two brief surveys completed by the respective superintendents. One survey gathered the superintendents' demographic and career path information, while the other collected data regarding the superintendents' leadership style based on Bolman and Deal's Leadership Frames (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Each of the superintendent interviews took place in the superintendents' offices. The interviews with all principals, business officials, and school counselors occurred in their respective offices. The interviews with Diamond Point School District school board members Robert Holdsworth and Donna Mydland occurred in meeting rooms within the school, while the interviews with Smithville School District school board member Jon Gadiel occurred at his place of employment, and fellow Smithville board member Brad Parish took place in his home.

The audio files from the interviews were saved on the digital recording device and secured in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home. Back-up copies of the audio files were saved on the researcher's computer. The audio files were sent to a bond transcriber, who listened to the audio files and typed the transcripts. The transcriber was approved by The Sage Colleges Institutional Review Board (see Appendix H) and agreed to maintain confidentiality. She did not know which school districts participated in this study and participants' names were not used on the audio files. The transcripts were stored on a password-protected laptop computer, with a back-up copy stored on a password-protected, encrypted flash drive.

The interview transcripts were emailed to each participant for their review, editing and ultimate approval. If after two weeks the participants had not responded, it was deemed that the participants agreed with their transcribed statements. Throughout the data collection process, the researcher made himself available to the participants, allowing them to ask questions and provided clarification when necessary. However, none of the participants asked any questions.

Data Analysis

The information gathered from the demographics survey was reviewed and compared based on the methods of Creswell (2009) and Patton (1990). The methods of Creswell (2002 and 2009), as well as Miles and Huberman (1994) were used to analyze the data gathered from the

interview sessions. Specifically, the following methods, introduced by Miles and Huberman (1994), were employed to review interview data:

1. Data Reduction: In this initial, transition step the researcher reviewed interview transcripts, then coded and categorized data. The data obtained through interviews were grouped into smaller portions to discern trends and themes.

2. Data Display: The researcher developed an organizational chart to show the open coding of data. Open-coding is defined as examining, organizing, and comparing data in an effort to exhibit the organizational structure of the data. This strategy was used to discover themes in the responses of the twelve participants.

3. Drawing Conclusions and Verification: The researcher identified the inferences drawn by analyzing the themes found in the data. The accuracy and authenticity of these conclusions were then reviewed and reported.

Following the suggested procedures of Creswell (2002 and 2009), and Miles and Huberman (1994), the qualitative data were open-coded through comprehensive analysis of interview transcripts to determine in which categories the information fit most accurately. The categories included: benefits of the counseling background; counseling skills used by these superintendents; superintendents' leadership style; disadvantages of the counseling background; how the superintendents have overcome those issues; areas in need of improvement for these superintendents; and level of instructional leadership provided by the superintendents. A final iteration established and analyzed themes found in these categories.

For Bolman and Deal's (1988) Leadership Orientations survey, the researcher computed scores based on Bolman and Deal's methods outlined in Appendix F. These computations

helped the researcher to determine from which of the four frames these superintendents led, and how the superintendents viewed their own leadership approach.

Researcher Bias

Richards (2009) noted the interpretative nature of qualitative research and stated that biases and judgments must be clearly defined in the report of findings. The biases of researchers do not always negatively impact a study and the analysis of data (Creswell, 2009; Richards, 2009). Richards (2009) suggested that the biases and viewpoints of the researcher, which may affect the study in any manner, be reported regardless of their perceived impact. Richards stated,

The goal of most qualitative research is to learn from the data. But researchers don't have empty minds, and are likely to have strong values and commitment to their topic. So good research design will always take into account what's already known, and will build into the design the ways this knowledge can and will be used and tested. (2009, p. 23)

Despite his biases and background, the researcher attempted to remove any bias from the interview instruments. In addition, the researcher attempted to analyze data and present recommendations with neutrality and without any preconceptions (Creswell, 2009; Richards, 2009).

The researcher's perceptions and any biases, in part, are derived from his personal and professional experiences. The researcher worked as a school counselor in a Mid-Atlantic state from July 2004 through August 2006. During this period, the researcher was partially responsible for the social, emotional, and academic development of adolescents in grades seven through twelve, as well as the post-secondary planning of these students. With the assistance of a counseling colleague, the researcher was charged with the development of the master schedule,

student assessment coordination, and standard individual and group counseling responsibilities pertaining to a litany of student needs and concerns.

From August 2006 through August 2007, the researcher took a twelve month leave of absence in or to pursue an advanced degree in Educational Leadership. In the autumn of 2007, the researcher became the assistant principal at the school in which he served as a school counselor. Currently serving in his fourth year in this administrative position, the researcher has worked in close conjunction with superintendents of schools and principals in a variety of school and community related issues. The researcher has also worked directly with students, parents, faculty, staff, and the board of education, making decisions that affect the present and future of the youths in the school community.

From his professional experiences, the researcher possesses a working knowledge of rural school districts. In addition, the researcher has a basic understanding of the operations of large suburban and urban school districts, which he gained from internship experiences. These experiences include rather extensive exposure to the central office structure and daily functions of a large, urban school district in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. While not having served as a superintendent, the researcher does understand the multitude of job responsibilities and tasks associated with the position. School districts, their superintendents, and school boards face numerous challenges. As an aspiring superintendent, the researcher hopes to use the knowledge gained from this study to become an effective district leader, providing students with vast opportunities for academic achievement and life-long success. This in and of itself may be a bias.

The most impactful potential bias held by the researcher is his belief that school counselors can become effective superintendents due to their training in human relations,

problem solving, communication, data analysis, and flexibility. The researcher has a core understanding of the immense challenges superintendents face, yet he believes the position is manageable and can be deeply satisfying for the leader possessing integrity and a strong work ethic. The researcher also holds the viewpoint that educational leaders have a meaningful opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of children and to provide leadership to a community, bettering society as a whole. Thus, it is possible that the researcher's work experience and background may have impacted his judgment, thereby resulting in inadvertent research bias.

The researcher knew these biases existed prior to the design being finalized, and data being collected and analyzed. As a result, the researcher carefully followed the interview instrument and avoided interpolating his opinions to the participants' responses to questions. Through professional interview transcription, the researcher attempted to diminish any bias in his recall of the responses participants provided during the interview sessions, which otherwise may have affected data analysis.

Validity

The validity of qualitative studies addresses whether or not the results of the study are generalizable. Essentially, the researcher must determine if the results of their particular study are an anomaly or if similar studies with different participants would produce analogous results (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 1990). The "external validity threats" (Creswell, 2009, p. 162) of this study are that the non-traditional superintendent participants, administrators, school counselors, and school board members may have held opinions and perspectives that differ from other superintendents with a background in school counseling and those who work with them. The leadership methods of the superintendent participants may not be generalized to all former

school counselors serving as school superintendents. However, Creswell noted that, “Particularity rather than generalizability is the hallmark of qualitative research” (2009, p. 193). The researcher utilized extensive quotations garnered from the interview sessions to help establish validity.

An internal threat to the validity of this study may be that those constituents selected to participate could, “have certain characteristics that predispose them to have certain outcomes” (Creswell, 2009, p. 163). In other words, the school board members, the administrators, and the school counselors interviewed may have believed, for example, that all superintendents should have training in school counseling thus affecting the data and the results of this study. The researcher assumed that all participants in this study truthfully and candidly answered the questions from the respective interview instruments.

The researcher developed interview instruments that attempted to address the research questions, namely, the advantages and disadvantages of this career path, the counseling skills these non-traditional superintendents use in their daily duties, and how their background has impacted their leadership style (see Appendix C). To help develop validity, the researcher conducted a pilot study, asking a superintendent, principal, business official, school counselor, and school board member the respective sets of interview questions specific to each group. These individuals provided suggestions, at which point modifications to the four interview instruments were made. The researcher also gathered rich and thick data from the interview sessions and presented this information in the form of quotations (Creswell, 2009).

The validity of the Leadership Orientations survey was impacted by the small number of participants. Bolman and Deal’s survey may be impacted by the forthrightness of the superintendent participants completing this survey. Each superintendent may want to be

perceived in a certain manner and thus answered the questions to indicate that they lead from a desirous leadership frame. In addition, the superintendents may have misconceptions about their leadership style as it relates to Bolman and Deal's Four Frames of Leadership (Bolman & Deal, 1988; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Creswell, 2009).

Reliability

Reliability in qualitative research is associated with the ability of the researcher to reproduce the results found from the study. Reliability is garnered when the results of the study are consistent with the data collected. To develop reliability within this study and to help participants feel as comfortable as possible, the researcher assured unbounded confidentiality. The participants were assigned pseudonyms and were referred to by such throughout this document (Table 1). Moreover, in an effort to maintain confidentiality, the names of school districts were altered. Therefore, if the interviews were to be conducted again, the researcher assumed all study participants would answer the interview questions as they previously had responded.

In an attempt to reduce researcher bias, which can result from research conducted by an individual, the researcher utilized triangulation to analyze the data. In this study, triangulation refers to data being reviewed numerous times prior to coding and drawing conclusions. The researcher listened to the audio from each interview at least once, and read each transcription at least three times. Patton (1990) stated that triangulation can strengthen the reliability of qualitative research, specifically case studies. To help ensure reliability, the researcher carefully compared the professionally typed transcripts to the audio tapes of each interview session and provided each study participant with a copy of the transcript from her/his interview session for

their own review. Any inaccuracies were corrected and alterations in responses were made as necessary.

The superintendents in this study completed the survey tool only once. If the superintendent participants in this study completed Bolman and Deal's Leadership Orientation survey multiple times, presumably they would rate their own leadership competencies and style identically each time. However, it is possible that the superintendents would view their leadership skills and style differently depending upon the day or setting in which they are asked to evaluate themselves. One can presume that the superintendents' perception of their approach to leadership would not differ greatly from day to day. The researcher did not use the test-retest method, but it is assumed that there would be test-retest reliability, as the superintendents would presumably rate themselves similarly if they were to complete the survey instrument a second time (Schutt, 2009). Since the sample size was simply too small, other reliability measures such as split-half reliability, Cronbach's alpha, and alternate-forms reliability could not be accurately measured (Schutt, 2009)

Summary

This chapter includes information regarding the research design, methodology, subject sampling, interview preparation, data collection, and data analysis used in the completion of this study. The Institutional Review Board committee of The Sage Graduate Schools approved this research design and study on November 22, 2010 via email and via letter on December 7, 2010 (see Appendix A). Invitation letters sent were to superintendents on December 10, 2010 (see Appendix D). Telephone contact was made with Superintendent Forbin on December 29, 2010 and Superintendent Palmer January 5, 2011. Interviews were conducted with Diamond Point Central School District participants on January 13, 2011 and February 4, 2011 and with

Smithsville Central School District participant on January 19, 2011 and January 24, 2011. The participants in this study participated without coercion and granted the researcher permission to use the data gathered from the interviews and surveys. The respondents fully understood their role in this research and, should concerns have arisen, they knew that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

In Chapter Four, the researcher provided an analysis of the data collected. From this analysis of this data, the researcher delineated the key themes that became apparent.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze data as they pertained to each of the research questions framing this study. Throughout this chapter, each research question is restated and followed by pertinent data collected from the twelve study participants. Findings related to the specific questions from each of the four interview guides (Questions for Superintendents; Questions for Principals and Business Officials; Questions for School Counselors; and Questions for Board Members) are also presented.

This chapter contains seven distinct sections. The first is a profile of the superintendent participants and the school districts they lead. The second through sixth sections are dedicated to one of the five research questions. Each section includes extensive quotations from the participants' responses to the interview questions. The final section of this chapter is dedicated to the research findings from the superintendents' completion of Bolman and Deal's Leadership Orientations survey.

Profile of Superintendent Participants

The focus of these case studies were two school district superintendents who possessed a background in school counseling. One superintendent had no teaching experience, while the other had only limited traditional teaching. From the data collected, considerable detail is presented in this chapter about these school district leaders. To supplement that information, an overview of each superintendent, the school district he/she leads and information about the respective school communities, including demographics, is also included. This data was compiled from interview transcripts, telephone conversations, and email exchanges, as well as the respective school district's websites and state education department public records. The

superintendents and school districts were assigned pseudonyms in order to ensure confidentiality (see Table 1).

Superintendent Sally Palmer.

Superintendent Palmer graduated from a liberal arts college with a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology. She then earned a Master's Degree in School Counseling. Palmer continued her education, and earned a certificate of advanced study in Educational Administration. Palmer began her career as a mathematics teacher for emotionally disturbed students in a large, urban school district in New England. After two years in this position, she served as the coordinator of a drop-out prevention program for four and a half years in that same school district. That experience was followed by a three-year stint as a truancy prevention counselor for a small city school district in a Mid-Atlantic state. The next nine years of Palmer's career saw her work as an elementary school counselor in a small, rural school district. Palmer then served as an elementary assistant principal for one year in a suburban school district. For the last seven years, Palmer worked in another small, rural school district (Diamond Point Central School District). There she served as the elementary school principal for five years and for the next two as the superintendent of schools, as well as the elementary school principal (Table 2).

Diamond Point Central School District.

Diamond Point Central School District is located in a rural area of a Mid-Atlantic state. The pre-kindergarten through grade twelve student enrollment for the 2010-2011 school year was slightly more than 600. The district had one pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade school building. Diamond Point Central School District also had a wealth of unique, challenging course offerings and extracurricular opportunities for its students. Diamond Point Central School

District was a chief local employer with just over 100 employees, including sixty-five faculty members. The Class of 2010 was comprised of nearly sixty students, approximately 75% of who pursued post-secondary education.

Superintendent Jerome Forbin.

Forbin graduated from a liberal arts college with a Bachelor of Science degree in education. Forbin went on to earn a Master's of Science in Education and Certification of Advance Study in School Counseling from the same institution. Then, Forbin completed a certificate of Advanced Study in School Administration and Supervision, from the same institution where he earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees. Forbin spent his entire career in the Smithville Central School District. He first served for six and a half years as an elementary school counselor and Committee on Special Education chairperson. This was followed by a brief stint in the principalship, at which time he was appointed to the superintendency when the former superintendent retired. He served as superintendent of schools for the next seven years (Table 2).

Smithville Central School District.

Smithville Central School District is located in a rural area of a Mid-Atlantic state. The pre-kindergarten through grade twelve student enrollment for the 2010-2011 school year was approximately 400 students. The district had one pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade school building and offered diverse distance learning and college credit courses for its high school students. Much like Diamond Point Central School District, Smithville Central School District was a major employer in the community with more than eighty employees, including forty-five faculty members. The Class of 2010 was comprised of nearly twenty-five students, approximately 70% of whom pursued post-secondary education.

Table 2

Career Pathways of Superintendent Forbin and Superintendent Palmer

Superintendent	Position	Duration
Sally Palmer	Math teacher (Special Education)	2 years
	Coordinator (Dropout Prevention Program)	2 years
	Director (Dropout Prevention Program)	2.5 years
	Counselor (Truancy Prevention Program)	3 years
	School counselor (Elementary)	9 years
	Assistant Principal (Elementary)	1 year
	Principal in Diamond Point (Elementary)	5 years
Jerome Forbin	Superintendent in Diamond Point (As well as elementary principal)	2 years
	School counselor in Smithsville (As well as Committee on Special Education chairperson)	6.5 years
	Principal in Smithsville	1.5 years
	Superintendent in Smithsville	7 years

Ascending to the Superintendency with a Background in School Counseling

This section provides information gathered from the interviews regarding the advantages and disadvantages of ascending to the superintendency with a background in school counseling, as opposed to the traditional career pathway from classroom teaching. The interview questions for each set of participants (superintendents; principals and business officials; school counselors; and school board members) are listed as they correspond to the research questions of this study. A detailed overview of findings is presented here.

Research Question 1: What are the perceived advantages and disadvantages of accessing the superintendency with a background as a school counselor?

To address this research question, the researcher asked the superintendents six interview questions. In addition, the principals, business officials and school counselors were asked three questions each, while the school board members responded to five interview questions.

The superintendents began their interview sessions by responding to a question which asked them if anyone encouraged them to pursue the superintendency. The two superintendents who participated in this study both noted that they were hired from within their respective school districts. In addition, Superintendent Forbin had spent his entire fifteen year educational career in Smithsville Central School District, moving from elementary school counselor to principal and then to the superintendency. Former superintendents and current board of education members in both districts discussed with both Forbin and Palmer the possibility of moving into the role of superintendent of schools and advocated for these former school counselors. Both Palmer and Forbin were highly respected and well regarded within their school districts. The constituents in the two districts viewed Palmer's and Forbin's people skills as a key predictor of their ability to become effective superintendents.

Due to budget cuts and retirements in Diamond Point Central School District and Smithsville Central School District, Superintendent Palmer and Superintendent Forbin both ascended to the superintendency more rapidly than they had anticipated. Superintendent Palmer noted,

Probably I was not going to move into the superintendency at the point that I [did]. I still have children that are in school and I really liked being a principal. We went through some budget cuts, and we made some realignments and it was the right thing to do. And I like it. But would I have chosen [to move to the superintendency at that point in my career]? If the opportunity was not in front of me, I would not have gone to another district to pursue the superintendency. (S. Palmer, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

When asked the same question, Superintendent Forbin remarked that while he was working as counselor, “The superintendent prior to me came to me and asked me if I would consider going for my additional degree” (J. Forbin, personal communication, January 19, 2011). Forbin later noted, “So he (the former superintendent) definitely encouraged me and then different members on the board came to me and asked if I would think about it” (J. Forbin, personal communication, January 19, 2011). Despite his young age when ascending to the superintendency, at that point in his career, Forbin felt comfortable moving to the superintendency.

When asked why he thought he was encouraged to pursue the superintendency, Forbin stated that the former superintendent and board members appreciated Forbin’s counseling efforts and his work as the chairperson for the district’s Committee on Special Education. Forbin remarked that the board of education and previous superintendent saw his successful work with

parents and the fostering of relationships with other stakeholders as a key building block to an effective superintendency.

Similar to the comments of Superintendent Palmer, when talking about his ascent to the superintendency, Superintendent Forbin noted,

I'll be honest with you; I thought I was going to be at least one additional year as a principal. When I took over the principal position, I started in January of that year. I was doing some principal work prior to that, but I was still carrying the CSE and elementary counseling caseload. So I transitioned into that... then I did that half a year and then a whole year as principal. But I thought there was going to be at least one more year, but my superintendent decided to retire. So the transition [to superintendent] actually happened a little bit quicker than I had thought. (J. Forbin, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

The superintendents were also asked how their counseling background had been beneficial during their superintendency. Both superintendents commented on the interpersonal skills they developed during their respective counselorships. When answering this question, Superintendent Palmer remarked,

I think when you are a teacher you don't have enough opportunity to do the other things that you do as a counselor. Where when you are a counselor you do have the chance to view what goes on in a classroom because you're around a classroom enough. You go in and do presentations; you meet with students. You meet with parents, and you do all of the things that you will use later on [in the superintendency]. (S. Palmer, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Palmer suggested another benefit of coming to the superintendency with a school counseling background was that counselors are regularly in contact with parents. Palmer stated, “They [teachers] don’t have to be making as many of the phone calls with parents where there’s a lot of conflict, and I think that hurts [those with a teaching background]” (S. Palmer, personal communication, January 13, 2011).

Similarly, Superintendent Forbin viewed the interaction that counselors have with various stakeholders, particularly parents, as a beneficial byproduct of being a school counselor. He noted, “I was an elementary counselor, but I was also CSE chair, K-12. So [faculty and staff] saw me and participated where I led tons of meetings, and worked with parents and did many of the things that are administrative” (J. Forbin, personal communication, January 19, 2011). During their counseling experience, Forbin and Palmer both had numerous opportunities to communicate with constituents holding varying roles. Both superintendents viewed this as a valuable experience which directly translated to the superintendency and the responsibilities of district leaders.

The superintendents were next asked if their school counseling background had been detrimental to their superintendency in any way. As a result of never having served as a traditional classroom teacher, Superintendent Forbin explained that some faculty members questioned his ability to be an instructional leader. Forbin stated, “There’s still the question from some classroom teachers. They’re a classroom teacher. I was not. ‘How can you lead?’ Luckily, I think part of that was broken because they knew me” (J. Forbin, personal communication, January 19, 2011). Forbin also stated that he had to become more “firm” with employees (J. Forbin, personal communication, January 19, 2011). Specifically, Forbin said,

A personal thing I had to overcome was, in some aspects, I had to become harder. I really became a disciplinarian of adults... It was very different when you're all of a sudden disciplining those who used to be your co-worker... That was a learning curve. (J. Forbin, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

Superintendent Palmer had a different perspective on the hindrances of not possessing a wealth of experience as a classroom teacher. Again, Palmer did teach briefly immediately after earning her bachelor's degree. Palmer discussed how her non-traditional background impacted her as an applicant for leadership positions. She noted,

I think where it hinders would be getting in the door for interviews [for principalships or superintendencies]. And during interviews, I think that's a roadblock... When I said, 'Well, I did teach for two years', I could tell that made a difference in people's minds. Beyond that, I don't think it makes a difference overall. (S. Palmer, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

To that response, the researcher asked the follow-up question, "So once in the position [superintendency], you haven't faced anyone who's questioning your ability to lead the district simply because you don't have a great deal of teaching experience?" Palmer answered,

No, nothing. I would say I've had some teachers that I could tell when they realized that I had taught... it was a positive for them to know that. I could tell it made a difference. And I will say it did [teaching experience was beneficial]. All of your employment makes a difference, and I think when I taught it certainly did help me understand what the challenges of being a teacher are. (S. Palmer, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

The superintendents were asked to name their strengths. Each superintendent seemed challenged by this question. Both superintendents stated that they believed their interpersonal

skills and ability to relate well to faculty, staff, and students were strong points. After a great deal of pondering and even some discussion about the researcher's own school district and financial challenges, Palmer responded,

I would say my strengths are... that I care about kids and people. And I care what happens to them here in the school. I would say that is probably what helps me do what I have to do here. My... what other strengths? I would say that I... I can work well with people. That I can do. It doesn't hurt that I'm a mom too. (S. Palmer, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Superintendent Forbin also mentioned that parenthood has allowed him to view students from a different perspective and has proven beneficial in his leadership of the school district. Forbin explained, "You don't have to have children to be a good teacher or administrator, but I can tell you I think it has helped me, being a parent, just understanding some of the situations" (J. Forbin, personal communication, January 19, 2011).

At several times during the interview sessions in Diamond Point, Superintendent Palmer's empathic leadership style was mentioned. Palmer viewed her compassionate nature as one of her strengths. Citing examples of this, Palmer stated,

[Making] the late night phone calls. The calling back to parents to make sure things are okay. Checking on teachers. Following up with students who are not doing well or have an issue. All those little simple things throughout the day I think is what I'm in this business for. If anything, being a superintendent, you don't get as much time to interact with students. (S. Palmer, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

In addition to her caring demeanor and ability to work well with others, Palmer noted that her problem solving skills and coping skills are also strengths. She stated,

I think all those types of things [problem solving and coping]; maybe they come from counseling... That's probably more from a counseling background, because, as a counselor, you were handed the situation and then you kind of had to smooth it over. And I think those things are what I bring to this job. You can't... you don't just turn those [skills] off. (S. Palmer, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Forbin suggested that his ability to relate to people was his primary strength. He expanded his answer by noting,

I think I have good judgment. I think I have strong relationships. Where relationships are important, I think I try to foster those and make sure they're strong. Again I think my listening skills are good. I also think I'm a good leader and, often times, I say a good leader needs to turn around and make sure that someone is following them. And I think I do that. I think I will turn around sometimes and ask people. 'Are you really on board with this? Are we going in the right direction?' (J. Forbin, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

The next interview question asked the superintendents to comment on their areas in need of improvement. Superintendent Palmer's answered that she needed to improve her skills in the financial realm of educational leadership. She also viewed her ability to think outside the box as a weakness. When asked to expand upon that answer, Palmer noted, "The new initiative, that's not my strength" (personal communication, January 13, 2011). Palmer also stated that superintendents must constantly broaden their knowledge base. Specifically, Palmer explained,

I would say it's always important to know more about... like right now, the common core standards, all of those. You have to do a lot of reading. But I don't live it. Yet I'm the one who's going to be trying to help teachers get there and make that transition plan. So

those are areas that I really need to continue to grow. Curriculum areas. (S. Palmer, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

The researcher found that Superintendent Forbin viewed communication as an area in which he must improve. Forbin asserted,

I think one area that we all need to continue to improve on is communication. If I have any issue, it seems to be through a lack of communication on my part. The principal and I, we'll be talking and all of a sudden we get somewhere and we both realize even though we just sat down and we talked about something, we're on such different pages. (J. Forbin, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

Forbin noted that his issue with communication was that he sometimes failed to share pertinent information with the necessary stakeholders in a timely manner or mistakenly assumed that they had the same information as he. Forbin attributed this to the hectic nature of the superintendency, but realized increased attention to solid communication could help to remedy this area in need of improvement. (J. Forbin, personal communication, January 19, 2011). Forbin stated that he had made a concerted effort to improve his communication with constituents by, "Keeping that information current and just making sure we're all talking the same language" (J. Forbin, personal communication, January 19, 2011).

After the researcher gained information regarding the superintendents own perceptions of their strengths and weaknesses, he asked the board of education members in each district why Forbin and Palmer were hired to lead their respective school districts. The researcher also questioned if there was anything that set the two superintendents apart from other candidates.

The two Diamond Point board members interviewed believed that Superintendent Palmer's experience as a highly regarded principal in their district would translate to an effective

superintendency. Diamond Point board member Donna Mydland noted, “We had experience with [Palmer] in a supervisory position, in an administrative position. We were very pleased with the work she had done. She had a great deal of respect with the community” (D. Mydland, personal communication, January 13, 2011). When asked if Palmer possessed any skills that set her apart from other candidates, Mydland commented,

Her ethics and morals are beyond reproach. She’s very thoughtful in making decisions. She does not make quick decisions, which sometimes is good and sometimes is bad, but she takes the time and thinks things out and thoroughly decides what is the best approach to something. We had seen that in use for quite some time. Also, she handled things, as a principal. Anything that had come up, she had handled, whether it was discipline, whether it was getting grade levels up, whether it was test scores. Whatever it was she seemed to take the bull by the horns. (D. Mydland, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Michael Holdsworth, the other Diamond Point board member who participated in this study, echoed Mydland’s sentiments when he stated,

[Palmer] had been one of our principals and, for myself, I liked what I saw. Very straight forward, hard working individual, and I believe in hiring from within for one thing and she just seemed to have everything that I would look for. A strong background in counseling and to me that person with that background knows the end result of what you need, when to continue on an education. Sometimes it’s just for a person to have a career path and having the person leading the school that understands that, to me, is a positive. I think a school counselor, especially a high school counselor, is one of the most important,

if not the most important, positions in school. (M. Holdsworth, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Like Mydland, Holdsworth also discussed the respect that the school community had for Palmer prior to her appointment to the superintendency. Holdsworth asserted,

I think she commands respect from not only her peers in other districts, but everybody that I could see respects her from the parents, to the children, to the older kids, the teachers. Even if everybody doesn't always agree with her, I think she commands respect without demanding respect. (M. Holdsworth, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

In both Diamond Point and Smithsville, each of the board members who participated in this study were on the board of education in their respective school districts when Superintendent Palmer and Superintendent Forbin were hired. Both Palmer and Forbin were hired from within, with each serving as a principal in their respective districts prior to ascending to the superintendency. During their principalships, both Palmer and Forbin made profoundly positive impressions on constituents in their districts, which gave the stakeholders confidence that they would both be effective superintendents. Brad Parish, a Smithsville board member stated, "We actually groomed [Forbin] and helped him get his education to become the superintendent of our school by first being our principal" (B. Parish, personal communication, January 19, 2011).

When asked why the board of education believed Forbin would be an effective superintendent, Parish remarked,

As a school counselor, he had very good skills with both the teachers of the school, the board, and the parents of the school district. He had good, open communications and he was... you were able to talk to him. You didn't have to feel that you couldn't talk to him

at any time about anything. He was always open with you and there for you. (B. Parish, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

Parish continued by stating that Forbin's background as Smithville's Committee on Special Education chairperson also provided Forbin with leadership experience. Parish understood the magnitude of special education and stated, "Special Ed. is probably the most misunderstood thing in most school districts" (B. Parish, personal communication, January 19, 2011). Prior to his Forbin's appointment to the superintendency, Parish believed Forbin's knowledge of special education would be beneficial to him as the district leader (B. Parish, personal communication, January 19, 2011). Forbin acknowledge that his experience with special education has been valuable (J. Forbin, personal communication, January 19, 2011).

Parish's board of education counterpart in Smithville, Jon Gadiel, mentioned that Smithville's previous superintendent, knowing that his own retirement was imminent, highly recommended Forbin to be his successor. Gadiel was confident with the former superintendent's recommendation, noting,

We are a small district so [the board of education] knew [Forbin], his work, certainly as principal. And principal in a small school is a very busy position, so we knew he could handle the task (of superintendent). So we were comfortable and, personally, I've been on the board twenty some odd years and it's a crap shoot every time you hire a superintendent. You don't know for a year or so what you're getting. And in this case, we did know what we were getting. (J. Gadiel, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

Next, the board of education members were asked if any of their colleagues expressed any reservations in hiring a superintendent who lacked (or had very limited) experience as a

classroom teacher. In Diamond Point, board members Michael Holdsworth and Donna Mydland bluntly answered this question with a resounding, “No” (M. Holdsworth, personal communication, January 13, 2011; D. Mydland, personal communication, January 13, 2011). Holdsworth stated, “It was a very easy decision for the five of us to make” (personal communication, January 13, 2011). Due to Superintendent Palmer’s efficacy in the principalship at Diamond Point, stakeholders had little doubt that she would become an effective superintendent. Mydland noted,

At that point [when she interviewed for the superintendency], she had proven what she could do. She knew how to get things done in the classroom. The elementary teachers would be the first ones to and did endlessly talk on her behalf; they had a great deal of respect for her. She understood them, she understood the classroom, and she understood how to make things work. There were no issues there. (D. Mydland, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

The Smithsville board of education members responded similarly to this question, stating that the school board did not have any reservations regarding the hiring of Superintendent Forbin. The two board members in Smithsville said that they knew that Superintendent Forbin was capable of successfully leading the district. Board member Jon Gadiel responded to this question by declaring,

I think we would have [had reservations hiring a superintendent without teaching experience] if we hadn’t known [Forbin’s] work and known his ability as a counselor. We had a superintendent years ago that had no teaching experience, and it was a bad experience for our district. Now, can I blame that totally on the fact that they never were in a classroom? I don’t know. But... experience with children, you need that to be a

superintendent. And whether it has to be teaching or in the counseling position, I don't know, but [Forbin] certainly had experience with classroom settings. (J. Gadiel, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

Smithsville board member Brad Parish emphasized the confidence that the board members and the school community had in Superintendent Forbin. Parish responded, "Actually, we took the first step forward and approached [Forbin] and asked him [if he would consider the superintendency]. We have been a true believer in our school, if we can promote within, that it's a known entity, what you're getting. And [Forbin] proved to be that candidate for us. We asked him right from the beginning to continue his education and we knew our superintendent was going to retire. And we actually groomed him and, or helped groom him, and provided him with a means so he could step in the position when our superintendent retired. And he worked very closely with our previous superintendent, so it helped his skills tremendously. So he was ready when he took over. (B. Parish, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

The researcher followed Parish's response with the question, "Do you think anyone in the community, whether it be faculty and staff, or just residents of the community, thought that he wouldn't be able to be successful because he wasn't a teacher?" Parish replied, "I don't believe that at all. I've never heard that, so I don't believe that was ever a situation" (personal communication, January 19, 2011).

The board of education members who participated in this study indicated that they and their board member counterparts had confidence that Forbin and Palmer would become effective superintendents. It was not determined if this confidence was due to the skills Forbin and Palmer

possessed as a result of their counseling background or as a result of Forbin's and Palmer's effective principalships in Smithsville and Diamond Point respectively.

The principals and business officials in each district were asked to name their superintendent's strengths. Diamond Point principal Phillip Gordon and business manager Brent McConnell both viewed Superintendent Palmer's interpersonal skills, as well as her willingness to ask questions and admit she was not all-knowing as some of her key strengths. Gordon explained, "[Palmer's] willing to say 'I don't know that' or 'I'll have to look that up'" (P. Gordon, personal communication, February 8, 2011). In response to this question, McConnell stated,

Her interpersonal skills; very good with the public, very good with the staff... A desire to, where she's weak or where she doesn't know as much, even with the money/financial side of things, a willingness to say 'Give it to me and let's sit down and go through this again, so I can make sure.' A real desire to learn. (B. McConnell, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

McConnell also stated that Palmer had an intrinsic ability to foster enthusiasm in stakeholders. "I think she has a grand ability... with curriculum mapping, for example, of talking to the faculty and getting them excited about something" (B. McConnell, personal communication, January 13, 2011).

When asked how Palmer was able to create buy-in and develop district-wide enthusiasm, McConnell noted,

I think it's because they trust her. Because she's established that trust over the five or six years that they've known her. So, there's a level of trust they have in her and she explains why we need to move in this direction... And [Palmer] looks to the strengths of

the people, like her good teachers and says, ‘I know you want this.’ She assumes the best of them. (B. McConnell, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Phillip Gordon, Diamond Point Junior-Senior High School’s principal, saw Palmer’s strengths as her flexibility and team approach to leadership. Gordon’s response to the question about Superintendent Palmer’s strengths was,

[Palmer’s] willingness to consider options. I’ve worked for some people in the past that... it’s their way or no way, and there’s really not a whole lot of input from any of their underlings, so to speak. And [Palmer] is not like that. She wants to involve [others] ‘What do you think?’ ‘Why do you think that?’ Basically, it’s like defending a thesis. You go up with your idea and you say ‘This is what I think and this is why.’ And she takes that into consideration. I’ve seen her change decisions or modify decisions based on input from myself or other people. (P. Gordon, personal communication, February 8, 2011)

Gordon continued with his response to the question about Palmer’s strengths by stating, “[Palmer’s] a real team player. I think she does look to her administrative team for aid in decision making, but also for gathering the proper information so that she can make a decision [herself]” (S. Palmer, personal communication, January 13, 2011).

Smithville principal, Eliza Hunter, and business manager, Candice Kuroda, revealed their impressions of Superintendent Forbin’s strengths. Both Kuroda and Hunter characterize Forbin as a people person who treats others with respect and kindness. Hunter stated,

[Forbin] is very honest and he tries to be very fair. He envisions long and short-term goals. He’s a great listener. He has great integrity. His relationships with people in the building - he tries to have those key players and finds out things going on around the

building with certain people... What's nice about [Forbin] is, when he does make a mistake, he admits it and accepts his mistakes. (E. Hunter, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

Kuroda furthered her assertion that Forbin's interpersonal skills were a strength of his by noting that,

[Forbin], as a person, he has a very solid core. He knows who he is. He is very comfortable with how he feels about things. And I think it's that kind of confidence that he has in himself allows him to better hire people and analyze people. As far as being able to review people and things like that, it all comes from that solid core of his, as far as just loving to be around people. (C. Kuroda, personal communication, January 24, 2011)

Kuroda continued by stating that Forbin did not let his emotions get the best of him.

Forbin never displayed a temper and was always patient. Kuroda emphasized this by saying,

I've been in some situations with him with employees, with grievances and things like that, where I thought I was going to crack. But he could just sit back and let the silence hang in the air for a while before anything else was said. You never see him really get riled up... And I wonder if that doesn't come from his counseling skills as well. (C. Kuroda, personal communication, January 24, 2011)

Responding to the interview question which asked them to name their superintendent's strengths, the school counselors' perceptions of Superintendent Palmer and Superintendent Forbin were particularly meaningful, as the counselors were able to share specific information regarding counseling skills used by their respective superintendents. According to Amy Clifford, Diamond Point's secondary school counselor, Superintendent Palmer's most valuable strength was her communication skills. Clifford replied,

I think communication is the biggest strength. [Palmer] knows how to communicate. I think when you're a counselor you know the biggest part of the job is being the liaison between student, teachers, administrators, so she is aware of all the people who need to be on board to get something to happen, and she does that pretty easily. So, I think great communication and a great sense of humor, which you have to have to be a counselor. (A. Clifford, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Sharing the same sentiments as other stakeholders who participated in this study, Clifford asserted that Palmer was a "people person" (A. Clifford, personal communication, January 13, 2011). Clifford furthered this response by noting,

[Palmer's] warm. People know that even though she's your leader that she definitely cares. We had an awful budget last year. We had to make a lot of cuts. When we had to do that previously... the morale was awful then. [Palmer] approached the cuts differently though. I think [Palmer] was up front and honest, and because she was so supportive those teachers knew that it was hard for her. They knew that it wasn't personal. Her communication skills helped them to know why she was making her decisions, that it was bad, but that it wasn't personal and that she truly felt for them. So, the morale was completely different. (A. Clifford, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

When reflecting on Forbin's strengths, Smithville's secondary school counselor, Carolyn Hart, stated that Forbin was a caring, understanding person with whom she felt comfortable talking. Hart said,

He's a kind person, which makes him approachable and makes him non-intimidating where you can go in there and say what's on your mind in a respectful way. Whereas, I know other superintendents within [our region], a lot of teachers fear them and have a

fear of repercussions... and thank God we don't have that here. We're a small district and it's helpful that we have that closeness without fear. (C. Hart, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

Hart further noted the collaborative aspects of Forbin's leadership style when she stated, "He is open and he is willing to listen and go with it, and take ideas rather than just do things on his own" (C. Hart, personal communication, January 19, 2011). Hart continued by stating that Forbin was "warm" and said, "He cares about the district. He cares about his employees. He cares what people think" (C. Hart, personal communication, January 19, 2011). This was similar to Superintendent Palmer, who characterized her own leadership style as "caring" (S. Palmer, personal communication, January 13, 2011).

The board of education members in both school districts were asked to name their superintendent's strengths. Diamond Point Central School District board of education members answered similarly to those stakeholders who worked with Superintendent Palmer on a daily basis. Michael Holdsworth and Donna Mydland both viewed Palmer as a compassionate individual who was interested in the wellbeing of both students and staff. In reply to this question about Palmer's strengths, Holdsworth stated,

Honesty, integrity, very caring, understanding. I think [Palmer] understands the dilemma that some kids find themselves in through no fault of their own. She's just a person that sees the whole picture, but yet can enforce rules. With discipline, she's not afraid... she doesn't shy away from that, but uses compassion. (M. Holdsworth, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Holdsworth continued to say that Palmer was a "trustworthy, up front" leader (M. Holdsworth, personal communication, January 13, 2011). Likewise, Mydland noted that Palmer

was able to disseminate necessary information to the appropriate stakeholders. Mydland specified what she viewed as Palmer's strengths by stating, "Communication, as a whole, is certainly her strength. And, even though she doesn't have a teaching background, she has a great interaction with kids" (D. Mydland, personal communication, January 13, 2011).

Later in the conversation with the researcher, Mydland mentioned additional strengths of Palmer's when she stated,

I think [Palmer's] thoughtfulness and thoroughness as far as making decisions, making a plan, deciding the best way to go about something is a strength. I think her level of professionalism. A lot of times in a school district... it becomes gossipy... and her level of professionalism does not allow that and does not play into that and that is something that is very hard to get in a small town... She has an amazing level of professionalism that she's very approachable on a personal level, but there is a definite distinction between personal and professional. (D. Mydland, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

In Smithsville Central School District, board of education members Brad Parish and Jon Gadiel were candid in their responses about Superintendent Forbin's strengths. Gadiel replied to this question by stating,

I would say [Forbin's] strengths are his people skills. He just has a grasp of people's mental state, for lack of a better term. He can pick up on the mood when they come through the door. And I think that's a strength because I think he knows how to handle the situation more than [superintendents without a counseling background]. (J. Gadiel, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

In the same vein, Gadiel noted that Forbin knows his staff well and can accentuate their strengths. Expanding upon this, Gadiel stated that Forbin had success with,

Picking up on a certain teacher's strengths and having them teach their colleagues. It could be as simple as a SMART board, or computer training, or whatever, but he'll find people that are strong in that and have them do the training, which works out great for everybody. I think it's a better setting for everyone and it certainly saves the district money. (J. Gadiel, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

Board member Brad Parish reiterated the viewpoints of many other Smithsville stakeholders when answering this question about Superintendent Forbin's strengths. Parish asserted,

People skills are by far the biggest [strength]. Communication. We have a wide variety of people who communicate with him, and I guess I'd want to say he can communicate on the highest professional level and he can communicate to the average citizen... I'm not down-talking anybody, but he can talk to anyone. And it doesn't matter what level of education or experience they have. He can get his point across. And he's just so, so easy to talk to. And I truly believe that came from his counseling background. Because a lot of that is being able to know how to handle people and talk to people, and he does it very well. (B. Parish, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

While communication was viewed as one of Forbin's strengths by Smithsville's board member and the business manager, Forbin himself listed communication as an area in need of improvement. As previously mentioned, Forbin noted that he must share information more quickly and comprehensively with stakeholders (J. Forbin, personal communication, January 19, 2011).

After naming their superintendent's strengths, the principals and business officials in the two school districts were asked if they felt a school counseling background provided a solid foundation for the transition to the superintendency. Three of the four principals and business managers emphatically concluded that school counseling does provide a solid foundation for the transition to educational leadership positions. Diamond Point's business manager responded,

Yes. I guess I don't see it as having as much to do with what you did, as it does with who you are. If you have a personality that can lead whether you were... Where you came from in the system doesn't really have a significant impact, and good leadership will override or overcome any of those weaknesses or seeming issues to other people. It probably helps in some way to have a little bit of a better knowledge of the back office view of things. As with a counselor, you do see more of the administrative functions probably than a classroom teacher does. So the classroom teacher would be maybe a little more limited, where, as a counselor, you see how classroom teacher functions, but you also see how the support staff works and more of the life of the school. (B.

McConnell, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Phillip Gordon, Diamond Point's secondary school principal, echoed McConnell's sentiments. Gordon posited that superintendents with a classroom teaching background may become too curriculum and instruction driven, and, at times, fail to focus on students' needs. Gordon provided a wealth of significant information when he stated,

I would have to say the skills learned there [school counseling] are beneficial to the understanding of the student because, let's face it, we're all in it for the kids and their education and their development. I think having a student focus is very important... So, I think coming from the counseling perspective, it really puts the focus on the kids, where

it should be. And it also, those skills that you learn, dealing with kids are transferrable to dealing with families, to dealing with parents, all that kind of stuff. So I think there's a big advantage in the leadership role.

[Counselors] may have to work a little bit to understand the instructional aspect, but again, it's like you can't teach being tall. The skills that you really need to have to be a good leader, I think, you develop as a counselor. Whereas you can be an instructional master, but not be able to convey that information or lead people into that direction. That's the key. It's lead the people. You can know everything you want to know about instruction, but, if they don't do what you tell them to do, it's not going to work. So the buy-in process, the fact that [Palmer] has those abilities to pull people together. She gets buy-in from the teachers and she works hard to understand the instructional end of things. Yes, [school counseling] is an advantageous way to come into leadership. (P. Gordon, personal communication, February 8, 2011)

Smithsville's business manager, Candice Kuroda, also believed a school counseling background was beneficial when ascending to leadership roles. Answering the interview question which asked if school counseling background provided a solid foundation for the transition to the superintendency, Kuroda stated,

I do, because I think that it provides an inner core of strength as far as being able to communicate with all the core factions that a superintendent has to communicate with, whether it be his board or the community or the teachers or the support staff or whatever it may be... For us right now with this community group that is angry out there, it's very important that [Forbin] is able to communicate with them. And again, communicate with them in a very level headed way. Not with them getting best of him if you will. And

he's able to do that and I think that calmness, that sense of security that he has. He's very confident dealing with the people. And I think that comes from the counseling background. (C. Kuroda, personal communication, January 24, 2011)

Eliza Hunter, Smithsville's pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade principal, was the lone dissenting voice amongst the two principals and two business managers who answered this question about a counseling background providing a good foundation for leadership positions. Hunter did not think the skills developed in a counselorship effectively prepared educators for the superintendency. Hunter responded without a great deal of detail by saying,

I don't think it would be a solid background, a counseling background. I think, like I said before, going through as a teacher, being a principal, stepping in and looking, from everything; understanding. But having the counseling background, he does seek out information to grow as a leader. So, is a counseling background a solid foundation? I would say... not really. (personal communication, January 19, 2011)

A school counselor in each district was asked to comment on school counseling providing a strong foundation for the move to educational leadership. Diamond Point's secondary counselor had a favorable viewpoint of the school counselorship providing a foundation for the superintendency. Amy Clifford saw many similarities between the counselorship and the superintendency, particularly in the interaction with multiple stakeholders. Clifford stated,

I think you're an administrator the minute you walk in [as a school counselor] and, in many places, you're the only counselor so you don't have a support team, you don't have people to bounce ideas off of. You go to your administrators, but you're working with students, parents, teachers, administrators; four groups and you can never please all of

them... So, in many ways, I think counselors are administrators. You have to make decisions that, obviously, you run by your administration, but you have to make decisions and come up with plans, and be able to think on your feet, and develop ideas to come up with what works. Also, counselors are working with teachers to help students, so you're not directing teachers, but you're definitely giving them advice and you have to do it in a way that they don't feel that you're being confrontational or judgmental or disrespectful. So I think all of those things definitely help [in this transition to the superintendency]. The money issues that go with the superintendency, I don't know about that. I think you have to be able to learn quickly and efficiently as a school counselor, but we don't do a lot of budget things. (A. Clifford, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Clifford continued to explain her point of a superintendent being effectively prepared by serving as a school counselor when she stated that counselors and superintendents are both responsible for, "Thinking out of the box, creating solutions to brand new problems. Asking, 'How can we make that work?' Multitasking" (A. Clifford, personal communication, January 13, 2011).

Much like Smithsville's principal, Smithsville's secondary school counselor was also quick to state that she did not believe school counseling provides as solid foundation for the transition to educational leadership positions as does classroom teaching experience. Hart felt as though there are roles and responsibilities that superintendents hold for which many counselors are not adequately prepared, specifically instructional leadership and teacher evaluation. Hart noted that Forbin ascended to the superintendency without a great deal of career experience and only a brief stint in the principalship. Hart said,

I truly believe that to become a superintendent you should have that classroom experience. You also should have finance experience. Obviously, creating the budget and working with the budget is a huge factor, and some people would feel that's even more important than classroom experience. How can you coach the game when you've never been a player, so to speak? I think that if you don't have the classroom experience then doing what you can to take workshops or... possibly substitute teach. Just to have that feel of what it's like to be in that classroom with kids, and know that instruction and the curriculum. But he's a good guy and he listens, and he does the best he can. So a lot of that makes up for [his weaknesses]. (C. Hart, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

School Counselor Hart responded further to the question by stating,

I think the road to superintendency [for Forbin] was very fast. And he does the best he can and he is a good superintendent. We all have faults. We all have things we need to improve on. Some people would say in order to be a school counselor you should have been a teacher. Maybe. He's been a superintendent for six or seven years now and I don't see him turning back to become a school counselor. I think with experience, in years to come, you improve just as you do as a school counselor. Just because he was a school counselor and wasn't a teacher, it doesn't make him any less of a superintendent compared to the one who was [a teacher]. You just lack that experience, but in time you gain an understanding. (C. Hart, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

Hart did state that there are a number of skills that school counselors possess that do translate to the superintendency, skills which traditional classroom teachers may not always possess. Specifically, Hart noted, "The patience, the listening skills. There are many teachers

who don't have that who become superintendents. There are superintendents who were teachers and are horrible, and they're hard to work for and they are intimidating. So it's a balancing act" (C. Hart, personal communication, January 19, 2011).

All study participants were asked to discuss areas of leadership in which their superintendent could improve. When addressing this interview question, in an attempt to ensure the confidentiality of the participants, the researcher elected not to refer to specific individuals, even by pseudonym. Eight of the twelve participants stated that any weaknesses exhibited by Superintendent Forbin and Superintendent Palmer would be remedied as the superintendents gained additional experience in the position.

Possessing and vocalizing a vision for their respective school districts were leadership functions that stakeholders in both districts deemed to be an area in which Forbin and Palmer could improve. A participant from Smithsville noted that Forbin's predecessor had a clear vision for the direction in which he saw the district going, and this was something that Forbin initially lacked when he assumed the superintendency. This participant noted that Forbin may not have fully understood all elements of district-level leadership – specifically, board of education relationships, community support, and educational finance – when he stepped into the position. In Diamond Point, one interviewee stated that as Palmer spends more time in the district she will gain confidence in her decision making, and in determining and articulating the vision she has for the school district.

When asked what Palmer could improve upon, one Diamond Point participant paused for nearly thirty seconds before stating that Palmer may be too invested in her job. This participant worried that Palmer may burn out as a result of the long hours required of superintendents, the high stress of the position, and Palmer's passion for her job and her school district. This

individual stated that Palmer may care too much about Diamond Point Central School District. In a similar vein, another participant suggested that Palmer could become a more effective superintendent if she was less concerned with others' perceptions of her and did not take things personally. This interviewee noted that this is challenging for anyone, especially those in such a public role as the school superintendency.

Another study participant from Diamond Point said that Superintendent Palmer may need to be more forceful with employees, specifically issuing directives. When asked if Palmer's reluctance to give faculty and staff directives could have been a result of Palmer's school counseling background, this participant remarked that it could be attributed to Palmer's career path, as counselors tend to want to help individuals come to their own conclusions rather than tell them what to do.

In Diamond Point, an interviewee commented that Superintendent Palmer's organizational skills were a weakness when she assumed the superintendency, but have improved during her tenure. The participant noted that continued improvement in this realm may allow Palmer to become increasingly effective.

Forbin's consistency was an issue raised by a study participant. When asked to specify, this individual noted that Forbin is more lenient with certain employees than he is with others. This interviewee noted that Forbin may have given privileges to some employees, but not to other colleagues. This participant did note that Forbin has improved in this realm.

Two participants from Smithsville stated that Forbin could do more to ensure that employees fulfill contractual obligations, specifically enforcing work hours and departure times. Another study participant suggested that Forbin could display a greater leadership function with the school board members, rather than, at times, deferring to their viewpoints and objectives.

The researcher found that some study participants in each district viewed certain attributes and practices of Forbin's and Palmer's as weaknesses, while other participants in that district viewed these same characteristics and skills as their superintendent's strengths. For example, two Smithsville's participants noted that communication with faculty and staff is an area which Forbin could improve upon. These two individuals stated that Forbin did not always share pertinent information in a timely manner, which led to confusion and minor misunderstandings. As previously noted, Forbin himself believed his communication with stakeholders could be improved. Ironically, other Smithsville employees deemed Forbin's communication skills to be one of his strengths.

Much like the differing opinions regarding Forbin's ability to communicate effectively, Smithsville participants were divided in their perceptions of Forbin's visibility within the school itself and the community at large. Two Smithsville participants suggested that Forbin could be more visible both in the school building and within the community. On the contrary, other study participants from Smithsville viewed Forbin's visibility and school community involvement as two of his strengths. Two Smithsville participants commented on Forbin's involvement with numerous extracurricular functions and community events, as well as community-based organizations. Those who noted that Forbin's visibility could be improved believed that teachers may have felt more supported and understood if Forbin had made a greater effort to get out of his office and be a presence throughout the school.

In another instance of a difference of opinions, a Diamond Point study participant suggested that Palmer could delegate more of her duties and responsibilities, simply because she was always tremendously busy and involved in a multitude of district functions and operations.

However, another Diamond Point participant viewed delegation to be a strength of Superintendent Palmer's.

Research Question 2: How has a background in school counseling molded the leadership style of the superintendents who participated in this study?

The researcher asked two interview questions to all participants specifically related to this research question. Responding to the interview question which asked the superintendents to discuss how their school counseling experience molded their leadership style, Palmer and Forbin felt that numerous aspects of their leadership style have been directly influenced by their counseling experience. Specifically, Palmer stated,

I find that my experience as a counselor and my training as a counselor are used every day. It is something you don't think about, but you find that there are so many times that you use the facilitating skills and the counseling skills, and helping people work together to solve problems. It is all counseling background, so [the counseling experience] is very instrumental. (S. Palmer, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Forbin noted that his background in school counseling has helped him to understand people and the impact stakeholders have on a school district. Forbin answered,

I think the strongest affect my counseling experience has had is my insight on people. I think counseling gave me the background and the skills to be able to, not only work with people, but understand personalities. To understand, at times, the difference between the needs and wants of people and know how to fulfill some of those. (J. Forbin, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

Next, the superintendents were asked how they would guide or mentor a novice superintendent. Superintendent Palmer felt that learning from her superintendent colleagues allowed her to become an effective superintendent. She noted,

We have a small group of superintendents that are all fairly new and we meet monthly. We have been meeting to just to kind of talk about different options and directions we're going in; brainstorming. So I think either in mentoring or as a new superintendent, developing relationships with area superintendents is important. (S. Palmer, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

When asked about what specific elements of the superintendency she would discuss with novice superintendents, Palmer continued,

To me, it's having somebody to step you through the Superintendent Hearing... So many of the other things, again, counseling has prepared me for because you have so many documents you have to submit to the state [as a counselor]. So that part was pretty easy, but I think the paperwork would be hard if you did not have some of the background. (S. Palmer, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

In addition, Palmer mentioned that she would mentor new superintendents in the budget development process and in the multitude of financial decisions that superintendents make, for which many are unprepared.

Superintendent Forbin noted the value of novice superintendents observing and shadowing experienced superintendents. Shadowing allows the new superintendent or aspirant to the position to witness district operations and see the numerous roles and responsibilities of a superintendent. Forbin specified,

One of the things I would when mentoring is they would be beside me throughout the day. I think first-hand walking through, hearing the different situations. I did, obviously, the curriculum work and the book information [in his superintendent preparation program], but, and I think you hear this from almost every job, walking not only a day, but a length of time in a position is so important.

Probably the largest surprise that I had coming into this position was the vast amount of information that you're expected to know. When I came into the position, we were doing a building project. I was being asked what color tile, what kind of finish, what kind of... things that I didn't know. I had no idea what a parapet was. I didn't know terrazzo. I walk into hospitals or places now, and I look and say, 'What a beautiful floor.' Because now I know what a beautiful floor is. I had no clue before. (J. Forbin, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

Forbin also discussed how he would mentor novice superintendents to help them develop respectful, working relationships with all constituents. Forbin suggested this because he firmly believed that educating a child is a group effort in which members from the entire school community must take an active role. Novice superintendents should understand that, often times, they are less effective when working alone. Forbin explained that a team effort is essential to ensure that a school district is meeting the students' needs (J. Forbin, personal communication, January 19, 2011).

Next, the researcher asked the principals and business officials who participated in this study to describe their superintendent's leadership style. Diamond Point's secondary school principal, Phillip Gordon, characterized Superintendent Palmer's leadership style as one in which Palmer provides her administrators, faculty, and staff with the necessary autonomy to complete

their task, while, at the same, being available to discuss any concerns these stakeholders might have. Gordon stated,

[Palmer] is very involved in regards to availability to help, and she has a willingness to discuss different issues. She is there, if needed, but she's a very hands-off leader. She allows you to do your job how you feel you should do the job. But again, she's always there to support you or offer some suggestions, in either case. But, pretty much, I have quite a bit of autonomy in running the high school. (P. Gordon, personal communication, February 8, 2011)

Brent McConnell, Diamond Point's business manager, answered this question differently than the other administrators who participated in this study. Instead of referencing the role his superintendent takes in leadership decisions and functions, McConnell discussed Superintendent Palmer's calculated, focused approach to leadership. McConnell declared,

[Palmer's] leadership style is ... smooth would be a word. Careful. If information is coming in, she makes sure she gathers in all the feeds of information to make sure she's got the whole story, which can frustrate [constituents] at times because it's like, "Oh, come on", but at the same time it's the best thing to do because then everybody knows that they've had ample time to give their input. So, she's thorough, very thorough and makes certain she's making an informed decision, but not in such a way that it handcuffs her. If a decision needs to be made in a hurry, she doesn't worry about making sure that everybody's heard, but she wants to make sure she's got the best information to go forward. (B. McConnell, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

In Smithsville, Principal Hunter and Business Manager Kuroda both saw Superintendent Forbin's leadership style as participatory. They both declared that Forbin was actively involved

in all decision making functions and leadership actions. Hunter stated, “I would say [Forbin’s] a participative [leader], where he uses one or more people to sit down and talk things over and then he basically makes his decision from that. He makes the authoritarian decision from those conversations” (E. Hunter, personal communication, January 19, 2011). Kuroda had a similar response, noting,

Depending on the circumstances, [Forbin] might be likely to participate in whatever the directive is or whatever the situation is. In another situation, he might delegate the authority. I guess if I had to classify him into one specific area, I would say he has a more participatory approach in trying to lead and find solutions to problems. (C. Kuroda, personal communication, January 24, 2011)

When asked to cite examples of Forbin’s participative leadership style, Kuroda mentioned Forbin’s willingness to get involved in school community events, such as Smithville’s annual Grandparents’ Day breakfast and cookouts in the autumn during athletic contests. Kuroda concluded her response to this question by stating, “I think what I’m trying to say is that [Forbin’s] in the middle of whatever is going on” (C. Kuroda, personal communication, January 24, 2011).

The school counselors also described the leadership style of their superintendent. The counselors emphasized the team approach to leadership that both Superintendent Forbin and Superintendent Palmer employed. Amy Clifford from Diamond Point stated,

[Palmer] leads by example and hard work, and is really able to get people to come on board by supporting them. She will have a pretty direct goal, but is pretty free in letting people add to how we get there. Definitely a team approach too. But I think she also has

a clear goal, which is a perfect combination. (A. Clifford, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Smithsville's counselor, Carolyn Hart, referenced Superintendent Forbin's listening skills, open door policy, the respect constituents have for him, and his desire to obtain the viewpoints of others when making decisions. Hart answered,

[Forbin] has the listening skills needed to be a leader. He is approachable. He is non-intimidating. If I have a problem, he's right down the hall and I sometimes go to him more than I do my own principal. You may not agree with everything he says or does, but he is our leader and I do respect him. But when we disagree, I'm not afraid to say I disagree. (C. Hart, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

In addition, the board of education members who participated in this study discussed the leadership style of their superintendent. The two board of education members from Diamond Point Central School District stated that Superintendent Palmer led with integrity and was clear in her expectations of district employees. Donna Mydland noted,

Again, ethics and morals come in. [Palmer] always leads ethically. She lets people know what is expected of them, and then she gives them the room to do it. She does not have a problem stepping in when she needs to. She will give people the room to do things their own way. She does not force her own style, her way onto anybody else, with the exception of reminding everything that there's a right way and there's a wrong way... We've had different styles of superintendents. We've had some that micromanage everything. There are pros and cons to that. But she's a definite delegator. (D. Mydland, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Michael Holdsworth, Mydland's school board counterpart, stated that Palmer led by example, showing district employees how she expected them to operate. Holdsworth's answer to this question was similar to that of Business Manager McConnell. Holdsworth explained,

I think [Palmer] leads by example. I just think she thinks things through, but yet can make a quick decision if need be. But I think she plans and leads from the front. I think she takes people's opinions, and she garners from people's ideas, but she's not afraid to, if she has to, maybe take a different approach than they suggest. (M. Holdsworth, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

The board of education members in Smithsville answered this question similarly to their counterparts in Diamond Point. Brad Parish remarked that Forbin also leads by example, values the input of stakeholders, and has an open door style of leadership. Specifically, Parish noted,

[Forbin] leads by doing it himself. If he wouldn't do it himself, he wouldn't ask someone else to do it. Like everyone, we're having tough times with contract negotiations and finances. When it comes to salary and pay cuts, [Forbin] took a voluntary pay cut... He's probably the most fair person I've ever seen and he listens to everyone. (B. Parish, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

Smithsville board member Jon Gadiel also mentioned Forbin's open door policy, but thought that Forbin should have, at times, limited his accessibility. Gadiel said,

It's a positive that [Forbin's] approachable, but sometimes it's to a fault in my opinion. But I think that's the counselor in him. He wants to hear everyone out. And I think sometimes he needs to have people wait their turn to be heard. Regardless, he's not easily pushed around. If he makes a decision, he sticks by it. I think he's a good leader. (J. Gadiel, personal communication, January 19, 2010)

The principals and business officials responded to the question which asked them how their superintendent's leadership style differed from that of previous superintendents with whom they had worked. The overriding theme in the administrators' answers to this question focused on Forbin's and Palmer's desire to obtain input from others, their calculated approach to decision making, and the openness that typified the superintendents' respective leadership styles. While not directly discussing leadership methodology, Principal Gordon noted that Palmer was not as familiar with some of the nuances of the classroom and instruction as previous superintendents with whom Gordon has worked. Gordon stated, "I think [Palmer's] worked closely with teachers throughout the years to kind of understand what they go through, but I think other superintendents maybe had a deeper understanding of what teachers have to go through" (P. Gordon, personal communication, February 8, 2011). Gordon expanded this observation by noting that Palmer might not be as well versed in curriculum or the preparation time that classroom teachers need to craft a solid lesson as would superintendents with a long-term teaching background. Gordon concluded his reply to this question by saying,

As far as student management, I think [Palmer] has a good handle on that because she's dealt with kids and what they go through. And probably even better than most superintendents because, as a counselor, you talk to kids about how all the teachers are affecting them. (P. Gordon, personal communication, February 8, 2011)

Brent McConnell from Diamond Point believed the biggest difference between Palmer's leadership style and that of previous superintendents with whom he has worked was that Palmer was a more inclusive superintendent and valued others opinions (B. McConnell, personal communication, January 13, 2011). McConnell said,

[Palmer] does a much better job of getting consensus. Instead of forcing [directives and initiatives] on people, [Palmer] builds the consensus. She knows where she wants to go, but builds consensus to make it happen instead of hammering it in to make it happen.

There's a resentment that happens with staff if they don't understand why they're doing something. (B. McConnell, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

McConnell also stated that Palmer had a profound ability to keep abreast of state and federal educational mandates and disseminated appropriate information to constituents (B. McConnell, personal communication, January 13, 2011).

In Smithsville, Principal Hunter stated that the superintendents she worked with prior to Superintendent Forbin were authoritarian in nature. Hunter continued,

[Forbin] seems to be more open to listening to other people and getting their views and I feel that he takes what you say seriously and takes it to heart. And he usually waits on making decisions. Sometimes before he makes them he likes to think about it. He's not one to jump right on something unless it's serious. (E. Hunter, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

Hunter believed that Forbin's personality and counseling background prompted him to listen to others and ensure that all involved parties were in agreement before action was taken (E. Hunter, personal communication, January 19, 2011).

When answering the question about how Forbin's leadership style differed from previous superintendents, Candice Kuroda, Smithsville's business manager, was quick to note that the previous superintendent with whom she worked was a deeply experienced educator and long-time superintendent who was at the end of his career. Kuroda stated that, due to his veteran status, Forbin's predecessor had experienced a great deal during his career that he could

reference when issues arose. Kuroda did note that Forbin sought the input of constituents much more so than did this former superintendent who was much more authoritarian in his decision making. In addition, Kuroda stated that, at this point in his career, Forbin lacked the vision of his predecessor, but was much more willing to ask questions and expand his knowledge base.

When commenting on how their superintendent's leadership style differed from previous superintendents in the school district, the school counselors interviewed for this study both noted that their respective superintendents were well respected by faculty and staff, as well as throughout the entire school community. Both counselors also suggested that Superintendent Forbin and Superintendent Palmer made their employees feel comfortable and valued more so than under the leadership of former superintendents. Amy Clifford from Diamond Point said,

[Palmer] is just a people person and I think the main thing is that she is comfortable in a team approach, and you don't feel like when [Palmer] walks in a room that she needs it to be clear that she is the leader, but I think out of respect people are happy to have her as our leader. I think again, what she does every day – communication, respect – definitely she communicates that she respects her teachers. She is able to say five positive things before she says something that she would like you to correct. She can get that across in a way that isn't confrontational and she knows how to soften the blow too. (A. Clifford, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Clifford also referenced Palmer's ability to multitask, a skill Clifford believed Palmer developed as a school counselor. Clifford stated that talking calmly and empathically with community members are skills that Palmer excelled in, which were not always the strengths of previous superintendents (A. Clifford, personal communication, January 13, 2011).

When discussing the differences between Palmer and other superintendents who did not have a school counseling background, Clifford noted that Palmer had a more student centric approach and worked in close conjunction with parents/guardians to help increase student achievement. Clifford also commented on Palmer's compassion towards staff members.

Clifford specified,

Her goal is really what's best for the student and the parent. Really the student first, but bringing the parent in. And I haven't seen that so much with other superintendents. Not because they don't care, I just think that she's comfortable in that role of working with everybody in a hard situation.

And also, empathy towards teachers. I think sometimes when you don't work in the classroom it's easy to say, 'Well, if they would just do this and this', but her teachers know that she cares about them. And my best example for that is when we had all of the new state tests, initially our elementary school did not do well on them, and she was able to lead the teachers to work hard to achieve better results. She sees things very positively, and she really led a lot of different ways to meet needs academically in the classroom, and had some very good results. But the end was her teachers love her, and you don't always see that when somebody comes in with a lot of change. But the way she works with people, they wanted to work hard for her, and I think she brings out the best in teachers. To have all of those changes and really more work than was being done, but the teachers love her because they felt supported. They were willing to try hard things because they knew that she was behind them, and that she would go to bat for them. If they needed training, if they needed workshops, she was there for them. (A. Clifford, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Smithsville's counselor, Carolyn Hart, noted that Superintendent Forbin's limited experience as a principal and the young age when he assumed the superintendency may have hampered Forbin when he first took the position. Much like Candice Kuroda, Hart suggested that Forbin's predecessor was able to swiftly deal with issues, in part, because of his depth of experience and knowledge and his ability to reference similar issues that he overcome during his career. Hart also noted that Forbin is not the instructional leader that some previous superintendents have been. However, Hart added that Forbin's leadership style was based on honesty and compassion. Hart described Forbin as a leader who was quick to admit his deficiencies and made concerted efforts to ask questions and learn from superintendent colleagues as well as those within the Smithsville Central School District (C. Hart, personal communication, January 19, 2011).

The school board members provided detailed responses when asked how Forbin's and Palmer's leadership style was different from previous superintendents in their respective districts. The four board of education members who participated in this study each were long-time board members, and mentioned that their current superintendents were much more willing to listen to input from constituents. In addition, each of the board member participants stated that both Forbin and Palmer worked alongside faculty and staff, and negotiated with members of the school community, both employees, and residents, more so than previous superintendents.

The board members of Diamond Point Central School District had analogous responses to this question. Michael Holdsworth said,

I would have to say [Palmer's] more open [than her predecessors]. She's more up front. What you see is what you get. She's a very straight forward person who leads by example with the utmost integrity. That is a little bit of a different style. And, I would

have to say, a refreshing style and it fits the community to a T. It's a conservative type of a community and conservative values and she fits the bill to a T. (M. Holdsworth, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Holdsworth also noted that Palmer was willing to take action on difficult matters whereas previous superintendents may have elected to stall, excessively contemplating a situation without taking prompt and appropriate action. Ironically, Donna Mydland referenced a different predecessor of Palmer who made rash decisions and then, when the decision was ineffective, was forced to change his course of action (D. Mydland, personal communication, January 13, 2011). In regards to decision making, Mydland stated that Palmer was like neither of the previous superintendents with whom she had worked as a board member. Unlike her predecessors, Palmer gathered information from various constituents and weighed options. Only then did she make swift, but calculated and logical decisions based on the knowledge she had obtained (D. Mydland, personal communication, January 13, 2011). From their feedback, Holdsworth and Mydland indicated that they appreciated Palmer's sound, informed decision making and problem solving skills, which allowed Palmer to develop timely, effective action plans (M. Holdsworth, personal communication, January 13, 2011; D. Mydland, personal communication, January 13, 2011).

In Smithsville, Brad Parish stated, "We've had superintendents in the past that have had the style that, 'I run the school. It's my way or no way.' They'd pivot themselves against teachers and staff. They weren't good teammates" (B. Parish, personal communication, January 19, 2011).

Also from Smithsville, Jon Gadiel, as he had earlier during the interview, noted Superintendent Forbin's "open door style" of leadership (J. Gadiel, personal communication, January 19, 2011). Gadiel asserted,

We have had open door [superintendents] before, but kind of selective open door, if you know what I mean. Our last superintendent had an open policy, but would control it more I think. But other than that, they [Forbin and his predecessor] are very similar. They are easy going. They are approachable. Their people skills are excellent. I think if anything, maybe our previous superintendent had more of a community visibility. He was more active in the community. But he lived in the community, and I think that makes a difference. (J. Gadiel, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

Research Question 3: What counseling skills do these superintendents utilize in their daily duties?

Related to this research question, the researcher posed two interview questions to the superintendents and two questions to the other participants. Responding to the interview question that asked what counseling skills the superintendents used in their daily operations, both superintendents stated that they used various counseling skills on a daily basis in their roles and responsibilities as a superintendent of schools. Superintendent Palmer stated that active listening was the counseling skill she used most often as a superintendent. As a superintendent, Palmer noted,

A lot of times, I find in this role that you do a lot of listening. So I find counseling helps a lot because by being a listener and allowing people to think about their problems, they often have a solution themselves. (S. Palmer, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Conflict resolution was a counseling skill that Palmer continued to use in her superintendency. Similarly, Superintendent Forbin also deemed listening to be the counseling skill that best translated to the superintendency. Forbin declared,

Obviously one of the largest things [a counseling background] did is it gave me practice on listening skills. And, for any leadership role, I think one of the main things you have to be able to do is listen. I think counseling also gave me the ability to learn how to prioritize, but not just in time management, but prioritize with needs of the district and needs of people; and how to achieve both of those at the same time. Also empathy. I think in any leadership role there has to be some type of empathy. You have to have understanding. You can't go into a situation assuming, which I'm still partially guilty of, as I think we all are. (J. Forbin, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

Next, the superintendents were asked what skills they deemed most vital to become an effective superintendent. It is meaningful to note that the superintendents' answers to this question were similar to their answer to the question, "In your daily operations as a superintendent, what counseling skills do you use?" Skills in leadership, listening, communication, and interpersonal relations were mentioned by both superintendents in their responses to these two distinct questions.

In her response to the question about what skills she deemed most vital to become an effective superintendent, Superintendent Palmer stated, "Organization and just being able to lead. Being able to see and assess what we have and determine where we need to go. I'm not sure what that skill would be" (S. Palmer, personal communication, January 13, 2011). The researcher responded by asking if that skill was, "Forethought?" Superintendent Palmer then continued,

Yes, it takes a lot of forethought. I had mentioned listening earlier and I have to bring it up again only because it's so across the board, whether it's parents or what's happening at the state level or in your classrooms. No matter what, it's a lot of gathering information, listening to people and to what we need to do, and then putting it together into some form of a plan. (S. Palmer, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Superintendent Forbin stated he viewed active listening and "good decision making" skills as the most essential skills to become an effective superintendent. He also discussed flexibility and open-mindedness. Forbin stated, "I find time and time and time again, I go into a situation thinking that it's just obvious or I have all the information and I just get shocked by some of the things" (J. Forbin, personal communication, January 19, 2011). Forbin found that he must not jump to conclusions when making decisions. He concluded, "You have to expect the unexpected and then try to figure out a good decision with that. And I guess that goes with looking at all sides of the situation" (J. Forbin, personal communication, January 19, 2011).

The principals and business officials were asked to name the skills related to counseling used by their superintendent. When answering this question in Diamond Point, Principal Gordon and Business Manager McConnell both viewed Superintendent Palmer's counseling experience as having shaped her leadership style as a superintendent and utilized by Palmer in her daily operations. McConnell stated,

I guess I would see the counseling skills in the way she obtains information and when we're going through a process, whether it be the budget... just her way of gleaning from a number of different people the information that is necessary to make a sound decision and not just basing it on what she heard somebody say. You'll find that even a couple months down the road she's still doing the research to find out whether [the decision] was

a wise one. I think that's a counselor, making sure that they're not making a rash decision. (B. McConnell, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

McConnell continued by discussing Palmer's conflict resolution skills. He stated, I sense much less conflict [than during the leadership of previous superintendents]. Much less conflict in the staff, and between staff and administration or within administration. If [Palmer] does hear about a conflict between staff members, she is trying to resolve it. So I think that's the counseling. (B. McConnell, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

McConnell amplified his response when he noted, "I don't think about the fact that she has a counseling background. It doesn't impact how I view her, but it probably does impact how interpersonal things are smoother than they have been – quieter than they have been" (B. McConnell, personal communication, January 13, 2011).

Diamond Point's secondary school principal, Phillip Gordon noted that Superintendent Palmer had excellent people skills. Gordon suggested that from her counseling experience Palmer understood the nuances of adolescents and the challenges of preparing students for their post-secondary lives. Gordon also stated that Palmer used her counseling "expertise" in her ability to deescalate issues with distressed stakeholders, especially parents (P. Gordon, personal communication, February 8, 2011).

In Smithsville, the business official believed Superintendent Forbin's ability to communicate with various stakeholders stemmed from his counseling background. Kuroda stated,

Maybe because he does enjoy being with people so much, that's why he initially chose the field of counseling. Because he did like communicating with people one on one and being able to lead by example, and just wanting to help others. It doesn't matter who you

are or what your position is in the school or community or wherever. He will give you as much time as you need behind closed doors to discuss whatever it is that is needed to be discussed. That is definitely coming from his counseling side. (C. Kuroda, personal communication, January 24, 2011)

Kuroda asserted that Superintendent Forbin was able to analyze people accurately and determine how they could contribute to the school district.

Eliza Hunter, principal at Smithsville Central School District remarked that Superintendent Forbin used numerous counseling skills in his superintendency. In particular, Hunter noted,

[Forbin] does active listening. He observes body language. He asks questions. He does a lot of paraphrasing. He uses different tones. He takes notes. He summarizes things. Basically, I would say all of the counseling skills are used when he's questioning people or trying to find out things or concerns. He uses counseling skills in his problem solving and decision making... He is empathetic. I think that's the counseling side of him also. (E. Hunter, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

The school counselors who participated in this study possessed a vast knowledge of counseling skills and practices and expressed this when they responded to the interview question about the counseling skills utilized by Palmer and Forbin. Clifford and Hart commented on Palmer's and Forbin's ability to listen, empathize with others, set goals and develop action plans.

Many of the interview participants in both districts deemed both Superintendent Forbin and Superintendent Palmer as a "people person". Amy Clifford, Diamond Point's secondary school counselor shared this perception of Palmer. Clifford pronounced,

[Palmer] is definitely a people person, and I think she truly cares about how things impact her teachers, her parents, and her students. I think you develop that as a counselor, you work with teachers, parents and students... I think before she makes any major decisions she really tries to think of how that would make somebody feel. My best example is when she's working with parents in a Superintendent's Hearing where sometimes you just open the discipline book and say, 'That's five days out [of school suspension].' I think she really cares about what is good for the student and how to work with the parent, and doesn't assume that the student that did the same thing a year before is the exact same student as the one in this situation. So, [Palmer] sees everything individually. I think empathy is also one of her strengths. And trying to come up with an answer; looking at many different options. And she has great communication skills, so I think those would be the counseling skills that she uses. (A. Clifford, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

When asked to delve into the topic of empathy further, Clifford remarked, I think definitely she has empathy for the student when the student makes a mistake. She's very strict and there are consequences, but her reaction isn't to label the student as a bad kid. She almost always has a look of disappointment for them and their parents first. I guess the big thing is she doesn't take it personally. When the student makes a poor decision, she doesn't take it as they did that to me and my school. She knows that there are other issues going on, usually knows the background, and how that impacts students' decisions and [that they may have] lack of support [at home]... But [Palmer] definitely comes in with a feeling that parents do care and want the best [for their

children]. I think that makes her relationship with parents different [from other superintendents]. (A. Clifford, personal communication January 13, 2011)

When discussing the support and buy-in that Palmer was able to garner from faculty and staff, Clifford attributed that, in part, to Palmer's counseling background, stating,

Palmer comes down as one of [the staff members], willing to work as hard as they're working. Her communication skills are great. She would say, 'This is where I want us to be. How do we get there?' She just is a people person, and I think they felt supported... I think she comes from a place of, 'I'll help you get there.' I think that comes from... being a counselor is, 'How can I help you?' 'And how can we work together?' I think that helps all of her relationships. (A. Clifford, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Carolyn Hart, Smithsville's secondary school counselor, noted that while Superintendent Forbin used a number of counseling techniques in his role of superintendent, he had to alter his leadership approach to consider finances and district operations as a whole, rather than individual students. Hart named active listening as the counseling skill most often utilized by Superintendent Forbin. In addition, Hart declared,

If there is an issue, he thinks outside the box, which sometimes is hard to do. And he will bring things to the table that you haven't thought of to solve a problem and he gives you different things to think about before you go into a meeting. He will say 'What about this?' 'What about that?' As a superintendent, the district comes first. He has to protect and make sure that the district, as a whole, is taken care of. Whereas, as a school counselor I may say... I'll bring an issue to him, and he will say 'I can't go that way

because I have to look at the welfare of the district rather than just the issue you're bringing up.' (C. Hart, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

When asked to cite an example of this, Hart continued, "If I feel that a student is qualified for a GED program and I'm pushing for this, he may say, 'It wasn't in the budget. We did not budget for it. I'm sorry'" (C. Hart, personal communication, January 19, 2011). From Hart's examples, it was clear that Superintendent Forbin was able to see the bigger picture, yet still focus on students' needs.

The board of education members were also asked to name the counseling skills used by their superintendent. In Diamond Point, the board of education members saw Superintendent Palmer's counseling skills emerge when she was involved with student discipline and in matters of post-secondary planning. Donna Mydland responded by stating,

I think her counseling experience is especially helpful in the way she's handled kids and discipline. We've always had a problem with discipline. We've been able to handle it, but there's always been the backlash. There's always been the parent who thinks their kid shouldn't have gotten that or this [punishment]. I think with the school counseling background... kids respect her. Kids, I don't want to say fear her, but they don't want to go see her, but she handles them fairly. She knows how to deal with the parents. I don't know if it's a difference between her background and a person that has a teaching background. But I'm assuming those counseling skills in things like that [interpersonal relations] kind of play into that a little bit. (D. Mydland, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Mydland commented that Superintendent Palmer used communication and listening skills in her approach to student discipline. Mydland said,

I must say, my kid has gotten in trouble with her before as the principal and you can tell by the time you talk to your kid... You know they know what's wrong. You know they feel bad about it. You know [the situation] was handled well. [The students are] upset, but they don't feel ashamed. They don't feel mortified. And they're forced to explain it and do appropriate things as a consequence. She does relate very well with the students. (D. Mydland, personal communication, January, 13, 2011)

In his reply to this question, Smithsville board member Michael Holdsworth deemed that Superintendent Palmer had a deep knowledge of Special Education and career planning. Noting that Palmer worked in close conjunction with the school counselors in Diamond Point, Holdsworth stated,

I would have to say the coordination of the whole, the big picture. Like the Special Ed. [piece]... I think she works quite closely with [Amy Clifford] our [secondary] school counselor and when [Clifford] has thoughts I think [Palmer] understands the value of helping students decide their future... Like visiting college campuses, for example, and how important that is to some kids who just don't have the opportunity to visit colleges because of their parents or their background or lack of parents.

I think she has a really good handle on Special Ed. and integrating kids back into the [general education] classroom, and the different career paths that our [career and technical programs] offer. She knows how students can take advantage of the ones that we can use and, quite honestly, delete the ones that we aren't using to get our money's worth out of them. I think that is a way that she understands some of those things better than a former teacher would. (M. Holdsworth, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Smithsville board of education members Jon Gadiel and Brad Parish both attributed Superintendent Forbin's ability to relate to people as a skill he developed as a school counselor. Gadiel stated,

I think [Forbin] certainly knows how to handle people. If someone is visibly upset, I think he can diffuse that. By the same token, if someone is not saying anything, I think he can draw it out of them. So I guess that would be the counseling skill part of it, which is very beneficial, I think. I think he also is able to recognize issues before they become full blown. Maybe head them off a little bit. Either through counseling, sending them to counseling or and I'm talking students now more than staff. But even staff... I think he has a good grasp on humanity. (J. Gadiel, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

In a similar manner, Parish remarked,

[Forbin] uses his skills with... people skills and how to negotiate between people. A lot between parents and students. And a lot between students and teachers where there are issues that might have to be addressed. Again, I think he is such a strong superintendent because he was such a good school counselor. Because he knows how to talk to people. He knows how to relate to people. (B. Parish, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

In addition, Parish and Gadiel both commented on Superintendent Forbin's welcoming nature and his open door policy, in which constituents felt as though he truly valued their thoughts, ideas, and concerns.

Research Question 4: To what degree is a lack of/limited traditional classroom teaching experience an impediment to effectiveness as a superintendent?

Specifically related to this research question, the researcher posed two interview questions to each of the superintendents and the other study participants. First, the

superintendents were asked how their non-traditional background had helped or hindered their ability to lead their school district. Both Superintendent Palmer and Superintendent Forbin responded to this question by stating that they believed they benefitted more from their experience as school counselors than they were hindered by it. As previously noted, Forbin commented that, in part, due to his counseling experience, he felt comfortable communicating with the numerous constituents with whom superintendents must interact. With many Smithsville staff members having worked with Forbin during his years as a counselor, Forbin stated that the faculty knew that he could effectively run meetings and looked to him as a leader when he was a counselor. However, Forbin stated that, seven years into his superintendency, some faculty members still questioned his ability to lead a school district, simply because of his lack of traditional teaching experience (J. Forbin, personal communication, January 19, 2011).

Superintendent Palmer also commented that from her counseling experience she learned how to talk with parents and interact with various stakeholders throughout the school community. Palmer had not faced as many questions about her limited instructional experience, which the researcher presumed may have been the case because Palmer did teach in a special education setting at the beginning of her career. Overall, Palmer and Forbin both indicated that they felt as though their counseling experience was extremely beneficial in their transition to the superintendency. The two superintendents who participated in this study also commented that the quasi-administrative nature of the counselorship prepared them well for their leadership roles. Both Palmer and Forbin noted that some teachers who transition to educational leadership do not come to the position with as many leadership competencies as do school counselors (J. Forbin, personal communication, January 19, 2011; S. Palmer, personal communication, January 13, 2011). Palmer asserted,

I do think the teachers that go into administration, sometimes, they have not had the chance to have that experience [leading meetings, interacting with various stakeholders, completing ‘administrative’ paperwork]. I think that you have to learn it somewhere along the way, so you may not get it until you’re an assistant principal or principal. But somewhere along the way you have to do that. (S. Palmer, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Both superintendents were asked to discuss if and how they function as instructional leaders. Both Forbin and Palmer noted that, despite their lack of/limited teaching experience, they did see themselves as instructional leaders. During the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years, both superintendents led curriculum mapping initiatives in their respective school districts.

In Diamond Point, Superintendent Palmer appeared to play a larger role as an instructional leader than did Superintendent Forbin. This might have been due to Palmer’s responsibilities as Diamond Point’s pre-kindergarten through sixth grade principal. Palmer remarked,

I am an instructional leader in that I try to bring the information of the state initiatives and provide opportunities for our teachers to become educated and empowered regarding the changes, and help, as a district, lead us to get there. I am not one who will hold a lot of professional development on, let’s say, how to improve your lessons. That would not be me. That’s not my leadership. ‘Is the instruction on target?’ ‘Are children engaged?’ All of that, I have no problem with though. (S. Palmer, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Palmer went on to describe an instruction-based initiative she had led. She stated,

Last year [2009-2010] we were really trying to focus on curriculum mapping, the whole curriculum project and get our curriculum mapping back on track and going. We established a team of five of us and we attended workshops for the whole year.

Throughout the year, we went to full day workshops together as a team that then came back and did a professional development day. As a team we developed it and brought in [a consultant]. It was amazing. But it came from the whole team. So we went to the trainings for us all to learn and then came back [and shared information with the entire faculty and staff]. (S. Palmer, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Forbin noted that Principal Hunter was the chief instructional leader in Smithville.

Forbin deferred to Hunter on many of the curriculum and instruction matters that arose.

Notwithstanding, Forbin stated,

I see myself as the person who has to make sure we're all moving in the same direction. And when we're not, I've got to step in, and I've got to get us all on the same page. I also see myself as the person to make sure that both the principal and the teachers have what they need to get to where the district sees them going. (J. Forbin, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

The principals and business officials were asked if their superintendent's lack of/limited teaching experience has affected Forbin's or Palmer's ability to lead the district. In Diamond Point, neither Business Manager McConnell nor Principal Gordon deemed Superintendent Palmer's limited teaching experience as hampering her ability to lead the district. McConnell answered, "I do not see that at all. In fact, like I said before, I don't think about the fact that she [was only briefly] in the classroom" (B. McConnell, personal communication, January 13, 2011). McConnell again noted that Palmer learned a great deal from observing teachers, made an effort

to speak with faculty members to learn about their craft and sought their input on matters in which Palmer was not an expert (B. McConnell, personal communication, January 13, 2011).

Principal Gordon also commented on Superintendent Palmer's willingness to ask questions and her ability to relate to teachers despite having only taught very briefly prior to her tenure in school counseling. Gordon stated, "[Palmer's] pretty astute and I think... it's not rocket science, but you do have to reach out and ask and understand what the teachers are going through. And she's willing to do that" (P. Gordon, personal communication, February 8, 2011).

When asked if Forbin's lack of teaching experience had affected his ability to lead the district, it was evident that Principal Hunter and Business Manager Kuroda had differing opinions regarding the impact that Superintendent Forbin's non-traditional career path had on the school district. Kuroda felt as though Forbin's experience as a school counselor did not hamper him in any way. Kuroda explained,

I'm going to say that I think [Forbin] does extremely well given his lack of classroom experience. Because every single time that I come to him saying, for example, we need to cut \$10,000 from the budget, and I'll make a comment to him like, 'Cut out some field trips' or 'Cut out some professional development' or something like. He, right away, will come back with, 'No, first grade needs this, sixth grade needs this, the science department needs this.' And it amazes me how he knows what all the different departments, all the different grade levels, need and what they should have. Now again, he is in close contact with the principal and we are small so he does have teachers coming and going from his office during the day – so he does hear from them. But it just amazes the heck out of me because it seems like he truly can put himself in a classroom setting and know what should happen and what they should need to get the job done. So I think that his having

come from counseling does not negatively impact his superintendency at all. I think that he's every bit as good as any classroom teacher becoming superintendent could be. (C. Kuroda, personal communication, January 24, 2011)

Principal Hunter noted that, while she did not deem classroom teaching experience as an essential background for an effective superintendent, she did believe it is helpful. Hunter stated, I think being a teacher and understanding the classroom, the curriculum [is beneficial]. I was a teacher. Do I know all of the curriculum in the school district? Absolutely not, but I do know classroom management. I do know different styles [of instruction]. ... Understanding where the teachers are coming from sometimes. I think if you were a teacher, I think it has to do with ... you were there. You have that experience. (E. Hunter, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

The school counselors were also asked to ponder if their superintendent's lack of/limited teaching experience impacted their ability to lead. Much like the principals and business managers who answered this question, the school counselors who participated in this study had vastly divergent responses to this question. Amy Clifford from Diamond Point adamantly stated that Superintendent Palmer's limited teaching experience was not detrimental to Palmer's leadership. Clifford actually believed that Palmer's counseling experience was more beneficial to the superintendency than teaching experience. Clifford responded to this question by noting, I think as a counselor you are in the classroom. I mean we don't have lesson plans, but... I was in the classroom all day today doing scheduling. I do test results; we do classroom guidance, so we do have classroom experience. I think [Palmer] has enough to know what's necessary to make a successful classroom, and I think that's half your training as a counselor – what makes a successful classroom. I was an elementary counselor first...

Half of your job is working with teachers to say, ‘How do you think we can run the classroom to help this difficult student succeed?’ So I think even though you’re not in the classroom, you’re working with classroom teachers and a lot of your background is instructional techniques that work. So I don’t see that as [detrimental]. And the other nice thing is that you don’t have a [former] teacher [as superintendent] that feels that every single thing that they did was the best way to do it. So, I think [Palmer’s] a lot of times open to many new ideas and knowing that that’s not the only way that something can run successfully. (A. Clifford, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Conversely, Carolyn Hart from Smithsville believed a counseling background brought about some challenges for Superintendent Forbin, specifically in that school counselors typically do not have an expertise in curricular and instructional matters. Hart said,

I tend to believe you need that classroom experience for the issues that come forth in order to know how to deal with students, get to know students. As a school counselor, sometimes we get to know the student body, but sometimes we don’t get to know many of them. Some of them don’t need us... I will have a student come in here [the school counselor’s office] who is a trouble maker, but they are so respectful to me when they’re in my office. But in that teacher’s classroom they are nothing but trouble. And there are issues that arise in a classroom that I have not had any experience with. And sometimes that hinders your decision making or it makes you reply or respond in a way that maybe you shouldn’t because you’re taking a counseling point of view rather than a teacher point of view. (C. Hart, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

However, throughout her interview, Hart did make it clear that she believed Forbin was an effective superintendent despite not having traditional classroom teaching experience.

Finally, the board of education members were asked if and how their superintendent's lack of/limited teaching experience had affected Forbin's and Palmer's leadership abilities. Each of the four board of education members articulated that their respective superintendent's lack of/limited teaching experience had not impacted Forbin's or Palmer's ability to lead. To this question, Diamond Point board member Donna Mydland answered, "No, it really hasn't. Again, by the time [Palmer] was here for about a year, there was such feedback from the teachers about... they were so thrilled to have her and about what a great job she was doing" (personal communication, January 13, 2011). Mydland furthered her response, noting that she had received positive feedback about Superintendent Palmer's effectiveness with data analysis, planning, and goal setting. Mydland concluded by stating that the Diamond Point faculty and staff had a great deal of respect for Palmer (D. Mydland, personal communication, January 13, 2011).

Mydland's peer in Diamond Point, Michael Holdsworth, also stated that Palmer was not negatively affected by her limited teaching experience. He said that Palmer was knowledgeable and continued to learn on the job. Holdsworth declared,

[Palmer's] right on top of the tests coming down, and different ways to improve. I think she uses her peers and the different conferences and committees, and her [regional] contacts. And I think she's right on top of what's going on and I think if there's a question, I don't think she's afraid to ask other people who have had success what they did. The wheel only has to be invented once. (Holdsworth, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Jon Gadiel from Smithsville answered,

I don't see [a lack of teaching experience] as detrimental at all in [Forbin's] case. I think a lot of it is personality. A lot of it is knowledge of the district. I think if we were to have someone with no teaching experience, new to the district, it would be a totally different ball game. And that's just my experience. I think teaching... I think you have to have some knowledge of the way things are structured and the way things work, from classroom on up, which you do have in a small school. I don't know about a large district, if you would have [that experience]. [In larger school districts] I think a counselor is more apt to be just a counselor and not know the rest of the workings as much. But in our case, no, I don't think it's detrimental at all. (J. Gadiel, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

Brad Parish, also from Smithsville, responded that Forbin's lack of traditional teaching experience had not negatively affected Forbin's superintendency in any manner. Parish continued, "Even when [Forbin] was a school counselor, he was still in the classroom. He still had the connection with the teachers. He still had a connection with the students. So a counselor is a teacher" (personal communication, January 19, 2011).

The principals and business officials were asked to comment on the instructional leadership of their superintendent. Similarly to Superintendent Palmer's and Superintendent Forbin's own responses to this question, the principals and business officials all referenced Palmer's and Forbin's involvement with curriculum mapping initiatives in their respective school districts. Principal Gordon in Diamond Point noted that Superintendent Palmer led many committees which focused on instructional matters, such as literacy and curriculum mapping. Gordon also referenced Palmer's ability to build teams and create buy-in from constituents regarding various instructional initiatives. According to Gordon, when applicable and

financially feasible, Palmer was willingly sought the input of consultants when making decisions regarding curriculum and instruction (P. Gordon, personal communication, January 13, 2011).

Given Palmer's combined role of superintendent and elementary school principal, it was not surprising to hear Brent McConnell state that Palmer was more of an instructional leader at the pre-kindergarten through grade six level. McConnell stated,

With the curriculum mapping K-12 project ... [Palmer] is the driving force behind making sure that happens – encouraging other administrators to get their people involved. But [Palmer] always gives purpose behind what she's doing, not just like were on another... this is the flavor of the month and this is what we're doing today. It's thought out and [Palmer] wants to commit to it and see it followed through. And she gives the proper background and training to people so that they know why they're doing it and what they have to do. (B. McConnell, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Principal Hunter responded to this question by noting that Superintendent Forbin was an advocate for professional development and allowed teachers and teachers' aides to attend training sessions and workshops to enhance their instruction. Similar to Palmer's efforts, Hunter indicated that Forbin spearheaded Smithsville's curriculum mapping initiative and hired a consultant to develop the framework of the curriculum mapping program used in the district (E. Hunter, personal communication, January 19, 2011).

Smithsville's business official, Candice Kuroda, talked about Forbin's involvement with the curriculum mapping project and his facilitation of a committee, which enacted the initiative and educated colleagues in the use of the software. Kuroda also spoke about Forbin's familiarity with the lessons being taught in the classrooms, as well as how students and staff are impacted

by instructional resources or lack thereof (C. Kuroda, personal communication, January 24, 2011).

The school counselors in each district believed their superintendent was an effective instructional leader. Amy Clifford answered this question candidly by stating,

[Palmer] definitely is [an instructional leader] and I think this is the part that makes me say I would never want to be a superintendent. Sometimes I go back and forth... You work with different people and you say 'I know I could do it. I do it all the time', or sometimes you say, 'I'm doing it and not getting paid for it' – the administration, the back and forth. But [instructional leadership] is the piece the makes me think, 'I definitely don't want to be an administrator'. (A. Clifford, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Clifford went on to discuss Superintendent Palmer's active role with Academic Interview Services (AIS) in Diamond Point. Clifford mentioned that Palmer facilitated a committee to revise Diamond Point's AIS program. That project began with Palmer seeking the input of consultants and faculty members to help her interpret student data. That initial step allowed the district, led by Palmer, to develop an action plan to improve AIS and, in turn, improve student assessment scores. Clifford concluded that the Diamond Point's teachers were extremely supportive of Palmer in this initiative and appreciated Palmer being directly involved in the AIS revision process (A. Clifford, personal communication, January 13, 2011).

Carolyn Hart from Smithsville answered this question by noting that Superintendent Forbin conducted one evaluation per teacher per year. From this practice, Forbin was able to address curriculum and instruction with faculty members, helping teachers to supplement and enhance their pedagogy. Hart specified, "[Forbin] does function as an instructional leader

because he networks, he asks questions, and wants to make sure that things are done correctly and everyone is happy with how things are done. He will get teachers' input" (C. Hart, personal communication, January 19, 2011). Hart was not aware of Forbin's direct involvement with Smithsville's curriculum mapping initiative.

The board of education members explained they had limited first-hand knowledge regarding their superintendent's role in instructional leadership. While the board of education members in the two school districts did not seem to be as knowledgeable about the instructional leadership provided by Superintendent Forbin and Superintendent Palmer as some of the other study participants, each board member indicated that the two superintendents did serve as instructional leaders in some capacity. When asked if Palmer functioned as an effective instructional leader, Donna Mydland remarked,

Yes, I think [Palmer] does. I think she's... again more from the elementary level, but, of course, that's where she [also serves as the] principal. We had a major disaster with test scores this year. She's taken the lead on that. I've been to meetings where she's sat and explained the issues to the parents. She's explained how things have happened, explains how we've analyzed the data, how we're going to move forward with the tests, how we're going to change things. She's always been up to speed on changing the curriculum and how we're going to incorporate it into the flow, and says 'This is going to change in 2012 and so we need to start looking at this now.' (D. Mydland, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Michael Holdsworth noted Palmer's familiarity with curricular matters and her willingness to collaborate with the department members from each subject area. In addition, Holdsworth referenced Palmer's prowess with leading the implementation of curricular changes

required by the state education department (M. Holdsworth, personal communication, January 13, 2011).

Smithsville's board members mentioned Superintendent Forbin's facilitation of committees, which focused on curriculum and instruction. Jon Gadiel mentioned Forbin's leading of the committee which elected to resume Smithsville's use of the Saxon math program at the junior high school level. Additionally, Gadiel spoke about an anti-bullying curriculum that Forbin "spearheaded" on a district-wide level (J. Gadiel, personal communication, January 19, 2011). Gadiel noted that Forbin had worked closely with special education teachers, in particular, to develop anti-bullying lessons and policies. Forbin had also organized assemblies and arranged for presenters to speak with students about the dangers of bullying (J. Gadiel, personal communication, January 19, 2011).

Brad Parish also mentioned Forbin's contribution to the curriculum mapping initiative that took place in Smithsville in the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years. Like school counselor Carolyn Hart, Parish also referenced Forbin's annual formal observations of teachers when discussing Forbin's instructional leadership. Parish noted that he believed Forbin utilized his observations to help teachers improve their instruction rather than simply fulfilling his responsibility and the teachers' contractual obligation (B. Parish, personal communication, January 19, 2011).

Research Question 5: In what ways have these non-traditional superintendents compensated for their lack of/limited experience in traditional classroom teaching experience?

In an attempt to answer the fifth and final research question, the researcher posed one specific interview questions to each participant. The superintendents were asked to reflect on

how they had to adjust for their lack of/limited teaching experience to lead their district. To develop a more profound understanding of instruction, Superintendent Forbin and Superintendent Palmer both noted that they sought advice from superintendent colleagues who were former teachers. In addition, both superintendents again mentioned that they spent a great deal of time observing, both formally and informally, high quality teachers. Superintendent Palmer declared,

I definitely had a learning curve when I was an assistant principal. I got into a school where you were expected to be an educational leader, curriculum type leader and I had a learning curve. I had to really do a lot of extra [work] to get up to speed. I talked to a lot of people, did a lot of reading. You wanted to be able to answer those questions and be able to be familiar with that language, and that would be curriculum work primarily. A lot of reading, whatever was around. A lot of discussion and, whenever you were in discussion with another administrator, taking about what they were doing, listening... I came from a very small school that didn't have any curriculum people at all. Then I went into a suburban district that had [curriculum specialists] and I think there was a lot of information that existed in the district, so a lot of [gaining knowledge about curriculum and instruction] could have been in-house. A lot more resources, a lot more focus... But it was definitely something you had to do to get up to speed. Now in this role here, I'm pretty up front. My teachers know I'm not a reading specialist, for example. I don't pretend to be one. But we've tried to empower our committees, and I help lead the committees. (S. Palmer, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Superintendent Forbin also noted that he made it clearly known that he was not an expert on instructional or curricular matters. When discussing how he had gained knowledge about teaching, Forbin said,

I think back to when I went into the classrooms [to informally observe teachers] as a counselor. I made sure that I positioned myself around teachers who I knew were strong. And the way I judged strong was by student perception. What were the students saying? By parents, and then also by scores. If you have those three things behind you ... I mean if you have the scores to say, 'Look, it's working in here.' If you have the students saying, 'I can't wait to get into Mr. so-and-so's or Mrs. so-and-so's class', and then you have the parents saying, 'Boy, I hope my kid gets whoever.' I think you have some evidence there that you have a strong teacher. So I made sure I knew what those teachers were doing and then those were some of the things I would look for in new teachers or in teachers who were maybe not working up to that [level]. And I made sure the high quality teachers were mentors. I made sure those were the people who were training our new people.

So I put that into place. I also made sure that I had conversations with people. I reassured people that we're about the classroom and it goes back to, 'I think you're the expert.' It was, 'You're the expert in sixth grade, so I'm going to come to you.' And when you surround yourself with strong people... I know it's kind of a cliché, but it's so true. If you surround yourself with good, strong people, then they just make your job ten times easier. (J. Forbin, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

The principals and business managers were asked to speak about what Forbin and Palmer did to compensate for their lack of/limited traditional classroom teaching experience. Akin to

the answers from the superintendents themselves, the principals and business officials interviewed reaffirmed that Palmer and Forbin were not afraid to admit that they were not instructional experts, and stated that both were willing to ask questions to further their knowledge of teaching. Principal Gordon commented that Superintendent Palmer regularly talked to her teachers to learn more about curriculum and instruction. Gordon also noted that Palmer constantly immersed herself in scholarly literature to learn more about education on a global scale. Gordon concluded,

As a non-classroom teacher, the thing that you can bring to the table is what you've witnessed or what you've observed [being successful] in the classroom in conjunction with what you learned works in the classroom. Just going into the classroom itself and observing all these teachers is a pretty big learning experience on its own. (P. Gordon, personal communication, February 8, 2011)

Diamond Point's business official, Brent McConnell also stated that Palmer had learned a great deal from observing teachers over her years in administrative roles. McConnell answered that Palmer had adjusted for her limited teaching experience through, "The observing of good classroom techniques. I think she's a good listener, a very good listener. So, I think she takes in, even from observations, takes in and gleans off of that" (B. McConnell, personal communication, January 13, 2011).

Much like those interviewed in Diamond Point, Smithsville's pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade principal, Eliza Hunter, noted that Superintendent Forbin was willing to ask questions, and seek input and feedback from the instructional "experts". Hunter stated,

[Forbin's] a people person. He has great conflict resolution. He has good people skills. He compensates that way and he seeks out information. When he doesn't have [an

understanding of something], he will go to the key players, and seek his information and then make a decision from that. So he does make up for [his lack of teaching experience]. (E. Hunter, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

Candice Kuroda, Smithsville's business manager, had a unique, expressive response to this question. She noted that Forbin is very knowledgeable about teaching and classroom matters. Kuroda wondered how he had obtained this knowledge. When asked how Forbin attempted to compensate for his lack of traditional teaching experience, Kuroda replied,

I've asked myself the question, 'Does he intentionally have conversations with different teachers to get a better feel for the classroom?' Because obviously every school has teachers that you know you can rely on for accurate information and quote for good perspective on things. And I wonder to myself, 'Does he go to them and ask these questions?' I have never witnessed it so I really don't know how he gains his experience. That's why I thought maybe it started back in [Forbin's tenure in] counseling. (C. Kuroda, personal communication, January 24, 2011)

Again, Kuroda also stated that Forbin asks questions of his superintendent colleagues regarding matters of curriculum and instruction. Kuroda was impressed with Forbin's ability to admit he lacked knowledge in an area of education despite his prominent position. Kuroda noted, [Forbin's willingness to ask questions] is a great quality. Because a lot of times a person won't ask when they don't know the answer because they either don't want the person to know they don't know the answer already or they just don't want to be vulnerable. But [Forbin] definitely asks questions if he doesn't understand the situation or needs input. (C. Kuroda, personal communication, January 24, 2011)

The school counselors were asked to discuss the efforts Forbin and Palmer took to compensate for their lack of/limited teaching experience. When answering this question, the school counselors provided to similar responses to the principals and business officials interviewed. Amy Clifford and Carolyn Hart both stated that their superintendent willingly admitted when he/she needed help or clarification on any matter. Clifford stated,

I don't know if this is a school counselor personality, but Palmer's not afraid to say, 'I don't know the answer to that.' She doesn't fake it when she doesn't know the answer and will always say, 'I'll get back to you on that' and then does the research on whatever it is, whether it's budget or testing or the new requirements. And she's very comfortable pulling in the people that should know [the answers] and bringing them in on the team. I think that's something that you do as a school counselor – not being isolated in a classroom, you always have to go to people. You don't know everything that they do in their classroom, so you have to become comfortable asking questions. (A. Clifford, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

In the same vein as Clifford, Hart commented, [Forbin] acknowledges [his lack of teaching experience]. He verbalizes it. He admits it. And will say, 'What do you think?' He'll ask for advice and want to listen to some of the veteran teachers to get their point of view. And will say, 'Thank you, I didn't think of that. Thank you for bringing that to my attention.' He is willing to listen and ask and learn that way, rather than just go on his own or make his own decision without listening to them. (C. Hart, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

Finally, the board of education members were asked how their superintendent attempted to compensate for her/his lack of/limited traditional classroom teaching experience. Due to the

fact that they typically spent less time interacting with their superintendents during the school day than did district employees, it was not surprising that the board of education members did not have in-depth answers to this question.

Both Diamond Point board members were not explicitly certain how Superintendent Palmer had compensated for her limited teaching experience or if she needed to compensate to effectively lead the school district. Donna Mydland remarked,

I honestly don't know. I don't know if she has to. I've never noticed. Again, she's been a principal for five or six years here. She was a principal for a couple years before that [in other districts within the state]. So, I'm assuming with her overall knowledge of teachers' reviews... I mean it's not like she hasn't sat in a classroom. It's not like she hasn't seen them and seen what works and what doesn't work. So, I don't necessarily think you have to do something to understand it and know it. Again, if she has used any coping techniques, I don't know. It doesn't seem to come into play from this end. (D. Mydland, personal communication, January 13, 2011)

Michael Holdsworth commented that Superintendent Palmer was constantly in contact with her peers to bolster her knowledge of teaching. Holdsworth also mentioned that Palmer conducted research regarding curriculum instruction on her own, especially via the internet. Holdsworth continued, "And I don't think [Palmer's] afraid to seek whatever it takes to get the job done, and so far she has. She's a doer instead of a talker" (M. Holdsworth, personal communication, January 13, 2011).

In Smithsville, the board members answered in a similar fashion to those in Diamond Point. Smithsville board members stated that even though Forbin was not a traditional classroom teacher he still understood the nuances of the classroom. Jon Gadiel responded by saying,

Again, I think he had a good working knowledge of what goes on even if he hasn't personally done it. As far as evaluations go in our district, the principal does two and the superintendent does one a year. So I think he had kind of a model to go by there. I don't know of anything that's affected him in any way from his lack of teaching. (J. Gadiel, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

In Smithsville, Gadiel's board of education counterpart, Bard Parish, simply replied, "None that I'm aware" (personal communication, January 19, 2011).

Concluding interview question.

At the conclusion of each interview session, all participants were given a final opportunity to discuss anything else pertinent to this study regarding their superintendent as a leader with a non-traditional background. The researcher asked each participant: "Is there anything else you wish to add?" Each of the ten non-superintendent study participants indicated that they respected their superintendent and believed that Superintendent Forbin and Superintendent Palmer were effective district leaders with whom they enjoyed working.

Earlier in their respective interview sessions Principal Hunter and School Counselor Carolyn Hart, both in Smithsville, remarked that they believed superintendents should have teaching experience. However, when responding to this final question Hunter and Hart both noted that Superintendent Forbin's counseling background had been beneficial to Forbin's leadership. Hart asserted that, "If you're the perfect superintendent, you'll have [counseling experience], as well as the classroom experience" (personal communication, January 19, 2011).

Hunter stated,

I enjoy working with [Forbin]. I can be down to earth with him. I can go in and be frustrated with him. He lets me vent, which I would say your average superintendent

would not do that. I think the counseling background helps in that fashion. So I really feel like we work well together. And I wouldn't want somebody else in that position. (E. Hunter, personal communication, January 19, 2011)

Each interviewee responded that they saw similarities between the roles and responsibilities of school counselors and superintendents. All participants viewed school counselors as leaders in the school community. In addition, all twelve participants in this study indicated that they believed the advantages of ascending to the superintendency with a background in school counseling outweighed any of the disadvantages.

In response to this final interview question, Diamond Point board member Michael Holdsworth stated, "I think the school counselor has a bigger effect on children and young adults than they're given credit for" (personal communication, January 13, 2011). Holdsworth continued by telling the story of his son who had become a successful educator himself despite a poor experience with his high school counselor. Holdsworth's son's school counselor did not encourage him to attend college, but, at the urging of his parents, did so and went on to enjoy higher education.

Holdsworth noted the impact, both positively and negatively, that school counselors can have on students. Holdsworth continued by stating that students often look to school counselors for guidance, advice, and direction. He mentioned that when students receive encouragement from any educator they may put forth the extra effort to attain goals. Holdsworth concluded that even in her district leadership role, Superintendent Palmer continues to have a positive influence on Diamond Point's students, as she encourages students to set their sights high and strive for success. Holdsworth directly attributed Palmer's supportive demeanor and student advocacy to her counseling background (M. Holdsworth, personal communication, January 13, 2011).

Bolman and Deal's Leadership Orientations Survey.

The two superintendents who participated in this study completed Lee Bolman and Terrance Deal's Leadership Orientations Survey (Table 3). The researcher attempted to determine from which frame (structural, human resource, political or symbolic) these superintendents with a background in school counseling were most comfortable leading. The survey tool asked the superintendents to think of themselves solely as a leader. Each of the six survey questions had four phrases as responses, which the superintendent participants ranked in order to best describe their leadership style.

While this survey was certainly not a conclusive tool to determine how these superintendents led, the data collected did provide insight regarding their approach to leadership. First, and most noteworthy, was that the two superintendents responded to three of the six questions identically. The data collected from the survey indicated that both superintendents viewed themselves as human resource leaders. Both superintendents had an identical human resource "score" of 22. Bolman and Deal (1988) defined human resource leaders as the following,

Human resource leaders emphasize the importance of people. They endorse the view that the central task of management is to develop a good fit between people and organizations. They believe in the importance of coaching, participation, motivation, teamwork and good interpersonal relations. A good leader is a facilitator and participative manager who supports and empowers others. (Bolman & Deal, 1988)

The roles, responsibilities, and leadership style of human resource leaders bare many similarities to how school counselors function. Specifically, the role of facilitator with a focus motivating students and staff to achieve at the highest level possible. Effective interpersonal

relations are also common to school counselors and human resource leaders (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Dollarhide, 2003; Hayes & Paisley, 2002; Reynolds & Cheek, 2002). Thus, it was not surprising that these two superintendents who had a background in school counseling provided answers on this survey which indicated that their strongest leadership orientation according to the Leadership Orientations Survey was in the frame of human resource.

The most prevalent leadership orientation for both Superintendent Forbin and Superintendent Palmer was the human resource frame. Both superintendents rated the structural leadership frame as their third most utilized leadership orientation. Superintendent Forbin’s answers indicated that the symbolic frame was his second most common leadership orientation, followed by the structural frame, with the political frame being used least often. After the human resources frame, Superintendent Palmer’s responses indicated that her next most commonly utilized frame was political leadership. The structural frame ranked third, with symbolic leadership being the frame she used least often in her leadership style.

Table 3

Bolman and Deal’s Leadership Orientations Survey Results

Superintendent	Four Frames of Leadership			
	Structural	Human Resource	Political	Symbolic
Jerome Forbin	13	22	9	13
Sally Palmer	14	22	15	9

Note. These scores are the results of superintendents completing the survey and not the other ten study participants. All phrases in the six questions were assigned values (one to four, with four indicating the phrase that best describes the superintendent’s leadership style). The phrases relate to the leadership styles outlined by Bolman and Deal’s Four Frames of Leadership. See Appendix F

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes the summary of findings, conclusions, recommendations, and recommendations for future study related to the research questions, as well as a presentation of prevalent themes that emerged from the analysis of data. In addition, deduced conclusions and relevant recommendations for practitioners are presented. Finally, recommendations for future research are offered.

The purpose of this study was to determine how school superintendents with a background in school counseling use counseling skills in their daily duties, as well as to determine how the superintendents' background has shaped their leadership practices and style. Specific research questions answered by this study were:

1. What are the perceived advantages and disadvantages of accessing the superintendency with a background as a school counselor rather than a classroom teacher?
2. How has a background in school counseling molded the leadership style of the superintendents who participated in this study?
3. What counseling skills do these superintendents utilize in their daily duties?
4. To what degree is a lack of/limited traditional classroom teaching experience an impediment to effectiveness as a superintendent?
5. In what ways have these non-traditional superintendents compensated for their lack of/limited traditional classroom teaching experience?

Literature regarding effective superintendents, traditional and non-traditional pathways to the superintendency, the shortage of superintendent candidates in the twenty-first century, school

counselors serving as leaders, counseling skills that apply to the superintendency, and Bolman and Deal's leadership frames was used as a framework for this study. This study will contribute to the existing knowledge and body of work regarding the school superintendency by providing insight into the understudied area of superintendents ascending to the position with a background in school counseling.

Summary of Findings

The analysis of the data indicated the following results, which are listed as they relate to the five research questions:

The first research question investigated the perceived advantages and disadvantages of accessing the superintendency with a background as a school counselor rather than a classroom teacher. Both superintendents in this study commented on the similarities between the counselorship and the superintendency. Notably, both referenced the quasi-administrative nature of the school counselorship and the experience that counselors gain in communicating with numerous stakeholders. This study revealed that the advantages of coming to the superintendency with a background in school counseling outweighed the disadvantages. Ten of the twelve study participants shared this opinion. In this study, the researcher found that skills fostered in school counselor preparation programs and augmented in the counselorship, including: active listening, empathy, communication, goal setting, interpersonal relations, facilitation, negotiations, problem solving, and analyzing and understanding stakeholders, directly relate to the school superintendency.

The disadvantages of ascending to the superintendency with a background in school counseling were less obvious to the interviewees, but included: limited knowledge of curriculum and instruction (as compared to previous superintendents who served as long-term classroom

teachers), difficulty relating to issues faced by teachers, and challenges in disciplining faculty and staff. Interviewees also expressed that Superintendent Forbin's and Superintendent Palmer's limited familiarity with educational finance was a disadvantage. However, the limitations of the superintendents familiarity in the area of school finance cannot solely be attributed to their school counseling background. Many superintendents, novice and experienced alike, struggle with the financial aspect of the position regardless of their background and training (Brimley & Garfield, 2005).

Palmer and Forbin, as well as eight of the other ten participants commented that many of these disadvantages would be surmounted as superintendents gained more experience in the superintendency and became more comfortable with their role, as well as the expectations of the stakeholders within their respective school districts. Many of the effective leadership skills utilized by Forbin and Palmer were learned and developed during their counseling experience.

The second research question investigated how a background in school counseling molded the leadership style of the superintendents who participated in this study. In this study, both superintendents' leadership style was influenced by their counseling experience. The two superintendents were described as democratic, participative, and collaborative leaders who were involved in all aspects of district operations and regularly listened to input and feedback from multiple constituents when making decisions. The listening skills of these superintendents and their ability to effectively interact with constituents were named as strengths by all participants in this study.

Participants in this study viewed the superintendents' leadership style as based upon a team approach, which each of the interviewees believed related directly to the counseling background and experiences of the two superintendents. Forbin indicated that neither school

counselors nor superintendents would be effective “working alone”. The superintendents’ approachability and open door style policy was referenced by eleven of the twelve participants. In this study, the two superintendents were viewed as people persons and non-intimidating, friendly leaders who are able to control their emotions.

On the other hand, three interviewees remarked that their superintendent could benefit from being more firm with faculty and staff. Two participants in Smithsville and one in Diamond Point suggested that Forbin and Palmer may be taken advantage of because both superintendents were deemed by faculty and staff as compassionate individuals, and willing to talk through issues rather than discipline district employees.

The third research question investigated the counseling skills these superintendents utilized in their daily duties. Conflict resolution, data analysis, communication, active listening, paraphrasing, empathy, goal setting, problem solving, decision making, planning (short-term and long-range), obtaining stakeholder buy-in, negotiating, and facilitating meetings and hearings were skills closely related to school counseling, which Superintendent Forbin and Superintendent Palmer both used on a daily basis as reported by the participants in this study. In part, the use of each of these skills has allowed the two superintendents to be deemed effective. In each district, five out of six participants named empathy as a counseling skill used by Palmer and Forbin. The interviewees referenced the empathy that the superintendents displayed for students, faculty, staff, and community members alike. Two interviewees in each district discussed Forbin’s and Palmer’s ability to provide insight into matters of post-secondary planning.

Above all, each of the interviewees asserted that Superintendent Forbin and Superintendent Palmer served as student advocates. This was a role that these superintendents did not relinquish despite leaving their position as school counselors. Communication and active

listening were skills that were referenced by all twelve interview participants. Three interviewees, including Superintendent Forbin himself, indicated that Forbin could strengthen his communication skills with faculty and staff members. These three study participants mentioned instances in which Forbin had not effectively shared significant information with stakeholders in a timely manner. Forbin recognized that he needed to make a concerted effort to keep constituents on the same page and share necessary information quickly, yet comprehensively.

Three individuals in both districts mentioned Forbin's and Palmer's ability to effectively analyze data, particularly student assessment information. The skills of paraphrasing, goal setting, and conflict resolution were referenced in four of the six interviews conducted with Diamond Point stakeholders, and in five and the six interviews with Smithsville constituents. Problem solving and decision making competencies were discussed in five interviews in both districts.

In their efforts with student discipline, both superintendents cited the goal of assisting students to develop improved decision making skills, a common function of school counselors. All the interviewees in both Diamond Point and Smithsville spoke about Superintendent Palmer's and Superintendent Forbin's vast knowledge of special education and their involvement in decision making processes, which impact student programming in their respective districts. Each of the twelve participants in this study noted the superintendents' ability and desire to interact with students.

According to the study participants, the listening skills employed by Palmer and Forbin, their ability to relate to stakeholders, and their interpersonal skills were the key competencies that helped the superintendents to become effective district leaders. Forbin and Palmer noted

that they developed each of these skill sets in their training for the counselorship and augmented these skills during their counseling tenure.

The fourth research question investigated the degree to which a lack of or limited traditional classroom teaching experience was an impediment to effectiveness as a superintendent. It is widely accepted that the position of superintendent of schools has many facets and functions, thus teaching experience is only one element that may impact a district leader's effectiveness (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Hoyle et al., 2005a). In addition, given the similarities in the multifaceted roles and responsibilities of both school counselors and superintendents, it was not surprising to learn that Superintendent Forbin and Superintendent Palmer were both considered effective leaders by each of the ten stakeholders interviewed for this study. Three study participants even deemed school counseling to be an "ideal" or "logical" pathway to the superintendency. This belief was due, in part, to school counselors having varied experiences with multiple constituents and opportunities to assume administrative responsibilities and leadership roles prior to assuming official leadership positions beginning at the building leader level.

Ten of twelve study participants did not perceive Superintendent Forbin's lack of traditional classroom teaching experience or Superintendent Palmer's limited teaching experience of two years as a special education math teaching at the beginning of her career as an impediment to either's effectiveness as a school superintendent. Each of the twelve participants in this study noted that Superintendent Forbin and Superintendent Palmer functioned as instructional leaders. However, Forbin and Palmer both understood that instructional leadership was not their area of expertise. As a result, Forbin and Palmer utilized principals and teachers as curriculum and instruction specialists, as necessary.

Both superintendents made an effort to speak with teachers to learn about and understand the nuances of curriculum, instruction, and classroom management. When they were unclear about any aspect of education, particularly teaching, Forbin and Palmer willingly admitted they needed assistance and sought input from the experts in the classroom. In an effort to increase their own knowledge base, both superintendents were willing to ask questions. Both Forbin and Palmer were supportive of their teachers and attempted to provide them with the resources required to effectively instruct students.

The two individuals who found a lack of classroom teaching experience to have limited their superintendent's effectiveness were both Smithsville Central School District employees (Principal Hunter and School Counselor Hart). Hart and Hunter both suggested that Forbin was an effective superintendent, but may have been a more successful leader had he possessed experience as a classroom teacher. Both Hart and Hunter noted that, at times, some faculty members, particularly veteran teachers, questioned Forbin's leadership abilities, in part, due to his lack of teaching experience. However, Hart and Hunter both also stated that the relatively young age at which Forbin ascended to the superintendency and his brief stint in the principalship were also contributing factors to the criticisms they heard regarding Forbin's leadership. It must be noted that, according to Hart and Hunter, these criticisms were minor. Hart and Hunter stated that Superintendent Forbin's lack of classroom teaching experience did not have a negative impact on Forbin's overall performance as a superintendent.

None of the Diamond Point Central School District employees who were interviewed believed Superintendent Palmer was negatively affected by her limited teaching experience. The researcher deduced that this may be due to the fact that Palmer did have two years of classroom teaching experience while Forbin did not have any. Four of the six study participants from

Diamond Point felt that, as a result of her brief stint as a classroom teacher, Palmer was able to relate directly to the trials and tribulations teachers face each day. Palmer understood some of the curricular intricacies, instructional strategies, and student management challenges.

Superintendent Forbin did not have the classroom experience to coincide with his counseling prowess, and thus some constituents may have viewed him as less able to serve as an instructional leader than superintendents with a background in teaching.

In addition, it must be noted that Superintendent Forbin had spent his entire career in Smithsville, while Palmer worked in four school districts prior to arriving at Diamond Point and assumed the superintendency after a five-year principalship there. Thus, many of the staff and faculty in Smithsville remembered Forbin when he was a school counselor, while no one in Diamond Point worked with Palmer when she served in the counselorship. The impact that these factors had on either superintendent's effectiveness and/or the perceptions of them held by the research participants were not determined from this study.

The fifth and final research question investigated the ways in which these non-traditional superintendents compensated for their lack of or limited traditional classroom teaching experience. The superintendents themselves noted that they spent a great deal of time learning from colleagues and mentors throughout the course of their career. Forbin and Palmer both asked questions of faculty members and their superintendent peers to bolster their knowledge of curriculum and instruction. Forbin noted that he informally observed numerous high-quality teachers when he was a counselor, preparing for the move to leadership positions. Eight of the twelve participants in this study referenced Forbin's and Palmer's observations of teachers as helping the superintendents to compensate for their own lack of and limited classroom instruction experience. Forbin and Palmer both noted that, throughout their careers, they

carefully observed highly effective teachers to learn from their instructional methodology and determine an explanation for their successes. From these observational learning experiences, Forbin and Palmer mentioned that they shared the information gleaned with novice teachers and teachers who were deemed less effective.

Forbin and Palmer both regularly attended meetings, conferences, workshops, and seminars to enhance their understanding of teaching. In an effort to remain current in twenty-first century pedagogy, the two school superintendents read scholarly literature about teaching and learning. In addition, Superintendent Forbin and Superintendent Palmer both looked to the faculty, staff, and building administrators as their respective district's instructional experts. These stakeholders served in key positions on committees which made curricular and instructional decisions. In Diamond Point Central School District and Smithsville Central School District, decisions were made with in-depth input from those with teaching expertise beyond that of Forbin and Palmer.

Prevalent Themes

Each of the twelve study participants stated that they perceived a background in school counseling to be a valuable experience and career pathway for the two superintendents studied. All participants deemed counseling skills as transferable to the superintendency, and each stated that the superintendent participants used counseling skills on a regular basis in the superintendents' daily duties. Only two individuals perceived classroom teaching experience as necessary for superintendents to be as effective as possible, particularly in their role as instructional leaders.

Conclusions

Several researchers noted that superintendents with previous careers in business, military or law, who lack classroom teaching experience, can be effective school district leaders (Duckworth, 2008; Hernandez, 2010; Lofton, 2010; Quinn, 2007; Sanchez, 2008; Usdan & Cronin, 2003; Usmani, 2010). This study indicated that superintendents with a background as school counselors with limited or no teaching experience can also be effective, highly regarded school superintendents. The researcher discovered that there are numerous similarities between the superintendency and the school counselorship. Individuals in either position must be empathic. In addition, these individuals should actively listen, communicate with an array of constituents, plan, set goals, facilitate groups, analyze data, solve problems, make decisions, and lead others.

Those educators and board members who participated in this study noted that there are a multitude of benefits and few disadvantages to ascending to the position of superintendent of schools with a background in school counseling. The superintendents in this study continued to utilize the skills they learned and put into action as school counselors. The curricular and instructional expertise that Superintendent Palmer and Superintendent Forbin lacked was supplemented by both superintendents' willingness to learn and to admit they required assistance. They also acknowledged the need to ask questions in order to obtain input and feedback from traditional classroom teachers who have the proficiency to help superintendents make decisions and develop actions plans. Most important to the effectiveness of Forbin and Palmer were their listening skills, their ability to relate to stakeholders, and their interpersonal skills. The literature noted that these skills are fostered during the counselorship and are utilized each day in the superintendency (Brunner, 2002; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Dollarhide, 2003;

Dollarhide et al., 2008; Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999; Konnert & Augenstein, 1995; Janson et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2010; Mason & McMahon, 2009; Sanchez, 2008; Stone & Clark, 2001; Usmani, 2010).

Both Forbin and Palmer led with an open door policy, using collaboration and teamwork as the tenets of a distributed leadership approach (Carter & Cunningham, 1997, Collins, 2001; Janson et al., 2009). The two superintendents willingly listened to the input and feedback of constituents. They both worked closely with stakeholders to develop varied learning opportunities for students. Neither superintendent was described as a micromanager, but both were active participants in all aspects of district operations, including curriculum and instruction, which the literature deemed as fundamental to the effectiveness of the superintendent (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Houston & Eadie, 2002; Konnert & Augenstein, 1995; Usmani, 2010).

Two study participants in Smithsville and one in Diamond Point noted that their superintendent could be more firm with employees and, when necessary, issue directives. Forbin himself deemed disciplining district employees to be a challenging aspect of the superintendency and one that the counseling background did not prepare him. Forbin noted that disciplining employees was particularly difficult because he had spent his entire career in the Smithsville Central School District, and was a peer of many of the district's employees of whom he then led and was responsible. Overall, school counseling had a profound and largely positive impact on the leadership style of these superintendents. Instead of focusing on discipline and punitive measures, both superintendents used their skills in communication, conflict resolution, and problem solving to address issues that arose with students and district employees.

The participants in this study indicated that Superintendent Forbin and Superintendent Palmer used numerous counseling skills in their daily duties as school district leader. From the

results of this study and the review of literature, the researcher concluded that many of the skills required to be an effective school counselor and are also utilized by effective superintendents (Brunner, 2002; Dahir et al., 2009; Dollarhide, 2003; Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999; Konnert & Augenstein, 1995; Janson et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2010; Lofton, 2010; Mason & McMahon, 2009; Reeves, 2002; Sanchez, 2008; Stone & Clark, 2001, Usmani, 2010). Specifically, both groups must possess competencies in active listening, human relations, goal setting, and problem solving. Solid communication skills are necessary in both the counselorship and the superintendency. One's ability to communicate successfully may set the most effective counselors and superintendents apart from those in either position who are merely competent.

The literature indicated that school superintendents do not have to possess a teaching background to be effective school district leaders (Duckworth, 2008; Kowalski & Bjork, 2005; Pino, 1997; Quinn, 2007; Sanchez, 2008; Usdan & Cronin, 2003; Usmani, 2010; Young, 1999). The researcher determined that this belief held true in the case of Forbin and Palmer. Only two interviewees, both from Smithsville, believed teaching experience was a more beneficial background for a superintendent than was counseling experience. Despite the opinion of these two individuals, each of the six study participants from Smithsville stated that Forbin's lack of traditional classroom teaching experience did not hamper his effectiveness as a superintendent. Admittedly, Forbin was not a curriculum and instruction expert. Understanding this, Forbin sought the assistance of those whom were deemed experts in these key areas. The participants from Smithsville did note that some district constituents were keenly aware of Forbin's lack of teaching experience and, from time to time, would reference this fact.

Conversely, the participants from Diamond Point stated that Palmer's limited teaching experience did not impede her effectiveness as a superintendent in any way. Diamond Point participants appreciated Palmer's well-roundedness and varied career experiences. These constituents acknowledged the benefits of Palmer's brief teaching experience, but were more cognizant of the advantages that Palmer possessed in listening, communication, and problem solving skills, which they deemed to be a direct result of her counseling background. In the case of both Forbin and Palmer, the superintendents did not attempt to pose as curriculum and instructional experts. Instead, both superintendents utilized the expertise of their faculty and staff in these areas and focused on their own strengths in human relations, which were fostered during their respective counselorships.

To be most effective, the literature noted that it is necessary for non-traditional superintendents to bolster their knowledge of curricular and instructional matters (Duckworth, 2008; Quinn, 2007; Sanchez, 2008; Sullivan & Shulman, 2005; Usdan & Cronin, 2003; Usmani, 2010). Forbin and Palmer made conscious efforts to compensate for their lack of and limited traditional classroom teaching experience. Forbin and Palmer did not allow their lack of and limited teaching experience, respectively, to become a weakness. Instead, to enhance their knowledge of curriculum and instruction, both superintendents engaged in formal and informal professional development opportunities. Both superintendents were proponents of continuing education and understood that they needed to hold some instructional leadership responsibilities in their respective school districts. Forbin and Palmer both willingly admitted their shortcomings and desired to learn from others whenever possible.

All of the constituents interviewed enjoyed working with their superintendent and believed Forbin and Palmer would become increasingly effective as they gained additional

experience. While both superintendents were respected and effective, Palmer faced fewer questions about the impact of her limited teaching experience than did Forbin, who acknowledged that he faced questions from faculty about his ability to lead teachers when he had no classroom experience himself. From this study, the researcher did not attempt to determine whether or not Palmer's varied career experiences and diverse work environments were the reason why she was so highly regarded by Diamond Point Central School District stakeholders. However, during interview sessions, four of the six interviewees from Diamond Point referenced Palmer's brief teaching experience and noted that it was beneficial to her success as a superintendent. In particular, Principal Gordon, School Counselor Clifford, and Palmer herself noted that teachers recognized and appreciated the fact that Palmer had worked as a classroom teacher.

Superintendent Forbin stated that he faced some opposition from faculty during his superintendency, specifically due to the fact that he was not a classroom teacher. The researcher did not attempt to determine the impact that Forbin's hiring from within the school district had on his effectiveness and the perception(s) held by stakeholders. Also, Forbin had spent his entire educational career in Smithville. The researcher did not attempt to establish the effect this fact had on constituents' perceptions of Forbin or his effectiveness as a superintendent. Regardless of Forbin's lack of teaching experience and Palmer's limited experienced in the classroom, both superintendents were well respected in their school community and anticipated spending many years in the superintendency in their respective school districts.

It has been noted that in the twenty-first century there is a shortage of qualified candidates willing to pursue the superintendency (Beaudin et al., 2002; Glass, 2001; Hoyle, 2005b; Usmani, 2010; Wilmore 2008; Wolverton, 2004). The two school superintendents, both

with a background primarily in school counseling, who participated in this study are effective and well respected in their school community. The findings suggest that school counselors could be advised to consider educational leadership positions and possibly even be groomed for the position of superintendent of schools. The researcher determined that the counselorship and the superintendency mirrored one another in numerous ways. The roles, responsibilities, and functions of school counselors and school superintendents are similar, and many of the skills used by counselors translate to the superintendency. Boards of education and superintendent selection committees should give fair consideration to former school counselors who are applying for superintendencies throughout the United States.

Recommendations

From this study, several recommendations can be made to enhance the school superintendency and increase the likelihood that former school counselors can become effective superintendents. First, due to several similarities in the roles, responsibilities, and skills needed to be effective in both the counselorship and the superintendency, former school counselors should consider pursuing the position of superintendent of schools. This study determined that both superintendent participants used counseling skills in their daily duties, and their leadership style was forged by their counseling experience. This study also found that the advantages of the superintendents' school counseling background were far greater than the disadvantages.

Beginning during his counselorship, the Smithsville board of education and previous superintendent groomed Forbin for the superintendency. Given the similarities in skills used by both counselors and superintendents, it may be advisable for school districts leaders and their board of education to groom school counselors for the superintendency. Clearly, not all school counselors would be effective superintendents and not all school counselors are willing to

assume the superintendency. However, those who are interested in school district leadership should be mentored by their superintendent, and encouraged to continue their education and earn the degree and/or certification necessary to become a superintendent.

Given the findings and conclusions from this study, the researcher recommends that superintendent preparation programs focus more of their curricula on counseling and human relations skills – active listening, communication, empathy, decision making, goal setting, and problem solving – in which most school counselors are trained and are essential for leaders to possess (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Collins, 2001; Dahir et al., 2009; Dollarhide, 2003; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Hoyle et al, 2005b, Sanchez, 2008; Usmani, 2010). The review of literature conducted by the researcher found that most effective superintendents are highly accomplished in these skills.

The lack of superintendents who are former school counselors may indicate that school counselor preparation programs should develop a greater focus on leadership skills and expand curricula to increase their students' "leadership identity" (Mason and McMahon, 2009, p. 113). In addition, the researcher recommends that school counselors who aspire to become superintendents broaden their knowledge base of curricular and instructional matters. Regardless of one's background, in an effort to be as effective as possible, all superintendents should possess an understanding of curriculum and instruction (Duckworth, 2008; Hoyle, 2005a; Konnert & Augenstein, 1995; Lofton, 2010; Quinn, 2007; Usmani, 2010; Wilmore, 2008). By augmenting one's familiarity with curriculum and instruction, a superintendent or aspirant to the position will be more likely to gain the support of faculty and staff members whom may otherwise question the validity of the leader's viewpoints.

All superintendents and those who aspire to the position, regardless of their background and training, should attend seminars, workshops, and conferences to expand their knowledge base of all educational matters. In addition, superintendents and aspirant district leaders should engage in discussions with those deemed as experts in the field – scholars, their superintendent peers, and stakeholders within their own district. The superintendent participants in this study indicated that they regularly attended workshops and read scholarly literature in an effort to continue their own learning. Forbin and Palmer both stated that they benefitted greatly from conversations with experienced superintendents and faculty members in their own district who were viewed as instructional experts.

Even with continuing one's education in curriculum and instruction, and finance, school district leaders with a lack of or limited traditional classroom teaching experience will need to find ways to offset their lack of experience in these areas. Superintendents with a background in school counseling must look to the so-called experts in their school district whom possess a deeper understand and first-hand experience in instruction and curricular matters. Non-traditional superintendents should willingly admit they are not curriculum and instruction experts, and thus seek assistance from those stakeholders who are authorities in these realms, as did Forbin and Palmer. However, the researcher recommends that those with a background in school counseling who become superintendents or aspire to the position should not avoid instructional leadership, and, instead, should embrace the challenge. Despite one's background, constituents look to their superintendent for leadership in all educational areas. As such, it is paramount that superintendents do not shy away from matters they are less familiar with, but instead attempt to gain knowledge via professional development and continued learning.

Lastly, when interviewing for the superintendency, it is recommended that aspirant superintendents who are trained as school counselors focus on their strengths in interpersonal relations and leadership skills, which most effective superintendents possess (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Duckworth, 2008; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Hoyle et al. 2005b; Sanchez, 2008, Usmani, 2008). In addition, during interviews, aspiring superintendents with a background in school counseling should note the similarities between the counselorship and the superintendency found in this study. The researcher recommends that aspirant superintendents who have a lack of or limited teaching experience acknowledge their limitations in terms of curricular and instructional knowledge. If the candidate for the superintendency may be perceived as weak in the areas of curriculum and instruction, it is imperative for the applicant to discuss their desire and enthusiasm to gain understanding of the intricacies of these facets of education. They should discuss with the interview committee the learning they will engage in from graduate level classes, conversations with experts, participation in seminars and training sessions, and the regular review of scholarly literature.

Recommendations for Future Study

Recommendations for the use of this study's findings and for practitioners' further research include the following:

1. A comparative study of superintendents with a traditional classroom teaching background and superintendents with a background in school counseling could be conducted to determine the similarities and differences in leadership style and effectiveness as suggested by student assessment data, students' post-secondary plans, and length of superintendent tenure.

2. This study looked at superintendents with a background in school counseling who led rural districts in a Mid-Atlantic state. A study of former school counselors now serving as

superintendents in large urban and/or suburban school districts could be conducted to determine the similarities and differences of former school counselors leading districts with larger student enrollment and greater numbers of faculty and staff as compared to the superintendents leading rural districts in this study. Typically, larger districts have additional district office administrators. It would be valuable to study how the leadership approach and responsibilities of superintendents with a background in school counseling leading larger districts differs from those in rural districts, as leadership roles and responsibilities vary widely depending upon the size of the school district.

3. One aspect of this study was the review of the superintendents' instructional leadership. An in-depth study could be conducted to review the instructional leadership roles and responsibilities of superintendents with a traditional classroom teaching background as compared to superintendents with a school counseling background. Similarities and differences could be determined and analyzed.

4. Another recommendation for future research is to conduct a quantitative study of each of the twenty superintendents who have a background in school counseling in the Mid-Atlantic state in which Forbin and Palmer led. The demographics, career path, graduate study, degrees held, and motivation for pursuing the superintendency of these twenty individuals could be studied to determine the most common backgrounds and experiences. It would also be valuable to determine if a particular career path or background provided more effective training for the superintendency than others.

5. Typically, school counselors are trained in communication, active listening, problem solving, conflict resolution, goal setting, planning, motivation, and human relations. Future study could be conducted to determine the effectiveness of superintendents with a background in

school counseling in these competencies, as compared to superintendents with a non-counseling background. This would be a valuable study, as, dependent upon the findings, superintendent preparation programs may wish to incorporate more of these so-called counseling skills into their curricula to increase the overall effectiveness of superintendents.

6. A review of the curricula taught in superintendent preparation programs could be conducted to review if and how counseling skills, interpersonal relations, and human resource skills are incorporated into the programs and their pedagogy. The findings may suggest that graduate study programs should focus more of their curricula on these counseling skills, which literature notes most effective superintendents possess.

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Sage Graduate Schools

Appendix A

EDUCATION
HEALTH SCIENCES
MANAGEMENT

School of Health Sciences --- Office of the Dean
45 Ferry Street
Troy, NY 12180
www.sage.edu --- 518-244-2264

December 7, 2010

Christopher G. Wojeski
Assistant Principal- Mayfield Junior-Senior High School
6 North Hollywood Avenue
Gloversville, NY 12078

IRB PROPOSAL # 10-11-027

Reviewer: Susan C. Cloninger, Chair

Dear Mr. Wojeski

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application and has approved your project entitled "The Leadership Practices of School Superintendents with a Background in School Counseling." Good luck with your research.

When you have completed collecting your data you will need to submit to the IRB Committee a final report indicating any problems you may have encountered regarding the treatment of human subjects

Please refer to your IRB Proposal number whenever corresponding with us whether by mail or in person.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Susan C. Cloninger, PhD
Chair, IRB

SCC/nan

Cc. Dr. Daniel Alemu

Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

To:

You are being asked to participate in a research project entitled: **The Leadership Practices of School Superintendents with a Background in School Counseling**

This research is being conducted by :

Principal Investigator: Dr. Daniel Alemu, Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership and Committee Chair, Sage Graduate Schools

Student Investigator: Christopher G. Wojeski, Doctoral Candidate, Sage Graduate Schools

Explanation of the Study and its Procedures:

This doctoral research study is designed to examine the experiences and competencies of superintendents whom were former school counselors, through the eyes of the superintendents themselves, as well as from the perspectives of school board members, administrators and school counselors within the respective school districts. Christopher Wojeski, a doctoral student at Sage Graduate Schools in Albany, New York, is conducting this study to learn more about the career paths of these superintendents and their leadership style. Individual interviews will be conducted with twelve school district constituents to gain insight regarding these superintendents with a background in school counseling.

The nature and duration of subject's participation and procedures

Participants in this study will be interviewed by the researcher either in-person, on the telephone or via the internet on Skype (www.skype.com). The interviews will last approximately forty-five minutes, but no longer than one hour. For the purpose of data analysis, the interviews will be audio taped by the researcher and later transcribed by a bond transcriber. The interviews will be conducted at a location and setting that is mutually agreed upon by the participant and the researcher.

The data gathered from interviews will remain confidential. For the duration of this study, all information will be stored on a password protected laptop computer and hard copies of documents will be locked in a file cabinet. Only the researcher and members of the dissertation committee will have access to the study data. There will not be any identifying names on the audio tapes. In addition, the participants' names will not be available to anyone other than those serving on the committee. The results of the research will be published in a typed document and may be published in a professional journal or presented at professional meetings. After the completion of the dissertation, the audio tapes will be destroyed. It is intended that the information gathered from this study will assist aspirant superintendents; especially those with a background in school counseling, to better understand the role of the superintendent, leadership strategies and how to effectively employ counseling skills in the superintendency

Benefits of participation

For superintendents, the anticipated benefit of participation in the study is the opportunity to discuss their career path and leadership strategies with a similarly trained educator. Such discussions may allow these district leaders to strengthen their approach and increase their efficacy. For school board members, participation in this study may help reinforce their role and responsibilities related to governance and policy development. For administrators, involvement

in this study may help further their own leadership competencies and understand their superintendent's leadership approach. For school counselors, the anticipated benefits of participation in this study include evaluating their own counseling skills as related to those their superintendent uses as a leader. In addition, these counselors may determine that educational leadership is a career path they should consider themselves.

Potential risks of participation

The potential of minor risks and/or discomforts for participants include disparaging comments and perceptions of constituents regarding the superintendents involved in the study. Such comments may be upsetting to these superintendents and, in the worst case, could strain relationships between stakeholders.

In the event that I am harmed by participation in this study, I understand that compensation and/or medical treatment is not available from The Sage Colleges. However, compensation and/or medical costs might be recovered by legal action.

Audiotape of Interview

For the purpose of data analysis only, the interviews will be audio taped by the researcher and later transcribed by a bond transcriber. The tapes will be played in the home of the researcher and in the office of the transcriber. The interviews will be conducted at a location and setting that is mutually agreed upon by the participant and the researcher.

I give permission to the researcher to play the audio tape of me in the places described above. Put your initials here to indicate your permission. _____

Participation in this study is voluntary, I understand that I may, at any time during the course of this study, revoke my consent and withdraw from the study without any penalty.

I have been given an opportunity to read and keep a copy of this Agreement and to ask questions concerning the study. Any such questions have been answered to my full and complete satisfaction.

I, _____, having full capacity to consent, do hereby volunteer to participate in this research study

Signed: _____

Research participant

This research has received the approval of The Sage Colleges Institutional Review Board, which functions to insure the protection of the rights of human participants. If you, as a participant, have any complaints about this study, please contact:

Sage IRB
Dr. Esther Haskvitz, Interim Dean
Sage Graduate Schools
School of Health Sciences
45 Ferry Street
Troy, New York 12180
518-244-2264
haskve@sage.edu
revised 7/10

Appendix C

Interview Instruments

Interview Questions for the Superintendents

1. Please tell me about the demographics of the district and the school community (this question was asked via telephone or email)
2. How has your background in school counseling molded your leadership style?
3. In your daily operations as a superintendent, what counseling skills do you use?
4. Do you believe your background, which is different from the traditional experience of superintendents, has hindered or helped your ability to effectively lead a school district?
How?
 - a. How has your counseling background proven to be beneficial during your superintendency?
 - b. Has your unique background been detrimental to your superintendency in any way? How so?
5. Did anyone encourage you to pursue the superintendency? Why? In what manner?
6. How have you adjusted for your lack of traditional classroom teaching experience to effectively lead a school district?
7. In what capacity do you function as an instructional leader?
8. What skills do you deem most vital to become an effective superintendent?
9. As a superintendent, what are your strengths?
10. In what areas (or what skills/abilities) do you need to improve?
11. How would you guide/mentor a new superintendent?
12. Is there anything else you wish to add?

Interview Questions for Administrators

1. Please describe your superintendent's leadership style.
2. How does your superintendent use her/his counseling skills in the superintendency? What specific skills does he/she utilize?
3. What are your superintendent's strengths?
4. How does this superintendent's leadership style differ from that of previous superintendents with whom you've worked?
5. Do you perceive your superintendent's lack of/limited traditional teaching experience as detrimental to her/his ability to lead the district? How/Why/Why not?
6. How does your superintendent compensate for her/his lack of traditional classroom teaching experience?
7. Does your superintendent function as an instructional leader? How so?
8. Do you believe a background in school counseling provides a solid foundation for the move to administration? How?/In what ways?
9. In what areas of leadership could your superintendent improve?
10. Is there anything else you wish to add?

Interview Questions for School Counselors

1. Please describe your superintendent's leadership style.
2. How does your superintendent use her/his counseling skills in the superintendency? What specific skills does he/she utilize?

3. What are your superintendent's strengths?
4. How does this superintendent's leadership style differ from that of previous superintendents with whom you've worked?
5. Do you perceive your superintendent's lack of/limited traditional teaching experience as detrimental to her/his ability to lead the district? How/Why/Why not?
6. How does your superintendent compensate for her/his lack of traditional classroom teaching experience?
7. Does your superintendent function as an instructional leader? How so?
8. Do you believe a background in school counseling provides a solid foundation for the move to administration? How?/In what ways?
9. In what areas of leadership could your superintendent improve?
10. Is there anything else you wish to add?

Interview Questions for Board Members

1. Why was your superintendent hired to lead your school district? What competencies set her/him apart from the other candidates?
2. Did the Board of Education express any reservations in hiring a superintendent whom did not possess experience as a teacher?
3. Please describe your superintendent's leadership style.
4. How does this superintendent's leadership style differ from that of previous superintendents with whom you've worked?
5. How does your superintendent use her/his counseling skills in the superintendency? What specific skills does he/she utilize?
6. What are your superintendent's strengths?

7. Do you perceive your superintendent's lack of/limited teaching experience is detrimental to her/his ability to lead the district? How/Why/Why not?
8. How does your superintendent compensate for her/his lack of traditional classroom teaching experience?
9. In what areas of leadership could your superintendent improve?
10. Does your superintendent function as an instructional leader? How so?

Is there anything else you wish to add?

Appendix D

Invitation Letter to Superintendents

December 10, 2010

Superintendent:

I am conducting a qualitative research in the form of two case study regarding superintendents whom have a background in school counseling. Given your school counseling experience, I was hoping you would be willing to allow me to interview yourself, two _____ school board members, two administrators (a principal and business official would be ideal) and a school counselor from the _____ School District. The research involves the completion of a brief personal interview. The audio taped interview will last approximately forty-five minutes (no more than one hour) and will be conducted at your convenience, be it face-to-face, via telephone or online using Skype. In particular, I am hoping to address the following research questions:

1. What are the perceived advantages and disadvantages of accessing the superintendency with a background as a school counselor rather than a classroom teacher?
2. How has the background in school counseling molded the leadership style of these superintendents?
3. What counseling skills do these superintendents utilize in their daily duties?
4. To what degree is a lack of/limited traditional classroom teaching experience an impediment to effectiveness as a superintendent?
5. In what ways have these non-traditional superintendents compensated for their lack of/limited traditional classroom teaching experience?

The benefit of your participation is that your input for this project will add to the literature regarding non-traditional superintendents and their leadership style(s). All information gathered would be confidential and participants (including the school district) would be given pseudonyms. If you agree to participate in the study, the Sage Colleges' Institutional Review Board (IRB) requires a letter of consent on your district's letterhead.

Please feel free to contact me at wojesc@sage.edu or my doctoral chairperson, Dr. Daniel Alemu at alemud@sage.edu with any questions or concerns. I thank you for your consideration and hope to work with you in my study.

Sincerely,

Christopher Wojeski
Doctoral Candidate
Sage Graduate Schools

Appendix E

Superintendent Survey

1. Please list in chronological order all the professional positions in education you have held and the number of years for each: (**example:** elementary school counselor - 6 years; junior high school counselor - 2 year; assistant high school principal - 2 years; high school principal -7 years; superintendent - 2 years)

Position - including grade level(s)	School District	Number of Years

2. What was your reason for leaving your previous position/assignment?

- to become a superintendent for the first time
- moved up in same district to become superintendent
- move to a different district
- move for higher salary
- job dissatisfaction in previous position
- board conflict
- other

3. At what age were you appointed to your first superintendency? _____

4. Please list all degrees you hold: _____

Appendix F

Name: _____

LEADERSHIP ORIENTATIONS

This questionnaire asks you to describe yourself as a manager and leader. For each item, give the number "4" to the phrase that best describes you, "3" to the item that is next best, and on down to "1" for the item that is least like you.

1. My strongest skills are:

- _____ a. Analytic skills
- _____ b. Interpersonal skills
- _____ c. Political skills
- _____ d. Flair for drama

2. The best way to describe me is:

- _____ a. Technical expert
- _____ b. Good listener
- _____ c. Skilled negotiator
- _____ d. Inspirational leader

3. What has helped me the most to be successful is my ability to:

- _____ a. Make good decisions
- _____ b. Coach and develop people
- _____ c. Build strong alliances and a power base
- _____ d. Inspire and excite others

4. What people are most likely to notice about me is my:

- _____ a. Attention to detail
- _____ b. Concern for people
- _____ c. Ability to succeed, in the face of conflict and opposition
- _____ d. Charisma

5. My most important leadership trait is:

- _____ a. Clear, logical thinking
- _____ b. Caring and support for others
- _____ c. Toughness and aggressiveness
- _____ d. Imagination and creativity

6. I am best described as:

- _____ a. An analyst
- _____ b. A humanist
- _____ c. A politician
- _____ d. A visionary

_____ **ST** _____ **HR** _____ **PL** _____ **SY** _____ **Total** _____

1988, Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal. All rights reserved. This survey is based on ideas in Bolman and Deal's Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991, 1997, 2003).

1. Structural leaders emphasize rationality, analysis, logic, facts and data. They are likely to believe strongly in the importance of clear structure and well-developed management systems. A good leader is someone

who thinks clearly, makes the right decisions, has good analytic skills, and can design structures and systems that get the job done.

2. Human resource leaders emphasize the importance of people. They endorse the view that the central task of management is to develop a good fit between people and organizations. They believe in the importance of coaching, participation, motivation, teamwork and good interpersonal relations. A good leader is a facilitator and participative manager who supports and empowers others.

3. Political leaders believe that managers and leaders live in a world of conflict and scarce resources. The central task of management is to mobilize the resources needed to advocate and fight for the unit's or the organization's goals and objectives. Political leaders emphasize the importance of building a power base: allies, networks, coalitions. A good leader is an advocate and negotiator who understands politics and is comfortable with conflict.

4. Symbolic leaders believe that the essential task of management is to provide vision and inspiration. They rely on personal charisma and a flair for drama to get people excited and committed to the organizational mission. A good leader is a prophet and visionary, who uses symbols, tells stories and frames experience in ways that give people hope and meaning.

Computing Scores:

Compute the scores as follows (*the researcher will be responsible for the computation of scores*):

$$ST = 1a + 2a + 3a + 4a + 5a + 6a$$

$$HR = 1b + 2b + 3b + 4b + 5b + 6b$$

$$PL = 1c + 2c + 3c + 4c + 5c + 6c$$

$$SY = 1d + 2d + 3d + 4d + 5d + 6d$$

Appendix G

Pre and Post Interview Scripts

Pre-Script

“Hello. My name is Chris Wojeski and I am a doctoral candidate at Sage Graduate Schools. Thank you for agreeing to take part in an interview to gather data for my doctoral research. As you know, my research is investigating the counseling skills you (Superintendent _____) utilize(s) in your/her/his leadership style. I am hoping to determine some of the advantages and disadvantages of coming to the superintendency from a background in school counseling.

I will be asking you _____ questions that will help me develop a better understanding of how your (Superintendent _____’s) background in school counseling has impacted your superintendency. Your interview will be taped on a digital recorder. The tape will be destroyed after my dissertation is completed. Participant names and school districts will be confidential and pseudonyms will be developed for use in the dissertation. Please know that you do not have to answer all of the questions and that all of your answers will remain confidential. At any point, you may withdraw from this study. Also, the recorded data will be solely used for this research.”

Post-Script

“Thank you for participating in the interview and my study. If you have an follow-up questions, please contact me via email at wojesc@sage.edu or phone at (518) 225-2261”

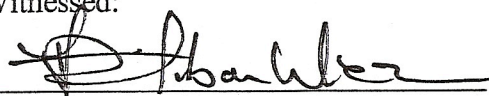
Transcription Confidentiality Agreement

Agreement and acknowledgement between Jamie Mroczo (transcriber) and Christopher G. Wojeski (client/researcher).

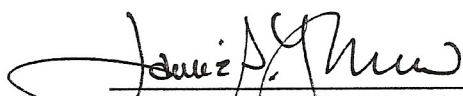
The client has or shall furnish to the transcriber certain confidential information, all on the following conditions:

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4. This information shall not be disclosed to any employee, consultant or third party unless party agrees to execute and be bound by the terms of this agreement, and disclosure by client is first approved.
5. The transcriber acknowledges the information disclosed herein is proprietary and in the event of any breach, the client shall be entitled to injunction relief as a cumulative and not necessarily successive or exclusive remedy to a claim for monetary damages.
6. This constitutes the entire agreement. Signed this 12 day of NOVEMBER, 2010.


Witnessed:



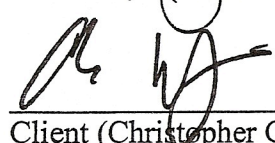
Witness



Transcriber (Jamie Mroczo)



Witness



Client (Christopher G. Wojeski)

ROBERT HUSAIN
Principal
Mayfield Jr-Sr H.S.