

**AN EXPLORATION OF FACTORS LEADING TO SHARED SUPERINTENDENCIES
IN NEW YORK STATE**

A Doctoral Research Project

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Assistant Professor John W. Johnson

Doctoral Committee Chair

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Jason A. Andrews

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IN NEW YORK STATE**

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Jason A. Andrews

Date of Signature

John W. Johnson
Assistant Professor of Education
Doctoral Research Committee Chair

Date of Signature

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“Each generation goes further than the generation preceding it because it stands on the shoulders of that generation. You will have opportunities beyond anything we've ever known.”

-Ronald Reagan

It has long been a personal and professional goal to complete my doctorate. As a boy growing up on a dairy farm in upstate New York, the value of hard work and importance of education were instilled in me from a young age. I have been blessed with many opportunities not afforded to previous generations in my family. I am incredibly grateful to have the support and resources available to me to achieve this significant benchmark.

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ABSTRACT

As the search to provide high quality services with diminished resources intensifies under pressure from budgets and taxpayers, a growing number of school districts are considering shared administrative services to meet this need. One manner in which some school districts in upstate New York have decided to respond is to enter into shared superintendency agreements where two districts share a single superintendent. This study sought to discover what factors influence the decision by districts in New York State to enter into shared superintendent agreements and how these factors relate to Bolman and Deal's (2013) organizational frames. This study interviewed board of education presidents, vice-presidents and superintendents in four upstate New York school districts who have entered into shared superintendent agreements since legislation authorizing the practice was passed in 2011. This study aimed to expand upon and contribute to the prior literature and research on shared superintendencies and decision-making by school district leaders during times of reduced resources.

There are four key findings from this study. First, district leaders have a desire to attract and retain stable, high quality system leadership in order to meet organizational goals which is the primary influence in prompting the decision to enter a shared superintendent agreement. Second, there is a perceived scarcity of financial and human resources including insufficient revenue sources, an adequate pool of qualified candidates for the superintendency and a reluctance to pursue a search for a superintendent in participating districts. Third, there are certain prerequisite conditions which must be in place to commence a successful shared superintendency including a previous successful shared service agreement between the districts, experience as a superintendent, familiarity with at least one of the districts by the shared superintendent, and a competent administrative team in each participating school district.

Finally, several potential and perceived benefits have been identified as a result of the shared superintendent agreement for participating districts including the opportunity for additional shared services between the two districts, taking a proactive step prior to the potential of being forced to consolidate or merge and the ability to demonstrate frugality to stakeholder groups.

This study has implications and recommendations for further research, practice and policymakers around: revisiting provisions in the legislation authorizing shared superintendencies; developing professional development for aspiring and new superintendents, Ensuring that proper conditions exist within districts considering entering a shared superintendent agreement, and determining the long-term impact of shared superintendencies on student achievement and the attainment of organizational goals.

Key words: shared superintendents, leadership, shared services, limited resources, decision-making

CHAPTER I

In recent years, there has been a substantial reduction in resources for school districts across New York State. According to New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli (2014), “New York State’s school districts are facing severe fiscal challenges. District officials must continue to improve student performance, ensure student safety and provide extracurricular activities that taxpayers value for their children—all against the backdrop of a slow economic recovery in which resources are limited” (p. 1). At the same time, many districts in upstate New York have faced considerable reductions in student enrollment. In addition to these issues, school boards must also deal with a declining number of qualified superintendents willing to lead school districts (Beem, 2007, Harris, Lowery, Hopson & Marshall, 2004). Yet, according to the New York State School Boards Association, hiring a superintendent is the "single most important decision a school board ever makes" (Weiner & Stern, 2014). Abshier, Harris, and Hopson (2011) described the current school climate succinctly stating, “School leaders are being asked to stretch existing resources and to do even more with less, while at the same time resources are dwindling and expectations are often escalating” (p. 3). Consequently, school leaders have been called upon to respond to these challenges in new and innovative ways. As the search to provide high quality services with diminished resources intensifies under pressure from budgets and taxpayers, a growing number of school districts are considering shared administrative services to meet this need. One manner in which some school districts in upstate New York have decided to respond is to enter into shared superintendency agreements where two districts share a single superintendent.

In 2011, the New York State Legislature passed N.Y. Education Law 1527-C - Shared superintendent program. This authorized the school boards of districts with an enrollment of less

than 1000 students in the previous year to enter into a school superintendent sharing contract with no more than two additional school districts each of which had fewer than 1000 enrolled pupils in the previous year. Consequently, a number of districts have considered entering into such a contract and several districts in upstate New York now share a single superintendent. During the 2012-13 school year, a single district took advantage of this new legislation. In this inaugural shared superintendency, a very seasoned, retired superintendent returned to service first on an interim basis to initiate the new shared service. After one year, the two participating districts conducted a search for a new shared superintendent. According to the New York State School Boards Association, five additional shared superintendencies commenced in New York State during the 2013-14 school year. However, one of these arrangements was between a mid-level BOCES administrator who also served as the superintendent of a very small district, which does not meet the traditional definition of a shared superintendency. Additionally, it is noteworthy that the initial shared superintendent arrangement that began in 2012 was dissolved prior to the start of the 2014-15 school year. As this emerging practice becomes more common, it is important to explore the decision making process and considerations districts take into account when contemplating a shared superintendency.

The job of a superintendent is challenging. Patterson (2000) stated that the superintendency is more of a lifestyle than a job that provides the opportunity to engage in “difficult but valuable work” (p. 23). Glass and Björk (2003) argued, “The superintendency in American schools is a difficult position to hold- constrained by state policy, surrounded by ambiguity, and vulnerable to local politics” (p. 265). Yet, superintendents play a key role in the achievement of district goals and initiatives. In their meta-analysis of research involving school leadership and the factors which impact the quality of schools, Marzano and Waters (2009)

found that the quality of work of the school superintendent significantly impacts the quality of student achievement on a district-wide basis. They argued that, “Effective leadership at the district and school levels changes what occurs in the classrooms, and what happens in the classrooms has a direct effect on student achievement” (p.11). Therefore, the manner by which this leadership occurs is an important aspect to explore. At a December 2013 conference held by the Rural Schools Association of New York State entitled “The Shared Superintendent: Understanding the Implications,” veteran superintendent Beverly L. Ouderkirk reflected on her year and a half of serving as a shared superintendent in two small rural school districts in upstate New York. She stated, “Before even considering sharing a superintendent, districts must be clear about what the purpose and goal of the share might be. Leading two school districts is not the same as one, and there is a significant impact on the work accomplished by a shared superintendent.” Consequently, investigation of the intended goals and outcomes by districts are an important consideration for school district leaders contemplating the sharing of a superintendent.

Statement of the Problem

This study emerged from the growing consideration across upstate New York to engage in shared superintendent agreements. It is important for educational leaders to understand the process by which the decision to share a superintendent is made as well as the factors that influence such decisions. There is limited research regarding the topic of shared superintendencies and none of the studies located have specifically investigated New York State (Bratlie, 1992; Cronin, 2008; Decker & Talbot, 1991; Dose, 1994; Edwards, 2003; Myer, 1990; Oberg, 2002; Winchester, 2003).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the decision of New York State school districts to engage in a shared superintendency where two districts share a single superintendent. Methods of inquiry included interviews of superintendents and officers of the boards of education in each selected district with shared superintendents as well as thorough review of relevant documents. Participants included four school districts in upstate New York who made the affirmative decision to share a single superintendent. Bolman and Deal's (2013) organizational frames were utilized as a lens through which to study the decision to share a superintendent.

Research Questions

This qualitative study was based on two key research questions:

1. For districts entering into shared superintendent agreements, what factors influence the decision?
2. To what extent do the factors influencing decisions by districts to share superintendents relate to the four frames model of organizations identified by Bolman and Deal (2013)?

Scope of the Study

This study focused on four sites in upstate New York where the decision to share a superintendent was made since 2011. The number of districts included in the study was limited so as to obtain detailed data and gain a depth of understanding of the factors influencing the decision to share superintendents. Each of these districts was identified through pseudonyms for the purposes of confidentiality.

Definitions

The following terms will be used throughout the course of this study.

Board of Education – Elected governing body of a school district.

Frame - A basic set of ideas that enable an understanding of how other ideas and concepts of leadership and organizational systems can be interpreted and assigned meaning. The four frames (structural, human resource, political and symbolic) identified by Bolman and Deal (2013) will be the lenses through which decision making and leadership are viewed.

Superintendent of Schools - Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the school district.

Shared Superintendent –an arrangement in which two independent school districts share a single superintendent of schools.

Context of the Study

This study conducted in-depth interviews of participants in school districts in an effort to identify the major considerations leading to the decision to share a single school superintendent in New York State. These interviews and observations help provide a vivid description of the influences on both school board leaders and superintendents who enter into shared superintendent agreements as well as relate the findings of this study to issues having other impacts on schools.

Significance of the Study

There has been limited study on the topic of shared superintendencies and none were located that have focused on this emerging trend in New York State (Bratlie, 1992; Cronin,

2008; Decker & Talbot, 1991; Dose, 1994; Edwards, 2003; Myer, 1990; Oberg, 2002; Winchester, 2003). This study will provide policy makers and school district leaders with information on the process by which the decision to share a single superintendent is made as well as the factors that influence boards of education in making such a decision. In these times of reduced resources for school districts, this study will provide information to these leaders which will allow more informed decisions about whether or not to consider sharing a school superintendent through the lens of change theory. In addition, it is important to consider the factors that influence decisions made by school boards. Shoher and Hartney (2014) of the Fordham Institute argued, “Unfortunately, despite today’s spirited debates over how best to design school governance, very little evidence exists about how board members actually govern” (p. 9). This study offers insight into what influenced school board leaders in participating districts to make the decision to share a superintendent. Consequently, the information from this study should be useful to school boards, superintendent search consultants, superintendent preparation programs, The New York State Council of School Superintendents, the New York State School Boards Association, and sitting and aspiring superintendents throughout New York State.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework utilized in this study was Bolman and Deal’s (2013) theoretical model as described in the fifth edition of *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*. They offered four organizational frames (structural, human resource, political, and symbolic) through which organizations including schools could be studied. Although there are numerous organizational theories, Bolman and Deal’s (2013) Four Frame Model of leadership is well-suited for this study because of its prevalent use in educational research,

particularly research focused on leadership and organizational change. Bolman and Deal offer a framework in which to make sense of organizations and their leadership. Their four frames provide a means by which to understand the actions, behavior, and culture of organizations and their leaders. Bolman and Deal suggest that organizations including school districts have specific frameworks through which members of the organization make decisions. Bolman and Deal's Four Frame Model is a meaningful method through which to examine the decision-making and actions of school districts. Bolman and Deal explained the concept of a frame as, "a set of ideas or assumptions you carry in your head" (p. 16). They further describe the frames as, "a coherent set of ideas that enable you to see and understand more clearly what goes on day to day" (p. 41). Bolman & Deal's frames can be used during the development phase of a change initiative to help analyze organizational needs, to ascertain institutional challenges and contexts, and to develop appropriate actions and can be used to reconsider and reframe unsuccessful change initiatives. By using the frames as lenses to examine the decision of school districts to enter into shared superintendent agreements, factors influencing the decision can be analyzed and organized in a useful manner. Categorizing the data collected into structural, human resource, political and symbolic frames can inform school board members and superintendents of the major considerations of districts who have made the decision to share a single superintendent.

Delimitations/ Limitations of the Study

The participants of this study included selected school districts in New York State that participated in shared superintendent agreements in the 2013-14 school year. The study is limited to the perspectives of superintendents and school board members from these four school districts in New York State that experienced a shared superintendency. Other stakeholder

perspectives were not explored in depth. Much of the data gained and used in this study rests on perceptions of the participants which must be acknowledged as another limitation. Also, due to the small sample size and qualitative nature of the study, the perspectives of the participants in this study are not necessarily generalizable to other school districts that have had a similar experience.

Organization of Study

This document is organized in five chapters. Chapter 1 offers an introduction to the study, including the purpose of the study, research questions that will be addressed, definitions of key terms used in the study, the significance of the study, and the organization of the study. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature on change theory and summarizes the current research on shared superintendencies. Chapter 3 provides the methodology used in the study, including the design, sample population, data collection, validity, coding, and methods used in the analysis of the data. Chapter 4 provides the results of the data analysis as it relates to each of the questions addressed in this study. Chapter 5 summarizes findings, draws conclusions, makes recommendations, and suggests potential areas for future study.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Consolidation and shared services are increasingly becoming an attractive alternative in states where there is growing pressure to fund education in an economy struggling to produce adequate resources (Cook, 2008; Heiser, 2013). Reorganization is the combining or merging of two or more school districts into one new district. Over the past 70 years, the number of school districts in the United States has declined from 117,000 to approximately 14,200 even though student population over the same period almost doubled (Cook, 2008). Going back more than a century, New York State's thousands of small school districts have merged in significant numbers. In 1870, there were 11,372 districts. The biggest decade for reorganizations was the 1950s, when the number of districts plummeted by 3,208 (NYSED, 2013). Only 34 reorganizations have occurred since 1983 leaving the number of school districts in New York State at 695 as of July 1, 2013 (NYSED, 2013). According to the New York Association of School Business Officials (2014) there are a number of obstacles to school district organization. They listed the following hindrances:

- A fear of losing local identity;
- Perception that the communities are incompatible and that one may benefit more than the other;
- Higher costs and increase in property tax;
- More time required for transportation;
- Job security for school district employees; and
- Natural tendency to resist change (p. 5).

Despite the fact that most attempts to merge fail, there remains a constant call among the public and state level policy-makers for continued reorganization as the solution for savings and efficiencies (Heiser, 2013). The complexities of the process and misunderstanding of the pros and cons of school mergers have resulted in few successful mergers of school districts in New York State in recent years (Heiser, 2013). According to Reilly (2013), the number of school districts in the United States declined 5 percent from 1997 to 2012, while the number of school districts in New York decreased only about 1 percent over that period. (p. 12). In addition, small rural communities have fought to maintain their local control and identity by resisting consolidation (Reilly, 2013). Consequently, districts across the country and, more recently, in New York State have considered the sharing of a single superintendent in multiple school districts (Rural Schools Association of New York State, 2013).

Diminishing resources, heightened accountability, increased rigor, technological advances, and political rhetoric and pressure regarding the performance of public schools are just a few of the current challenges facing school leaders. A persistent message carried by educational leaders and advocates in upstate New York, particularly in rural school districts has focused on the issue of equity. The Statewide School Finance Consortium (SSFC) is an organization of more than 400 New York State public school districts whose mission is to bring equity to the distribution of New York State educational aid. Dr. Rick Timbs, its Executive Director, stated, “It is no secret that there are gross inequities in aid cuts and in the distribution of aid to school districts” (SSFC, 2013). This organization has consistently communicated the widespread belief among educational leaders that rural districts in upstate New York are being treated in an inequitable and unfair manner. Davies, Henderson, Johnson & Mapp (2006) explained as follows:

Quality public education may be national and state policy, but it is not yet a civil right. There remain tremendous disparities in funding, facilities, and instructional resources across our sixteen thousand school districts, and this inequity underlies the poor outcomes that the law attempts to address (p. 1).

Brimley, Verstegen, & Garfield (2012) explained that typical comparisons of equity involve horizontal equity which they describe as “equal treatment of equals” (p. 54). However, since most schools are not equal, discussion of equity must be examined in terms of vertical equity or “unequal treatment of unequals” (p. 54). This vertical inequity has led, in part, to the exploration of sharing superintendents in small districts across upstate New York resulting in six shared superintendents employed within the state in the 2013-14 school year.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the decision of New York State school districts to engage in a shared superintendency where two districts share a single superintendent. Methods of inquiry included interviews of superintendents and members of the board of education in each selected district with shared superintendents as well as thorough review of relevant documents. Participants included four school districts in upstate New York who have made the affirmative decision to share a single superintendent. Bolman and Deal's (2013) organizational frames were utilized as a lens through which to study the decision to share a superintendent. The literature and research serving as the basis for this study will be explored through the following sections:

- School Boards and Superintendents
- Shared Superintendencies
- Bolman and Deal's (2013) Organizational Frames
- The Change Process

Exploration of these areas served as the basis for the study of the decision to share superintendents in New York State and provided the critical foundation and context upon which the findings from this study could be analyzed and discussed.

School Boards and Superintendents

A shortage of qualified superintendents in New York. One reason cited in research for sharing superintendents in other states is a shortage of qualified superintendents (Beem, 2007; Cronin, 2009). According to Esparo and Rader (2001), all northeastern states including New York face a shortage of candidates for school superintendents due to “poor superintendent-board relations, narrowing income gaps between administrators and teachers, lack of community/parental support, and lack of job security” (pp. 46-47). Large numbers of retirements, increased expectations, and mounting political pressures have resulted in a diminished talent pool for school superintendents (Karmler, 2009, p. 115). School districts struggle to attract qualified candidates for superintendent vacancies even when they utilize search consultants (Harris, Lowery, Hopson & Marshall, 2004, p. 108). According to the New York State Council of School Superintendents (2012) 75% of current superintendents in New York State consider the job more stressful than expected. One third of respondent superintendents indicated their intent to retire by 2016. These bleak statistics indicate a growing shortage of school superintendents in New York State. According to Conboy (2014) the New York State Council of School Superintendents reported “a significant decline in the number of qualified applicants for superintendent’s jobs over the past several years” (p. 6). Glass and Björk (2003) conducted a nation-wide survey of school board presidents where they assessed the actual shortage of superintendent candidates. They found as follows:

Perhaps the most serious problem uncovered by an empirical study of the issue is that of school boards ‘churning’ superintendents through their districts. These findings suggest that rather than being a problem of the superintendency per se, we have a problem with some local boards of education that are incapable of carrying out responsibilities of selecting and retaining a qualified superintendent and ensuring a stable environment conducive to educational improvement (p. 284).

According to Gref (2014) of the Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress, a policy and advocacy organization in New York State, superintendent stability has been “eroding for some two decades” (p. 2). This organization argued that “The high turnover is indicative of the shifting educational landscape in a number of ways, from changing fiscal realities to new state and federal objectives. It also leads to concern over how districts can attain their goals when there is a lack of stability in the highest leadership position” (p. 2). Sharing superintendents is viewed as one way to fill the void and retain talented superintendents in small school districts (Beem, 2007; Gref, 2014).

District-wide leadership matters. The shortage of superintendents is a critical consideration for districts as leadership and governance are significant factors in the success of a school district. Waters and Marzano (2006) determined that district-level leadership has a significant impact on student achievement. Their meta-analysis identified 27 studies conducted since 1970 that explored the influence of school district leaders on student achievement. The authors identified five district-level leadership responsibilities having positive correlations with average student academic achievement. They recommended non-negotiable district goals (i.e., goals that all staff members must act upon) be established for student achievement and effective instruction as a necessary condition for student achievement (p. 4). These goals should be monitored and used as the basis for immediate corrective action thus moving districts toward the ideal of high-reliability organizations. Also, the non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction should be established through collaborative goal-setting that involves key

stakeholders. All available resources in the district should be used to support these non-negotiable goals (Marzano & Waters, 2006). Sound district leadership is critical in sustained school improvement processes. If schools and student achievement are to improve, there are specific skills and strategies that must be employed by superintendents and school boards (DuFour & Fullan, 2013; DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Shelton (2010) found a significant relationship between time spent by the superintendent focused on student achievement and student results. He stated, “Superintendents should have a laser-focus on student achievement and put their time there because of the obvious impact on student achievement” (p. 122). Gref (2014) concluded, “No matter the district, in the case of long-term district performance goals, a substantial degree of stability in the superintendent’s office will likely be required in order to attain achievement” (p. 3). Therefore, the position of superintendents is important to the performance and improvement of school districts. Consequently, the decision to enter into a shared superintendency is important for school boards pondering such an arrangement as there will be important implications for the operation of the governance team and a related impact on student success.

Models of School Governance

Current national attention given to school district organization and models for governance does not necessarily provide clarity of the most effective or efficient models of school governance. “Even though K-12 education policy has become an increasingly salient topic in the United States, few individuals understand the diverse arrangements states have devised to govern America's schools” (Manna, 2006, p. 1). School districts in the United States have been traditionally organized either by geographic area closely associated with municipal boundaries or by county borders. Dixon (2009) explained that counties were there most common

type of school districts within the Southern United States (p. 1). In most of New England and the Midwest, the township system where the governing body (the board of education or trustees) would oversee the operation of all schools in the township; the township being primarily a political as opposed to a geographical subdivision (Woodward, 1986, p. 14). Zubrzycki (2014) argued, however, that organizational models of school districts are in a time of flux. She said, “Budget crises, state and federal demands for academic improvement, and the rise of market-based approaches to running schools are spurring new models of governance and internal administration” (p. 4). States and geographic regions of the nation have had a variety of traditional approaches to school organization and governance. Even within states, there are a variety of approaches to organize and govern various types of schools and school districts. According to Manna (2006) “A common saying holds that education in the United States is a national concern, a state responsibility, and a local function. Even though state constitutions empower all states to establish and maintain free systems of public education, the states vary in how they govern these systems” (p. 2). Models vary from a complete statewide system in Hawaii, to county systems largely in the southern states to local township districts largely remaining in New England. Woodward (1986) argued, “The history of reorganization in New York State reveals that nearly every set of recommendations which has encouraged consolidation of school districts had brought about widespread negative reaction. The catalyst for this reaction was a perception that the tenet of local control of public education was being abridged” (p. 1). Shared superintendencies are considered as an alternative to consolidation and can fall in the middle of the continuum of school governance between traditional township districts and county-wide schools. In any case, however, the National Association of State Boards of Education (1996) warned, “Experience shows that there are no ‘magic bullets’ and simplistic, abrupt

governance ‘reforms‘ can have unintended consequences that create new difficulties, including administrative chaos and significant morale problems” (p. iii).

Shared Superintendencies

One response to the sustained diminished resources is the shared superintendency. With increased financial pressure, decreases in enrollment, and the diminished pool of qualified superintendents, an increasing number of school districts in upstate New York are looking for ways to share administrative costs, and several are now contemplating the sharing of a single superintendent (Paterniti, 2013). According to Archer (2005) sharing superintendents is a way to achieve greater efficiency either as a stand-alone money saver or as a pre-cursor to merger. For many communities, sharing superintendents represent a last stand against forced consolidation which many view as the end of their community’s identify. For others, a shared superintendent is part of a strategic process of moving toward consolidation (Beem, 2007). Mergers in New York State are multi-step requiring multiple votes by both school boards and district residents and represent wide-scale change to transportation, academic schedules, attendance zones, and potential loss of opportunities to participate in athletics and co-curricular activities (Heiser, 2013). Mergers and consolidations are rarely smooth and place a heavy burden on district leaders (Russo, 2006). In many cases, particularly in New York, mergers occur as a result of substantial incentive aid received by schools that reorganize (Duncombe & Yinger, (2010). Shared superintendencies can be viewed as more palatable for school boards seeking economic survival.

Decker and Talbot (1989) conducted early research on the topic of shared superintendents. They found the primary reason school districts shared a superintendent was financial (85.7% of responses). In addition, their study identified four challenges the

superintendents acknowledged that changed the role of the superintendent. Specifically, the shared superintendents perceived themselves as less visible and accessible and thought they were "losing personal control over the daily operation of each district." In addition, the study considered lessons learned from sharing. Decker and Talbot found one constant response with 95.2% of the respondents indicating that clarification of the expectations of the respective school boards is critical for success. Finally, this research concluded that it was important for the shared superintendents to have experience in one of the two districts prior to sharing.

Dose's (1994) study revealed an important finding for districts considering shared superintendencies. The shared superintendents in the study indicated lower levels of job satisfaction when compared to non-shared superintendents. Edwards (2003) studied eight shared superintendents in Nebraska. He summarized six conclusions of the study with the following key results and findings:

- School districts and school boards need to do their homework when deciding whether or not to enter into a shared superintendency and select right individual to fill the position;
- The ability to multi-task and delegation of duties are critical for success of shared superintendents;
- Balancing time between districts is a major consideration impacting whether or not the situation will be successful;
- The informants in this study referred to their position as more of a financial advisor or CEO rather than that of the educational leader of the district;

- Expectations of the position must be made realistic; and
- The informants identified financial issues as a primary reason for their districts to enter into a shared superintendency.

Meyer (1990) conducted a study of perceptions of shared superintendents and school board presidents. Key findings were that shared superintendents perceived reduced effectiveness as a community advocate, educational leader and communicator. Board presidents did not agree with this assessment, however. In addition, Meyer's research revealed key differences between board presidents and shared superintendents in the perception of the increased work load and associated additional compensation. Meyer concluded that improved communication between shared superintendents and their boards must occur for there to be a more consistent understanding of the challenges associated with a shared position.

Benefits of sharing. There is clear consensus among the research that the primary benefit of sharing a superintendent is cost savings (Cronin 2008; Decker & Talbot, 1989; Trainor, 2009; Winchester, 2003). Winchester (2003) found that although school board members generally sought shared superintendents in an effort to save money which was immediately realized. Her research indicated, however, that the savings diminished after four or five years and long-term savings were debatable. After conducting a study on the financial implications of the shared superintendency, then serving as a shared superintendent, Winchester (2006) concluded as follows:

Some modest savings remained after five years, but other expenses had increased by then as responsibilities once handled by the two superintendents were shifted to principals and other staff closer to students. It is clear there must be a higher good that comes from sharing a superintendent if it is to be effective and long-lasting. The arrangement has to

be about learning and creating a positive, supportive climate with high expectations for student success (p. 23).

Winchester argued, therefore, that sharing a superintendent must be done for more than simply saving money.

Archer (2005) noted benefits of sharing superintendents beyond financial savings such as joint professional development and other collaborative efforts. Similarly, Trainor (2009) identified possible benefits of sharing including expansion of best practices, combined purchasing power, collaborative curriculum planning, hiring and internal controls.

Stretched thin. Although there are benefits of sharing superintendents, there are also important limitations and challenges posed by such arrangements. Howley, et al. (2012) noted that most studies on shared superintendents have found that communities tend to be apprehensive about such arrangements as there is less access by community members, decreased visibility of the superintendent and cuts in overall services to the school community. Heath (1980) reflected his experiences as a shared superintendent in Minnesota. He did not believe effective instructional leadership can be provided by shared superintendents who are simply spread too thin and have a primary focus of keeping the two districts intact. Heath argued strongly, “Each school board is happy to fork over the customary administrative costs, but often is unwilling to accept the fact of decreased administrative time. Community members especially are reluctant to accept the limited time their superintendents can devote to community activities” (p. 35). Long hours and overload were consistently identified as a deterrent for sharing superintendents (Archer, 2005; Decker & McCumsey, 1992). Heath (1980) described the time and overload as “being overtaken by events” (p. 35). Cronin (2008) found that superintendents in a shared role perceived their accessibility and visibility to be substantially diminished and believed their

communication and community relations performance to be compromised. According to Graves (2011), shared superintendents are “managers first, and leaders second” (p. 17). Oberg (2002) discovered that both school boards and superintendents find relationship building and daily governance to be more effective for single superintendents than those in a shared role.

Bratlie (1992) found numerous drawbacks to sharing superintendents and argued that school boards lack the necessary information to make an informed decision regarding shared superintendents. His study of shared superintendents and school board presidents revealed a number of noteworthy findings:

- School finance was the most important task of a shared superintendent;
- Saving money was identified as the primary reason for sharing a superintendent;
- School boards were the biggest supporters while communities and staff were the biggest opponents;
- Availability of qualified candidates and burnout were the biggest disadvantages; and
- Board presidents were more enthusiastic about the shared arrangement than were the superintendents (Bratlie, 1992, pp. 2-3).

Bratlie argued that shared superintendencies should only be considered if the districts intended to reorganize and that financial savings alone were an insufficient reason to share. Community members who do not support such reorganization may also be less than enthusiastic about sharing a superintendent. They see the sharing of a superintendent as a step toward clearing the infrastructure that supports small schools and the closing of community schools (Alexander, 2006).

Saron and Birchbauer (2011) contended that the consequences of part-time superintendents are severe. After studying what they termed “compressed” superintendents in Wisconsin, they enumerated a number of conclusions and implications (p. 20). They found the following:

- School district vision is neglected by a part-time superintendent;
- The priorities of part-time superintendents is focused on management tasks rather than leadership work;
- There is greater involvement of the school board in day-to-day operations and micromanagement with a part-time superintendent;
- There is more delegation of duties to principals and other administrators with a part-time superintendent; and
- There is insufficient time for part-time superintendents to meet the expectations for a full-time superintendent (Saron & Birchbauer, 2011, pp. 21-22).

There are substantial consequences illuminated by the literature regarding limitations of the shared superintendent arrangement. Lack of visibility, time, and the ability to lead effectively are all noted as important considerations. Saron and Birchbauer (2011) quoted a shared superintendent as describing their districts as “under-led and underexposed to district-level leadership” (p. 10). Davies et al., (2006) stated, “If school leaders are aware of what’s going on in their community, school resources can be applied to problems that matter” (p. 209). Therefore, this visibility and access in the community can have substantial consequences.

Shared superintendents in New York State. The economic collapse of 2008 further constrained resources available to school districts. The strained resources had a particularly dramatic impact in New York (NYSCOSS, 2012). Consequently, in 2012, New York State enacted Education Law § 1527-c. which is popularly known as the tax cap legislation. This law also authorized a shared superintendent program for districts with an enrollment of less than one thousand students in the previous year to enter into a school superintendent sharing contract with no more than two additional school districts each of which had fewer than one thousand in enrolled pupils in the previous year. According to Handzel (2013), the prospect of shared superintendent has received a mixed reception with concerns such as increased workload, decreased accessibility and contractual considerations noted by superintendents. Still, with potential savings of more than \$80,000, school boards in New York State find the possibility of sharing a superintendent to be an attractive alternative worth pursuing (p. 10).

The Dilemma of Deciding to Share

School boards faced with public pressure for solutions to the sustained reduction in resources are confronted with a major quandary. How do they consolidate and share services without sacrificing the quality of leadership in the district? There are key implications on the governance team that must be considered when contemplating the sharing of a single superintendent.

The critical role of the governance team. Governance teams in school districts consisting of the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools and their effectiveness are one of the most important aspects of the success of these organizations. Eadie (2012) compared the relationship to a marriage and argued that building a strong board-superintendent

relationship was one of the most important jobs of board members. As with any marriage, finding the right match is critical. Carver (2006) made a distinction between the leader of the board who he termed the Chief Governance Officer (CGO) and the top manager as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). He argued that the role of the CGO is to lead the board's process and ensure that the board gets its job done while the role of the CEO is for the operation of the organization (p. 217). VanClay and Soldwedel (2009) describe the role of the board as strategic and that of the superintendent as tactical. Since these key leadership roles are essential to the effective operation of school districts, attention to their relationships is vital and clarity of expectations assists all members of the governance team in their roles. Meyer (1990) identified loyalty as an important component of the school board-superintendent relationship. Consequently, those engaging in a shared superintendency must consider how to display loyalty to more than one partner in the marriage. One of the dilemmas in showing this loyalty is in effective communication with multiple boards of education.

Communication practices between superintendents and school boards.

Communication is one of the critical considerations of the governance team. Literature regarding the importance of effective communication between the superintendent and the board is emphatic. Leaders must be expert communicators (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Houston and Edie (2002) argued, "Communication is a glue that helps to cement a strong board-superintendent working relationship, provided that it is pertinent, honest, and accurate in content, that it is provided in a timely fashion, and that it is formatted for ease of understanding" (p. 18). Eller and Carlson (2009) summarized, "Sound and effective communication between the superintendent and the board is the foundation of a good relationship" (p. 40). Johnston et al. (2009) added, "The wise superintendent knows that relationship building never ends. Clear and complete

systems of communication contribute to the development of a strong superintendent and board governance team” (pp. 26-27). Eadie (2012) discussed how vital communication is to maintaining a healthy board-superintendent relationship (p. 38). Callan and Levinson (2011) and Meyer (1990) noted that trusting relationships between school boards and superintendents can only be established through clear communication. Howland (2012) found that a key to the success of new superintendents is through frequent communication. He argued that effective communication must be a main ingredient in a new superintendent’s entry plan. The research is clear that consistent, open communication with and among the board is essential for effective governance. Therefore, when engaging in a shared superintendency, this communication will remain critical despite the addition of another school board. Clarity of roles and expectations is critical to the effective governance of a school district. Esparo and Rader (2001) argued as follows:

Boards of education, together with their superintendents, should address the ambiguity of role and function that presently exists in many if not all of the states in the Northeast Region. Redefining the roles, rights, and responsibilities of boards and superintendents can enhance the effective management of the school district (p. 47).

Clarifying these roles and responsibilities is even more important and challenging for superintendents and boards of education in a shared superintendent arrangement.

Bolman and Deal’s (2013) Organizational Frames

Despite the concerns and challenges associated with shared superintendencies, some in New York have started to engage in the practice. In order to explore and analyze the motivation of school boards which enter into shared superintendent agreements, it is necessary to have a lens through which to evaluate organizational decisions. Bolman and Deal’s (2013) fifth edition of *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership* provides an ideal theoretical

foundation with which to consider this important decision. In this classic text, four frames are espoused as components of every organization. They defined a frame as “a coherent set of ideas forming a prism or lens that enables you to see and understand more clearly what goes on from day to day” (p. 41). Frames help one to understand the social architecture and consequences of such structures. According to Bolman and Deal (2013), the following four frames exist in every organization as fundamental to the existence and operation of the organization:

- **The Structural Frame** – This frame emphasizes planning, goals, specialization, and metrics to create policies, procedures, and systems (p. 15). Defines what an organization can and cannot achieve through established goals and objectives. “Like an animal’s skeleton or a building’s framework.” (p. 47).
- **The Human Resource Frame** – This frame views the organization as “an extended family” and highlights the relationship between people and organizations (p. 16). The human resource frame focuses on how to satisfy human needs, empowering employees, and building positive relationships and group dynamics. Institutions and people need each other to function and a proper fit is important (p. 135).
- **The Political Frame** – This frame depicts organizations as jungles where “parochial interests compete for power and scarce resources’ (p. 16). The political frame helps leaders to make decisions allocate scarce resources and competing interests through negotiation and bargaining (p. 183).
- **The Symbolic Frame** – This frame focuses on meaning, faith, belief and culture in organizations. “It abandons the assumptions of reality prominent in other

frames and depicts organizations as cultures, propelled by rituals, ceremonies, stories, heroes, and myths rather than by rules, policies, and managerial authority” (p. 16) Answers the question of “how we do things around here” (p. 244).

According to Bolman and Deal (2013) these four frames assist leaders in “finding clarity and meaning amid the confusion of organizational life” (p. 40). Using these four frames as a lens, observers can more clearly understand what happens in organizations when a substantial change occurs. Although there are numerous organizational theories, Bolman and Deal's (2013) Four Frame Model of leadership is well-suited for consideration of the decision to share a superintendent because of its prevalent use in educational research, particularly research focused on leadership and organizational change. Bolman and Deal offer a framework in which to make sense of organizations and their leadership. Their four frames provide a means by which to understand the actions, behavior, and culture of organizations and their leaders. Bolman and Deal suggest that organizations including school districts have specific frameworks through which members of the organization make decisions. Bolman and Deal’s Four Frame Model is a meaningful method through which to examine the decision-making and actions of school districts and can be used during the development phase of a change initiative to help analyze organizational needs, to ascertain institutional challenges and contexts, and to develop appropriate actions and can be used to reconsider and reframe unsuccessful change initiatives. By using the frames as lenses to examine the decision of school districts to enter into shared superintendent agreements, factors influencing the decision can be analyzed and organized in a useful manner. Categorizing the data collected into structural, human resource, political and symbolic frames can inform school board members and superintendents of the major considerations of districts who have made the decision to share a single superintendent.

The Change Process

Sharing the services of a single superintendent in multiple districts represents substantial change for participating school districts. Eller and Carlson (2009) advised, “Take time to understand the change process and the idea of building meaning for the vision before moving into a major change as superintendent” (p. 96). Consequently, system leaders need to become shrewd learners of change process and theory if they are to be effective in the implementation of organizational change. Reeves (2007) asserted “the successful leader is, by definition, dissatisfied with the status quo” (p. 12). Senge, et al. (2000), however, found that “most educational leaders were trained to maintain the status quo” (p. 317). Eller and Carlson (2009) argued, “In any change effort there are people in your district that are very resistant because they are in some way benefiting from the present way business is being conducted” (p. 110). Therefore, system leaders must first reflect upon their own resolve then work to motivate the managers and leaders they guide to abandon the comfort and self-benefit of existing conditions for the sometimes unmapped waters of transformation and ingenuity. Martin-Kniep (2008) termed this inclination to embrace change and innovate “Courage and Initiative” which she described as “a willingness to face new challenges, enter uncharted territory, and share work in unfamiliar ways or genres or with an unknown audience” (p. 30). She argued that this disposition is critical in the development of professional learning communities (p. 30). Peter Senge (2000) contends that every organization is a product of how its members interact. He suggested that all organizations face challenges that are deeply influenced by the kinds of mental models and relationships that exist within the system. Senge, et al. (2000) explained, “the top-down nature of education favors the status quo” (p. 382). Yet, as districts implement organizational change of the magnitude of sharing a superintendent, there must be a paradigm

shift which is conducive to system leaders embracing dissatisfaction with the status quo despite their lack of training and preparation if they employ a systematic approach to enactment of change of this caliber. Such significant change necessitates a deliberate and thoughtful approach by school boards and superintendents.

Kotter and Cohen (2002) asserted that by following an eight-step process, organizations can avoid failure and become adept at change thus increasing their chances for success. The steps of this process are as follows:

- Step 1: Establishing a Sense of Urgency - Assist others in seeing the critical necessity for change and they will be persuaded of the importance of becoming engaged and acting;
- Step 2: Build the Guiding Team - Pull together a group with enough credibility, skills, and power to lead the change effort, and encourage the group to work as a team;
- Step 3: Get the Vision Right - Create a vision to help direct the change effort, and develop strategies for achieving that vision;
- Step 4: Communicate for Buy-in - Make sure as many as possible understand and accept the vision and the strategy;
- Step 5: Empower Action - Remove obstacles to change, change systems or structures that seriously undermine the vision, and encourage risk-taking and innovation;
- Step 6: Create Short-term Wins - Plan for achievements that can easily be made visible and celebrate accomplishments publicly;
- Step 7: Don't Let Up - Use momentum from wins to create new changes while keeping a narrow focus and not doing too much; and

- Step 8: Make Change Stick- Incorporating changes into the culture by articulating the association between the new behaviors and organizational success, and develop the means to ensure leadership development and succession (pp. 3-6).

Bridges (2009) argued that transitions are more important to manage than change. He stated the following:

Change is situational: the move to a new site, the retirement of the founder, the reorganization of the roles on the team, the revisions to the pension plan. *Transition*, on the other hand, is psychological; it is a three-phase process that people go through as they internalize and come to terms with the details of the new situation that the change brings about (p. 3).

Bridges offered a model for these transitions which highlights three stages of transition that people go through when they experience change. These are:

- Ending, Losing, and Letting Go – a time to let go of the old identity and old ways;
- The Neutral Zone – in-between time when old is gone but new has not been operationalized; and
- The New Beginning – when people develop a new identity, energy and purpose that make the change work (pp. 4-5).

Fullan (2008) offered leaders six critical conditions which must be present to successfully lead an organization through a significant change effort. Fullan described these secrets to the change process as follows:

- Love your employees- support employees and enable continuous learning and meaningful work and relationships;
- Connect peers with purpose – providing employees with good direction then implementing through purposeful peer interactions;

- Capacity building prevails – promoting the development of new competencies, new resources, and new motivation;
- Learning is the work – learning by doing;
- Transparency rules – continuous display of results and clear access to practice; and
- Systems learn – systems can learn from themselves on a continuous basis (pp. 11-14).

Bridges (2009) asserted, “Changes of any sort – even though they may be justified in economic or technological terms – finally succeed or fail on the basis of whether the people affected do things differently” (pp. 5-6). Similarly, Kotter (1996) explained, “Culture changes only after you have successfully altered people’s actions, after the new behavior produces some group benefit for a period of time, and after people see the connection between the new actions and the performance improvement (p. 156). Then, in order to fully implement change and see the behavior or people to change, systems leaders must employ a deliberate, systematic method that is thoughtfully designed and strategically employed. The substantial change represented by sharing a single superintendent necessitates the adoption of some formalized model of change implementation if such an arrangement is to succeed over the long term.

Conclusion

Leadership provided by the school board and superintendent are critical to the success of school districts. Sustained school improvement and student achievement is dependent upon a high functioning governance team. If a district is to function properly, there must be an effective working relationship between the school board and superintendent. Frequent, clear, and consistent communication is critical in forming and maintaining this relationship. Yet, financial pressures and a shortage of qualified superintendent candidates have led school boards to explore

the sharing of superintendents between multiple school districts. The relatively limited research completed regarding shared superintendents revealed cost savings and efficiency as the primary benefits of sharing while increased workload leading to decreased accessibility, visibility and communication were identified as the primary drawbacks. Winchester (2006) summed the dilemma up well stating, “If sharing a superintendent results in improved efficiency without curbing student learning, then it’s a strategy small school districts should certainly consider” (p. 23).

Sharing superintendents represents a substantial organizational change which, if to be successful must be implemented through a formal change process. Bolman and Deal’s (2013) four organizational frames provide an effective lens through which to analyze the decision of schools in New York State to enter into shared superintendencies. As such, this study set out to answer two research questions for districts into shared superintendent agreements. It attempted to determine what factors influenced the decision to share and the extent to which Bolman and Deal’s (2013) organizational frames relate to the decision. This study will provide school district leaders with information on the process by which the decision to share a single superintendent are made as well as the factors that influence boards of education in making such a decision. The study was designed to elicit themes that would lead to a better understanding about the factors influencing districts to share superintendents. Shared superintendents and school board members in four school districts in upstate New York were interviewed in an effort to identify emergent themes in their decision to enter into a shared superintendency. The methodology of the study is presented in chapter three.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

In order to gain an understanding of the factors leading to school boards entering into a shared superintendency, this researcher conducted a qualitative study using Bolman and Deal's (2013) four organizational frames as a lens. This chapter describes the research questions addressed in this study, the methods chosen to conduct the study, and the methodology for data analysis. The sections included in this chapter are: (a) purpose statement, (b) research design (c) research questions, (d) scope of the study, (e) sample population, (f) data collection and analysis, (g) data validity, reliability and confidentiality, (h) researcher bias, and (i) summary.

Purpose Statement

This study emerged from the growing consideration across upstate New York to engage in shared superintendent agreements. It is important for educational leaders and policy makers to understand the process by which the decision to share a superintendent is made as well as the factors that influence such decisions. Few studies have been conducted regarding the topic of shared superintendencies and none were located specifically focusing on the sharing of superintendents in New York State.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the decision of New York State school districts to engage in a shared superintendency where two districts share a single superintendent. Methods of inquiry included interviews of superintendents and officers of the board of education in each selected district with shared superintendents as well as thorough review of relevant documents. Participants included four school districts in upstate New York who have made the affirmative decision to share a single superintendent. Bolman and Deal's

(2013) organizational frames were utilized as a lens through which to study the decision to share a superintendent.

Research Design

Creswell (2009) described qualitative research as follows:

Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research, involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations from the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2009, p. 4).

In an effort to accomplish this research utilizing a qualitative approach, the study employed a purposeful sampling of multiple districts in which methods of inquiry include interviews of superintendents and members of the board of education and a thorough review of relevant documents in selected districts with shared superintendents.

Research Questions

This qualitative study was based on two key research questions:

1. For districts entering into shared superintendent agreements, what factors influence the decision?
2. To what extent do the factors influencing decisions by districts to share superintendents relate to the four frames model of organizations identified by Bolman and Deal (2013)?

Scope of the Study

This study focused on four geographically and demographically diverse sites in upstate New York where the decision to share a superintendent was made since 2011. These four districts consist of two pairs of neighboring districts who share two superintendents. Two districts have enrollments of less than 300 students and the other two districts range in enrollment from 875 students to 1460 students. Two districts are located in the western part of the state and two are located across the state in the Catskill Mountains. A more detailed description of each site is provided in the next chapter.

Selection of Participants

According to Creswell (2012) a purposeful sampling “is a qualitative sampling procedure in which researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (p. 626). A purposeful sampling model was utilized in this study, which provided for a non-random selection of participants who had the requisite knowledge of the topic being studied, namely an understanding of the factors that led to the decision to enter into a shared superintendent agreement. The population sample included four school districts in upstate New York and participants comprised presidents and vice-presidents of the board of education and the superintendents of districts entering into shared superintendent agreements. This researcher was seeking multiple perspectives from participants in the same locations. Although school board presidents and vice-presidents were selected from the same districts, each participant had diverse backgrounds and experiences which added to the richness and depth of data gathered through interviews. A list of school districts with shared superintendents was provided by the New York State School Boards Association and New York State Council of School Superintendents.

Eight board members and two shared superintendents in the four districts were interviewed. Six interviews were conducted in person while four were conducted via telephone due to geographic location. All participants signed the informed consent form (See Appendix C).

Data Collection and Analysis

An invitation to participate in the study was extended to the superintendents, school board presidents and school board vice-presidents in each of the four districts with shared superintendents. Participants were recruited for involvement in the study either via telephone or written correspondence (See Appendix A & B). Interviews were scheduled after participants agreed and returned the informed consent form. The interview protocol (Appendix D) was followed for each interview. Open-ended questions were asked in an effort to gather data that would lead to a textural and structural description of experiences, and provide a better understanding of the common experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2009). The study was designed to elicit themes that would lead to a better understanding about the factors influencing districts to share superintendents.

Once interviews were completed, data collected were organized, analyzed, and interpreted so that informative conclusions could be developed. Creswell (2009) described a process for analysis of data that includes the following steps: organizing and preparing raw data for analysis, reading through all data, coding the data, separating data into themes and descriptions, interrelating themes and descriptions, and interpreting the meaning of the themes and descriptions (p. 85). In this study, once the data were collected, the researcher analyzed the data using Creswell's (2009) six-step plan for data analysis. The first step was to prepare the data

for analysis. All voice-recorded materials were transcribed. In the second step, all data were read. In the third step, the researcher applied the coding process. Codes were created based on the factors leading to the decision to share a superintendent and Bolman and Deal's (2013) four frames model of organizational; structural, human resource, political and symbolic. There were codes that emerged during data analysis as unpredicted themes materialized. The fourth step was to describe the emerging patterns in detail. For the fifth step, the researcher outlined the qualitative narrative to report the results. In the sixth step, the researcher interpreted the data to prepare conclusions of the study.

Data validity and reliability

Regardless of research design, some of the most important aspects of any research study are the validity and reliability of the data collected and protection of confidentiality. According to Creswell (2009), validity in any qualitative study should involve terms such as authenticity, accuracy, credibility, and trustworthiness. He advised as follows:

The researcher actively incorporates validity strategies into their proposal. I recommend the use of multiple strategies, and these should enhance the researcher's ability to access the accuracy of findings as well as convince the readers of that accuracy. There are eight primary strategies, organized from the most frequently used and easy to implement to those occasionally used and more difficult to implement: triangulation, member checking, use of rich, thick description, researcher bias, negative or discrepant information, prolonged time in the field, peer debriefing, and the use of an external auditor. (Creswell, 2009, p. 191)

Prior to beginning the collection of data, the researcher had the interview questions reviewed by a panel of experts. This panel included three doctorally prepared, experienced school and District superintendents from New York State. Two of the panel members were experienced in conducting superintendent searches. Panel members reviewed interview questions for clarity and

content and offered recommendations for further interview question development and refinement in an effort to ensure they would garner deep responses to the desired data sought in the study.

In this study, data collected from the interviews were transcribed and member checked for accuracy. Once interview transcripts were completed, transcripts were sent to study participants for their review and verification of their accuracy. Participants were asked to respond acknowledging their receipt and verification of the interview transcripts. According to Creswell, (2009) triangulation “is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research” (p. 629). Data were triangulated in this study by interviewing multiple participants from each school district and analyzing both interview transcripts and publicly available documents to ensure data reliability and validity. These documents included board of education meeting agendas and minutes, school newsletters, conference presentation documents, and newspaper articles. Additionally, the selection of multiple participants from the same school districts aided in the triangulation of data as multiple participants with varied educational and professional experiences were asked to respond to the same questions. This allowed for additional data reliability as consistency was ensured through the emergence of common themes from participants with diverse perspectives and personal styles.

Confidentiality

This study was conducted confidentially and great care was taken to protect the identity of study participants. Pseudonyms, confidentiality agreements and attention to protecting electronic data from potential breaches in privacy were employed. Participants were interviewed and digitally audio taped for accuracy of transcription. Participants could elect not to answer any

questions and could terminate the interview at any time. Each participant elected to answer all questions. The names of the participants as well as the districts selected for study were maintained confidentially. School districts and participants were not identified in the study. Pseudonyms were developed for both the participants as well as the districts and used when reporting the results. Facts and quotes were altered as necessary to protect the identity of participants while not compromising the integrity of the content. The participants as well as the selected districts are known only to the student researcher and the transcriber. A confidentiality agreement with the transcriber was executed. (See Appendix E). In order to further maintain confidentiality, the researcher's notes, audio tapes and transcriptions of interviews were maintained on a password protected computer in the researcher's office throughout completion of the study. Once the interviews were transcribed, interviews were verified for accuracy by the participants. The audio recordings, transcriptions and other data collected will be maintained until the research has been concluded and then destroyed.

Researcher bias

Researcher bias can be detrimental to a research study (Creswell, 2009). The researcher in this study is currently a sitting superintendent in New York State and previously served as a school board member. Having led a school district for nine years including during times of reduced financial resources, this researcher is interested in the factors that would lead a district to share a superintendent. In conducting this research, it was important for the researcher to put aside any pre-conceived notions of how and why school boards make particular decisions and their motivation for entering into shared superintendencies. The researcher in this study was mindful of putting aside any preconceived conclusions and remained objective throughout the study. The researcher must allow themes to emerge without being influenced by personal

experiences. This researcher does not have any experience with shared superintendencies and was unfamiliar with participants prior to this study. In an effort to assist in guarding against researcher bias, an interview protocol was utilized in this study. This protocol was consistently employed and not deviated from. In addition, the completion of the literature review and adoption of a conceptual framework also protected against researcher bias.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the decision of districts to engage in a shared superintendency where two districts share a single superintendent in New York State using Bolman and Deal's (2013) organizational frames as a lens. The study explored school districts in which methods of inquiry included interviews of superintendents and members of the board of education and a thorough review of relevant documents in selected districts with shared superintendents.

The population sample included four school districts in upstate New York and participants included presidents and vice-presidents of the boards of education and the superintendent of each of the four districts who were included for interviews.

The study was designed to elicit themes that would lead to a better understanding about the factors influencing districts to share superintendents. The researcher created an interview protocol for this study aligned with the research questions.

All interviews were transcribed and checked for accuracy by participants. Data were coded and analyzed to identify emergent themes and findings. The researcher set aside his personal experiences to ensure that there was no influence on the data collected. The results of this study, the interview findings, are reported in the next chapter, Chapter 4. Following a

qualitative research design, this study's interview transcripts are analyzed then themes are identified. The findings are then summarized and reported.

Chapter IV

Data Analysis

As school districts seek high quality leadership and fiscal efficiencies, it is important for policy makers and school officials to know the particular circumstances and experiences of school districts who have engaged in shared superintendencies. The emerging themes and common characteristics can be informative for these decision makers so that the assessment of whether or not to share a single school superintendent between multiple school districts makes sense for a particular set of circumstances. Since there is very little research on the topic of shared superintendents nationally (Bratlie, 1992; Cronin, 2008; Decker & Talbot, 1991; Dose, 1994; Edwards, 2003; Myer, 1990; Oberg, 2002; Winchester, 2003) and none located specific to New York State, this topic is of particular importance to state, local, and school leaders in New York. In order to gain an understanding of the factors leading to school boards entering into a shared superintendency, this researcher conducted a qualitative study using Bolman and Deal's (2013) four organizational frames as a framework by which interview questions were developed and data were analyzed.

In this chapter, research findings will be summarized and presented. The guiding structure of this chapter is provided by the two research questions. This chapter presents and analyzes the data collected from the study of the factors leading to the decision to enter into shared superintendent agreements. A brief description and comparison of the demographics of the school districts studied is provided followed by a presentation of research questions and an analysis of the data including emergent themes and other noteworthy data collected during the study.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the decision of New York State school districts to engage in a shared superintendency where two districts share a single superintendent. Methods of inquiry included interviews of superintendents and officers of the board of education in each selected district with shared superintendents as well as thorough review of relevant documents. Participants included four school districts in upstate New York who have made the affirmative decision to share a single superintendent. Bolman and Deal's (2013) organizational frames are utilized as a framework for analysis through which to study the decision to share a superintendent.

This qualitative study was guided by two key research questions concerning the decision of school districts to share a superintendent:

1. For districts entering into shared superintendent agreements, what factors influence the decision?
2. To what extent do the factors influencing decisions by districts to share superintendents relate to the four frames model of organizations identified by Bolman and Deal (2013)?

In analyzing the research findings through the lens of the research questions themes will be identified and explained. These themes will provide the basis for the final chapter of this study reaching conclusions, recommendations to policy makers and implications for further research.

Background Information

In order to fully comprehend the findings of this research, it is important to provide background information regarding the districts and the participants in this study. This research

comprised 10 members of governance teams including two superintendents shared by four school districts in upstate New York engaged in shared superintendencies at the time of the study. Participants included the board of education president, board of education vice-president and superintendent in each of the four districts involved in the study. The point of the study was to understand the factors behind leaders’ decisions to pursue this form of governance. Each of the participants in this study held one of the key leadership positions at the time when the decision to enter into a shared superintendent agreement was made. Therefore, they could offer insights into their thinking at the time of making the decision to enter into a shared superintendent agreement. Data presented in this chapter was obtained only from those who were interviewed and is focused on consistent themes that emerged in all four school districts. The four participating districts in the sample also present geographic and enrollment differences which helped to prevent limiting the data findings to a particular locale or school size. Pseudonyms were employed for the each of the districts, as well as for each participant. Among the 10 participants were nine males and one female. Table 1 shows demographical information for the participating school districts.

Table 1.

Demographic Data for School Districts Involved in the Study

<u>Name of School</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>2013-14 Budget</u>	<u># Buildings</u>	<u>Geographical Size</u>
Alpine Hill*	300	\$9,589,123	1	142 Square Miles
Nubian Valley**	1460	\$22,000,000	3	81 Square Miles
Saanenville**	875	\$19,000,000	2	74 Square Miles

Sabletown* 279 \$7,741,000 1 117 Square Miles

* Share Superintendent Whigham

** Share Superintendent Snyder

In order to gain a better understanding of the study’s participants and characteristics of the districts involved in the study, it is important to comprehend the background and demographical information of each of the participants. These data include their age range and years of experience as either a superintendent or the member of a board of education. The profiles of the interview participants are provided in Table 2.

Table 2.

Demographic Data for Interview Participants in the Study

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age Range</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Years Experience</u>
John Andresen	60-70	Sabletown	BOE Vice-President	20+
Peter Bosch	70-80	Saanenville	BOE Vice-President	19
Terry DeLucca	50-60	Saanenville	BOE President	26
David Funk	50-60	Nubian Valley	BOE Vice-President	10+
Paul Green	50-60	Sabletown	BOE President	16
Heath Lombard	40-50	Alpine Hill	BOE Vice-President	12
Shannon Murray	50-60	Nubian Valley	BOE President	11
Peter Snyder	50-60	Nubian Valley/Saanenville Superintendent		7

Tom Stevens	40-50	Alpine Hill	BOE President	16
William Whigham	40-50	Alpine Hill/Sabletown	Superintendent	4

In order to understand the context in which the decision to share a superintendent was made, a brief description of each district, their governance team, and key factors faced by each district at the time of the decision is provided.

Setting the stage to share in Nubian Valley.

Nubian Valley is a school district located in Western New York. The board of education has experienced substantial turnover with many members choosing not to run for re-election after serving for one three-year term. Shannon Murray, the Board President, however, has served on the board of education for over ten years. She has been the board president for a decade. Mrs. Murray graduated from Nubian Valley and is an administrator in another educational institution. The Board Vice-President, David Funk, has also been on the board of education for multiple terms. He has spent his entire life in the community and has eight children who have gone through the school system. Nubian Valley has had relatively stable district leadership over the past decade with the two previous superintendents serving 11 and three years respectively. The district has been making cuts to staffing for more than a decade. These cuts were made both due to declines in enrollment as well as in an effort to proactively respond to concerns with the fiscal climate in Western New York. There has been concern among the board that academic performance, and the graduation rate in particular, have been sub-standard. The board approached Saanenville about the possibility of sharing their

superintendent, Peter Snyder. They agreed, and the two boards entered into a shared superintendent agreement in 2013.

Setting the stage to share in Saanenville.

Saanenville is a relatively small rural district in Western New York. Over the past decade, the district has experienced a decline in enrollment. The district has been faced recently with a substantial decline in the assessment of its largest taxpayer, a major utility. The district has concurrently faced sizable reductions in state funding. Consequently, there is considerable concern regarding the fiscal position and sustainability of the district. The district was involved in an unsuccessful merger study over the past several years. The board of education is stable with several of its seven members serving at least twenty years. Board President Terry DeLucca is a graduate of Saanenville and has served on the board for over twenty-five years. Board Vice-President, John Andresen, has been on the school board for nearly twenty years after serving as a teacher in the district for nearly three decades. Superintendent Peter Snyder has held his current position for seven years. Prior to serving in this role, he was a district and building level administrator in the district for several years. Superintendent Snyder lives in Saanenville and his children attended and graduated from the school. Saanenville is known for strong academic performance compared to similar districts and has a good reputation as a well-managed school district. These factors made Saanenville an attractive district for Nubian Valley to approach to seek a shared superintendency with Superintendent Snyder while the board at Saanenville was concerned about finding any cost savings possible. Saanenville entered the shared superintendent agreement with Nubian Valley in 2013.

Setting the stage to share in Alpine Hill.

Alpine Hill is a small rural school district in eastern New York State. The board of education has been very stable with most members serving at least two five year terms. The Board President, Tom Stevens is a lifelong resident of Alpine Hill. He has served on the board for over fifteen years and has multiple children in the district. The Vice-President of the Board moved to the community over 20 years ago and has been on the board for more than a decade. Alpine Hill has had six superintendents in the last ten years. The longest serving superintendent in the past five years was an interim. Due to revenue coming from water reservoirs located within the district, the community enjoys a relatively low tax rate and has not experienced the same degree of fiscal stress associated with State Aid cuts as other districts in the region. It was the most recent interim superintendent who suggested that the board consider sharing a single superintendent. After meeting with the board of neighboring Sabletown and their superintendent, William Whigham, the two boards entered into a shared superintendent agreement in 2013.

Setting the stage to share in Sabletown.

Sabletown is a small rural district nestled in New York's Catskill Mountains. The board of education is experienced and stable. Paul Green, the Board President, moved to the district almost 40 years ago. He has served on the board for more than 15 years and has held the position of board president for multiple terms. The Board Vice-President, John Andresen, has been on the school board for over 20 years. He has lived in the district for over four decades and was previously a teacher, coach and teacher union president in the district. During the 1980's and 1990's, Sabletown experienced a period of turmoil in which there were 18 superintendents in

16 years. Then, there was a superintendent who held the position for approximately ten years. He brought some much needed stability to the district. Upon his retirement, Sabletown completed a search which yielded an experienced administrator from out of the area. When he left after three years, the board became concerned that there would be limited stability of leadership once again. In 2010, William Whigham was hired as superintendent. He was a native of Sabletown and the board and community were very pleased to have a local person as the superintendent. Sabletown is the smallest school district in the county and is located at the western edge of the BOCES. Therefore, Mr. Whigham was among the lowest paid superintendents in the county. The district was involved in an unsuccessful merger study in the past decade. When the board was approached regarding sharing the services of Mr. Whigham, members thought that such an arrangement was a potential mechanism to retain his services in Sabletown and the board entered into a shared superintendent agreement with Alpine Hill in 2013.

Factors Influencing the Decision to Share a Superintendent

The first research question this study sought to answer was the factors influencing the decision of school districts in upstate New York to enter into shared superintendent agreements. School districts enter into shared superintendent agreements for a number of reasons. As stated in Chapter 2, the impetus to share a superintendent depended largely upon the particular circumstances faced by school districts. In New York State, since legislation authorizing school districts to share superintendents was contained as part of the tax cap law, some might assume that financial issues were the sole rationale for districts to engage in shared superintendencies. This study sought to deeply explore all factors leading to the decision to enter into shared superintendencies and assess the extent to which these factors relate to Bolman and Deal's

(2013) organizational frames. Interviews revealed both the major factors influencing the decision to a shared superintendent agreement as well as the conditions within participating districts that prompted and allowed districts to share a superintendent. These factors included the desire for and necessity of stable, experienced, high quality leadership, the opportunity to save money through a shared superintendent and other opportunities to share, and a previous successful shared service experience between the two districts prior to sharing a superintendent.

Stability

Each of the districts involved in the study was characterized by interviewees as “entry level” positions for superintendents and potential “stepping stones” for district leaders. Therefore, board members were very concerned with the potential of inexperienced system leaders spending a short period of time gaining experience and learning the necessary skills and attributes of the position and then moving on to a larger district with a more lucrative salary package. Consequently, board members were seeking a superintendent who could provide stable, consistent, competent leadership to the district. For Alpine Hill and Sabletown, Shared Superintendent Whigham described the situation as follows:

At Sabletown, when I was hired in 2009, the superintendent’s secretary at the time said I was her 19th superintendent in her 27 years, so Sabletown has been kind of a revolving door of superintendents for a long period of time. In Alpine Hill, when I started in July, I was the sixth superintendent to hold that position in four years. That includes a couple of interims, so Alpine Hill has had a challenge keeping superintendents as well and I think that's not uncommon with a lot of small schools. They are stepping stones and that's the

driving factor behind schools looking for stability; looking for someone with experience as superintendent (W. Whigham, personal communication, March 2, 2014).

Whigham believes that this desire for stability was a critical factor for both districts in pursuing a shared superintendency. After experiencing the instability of leadership from the superintendent, Alpine Hill Board President Stevens shared the following perspective:

Having the stability of a leader that knows what they are doing is important for us. I think William Whigham is a perfect dynamic for Alpine Hill. He is approachable, a hard worker, and a proven leader (T. Stevens, personal communication, February 24, 2014).

Alpine Hill Board Vice-President Lombard also specifically identified the importance of stability in the decision to share a superintendent with Sabletown. He said:

Our issue, I feel, was stability and getting someone who is well respected and can do the job without an immense amount of training. We, Alpine Hill Central School, and the board needed stability. (H. Lombard, personal communication, February 24, 2014).

It is clear that the desire for stable leadership was a critical factor for Alpine Hill in making the decision to share a superintendent.

Even though there was an incumbent superintendent in place at Sabletown, members of the board of education remember the instability of district leadership that had plagued the school for many years. Consequently, they wanted to keep Superintendent Whigham in place even if that meant they would receive less time from him. Sabletown Board Vice-President Andresen shared, “I think the rest of the board would agree that having him here part of the time as our

leader would be better than losing him and having to start over again (J. Andresen, personal communication, February 20, 2014). Board President Green confirmed this perspective:

We wanted to keep Mr. Whigham here and, financially we know he could be out somewhere else and make a lot of money. He was willing to try this and he is being paid more than he was for just working for Sabletown. So, it's a lot of work for him and he is willing to do it and it's a way for him to make more money and we can keep him in the district (P. Green, personal communication, February 20, 2014).

For Sabletown, even though there was not excessive superintendent turnover in recent years, board members were equally concerned with maintaining stable leadership. This was a major factor for them in entering into a shared superintendent agreement.

In Saanenville, Superintendent Snyder had already provided stable leadership for the school. In addition, since he had moved into the district and built a home, and since his children attended the school, he was viewed by the school board as committed to the district. Board members, however, were still concerned that stable leadership be maintained. Saanenville Board Vice-President Bosch said:

It seemed that our concern was that if the shared superintendent agreement did not work out, the other district might try to steal him away from us and we'd be in the market for a superintendent search (P. Bosch, personal communication, March 12, 2014).

Like Sabletown, Saanenville was concerned with maintaining stability and retaining the services of their incumbent superintendent. Saanenville Board President DeLucca confirmed the desire to maintain stability with Superintendent Snyder. He stated:

Rather than taking a chance on someone we don't know, in a climate where my perception is there are probably a lot of candidates out there that we'd just as soon not have. I'd rather have Superintendent Snyder half time with strong leadership than someone with fewer skills that has the same motivation and priorities (T. DeLuca, personal communication, March 3, 2014).

So, although Saanenville board members did not view their superintendent as seeking to vacate his position, they were very concerned with retaining his leadership and maintaining stability within the district. Superintendent Snyder indicated that providing this stability was an important factor for both Saanenville and Nubian Valley. He said, "I had a good reputation as being a good, strong superintendent, providing stability within the district. It wasn't like I was going to go anywhere" (P. Snyder, personal communication, March 3, 2014).

In addition to board members, other interested parties were also concerned with high quality, stable leadership. It was the outgoing interim superintendent in Alpine Hill who initiated discussion with board members as well as neighboring Superintendent Whigham regarding a potential shared superintendency. She was not confident that a successful superintendent search would occur for Alpine Hill and she believed that entering a shared superintendent agreement with the proven leader in Sabletown was a feasible solution (W. Whigham, personal communication, March 2, 2014). Likewise, in Nubian Valley, both the outgoing superintendent and the BOCES District Superintendent were integral in the initiation of consideration of a shared superintendent agreement with Saanenville (S. Murray, personal communication, March 6, 2014; P. Snyder, personal communication, March 3, 2014). Although these players were not interviewed as part of the study, data revealed that the outgoing system leaders in the districts

who sought the stable leadership of a neighboring superintendent performed a noteworthy role in the decision to enter a shared superintendent agreement.

Participating districts indicated that stable leadership was important to both acquire and maintain. It is concerning, however, that participants viewed the shared superintendency as a means to providing stability since previous studies have found that shared superintendencies can lead to burnout for superintendents and result in frequent turnover (Bratlie, 1992; Cronin, 2008; Dose, 1994; Heath, 1980).

This desire for stability was a major factor for all participants. However, the districts were not simply seeking stable leadership. Rather, they were in search of high quality leadership provided by highly skilled and experienced leaders.

High quality leadership.

Each of the participants involved in the study related the key importance of high quality leadership in their schools. Board members and superintendents each indicated their belief that an essential factor leading to the decision to enter into a shared superintendent agreement involved the quality of leadership in the district. Included in this dynamic were both the desire to acquire and maintain high quality leadership and also the prerequisite condition of a stable and competent administrative team supporting the shared superintendent.

Skilled system leader.

Participants in this study suggested that the districts were not looking for a generic sharing of the superintendent. It was not a matter of the simple concept of the shared

superintendent. Rather, districts were seeking to either keep or obtain the specific skillset of a particular system leader. Alpine Hill Board President Stevens said:

This is more of having the right person at the helm and keeping your district focused on what we're here to do educate children and do it in for the most cost-effective manner possible (T. Stevens, personal communication, February 24, 2014).

Stevens had served on the board when there were inexperienced superintendents who did not have successful tenures within the district. He came to learn just how critical it was to have the right kind of leader in the district. Neighboring district Sabletown Board President Green concurred with this assessment:

Superintendent Whigham was doing a really good job here. We had building projects going on. His supervision of that was really good. Personality wise, he is a good fit in the community. He's just very knowledgeable budget wise. I mean you need someone who's really willing to put 100% into it. And it's a lot of work. A lazy person isn't going to be able to do it. It definitely takes a very special type of person to do this (P. Green, personal communication, February 20, 2014).

For both Alpine Hill and Sabletown whose veteran board members had experienced ineffective district leadership, acquiring and retaining high quality leadership was a substantial factor in the decision to share a superintendent.

Though across the state, Saanenville and Nubian Valley were equally concerned with finding and maintaining high quality district leadership. Nubian Valley was not interested in conducting a search for a new superintendent. Board Vice-President Funk stated:

The superintendent pool is limited. I've gone through three superintendent searches and each time you reach out there it gets worse. And this last time we were looking at maybe five good candidates that could possibly come in. And I've been through enough interview processes today and I wouldn't have hired half of them. Then you get a good candidate you really want to hire and three other schools have him in the same position. So, now who's going to pay him more and what's more inviting to the candidate? Now it's a competition. So, those good candidates are in demand. They can go anywhere (D. Funk, personal communication, March 27, 2014).

The view of the current availability of high quality leaders and knowledge of the reputation of neighboring superintendent Peter Snyder was a major influence prompting the decision of Nubian Valley to pursue his services through a shared superintendent agreement.

Saanenville Board President DeLucca also saw Superintendent Snyder's skillset as an important factor prompting Nubian Valley to seek a share of his services. He said:

I think he's very well respected. I think Saanenville is considered to be a relatively strong rural district. And people know he's been in that job for a few years. He's been a stable force for us. Before being superintendent, he had different jobs for Saanenville. I think he's just a real solid individual and his reputation is very strong. So, I think a lot of it was just about getting his leadership involved with the Nubian Hill district. I think it was very appealing to them. I know one other district to the west of us was also interested in his services, but we can't split him three ways (T. DeLucca, personal communication, March 3, 2014).

Saanenville Board Vice-President Bosch agreed that the quality of leadership being provided was the major impetus for districts to pursue sharing their superintendent:

We have been very fortunate as a school district to have had two excellent superintendents in a row now. Superintendent Snyder has been very visible not only in the school but in the community. His work ethic has been impeccable. He has practically lived at the school and has been admonished by the board regularly that his family also needs him and that vacation time is necessary. In fact, I wondered how he would be able to continue that life style with another school under his belt. I guess he would probably prefer a 48 hour day but he seems to be hitting the high points of both districts and both communities (P. Bosch, personal communication, March 12, 2014).

Superintendent Snyder agreed with the assessment of his board leaders that it was his skill set and standing in the region led to Nubian Valley seeking his leadership. He offered as follows:

I was a veteran superintendent and time tested I guess, and so they felt that a veteran superintendent is one that you would want to be shared, not a first or second year superintendent to try to manage two schools independent of one another with the exception of the sports program, so the veteran status was there. So reputation, veteran status, success of the football program, academic achievement, instructional leadership were all factors leading to the share” (P. Snyder, personal communication, March 3, 2014).

This view was confirmed by Board President Murray who explained that the Nubian Valley specifically sought out Superintendent Snyder. She said that there are numerous districts that

could have been approached about sharing a superintendent, but it was specifically Superintendent Snyder whose services were desired. She said:

We as the board had discussed the positives from sharing that we've done with Saanenville. We knew of Superintendent Snyder and we also knew of the current standings that Saanenville has as far as their graduation rate and we were pleased with that and some of the successes that they had down there. Superintendent Snyder is a very fine individual; he works hard and he's a great listener. You really need to have somebody who very much has their act together and he does and so I really believe that he is the reason why this has worked (S. Murray, personal communication, March 6, 2014).

Nubian Valley Board Vice-President Funk agreed. He articulated the desire of Nubian Valley to improve their academic performance through the leadership of Superintendent Snyder. He stated as follows:

In this particular case, what Superintendent Snyder brings to the table is he is very good at the educational piece. Saanenville has a high graduation rate. Even though it's half the size we are, their education overall is superior. He delivers high academic standards. That was a very important piece of why this particular share was considered. He could bring something to the table (D. Funk, personal communication, March 27, 2014).

It is clear that the strong desire to attract and retain high quality leadership through a proven, experienced superintendent was a major factor for all participating districts. Every board member interviewed indicated the necessity for an established leader to guide the district through the challenging academic and financial terrain faced by school districts. All participants shared

that a key consideration of the decision to share a superintendent was this desire for high quality district leadership. This covet is consistent with previous research concluding the value and importance of high quality leadership ((DuFour & Fullan, 2013; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Marzano & Waters, 2006; Shelton, 2010). Data indicated that leadership at lower levels was also of critical importance when considering a shared superintendency.

Strong administrative team.

The study revealed that the desire for high quality leadership was not simply about the skill set of the superintendent. Rather, administrators at all levels must be highly competent. All interviewees indicated the critical importance of having highly effective administrators at both the district and building levels in order to make a shared superintendency feasible. In each participating district, participants revealed the necessity of a strong administrative team. Otherwise, according to participants, a shared superintendency would not be viable.

The stability and quality of the administrative team at Saanenville was a key factor in prompting the district to try a shared superintendency. Board President DeLuca said, “One reason I think people were comfortable trying was the fact that, at the time, we had stable administration” (T. DeLuca, personal communication, March 3, 2014). Saanenville Board Vice-President Bosch agreed and stated, “Definitely the fact that our principals have been here for a while and are very knowledgeable and dependable in their departments was an influence in making the decision” (P. Bosch, personal communication, March 12, 2014).

This stability and competency was also an important consideration for Nubian Valley in their decision to approach Saanenville about sharing Superintendent Snyder. Participants

indicated that they would not have pondered a share if they did not have a belief in the competency of the administrative team on staff. Board Vice-President Funk stated:

What made the decision easy to share Superintendent Snyder is our support people. We have an established business administrator. We have an established director of curriculum. All of our principals have been around for 3 or 4 years. Everyone has been around and they are experienced and they are good people. I could run the whole thing without a superintendent right now to be honest with you (D. Funk, personal communication, March 27, 2014).

Such an emphatic statement of support for the strength of the administrative team clearly impacted Mr. Funk's willingness to pursue a shared superintendent. Board of Education members were particularly concerned with having a highly skilled school business official when entering into the share. Nubian Valley Board President Murray stated:

If you do not have a good administrative staff where he can walk away from a district and go to the other district for a day or two, I don't see how that would work either. We have a wonderful individual who is our administrative person that handles all of our business office. Our business administrator is phenomenal. Our three current principals are very good (S. Murray, personal communication, March 6, 2014).

Across the state, Alpine Hill Board President Stevens also indicated that he thought the support of other administrators is critical to the shared superintendency:

The couple gentlemen underneath have really stepped up and really done a wonderful job to do the day-to-day, putting the fires out, keeping the lights lit. The whole trust and respect and a lot of buy in back-and-forth. I think having the key people in place and

getting their buy in from it because they can help you as well as they can hurt you (T. Stevens, personal communication, February 24, 2014).

Both Alpine Hill and Sabletown provided other administrators with stipends for additional duties assumed as a result of the shared superintendent agreement. Board members felt that this was a good opportunity to provide additional compensation to the building level administrators and business officials. The strength of the administrative team in each of these districts as well as the desire to maintain their stability and also provide them with opportunities for exposure to new district level leadership were all considerations of board members in Alpine Hill and Sabletown.

Not only did board members in participating districts recognize the critical importance of a strong administrative team in considering a shared superintendent agreement, the shared superintendents also believe that a highly competent administrative team is an essential prerequisite to even contemplating a share. Shared Superintendent Snyder indicated as follows:

It is critical. Without effective building and central office leaders, a share would not be feasible. You need good building and department leaders that are effective and that manage their responsibilities, manage their buildings and departments effectively. They don't need a lot of handholding, a lot of guidance as to where in essence you're the superintendent yet you are spending so much time and attention supporting a building leader if that was the case it would not be possible (P. Snyder, personal communication, March 3, 2014).

Similarly, in the Alpine Hill-Sabletown share, competent administrators were identified as an important factor prompting the decision to share a superintendent. Superintendent

Whigham said the quality of the administrative support was a key consideration in his decision to become a shared superintendent. He stated:

The Sabletown side was a known entity. I worked with those folks for a number of years, I knew what their strengths were, I knew what their weaknesses were and I knew what I could expect from them. On the Alpine Hill side, I did a lot of fact finding with the interim superintendent with what the skill set was with each of the gentlemen in those positions. That really factored into my decision because if that was something that was dysfunctional, if that was something that was going to be a lot of work, if I was going to spend more time trying to teach administrators how to be administrators then I was not going to be able to focus on my job (W. Whigham, personal communication, March 2, 2014).

As evidenced here, the importance and value of leadership was a central theme in the data collected in this study. Board members were seeking highly competent, tested, and successful superintendents. Board members were willing to contemplate a shared superintendency since they believed the supporting cast of administrators was capable of filling any voids that might be created by the share. For the shared superintendents, they would not even consider entering a shared superintendent agreement without a well-established and highly competent administrative team. This data is consistent with previous research that found that having high quality principals in each district was critical (Winchester, 2006). The data revealed the strong belief that shared superintendencies cannot be successful without a highly skilled administrative staff capable of taking on such a challenge. It was clear that participants believed strongly that pursuit of a shared superintendency should never occur simply as a cost savings measure although the savings and other fiscal considerations provide opportunities for districts and their communities.

Fiscal considerations.

Since legislation authorizing shared superintendents in New York was part of tax cap legislation, it could be assumed that the major impetus for districts entering such agreements was to limit expenditures in order to stay under the tax levy limit. However, data revealed that for three of the four participating districts, any savings were a secondary consideration. For Alpine Hill, financial savings was not a major part of the decision to share a superintendent. Board President Stevens stated:

The finance end of it was not a big issue for us because we really still budget for a full superintendent position and I think we can say it was a cost savings measure but, to be honest with you, having that right person in that position it shouldn't matter what the cost is because the right person in that position can save you a hundred thousand dollars on a \$9 million budget which is a drop in the bucket. And if somebody makes five bad decisions throughout the year and you end up in four lawsuits that's gonna cost you $\frac{3}{4}$ a million dollars (T. Stevens, personal communication, February 24, 2014).

Mr. Stevens believed that any cost savings were insignificant compared to the importance of having a competent and stable leader. Alpine Hill Board Vice-President Lombard concurred when he indicated:

For Alpine Hill, I don't think that fiscal issues were a big part of the discussion. Did we look at it is a financial savings? I would have to say no. Ours is more of a selfish reason for stability and having experienced, know what you get type of superintendent. It has always been about how we can do the best for our school, our public and our children, not cost savings (H. Lombard, personal communication, February 20, 2014).

Similarly, in Sabletown, fiscal considerations were secondary. Board President Green said, “We knew that maybe it wouldn’t be a lot of savings but they might be some savings, there is some, but that wasn’t the main issue” (P. Green, personal communication, February 20, 2014).

Sabletown Board Vice-President Andresen agreed and stated:

The only fiscal concern was that we weren’t capable of paying as much and we wanted to keep the superintendent. As far as keeping our costs down, that wasn’t our concern. We didn’t think about saving money by sharing – (J. Andresen, personal communication, February 20, 2014).

In Alpine Hill and Sabletown, savings were not a major consideration. In addition, both districts continue to budget for a full-time superintendent since the agreement can be suspended at any time with sixty days’ notice. Also, since other administrators in both districts are provided with stipends, savings for each district is minimal to begin with.

In the Saanenville-Nubian Valley share, financial issues were more important, but remained secondary for many. Shared Superintendent Snyder described the fiscal issues as a good opportunity to sustain district programming rather than as a primary impetus for the share. He said:

The first thing is to advance student achievement. Again, that’s your priority. The side effect was the sharing of my salary. The cost savings was a side effect. I did get an increase in salary but both districts saved on average \$100,000. So if you don’t have to take \$100,000 out from the general budget or account for that that’s more money for programs. It’s more life for the district. If you can do this over several years, four or five years, you’re saving four or five hundred thousand

dollars, that means another year of existence for a district (P. Snyder, personal communication, March 3, 2014).

In Nubian Valley, fiscal considerations were definitely secondary to participating board members. Board President Murray said, “I would not say it was a major piece of it but it certainly played a role in it. I think what really was one of the major or leading concerns was who are we going to hire, who is out there, who is out there that has experience” (S. Murray, personal communication, March 6, 2014). Nubian Valley Board Vice-President Funk also indicated that fiscal issues were subordinate to other issues in the district. He stated:

Well, savings is in the back of your mind. It’s really not the main concern. We don’t spend a lot of money and we’re not in a whole lot of trouble like a lot of schools around us. So we were in good shape on a 3 to 4 year plan, knowing we could hold off that long even with the State trying to figure out if they were going to go with a 2% tax cap, cutting back on your state aide, and all those issues. We were prepared to go for a couple of years, even with a full time superintendent (D. Funk, personal communication, March 27, 2014).

Saanenville was the participating district where data differed from other districts involved in the study. Since Saanenville was satisfied with the quality of leadership provided by Superintendent Snyder and has a history of stability among district leadership, financial considerations were a more important motivation for board members to share a superintendent. Board President DeLucca said:

Well, personally, I think it (fiscal issues) was the number one consideration, hands down. Superintendent Snyder did a nice job for Saanenville and it would have been nice to have

his full attention, especially with all changes coming down from the State. With all things equal, I would have supported keeping him full time. But we are in a difficult position with our declining PILOT revenues and having to dip into reserves. And that's only going to get worse as time goes on. To me it's all about prolonging our longevity. So the opportunity to save roughly \$100,000 was pretty compelling (T. DeLucca, personal communication, March 3, 2014).

Saanenville Board Vice-President concurred that financial issues were critical for their school district. He stated:

Fiscal issues were a major consideration. Student numbers are declining. When I started at Saanenville in 1968 total K through 12 registration was about 1600 students. We're now down to about 870. Also there is a power plant in our district on the verge of closing or going into bankruptcy they claim. A few years ago they were given a PILOT by the local IDA and then insisted on renegotiating their agreement resulting in severe financial losses to our district. Money is definitely an issue in our community. We have been holding the budget close by cutting costs through not replacing retiring teachers, moving some teachers to part time, and minimizing expenses everywhere possible plus drawing on reserves funds (P. Bosch, personal communication, March 12, 2014).

Shared Superintendent Snyder, however, was emphatic that cost savings should not be the primary consideration for a shared superintendency. He stated, "If you're looking to share a superintendent, the primary reason being cost savings is wrong. It will not work" (P. Snyder, personal communication, March 3, 2014).

In three of four participating districts, fiscal issues were a secondary consideration in sharing a superintendent. Cost savings were viewed as a positive side-effect but were secondary to the desire for high quality, stable leadership. This data is inconsistent with earlier study on the topic of shared superintendents. Previous literature found cost savings as a primary factor influencing the decision to enter a shared superintendent agreement (Bratlie, 1992; Decker & Talbot, 1991; Trainor, 2009). The district which has experienced such stable and high quality leadership was the exception where cost savings was revealed as a major consideration prompting the desire to enter a shared superintendency. Still, the incumbent superintendent in that district warned against the desire for cost savings persuading boards and superintendents engaging in such an arrangement. No matter what the primary motivation, it was also important that districts had previous positive experience in sharing with each other.

Successful athletic shares.

One of the themes that emerged in the districts involved in the study is the fact that a successful share in athletics occurred immediately prior to the decision to share a superintendent. In the year immediately preceding the shared superintendency, participating districts engaged in successful sports mergers. All four districts had also had negative experiences with sports shares in other districts. Each of the interviewees characterized the positive outcome of athletic shares with one another as a noteworthy factor in preparing for a shared superintendent.

Saanenville Board Vice-President Bosch explained that despite failed efforts to share athletics with another district, successfully merging a football program with Nubian Valley served as an impetus to explore further sharing including the superintendent. He stated:

This time we combined teams and coaches and the results were amazing. This year we're combining wrestling. So it looks like the success of these combinations provided encouragement to consider a shared superintendent (P. Bosch, personal communication, March 12, 2014).

Saanenville Board of Education President DeLucca also indicated the significance of the sports share in leading to a shared superintendency. He said:

I think it was really important because without that there would have been no history of working together. I think that was just enough of a highly successful experience that it gave everyone some comfort when giving this serious consideration. It's impossible to tell what would have happened without it, but I think it was a very important catalyst (T. DeLucca, personal communication, March 3, 2014).

Nubian Valley also viewed the sports share as a positive test to determine how well the two districts could collaborate. Board President Murray stated as follows:

Well, I'm sure it's no different at your school than it is anywhere else in the country, sports is a very important component in any child's education, or most anyway, so knowing that we would get a lot of parents upset with us it just would not be a good situation we thought well let's give it a try let's see what happens. The first year was extremely successful. The kids bonded. The team I believe was undefeated or maybe lost one game. Then after that we did so well, the Section did not invite the shared football team to participate the following year. So we all had a good chuckle over that and decided it was a very positive thing and we have continued that relationship and we are now under the offices of another Section. But it was one of those things where you just

kind of put your toe in the water and see what happens with this and it really, really, worked out very well we were very pleased (S. Murray, personal communication, March 6, 2014).

Alpine Hill and Sabletown also viewed the shared athletics as a substantial factor in facilitating the shared superintendency. Shared Superintendent Whigham explained his perspective that the athletic share was an important introduction to the Alpine Hill school community. He said:

Sharing sports allowed me to kind of get to know the Alpine Hill board and administration. It allowed me to be a known entity in the Alpine Hill community so when the two boards began talking about this, there was the name to the face and the fact that I was local and even had gone to high school with some of the folks that are now parents in the Alpine Hill community, I think that brought a sense of comfort they already knew who I was so that made it a little bit easier (W. Whigham, personal communication, March 2, 2014).

Alpine Hill Board President Stevens agreed with the characterization that the shared athletic program served as an important beta test for the two districts.

I think the sports shared service was a very positive piece because it became not so much the people over there it became we're all together. Kids seem to get along very well. There wasn't a lot of conflict. It was kind of an eye-opener because here they are, they're so close what more can we do and I think that was the part of maybe trying, at least give sharing a superintendent a shot (T. Stevens, personal communication, February 24, 2014).

Alpine Hill Board Vice-President Lombard concurred with this assessment and said, “It did break the ice having a shared sports program. It broke the ice between the communities” (H. Lombard, personal communication, February 20, 2014).

Sabletown Board Vice-President Andresen also expressed a view that the successful sports merger was an important factor facilitating the shared superintendent. He stated, “I think the sharing of sports opened the door and Alpine Hill got to know William, and William got to know Alpine Hill” (J. Andresen, personal communication, February 20, 2014). For Sabletown and Alpine Hill, this positive experience with one another, especially after a negative experience with other districts prompted the two districts to consider that a shared superintendency might work.

It is clear that sharing athletics provided an important opportunity for participating districts to test the waters of collaborating with one another. In addition, it gave the two communities as well as staff and students to gain familiarity with one another and build positive relationships. All participants characterized successful athletic shares as a key factor prompting them to consider the shared superintendency. These data are important for districts considering a shared superintendent as some kind of introductory share prior to the shared superintendent was revealed as a prerequisite to a successful share of the system leader. There was not previously written literature on shared superintendents that revealed this data. The shared superintendents and board members participating in the study also revealed that experience and familiarity are also important preconditions for districts considering a shared superintendency.

Experience and familiarity with one district.

One of the things that each of the shared superintendents expressed was their belief that it was critical for a shared superintendent to have experience as a superintendent in a single district prior to entering into a shared arrangement. In addition, they thought it was very important that the shared superintendent have extensive knowledge and familiarity with at least one of the districts prior to becoming a shared superintendent. Superintendent Whigham stated:

I think being a shared superintendent would be extremely difficult for someone coming out of the blue to be hired as a shared superintendent where both districts are new and unknown in both districts. That would be a monumental challenge (W. Whigham, personal communication, March 2, 2014).

Superintendent Whigham does not believe that a shared superintendency should be pursued by someone who is not intimately familiar with at least one of the school districts and noted that all people currently holding a shared superintendency in New York had been previously employed in one of the districts at the time of the share.

In the Saanenville-Nubian Valley share, participants also believe that experience and familiarity with at least one of the districts is a condition that must be met in order to even consider a shared superintendency. Nubian Valley Board President Murray said that experience was critical. She said:

It's sharing somebody who is a veteran employee who has been in this position for many years and knows his current district inside and out and has that district in good standing in order to take on a whole another responsibility. I can't imagine us being in the situation we are now with somebody who is not a veteran superintendent to take two school districts and somebody who has less than 3 to 5 years' worth of experience in the

superintendent position, I cannot imagine giving that task to anybody (S. Murray, personal communication, March 6, 2014).

Nubian Valley Board Vice-President Funk also believed it was important that the shared superintendent have specific skills and knowledge about the districts. He said:

You have to make sure it's the person that fits the bill. If you have two school districts that are financially in trouble but the academics are ok, you might want to get a guy, or girl, who is sharp at that. It is just not go out and get the neighboring guy. They really have to fit what you are trying to accomplish (D. Funk, personal communication, March 27, 2014).

Shared Superintendent Snyder agreed that a shared superintendent must be experienced and well-established. He argued:

If you're looking to share a superintendent, there needs to be certain conditions that will even allow the idea of sharing a superintendent to take place. That is stable leaders within the system, a veteran superintendent, someone who has good quality leadership in their home district. You can imagine if somebody really is not an effective superintendent or one you would not even consider giving them two districts to lead (P. Snyder, personal communication, March 3, 2014).

As evidenced here, participants believe that a prerequisite condition that must be in place to consider a shared superintendency is experience as a superintendent and substantial familiarity with at least one of the districts involved in the share. These are important data for districts considering a shared superintendent agreement. According to participants, a share involving an entry level superintendent or with someone who is unfamiliar with both districts would be

inappropriate and unsuccessful. Likewise, Decker and Talbot (1989) found that compatibility of the shared superintendent with both districts was important. These data are also consistent with previous research finding that the substantial challenges associated with the shared superintendency require an experienced superintendent (Archer, 2005; Cronin, 2008; Heath 1980; Oberg, 2002). There are other considerations for district leaders who might be contemplating a shared superintendency that data revealed which are informative.

Additional factors influencing decision to share.

Throughout the course of research there were other themes that emerged as factors influencing the decision to enter into a shared superintendent agreement. These factors were not necessarily consistent in all four participating school districts. Although these themes would not be characterized as major factors, they had an impact on the decision for shared superintendencies nonetheless. They are included as these minor factors are informative of some of the considerations that should be made by school officials and policy makers contemplating the shared superintendency in New York State. Included are the availability of technology and its application to leadership, the concept that a shared superintendency might preempt forced consolidation, and that a shared superintendent can lead to additional sharing between school districts.

Technology.

The advent of technology such as e-mail, smart phones, Skype, teleconferencing and other technological advancements played a role in making the shared superintendency a potentially feasible model for boards of education and superintendents considering such an

arrangement. Shared Superintendent Snyder indicated that technology allows access regardless of which district he is working in at a particular time. He stated:

Technology is a great contributor to the possibility of having an effective shared superintendent, so they always have access via e-mail, texting, cell phone, and they do that when necessary. No matter where I am located, I still am the superintendent in both districts and the technology functions well to have me be responsive to the needs.

Sometimes immediate responses are required (P. Snyder, personal communication, March 3, 2014).

The availability of technology in order to facilitate communication and availability regardless of distance and location provided comfort for board members as well. Saanenville Board Vice-President stated as follows:

Everyone today is aware of the proliferation of technology and how much it permeates our everyday lives. I think we just assumed that it would be used to maintain contact between Mr. Snyder and the two districts as needed. This of course would be especially important in emergency or critical situations that might arise (P. Bosch, personal communication, March 12, 2014).

Alpine Hill Board President Stevens indicated the importance of the availability of technology in maintaining communication despite no longer being located within the building:

Staff would come down and want to meet, just because the office was here. They think somebody needed to be sitting in it all the while. You know if you've been a teacher here for 20 years and you had a problem, you'd come downstairs and it was taken care of and I think it's just realizing that he has other obligations to another district as well as this one

and I think it's transitioned well. I think people in the office communicated that if you really need to get in touch with him this is how we do it. If you have a question I'll call him, you call him, you send him an e-mail, and he'll e-mail you right back so it really shouldn't matter if he's sitting across the table from you. Hey, if we've got something just call him up, he's available. They'd Skype, Internet, whatever they do, talk back and forth twice a day. If it's not that important, he'll be here tomorrow or will be here Wednesday, why don't you stop back then? And sometimes that gives people time to think about what they're asking and sometimes they think about it and sometimes they answer their own question. And maybe they will go in and put some more thought into it and then it will come out very positive (T. Stevens, personal communication, February 24, 2014).

Participants indicated that the availability of technology, though not a major consideration, is a factor which was taken into consideration as a condition that can facilitate a shared superintendency and provide comfort to stakeholders. The availability of technology allows the shared superintendent to be reachable no matter where they are located on a given day. Previous literature on the topic of shared superintendencies did not discuss specific findings in this area. In addition to bearing in mind the use of technology, participants also indicated other secondary considerations for entering the shared superintendency including maintaining their autonomy in making decisions regarding consolidation.

Preemptive move to avoid forced consolidation.

Each of the districts involved in this study have previously participated in merger discussions with other school districts. Although none of the participants indicated that a merger

was considered prior to sharing a superintendent nor did they view the shared superintendency as a precursor to a full merger, interviewees did suggest that they viewed taking such a step as a potential preventive step to avoid a forced merger. Sabletown School Board President stated:

Also I think at some point the state might force districts merge. But, from what I hear, that's been a little negative. They're realizing some of the merged things are not great. My thought is that this could show the state that we were already consolidating and doing things to cut costs and that maybe the state would leave us alone if it came time to force mergers. These two communities are getting along without merging. They're already saving money by combining services (P. Green, personal communication, February 20, 2014).

Sabletown Board Vice-President Andresen shared the view that sharing a superintendent could potentially stave off forced consolidation. He stated:

We talked about that at the board level after we started doing this that the State is talking about consolidating services to cut back. We thought if nothing else, this may buy us some time when we show that we're out in the front trying to share a superintendent, these high paid individuals. Now realistically we know we aren't saving any money. We're budgeting a full salary. This could end in June if it isn't working. And we need the money in our budget to pay him. I think at least now on paper the perception is we are looking to consolidate and do these things. Whether that would have any effect on the higher ups in the State, I don't know. It might (J. Andresen, personal communication, February 20, 2014).

Though located across the state, Nubian Valley is concerned with the potential of forced consolidation and mergers without input from school leaders. Board President Murray said:

The Nubian Valley Board, our number one concern is that we want to be part of the change, we don't want to be told what we have to do as far as the destiny of our district, we want to be part of that, we want to help make those decisions as to what we feel what would really work (S. Murray, personal communication, March 6, 2014).

Nubian Valley Board Vice-President Funk agreed and put it this way:

I'll tell you right now, you can draw an axis right down through certain counties, and I'm telling you right now what's going to happen, Cuomo is going to come in and say 'you four school districts are going to be one, you three over there are going to be one.' He is going to dictate how it's going to be. So, you might as well do it on your own terms versus on the Governor's terms. I think we should work with Saanenville and get it done before we are told what to do (D. Funk, personal communication, March 27, 2014).

In each of the participating districts, a view existed that school districts in New York State may be forced to consolidate and merge. Participants indicated that they were interested in maintaining their autonomy and local governance and decision-making authority. Data revealed that participants viewed a shared superintendency as a potential move to avoid forced consolidation or mergers. They view this as a positive side benefit of entering into a shared superintendency. This is consistent with prior literature which found that shared superintendencies allow districts to avoid mandatory mergers and maintain individual school identity (Beem, 2006; Graves, 2011). In addition, participants perceive the shared

superintendent as a manner in which to identify and facilitate additional sharing. Sharing a superintendent can serve as a vehicle for further efficiencies and consolidation of services.

Opportunities for additional sharing.

Participants in the study indicated that the shared superintendent can become a catalyst for additional collaborative opportunities. When there is one system leader overseeing the operations of multiple school districts, there is the opportunity to ascertain opportunities for additional shares which can create efficiencies or expand access to programming in the participating school districts. Areas such as professional development, special education, co-curricular activities, and business operations can be assessed to determine the potential for additional shares. Shared Superintendent Snyder described the added understanding that can be gained while overseeing two school districts:

It was another opportunity to having insight into both districts. Over the course of one year, would I be able to identify other programs whether they were new or to sustain them for students? So, there was the idea that you could do both and you're going to be able to say what we can share. Buildings and grounds, I think we can do that. We can share a director of technology or we can have a cooperative FFA program between the two that not only sustains programs but in this case you give new opportunities that you would not have seen had you just been in a single district (P. Snyder, personal communication, March 3, 2014).

Saanenville Board Vice-President Bosch explained that many in their community are hoping that the shared superintendent can become a catalyst for a shared or regional high school. He shared:

The idea of a new school located between our schools with a combined high school staff sounded great. It would offer students from both rural areas greater opportunities through more electives. The possibility of funding it at no cost to local residents with state aid and a financial deal with a nearby industry also was appealing. It was thought that it would be easier for a single superintendent to oversee such an endeavor (P. Bosch, personal communication, March 12, 2014).

Alpine Hill and Sabletown are also planning to increase the sharing of teachers. A number of classes are already beginning to be combined and staff is being shared. Shared Superintendent Whigham explained, “We’ve aligned our schedules and our start and end times so we can offer additional instructional sharing” (W. Whigham, personal communication, March 2, 2014). Alpine Hill Board President Stevens described additional sharing as follows:

Next year we need a physics teacher. That was something that a couple three of those guys sat down with some of our guys and we’re just kind of going over the schedules trying to fill the gaps and fill holes so we don’t have to go look for a halftime person for a service. Maybe some more distance learning... I know Spanish, back and forth between districts is a cost savings and it's a lot easier to move the teacher around than it is the kids (T. Stevens, personal communication, February 24, 2014).

In Alpine Hill and Sabletown, the shared superintendent agreement has led to additional opportunities for student course offerings and personnel savings which are unlikely to have occurred without the shared superintendent agreement in place.

The shared superintendency provides a unique opportunity to view the operations of two school districts in an effort to identify areas where additional shares can occur. These shares can

allow for enhanced programming for students, greater efficiencies of programming and services and cost savings. Archer (2005) also found opportunities to share such services as professional development were facilitated by shared superintendent agreements (p. 9). Data revealed that the opportunity for additional sharing between districts, though not a major consideration in the decision to enter a shared superintendent agreement, provide a substantial benefit to participating districts.

Summary of Research Question One Findings Data Analysis

This study's first research question seeks to discover what factors influence the decision by districts to enter into shared superintendent agreements. In this section of Chapter Four, I presented data from superintendents and school board members in upstate New York with shared superintendents which revealed several common themes of the major factors influencing the decision to share a single superintendent. Among these factors are as follows:

- the desire for stable system leadership;
- the need for high quality leadership both by the superintendent and other district leaders;
- scarcity of financial and human resources;
- a previous successful shared service agreement between the districts; and
- experience as a superintendent and familiarity with at least one of the districts by the shared superintendent.

In addition, some participants identified secondary considerations that can promote the sharing of a superintendent. These considerations include:

- the availability of technology;
- the desire to take a proactive step prior to being forced to consolidate or merge; and
- the opportunity for additional shared services prompted by sharing a superintendent as a substantial benefit identified as resulting from the shared superintendency.

The findings data from the first research question can be given context by applying a theoretical lens through which to offer analysis and insight as is offered by the second research question.

The Decision to Share a Superintendent through Bolman & Deal's Organizational Frames

The second research question of this study sought to determine the extent to which the factors influencing decisions by districts to share superintendents relate to the four frames model of organizations identified by Bolman and Deal (2013). In order to explore and analyze the motivation of school boards which enter into shared superintendent agreements, it is very beneficial to have a lens through which to evaluate organizational decisions. Bolman and Deal's (2013) *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership* provides an ideal theoretical foundation with which to consider this important decision. The leadership frame is the way that an individual in a leadership position interprets what is occurring and how they determine the appropriate action for each situation (Bolman & Deal, 2013). They defined a frame as "a coherent set of ideas forming a prism or lens that enables you to see and understand more clearly what goes on from day to day" (p. 41). Frames help one to understand the social architecture and consequences of such structures. According to Bolman and Deal (2013), the following four

frames exist in every organization which are identified to understand leadership: (a) structural; (b) human resource; (c) political; and (d) symbolic. Participants in this study were asked questions to elicit themes to which each of the four frames can be applied.

The structural frame.

The structural frame, as defined by Bolman and Deal (2013), is the frame that focuses on structures within an organization. Those who use the structural frame use the structure of the organization to allocate work according to areas of responsibility. The intent of establishing an organizational structure is to meet the nature of the environment and the desired outcomes of the organization. Organizations must establish the structure based on six dimensions: (a) size and age, (b) core process, (c) environment, (d) strategy and goals, (e) information technology, and (f) nature of the workforce (Bolman & Deal, 2013). There were several factors influencing the decision to share a superintendent in participating districts that fell within the structural frame. Among these were the desire to meet organizational goals, the scarcity of available qualified leaders, and the size and location of the organizations.

Size and location of participant school districts.

Participants in the study indicated that the rural nature and limited student enrollment were both factors that influenced their decision to enter into a shared superintendent agreement. Study interviewees shared their belief that the location of their district made it difficult to attract high quality leadership and that their small size led to the districts being largely considered as entry level positions. Alpine Hill Board Vice-President Lombard described the challenge of location as follows:

I think Alpine Hill is a little geographically challenged to hold some of your more professional staff. When you hire someone who doesn't know the area and doesn't realize that the nearest mall is an hour and 15 minutes or the nearest culture is a good 45 minutes to catch a show, a play, any type of good music. It's sometimes hard on the professionals and the families that come with them. It's a culture shock if they're not born into it, if they're not coming from that type of region. That's been difficult to lure great administrative leadership (H. Lombard, personal communication, February 20, 2014).

Lombard believes this remote location and lack of access to culture has a direct impact on the difficulty in attracting and retaining the high quality leadership desired by the district as evidenced in research question number one.

Sabletown Board Vice-President Andresen also believes that the small size of a district has an impact on the ability to recruit and retain a high quality school superintendent. He said:

You're selling yourself and some people are better sellers and you don't know what the product is until you have them here. Other people that haven't gone through as many superintendent searches say you want to hire the best person. We always thought we did. You never hire the worst one. And again, a small district isn't as attractive to most people looking for a superintendency than a larger one, especially this small. I feel in bigger districts a superintendent's job is a little easier than in a smaller one. In a small one you have to wear a lot of different hats and the expectations is that you are there all the time (J. Andresen, personal communication, February 20, 2014).

Across the state with an enrollment more than four times that of Sabletown, Nubian Valley Board Vice-President Funk also views his school district as entry level for superintendents. He stated:

Nubian Valley is a stepping stone. We don't pay a lot of money and you don't get all the perks. The people that come in were just coming out of school or people who had worked in assistant jobs and needed a full time superintendent's job. Then they come for 2 or 3 years and then they move on (D. Funk, personal communication, March 27, 2014).

Participants indicated that the small size of their school districts, remote location and declining population were structural factors that impacted the decision to share a superintendent as these factors limit the ability to attract and retain highly qualified candidates for the position of school superintendent. This was consistent with Beem (2006) who found difficulty in attracting a suitable candidate was a catalyst to share. The limited ability to recruit the type of leadership desired also has a direct correlation with the desire of participants to meet organizational goals.

Organizational strategy and goals.

Each of the participating districts was concerned with either maintaining their progress toward meeting strategic goals or improving such achievement through the attainment of leadership from the neighboring district's proven leader. Those in which the incumbent superintendent was experiencing success, board members wanted to ensure that the share would not impede on their ability to lead effectively. Sabletown Board Vice-President explained that his district is concerned about the impact of the shared superintendent agreement on meeting organizational goals. He said:

We are still early in this. We haven't gone through the whole budget cycle and we haven't gone through the test scores when they come back. Are we going to show some improvement level, or are we dropping? If we see things like test scores are going down and we can't blame the State, because of the foolish testing, we might want to look at why. Do we need somebody here overseeing the instructional leadership? But if our test scores are going up then I would say this is certainly working on our part (J. Andresen, personal communication, February 20, 2014).

Alpine Hill viewed this as a critical time to have an experienced leader overseeing the changes being implemented in their school district. Having a high quality leader working to meet the district's goals was a critical factor in the decision to share a superintendent. Board Vice-President Lombard said:

This is a tough time for all schools. We are going through so many changes with, of course, the Common Core and APPR. So there's been so many dynamic things happening right now, changes and uneasy feelings for teaching staff. Same thing, communication sometimes lack of, or lack of proper implementation or timely implementation of Common Core and APPR has gotten staff in kind of a murmur. That's statewide... nationwide. Having this but yet having someone with experience, and actually a name, that has done a good job, I think has helped with those issues immensely. It's gotten things on the right track to continue the implementation of the APPR and the Common Core (H. Lombard, personal communication, February 20, 2014).

Likewise, Nubian Valley Board Vice-President Funk explained that a major factor influencing their decision to share a superintendent was the desire to improve their academic

program. The board was dissatisfied with the district's performance, particularly with regard to graduation rate. Board members believed the proven track record of Superintendent Snyder with instructional leadership would assist them in meeting their strategic goal to improve student achievement. He said:

When the community starts seeing results a year from now that these are the things that have worked, kids are starting to grasp the academics and are starting to graduate on time, and our graduation is starting to go up. These are all the things that you want to see down the road and that's going to be all attributed to Superintendent Snyder (D. Funk, personal communication, March 27, 2014).

Nubian Valley Board President Murray confirmed this feeling. She shared as follows:

We do not have a graduation rate that I'm proud of in our school district and that's one of our number one concerns and one of the initiatives that we gave Superintendent Snyder to work on this year. So he has met with all of the stakeholders and he's made some very positive changes that we feel are going to increase our graduation rate and our overall stats for our students and the success that they have (S. Murray, personal communication, March 6, 2014).

Shared Superintendent Snyder viewed Nubian Valley's desire to meet their strategic goals and improve organizational performance as a major factor in the decision to share. He stated:

The Nubian Valley Board came and said what do you think? We're willing to take the chance. The academic achievement, student performance at Saanenville was very high relative to Nubian Valley. They recognized that and culture too of the district, the relationship with the teachers and parents and the other support staff was cooperative. In

Nubian Valley, it wasn't like that. There was a lot of contention in the district, a lot of distrust, their academic performance was subpar and their graduation rate was lower in the Western New York region. So basically it was, we are willing to give this a chance if you can you bring to us what you have done in Saanenville then we'll go to your board and ask for their permission to share you (P. Snyder, personal communication, March 3, 2014).

Since Saanenville has already experienced success in meeting district goals under the leadership of Superintendent Snyder, their concern with the shared situation is that the district continue to experience success. Saanenville Board President DeLuca said, "We'll see how it goes with a little more time. Again, all things equal, it would be nice to have full time attention with the Common Core and APPR and all the craziness going on in education right now" (T. DeLuca, personal communication, March 3, 2014). Saanenville Board Vice-President Bosch confirmed this concern when he stated:

We meet once or twice a year in retreats with the superintendent and administrators to establish annual goals and get reports on progress of previously established goals. So once Superintendent Snyder informed us that Nubian Valley was seeking to share him and that he was interested in trying to do just that, we supported him, but, to be on the safe side insisted that the agreement be for one year only so we could determine if it could work or not. We want to be certain we continue to accomplish as much as we possibly can while remaining responsible to the taxpayers (P. Bosch, personal communication, March 12, 2014).

Board members who participated in this study were highly concerned with meeting district goals. Those districts who were acquiring the services of a neighboring superintendent viewed this as a critical step toward meeting organizational goals. Such impact on attaining district goals is consistent with the findings of Marzano and Waters (2006). For those who were sharing their incumbent superintendent with another district, they reserved their judgment of the effectiveness of the shared service until progress toward meeting district goals could be measured. They wanted to be certain that the share would not hinder their ability to meet organizational strategic goals.

Nature of workforce: limited availability of qualified system leaders.

Participants in the study indicated substantial concern with the availability of highly qualified system leadership. They were not interested in the challenges associated with conducting a search for a new superintendent. Several interviewees had been through several searches and found the applicant pool to be unsatisfactory. Therefore, this structural issue of a lack of acceptable candidates had an impact on the decision to share a superintendent.

Sabletown Board Vice-President Andresen explained his perspective on the limited availability of qualified applicants. He stated:

I didn't think the caliber of the applicants was really good. Numbers wise it was good. And then you looked at their quality. You're either getting someone that's going to use you as a stepping stone, which isn't all that bad because they want to do a good job to move up or you're going to get someone who is at the end of their career (J. Andresen, personal communication, February 20, 2014).

Similarly, Alpine Hill Board President Stevens expressed his concern with the limited availability of high quality system level leadership as follows:

It's almost disgusting because the amount of money you pay for the caliber of person that has no experience and to put a person in there in these trying times that has no experience it's just a recipe for disaster (T. Stevens, personal communication, February 24, 2014).

Nubian Valley also was concerned with the quality of candidates when their superintendent position became vacant. Board President Murray described the initial discussion with a search consultant. She said:

What really was one of the major or leading concerns was who we were going to hire, who is out there, who is out there that has experience? I have had several conversations with the BOCES Superintendent and he would kind of rattle off the names of potential superintendents in our region and he would say what do you think of this one, what do you think of that one, I would put it back in his lap and say no you tell me what you think of those people. He knows them professionally, I might know somebody's name or what district they are associated with, but he certainly has much more access to the qualities of individuals that we would be looking at, he knows those folks. So nobody kind of like stood out and that's what I said to him. That was when we were considering sharing Superintendent Snyder (S. Murray, personal communication, March 6, 2014).

Nubian Valley Board Vice-President Funk concurred. He said:

The superintendent pool is limited. I've gone through three superintendent searches and each time you reach out there it gets worse. And this last time we were looking at maybe 5 good candidates that could possibly come in. And I've been through enough interview

processes today and I wouldn't have hired half of them. Then you get a good candidate you really want to hire and the three other schools have him in the same position. So, now who's going to pay him more and what's more inviting to the candidate? Now it's a competition. So, those good candidates are in demand. They can go anywhere. I've got one guy whose come twice to put letters in and I said don't bother. I'm not going to hire you. I'm not even going to interview you. Don't bother. Why would any person in their right mind want to be a superintendent? You can be a high school principal and make about the same amount of money and walk out with your hair on your head (D. Funk, personal communication, March 27, 2014).

Saanenville Board President DeLuca expressed a similar concern about the availability of qualified superintendent candidates. The district recently completed a search for a school business official that yielded a limited pool. This led him to be even more skeptical about the availability of high quality superintendents. He stated, "My perception is there's probably a lot of candidates out there that we'd just as soon not have" (T. DeLuca, personal communication, March 3, 2014).

Consistent with Beem, (2006) data from all participating districts were consistent that the perceived limited availability of highly qualified candidates for the superintendency.

As evidenced, the structural frame had a considerable impact on the decision of participating districts. Structural frame considerations influencing the decision to share a superintendent included the following:

- The remote location and limited enrollment of the district which impedes the ability to recruit and retain highly qualified superintendents;

- The desire for high quality leadership to meet district goals and strategies; and
- The perceived shortage of highly qualified superintendent candidates and the fear of conducting an unsuccessful search for a superintendent.

These structural considerations were closely aligned with numerous human resource issues which also played a role in the decision to enter a shared superintendent agreement.

The human resource frame.

The human resource frame views the organization from the perspective of the employees and their relationship within and to the organization. According to Bolman and Deal (2013), this frame is built upon four core assumptions: (a) organizations exist to serve human needs rather than the converse; (b) people and organizations need each other, organizations need ideas, energy and talent; people need careers, salaries, and opportunities; (c) when the fit between individual and system is poor, one or both suffer; and (d) a good fit benefits both. Interviews of study participants revealed several factors leading to the shared superintendent agreement that fit within the human resource frame including the desire for high quality leadership for students and staff, increased salaries for the shared superintendent and some administrative staff, and the critical importance of fit.

School districts desire leadership talent.

According to Bolman and Deal (2013) organizations need the ideas, energies and talents of people in order to be successful. Participants in this study indicated a desire for a talented and skilled superintendent to provide leadership to the district. Alpine Hill Board President Stevens expressed the frustration of being unable to attract high quality experienced candidates:

It's a sad thing to say that for the amount of money that you're offering someone you're getting someone that's green and that's hard thing for people in the community to realize that we're gonna put out a salary of \$130,000 and we're gonna get somebody with no experience and we've thrown darts at the wall. We pick this one and we pick that one and a year and a half later we're back to an interim. That's frustrating, very frustrating not only for board members, but for the teachers and the support staff as well (T. Stevens, personal communication, February 24, 2014).

This sentiment was confirmed by Alpine Hill Vice-President Lombard who said:

Ours is more of a selfish reason for stability and having experienced, know what you get type of superintendent. When you hire from abroad you have a very short term courtship before your marriage. We're talking like hours of interview in that sense. Paper can tell a story that doesn't tell the real story. When you see somebody working in the community or a position beside you and you know of them, you know their abilities and their leadership, you kind of know what you are going to get...you know what you are walking into (H. Lombard, personal communication, February 20, 2014).

Saanenville wants to maintain the strong leadership provided by Superintendent Snyder. Board President DeLucca said:

Rather than taking a chance on someone we don't know, in a climate where my perception is there's probably a lot of candidates out there that we'd just as soon not have. I'd rather have Superintendent Snyder half time with strong leadership than someone with fewer skills that has the same motivation and priorities (T. DeLucca, personal communication, March 3, 2014).

Nubian Valley Board Vice-President Funk talked about the prior experience and talents brought to the position by Shared Superintendent Snyder. He explained:

That was very important to make the decision easier. And once again, when you get somebody young getting their degree in administration and wants to be a superintendent, can they do this? What are their strengths? Are they strong in academics? Are they strong in finances? You never see a superintendent strong in both of them. It's one or the other. Superintendent Snyder is good at finances and great at academics. You have to read the one you hired ...what was their purpose. That's how I determine my Superintendent as being successful. It's based on what the board deemed as necessary and the type of person they hired. If they delivered on that, then they are a successful superintendent. It is very rare to find someone who can do both (D. Funk, personal communication, March 27, 2014).

School districts are organizations that need the talent and energy of high quality leaders. This aspect of the human resource frame played a major role in the decision to share a superintendent. Board members seek to attract and retain superintendents who possess the skills and traits needed by the organization in order to experience success. As previously stated, these data support the desire for and value associated with high quality leadership in school districts (DuFour & Fullan, 2013; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Marzano & Waters, 2006; Shelton, 2010). One consideration in the retention of these successful system leaders is the opportunity for additional compensation.

The ability to offer additional opportunity and salary.

Bolman and Deal (2013) explain that part of the human resource frame is the fact that people need careers, salaries, and opportunities. Participants in this study shared that one aspect of the decision to share a superintendent was to offer the incumbent superintendent additional salary or opportunity. The additional salary and opportunity for a challenge and to navigate uncharted territory were motivators for the superintendents involved in the study. Sabletown Board President Green indicated that getting additional salary for Superintendent Whigham in an effort to retain him was an important consideration for the district. He said as follows:

We wanted to keep Superintendent Whigham here and financially, we know he could be out somewhere else and make a lot of money. He was willing to try this and he is being paid more than he was for just working for Sabletown. So, it's a lot of work for him and he is willing to do it and it's a way for him to make more money and we can keep him in the district (P. Green, personal communication, February 20, 2014).

Saanenville Board President DeLucca explained that although the additional salary for the shared superintendent was not initially a goal of the share, it became part of the discussion. He said:

Initially, my perception of it is that Superintendent Snyder wasn't pursuing this for the money, by any means. That's my perception. And I think if you ask him he would probably agree with that. I think what happened was that the BOCES Superintendent was the one that kind of stuck his nose in and said that if you are going to this you need to pay him to do two districts. I think that's kind of how it happened. And that's fine. It's appropriate. He's always worked hard. It's a whole lot of work managing two districts and it's only appropriate that he has some kind of stipend for doing two. I wouldn't think

double, but he does have some. I can't tell you exactly what it is, but there is a meaningful stipend there for the second district (T. DeLuca, personal communication, March 3, 2014).

Though not for the additional salary, Board President DeLuca viewed Superintendent Snyder's motivation as the opportunity for a challenge. He explained:

As I look at Superintendent Snyder's skill set and his personal ambition, I think it is important to him to have a challenge. He, as you know and as you are, went ahead and got his doctorate on his own time and that's not something you do just for fun. He obviously felt it was something he wanted to do and he saw it through. Saanenville wasn't pushing him to do that. It was something he was motivated to do. And when this opportunity presented itself, I don't think there was a Board Member that said 'Gee, let's share you with Nubian Valley.' I think Superintendent Snyder brought the idea to us for his personal growth. He's the kind of guy that likes a challenge and I think it is important (T. DeLuca, personal communication, March 3, 2014).

Additional salary and the opportunity for a challenge were part of what prompted the shared superintendency to be considered by participants in the study. Organizations desire the skills and talents of the leaders and the leaders desire the salary and opportunities offered by the chance to be part of a shared superintendent agreement. However, Dose (1994) found that shared superintendents were significantly less satisfied with their salary after five years than their counter-parts in non-shared positions. In order to even consider the additional opportunities or compensation, however, the issue of fitting into the school community must be addressed in order to contemplate a shared superintendency.

The importance of fit.

According to Bolman and Deal (2013), research dating from the early 20th century provides the core assumptions about the human side of the relationship, i.e. “fit”, between the worker and the workplace. They explain that suffering results from a bad fit between the organization and its people while benefits result from a good fit between the organization and its people. Participants in this study indicated that fit was an important consideration in the decision to share a superintendent.

Sabletown Board Vice President Andresen explained that Shared Superintendent Whigham received the benefit of the doubt in entering into the shared superintendency in large part due to his fit in the community. He stated:

I think being local was a big plus. He grew up here. He knew a lot of the people, including staff members he went to school with. He’s a real person, not the suit from out of town and I think that’s a huge thing. I think a lot of time the suit has to spend a lot of time and sometimes never accomplishing fitting in. Superintendent Whigham has been here his whole life. He’s worked within the county, so people have seen him in his suit and in his hunting clothes. I think that is a big thing. If culture is anything, although the culture in Sabletown has changed over the last ten years, we’ve had different housing arrangements within the district and bringing in people that aren’t local but many times they are not as vocal or as active. I think that the older residents look at him as the local boy. I think that was the big part of the acceptance of him which leads to the trust that what he is saying is good and if he says he can do this, let’s go with it (J. Andresen, personal communication, February 20, 2014).

Sabletown Board President Green also expressed how important fit is to the district. He said as follows:

Sabletown is a small district. We can't pay a lot of money you know, in a community like this. Superintendent Whigham is a local guy, he grew up right here in Sabletown, he graduated right here from this school. He's a hard worker. He just has a great personality and is a great fit for Sabletown (P. Green, personal communication, February 20, 2014).

The concept of Superintendent Whigham's fit was also an important consideration for Alpine Hill. Board Vice-President Lombard said the following:

Looking at the size of the districts, looking at the type of children, and the type of education, looking at the geographic areas everything was a fit. It wasn't like one big city school and one small district. It wasn't like one very, very rich. The districts, although a continental divide, at the hollow, the mountain divide, and the County divide the district roles were pretty much the same and that's what was really pretty interesting. We knew Superintendent Whigham and folks here and people that are on the board knew him and his family when he went to school there. They knew his reputation, his upbringing and then he came back and people knew him (H. Lombard, personal communication, February 20, 2014).

Shared Superintendent Whigham shared the fit in terms of his personal characteristics in very vivid terms. He said:

I'm a redneck that hunts, like a lot of people in the two communities. I hunt, I fish, I snowmobile, I have four wheelers, I have kids. I do all of the things that these people do. I'm not somebody coming in in my BMW, in my suit. I would much rather wear flannel

shirt and jeans and work boots on any given day than a shirt and tie and that's something I think people could relate to. You know if it's a school function, if it's not something formal that I need to present at, I wear jeans. I have a lot of flannel shirts. I'm the guy that would be sitting on the barstool next to him shooting the bull about the deer I missed that afternoon or changing the chain on my kids snowmobile when he broke the driveshaft. So that in itself and the fact that I think my background has played a big role in my success in the various schools that I've been in. Being the shop teacher, I'm friends with all the custodians. I hate to say it but a lot of people about in our position sometimes are very condescending and arrogant to a lot of the folks that work schools and the fact that the first people I usually seek out in every district I've ever been in is the custodians because if you want to get something done, you be nice to the people that have the worst jobs because they are going to be the ones doing all the work. So that usually kind of lays the groundwork the fact that I talk to the people that the guys before me would not even associate with. It's kind of helped me fit in (W. Whigham, personal communication, March 2, 2014).

For Sabletown and Alpine Hill, it was the personal characteristics of Superintendent Whigham that supported the concept of him serving both districts. As a native of the area with similar interests, he was built relationships and had credibility within the community which prompted support for trying this new leadership structure.

Fit was also an important consideration for the Saanenville-Nubian Valley share. However, Nubian Valley Board Vice-President Funk described fit as more than simply being accepted in the community. He stated:

You have to make sure it's the person that fits the bill. If you have two school districts that are financially in trouble but the academics are ok, you might want to get a guy, or girl, who is sharp at that. It's just not go out and get the neighboring guy. It could be hiring somebody from outside that can come in and learn the communities. There's going to be a time frame in that. So they really have to fit what you are trying to accomplish (D. Funk, personal communication, March 27, 2014).

The fact that Superintendent Snyder has been such a positive fit in Saanenville, board members were willing to support this endeavor. Board President DeLuca described Snyder as a "stable force for us" (T. DeLuca, personal communication, March 3, 2014). Consequently, he viewed support of the shared superintendency as personal support for Snyder. Likewise, Board Vice-President Bosch indicated the personal traits of Superintendent Snyder have been a perfect fit for the school district that has had a history of successful superintendents. He stated:

We have been very fortunate as a school district to have had two excellent superintendents in a row now. Dr. Justin Lesniak was one of the best superintendents I have ever personally known. And as he got ready to retire he took Superintendent Snyder under his wing and provided guidance for a year with the understanding that he would step in when Dr. Lesniak left. The board was happy with that arrangement and immediately appointed Superintendent Snyder upon Dr. Lesniak's retirement. I don't think we've had any regrets. Each had his own strengths and it has worked out well for us. Superintendent Snyder has been very visible not only in the school but in the community. His work ethic has been impeccable. He has practically lived at the school and has been admonished by the board regularly that his family also needs him and that vacation time is necessary. In fact I wondered how he would be able to continue that life

style with another school under his belt. I guess he would probably prefer a 48 hour day but he seems to be hitting the high points of both districts and both communities (P. Bosch, personal communication, March 12, 2014).

Organizations want workers who will supply energy, talent, and do the work. Workers want a job, fair pay for their effort, and a chance to advance. These wants and needs describe the linkage, or “fit”, between people and organizations. Each of these factors played a role in participating districts in the decision to share a superintendent. Districts wanted to attract and retain superintendents with desirable skills and talents to meet the needs of the organization and fit within the school community while superintendents wanted additional salary and opportunity to succeed within their field. These data are consistent with previous findings which noted the importance of fit for the shared superintendent (Decker & Talbot, 1989; Dose, 1994; Handzel, 2013; Oberg, 2002).

The political frame.

The third frame, political is associated with the process of making decisions in an environment with competing interests and limited resources (Bolman & Deal, 2013). This frame has five basic assumptions: (a) organizations are coalitions of assorted individual and interest groups; (b) coalition members have enduring differences in values, beliefs, information, interests, and perceptions of reality; (c) most important decisions involve allocating scarce resources; (d) scarce resources and enduring differences put conflict at the center of day-to-day dynamics and make power the most important asset; and (e) goals and decisions emerge from bargaining and negotiation among competing stakeholders jockeying for their own interests. Factors influencing the decision to share a superintendent among participating districts that fell

within the political frame included the allocation of scarce resources and the perception of community members.

Allocating scarce resources.

School board members involved in this study revealed the two primary factors influencing their decision to enter into a shared superintendent agreement that were related to the allocation of scarce resources. Limited financial resources and a limited pool of qualified candidates were two common characteristics among participating districts. Consequently, the political frame involved the allocation of these limited resources in an environment with competing interests. As previously discussed, participants indicated the limited applicant pool for superintendencies was a major factor influencing their decision to share a single superintendent in multiple school districts. In addition, these school leaders viewed this as an opportunity to save money and protect programming as a desirable secondary benefit of the sharing. Shared Superintendent Snyder explained the scenario clearly. Although he was adamant that cost savings cannot be the primary reason for sharing a superintendent, the impact is noteworthy nonetheless. He said:

If you don't have to take \$100,000 from the general budget or account for that, that's more money for programs. It's more life for the district. If you can do over several years, four or five years like that, you're saving four or five hundred thousand dollars, that means another year of existence and solvency was a big issue. At the same time, if you take what was in the news, districts cutting massively, anything that wasn't nailed down to a mandate, districts were cutting, it was all over the news. We had districts that were either going to cut all programs, most all non-mandated programs or a huge increase

in the tax levy which was not supported by the community. We saw this as a means to say we are even going to share a superintendent to try to save programs for our two districts to save programs (P. Snyder, personal communication, March 3, 2014).

Saanenville Board President DeLucca expressed that limited financial resources was a major factor in the decision to share a superintendent in his school district. He stated:

Superintendent Snyder did a nice job for Saanenville and it would have been nice to have his full attention, especially with all changes coming down from the State. With all things equal, I would have supported keeping him full time. But we are in a difficult position with our declining PILOT revenues and having to dip into reserves. And that's only going to get worse as time goes on. To me it's all about prolonging our longevity. So the opportunity to save roughly \$100,000 was pretty compelling. And the way it was written was kind of nice too because it was an easy out situation if we discovered we just weren't happy with it or the job wasn't getting done or Superintendent Snyder got burned out. We had an escape clause (T. DeLucca, personal communication, March 3, 2014).

In neighboring Nubian Valley, Board President Murray explained that financial resources have been scarce in their district for many years. She said as follows:

I'm sorry to have to share with you that we have been making budget cuts since the second year I was on the Board of Education. We are a very frugal district and we've always been very, very careful of how we spend our money, what reserves we've had in place. We are not what I would call anywhere in a stellar position to make any kind of major changes just because of the financial piece of this. All along we were cutting before it was common to do that (S. Murray, personal communication, March 6, 2014).

Participants in the study viewed their limited access to both financial and human resources as a critical consideration in the decision to share a superintendent. Interviewees would prefer to keep one full-time person in the position, but they either do not believe they can afford a high enough salary, do not believe they can find a highly qualified superintendent to lead the school district, or want to divert the funds for a salary to stave off cuts in other programs. These data are consistent with previously published literature on shared superintendents (Archer, 2005; Beem, 2006; Bratlie, 1992; Graves, 2011). The cost savings was also sent an important message to community members regarding the fiscal responsibility of district leaders.

Community perceptions despite limited engagement.

Participants in the study shared that there was a limited effort to involve members of the community in the decision to share a superintendent. Most indicated that the community was not consulted prior to entering into a shared superintendent agreement. Despite limited involvement in the decision, however, the prevalent reaction from community members has been very positive. Shared Superintendent Snyder said that although neither community was involved in the decision, the cost savings was a justification accepted by community members. He said:

The communities really weren't involved in the decision. It was the two Boards. But when you can show \$100,000 in cost savings and you can salvage programs that may otherwise have been eliminated or reduced, the community saw a cost-effective advantage of me being shared. At the same time, because I've lived in the Saanenville for 14 years, my children went to school there, graduated, they knew I was not going to leave the new district and let ours go away so they had the trust that I would ensure that

Saanenville would continue to move forward (P. Snyder, personal communication, March 3, 2014).

Saanenville Board Vice-President Bosch described his assessment of community perception as follows:

I don't believe the community was as much involved as informed in the decision to share the superintendent. Feedback was generally positive but I'm sure many kept an eye open to see if he would still be present at school functions. I'm not sure how exactly he does it, but it seems that he is keeping both communities happy with his presence. The Nubian Valley community of course knew about Superintendent Snyder and all the wonderful things he was doing at Saanenville and were chomping at the bit to get him involved in their school (P. Bosch, personal communication, March 12, 2014).

Saanenville Board President DeLucca also indicated his perception that the community supports the decision despite limited involvement. He stated:

I don't know that the community was really involved much. There certainly has been no backlash. I haven't had anyone express concern to me from the community. I think the community is very pleased that we are sharing (T. DeLucca, personal communication, March 3, 2014).

Neighboring Nubian Valley Board President Murray explained that the community feedback has been very positive and was primed by the football program share. She said:

We did not involve the community. We made the decision. There's a seven-member board, we felt that the community has voted us in these positions in good faith and that

we needed to make the right decision and because we had already done the share with football and we were sharing a special ed class that we just felt that the community so far had been pleased and our community very much is always very much concerned with making the right fiscal decision in their favor so we felt that if this was going to show any kind of savings that they would agree and buy into the concept and they have. The feedback has been positive. I have not had one person approach me nor has anybody approached any of our board members with anything other than what a great choice we made, what a standup individual Superintendent Snyder is, how happy they are that we are looking ahead in trying to overcome some of the fiscal hurdles and everything positive. I have not heard a negative comment. The amount that we saved wasn't huge as far as I'm concerned, when you look at a 20 some million dollar budget but I think it was significant enough where people felt that it was an important move and the appropriate move at the time (S. Murray, personal communication, March 6, 2014).

Similarly, in Sabletown and Alpine Hill, Shared Superintendent Whigham explained that the decision was also made at the Board level with limited community involvement. He said:

The communities weren't as involved as the Boards. On the Sabletown side, after the superintendents talked about it and I said it was something I would consider, we brought the two boards together we share the same legal firm so we had an exempt session with the two boards with our who explained to the two boards the legal process by which you would share a superintendent and they were able to ask questions and all that stuff then the meeting ended the exempt session ended but the two boards remained and chatted. There was a public session but there was no public there so it was an opportunity for the

two boards to kind of talk about how it would work (W. Whigham, personal communication, March 2, 2014).

Sabletown Board Vice-President Andresen said their community supported the idea of a shared superintendent. He said as follows:

We did have some public meetings where we talked about the idea of this concept. We put it out there that this was a possibility and some of the down effects are that the superintendent won't be here for every basketball game, sporting event, dance and everything that goes on in the building. The faith of the community was behind Superintendent Whigham and they thought that if he thinks he can do both of these then let's try it (J. Andresen, personal communication, February 20, 2014).

Like Saanenville and Nubian Valley, Sabletown and Alpine Hill received very limited public engagement as part of the process of making the decision to share a superintendent yet have received widely positive support for the decision to share during the first year of implementation.

Although the political frame may be predicted to be the most critical frame through which to view the decision to make the decision to share a superintendent, the fact that there is such limited availability of qualified superintendents and school districts are in a time of reduced financial resources, the school boards involved in this study felt empowered to make the decision with limited stakeholder input. The perception that a shared superintendent could provide proven leadership at a cost savings to the district justified the decision to the community and staff with limited negotiation and coalition building. The school boards were able to leverage the current political climate to minimize the need to focus on the political frame to a great extent. However, Bratlie (1992) found that community members were biggest opponents of shared

superintendencies. It was also noted in previous research that reduced accessibility and visibility of the superintendent was a negative impact of entering such a shared agreement (Cronin, 2008; Decker & Talbot, 1991; Graves, 2011; Heath, 1980; Meyer, 1990; Oberg, 2002).

The symbolic frame.

The symbolic frame makes sense of the chaotic situations that are presented through the meanings, beliefs, and faith that are created from our past experiences. Within the symbolic frame the myth, vision and value of organizations provide purpose and resolve to the members of the organization. The values convey a sense of identity and help people feel special about what they do. This frame represents the culture of an organization (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Some of the factors leading participating school districts to the decision to share a superintendent correspond to the symbolic frame including the culture and values of the district as well as the traditional visibility of the superintendent in the community.

Culture and values of the school district.

The underlying beliefs, values, and attitudes of a school community influence the overall culture of the organization. Data gathered in this study reveal several common principles and characteristics shared by the community including frugality and a strong sense of organizational identity. These cultural values influenced the decision to share a single school superintendent.

Nubian Valley Board President Murray described the culture of the district as being very concerned with spending financial resources. She said:

Our whole area is financially, I would call it flat, it's not increasing at all we don't see a lot of people moving into our district, in either district, and building homes. So it just

really makes sense to come together and see what we can do to improve the quality of education for everybody concerned. Both communities are very conservative and sharing a superintendent gave the appearance of frugality to the community (S. Murray, personal communication, March 6, 2014).

Board Vice-President Funk shared this view. He described the thrifty nature of spending that has occurred in the district. He stated as follows:

So, there's the piece that we can do well because we are frugal. If you look at the statistics, I think Nubian Valley is number three in Western New York as far as lowest cost per student. We don't spend a lot of money and we're not in a whole lot of trouble like a lot of schools around us. So we were in good shape on a 3 to 4 year plan, knowing we could hold off that long even with the State trying to figure out if they were going to go with a 2% tax cap, cutting back on your state aide, and all those issues. We were prepared to go for a couple of years, even with a full time superintendent (D. Funk, personal communication, March 27, 2014).

In Nubian Valley, data revealed that the cultural characteristic of frugality of the school community impacted the decision to enter a shared superintendent agreement.

Likewise, in Saanenville, Board Vice-President Bosch described the financial challenges faced by the school district have become part of the district's culture and had an impact on the consideration to share a superintendent. He said:

As a small rural district, there are no industries that are local and the majority of the people living here are retired senior citizens on fixed incomes. Most graduates leave the area to find suitable occupations and live and raise their families in those locations.

Money is definitely an issue in our community. We have been holding the budget close by cutting costs through not replacing retiring teachers, moving some teachers to part time, and minimizing expenses everywhere possible plus drawing on reserves funds (P. Bosch, personal communication, March 12, 2014).

Even though they are still budgeting for a full superintendent in Sabletown, Board President Green also believes the frugal nature of the community is an important consideration. He stated as follows:

Not a lot of people come out at budget time, but they are concerned about costs and we've kept cost down here for a lot of years. Financially, we've made cuts when we had to in order to keep the tax rates down. I think by sharing, although we don't show a savings right at this point but there is some savings. I think people realize and appreciate that (P. Green, personal communication, February 20, 2014).

Shared Superintendent Whigham also believed the frugal nature of each of the districts had an impact on the decision to share a superintendent. He said:

Both districts are extremely sparing in their spending. It is just part of their culture. Neither has a history of spending a lot of money and neither community has any interest in starting to spend a lot of money now (W. Whigham, personal communication, March 2, 2014).

The cultural identity and underlying values of each of the communities involved in the study had an impact on the decision to share a superintendent. The expectation of each community for economical expenditures was one of the cultural factors from the symbolic frame that was a consideration in each participating school district.

The reluctance among participating districts to consider a full merger also relates to the culture of the school districts. Interviewees indicated that there was a strong sense of identity within the school district which made the communities reluctant to consider such an action. Shared Superintendent Snyder indicated that neither Saanenville nor Nubian Valley have any interest in a merger. He said both communities have “too much of their community identity established through their school districts” (P. Snyder, personal communication, March 3, 2014). Saanenville Board Vice-President Bosch explained the perspective of his community as follows:

A couple years back we had conducted a study to consider a full merger with a neighboring school district. Upon completion of that study it was obvious that most all the benefits would be gained by the other district, that transportation would be horrendous for a lot of the students, and the financial cost to Saanenville would be enormous. Feedback from the Saanenville residents were predominantly adverse to the idea after hearing the results of the study so the board decided not to even put it up to a public vote (P. Bosch, personal communication, March 12, 2014).

The Alpine Hill also indicated no interest in considering a merger. Board President Stevens stated:

I don't think merger as far as schools really came up. There's a lot of people from the community that are involved with the school and it's a hub to the community there's a lot of pride. A lot of pride in the school, a lot of pride in the teachers... Everybody seems to be real gung ho. We are the center of the community so merging is not an option (T. Stevens, personal communication, February 24, 2014).

When asked about considering a merger with Sabletown, Alpine Hill Board Vice-President Lombard stated:

Any type of merger, any direction was going to do be untenable. I think the bigger thing with that is... this building, and I know every town says this... this campus is the hub of the community. There is nothing else here in Alpine Hill. We have a few churches that are active. We have a fire department that's semi active. Then we have the school. The school is the place where the kids go, parents go. It's a Red Cross Center. It's a disaster relief center. It's been used several times in the flooding stages. It was more important to the community to keep, number one, the identity...the doors open. Even if it did affect the tax base, they were willing to pay and keep it here (H. Lombard, personal communication, February 20, 2014).

Sabletown Board President Green confirmed this view. He said, "We're not interested in merging and Alpine Hill is not interested in merging. We want to keep our identity in Sabletown" (P. Green, personal communication, February 20, 2014). Sabletown previously had a bad experience considering a merger with another district. Board President Green explained the concern with sharing a superintendent with that district.

It wouldn't have been sharing a superintendent with Toggenburg it would have been a merger. And that was a concern in Sabletown. Toggenburg's school is big enough to hold all the kids. You know how a merge works. Everyone could agree that we are going to keep both buildings open. You merge and then you elect a new Board. And the new Board could come and say, shut the Sabletown building down and send all of the kids to

Toggenburg. That's reality and we don't want that to happen in Sabletown (P. Green, personal communication, February 20, 2014).

In each of the participating districts, interviewees indicated some aspect of organizational culture and values that had an impact on the decision to share a superintendent. Whether it was frugality or a strong sense of identity, this aspect of the symbolic frame was a consideration for districts. This is consistent with the findings of Schumacher (2011) on the impact of shared services on the culture of school districts.

Traditional visibility of the system leader.

One of the areas of concern for board members and shared superintendents was the potential loss of visibility of the superintendent in a shared role. It was traditional in these small communities for the superintendent to be present and visible at numerous school and community events. Participants in this study indicated the need for an understanding of the trade-off of visibility of and access to the superintendent. In Saanenville, Board President DeLuca stated the following:

Superintendent Snyder involves himself in community events. He obviously can't be at as many school events as he would have been at in the past, but I think it is an important part of the culture that people want to be a little connected to their school. The superintendent is a visible part of that. We talked about the fact that we obviously can't expect the same level of community involvement that we would if he was dedicated to our school. I think people recognize that's a trade-off you are going to make. It's physically impossible for someone to do as much in two places as they did in one. I think

there's an understanding he is going to miss some things we'd like him to be present for, but it can't be helped (T. DeLuca, personal communication, March 3, 2014).

Nubian Valley Board Vice-President Funk indicated that the visibility of Shared Superintendent Snyder was a concern among members of the community. He said:

Feedback was generally positive but I'm sure many kept an eye open to see if he would still be present at school functions. I'm not sure how exactly he does it, but it seems that he is keeping both communities happy with his presence (D. Funk, personal communication, March 27, 2014).

Saanenville shared the visibility concern. Board Vice-President Bosch shared:

We were assured that Superintendent Snyder would continue to attend all of the usual festivities (graduation, awards ceremonies, concerts, etc.) and speaking engagements (Lions Club, Rotary, Senior Citizens, etc.) in both communities by manipulating the respective calendars to allow such behavior (P. Bosch, personal communication, March 12, 2014).

Alpine Hill discussed the expectations for visibility prior to entering into the shared superintendent agreement. Board Vice-President Lombard shared the following:

We knew we would not see the superintendent as much as we are accustomed to. This is changing ways. Small districts are so used to having the superintendent do this, as well as, grab the pipe wrench to fix a leaky pipe, but this role was truly a CEO or superintendent/executive leadership. We would not expect to see them at every concert, game as a public figure, but that we would try to have staff assigned from the

administrative team to be at most every event. That's been one change. Many people from all these rural schools, the smaller districts, smaller communities have older folks who believe in the old way, so that's been a little bit of a change. Our superintendent may not be available daily or when you call, but there will be people here to address the issue. This has been a cultural change that should have happened anyway. They need to follow the proper chain of command or the chain of events. We like the superintendent to get out to at least one or two senior citizen meals, especially at budget time. There are certain points, or traditions that really need to be followed to continue to operate without upsetting the apple cart. Even in the past, superintendents weren't always involved in the big community events. I haven't really heard from the public or the staff because they knew this up front. I haven't heard "Where's the superintendent?" He's not expected to be there. He will be there, but is not expected to. So by setting those expectations right up front, that's worked out well. Probably needs more work and we'll have to find where those things are and what is important. In every district it's hard to catch them all. It's hard, we have limited time as your CEO, it's sometimes hard to place that person at a public event which doesn't drive the business. It does, because it doesn't upset the apple cart but it doesn't really drive the business. You understand that it's a balancing act and between sanity, your own family time. (H. Lombard, personal communication, February 20, 2014).

Sabletown also knew that the traditional visibility of the superintendent would be decreased in a shared superintendent arrangement. Board President Green said:

We realized that we were going to lose him in the community a bit. He would be absent in the community. He couldn't be at all the ball games and all the concerts. You've got

two districts and he lives in another district and his kids are involved in sports and things in another district. He's got his own life and we said, we don't want this to negatively affect your family life either so we realize that you will not be here all time for all the social functions and after school activities. We knew that was going to be something we had to deal with and we accepted that (P. Green, personal communication, February 20, 2014).

When considering the symbolic frame, the loss of visibility, which was an important and valued traditional role and expectation of the superintendent, was a consideration of each of the participating school districts. As previously stated, prior research also found that reduced accessibility and visibility of the superintendent was a negative impact of entering such a shared agreement (Cronin, 2008; Decker & Talbot, 1991; Graves, 2011; Heath, 1980; Meyer, 1990; Oberg, 2002).

As evidenced here, data revealed key considerations in making the affirmative decision to share a superintendent relate to the symbolic frame. These key considerations are:

- Cultural values in each of the participating districts that include frugality and conservative fiscal values;
- A strong value for identity and local control; and
- The potential loss of the traditional visibility of the superintendent in the school community prompted by the share.

Summary of Research Question Two Findings Data Analysis

This study's second research question explores the extent to which the factors influencing decisions by districts to share superintendents relate to the four frames model of organizations identified by Bolman and Deal (2013). In this section of Chapter Four, data was presented from board of education leaders and superintendents in upstate New York school districts who have entered into shared superintendent agreements. Participants indicated factors from each of Bolman and Deal (2013)'s four leadership frames influenced their decision including:

- Structural -the size and location of participant school districts, organizational strategy and goals;
- Human Resource - the limited availability of qualified system leaders, the desire for talented leadership, the ability to offer additional salary, the critical importance of fit;
- Political- the allocation of scarce resources, community perceptions, messages to stakeholder groups; and
- Symbolic- visibility of the superintendent, strong sense of identity among the participating districts, and the culture of and values of the school district.

The findings presented in this chapter show a variety of factors leading school districts in upstate New York to enter into shared superintendent agreements. Among these factors was a desire for stability of leadership and the need for high quality leadership with a perceived shortage of high quality leaders available, limited fiscal resources, a positive previous sharing experience, and a desire to demonstrate to the community and policy-makers proactive consolidation efforts. These factors are largely consistent with previous research on shared superintendents in other parts of the country (Beem, 2006; Decker & Talbot, 1991; Winchester,

2006). However, the data differed from other research indicating that the primary and most important factor for sharing superintendents was cost savings (Bratlie, 1992). There were specific data indicating the importance of each of Bolman and Deal (2013)'s four frame model. The findings from analysis of data related to each of the research questions will be summarized in the next, final chapter of this study with an outline of summary findings, an examination of specific conclusions and detailing of implications for further research and policymakers.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Shared Superintendent Whigham summarized his initial impressions of serving in the shared role as follows:

Being a shared superintendent is very challenging. I think more so than anything I've ever done. In the fact that there are so many factors that make it difficult. It's two Boards of Education; they have two different philosophies. It's two teachers unions. It's two different NYSUT reps that are in different parts of the state. It's been challenging. It's been rewarding. It's been professional development on steroids where six months feels like two years of experience because while I'm still a Superintendent in year 4-5 in one district but I'm a first year Superintendent over on the other side of the hill going through all of those first year Superintendent things; getting to know the district, getting to know the people, getting to know the community, trying to find out where all the skeletons lie. So it's a learning curve. Everything is chaotic happening in a very fast pace, do year two and three kind of mellow out a little bit? It's been fun, it's been frustrating, but when it gets frustrating I stop and take a look is it the job that's frustrating me or is it the share (W. Whigham, personal communication, March 2, 2014).

This perspective goes to the core of the study. Shared superintendencies in New York State are a new phenomenon in which the still evolving dynamics are being assessed by participating districts. It is critical to identify the conditions that must exist in districts prior to considering entering into a shared superintendent agreement. This study's research questions were

developed in an effort to investigate the decision of New York State school districts to engage in a shared superintendency where two districts share a single superintendent.

1. For districts entering into shared superintendent agreements, what factors influence the decision?
2. To what extent do the factors influencing decisions by districts to share superintendents relate to the four frames model of organizations identified by Bolman and Deal (2013)?

The prior chapter provided an analysis of the factors influencing the decision of school districts to enter a shared superintendent agreement. As a qualitative study design, interviews provided substantial depth of responses from participating board of education members and superintendents. As previously noted, there is limited research on the topic of shared superintendencies in general and particularly narrow research on the motivations for entering into such agreements and specifically in New York State (Bratlie, 1992; Cronin, 2008; Decker & Talbot, 1991; Dose, 1994; Edwards, 2003; Myer, 1990; Oberg, 2002; Winchester, 2003).

This final chapter is divided into the following sections: summary of findings, discussion of research finding one, discussion of research finding two, discussion of research finding three, discussion of research finding four; recommendations and implications for school board members and superintendents, recommendations and implications for policymakers; conclusions, and final considerations.

Summary of Findings

There are four key findings from this study. The basis for the findings outlined below is analysis of the in-depth interviews conducted with participants who included superintendents and school board members in upstate New York who have entered into shared superintendent agreements. This study sought to discover what factors influence the decision by districts to enter into shared superintendent agreements and how these factors relate to Bolman and Deal's (2013) organizational frames. The data revealed the following findings:

- District leaders have a desire to attract and retain stable, high quality system leadership in order to meet organizational goals which is the primary influence in prompting the decision to enter a shared superintendent agreement;
- There is a perceived scarcity of financial and human resources including insufficient revenue sources, an inadequate pool of qualified candidates for the superintendency and a reluctance to pursue a search for a superintendent in participating districts;
- There are certain prerequisite conditions which must be in place to commence a successful shared superintendency including a previous successful shared service agreement between the districts, experience as a superintendent, extensive experience with at least one of the districts by the shared superintendent, and a competent administrative team in each participating school district; and
- Several potential and perceived benefits have been identified as a result of the shared superintendent agreement for participating districts including the opportunity for additional shared services between the two districts, taking a

proactive step prior to the potential of being forced to consolidate or merge and the ability to demonstrate frugality to stakeholder groups.

These findings show a variety of factors leading school districts in upstate New York to enter into shared superintendent agreements. The data also support findings that certain prerequisite conditions must be considered when contemplating a shared superintendent agreement and that there are certain perceived benefits beyond financial savings which can occur with shared superintendencies.

Discussion of Finding One

The first finding associated with this study can be summarized simply as, “Leadership Matters.” Consistent with previous literature discussed, there is a need for and value associated with high quality leadership in school districts (DuFour & Fullan, 2013; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Gref, 2014; Marzano & Waters, 2006; Shelton, 2010). Participating districts indicated that stable leadership was important to both acquire and maintain. This desire for stability was a major factor for all participants. However, the districts were not simply seeking stable leadership. Rather, they were in search of high quality leadership provided by highly skilled and experienced leaders. It was clear that the strong desire to attract and retain high quality leadership through a proven, experienced superintendent was a major factor for all participating districts. Every board member interviewed indicated the necessity for an established leader to guide the district through the challenging academic and financial terrain faced by school districts. All participants shared that a key consideration of the decision to share a superintendent was this desire for high quality district leadership. Consistent with Winchester’s (2006) findings, data in this study indicated that leadership at lower levels was also of critical importance when

considering a shared superintendency. The concern illuminated by this factor is that previous studies have found that shared superintendencies can lead to burnout for superintendents and result in frequent turnover (Bratlie, 1992; Cronin, 2008; Dose, 1994; Heath, 1980).

As evidenced in the previous chapter, the importance and value of leadership was a central theme in the data collected in this study. Board members were seeking highly competent, tested, and successful superintendents. Board members were willing to contemplate a shared superintendency since they believed the supporting cast of administrators was capable of filling any voids that might be created by the share. For the shared superintendents, they would not even consider entering a shared superintendent agreement without a well-established and highly competent administrative team. The data revealed the strong belief that shared superintendencies cannot be successful without a highly skilled administrative staff capable of taking on such a challenge.

School districts are organizations that need the talent and energy of high quality leaders. Board members seek to attract and retain superintendents who possess the skills and traits needed by the organization in order to experience success. The desire for stable, experienced, high quality leadership was the primary interest in pursuing a shared superintendent agreement.

Discussion of Finding Two

The second finding is that insufficient access to fiscal and human resources to participating school districts influenced the decision to pursue a shared superintendency. All participating school districts have experienced cuts in funding leading to reductions in staffing and programs. In addition, all districts participating in this study indicated a reluctance to undertake a superintendent search due to their perceived shortage of qualified candidates and the

view that their districts may be challenged in recruiting high quality candidates due to their size and location.

Due to cuts in aid and other revenues, participating districts have been experiencing challenging budgets for the past several years. Entering a shared superintendent agreement was influenced by this limited financial resource, but not as the primary factor. In three of four participating districts, fiscal issues were a secondary consideration in sharing a superintendent. Cost savings were viewed as a positive side-effect but were subordinate to the desire for high quality, stable leadership. Previous literature found cost savings as a primary factor influencing the decision to enter a shared superintendent agreement (Bralie, 1992; Decker & Talbot, 1991; Trainor, 2009). The district which has experienced such stable and high quality leadership was the exception where cost savings was revealed as a major consideration prompting the desire to enter a shared superintendency. Still, the incumbent superintendent in that district warned against the desire for cost savings persuading boards and superintendents engaging in such an arrangement. This is consistent with the findings of Winchester (2003) who found that costs savings dissipate after 4-5 years.

Participating districts wanted to attract and retain superintendents with desirable skills and talents to meet the needs of the organization and fit within the school community while superintendents wanted additional salary and opportunity to succeed within their field. Participants in the study viewed their limited access to both financial and human resources as a critical consideration in the decision to share a superintendent. Interviewees would prefer to keep one full time person in the position, but they either do not believe they can afford a high enough salary, do not believe they can find a highly qualified superintendent to lead the school district, or want to divert the funds for a salary to stave off cuts in other programs. These

findings are consistent with the seminal research conducted by Decker and Talbot (1991) in Iowa over twenty years ago. This study found that the following factors related to limited human resources were considerable factors in making the decision to enter a shared superintendent agreement:

- The remote location and limited enrollment of the district which impedes the ability to recruit and retain highly qualified superintendents;
- Limited ability to offer highly competitive salaries to attract and retain high quality superintendents; and
- The perceived shortage of highly qualified superintendent candidates and the fear of conducting an unsuccessful search for a superintendent.

Limited human and financial resources had a substantial impact on the decision of participating districts to enter a shared superintendent agreement. Limited access to money for programs, staffing, and salaries combined with a perceived shortage of qualified candidates for superintendent vacancies were all motivating factors for participating school leaders.

Discussion of Finding Three

The third finding of this study is that certain prerequisite conditions were found necessary in order to allow a successful shared superintendency. These conditions include a previous successful shared service agreement between the districts, experience as a superintendent, extensive experience with at least one of the districts by the shared superintendent, and a competent administrative team in each participating school district.

It is clear that sharing athletics provided an important opportunity for participating districts to test the waters of collaborating with one another. In addition, it gave the two communities as well as staff and students to gain familiarity with one another and build positive relationships. All participants characterized successful athletic shares as a key factor prompting them to consider the shared superintendency. This data is important for districts considering a shared superintendent as some kind of introductory share prior to the shared superintendent was revealed as an important step to facilitate the successful share of the system leader.

The shared superintendents and board members participating in the study also revealed that experience and familiarity are also important preconditions for districts considering a shared superintendency. According to participants, a share involving an entry level superintendent or with someone who is unfamiliar with both districts would be inappropriate and unsuccessful. This finding is consistent with previous research finding that the substantial challenges associated with the shared superintendency require an experienced superintendent (Archer, 2005; Cronin, 2008; Heath 1980; Oberg, 2002). Related to this experience and familiarity is the ability of the shared superintendent to fit into the school community of each district involved in the share. Decker and Talbot (1989) also found that the only way a shared superintendent could be successful was if the superintendent was viewed as a credible, secure, and respected leader in one district before being shared with another.

Participants indicated that the availability of technology, though not a major consideration, is a factor which was taken into consideration as a condition that can facilitate a shared superintendency and provide comfort to stakeholders. The availability of technology allows the shared superintendent to be reachable no matter where they are located on a given day. This is another prerequisite condition. Technology to allow remote communication and

access to the shared superintendent must be in place in order to allow the share to occur effectively.

Finally, all participants in this study expressed the need for a strong administrative team as a necessary condition in order to enter a shared superintendent agreement. Without competent building principals and a proficient business manager, the shared superintendent would be unable to devote adequate time and resources to each district involved in the share. This is consistent with the findings of Winchester (2006) in Nebraska.

This study revealed the following prerequisite favorable conditions that must be in place in order to consider a shared superintendency:

- previous successful shared service agreement between the districts such as an athletic share or merger:
- an experienced and competent superintendent as the shared superintendent;
- extensive familiarity with at least one of the districts by the shared superintendent;
- and
- a highly competent administrative team in each participating school district.

Participants revealed their strong belief that absent these favorable conditions, it is unlikely that a shared superintendency is sustainable for school districts.

Discussion of Finding Four

The final finding of this study is that several potential and perceived benefits have been identified by participants as a result of the shared superintendent agreement for districts including the opportunity for additional shared services between the two districts, taking a

proactive step prior to the potential of being forced to consolidate or merge and the ability to demonstrate frugality to stakeholder groups.

Participants in this study perceive the shared superintendent as a way in which to identify and facilitate additional sharing. This is consistent with previous literature regarding shared superintendencies (Archer, 2005; Talbot 2009). Sharing a superintendent can serve as a vehicle for further efficiencies and consolidation of services. The shared superintendency provides a unique opportunity to view the operations of two school districts in an effort to identify areas where additional shares can occur. These shares can allow for enhanced programming for students, greater efficiencies of programming and services and cost savings. Data revealed that the opportunity for additional sharing between districts, though not a major consideration in the decision to enter a shared superintendent agreement, provide a substantial benefit to participating districts.

In each of the participating districts, a view existed that school districts in New York State may be forced to consolidate and merge. Participants indicated that they were interested in maintaining their autonomy and local governance and decision-making authority. This was consistent with the findings of Beem (2006) that shared superintendencies were a way to stave off forced consolidation. Data revealed that participants in this study viewed a shared superintendency as a potential move to avoid forced consolidation or mergers. They view this is a positive side benefit of entering into a shared superintendency.

The cost savings was also sent an important message to community members regarding the fiscal responsibility of district leaders. The perception that a shared superintendent could provide proven leadership at a cost savings to the district justified the decision to the community

and staff with limited negotiation and coalition building. The school boards were able to leverage the current political climate to minimize the need to gather stakeholder input and feedback. The cultural identity and underlying values of each of the communities involved in the study had an impact on the decision to share a superintendent. The expectation of each community for frugality in terms of economical expenditures was one of the cultural factors from the symbolic frame that was a consideration in each participating school district. A benefit of entering a shared superintendent agreement was demonstrating to the community that district leaders were willing to make cuts to administrative expenditures which can assist in building and maintaining community support for school budgets whether there is actually substantial savings or not. Yet, previous studies found that the shared superintendency decreased visibility and community access to the superintendent (Bratlie, 1992; Cronin, 2008; Decker & Talbot, 1991). School boards and shared superintendents must be cognizant of this reduced visibility and community access as Bratlie (1992) found that communities may not always support a shared superintendent agreement even when school boards do.

In each of the participating districts, interviewees indicated some aspect of the decision to share a superintendent that offered additional benefits to the district. Included in these potential benefits are:

- the opportunity to identify and facilitate additional shared services between the two districts;
- demonstrating a willingness to legislators to take a proactive step prior to the potential of being forced to consolidate or merge; and
- the ability to demonstrate frugality to stakeholder groups in an effort to encourage and sustain community support for the school budgets.

These potential benefits, which could have a favorable impact on the financial or programmatic status of participating districts, were motivators impacting the decision to enter shared superintendent agreements.

Recommendations and Implications

There are several key recommendations and implications for both policy and practice. Legislators and regulators should consider these recommendations when reviewing current legislation regarding shared superintendents. In addition, there is critical information for school board members and superintendents who might consider entering shared superintendent agreements in the future. Also, there are steps that can and should be taken to address the shortage of qualified superintendents in New York State and provide more support to new superintendents. Finally, further study and assessment of the efficacy of shared superintendencies in New York State is warranted and necessary.

Recommendations and implications for policymakers and board of education members

Legislation authorizing the sharing of superintendents was passed in New York State as part of the Tax Cap Legislation in an effort to allow school districts the opportunity for expenditure reductions. This study revealed that such cost savings are minimal at best. Instead, the Legislature should craft legislation aimed at providing a more suitable pool of qualified candidates for the superintendency. Also, the legislation was limited to districts with enrollment of less than 1000 students. Since these districts are most often the districts with the least administrative support, it is those districts which will experience the greatest impact of losing a dedicated superintendent in their school. The enrollment threshold of the legislation should be reconsidered. Finally, the legislation authorizes the shared superintendency to occur between up

to three school districts. This study revealed substantial challenges with a share between two districts. The legislation should be revised to limit any potential shared superintendency to no more than two school districts.

School board members should carefully consider the goals of entering into a shared superintendent agreement. Such a decision should not be made simply on the basis of financial savings. In addition, board members should carefully consider whether or not the conditions for a shared superintendency are favorable. Namely, the shared superintendent being considered must be highly skilled, experienced, and intimately familiar with at least one of the districts. Due to the steep learning curve experienced by the shared superintendent, it is recommended that only situations where the incumbent superintendent of one of the districts assumes the role of shared superintendent. In addition, a strong administrative team must exist in each participating district. School boards must also carefully consider the impact of the shared superintendent on the other district administrators. The additional workload and lack of accessibility of the superintendent could have an impact on the remaining members of the administrative staff. Finally, school boards should insure that previous successful shares in public, high stakes programs such as an athletic merger, have occurred between the two districts prior to commencing a shared superintendent agreement.

Recommendations and implications for practice and professional development

The findings of this research can be used to improve practice in providing high quality leadership in school districts. This study found that two major factors influencing the decision of participating school districts were the desire for stable, high quality leadership and the perceived shortage of qualified candidates for school superintendent vacancies. Consequently, it is

recommended that additional programming be implemented to identify and provide professional development for aspiring superintendents. Programs such as the Superintendents Development Program sponsored by the State University of New York at Oswego and the New York State Council of School Superintendent's Future Superintendents Academy should be promoted and expanded. Such programs can assist in deepening the pool of qualified candidates for superintendencies. Current superintendents and school board members should identify leaders within their organizations and provide them with intensive professional development to cultivate the skills necessary to be an effective superintendent. In addition, more formal programming to provide mentoring and support to new superintendents should be developed and sustained. Such programs can assist in providing support and promoting stability and effectiveness among superintendents. Since stable, high quality leadership is so important to school boards, proactive steps must be taken in order to identify, support, and develop the skills of aspiring and new superintendents.

Recommendations for further research

Since the practice of shared superintendencies in New York State is a new phenomenon, there is considerable need for additional research to be conducted on this topic. One of the areas mentioned consistently by study participants was the fact that it was too early in New York to assess the effectiveness of shared superintendencies. Shared Superintendent Snyder stated, "The ultimate test is whether or not you can advance student learning and achievement. That is the key indicator of success, yet at this point and maybe after even two years is that it may still be too early to tell (P. Snyder, personal communication, March 3, 2014). Further study should occur in districts that have had the opportunity to fully implement a shared superintendency to determine whether or not the desire for high quality, stable leadership resulted in improved student

achievement. Did this innovative attempt to provide the desired leadership help toward meeting the district's organizational goals? Also, in the districts who were satisfied with the leadership capabilities of the incumbent superintendent prior to the share, it will need to be determined whether or not there is a decline in student achievement as a result of decreased attention and focus by the superintendent. This study could offer significant insight into whether or not shared superintendents are truly worth it in the end.

Additional further research that could offer substantial implications to the field is study of the pre-requisite conditions necessary for a successful shared superintendency previously discussed. Research conducted in an effort to further identify and quantify the impact of the presence or absence of these factors on shared superintendencies would be informative and useful for boards of education and scholars. Such research would allow districts entering considering a shared superintendent agreement could better gauge their readiness for such a governance structure.

In addition, since board of education were seeking stable, high quality leadership, it is important to determine whether or not the shared superintendency leads to this stability. Research should be conducted to determine whether or not the desired stability occurs in these arrangements or if the high levels of burnout and turnover found in other parts of the country occur in New York State. Also, since a high quality administrative staff was identified as a pre-requisite condition necessary to enter into a shared superintendent agreement, study should be conducted regarding the toll on the supporting cast of administrators as well as the impact on their stability and longevity.

Finally, as organizations and boards of education have viewed shared superintendents in New York State as a potential solution to the shortage of school superintendents and as a cost savings measure, further research should be conducted to see if either of these conditions result over the long term. Researchers should quantify the short and long term savings which occur over time beyond simply the cost of the superintendent. This study should also include the savings as well as program enhancements realized as a result of a shared superintendent facilitating the sharing of additional services between districts. In addition, there should be further study to determine whether or not the shortage of superintendents is impacted by shared superintendent agreements. Such studies will assist boards of education in making more informed decisions regarding whether or not a shared superintendency meets desired objectives.

Conclusions

This study aimed to expand upon and contribute to the prior literature and research on shared superintendents and specifically on the factors influencing the newly occurring decision of school districts in New York State to enter into shared superintendent agreements. Each of these aims is important. This study has implications and recommendations for further research, practice and policymakers around:

- Ensuring that proper conditions exist within districts considering entering a shared superintendent agreement,
- Revisiting and amending the legislation authorizing shared superintendents in New York State,
- Expanding and promoting opportunities for the professional development of aspiring and new superintendents, and

Four conclusions based on this study are the following:

1. The lack of resources including human resources and financial resources are the impetus for sharing superintendents even though participating districts prefer full time superintendent leadership,
2. Even though legislation authorizing shared superintendents in New York State was part of Tax Cap legislation to promote financial savings, data from this study revealed that the main issue and primary consideration for participating districts was a desire for stable, high quality leadership,
3. Due to the challenging nature of the work associated with a shared superintendency, it is important that the shared superintendent is highly competent, experienced, and extremely familiar with at least one of the districts, and
4. Shared superintendencies offer potential benefits to participating school districts including identifying and facilitating additional sharing and demonstrating to the community as well as legislators and regulators that participating districts are taking proactive steps to demonstrate consolidation, frugality, and fiscal restraint.

Conclusion one

This study found that the lack of resources including qualified candidates for superintendent vacancies and constrained financial resources due to revenue reductions are the primary factors leading districts to explore shared superintendent agreements despite the fact that participating districts would prefer full time superintendent leadership. Without a perceived shortage of qualified leadership and financial resources, shared superintendencies would not

have been considered. No participants in this study indicated that a shared superintendency was optimal. Rather, board members and superintendents viewed that shared superintendency as a potential solution to the scarcity of human and fiscal resources. Participants viewed the shared superintendency as an alternative, not a desired leadership structure. This brings into question both the sustainability and long-term value of shared superintendent agreements. Shelton (2010) equated the time superintendents spend focused on instructional leadership with student achievement in districts (p. 122). The question of whether or not the shared superintendents involved in this study will spend adequate time focused on student achievement is not yet answered. The test of whether such an arrangement is worthwhile or not will be by assessing student achievement improvement and progress toward meeting other organizational goals as well as the length of tenure of the shared superintendents.

Conclusion two

Shared superintendents in New York State were authorized in 2011 as part of the Tax Cap legislation in an effort to promote financial savings. Yet, data from this study revealed that in three of the four participating districts, the main issue and primary consideration for participating districts was a desire for stable, high quality leadership. Relatively small and rural districts involved in the study indicated a serious concern with the ability to recruit and retain quality leaders. The districts with superintendent vacancies specifically sought out the leadership provided by a neighboring superintendent. Board members in districts employing the incumbent superintendent were concerned with retaining the services of their successful superintendents. Data in this study is consistent with Waters and Marzano's (2006) assertion that "sound leadership at the district level adds value to an education system" (p. 8). It was the

value of leadership that was the primary motivation for districts to enter into shared superintendencies.

Conclusion three

Shared superintendents involved in this study described substantial challenges associated with leading two districts. Learning the staff, community, school board and programming of an additional district is difficult to accomplish while providing high quality leadership to another school district. Participating superintendents believed that a prerequisite condition that must exist is that the shared superintendent is highly competent, experienced, and extremely familiar with at least one of the districts. They did not believe a shared superintendency was feasible for a new superintendent or even an experienced superintendent who was new to both districts involved in the share. The learning curve is simply too steep. In addition, there must be competent administrative staff in both districts in order to make the shared superintendency work. Therefore, superintendents and school boards pondering a shared superintendent agreement must keep these considerations in mind when contemplating who would hold the position of shared superintendent.

Conclusion four

Shared superintendencies offer potential benefits to participating school districts including identifying and facilitating additional sharing and demonstrating to the community as well as legislators and regulators that participating districts are taking proactive steps to demonstrate consolidation, frugality, and fiscal restraint. With a single superintendent leading two districts, there is a unique opportunity to observe and assess programming and identify additional opportunities for sharing. This can lead to expanded opportunities for students in both

districts, more efficient delivery of services, and improved programming. It is more difficult to identify and facilitate such sharing with individual superintendents. In addition, there is political capital with taxpayers and legislators gained by demonstrating fiscal constraint and creativity through entering the shared superintendent agreement. The message sent by engaging in this consolidation at the system leadership level can be leveraged to gain support for school budgets and additional state funding.

Final Considerations

New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli (2014) summarized the challenges faced by school districts well when he stated, “Education is one of the most important functions that localities provide, and it is also one of the most expensive. Schools districts provide the foundation for the success of future generations, and do so in the midst of close scrutiny by taxpayers and mounting fiscal pressures” (p. 5). This challenging mission under extensive scrutiny from stakeholders requires sound, stable leadership. The challenge is exacerbated by a shortage of qualified superintendents. Consequently, school boards in New York State are increasingly considering shared superintendent agreements. This study reveals that there are such action should be taken slowly and cautiously in order to be successful. Such a decision has serious implications and should only be made after considering the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of this study. It is the hope of this researcher that school districts contemplating a shared superintendency are given pause by the findings of this study. Media reports and taxpayer groups may view shared superintendencies as a silver bullet to solve all of the financial challenges faced by school districts. The reality is that such arrangements require a much more thoughtful, strategic approach. Board of Education members must protect their districts and, more, importantly their students from hasty or reactive decisions. The leadership

provided by school superintendents is important and careful consideration must be taken prior to the decision to stretch the leadership provided by a single superintendent to multiple school districts.

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Appendix A

Invitation to Superintendents and Board Members

Date _____

Dear _____,

I am writing to request your participation in a research study that will investigate the factors leading to districts sharing superintendents in upstate New York. The study will focus on those districts who have engaged in shared superintendent agreement since 2011.

Your participation would include the provision of available documents such as Board of Education meeting minutes, Strategic Planning Documents, newsletters or other documents related to the decision to have a shared superintendency. In addition, you would be asked to complete an interview that will not exceed one hour in length. If possible, the interview will be conducted in person and will be scheduled at your convenience. Interview questions will be provided in advance, and all responses will be kept confidential.

I understand your time is valuable, but I am hopeful the results of this study will prove beneficial to your district and others like it.

Please indicate your willingness to participate no later than XXXXXXXXX via email: andrej3@sage.edu as well as complete and return the attached consent form; An addressed stamped envelope has been enclosed.

I appreciate your consideration and thank you for your anticipated participation. Upon receipt of your intent to participate you will be contacted to arrange an interview at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Jason A. Andrews

Doctoral Candidate

The Sage College

Appendix B

Verbal Recruitment Script

Hello - My name is Jason Andrews and I am a student from the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership at the Sage Colleges. I'm calling to talk to you about participating in my research study. This is a study about the decision of school districts to enter into shared superintendent agreements. You're eligible to be in this study because you are a (Board of Education member/Superintendent) in a school district with shared superintendent. I obtained your contact information from your district's website.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a confidential interview lasting for between sixty and ninety minutes. I would like to audio record your interview and then we'll use the information to identify any common factors leading school districts to share a superintendent.

Remember, this is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you'd like to participate, we can go ahead and schedule a time for me to meet with you to give you more information. If you need more time to decide if you would like to participate, you may also call or email me with your decision.

Do you have any questions for me at this time?

If you have any more questions about this process or if you need to contact me about participation, I may be reached at 607-693-1212 or andrej3@sage.edu

Thank you so much.

Appendix C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

To:

You are being asked to participate in a research project entitled: The Decision for Shared Superintendents in New York State

This research is being conducted by : Dr. John Johnson, Principal Investigator and Jason A. Andrews, Doctoral Candidate

This study has emerged from the growing consideration across upstate New York to engage in shared superintendent agreements. It is important for educational leaders to understand the process by which the decision to share a superintendent is made as well as the factors that influence such decisions. Few studies have been conducted regarding the topic of shared superintendencies. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the decision of districts to engage in a shared superintendency where two districts share a single superintendent in New York State using Bolman and Deal's (2013) organizational frames as a lens. The study explores school districts in which methods of inquiry include interviews of superintendents and members of the board of education and a thorough review of relevant documents in selected districts with shared superintendents. Participants will include four school districts in upstate New York.

If you decide to participate, you will be interviewed for between sixty and ninety minutes.

This study will be conducted confidentially. Participants will be interviewed and audio taped for accuracy of transcription. Participants may elect not to answer any questions and may terminate the interview at any time. The names of the participants as well as the districts selected for study will be maintained confidentially. Pseudonyms will be developed for both the participants as well as the districts and used when reporting the results. The participants as well as the selected districts will be known only to the student researcher. All interviews will be transcribed and maintained on a password protected computer. Once the transcribed interviews have been verified for accuracy by the participants, the audio tapes will be maintained until the research has been concluded and then destroyed.

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

If you have any questions about the study prior or during the study, I will be more than pleased to accommodate these questions or concerns. The risk associated with involvement in this study although minimal include that personal identifiable information could be disclosed. In order to minimize these potential risks, the confidentiality of all participants will be maintained with the utmost care. All of the information collected from the interviews will be confidential. Your name and other identifying features will not be used in analysis of the research. The information from the data will be confidential, which will be done by identifying you by the use of a pseudonym.

In event that you are harmed in the participation of the study, you understand that compensation and/or medical treatment is not available from The Sage Colleges. However, compensation and/or medical cost could be recovered by legal action.

Participation 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: _____ Date: _____
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:

Dr. Esther Haskvitz, Dean
Sage Graduate Schools
School of Health Sciences
65 First Street
Troy, New York 12180
518-244-2264
haskve@sage.edu

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

Hello. My name is Jason Andrews 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. My research is investigating the decision of school districts in New York State to enter into shared superintendent agreements.

I will be asking you questions that will help me develop a better understanding of the factors leading to the decision to share a superintendent and process by which the decision was made. Your interview will be taped on a digital audio recorder and transcribed. I will also take hand-written notes during the interview. The transcriber signed a confidentiality agreement. No real names will be used when data are recorded, transcribed or reported. Any hard copy data will be kept under lock and key in my home office. Hard copies of the data will be destroyed once the dissertation is completed. All electronic data and handwritten notes will also be deleted upon completion of the dissertation.

Your name and your school district will be kept 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. If you decide to withdraw from the study at any time, the data will not be used and will be destroyed.

1. Warm up question (three to five minutes):

a. Could you tell me some information about your background and your education?

2. What is your current role in the district and how long have you served in this role?

a. What other positions have you held in the district? (if any)

3. What has been the average tenure of superintendents in the district? Board members?

4. To what extent were fiscal issues a consideration for entering into a shared superintendent agreement?

a. Describe any prior budget cuts made by the district.

5. Was a merger of the districts considered prior to sharing a superintendent?

a. What other options were considered, if any?

6. What other considerations lead to the decision to share a superintendent?

7. Did any other shared services exist between the two districts prior to the decision to share a superintendent or were there other connections?

a. Was that an important factor?

8. Did the skills/reputation of success of either incumbent superintendent play a role in the decision to share a superintendent? Explain.

9. How was the community involved in the decision to share a superintendent?

a. What was the most prevalent reaction?

10. To what extent do you believe the culture of the school district impacted the decision to share a superintendent? Explain.

11. Were there any traditions or rituals or specific values in the district that were considered as part of the decision to share superintendents?

12. Please describe your assessment of the degree of initial success of the shared superintendent agreement?

Closing

Thank you for participating in the interview and my study. The next phase is for the interviews to be transcribed by an individual approved by Sage College. Once transcribed, the data will be sent to me and kept on a password-protected laptop and desktop computer. All information will remain confidential at all times.

Your responses will be returned to you to ensure that the intent of your responses align with the questions. If I do not hear back from you after 10 days, I will call you to confirm that you are in agreement with your transcribed statements.

If you have any follow-up questions, please contact me via email at andrej3@sage.edu or phone at (607) 693-1212.

Thanks again for your time.

Appendix E
CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT
Transcription Services

An Exploration of Factors Leading to Shared Superintendencies in New York State.
Sage IRB Application #110-2013-2014

I, _____, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes and documentation received from Jason A. Andrews related to his doctoral study on An Exploration of Factors Leading to Shared Superintendencies in New York State.. Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-taped interviews, or in any associated documents;
2. To not make copies of any audiotapes or computerized files of the transcribed interview texts, unless specifically requested to do so by Jason A. Andrews;
3. To store all study-related audiotapes and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession;
4. To return all audiotapes and study-related documents to Jason A. Andrews in a complete and timely manner.
5. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes and/or files to which I will have access.

Transcriber's name (printed) _____

Transcriber's signature _____

Date