This is to certify that the
dissertation entitled

Making Sense of Three Superintendent's Leadership Practice

presented by

Tina Ann Kerr

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for the

___Ph.D.___ degree in ___Education Administration___

_____
Major Professor's Signature

___MAy 5, 2005___

Date

PLACE IN RETURN BOX to remove this checkout from your record.
TO AVOID FINES return on or before date due.
MAY BE RECALLED with earlier due date if requested.

DATE DUE	DATE DUE	DATE DUE
FEB 2 4 2008		

MAKING SENSE OF THREE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT'S
LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

By

Tina Ann Kerr

.

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Educational Administration

2005

ABSTRACT

MAKING SENSE OF THREE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT'S
LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

By

Tina Ann Kerr

My primary purpose in this study was to investigate how three superintendents

made sense of their role and how that personal theory defined their leadership practice.

By examining selected superintendents' roles and practices, I intended to discover

whether the increasing challenges facing today's superintendents had induced changes in

their leadership roles. The overarching question in this exploratory study was: How do

school superintendents make sense of their role, and how does that personal theory define

their practice? Several subsidiary questions were posed to address this overarching

question as well as to guide the collection of data for this study.

This comparative case-based study incorporated specific elements of

biographical, phenomenological, and case study approaches of qualitative research. I

used three districts in this comparative case study because it allowed me to make

comparisons across environments to determine whether superintendents' environments

induced changes in their leadership roles. I also explored how the superintendents reacted

to their environment and what changes, if any, had emerged in their theory and practice

of school leadership. The case studies were developed from observations, interviews, and

documents. Through this process, I was able to compose a detailed description or

narration of each.

As is true with most qualitative studies, emerging themes were drawn from the research and empirical findings to help me respond to the research questions. These themes focused on fit, or how the superintendent gains organizational fit; situated leadership and how leadership defines the practice of the superintendent; and relationships and how the superintendent engages the stakeholders when building trusting relationships. These themes were defined and conceptual, theoretical, and empirical support are provided to demonstrate how the superintendent thinks about his work and translates that thinking into practice.

By examining the raw data, framing that information into cogent case stories of practice, and drawing on emergent themes, I generated a new model of the superintendent's practice of leadership. Several unanticipated implications and findings also surfaced during the course of this study. The research questions provided direction for the study, but the magic of qualitative research was not unveiled until a thorough data analysis was completed. The primary purpose of this study was achieved, and the field of research has been enhanced due to its completion. In this study I also put forward an emergent theory that promotes future research in the practice of leadership.

To my family, Wiley, Jerri, Shell, Edith, and John P.; and to my friend, Trina

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This has not been an easy journey and I would like to acknowledge those that helped me along the way. First, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Maenette Benham for challenging me to flex my scholarly muscle. I know I challenged your patience, but your high expectations forced me to dig deep inside myself. I also appreciate the assistance I received from my committee members: Phil Cusick, Steve Kaagan, and John Beck.

There are times in this process where you come across special people who help make the journey a pleasant experience. So, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the "Dissertation Brothers", Dr. Amsterburg and Dr. Marshall. My journey may have been cut short without your patience and dedication to helping me succeed. Our monthly meetings were a life raft that I desperately needed. I also need to acknowledge the extra help I received from "D". It was helpful to have a second pair of eyes and I really appreciate you not using a red pen.

Lastly, I am certain I wouldn't have begun the program at Michigan State without the support and encouragement of my family. You always taught me that the sky was the limit and it definitely paid off for me this time. Thank you for always believing in me even when I didn't believe in myself.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction and Purpose

Within the life of a school there are moments of quiescence, when things get done and problems get solved. There are also moments of turbulence created by either an external or internal pressure, during which the superintendent's ability to lead can result in a successful or unsuccessful outcome. Today's superintendents deal with forces and incidents that are much more complex than in years past, and the call for massive reform in education continues to increase. More than ever before in the history of education, external stakeholders are demanding that schools improve students' achievement levels. This demand can have a significant influence on the organization, as well as on the leadership role of superintendents.

Historically, superintendents have been the fulcrum of school management and leadership, charged with guiding school districts through both quiescent and turbulent times. Because of the continued external and internal pressure being applied to school districts across the nation, I have become interested in the changes that have occurred in the roles and responsibilities of superintendents. Superintendents appear to be redefining their roles and responsibilities during these turbulent times. Hence, my purpose in this study was to investigate how superintendents made sense of their role and how that personal theory defined their practice. By examining selected superintendents' leadership roles, I intended to uncover the influence that organizational sensemaking (Weick, 1995) has on leaders' ability to lead. Researchers have noted that there has been a significant

1

shift in the role of superintendents from education spokespersons and managers (Goldhammer, 1977) to negotiators and conflict managers (Fullan, 1991). So how do superintendents navigate this shift in roles and responsibilities to lead their organizations through periods of uncertainty and despair?

Superintendents must have a deep understanding of their organizations in order to guide the school districts through turbulent times. It is unlikely that today's superintendents are as immersed in organizational theory as Philip Selznick, Chester Barnard, or even Talcott Parsons said leaders should be. However, they must be able to draw from the ideas of these and other theorists to provide a quick analysis or make sense of the organization within which they find themselves. There is a definite need to rethink the role(s) and responsibilities of school superintendents both by the organizations that they serve and by the superintendents themselves. Gaining insight into these role changes can help in determining how superintendents are or are not effective in leading the organization through these turbulent times.

Problem Statement

In this time of inevitable change due to numerous pressures from diverse points and places within the school institution, as well as from outside forces such as new government legislation, superintendents have been placed in the position of defining the system, articulating this definition to the school community, and building the school's capacity to adjust to and proceed with these changes. Yet through it all they must continue to address the needs of students and teachers. In light of the pressures on today's superintendents, I was interested in gaining insight into how superintendents make sense

of their role and how that sensemaking defines their practice. As I think about superintendents who operate in this chaotic school environment, I am reminded of the barrel ride at an amusement park, which spins its riders around at high speeds until the floor suddenly drops. Newton's law of centripetal force explains why the barrel riders do not fly out or fall into the dark abyss. I have applied this law to the superintendency because today's organizations often parallel the barrel ride; that is, they no longer remain static, but are fluid in nature.

As Newton's theory suggests, a force is required to keep an object moving; in like manner, superintendents must keep their organizations moving. In this exploratory framework, I proposed that superintendents' leadership roles are what keep their organizations in motion. As the challenges facing organizations continue to increase, the centripetal force of superintendents' leadership role appears to be the driving force that moves the organization forward (see conceptual map, Figure 1.1).

Creswell (1998) defined qualitative research as "an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting" (p. 15). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) contributed to this definition when they stated, "Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials" (p. 2). These definitions suggest that researchers must immerse themselves in the data, while continuing to collect a variety of empirical materials. This study followed the typical definitions of a qualitative study as my inquiry took me to new research materials. This addition of new research allowed me to look at the data through new metaphorical lenses.

Leadership, organizational learning, and power and politics in schools were introduced

through this new research. A thorough interpretation of the ties between the conceptual
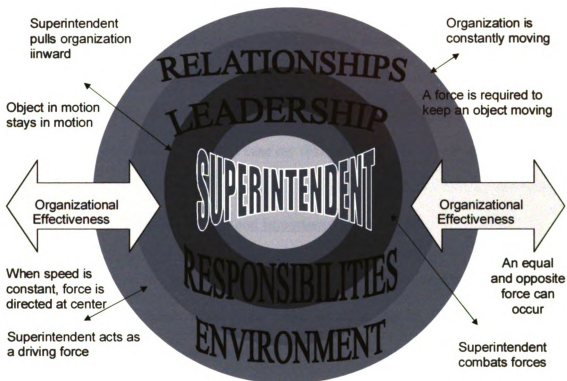
Figure 1.1 Centripetal force of the superintendency.

framework of this study, centripetal force, and the new empirical research will be offered

in Chapter V.

In this study, I explored the shifts that superintendents made in their leadership

practice to meet the challenges facing their organizations. Some of these challenges came

in the form of federal legislation, which required the superintendents to shift from being

an executive, a leader who was focused on both tasks and relationships (Reddin, 1970), to

a benevolent autocrat, a leader who was focused solely on tasks and not on relationships.

It has become apparent that the only way to comply with state and federal mandates is to maintain the organization's forward momentum. This could create new problems for superintendents, and they may have to shift once again from being managers to acting as leaders. Superintendents must continue to pull their organizations inward, as the law of centripetal force implies, or keep them from flying out of control while maintaining a constant speed to comply with state and federal mandates. As an aspiring superintendent, I hoped that understanding the new roles involved in the superintendency and the challenges superintendents face will ease my fears and allow me to get on the ride.

Need for and Importance of the Study

A number of studies have been conducted on the superintendency (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Cuban, 1989; Glass, 1992; Hirsch & Sparks, 1991) and the role superintendents play in the success of their educational organizations. Researchers have addressed the importance of leadership in today's schools; however, they have not examined the theory and practice that today's superintendents are using to succeed in an environment of changing expectations. Although studies have been done on the types of leadership superintendents use, minimal research has been conducted on the influence various theories of school leadership might have on the school environment.

This study will make a significant contribution to the field of educational research because it will define the superintendent's role and provide superintendents with possible strategies to meet the challenges of the newly defined or redefined position. The findings from this study will expand on existing research by providing information on the theory and practice used by today's superintendents, how superintendents frame their

understanding of their organizations, and the influence reciprocal relationships and distributive practices have on the school environment. This study can potentially serve as a resource guide for aspiring superintendents, helping them maneuver through the requirements of this complex position. It also can help current superintendents lengthen their longevity in the superintendency.

<u>Exploratory Questions</u>

My primary purpose in this study was to investigate how three superintendents made sense of their role and how that personal theory defined their leadership practice. The overarching question in this exploratory study was: How school superintendents make sense of their role, and how that personal theory defined their practice?

The following subsidiary questions were posed to address this overarching question and guide the collection of data for this study.

1. How do superintendents think about their role, and to what extent does this personal theory affect their practice?

    a. What external organizational pressures (e.g., state and national policies, economics, shift in local governance, etc.) shape how superintendents define their role and practice?

    b. What internal organizational pressures (e.g., shift in demographics, unexpected crises, teacher contracts, etc.) shape how superintendents define their role and practice?

2. To what degree do alternative leadership theories (e.g., transformational leadership, change theories, distributive theories, etc.) explain how superintendents define their role and carry out their work?

3. What implications does an understanding of a superintendents' theory and practice have for the preparation of school superintendents?

Overview

Chapter I contained information to serve as a blueprint for this study. I presented the problem statement and how this study was conceptualized through Newton's law of centripetal force. I also explained the purpose and significance of the study, as well as the research questions that guided this investigation.

Chapter II is a review of literature on topics of concern in this study. Included are research and literature in three distinct areas: the superintendent, leadership and leadership roles, and organizational theory. Included is a summary of research on the superintendent and his or her changing leadership roles and how superintendents' theory and practice are influenced by the school organization.

The methodological approach and research design are explained in Chapter III. I discuss the data-collection process that was used in this study, as well as the triangulation of data-collection techniques. Last, I discuss possible ethical concerns and limitations of this study.

Chapter IV contains the stories of the superintendents who were the subject of the study. This chapter includes data that were collected in the field. An analytical discussion of the findings is presented in Chapter V along with conclusions drawn from the findings. The newly designed conceptual map is included in Chapter VI, as are implications for practice and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Numerous studies have been done on the superintendency (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Cuban, 1989; Glass, 1992; Hirsch & Sparks, 1991) and the role superintendents play in the success of their educational organizations. Although many researchers have addressed how superintendents lead their organizations, minimal consideration has been given to the influence that superintendents' theory and practice of leadership have on their environments and/or organizations. Today's superintendents need to find balance between and across diverse needs and expectations.

My primary purpose in this study was to investigate how three superintendents made sense of their role and how that personal theory defined their leadership practice. The extent to which superintendents adjust their practice to meet the needs of this changing system is also a concern of aspiring and practicing superintendents. In particular, being aware of certain reciprocal relationships and distributive practices of the position will help superintendents meet the needs of a changing system. To help in this endeavor, I reviewed research and literature in three distinct areas: the superintendency, leadership and leadership roles, and organizational theory. This chapter contains a summary of research on superintendents and their changing role, theories of leadership, and how superintendents' theory and practice are influenced by the school organization or environment.

The Superintendency

The role of the superintendent in American education has undergone significant changes throughout the last decade. These changes are a result of schools' transformation and the public's perception that education must be improved for all students. Historically, education was considered the path to a better society, and those who led the school system were revered. However, as Tyack and Cuban (1995) noted, public perception changed in the 1960s and reform reports such as *A Nation at Risk* were an attempt to demonstrate that schools were regressing, not progressing. This backlash of public scrutiny created new demands on the superintendent and the school organization as a whole. The superintendent was targeted as the locus, as the leader to change the system.

During this period of public disarray, superintendents tried to take a business approach to reconfiguring public education. Schools began to be more "businesslike," and the governance of education resembled the management of business (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). This business approach to education was beneficial in a financial sense, but it created a perception that schools were unfriendly, cold, and nonempathetic. Superintendents were desperate to change public perceptions and revive the "old" school structure, in which schools could be fiscally sound and still provide a warm, caring learning environment for students. It did not take long for superintendents to realize that they needed to change their leadership roles and reframe their thinking about leading and managing schools.

Today, the need to reframe the position of superintendent is more obvious than ever before due to several systemic changes in the school organization as well as changing state and federal mandates. Federal legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act has

mandated more changes in schools. Small districts do not have the resources needed to comply with this new legislation, so they have had to consolidate with larger districts.

This consolidation of schools has created a whole different set of issues for superintendents. Overcrowding, lack of resources and materials, busing, and lack of student services are just a few of the issues facing superintendents in consolidated school districts. In addition, there are new issues related to state and federal legislation, in terms of demonstrating that each student has shown a year of growth for a year of instruction. These rigorous mandates have resulted in policies that can be a superintendent's nightmare.

Further, changing socioeconomic circumstances of children and families have created a different set of issues for today's superintendents. Economic shortcomings have created several new concerns for students. In most communities, the divorce rate has risen along with poverty. The challenge of making adequate yearly progress (AYP) seems ever more daunting as differences in school subgroups (i.e., based on race, economic status, mobility, and limited English) become more evident. Superintendents must develop strategies to link teaching and learning to state and federal standards and benchmarks to meet the needs of this diverse population.

There has been a definite change in the position of superintendent because there has been an increase in the number of female superintendents. Leadership roles, philosophies, and various other characteristics differ significantly between male and female superintendents (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). Research on this topic has been ongoing. Similarities and differences that have emerged from research with respect to male and female superintendents are enlightening. Many researchers have argued that

women have a tendency to match their leadership role to the unique needs of a situation, and to do so more quickly than their male counterparts (McEwan, 2003). Others have contended that gender is not the issue, but rather a deeper understanding of what makes a quality leader is more important.

In this section I have indicated how the role of the superintendent has changed. In the next section I examine the challenges and dilemmas that the superintendent must face. Today's superintendent must be a change agent, one who must make reform happen. The superintendent must understand change and the effect it may or may not have on the growth of the organization. Understanding what is involved in making reform happen is the first step in the superintendent's becoming a change agent.

The Superintendent as Advocate for Change

Evaluation is the first step in becoming a change agent, and it is important for the educational leader or chief executive officer (CEO) of an organization to understand that change for the sake of changing can be disastrous. For change truly to occur, there must be a need for the change, as determined through an organizational assessment. Change is most effective when it meets the needs of the individuals and supports the goals of the organization (Rogers, 1983). Evaluation is critical to successful change occurring because it establishes that there is a need for change to occur.

An example of this evaluation phase can be found in the areas of teaching and learning. The superintendent must demonstrate to staff why changes are needed in the strategies used in classroom instruction, in order for teachers to change their current practices. State and federal mandates may convey the urgency to change,

11

but, until the staff see that need for change exists, it is unlikely that classroom instruction will change.

Once the need for change has been established, the next step is to identify the problem. More often than not, the problem can be found in the stakeholders or individuals within the organization. It is human beings' fundamental nature to resist change, even though humans are the most adaptable of all living creatures. Learning takes place through this resistance to change, and it is people's willingness to adapt that makes them more likely to embrace or accept change. Human beings learn to adapt to change by having a sense of purpose, a certainty of knowledge, and an understanding of the power of empathy (Marris, 1974). Through the identification of a problem, an individual and an organization can begin to create a plan for change that will allow for individual and organizational growth.

The next step in the change process is implementation. Many organizations, as well as individuals, are fearful of change and unwilling to take the risk. A critical component of successful implementation of change is determining whether the active stakeholders in the organization have a strong commitment to the organization's success. Each invested stakeholder in the organization must be an active participant throughout the implementation process. Change can be difficult; therefore, staff and community buy-in is essential throughout the process.

Several stakeholders are responsible for the implementation of change in an educational organization. The superintendent is a critical participant, but the teachers are the primary change agents. Fullan (1991) said that how teachers think and what they do are crucial in the educational change process. The superintendent must recognize this and work to create organizational buy-in at all levels. The superintendent must empower all of the organization's stakeholders so that the organization can move forward and meet the demands of a changing system.

Once a commitment has been established, a strong plan of action must be in place for reform to occur. An innovation or reform is communicated through certain channels

over time among members of a social system or organization (Rogers, 1983). Because change is complex, it takes time for true organizational and professional change to occur. It is vital that participants share information through all the channels and subgroups in the organization so time is not wasted. The rate at which an innovation travels depends on successful communication through the various channels. This rate may fluctuate, but if the innovation meets the needs of the individuals and the organization, it may travel more efficiently (Rogers, 1983). Tyack and Cuban (1995) noted that not all schools could change at the same rate. Change is an inside-out reform; a dynamic system will naturally transform, whereas a stagnant system will die.

If a system is to survive and thrive, the superintendent and organization participants must be knowledgeable about the reform or change initiative. Knowledge enables us to frame our understanding around a particular pedagogy, context, or content. This framing of knowledge will allow the superintendent the opportunity to understand a particular reform, such as teaching and learning, technology, or other change initiatives. This will, in turn, give power to the superintendent and other change agents of the organization.

Reflection is the last step in the change process; it is important to reflect on what has occurred so that the organization can continue to grow. In any organization, it is inevitable that change will occur. It is important to anticipate and monitor the change so that change can occur repeatedly (Johnson, 1996). The superintendent, a school leader, must understand these basic assumptions because they provide the framework for the change process. Once he or she understands the change process, the superintendent can make decisions that will support the organization.

Change takes time, and it is an on-going, cyclical process. Through careful evaluation of the organization, the superintendent can determine whether a need for change exists. Once this need is established, the identification process begins. Through this process, problems that may arise from the change may be addressed, and the organization can determine what particular change initiative would be most effective. Once this has been accomplished, implementation of the initiative begins. The last step is to reflect on and rejoice in the success of the process. If the superintendent or CEO understands how to apply this concept of change, "true" organizational change can occur.

It is apparent that making reform happen, changing teaching and learning practices, understanding change initiatives such as technology, and bringing about systemic change can be difficult for today's superintendent. Other outside forces such as a poor economy or state and federal mandates add to this difficulty. The superintendent must possess various leadership characteristics and skills to move the organization forward.

In light of the challenges and dilemmas facing them, superintendents must possess a variety of skills such as strong leadership, strong financial management, good public relations, solid pedagogy, and staff development, to name a few. Superintendents are generalists in a highly specific field, and individual superintendents may approach their organizations differently. The school environment more often than not will dictate the pace of the organization. The superintendent must use effective leadership skills, as well as manage the organization, in order to overcome challenges and dilemmas.

If superintendents are going to move their educational organizations forward and give direction to meet the challenges facing today's educators, they must create a culture

of change within their districts. Through forward-thinking leadership, superintendents can guide their school districts through quiescent and turbulent times alike.

Leadership and Leadership Roles

For years, theorists have hypothesized as to what makes an effective leader and what leadership means. Sergiovanni (1987, 1992) proposed one of the earliest models of leadership, and he took many generic models to the next level. His five leadership forces were not unique to schools; he believed they would be present wherever strong leadership existed. Bennis and Nanus (1985) had their own version of leadership. They suggested that superintendents are more than just managers who do things right; they are also leaders who work to do the right thing. Current researchers have classified leadership into several categories that have similar characteristics.

Johnson (1996) defined leaders as individuals who use educational leadership where they create a vision, lead reform, and engage the stakeholders; or political leadership where they know and understand the political levels, tensions, and networks that make up the system; or managerial leadership where they manage the organization versus leading the organization. Each of these roles can be used in various situations, and an effective leader will reframe a particular role to meet the needs of the organization.

There have been numerous classical studies and contingency theories of leadership, and they all have direct implications for how a superintendent leads the organization and its stakeholders. Fiedler (1967) spent two decades developing his contingency theory. He noted that effective leadership is contingent on the leader's ability to control and influence a situation. This is different from Tannenbaum and

Schmidt's (1973) boss-centered versus subordinate-centered leadership or Blake and Mouton's (1985) managerial grid. Recently, research in leadership has continued to evolve into instructional leadership (McEwan, 2003) and engaged leadership (Benham, 2002), in which emphasis is placed on capacity building and engagement.

So how do we make sense of these leadership roles in the context of the organization? The first step is to understand the role the superintendent plays in the organization, as well as the challenges that he or she may face in the position.

Today, explicit external forces are demanding specific student outcomes. Clearly, many of the pressures the superintendent confronts are a result of these external forces. These forces come in the form of specific policies from outside interest groups, increasing state and federal mandates, and social and economic concerns, to name a few. Finding a way to manage these forces and align the efforts between the school and community can be one of the superintendent's greatest challenges.

Amid the plethora of pressures, the school executive must empower all of the organization's stakeholders (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). If the educational organization is to be successful, the stakeholders must be active participants in the decision-making process. The superintendent's ability to lead and empower the stakeholders is critical to the overall process. Mutual trust must exist among all interested parties for true change to be achieved (Carter & Cunningham, 1997).

Although the superintendent must face many challenges and obstacles in the quest for better schools, it is important to remember that the superintendent also must be an active political leader in the community. Politics is the backbone of today's superintendent, and to be successful he or she must understand the importance of the

political scenario surrounding the superintendency (Johnson, 1996). Success in politics requires that the superintendent understand the existing network, the culture of the school and community, and the political powerhouses that are evident. The superintendent must negotiate these interest groups and work to build collegiality and consensus. A school's executive leader will be unable to pass any change initiatives if he or she does not have control of the political community (Bolman & Deal, 2002). If the political community is ignored or cast aside, the superintendent will more than likely be disregarded as a school leader as well.

Now the question becomes how does the superintendent overcome these obstacles and what leadership characteristics are more prevalent? The first step to a deeper understanding, as discussed in the preceding section, is defining the superintendent's role as well as the obstacles that exist. The next step is learning from leaders in similar positions to draw from their success and what elements are present in an effective leader. Being the CEO of a multi-million-dollar company and being a school superintendent have many similarities. The same key elements that make someone successful in business can also make a person a successful superintendent.

Like the superintendent, today's CEO is leading a workforce that has been compelled to deal with both rapid change and heightened expectations. Global competition, a changing economy, and a shortage of qualified employees are just a few of the obstacles facing today's business executive. In many instances, the CEO has little or no control of these obstacles, and he or she must work to overcome them in order to survive. Both the CEO and the superintendent can overcome such obstacles by possessing strong leadership skills.

The primary role of the CEO of any company, school, or organization is to lead. An executive has to lead by managing and manage by leading, which in essence means that leadership is good management (Johnson, 1996). Therefore, leadership is "an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes" (Rost, 1991, p. 102). According to this definition, four elements must be in place for effective leadership to exist: There must be a relationship based on influence, the relationship must consist of both leaders and followers, the leaders and followers intend for real change to occur, and the leaders and followers have developed a mutual purpose (Rost, 1991). The CEO and the superintendent must recognize and understand these elements to be effective leaders.

Scholars and researchers are able to determine whether leadership is extant, based on whether these four elements are present. Understanding these elements of leadership is essential when attempting to gain insight into the superintendent as an educational leader. Like the CEO, the superintendent will use influence to be a successful leader. A leader must have the power to persuade other individuals in an organization. This influential relationship of leadership can be multidirectional in that it involves interactions that are vertical, horizontal, diagonal, and circular within the organization (Rost, 1991). The superintendent may have built a relationship among staff, support staff, board members, community, and professional colleagues. This may or may not be typical in a multi-million-dollar business or in a large urban school district. How the CEO and the superintendent use their influence to build relationships will depend on the setting.

Typically, the influential relationship should be noncoercive in nature. If the behaviors are coercive, the relationship becomes authoritative and dictatorial. Many

superintendents and CEOs operate in such a way, but this usually leads to lack of ownership and dissension within the organization. Superintendents and CEOs who engender multidirectional and noncoercive relationships create a positive environment in which change initiatives or other innovations can be implemented.

As Rost's definition suggests, leaders and followers intend for real changes to take place. This implies that a type of transformational leadership exists, in which the leader must use various practices of leadership in order for real change to occur. Real change in the organization can be accomplished when the superintendent or CEO works through the challenge or dilemma and moves individuals and the organization to a new level. Researchers continue to argue about whether real change is ever achieved because its definition is so vague. The general consensus is that real change can occur only when the leader and the stakeholders seriously intend for change to occur and their efforts are aligned with this intention.

The last trait that is present in effective leaders is the ability to develop mutual purposes with the organization's stakeholders. Purpose is broad, holistic, and integrated; it is what people generally term a vision or mission. Without a strong purpose, organizations and leaders may find themselves drifting aimlessly. The leader, in conjunction with the stakeholders, must create a purpose or vision of the organization. This purpose or vision will allow the CEO or superintendent to sift through various initiatives and make informed, purposeful decisions for the organization and its intended goals.

The CEOs in today's organizations are facing new challenges. If they are to survive in this chaotic environment, they must possess the tools to lead effectively,

regardless of how fast the world around them is changing. By attending to a broader moral purpose, cultivating collegial relationships, sharing knowledge, and setting a vision and context for creating coherence in organizations, leaders will be able to deal with complex change (Fullan, 2001). They will be exceptional leaders who consistently empower their followers to work while adjusting to an environment of constant change. The leader's ability to lead the organization in responding to changes, without a knee-jerk reaction to those changes, will be critical to the success of any organization.

The success of the educational organization may very well depend as much on the survival of the superintendent as it does on his or her ability to be an effective educational leader (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). For decades, researchers have been attempting to define leadership, but what is more difficult is discovering how to create or produce leaders. What makes individuals highly effective as leaders in some settings, whereas in other settings they are less successful? Contemporary researchers have suggested that it is more constructive to study what leaders do, rather than to focus on specific leadership traits (McEwan, 2003).

Much like contemporary researchers, McCabe et al. (2005) focused on how a superintendent begins to adjust and fit into the organization, where organizational fit can be achieved by gaining a deeper understanding of leadership and organizational behavior. These authors proposed that a leader could be defined metaphorically as a prophet, a poet, a coach, or a therapist. They then divided these metaphors into four quadrants that further define the leadership of a superintendent. Table 2.1 illustrates how superintendents are defined and how they are categorized by their ability to adjust leadership to meet a changing organization.

Table 2.1 Metaphors of Leadership

Metaphor	Level of Change Needed in the Organization	Definition
Prophet	Major change is needed in the organization.	A prophet is a leader who is confident in how to bring about major change. He has a plan, and a superintendent who leads as a prophet must know and understand the organization so he can adjust the existing perceptions to meet the challenges presented.
Therapist	Major change is needed in the organization.	The therapist has no idea how to accomplish the task at hand. The therapist knows there is a problem listens to it, and then tries to say encouraging words to help those involved.
Coach	Minor change is needed in the organization.	A superintendent is considered a coach when minimal changes are required and he knows what must be done to achieve success. In this type of single-loop work, the superintendent can coach his people through what needs to be accomplished.
Poet	Minor change is needed in the organization.	The poet is a type of leader who finds himself in a situation where minimal changes must occur, and yet he is unsure how to make those changes. The poet sings the song of the organization.

The metaphors shown in Table 2.1 help explain how a superintendent may be perceived in the organization and how he may act out a metaphor for leadership, but they are not all encompassing. McCabe et al.'s definition of leadership through the use of

21

metaphors and quadrants, makes it seem (gives the appearance) that leadership is very structured, either black or white. This type of thinking contradicts that of other theorists who have hypothesized for years that leaders can be classified into several categories having similar characteristics. One concept that bridges the gap between new research and classical studies is that the superintendent should be able to adjust to each particular challenge, forcing leadership alignment to meet the needs of the organization and the various stakeholders.

As previously suggested, organizational fit can be achieved by gaining a deeper understanding of leadership and organizational behavior. By expanding on leadership and developing an organizational framework, the superintendent may better understand the notion of organizational fit. Bolman and Deal (1991) suggested that there are four frameworks of leadership: the structural, the political, the human resource, and the symbolic frameworks. The circumstances in which the superintendent is situated will dictate what approach(es) is appropriate. In many cases, "effective leaders may use a number of these approaches at the same time" (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 1). Each of these organizational frameworks is defined in Table 2.2.

Table. 2.2 Frameworks of Leadership

Structural Framework	Human Resource Framework
The manager of this framework tries to implement a process that is appropriate for the circumstance. They work to clarify goals of the organization, manage the internal and external environment, and clarify lines of authority. This type of framework is used when there is minimal conflict, low ambiguity, and a stable legitimate authority in the organization.	This leader views people as the most important aspect of the organization. The human resource leader will work to gain commitment and loyalty from the stakeholders and he works to empower people to be active participants in the organization. This framework is appropriate when employee moral is low or high and there is relatively low conflict.
Political Framework	Symbolic Framework
This leader understands the politics of the organization and he has a plan to deal with it. He understands the interest groups, as well as their separate agendas and he works to build ties to these groups. Conflict is managed as the leader builds power and he works to find commonalities among groups.	This leader view vision and inspiration critical; people need something to believe in. Symbolism is important when communicating the mission. The focus is on the common vision and culture of the organization.

Source: Bolman and Deal (1991).

There are commonalities between the four metaphors and the four frameworks of leadership. It is obvious that many of the characteristics that define a prophet, a poet, a coach, and a therapist can also be linked to these frameworks. Although they are not exclusive of one another, they do provide another perspective on the complicated issues of leadership and organizational behavior. I created the matrix shown in Table 2.3 to show that how the superintendent positions himself within the framework can enhance or hinder his efforts to achieve organizational fit.

Table 2.3 Matrix of Organizational Fit

	Structural Framework	Human Resource	Political Framework	Symbolic Framework
Prophet	"FIT" A prophet can fit in this framework because both have a plan or process that is appropriate for the circumstance. Both have stable legitimate authority. Unlike the structural leader, the prophet is usually associated with organizations where major change is needed.	"FIT" The prophet is able to fit in this framework because both view people as an important aspect of the organization. The prophet and the human resource leader work to empower people to be active participants. Unlike the HR leader, the prophet is usually associated with organizations where major change is needed.	"FIT" The prophet is very similar to the political leader because each understands the politics of the organization and has a plan to deal with it. Conflict is managed as the leader builds power. Major change is usually needed, which is what makes these two so similar.	"FIT" The prophet is able to fit in this framework because this type of leader is energetic, highly visible, and believes people need something to believe in. The prophet, much like the symbolic leader, views vision and inspiration as critical; as well as the culture of the organization.
Therapist	"NON-FIT" The therapist would not function in this framework. Unlike the structural leader, the therapist does not have a plan or process.	"FIT" A therapist could function in the HR framework because he views people as an important aspect. The therapist will also encourage people to be active participants, but he will offer no direction.	"NON-FIT" The therapist would not function in the political framework because he has no plan to deal with conflict. While both leaders find themselves in a situation where major change is needed, the therapist does not have any clear direction.	"NON-FIT" The therapist would not fit in this framework as he lacks vision and inspiration. He can listen to the stakeholders, but he would not develop a common vision or nurture the existing culture to move the organization forward.
Coach	"FIT" The coach would fit in this framework and he has a plan of action that is appropriate for the situation. There is minimal conflict, which the coach prefers, and he has established legitimate authority in the organization.	"FIT" The coach would thrive in the HR framework as people are the heart of the organization. Since the coach is a motivator, he would work to empower people to be active participants, much like the HR leader.	"NON-FIT" It is unlikely that the coach would fit in this framework. He has a plan and direction to deal with conflict. However, he is most successful when there is minimal change needed, unlike the political leader.	"FIT" The coach would be most successful in this framework as he views vision and inspiration as critical components. Like the symbolic leader, the coach is energetic, highly visible, and they rely on traditions.

Table 2.3 Matrix of Organizational Fit

	Structural Framework	Human Resource	Political Framework	Symbolic Framework
Poet Poet	"NON-FIT" The poet would not fit in this framework because he lacks structure and direction. The poet does not have a "NON-FIT" plan of action. The only similarity between the poet and the structural leader is that both function where minimal change is needed.	"FIT" The poet could fit in this framework because people are a priority. The poet sings the song of the organization, much like the HR "FIT" leader. However, the poet lacks direction and he does not work to empower people to be active participants.	"NON-FIT" The poet would not survive in this type of framework as he does not handle conflict. He also does not have the skills to build "NON-FIT" power within the organization. The political leader would dominate the poet in this type of setting.	"NON-FIT" The poet could not fit within this framework. While we think of poetry as being symbolic, the poet has no vision for people "NON-FIT" to believe in. It is unlikely that he would be able to use poetry to communicate the vision of the organization.

McCabe et al. (2005) also proposed several metaphors of leadership, called the "commonplaces of leadership" (p.13). They believed that a superintendent must possess particular skills in order to be successful and ultimately establish his position as the superintendent. These commonplaces of leadership grew out of a major study the authors carried out over 10 years, encompassing various leaders from around the world. McCabe et al. (2005) learned that "there are seven issues rapidly becoming the 'commonplaces' of the world of the modern school superintendent" (p. 14). They are as follows: the superintendent must lead, he must lead within a governance structure, he must understand standards and assessment, he must understand race and class, he must develop school principals, he must learn to collaborate, and he must engage the community.

Developing and understanding these commonplaces of leadership gives shape and meaning to the superintendent's practice of leadership. The superintendent may need to

learn to prioritize these commonplaces to meet his needs as well as the needs of the
organization. The seven commonplaces of leadership are described in Table 2.4:

Table 2.4 The Seven Commonplaces of Leadership

The Superintendent Must Lead	Leading, in this particular instance, means that the superintendent understands the existing governance system. How the superintendent is able to maneuver within this system, which may include union and board issues, may or may not add to his success as a leader.
Lead Within A Governance Structure	The superintendent has many responsibilities and serves in many roles. In these roles, he is subject to second-guessing by internal and external sources. The superintendent must find a way to work with the board and unions.
Understand Standards and Assessment	The superintendent must have an expert grasp of what is required from federal and state officials in terms of standards and assessments. He must constantly look for ways to boost student achievement.
Understand Race and Class	The superintendent must set out to close the achievement gap. It is challenging, therefore it is important to elicit conversations and advice from others.
Develop School Principals	With the dawn of site-based management, many superintendents developed the ability to shift some power to the school principals. The superintendent will succeed or fail based on the quality of leaders in schools.
Learn to Collaborate	Collaboration implies that superintendents must work with other agencies to ensure that children receive the services they need. This can include collaboration among school personnel, board members, community members, other superintendents, and outside agencies.
Engage Your Community	The superintendent must develop a shared vision between the school and the community to achieve the desired results. The superintendent must create and foster relationships with the board and community.

Source: McCabe et al. (2005).

The last component focuses on power and authority and how the superintendent

can use this to gain organizational fit. The classic definition of power (Webster, 2002) is

the ability to get others to do what one wants them to do. Therefore, a superintendent may

use his leadership tactics to employ power and authority in the school organization. The superintendent may work to build a formal authority relationship with the organization, but this exercise of authority should not be mistaken for coercion. "Authority exists when a common set of beliefs in a school legitimizes the use of power as "right and proper" (Hoy & Miskel, 2004, p. 204). Researchers have since built on this concept to define types of authority. Because a superintendent is the leader in a formal organization, it seems appropriate to use Weber's (1938) research on three types of authority: charismatic, traditional, and legal.

A superintendent who is an exceptional leader with exemplary qualities can be said to have charismatic authority. Trust is the foundation for charismatic authority, and a charismatic leader has strong personal qualities and characteristics that appeal to the stakeholders of the organization. There is a deep commitment on the part of the organization to follow the directives of a charismatic leader. Charismatic authority suggests that an organization follows the superintendent because he has a personal "mystique" about him. This type of authority is very different from traditional and legal authority.

Traditional authority suggests that there is an established belief in authority carrying over from the past. For instance, the position of superintendent carries a certain authority from the past. The person who occupies this position will inherit the obedience and loyalty of the stakeholders. How long that inherited power lasts will depend on the stakeholders of the organization and will vary from one place to the next. The superintendent will use this position of power to gain organizational fit, and it is imperative that he does not abuse the power entrusted to him by the organization.

Legal authority is an integral part of the school organization. A superintendent uses this form of authority when dealing with compliance issues, special education laws, and so on. In legal authority, power is gained through the laws governing the organization. Obedience is not owed, but rather the laws specify to whom and how the organization must comply. In schools, legal authority helps govern the organization, and the superintendent must ensure that the organization adheres to all laws and compliance issues.

"Organizations are created and controlled by legitimate authorities, who set goals, design structures, hire and manage employees, and monitor activities to ensure behavior is consistent with the goals and objectives of the organization" (Hoy & Miskel, 2005, p. 202). The superintendent can use his positional power to gain legitimate authority in the organization. This positioning will ultimately assist the superintendent in gaining organizational fit, as it will help define the superintendent's practice of leadership.

To understand the superintendent's changing role and responsibilities, we should not only discuss his or her leadership disposition, but we must also look at the context of the school organization. Through this exploration, we will gain a better understanding of whether the superintendent's leadership disposition is dependent on the environment.

Organizational Theory

For superintendents to make sense of leadership, not only must they possess the necessary tools, but they must also have a clear understanding of their organizations. Organizations have been defined as distinctive social units that consist of a set of understandings for organizing action, languages, and other symbolic methods for

expressing common understandings (Louis, 1992). There is a phenomenon that surrounds organizations, as they are implementing programs of action that involve a substantial amount of planning. Organizations are considered formal or informal, so they may be distinguished from other forms of social units (Bittner, 1965).

A formal organization is one in which patterns of conduct and relations are accounted for and defined. If an organization does not support the growth of new patterns and relations, it would be considered an informal structure (Bittner, 1965). Schools would be considered formal organizations because the process by which they function and relate has a significant influence on their growth.

Most superintendents create images about the nature of the organization in which they are situated. As with leadership, metaphors and images help us view the same situation or organization through different lenses. Morgan (1998) proposed several metaphors that may help a superintendent to understand his organization. The images of the organization that we create are not mutually exclusive. In fact, an organization may have a dominant metaphor, but there may also be secondary metaphors that describe the organization. The metaphors reflect the organization a superintendent leads; therefore, they may be very complex.

Morgan (1998) suggested that an organization operates in the following ways: as a machine, an organism, a brain, a culture, a political entity, a psychic prison, flux and transformation, and an instrument of domination. These metaphors are described in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5: Morgan's Metaphors of an Organization

Machine	The organization is made up of interlocking parts that must work together smoothly.
Organism	The needs of the organization are emphasized with considerations of how organizations grow, develop, and adapt.
Brain	The organization emphasizes information processing, intelligence, learning, and the development of learning organizations.
Cultures	The organization emphasizes values, beliefs, norms, rituals, and patterns of shared meaning.
Political Entities	The organization is considered a system of governance where politics, power relationships, and conflict tell the story.
Psychic Prisons	The organization consists of people who are trapped in theory own beliefs and the nature and shape of their organization.
Flux and Transformation	In this organization, order can emerge from disorder in complex and chaotic systems.
Instruments of Domination	This emphasizes the exploitative aspects of some elements in organizational life.

Source: Morgan (1998).

In light of what we know about leadership and the types of organizations that exist, we can make some assumptions as to how the superintendent thinks about his role and the effect this personal theory has on his practice of leadership. For instance, if a superintendent were acting as a prophet when major change needed to occur in the organization, he would need to know whether the organization was acting as a machine. The proposed change would be met with resistance because it would upset how the machine operated. In contrast, if the superintendent knew the organization was a machine, he would focus his attention on reframing how the organization members thought about themselves before he implemented a change or restructuring initiative. A superintendent will act in different ways, depending on his metaphor of leadership and

his organization. McCabe et al. (2005) illustrated how a superintendent may act out his,

as shown in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6: Acting Out One's Metaphor

The Image	What It Looks Like in Your District	How You Act
Machine	Detailed rules and regulations govern school operation and curriculum; hierarchical reporting structures; emphasis on control, accountability, and uniform outcomes; separation of planning and design of teaching from classroom delivery.	You are either a mechanic or an organization man or woman. You supervise, monitor, oversee, and enforce rules; you see individuals as replaceable; you subordinate individual interests to organizational goals; you focus on uniform "products."
Political System	Competing interests in school and community dominant decision-making; interests, conflicts, and power continuously assessed; power relationships always under consideration.	You are a politician. You build coalitions among stakeholders to support schools; you use formal power of position to structure agenda; you think that knowledge is power and use information.
Psychic Prison	District is trapped in old ways of thinking; blind spots obscure new ideas and pedagogies; district unable to think past current school structures.	You bully people. You use rules to reinforce the status quo; to you, boundaries are a big deal. You encourage "groupthink" so that the district fails to see other options.
Instrument of Domination	Inequality in educational opportunities and resources among schools and students is taken for granted. School sites are "battlegrounds" rather than teams or collaboratives. Labor-management strife is rampant, and educators' work is "deskilled" or made teacher proof.	You dominate people. You believe in managerially rational decisions without concern for unintended consequences; you reproduce privilege and advantage of certain groups; and you emphasize organizational efficiency and effectiveness at expense of individual needs of students and teachers.
Culture	Schools may be defined by social processes, images, and symbols, and rituals. Or evidence of the competitive spirit of American society may be reflected in schools, which are encouraged to be different or to compete with each other for resources.	You are the superintendent as bard. You lead by developing shared meaning. You shape stories legends, and myths to create culture. You encourage organizational change through cultural change, and you tend to worry about symbolic significance of every aspect of schools.
Organism	Schools and their environment are viewed mutually dependent and interactive. The district seeks alignment of interrelated	You are a gardener. You scan the environment for changing conditions. You worry about the "fit" between the schools you

31

Table 2.6: Acting Out One's Metaphor

The Image	What It Looks Like in Your District	How You Act
Organism	subsystems and collaboration with other community interests.	lead and your community.
Brain	Intelligence and control are distributed throughout the system. Flexible, resilient, and inventive systems valued. An integrated information web exists across schools so that leadership can be diffused; schools are guided by core values that shape behaviors.	You are a teacher, learner, and problem solver. Through inquiry, you encourage a "learning to learn" orientation in schools. You engage in double-loop learning-questioning assumptions and appropriateness of existing norms. You imagine and anticipate new futures, and you uncover forces/structures beneath recurring problems.
Flux and Transformation	Educational chaos theory is at work. Schools self-create and self-renew from chaos. Small changes can lead to massive system change; meaning and purpose serve as primary points of reference; the key role of relationships and participation in creating the reality of schools is emphasized.	You organize anarchy. You shape and create new contexts to encourage self-organization. You use minimum specifications to create contexts. You nurture emerging context for change rather than controlling change, and you direct attention to attractors that pull systems into new forms rather than directing attention to how to resist change. You highlight the tensions between reality and aspirations.

Source: McCabe et al. 2005, p. 24.

Max Weber and Philip Selznick expanded on this organizational theory, contending that the organization is constantly influenced by outside variables and that the system must be adaptive in nature. The organization is a bureaucracy that continues to expand when outside influences compound. As government, special-interest groups, and unions influence educational organizations, they must adapt and expand their bureaucracy in order to accommodate these outside influences (Scott, 1992).

Although educational organizations are susceptible to increased bureaucracy, they are still viewed as open systems. In an open system, the organization not only engages in conversations with outside influences, but it also considers these influences to be a viable aspect of its growth. The organization is also a system of interacting components that

have relationships with each other. How these parts are composed will vary, but in terms of an educational organization, the parts are loosely coupled (Scott, 1992). This means the components within the organization are less constrained, so more flexibility can occur, which in turn can lead to greater productivity.

Educational organizations are also considered hierarchical systems due to the various levels and departmentalization within the organizational structure. This, combined with the philosophy of loosely coupled systems, demonstrates that the connections and interdependencies among the components of the organization are likely to be tighter than those between individual components (Scott, 1992). The superintendent must understand these systems as well as the subsystems that exist in order to meet the needs of the organization.

It is the superintendent's and CEO's responsibility to recognize and assess the power structure of the community and any other outside influences. According to Lutz and Merz (1992), there are basically three types of communities that the superintendent must be able to assess and identify. The first is a traditional community, in which there are several powerful people who are relatively invisible. If the superintendent is to have the community's support, he or she must locate and determine who these powerful individuals are and open the lines of communication with them. The superintendent can accomplish this task by embedding himself or herself in the community through affiliations with service clubs, churches, and other civic organizations (Lutz & Merz, 1992). Visibility within the community and the organization will help the superintendent build credibility. Credibility, in turn, will help alleviate any stereotypes associated with the superintendency.

The second type of community with which a superintendent may be associated is the changing community. This community is in a transitional period, in which many new families and members are entering the community. The superintendent must serve as the welcoming committee and build a relationship with these families early on. The superintendent can develop long-lasting relationships if he or she takes the initiative at the beginning. These relationships will be instrumental in the success of the superintendent and any change initiatives that may be implemented.

The last type of community is composed of special-interest groups. Such a community may be difficult for the superintendent to identify. The special-interest groups are political in nature and give little thought to the needs of other groups within the community. This can put increased pressure on schools and administrators as they sift through the demands and proposals from these outside groups. The superintendent will need training in conflict-management techniques to reduce the political tensions and ensure that his or her school agenda is implemented.

Once the superintendent understands the organization and the community in which it resides, the next step is to gain insight into the culture of the organization. The leader must be able to identify the culture and the relationships that exist within the organization. It is important to understand these relationships due to increased turnover rates in education. Many superintendents, principals, and teachers have short-term careers in education as a result of increased pressures. Understanding the culture of the environment will determine whether the organization is able to handle change and other innovations.

The culture of the organization is characterized by the relationships that exist within the organization. In general, people want to be stakeholders in the organization because they need to be a part of the larger whole. As Perrow (1979) suggested with self-efficacy, people want a connection to the organization so they can feel like valued members with a greater purpose in mind. This holds true in business as well as in education. The challenge is ensuring that each member is connected and identifying and reconnecting those who are disconnected. If the organization works as a cultural unit, it is more likely to be able to withstand outside influences.

As the organizational leader, the superintendent or CEO must be interconnected to these relationships as the organizational leader. This connection will allow the superintendent to determine what initiatives may affect the underlying concerns of the community and meet the needs of the organization. The superintendent should not provide solutions to every issue, but rather should serve as a facilitator when conflicting points of views are addressed in the best interest of the school and the community (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). Conflicting viewpoints and differences do not disappear; rather, they become embedded in the culture. If these viewpoints are not addressed properly, they may erupt. This eruption could send the organization into a tailspin, disrupting leadership and all other functions within the organization.

Last, many researchers have cautioned superintendents and the CEOs against believing that relationships are ends in themselves. Relationships are powerful, but they can also be powerfully wrong (Fullan, 2001). Any group within the organization can have a relationship with the superintendent, but how this relationship is used to enhance and implement the vision or purpose of the organization is critical to the sustainability of the

organization. People in these relationships must work together to establish greater program continuity within the organization while serving as facilitators for change.

Conclusions

Researchers in the field of educational leadership have characterized the school superintendent as a public leader. Although this characterization may be warranted, the role the superintendent plays in today's schools is much more complex than that. The superintendent must learn to survive in a politicized and conflictive job. The success and prosperity of American education may well depend as much on the superintendent's ability to make decisions as it does on his or her ability to lead effectively.

Researchers in organizational leadership have not provided an outline to demonstrate what leadership practice may be best suited for the challenges facing today's superintendent. The superintendency has been transformed throughout the last decade, and this transformation has had a significant influence on how today's educational leaders guide their organizations through the 21st century. Before superintendents can lead their organizations, they need to understand the roles they are expected to perform, the leadership role most suited to addressing internal and external pressures, and the condition of the organization. Superintendents have the power to make significant contributions to the prosperity of the organization. To do so, they must be skilled change agents and leaders who are proficient in the dynamics of the organization. The superintendent's leadership role should unite the public and all levels of the educational organization so that students and the community can prosper. The superintendent's ability

to create this united front will have a significant influence on his or her ability to meet and exceed the challenges of the superintendency.

Researchers have noted that there has been a significant shift in role of superintendents from education spokespersons and managers (Goldhammer, 1967) to negotiators and conflict managers (Fullan, 1991). The literature does not indicate how superintendents have been redefining their roles and responsibilities during turbulent times. Hence, my purpose in this study was to investigate how superintendents made sense of their role and how that personal theory defined their practice. By examining selected superintendents' leadership roles and practices, I intended to uncover the influence that organizational sensemaking (Weick, 1995) has on leaders' ability to lead. Are a superintendent's theory and practice of leadership influenced by internal and external organizational pressures?

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

My primary purpose in this study was to investigate how three superintendents made sense of their role and how that personal theory defined their leadership practice. Through an examination of superintendents' leadership roles, I sought to discover how the increasing challenges facing today's superintendents induced changes in their practice. In this chapter I describe the methodology that was used in studying superintendents' leadership roles. I also describe the participants, the data-collection tools, the data-analysis method, and limitations of the study.

Methodological Approach

This study was undertaken to gain an understanding of superintendents' leadership through a research design that was interpretive, evolving, and holistic in nature. Marshall and Rossman (1999) suggested that qualitative research is a "broad approach to the study of social phenomena" (p. 2). This type of approach corresponds with the purpose of this study; therefore, a qualitative methodology was appropriate. I hoped to learn from the leadership experiences of school superintendents and to provide a narrative analysis of those experiences. Although I used theories of school leadership, change, and organizations to provide a framework for this study, I also used an inductive process in analyzing and presenting the stories of the superintendents.

This study blends specific elements of biographical, phenomenological, and case study approaches of qualitative research. Narration was the main component of the biographical approach that was used in this study. The elucidation of the participants' stories helped reveal common themes and messages. The phenomenological approach was used to describe "the meaning of lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or phenomenon" (Creswell, 1998, p. 51). In this study I used several elements associated with phenomenological studies as I explored the experiences of three school superintendents and the influence the environment had on their leadership roles (phenomena). These experiences are presented in a narrative that will tell the story of each superintendent. I also explored how the superintendents reacted to the environment and what changes, if any, had emerged in their practice. I proposed a visual picture or conceptual map; however, because qualitative research is not static, this picture evolved throughout the course of the study.

In this study I relied heavily on the case study approach to qualitative research, in particular a comparative case study analysis. Case studies incorporate a variety of disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, and educational psychology (Merriam, 1988). I used a comparative case study format in this research because it allowed me to make comparisons across environments in order to determine whether superintendents' environments induced changes in their practice.

Because the focus of this study was to investigate how superintendents made sense of their role and how that personal theory defined their practice, this type of approach enabled me to understand leadership roles of superintendents with varying organizational demographics. A case study allows the researcher to explore a

phenomenon bounded by time and then to collect detailed data involving multiple sources of information (Creswell, 1998). In keeping with a comparative case study approach, this study involved three superintendents and multiple sources of information such as interviews, observations, and documents. I also conducted interviews with each superintendent's professional community.

The three school districts I selected provided different perspectives on leadership. The literature review indicated that environmental variations can influence the challenges and issues facing superintendents. Because I was interested in how these challenges or changes in the environment influenced the theory and practice of superintendents, it was important to recognize these variances in the sample population.

The case studies were drawn from observations, interviews, documents, and reports. Once I collected the data, I used a holistic analysis to view the entire case. Through this data-collection process, I was able to develop a detailed description or narration of each case; this is considered a within-case analysis. Within-case analysis was followed by a cross-case analysis of the three cases (Creswell, 1998). Once these analyses were complete, "lessons learned" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) emerged from the study.

Sample Selection

I used purposeful sampling to obtain three districts that had limited environmental variances. Sample selection also hinged on district location and proximity to me, or what Rudestam and Newton (2001) designated a sample of convenience. Because I was

employed full time at the time of the study, the districts needed to be close to my work and home so that I could complete a thorough investigation.

I began the process of sample selection with an informal conversation with my current superintendent. I outlined the purpose of my study, and he suggested two superintendents located in Hummingbird County (a pseudonym), where I was employed. The third superintendent was chosen because the district was close to my home. Each of these superintendents' districts had environmental variances, and there were variances between the individual superintendents. I believe that each organization is a bureaucracy, in which various internal and external pressures can have a negative or positive influence on the superintendent's theory and practice of leadership. Once I determined which superintendents were best suited for the study and this sample of convenience, I phoned each of them to ascertain their willingness to participate in the study. Because I already had a connection with each of the chosen districts, I was able to gain access and build relationships with the superintendents, which enhanced the quality of the data as well as the credibility of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). I had extensive opportunities to observe the superintendents in their leadership roles.

I also wanted to interview various professional community members around the superintendent, so I also obtained permission to use this group from the superintendent and the individual professional community members. I interviewed three to five of the following professional community members: board officer, board trustee, school administrator, local union president, parent teacher organization member, secretary, department head, or community leader.

Once I determined which professional community members were to be interviewed, I sent them a letter of consent (see Appendix A). Because the superintendents had already agreed to participate in this study, I also sent a letter of consent (see Appendix A) to each of them. To maintain the anonymity of all participants, I assigned pseudonyms to each of the three superintendents and professional community participants. Participants were assured that their identities and those of their districts would not be revealed. I also used pseudonyms also when referring to other stakeholders in the superintendents' districts. Table 3.1 provides a description of the superintendents and their districts.

Table 3.1 Characteristics of Sample

Characteristics of Superintendent and District	Mr. Goldfinch Arborville Community Schools	Dr. Kingfisher Bakersville Community Schools	Dr. Owl Collinsville Public Schools
District size	817 students, 40 staff members, and 2 buildings	2,240 students, 120 staff members, and 4 buildings	2,029 students, 140 staff members, and 6 buildings
Operating budget	$5 million	$15 million	$18 million
Per pupil spending	$6,781	$6,945	$7,361
% of students transported	65%	40%	65%
Years of service	Seven years	Thirty-two years	Twenty-three years
Educational level of superintendent	MA + 20	Ph.D. in educational administration	Ph.D. in educational administration
Superintendent salary	$73,000	$120,000	$117,000
Community demographics	Small, rural agricultural community	Fringe of urban city; bedroom community	Major railway system, located on fringe of urban community; most citizens commute

Data Collection

I used three methods to collect the data for this study: on-site interviews, observations, and document analysis. In the following paragraphs, I describe each method and provide a rational for choosing of each one.

On-Site Interviews

The interview technique is an effective method of data collection in qualitative studies. It allows the researcher to create probing questions to answer the research questions posed in the study. I conducted three on-site, one-on-one interviews with each superintendent in this study. I also conducted one on-site, one-on-one interview with three to five professional community members. Patton (1990) stated, "The quality of the information obtained during an interview is largely dependent on the interviewer" (p. 279). The quality of the information gleaned from the interview also will depend on whether the interviewee is articulate or shy (Creswell, 1998); therefore it is important to determine whether a one-on-one interview is the most appropriate for a particular study.

Another issue I needed to consider when deciding whether to use this technique was the accessibility of the superintendents and professional community members. The superintendents were obviously in positions of control and power within the organization, so time constraints had to be considered (Odendahl & Shaw, 1997). The environment in which the interviews would take place had to be considered; because it was likely these interviews would take place in the school environment. Such an environment might present distractions, in that the superintendent or professional community members might have needed to address any problems that arose.

It is important to devise substantive questions for the interview, and the interviewer must maintain a certain level of detachment to ensure that personal biases are kept to a minimum. The interview protocol (see Appendix B) consisted of questions from a previous study I had conducted, as well as from two other protocols. I received permission to use questions from the other protocols through written correspondence.

Each superintendent participated in three interviews. The first interview lasted about an hour and a half. This interview consisted of questions that probed the superintendent's thinking about his own theory and practice of leadership. Before the first interview, I sent each superintendent a Professional Critical Incident Map (see Appendix B) and asked them to identify three to five ideas in response to the question: As a school superintendent, what are the right things to do? They provided examples that supported how they were doing the right thing. I also asked the superintendents to talk about each of their critical points. I probed their stories for elements of thinking, action, and outcome.

The second interview was approximately 45 minutes long. I asked superintendents to bring three artifacts that exemplify what it means to be a good superintendent. I asked questions that expanded on their description of the artifacts, so I could gain an understanding of their perception of the position, how they worked with individuals and groups both internal and external to the organization, and how their thinking was or was not enacted (from the superintendents' own points of view).

The final interview took place after I spent a day of shadowing the superintendents. This interview gave the superintendents an opportunity to reflect on the day of observation. Before our interviews, I typed up the notes from my protocol and shared them with the superintendents. Then I asked the superintendents whether they

were seeing links between how they thought about what was the right thing to do and what they did in the role of superintendent. If there was a gap, we explored it together. This gave the superintendents an opportunity to identify whether their personal theories were being practiced. The superintendents also had an opportunity to draw a visual representation and explain what it meant to be a school superintendent. This was a more reflexive interview. It offered the most growth opportunity for the superintendents and it provided me with interesting information that was helpful in understanding the superintendents' learning processes as well as implications for superintendents' preparation.

The interview that took place with the professional community members lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes. The protocol (see Appendix B) for this interview allowed me to determine what they thought the superintendents were doing right. The protocol also probed the interviewees as to their expectations of the superintendent's role, as well as how their superintendent matched up to these expectations. The professional community members were asked to give examples of how their current superintendent had or had not met their expectations.

Observations

Observations as a type of data collection method are consistent with the case study and narrative approaches. I observed the superintendents in leadership roles on one day when they had several meetings with parents, staff, administrators, and the board of education. Through a day of shadowing, I hoped to gain a better understanding of the social/cultural environment in which the superintendents worked and lived. My field notes were critical in documenting the shadowing experience.

The protocol (see Appendix B) I used during the observations was descriptive and reflective in nature. I used a field book during the observations, in which I recorded information concerning the superintendents' interactions, duties of the position, the physical setting, particular events, and my own personal thoughts and reactions. Once the observations were complete, I thanked the participants, withdrew from the site, and informed them how the data would be used and their accessibility to the study (Creswell, 1998). I typed up my observation notes and shared them with the superintendents before the third interview.

Document Analysis

The third source of data was document analysis. Documents pertinent to this study included summaries from administrative and certified staff meetings; memoranda from the superintendent to parents, staff, and board of education members; and other communication materials distributed by the superintendents to the stakeholders of the organization. Analyzing pertinent documents helped me determine the climate of the organization and how the superintendents performed their assigned duties. I kept a journal during the research to record thoughts, themes, and ideas that were generated when looking at the various documents of the organization. Through this document-analysis process, I was able to discover the superintendents' theory and practice of school leadership.

Data-Analysis Techniques

Creswell (1998) provided a framework of the five traditions of inquiry and the specific data-analysis techniques used in each method. I used portions of his table to

outline the data-analysis techniques associated with the phenomenological and case study

approaches (see Table 3.2). Because this study includes a narration of the

superintendents' stories, some of the characteristics associated with the biographical

approach to inquiry are included. Particular attention was given to classification,

interpretation, representation, and visualization in the biographical approach.

Table 3.2 Data Analysis and Representation by Inquiry Method

Data Analysis	Biography	Phenomenology	Case Study
Data managing	Create and organize data	Create and organize data	Create and organize data
Reading	Read through text and make margin notes	Read through text and make margin notes	Read through text and make margin notes
Describing	Describe experiences of superintendent	Describe the meaning of the experiences	Describe the case and its context
Classifying	Identify experiences	List statements of meaning for each supt. and group statements into meaning units	Use categorical aggregation and establish patterns within the categories
Interpreting	Theorize toward developing patterns of meaning	Develop the "what happened," the "how" of the leadership phenomenon, and describe the experience	Interpret case and develop naturalistic generalizations
Representing, Visualizing	Present narration	Present narration of the "essence" of the experience and use tables or visual presentations	Present narrative through the use of tables or visual presentations

Source: Adapted from Creswell, 1998. pp. 148-149.

There was a triangulation of the data as I was able to see how the superintendents

perceived themselves (interviews 1 and 2); my perception of the superintendents

(observation) and the professional community members' perceptions. The reflexive

interview (Interview 3) brought me back to the core of my study--that is, "This is what I think I should do, this is what I do, and this is what others think I do."

Confidentiality and Ethical Concerns

Mentioned earlier, pseudonyms were used in referring to each district and all personnel involved in the study. Confidentiality was of the utmost importance, and I took every step possible to ensure that this was maintained. All data collected were kept in a locked, secure area; none of this material was disseminated. The superintendents had access to the final reports, and they were asked to review the reports to ensure that the information was accurate.

Each superintendent signed a letter of participation, which was kept on file for each superintendent as outlined in the human subjects agreement. A draft of the agreement to participate and interview protocols can be found in the Appendix B.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of the study is the fact that I am a public school administrator and have certain preconceived notions as to what leadership role is more effective than others. I perceive myself as being a quality leader, but it was not appropriate to expect these superintendents to exhibit the characteristics I do. Hence, I had to learn to leave my perceptions and knowledge behind so that the study could evolve and themes could emerge.

The sample itself also may be a limitation of this study. Because of constraints on time, resources, and convenience, no comparisons were made between leaders of different genders or ethnicities. However, even though certain compromises were made

for purposes of convenience, this study is still important and the knowledge gained will be valuable to future researchers.

Summary

In this study I used a blended approach of qualitative inquiry that mingles components of the biography, phenomenology, and case study approaches of qualitative research. This method of data collection and analysis allowed me to explore thoroughly the driving questions of this study. Through this exploration, the influence of the school environment on the superintendents' theory and practice emerged.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF DATA

The Project and the Players

We are at a peculiar moment in history when people feel mobilized and empowered, and somehow leadership is paralyzed (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). There is a new outpouring of political activism, and superintendents must work with different groups of citizens, parents, and staff who display an adversarial stance. Superintendents must create a real sense of community, in which trust is not a scarcity. This case study of superintendents' theory and practice demonstrates how the increasing challenges facing today's superintendents can induce changes in their leadership roles. My purpose in this case study was to investigate how three superintendents made sense of their role and how that personal theory defined their leadership practice.

Each case begins with a brief description of the project and the people; this is followed by a detailed look at the superintendent and his cabinet. Because each superintendent selected the cabinet members to be interviewed, I describe them in detail so the reader can understand why these individuals were key players. Each of the districts had one or more issues that were the focal point of the case; thus a historical background of the issue, as well as the events and happenings surrounding the issue, is provided. An analysis of power, politics, and authority is included in each case, as is a description of how the superintendents worked to mobilize and empower their organizations amid the politics and controversy of their communities.

The Arborville School District: A Case of Power and Politics

The Arborville School District had not passed a bond issue since 1996, which appeared to reflect a growing distrust between the community and the schools. Angry citizens filled the boardroom each month to voice their concerns and displeasure with the district. The elements of power and politics suggest that coercion was ineffective in this district. To defuse the community's negative perceptions of the schools, Arborville needed to address these tensions. The school organization needed to present a clear definition of the sources of authority and power in the Arborville district, so that the community could gain a better understanding of the organization. The case presented in this section highlights the tensions that existed in this small community and the key players who worked to bridge the gap between the school organization and the community at large.

The Superintendent and His Cabinet

The following table provides details of the Bakersville superintendent and his cabinet members.

Table 4.1 Description of the Arborville Superintendent and His Cabinet

Name	Position	Education	Years of Experience
Mr. Goldfinch	Superintendent	Masters + 20 hours	6 Years as Superintendent
Mrs. Robin	Superintendent's Secretary	Bachelor's Degree	6 Years as Superintendent's Secretary
Mr. Sparrow	Board of Education Trustee	Master's in Media Specialty	4 Years as Board Trustee
Mrs. Oriole	Elementary Principal	Master's in Administration	3 Years as Principal

When Superintendent Goldfinch was in college, he didn't aspire to be an educator. Rather, he pursued a business degree and entered the corporate world.

> I wasn't going to pursue a career in education. I had a business degree and that was my intent, to pursue a career in business and I actually started working in business and realized that in that world it is not really conducive to what I call quality family life, and the demands are such that you are gone a lot and your first commitment is to the company and not to your family. That was not really consistent with what I wanted so I decided to go back and get a teaching degree. (Personal interview, May 2004)

Although he had planned to teach for the next 30 years, something happened along the way. Superintendent Goldfinch suspected it was a little boredom, as he prided himself on being the type of person who needed challenges. Nevertheless, he was not being challenged after three short years in the classroom, so he decided to entertain the idea of becoming a building principal.

Superintendent Goldfinch obtained his first position as a school administrator in a small junior/senior high school. He was surprised to discover that being a building principal was nothing like what he had anticipated. "Interestingly enough, the first year I absolutely hated it. I couldn't stand being a building principal. It wasn't anything like I thought it was going to be; it was totally negative" (personal interview, May 2004). Nevertheless, he served as a principal in the same building for three and a half years until he decided the job had become very easy. Although Superintendent Goldfinch had thought he would be a building principal for the remainder of his career, he soon determined he needed a different kind of challenge. At that point, he decided to consider the possibility being a superintendent.

> I saw some of the superintendents out there and I thought I could do as good a job as they were doing. So at that point I knew that I probably could get my, at least an Ed Specialist, so I applied at CMU and started the specialists degree and about

halfway through that program, I decided to start applying to districts and I had applied to a couple and actually had some jobs offered, but I decided they weren't in districts I wanted to be in. (Personal interview, May 2004)

Superintendent Goldfinch looked for a small district in which he could grow as a superintendent. He also needed to consider whether the district was a good "fit" for him. It did not take long for Mr. Goldfinch to find the district he was looking for, and he soon became the new superintendent of the Arborville School District. He spent his first year getting to know the key players and personnel associated with the district as well as the inner workings of the school organization.

Superintendent Goldfinch believed Mrs. Robin was a key player in the inner workings of the Arborville School District because she was the central office secretary. Superintendent Goldfinch hired her to be his secretary, and she described her working relationship with him as a "very close working relationship" (personal interview, May 2004). Although this was Mrs. Robin's first central office position, she came to Arborville with clerical experience in the realm of education (counseling, athletics, and building principal offices). Although Superintendent Goldfinch was the only superintendent Mrs. Robin had worked for, she seemed to have a clear understanding of how a superintendent should function. For instance, she described her superintendent as "a good communicator, which I think he is with both public, board, staff...He is not going to go into confidentiality, but he definitely tries to keep everyone aware of what's going on and up to speed on anything they need to know" (personal interview, May 2004).

Superintendent Goldfinch thought that Mr. Sparrow, a first-term trustee on the Arborville Board of Education, was also a key player in the district. Superintendent Goldfinch thought a board member would bring a different perspective to the

superintendent's cabinet, and Mr. Sparrow was a good choice because he obtained his education in the Arborville District. Mr. Sparrow's mother was a prominent figure in the Arborville community, and she encouraged her son to take an active role in the community and the district. This led Mr. Sparrow to run for the Arborville Board of Education. He worked in a neighboring district as a media specialist, so he brought a different perspective to the Arborville School District.

Mr. Sparrow described his relationship with Superintendent Goldfinch as amicable. He believed that the superintendent was very approachable, but he had a slightly different viewpoint from Mrs. Robin on what a superintendent should do.

> Basically, I feel they should be the main person in the district. They should be the, how do I say, I guess I would say the standard there in each individual district; they should be visible more than any administrators, and I feel that. Second, they are really in charge of making sure all the board policies and curriculum policies set forth by the board are taken. And number three, they are in charge of making sure communication is ongoing between all members of the district. (Personal interview, May 2004)

The last member of Superintendent Goldfinch's cabinet was Mrs. Oriole, an elementary school principal. Because there were only two principals in the district, Superintendent Goldfinch thought a building principal would bring another perspective to the team. Mrs. Oriole began her first principalship with the Arborville District three years ago. Superintendent Goldfinch hired her three years after he had been hired as the superintendent. The previous principal had taken a new position across the state. Mrs. Oriole thought she had a strong working relationship with Superintendent Goldfinch and that he was a

> . . . .nice person. I have learned a lot from him since I have been here. You know, I think he has a lot to offer and I think this situation, it's not a normal situation that we are in. I think being the teensy, tiny town that sits back in the 50s makes it tough. I think he is tired of it. He is a good person and he wants to be a good

superintendent. I think he had a lot of ideas and got shot down and he didn't get the support he needed. (Personal interview, June 2004)

The Community and District

The Arborville School District had 40 staff members who served 817 students at the time of this study. The K-6 principal, the 7-12 principal, and the superintendent made up Arborville's administrative team. The district was situated in a small, rural agricultural community with approximately 4,624 residents, most of whom were predominant, middle-income Caucasians who were born and raised in the district. There were no major industries in this one-stoplight town, so many of the residents commuted to jobs in surrounding towns. The town was founded in 1868 by a Baptist minister, which might help explain how this small town supported four large churches of various denominations, such as Catholic, Methodist, and Baptist.

The school district covered 100 square miles and operated two schools, one K-6 building and one 7-12 building. The elementary school was very old; in fact, it was the first school in Arborville. The school served grades K-12, but over the years, as the district grew, it became the K-6 building. The high school was more modern, as it was just 15 years old. It currently housed the 7th through 12th grades. The district had a new bus garage to hold the fleet of buses that transported 65% of the students. The Arborville School District was once viewed as a top-notch school system that had high academic standards and outstanding athletic teams. About 15 years ago, the district experienced a growth spurt, and the town of Arborville and the school district prospered. However, times have changed, and Arborville schools have been consistently losing students to neighboring districts. These changing times in the Arborville District can be directly

linked to the lack of trust and positive relationships between internal and external forces

in the organization. As Mr. Sparrow noted, "In a town like Arborville, things can get

volatile real quick" (personal interview, May 2004). This was demonstrated when the

townspeople voiced their displeasure at board meetings.

The Superintendent's Perspective on Leadership

Superintendent Goldfinch described his own leadership as "visionary" (personal

interview, 2004); and he believed that everybody has a certain leadership style.

> The way I look at it is that I realize that I can't do everything. Nor should I want
> to do everything. I think that people who cannot delegate in any way are people
> who are going to be ineffective. Because again, either you are going to wear
> yourself into the ground or you're going to not get the job done. You just simply
> can't do everything in the district, so you need to be willing to delegate it and
> support those people and give them the help, encouragement, and resources that
> they need to be successful. . . .That's the key issue; you surround yourself with
> good people, and then when you do, let them do their jobs. This, as opposed to
> being a dominating, authoritative type figure that has to control everything. I think
> that leadership style is more doomed to failure. The other thing that I think you
> have to be is, I think you have to be somewhat easy going. I think if you are the
> type of person that overreacts, you can have some major problems. Again, people
> are looking to you to provide leadership, stability, and a sense of direction.
> (Personal interview, May 2004)

Superintendent Goldfinch believed that one is either a good leader or a poor

leader.

> I think that if you are a good leader, you would be a good leader whether you
> were president of the United States or the manager of a small office. It's your
> personality; it's everything about you. I don't think it is anything that you learn in
> the classroom; I think it's your life experiences that either make you a good or a
> bad leader. It's your temperament, everything about you--your diplomacy, your
> tactfulness and how you deal with people. I don't think it is something you can
> learn; I think there is something that is ingrained in you since the day you were
> born. Some people are born to be leaders, and some people it is just not in their

chemistry and their make-up, and they just can't cope and deal. (Personal interview, May 2004)

In reflecting on the superintendency and his leadership, Superintendent Goldfinch provided five examples of leadership ideas that denote the position of superintendent. First, he believed the superintendent must look to staff when making decisions. He believed one can use staff input when determining professional development opportunities. The following exemplifies his thinking:

> A few years ago we negotiated into the contract some professional development days. At that point our teachers were kind of going out there on their own. They were going to pick up the hours they needed for professional development. We thought that was not really in the best interest of the district you know. It didn't seem like we had a lot of control over that, also it was very costly to do that, so we thought that there has to be a better way. What we did was negotiate in that contract, five professional development days, so that we made the state mandate. Once we did that, we were successful in getting in that contract, then became the responsibility, now that you have the days, what were you going to do during those days. . . . I asked for at least two teachers from each building, and we gave them release time, we brought subs in and we meet a couple of times a year. We do it in the fall and the spring and half a day each time and sit down as a team and everybody is of equal value at that meeting. It is not dominated by myself or the principals; the teachers have as much say, even more as to what's going to be offered to teachers on their P.D. days. We have been doing that now for about three years, or two years, because like I said, the first year we did it as administrators and the reaction from the staff has been overwhelming and positive about the professional development activities. . . . Obviously you can't have the teachers running everything, but when it comes down to activities like this that have a direct impact on them; like I tell them, these are their days. (Personal interview, May 2004)

Superintendent Goldfinch's goal was to provide a safe and comfortable learning environment. He stated,

> Since Columbine, obviously school safety is a big issue and it is one we all take seriously. We have been working hard on that, trying to provide a safe environment. Even though we are a small district, we do feel a little bit isolated from the rest of the world and probably don't feel threatened as maybe we would if we were a more metropolitan area. We do take it seriously because anything can happen anywhere, so over the years we started by developing a crisis plan and

worked on that and had it ready to go and still have it. (Personal interview, May 2004)

Mr. Goldfinch believed a superintendent should work to ensure that students and staff have technology available to them to support the curriculum. He thought the Arborville District had made huge strides in this area.

> We recently wired every classroom in the high school building with fibers so every classroom had Internet access, and we put a computer in every classroom with that money. At the elementary we did a similar thing; we put in a computer lab and we also wired every room. . . . The other thing we did for the first time is put phones in every classroom. We upgraded the phone system here, and we joke that the phone system we had before was one step up from the tin can with a string going through it. . . . so you can see we have made some great strides. (Personal interview, May 2004).

Further, Superintendent Goldfinch believed that staff and students must be provided a quality curriculum. When he first came to Arborville, there was no set curriculum.

> Every teacher was doing whatever they wanted to do, and based on their years of experience, they were deciding what they thought should be taught in third grade and fifth grade and not necessarily what anybody else thought should be taught and I found that there wasn't even consistency amongst third grade. (Personal interview, May 2004)

Superintendent Goldfinch went to the board of education and encouraged them to purchase a particular curriculum. After the curriculum was purchased, Mr. Goldfinch went back to the board and said,

> Just buying that curriculum, in itself, won't make us successful. I have seen districts where they have the curriculum, they buy it and it sits on the shelf collecting dust because there is not buy in or no leadership to implement it. . . . In just a matter of a few years we have gone from no curriculum to where all our buildings are all meeting the benchmarks and standards, and our staff now has bought into it, which was a big hurdle. (Personal interview, May 2004)

Because of the financial constraints being placed on districts, Mr. Goldfinch believed that a superintendent must be fiscally responsible. "It's no different than being a CEO of a company; ultimately you are responsible for keeping that company in operation," he explained (personal interview, May 2004). The superintendent believed that being a strong fiscal manager went along with his leadership style, "I empower them to maintain the budget; they keep me aware of issues that come up, questions, because ultimately I have to make the decisions when it comes to budget issues" (personal interview, May 2004). He thought he had been successful because the district had maintained its current programming and also had been able to add money to the fund equity.

According to Superintendent Goldfinch, a successful leader must take the initiative to understand the politics of the organization. He stated:

> I think one of the hardest things you have to be prepared for is, like I said, the politics that goes on within the school, within the community; a lot of the other things will work out, like the trust and respect. You earn that on a day-to-day basis with what you do; that's something either you have it or you don't. I'm not sure you can fake that or do something with that. Like I said, the politics because your school board is going to change. If you are going to be there for a while, you are going to deal with different people. The school board that hired you, in a few years might be gone and you are going to be dealing with a whole new board of education-- seven different people that have different values, different wish lists, or whatever their agenda might be. You have to be able to deal with that and keep them happy and keep them focused. Then the politics within the community and different groups you have to work with. I think that is a big part of it, being prepared for that, because that is something you can't always control and you have to be flexible and be able to deal with it and pull things together. (Personal interview, May 2004)

According to Superintendent Goldfinch the best way to deal with political agendas was to keep the board informed on a regular basis; this is why he made weekly, even daily, contacts with board members to maintain open lines of communication. He

did this by mailing weekly board briefs, making telephone calls, and sending e-mails. Despite his efforts, Superintendent Goldfinch was often criticized, especially by Mr. Sparrow, as not promoting dialogue between board members and staff. Mr. Sparrow stated that he would like more "follow-up on a daily basis" (personal interview, May 2004). The weekly updates were beneficial, but he would prefer that Superintendent Goldfinch give him a quick five-minute phone call to keep him updated as to possible concerns or activities in the district. Mr. Sparrow did not want to be caught off guard when a parent or concerned citizen approached him.

Mr. Sparrow also believed that in Arborville the superintendent must walk a thin line due to the politics of the district. He asserted:

> I think working in a school there are a lot of politics that go on behind the scene that people in the community never see, which is a good thing because a lot of it is totally off-the-wall stuff that really doesn't affect how teachers and administrators and the board do their job. There is a lot of special agendas and it's hard to be, like I said, be objective and step back and say, well while this might not be the popular thing, it is something that is going to benefit our district; maybe not today, but in the long run it is definitely going to be beneficial for everybody. (Personal interview, 2004)

Some people had accused Superintendent Goldfinch of being a "pleaser" or possessing a laissez-faire approach in which he liked to gather all the facts before making a decision. If he did not agree with a policy or an issue, he might ignore it in hopes it would dissolve. It was difficult for the superintendent to be objective when he did not agree with the board, but the professional community believed he was unwilling to take a stand and fight for his or their beliefs (personal interview, May 2004). It appeared that he was more concerned with keeping harmony between the board and the school community.

<u>Case of Power and Politics</u>

The Arborville Board of Education hired Superintendent Goldfinch in 1998, and he had led the district for the past six years. At the time he was hired, the board believed rebuilding the community-school relationship should be the new superintendent's primary focus. Mr. Goldfinch enjoyed the board's laissez-faire approach and was able to build a strong tie between himself and the board members who seldom questioned his decisions. The board, much like the superintendent, believed the school was a reflection of the community, and it should be held in high regard.

In the first years of his tenure, Superintendent Goldfinch believed the overall operation and day-to-day activities of the district progressed commendably. There was a strong working relationship between the administration and the board of education, which had been missing in previous years. The biggest challenge facing Superintendent Goldfinch was the fact that the district had not passed a bond issue in several years. The board wanted to try again, so they decided to move forward with a bond proposal in 2002, although odds were against its passage. In fact, in the last five years, other such attempts had failed, two of them during Superintendent Goldfinch's tenure. However, Mr. Goldfinch appeared to need another challenge, so he began to investigate the voting pattern that existed in the community and to look at the previous bond proposals. He organized town meetings, to be held every Monday night, and he circulated literature describing the scope of the project.

> The number of people that came varied, but typically we would have about 30 people at the meeting like that, and that became our workers. They became the backbone of our committee to ultimately pass the bond issue. This was one of the things I learned through some failing proposals to the public; the superintendent and the school board cannot pass bond issues. No matter how hard you try, it's

more than you can personally do, so you need to reach out to the community and it needs to become a community package. If you can get key people within the community to work on it, and to really support it, they can influence a lot of other folks. And not only that, they can have some great ideas and they bring those to the table. . . . My role in that was to make sure what was in there was accurate and that we didn't put anything out that could be misconstrued, because ultimately when you are done with the project, people could come back with the flyer and say, "You said this was going to be done and you didn't do it," so you have to make sure that's right. (Personal interview, May 2004)

Through this process, Mr. Goldfinch found that there still was tension in the community from the previous high school building project. The former administration had convinced the community to build a new high school and due to financial constraints, the building sat empty for a year. Superintendent Goldfinch considered this information and presented a bond proposal that did not include a new building. Instead, the new proposal focused on developing a shared commitment and sense of community pride with minimal funding. Repairs and renovations would be made to both the high school and the elementary school; several technology upgrades also would be made, and a 5,000-square-foot addition would be built on the elementary school to house a new library and computer lab. In addition, several renovations would be made to the high school science lab and the athletic complex.

Despite defeating bond issues over the past five years, the Arborville community gave their support to the school and passed the $6.87 million dollar bond issue in 2002 with a 722 to 523 vote. This bond project provided the new technology and upgrades the district needed. It was a small victory for the school community; however, the celebration was short- lived.

As in many small communities, Arborville fans rallied together every Friday night to support the local football team. However, these fans did not have a lot to celebrate, as

their football team had not won a game in four years. Given this record, the board believed the head football coach had more than an ample opportunity to prove himself. Therefore, the board and superintendent decided to terminate his contract. Community members, however, disagreed, and the decision to terminate the football coach's contract resulted in the recall of three board members. This dramatic change in the makeup of the board presented a whole new set of issues for Superintendent Goldfinch to address.

The new members of the Arborville Board of Education brought new agendas and plans to the board and superintendent. These agendas included the purchase of new language arts materials to appease a fifth-grade teacher, who was a close personal friend of a newly elected board member, a push to terminate the elementary principal's contract, and a push to replace Superintendent Goldfinch. These agendas created tension between Superintendent Goldfinch and the board, and he worked diligently to restore the relationship that had been severed between the board, the school, and the community. Superintendent Goldfinch wanted to move this new board in a positive direction, but the existing lack of communication and trust hampered his ability to reestablish the relationship.

Much of the controversy between the board and the school organization centered on the elementary principal, Mrs. Oriole. She brought several years of teaching experience to the district, and because this was her first principalship, she worked hard to demonstrate her talents to the Arborville community. Mrs. Oriole was very innovative and wanted to help transform the predominantly archaic teaching methods in the elementary school. However, she was met with resistance from a predominantly experienced staff, whose "old school" methods were embedded in the school and

community. When Mrs. Oriole wanted to adjust the current teaching practices or the curriculum, teachers began to question her tactics, bypassed her position as principal, and went to the superintendent and board members to voice their concerns.

Mrs. Oriole believed there was a lack of administrative support as well as a lack of educational focus at Arborville.

> I think Superintendent Goldfinch and I have a good relationship, I always have. I think there has been a lot of pressure that has undermined a lot of things, unfortunately, and put him in a precarious situation. I think for the most part he has done the right thing. The part that I feel I could use more support is the relationship as far as the staff, and moving toward best practices now; not what's best for the teachers, but what's best for the kids. That focus I don't think is there any longer. (Personal interview, June 2004)

Mrs. Oriole thought Superintendent Goldfinch "wants everyone to be happy, so I think he tells you what he thinks might make you happy at the time. I think decisions are made on who puts more pressure on him" (personal interview, June 2004). She described what was occurring: "The books, the language arts textbooks that we didn't need. We had meetings and we brought in our curriculum chairpeople and they explained it, yet a teacher who wanted them at the time, a personal friend of the board members, we ended up getting books which cost $2,000 that I didn't have. It kind of undermined the whole process of curriculum development" (personal interview, June 2004). Mrs. Oriole would soon discover that the conflicts she was having with the board went well beyond the decision to purchase textbooks.

According to board policy, administrative contracts had to be taken to the board of education for review and renewal every year. Because of the tensions surrounding the elementary principal, the board president refused to put her contract on the meeting agenda; therefore, the contract was not going to be reviewed and ultimately not renewed.

Mrs. Oriole turned to her superintendent for support, but he had decided to support the board's position and suggested she look for a new position.

Superintendent Goldfinch believed that he had done everything he could to support his elementary principal; however, supporting the board was his top priority.

> I have always told my board members when they come on that we all have the rights to our opinions, that's a natural phenomenon. As a board and as a governing body of the school district, we can all express our opinions, but when we walk out the door, we walk arm in arm, so to speak; supporting whatever it is that we decided on. Even if the vote is 4 to 3, we still walk out supporting that initiative (Personal interview, May 2004)

The superintendent believed his time in Arborville had been successful and the Arborville School District had made huge strides in passing the bond issue. Yet, at times, there was a definite breakdown in communication between the superintendent and the board, the superintendent and the staff, and the superintendent and the community. These breakdowns created tension and a definite lack of trust existed in the school organization and the community. Whereas Superintendent Goldfinch saw himself as the power figure of the organization, the professional community viewed the board as holding the power. This difference of opinion created tensions in the Arborville organization, and these tensions appear to remain an on-going issue for the district.

The Bakersville School District: A Case of Communication and Commitment

Communication and vision were integral parts of the Bakersville School District and community. In 2002, the district passed a bond and sold the building that housed its alternative high school. In some districts this action might have caused chaos, but in Bakersville the transition went smoothly. Much of this success was due to the relationships that Dr. Kingfisher, the superintendent, had created with the school and the

community. He had forged a strong bond that was based on trust and honesty, which

went a long way with the staff and community of Bakersville.

The Superintendent and His Cabinet

The following table provides details of the Bakersville superintendent and his

cabinet members.

Table 4.2 Characteristics of the Bakersville Superintendent and His Cabinet

Name	Position	Education	Years of Experience
Dr. Kingfisher	Superintendent	Ph.D. in Educational Administration	32 Years of experience 10 Years as superintendent
Mrs. Tern	Transportation supervisor	High School diploma	11 years
Mr. Finch	Assistant superintendent	Ed. Specialist	8 years
Mrs. Chickadee	Head custodian	High school diploma	20 years
Mrs. Hummingbird	Title I aide and union president for support staff	Associate's degree	6 years

Dr. Kingfisher has been in the business of education for 32 years. He was a

teacher and then an elementary principal for 10 years. During Dr. Kingfisher's tenure as a

principal, his superintendent called him into the office and asked him what he wanted to

be when he grew up. After reflecting on this question, Dr. Kingfisher realized he wanted

to eventually become a superintendent. "I think if you're in this business long enough, at

some point in your career, you think you can do it better than the person that's sitting as

superintendent, so at some point I decided that if he could do it, I could do it, and I could

probably do it better" (personal interview, May 2004). With that being said, he began to

prepare for the superintendency by taking on additional duties in finance and federal programming (personal interview, May 2004).

Because Dr. Kingfisher had a strong mentor, he also served as a mentor in his organization. He explained:

> I hope I spend time mentoring my staff and mentoring the other administrators and providing them with information based on my experiences. I think that there is something; part of my personality is to help others, to work with others and to give back. So I think there is a part of my personality that is there, and then having that strong mentor nurtured that personality trait. (Personal interview, May 2004)

Dr. Kingfisher translated this role as a nurturer into how he operated in the organization:

> I think it has a lot to do with us having a shared vision within the organization. I think it has a lot to do with working with the community and how we form partnerships with the community and how we form partnerships with one another, whether we're teachers or administrators. We as an administrative staff look at ourselves as lifelong learners; at least I look at myself as a lifelong learner. All of our administrators are . . . . in or working on advanced degrees . . . . or have just finished, so I think that's all part of the importance of taking my experiences and helping. (Personal interview, May 2004)

Mrs. Tern, a member of the superintendent's cabinet, had been with the Bakersville School District for 11 years; the last six years she had served as the transportation supervisor. Mrs. Tern believed Dr. Kingfisher was supportive of her and the decisions she made in regards to transportation. She has worked with him for the past 10 years and said there had never been a time when he failed to meet her expectations of did not follow through with a decision.

Mr. Finch served as the assistant superintendent of the Bakersville School District; he had been in the district for eight years. He began his career in Bakersville as

the high school principal before advancing to the position of assistant superintendent. Mr. Finch appreciated the way that Dr. Kingfisher "gives his administrators latitude and he doesn't micromanage, but he does set general guidelines. He counts on the positive human nature of his administrators and people to get the job done. He's outstanding!" (personal interview, May 2004). Mr. Finch admitted that he enjoyed his positive working relationship with Dr. Kingfisher, and although he had aspirations of becoming a superintendent one day, he wanted to continue working for Dr. Kingfisher as long as possible.

Mrs. Chickadee had not always had a positive experience with the Bakersville administration. Having been the head custodian in the district for the past 20 years, she had seen the devastating effects that poor administration could have on a program.

> I think we are so fortunate to have Dr. Kingfisher. We have had other administrators here. I have been here for 20 years, and I have been lied to; I have, everything. You don't know the whole truth. Dr. Kingfisher is the most honest, straightforward. When we meet a problem, it is not swept under the rug. He meets it head on; he never sweeps it under the rug. You can go to him with a problem and he can see further ahead, things you haven't even thought of, and help you work it out and do the right thing. (Personal interview, May 2004)

Mrs. Hummingbird had been with Bakersville for the past six years, serving as the Title I aide and union president for support staff. She thought that communication was one of Dr. Kingfisher's strongest attributes. During contract negotiations, he listened to the concerns of the union and worked to resolve them. "Any issues that come up in the union, he is always very willing to look at all sides and possible solutions, and together we try and do what's best for the overall union. He has gone out of his way to accommodate special requests from my union members" (personal interview, 2004). Mrs. Hummingbird believed Dr. Kingfisher cared about her concerns and worked diligently to

meet the needs of support staff. He had created strong organizational ties between the staff and administration, and this had gone a long way in creating a unified organization.

The Community and District

The Bakersville School District was located in the city of Bakersville; 12, 247 people resided within the district boundaries. Bakersville was a quaint, middle-income community that had a 7.7% unemployment rate. The town of Bakersville had three large automobile dealerships and several small businesses to support employment. The adult population in the city of Bakersville averaged about 35 years of age, so the district was consistently growing with over 2,000 students.

The Bakersville School District had 257 employees, 129 of whom were teachers; they serviced the 2,240 students. There are nine administrators and three supervisors who oversaw transportation, food services, and business services. The school district had five buildings: a high school, an alternative high school, a middle school and two elementary schools. The district also housed the Special Education Consortium for Exceptional Children. The district had a $6,700 per pupil foundation allowance and transported approximately 40% of its students.

In 2002, the Bakersville School District passed a bond issue to make major renovations and upgrades to their high school, central offices, and middle school. This bond passed with a resounding affirmative vote and many would say this was a result of the leadership of their superintendent, Dr. Kingfisher.

The Superintendent's Perspective on Leadership

Dr. Kingfisher had developed strong, loyal ties to Bakersville's educational community and the community-at-large. He realized that schools cannot be successful unless everyone is involved. The superintendent believed that school members must form partnerships with the community and with one another, whether one is a teacher or an administrator. He believed that the school district does not operate in isolation, but rather is an active part of the community. According to Dr. Kingfisher, in order to have a vibrant, growing community, there must be a vibrant, growing school. He believed the school district must also have a broad base of support in the community and therefore worked to develop relationships within the community.

Dr. Kingfisher believed he was able to build these partnerships and be successful through his leadership, which entailed being a role model and leading by example. He said all leadership starts with a set of core values:

> I tell people often that at the end of the day the only thing I have left is my reputation and my ethics, so I think that leadership starts with being a role model and living day to day ethically and honestly. I think that leadership from there is taking quality people, good people, talented people, and kind of being a catalyst for change--having people think outside the box and take chances and create something better than what we had when we started. (Personal interview, 2004)

Dr. Kingfisher translated these definitions of leadership into the school superintendency by maintaining a clear picture of what the district was about, which was to help all children learn.

> I think that the superintendent has to have a clear picture of what they are all about and what is most important to them. I have always said, since I have been a superintendent, and I guess I repeat it a lot, so that must be one of my core values, that we are here to help all children learn, we are here to promote the success of all kids, all students. The most important thing that happens in a school district happens inside a classroom, so the most important people here in my mind are the

teachers. So my leadership, my core values, are to provide all the tools necessary for teachers to do their jobs, principals to do their jobs, and so I guess that's where it begins, with those core values. (Personal interview, 2004)

Promoting student success was a top priority for Dr. Kingfisher, and he cited a variety of ways in which he accomplished this goal. First of all, he believed that the school district, including the board, the administrators, and the teachers, needed to have a shared vision of learning, and a culture that promoted learning. Second, there had to be management, whereby the superintendent took care of the basic needs of the district, for example, dealing with hostile parents, making sure paychecks were sent out on time, and ensuring that there was an organization plan, from maintenance to finance.

Dr. Kingfisher believed the superintendent must work in collaboration with families and the community. Further it was the superintendent's responsibility to be aware of trends that were going on within the community. "If I develop those relationships within the community and we have a difficult problem at school that is going to be controversial, often times there are leaders within the community that would say, 'that's probably not the way it is, Dr. Kingfisher would have a reason for doing that'. So it's building a trust and building that relationship" (personal interview, May 2004). Dr. Kingfisher also believed that a superintendent needs to be able to respond to state laws, national laws, the legal issues, the economy, and politics (personal interview, May 2004).

Dr. Kingfisher admitted he was a big idea person, but he also learned early in his career that if he had all the ideas and went to people and declared, "This is what we are going to do," that approach usually was not successful.

The one incident that comes to mind was when I was a middle school principal, and we wanted to do some teaming I wanted to do some teaming, and I didn't have staff buy-in; I had a staff that was made up of high school teachers who got stuck in the middle school, so I wanted to do some teaming or team teaching. So I set that up and really what it became was a science teacher who taught 60 kids, while the other two teachers disappeared; then the math teacher came in and taught 60 kids while the other two teachers disappeared. So they really didn't do any planning together, they didn't do any teaming, anything that I thought was important. And that wasn't their fault, it was just the way I set up the schedule; nor did they have buy-in, so it failed miserably. (Personal interview, May 2004)

He had learned that if he followed his core values as a leader and worked with the community and staff, it was possible to bring about change in his district.

A Case of Communication and Commitment

In the summer of 2002, the Bakersville School District sold the building that housed their alternative high school. The district had three months--from the time school closed in June to the time it opened again in the fall- to find a place to house the alternative high school. School board members were tense because the district did not have a place to put these students, and the tension brought intense pressure, concerns, and anxiety. The staff and the administrator of the building also were feeling troubled; they feared the district would eliminate their jobs because the building had been sold. The simplest solution was to forget that the alternative high school ever existed, but this was not an option for Dr. Kingfisher.

Several possibilities were investigated to determine the best placement for the alternative high school during this transitional period. The fix was to be only temporary, because the bond project would add additional classrooms to the high school, there by providing alternative high school with a new home. It was determined that the best place to house the students in the meantime would be a local church, but the idea of renting the

church for this purpose then created tension and apprehension on the part of church members. They were concerned that these alternative students were difficult and that they would destroy the church. Church members sent letters voicing their concerns to their minister and to the Bakersville Board of Education. Dr. Kingfisher had to deal with these tensions and stress immediately so the situation would not escalate.

Dr. Kingfisher knew he could not eliminate the administrators' and the teachers' stress because their concern had shifted from not having a place for the alternative high school to not knowing how their things would fit in the church. During this stressful time, Dr. Kingfisher worked to reduce the stress by meeting regularly with the staff of the alternative high school from August to September. He frequently visited the building to reassure them that he cared about their plight. He clearly communicated to the staff that any problems that arose would be handled (personal interview, 2004).

The superintendent also worked to reduce the strain the Bakersville Board of Education was experiencing through the use of weekly updates, telephone calls, and frequent committee meetings. Dr. Kingfisher did not want the board to be surprised by local community members who belonged to the church. He kept the board informed at all points-- from the sale of the building, to the rental of the church, and throughout the construction project. Again, communication appeared to be the key ingredient for reducing stress among board members. Dr. Kingfisher consistently tried to answer all questions honestly and forthrightly, without avoiding difficult ones (personal interview, May 2004). This honesty enabled the Bakersville School District to work through the issues surrounding the move of the alternative high school with minimal discontent. At

the time of this study, the alternative high school had been successfully relocated to its

permanent home at Bakersville High School.

Dr. Kingfisher believed that issues such as these would continue to be resolved if

there was a strong vision and commitment by the school community and the community-

at-large. He believed the school is a direct reflection of what the community is and that

the school district is there to serve the community. He also believed that "the school

district has a responsibility to be a leader in the community" and that "the school district

is an institution that can change the community and can make the community a better

place to live, to work, and to play" (personal interview, 2004). In an effort to support

these beliefs, Dr. Kingfisher conducted community surveys because the school board, the

administration, and the teachers need to know what the community wants. The surveys

gave the Bakersville District an opportunity to find ways they could lead the community

to a better place. Since Dr. Kingfisher had implemented the community surveys, there

had been no real surprises in regard to needs of the community.

As stated before, Dr. Kingfisher believed he needed to ensure that all the

stakeholders in the organization and community-at-large were working toward achieving

the same vision.

> I think of the most important things that I do is making sure that everybody is
> working in the same direction on the same goals, working toward the same
> mission, the same vision. I want to make sure all the arrows are going to the same
> target, so that's why I feel it is important to have performance indicators. That is
> probably one of the most important documents I have in terms of what I do is that
> I have goals, the administrators have goals, the administrators set goals for their
> buildings, so the board sets my goals, I set the principals' goals, so we are all
> focused on the same thing. (Personal interview, May 2004)

This superintendent believed that communication was the key to building bridges

between the school and the community, as well as establishing relationships within the

organization. He sent the board weekly updates in the form of memos. "I have always done updates to the board because it's important to keep the board informed, and as long as you have a well-informed board, good intelligent people with the right information, they will, make good decisions. You have to make sure board members have as much information as possible" (personal interview, May 2004).

Dr. Kingfisher believed a successful superintendent should possess certain characteristics or skills. First among them were integrity and honesty. He stated, "No matter what you do, your integrity, your honesty, and your reputation are all you're going to have left when you get done, so it's important to always deal with people in an open and honest way" (personal interview, May 2004). He also believed that the superintendent should strive to "leave the district in better shape than when you came to it, you should leave a mark" (personal interview, 2004).

Further, Dr. Kingfisher said that in this day and age with all the problems with state funding, "a superintendent needs to know finance. Unfortunately it has become more important to the superintendent than curriculum" (personal interview, May 2004). Last, Dr. Kingfisher believed that a superintendent needs to have a plan to make sure the curriculum is being reviewed and evaluated.

> Curriculum needs to be taken care of, and somebody needs to take care of that. In our district, it might be difficult for the superintendent to be up on everything. They can't do everything, they can't do curriculum and do it justice, and finance, and personnel, or those things; so the superintendent needs people working for them. (Personal interview, May 2004)

Dr. Kingfisher's did not just verbalize his definition and characteristics of a successful superintendent. According to the professional community, he practiced what he preached about school leadership (personal interview, May 2004). This quality was

evident as student enrollment in the district was rising and Bakersville continued to attract several school-of-choice applicants. The Bakersville School District and the Bakersville community were continuing to prosper and grow.

The Collinsville School District: A Case of Rebuilding

The Collinsville School District was an organization in turmoil prior to the arrival of its new superintendent, Dr. Owl. The previous administration didn't work to build relationships with the staff or the community; they focused on the needs of the Board of Education. This created tension within the organization and the community and this tension escalated to a point where the board terminated the superintendent. Dr. Owl was hired by the district to repair the damage done to the budget and to the morale of the staff and community. This was going to be a daunting task, but Dr. Owl had a vision for the organization and the necessary tools to bring harmony back to the community and the school organization.

The Superintendent and His Cabinet

The following table provides details of the Bakersville superintendent and his cabinet members.

Table 4.3 Characteristics of the Collinsville Superintendent and His Cabinet

Name	Position	Education	Years of Experience
Dr. Owl	Superintendent	Ph. D in Educational Administration	23 Years/4 years as Supt. in Collinsville
Mrs. Quail	Secretary to Superintendent	B.A.	15 Years
Mr. Pelican	Curriculum Director and Elementary Principal	M.A. in Educational Administration	12 Years
Mrs. Goose	Teacher/Union Pres.	B.A. in Education	22 Years

Dr. Owl began his administrative career working as a community education director for a small district near Collinsville. He had held that position since 1978, and decided it was time to consider other administrative positions. As luck would have it, the high school principal took another job, which left the position open. Dr. Owl decided he would try his luck at being a high school principal. Although the job was somewhat difficult at times, Dr. Owl found it very exciting, and new doors began to open for him. He found another administration challenge when the superintendent of his district left for a new position. "I was asked if I could assume the superintendency. It was pretty short notice, it was about nine weeks I got to assist in the process of hiring a new superintendent, and as a result I got to be in about 13 different interviews. It was fascinating, and I did enjoy it and the dye was cast" (personal interview, 2004). Those nine weeks were enough to give Dr. Owl the impetus he needed to pursue a career change.

Once again, an opportunity arose for Dr. Owl to move into a superintendency, but this time it was in a remote location. He served as the superintendent of that small district for four years before again deciding he needed a new challenge. "I don't know if wander

is the right word, administrative challenges may be on the horizon, and I needed to enhance my position" (personal interview, May 2004). Dr. Owl wanted to get back to the Collinsville area, and fortunately they were looking for a superintendent. Dr. Owl was appointed superintendent of the Collinsville School District in 2000, and he embarked on a new journey in his career.

Dr. Owl found an entrenched group of professional community members when he moved to Collinsville, but he had worked to build strong relationships with these (now) valuable members of his cabinet. For instance, whereas Mrs. Quail had been Dr. Owl's secretary for the four years he had been superintendent, she had served in that position for the past 15 years. Mrs. Quail was loyal to the previous administrator and Dr. Owl had worked assiduously to build a positive working relationship with her.

Mrs. Quail believed a good leader stays in touch with the staff and community; communication is a priority. She thought she was very competent at her job and that it was the superintendent's responsibility to support her decisions so she could continue to be successful. Mrs. Quail stated, "It's kind of funny the way we work. I only go to him if I am absolutely stuck. I do my job, it is always done, so I don't go to him with a lot of things as far as actual job duties that are mine. He just knows that I will always have it done; he never has to come to me and ask if I have something done" (personal interview, May 2004).

Mr. Pelican had been with the Collinsville District for the past 12 years and wore several hats there. He was the elementary principal of the town's elementary school and he also served as the K-12 curriculum director. Mr. Pelican believed Dr. Owl was successful because he understood the organization and the people in it. He said, "I think

the superintendent is very aware of community values. He has very good people skills and interacts well with others. He is a good listener. He listens carefully to all factions, the board, the administrators, the teachers, the community as a whole, service organizations" (personal interview, May 2004).

According to Mr. Pelican, Dr. Owl had a good vision for the organization, and everything he did worked toward that vision. "I almost see his role like a matador with a bull. He is directing and kinda keeping things flowing, as opposed to confronting it head on and making his vision the most important and impressing or forcing it on others" (personal interview, May 2004). Mr. Pelican said that Dr. Owl was also highly successful at rebuilding relationships, which was evident from the first board meeting, and would continue to build positive relationships with the community and the school organization in the future.

Mrs. Goose had been a teacher in the Collinsville School District for the past 22 years. She had served as the union president for the past 10 years and admitted the union had been in complete disarray before Dr. Owl arrived. The previous administration had made promises to the union that were never kept, and there was a huge rift between the school organization and the administration. Mrs. Goose admired the way Dr. Owl swooped in and immediately gained control of the situation. "When he first came here, there was a great deal of animosity between the teachers and the administration. He certainly has been able to smooth that over and make the teachers trust him. We didn't have that trust with the former administration" (personal interview, May 2004). As a result, Mrs. Goose and the union had begun to trust Dr. Owl and support his decisions.

"He is fair, and I believe he is concerned about the education for all kids. He makes a good impression, and I think it is a genuine impression" (personal interview, May 2004).

The Community and the District

The Collinsville School District comprised four townships, and approximately 11, 575 people resided within the district boundaries. The city of Collinsville was once a hub for the Grand Trunk Railway system and a clock tower in the center of town depicted the railroad way of life. Although the Collinsville school district was not growing rapidly, it was a solid district that supported the 2,029 students who attended school there.

The district had 260 employees, 119 of whom were teachers; this staff serviced 2,029 students. The school district was spread out over four townships where its four elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school were located. The community of Collinsville housed a majority of these buildings as it had two of the four elementary schools, the middle school, and the high school. The Collinsville School District had a $6,700 per pupil foundation allowance and transported approximately 50% of their students.

The district itself had undergone some dramatic changes before their new superintendent, Dr. Owl, was hired. There was a definite lack of trust between the administration and the organization, as well as between the community and the organization, due to previous reports of the misappropriation of school funds. Dr. Owl began his superintendency at a time when the Collinsville School District was in complete disarray and more than $800,000 in the red. He definitely had his work cut out for him, and the task at hand was not going to be an easy one.

A Superintendent's Perspective on Leadership

Dr. Owl could not remember a time when he was "skipping and singing on the way to work" (personal interview, 2004) as a school superintendent. He did however, recall many times when he "came out of a difficult board meeting or having negotiated not only contracts, but mediated is a better word, tense situations either among employees, parents, or whatever, and came out with what I would call fair and equitable agreements and you feel satisfied in that; you feel successful that you brought success to others" (personal interview, 2004).

Dr. Owl described leadership in two ways:

> Leadership to me is a couple of things. It has to be first and foremost a shared vision of inspiration to people; I think they have to believe in you and believe in what you believe in. Then number two, leadership is also defined in knowing that during a sometimes-precarious moment, you have to act authoritatively in a solitary manner. Occasionally we don't make that right choice, but hopefully you have built a shared vision and a sense of community. (Personal interview, May 2004).

Dr. Owl believed that if the superintendent has built a shared vision and a sense of community, he or she will make the right decisions for the organization.

According to Dr. Owl, vision and a sense of community were built in a variety of ways. First of all, he maintained, there is no substitute for visibility. Dr. Owl worked to ensure that he was visible in the classroom, where he might be seen playing his guitar, or at local clubs and organizations. He worked to have the community members view him not only as a superintendent, but also as a person who was willing to make a commitment to both the school organization and the community.

Dr. Owl outlined several ways to fulfill the responsibilities of the superintendency and create a sense of community. The previous administration had not developed a shared vision in the organization, so when Dr. Owl first arrived at Collinsville he realized that this would be a tension within the organization.

> There was a huge rift between the union, which here it is called the (CEA), and the administration and board. Things were of such a nature that there were over 100 members of the (CEA) in green shirts at each board meeting because they did not have a contract. Happily, the board settled the contract just prior to my arriving on the job, so the first thing I did was meet with the (CEA) officers and we established a contract maintenance group where we had to meet every other month. (Personal interview, May 2004)

He bought pizza for the group members, and they would sit and discuss troubling issues. It was a very painful process at the beginning, as there were many issues to hash out. However, Dr. Owl had not needed to continue the group because the issues were addressed successfully and harmony in the organization was restored.

Because the previous administration still was mildly visible in the organization, Dr. Owl realized that he had to build community support. "I felt it was important, if the school was to move forward to garner any support for future bond issues as well as just for people taking more of an interest in our school, I would need to become more involved in the community" (personal interview, May 2004). With that in mind, he joined the Rotary Club, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Methodist Church. He took every available moment to work with community members and this effort had begun to pay off as Dr. Owl gradually garnered community support.

Dr. Owl believed that in addition to other responsibilities, a superintendent must lay a strong financial foundation for the district. Thus, he began building community and organizational relationships and took an open-book approach to budgeting with the

organization. Dr. Owl gained new respect when he sought input from the staff when making tough budget decisions. The staff offered valuable suggestions and the relationship between them and the superintendent grew even stronger; their support would be beneficial during difficult times.

The one area in which Dr. owl wanted to be more successful was superintendent-board relations. Dr. Owl criticized himself for not working to foster a closer working relationship with the board.

> There are seven board members; we had two board members not in attendance at the last meeting, and my contract was renewed 4 to 1. One person voted against that, and there were two that gave me scathing evaluations, and the other five were very supportive. So there are obviously some bridges that need to be built there. I don't think I even put up a single strand of rope. It was a two way street, of course, too, but I feel I could have spent more time doing that and it needed that. Like I said, I had to prioritize the other areas first; they all proved to be very fruitful, and I think they are successful. This area was not as successful, and I am turning my efforts more toward it. (Personal interview, May 2004)

Building superintendent-board relations continued to be a concern for Dr. Owl. He explained the challenge:

> I think the board at first was looking for a more traditional leader as well as a collaborative, cooperative type of leader. And I don't think I did a good enough job from that standpoint in explaining that the nuances of my particular leadership style would get the job done. Maybe not outwardly as fast as a more authoritative or dictatorial leadership style, but when it was built, when the bridge was built, it would remain standing and be very solid. I did not sell that nor make an effort to convey that, and as a result I think I pulled back, especially from those two more distant board members. I did not go out of my way to initiate a whole lot of communication, and again it was a two-way street. Rumors were circulated about me, and I would hear stories back from people that weren't very nice about my level of competence, other things that were all untrue. One board member was called out on it and caught directly lying, but it still continued on. It's a precarious position, but that's just part of that. You can't look for a winner or loser, you just have to fix that particular situation and foster that relationship. I think I need to reach out and be proactive in demonstrating my leadership style, even though not what they were particularly looking for or considered to be a successful

management style, was going to be equally successful. (Personal interview, May 2004)

The last thing that Dr. Owl believed was necessary for success in the superintendency was balancing the job with continuing educational challenges and fun. "I still like to be challenged in some different areas, and I still like to share some of the knowledge I have gained in this position and also through all my 28 years with younger administrators or administrators-to-be, as well as Ph.D. students" (personal interview, May 2004). This is all part of the balance needed in the position of superintendent and each component must be valued and addressed.

A Case of Rebuilding

When I arrived here in November of 2000, the budget was already set and that was the year we had received an additional $400 a student, and on 2,000 students, that was an additional $800,000. Previous administration had miscalculated the budget by $800,000 so in effect they had made a small miscalculation of about $1.6 million and we were $825,000 in the hole at the end of that year and that was after we had received $800,000 in state aide. As one of the local superintendents said, if you can't make ends met on an additional $400 per kid, you got real problems. Well, we had real problems and ever since then we have had to make drastic budget cuts. Basically, that previous administration spent the entire fund equity we had in one year. (Personal interview, May 2004)

Although Dr. Owl had made significant progress in recovering the almost $800,000 spent by the previous administration in 2000, the district was still losing money because state funding was not being increased and students were leaving the district. The superintendent told me,

Whenever there is financial challenges, it just shoots right through your whole staff like the plague. People are always looking over their shoulders; every time we have had to make reductions, we have not had to lay people off. Unfortunately, that will not be the case this coming year. We have been able to do that through attrition. So far, I think we are at nine teachers, two administrators, and a maintenance supervisor. We are going to lose five more teachers this year. Parapros are probably going to be laid off and probably some other support

personnel. So, externally, I think, you hope that you have been visible enough in the community and your own district so people believe that these are not malicious-type reductions; this strictly is the answer to a financial challenge. (Personal interview, May 2004)

During the 2003-04 school year, once again Dr. Owl had to make some tough decisions to combat the projected $537,000 budget deficit for the following school year. These decisions included a budget-cutting proposal to lay off 26 employees and outsource the district's custodial services. The proposal created tremendous dissent in the district, and the relationships that Dr. Owl had worked so diligently to repair were on the verge of disintegrating. Dr. Owl's proposal recommended cutting 20 paraprofessional positions, six custodial jobs, and five teaching positions that could be eliminated through attrition. "We realized this does affect people, their lives, and their plans. That's why it took us so much time to arrive at this decision" (personal interview, 2004). The community became polarized, and to make matters worse, the proposed budget passed 5-2.

The two board members who voted against the proposal voiced their disapproval to local newspapers, thereby adding to the tension that already existed in the community. They pointed out that the athletic budget was increased by $10,000 and that funds slated for North Central Accreditation were reduced. The board members thought these items were pushed through, and they publicly announced that they wondered what else was going on behind their backs. The local papers labeled the budget-cutting process as a "slash-and-burn operation" (personal interview, May 2004).

According to Dr. Owl, things had never been more dismal.

For the first time in my career, at the board meeting, I had to signal my secretary to call 911 when one of the local citizens became irate that we were outsourcing the

custodians and then the spouse of one of the custodians that we outsourced became irate and would not stop talking. They were making threatening gestures to the board, so I signaled my secretary to call 911, which she did; it took the police 15 minutes to get there. They did talk to the individuals in the parking lot, and that was a tension. I knew, in the 29 years I had been doing this, that was a real significant moment because if it was handled poorly, or the press had gotten hold of it, we probably would have got a lot of negative publicity about having to do that. But again, I felt the police presence was necessary because I was unsure about the actions of these two gentlemen and where it was going to lead; it was very emotional, and they said and made very threatening comments and gestures to the board. It turned out fine though; they both got very aggravated and got up and left, which was beneficial for us all. (Personal interview, May 2004)

Dr. Owl and the board of education also decided to contract out nearly half of the district's maintenance jobs paying a firm in order to save money. The district went from spending $550,000 in wages and benefits to $168,696 to provide custodial services. Dr. Owl worked with the community in an attempt to soften the blow, and he experienced a much success in this otherwise grim situation. The superintendent continued to build relationships with his staff and community by opening the school's books to prove to staff members that the organization was in a desolate financial situation. Staff and community members appreciated his honesty and despite negative publicity, Dr. Owl and the organization worked through this formidable issue.

At the time of this study, the Collinsville School District still had financial problems, but Dr. Owl's vision and leadership had helped move the organization through its financial difficulties. He prided himself on the fact that the students continued to be a top priority and those programs that directly affected student achievement still prospered in the Collinsville School District. Dr. Owl did not pretend to have all the answers, but he believed that communication and strong bonds with the community and school organization were essential in weathering difficult times (personal interview, 2004). Dr.

Owl planned to continue using these techniques in coming months and years to combat the challenges facing the Collinsville School District.

CHAPTER V

AN ANALYTICAL DISCUSSION

Introduction

My primary purpose in this study was to investigate how three superintendents made sense of their role and how that personal theory defined their leadership practice. During the course of this study I hoped to uncover whether the increasing challenges facing today's superintendents induced changes in their leadership roles. The initial research question posed was: How do school superintendents make sense of their role and how does that personal theory define their practice? The focus of this study was enhanced through the development of the following subquestions:

- How do superintendents think about their role, and to what extent does this personal theory affect their practice?

- To what degree do alternative leadership theories explain how superintendents define their role and carry out their work?

- What implications does an understanding of superintendents' theory and practice have for the preparation of school superintendents?

These research questions supported my original assumption that the superintendent is the key driver, the centripetal force, of organizational change.

Examining the data, framing cogent case stories of practice, and using my initial, proposed lenses led me to seek alternative ways of understanding the superintendents' practice, which included the thinking of McCabe, Cunningham, Harvey, and Koff (2005); Bolman and Deal (2002); and Morgan (1998)(see chapter II for a discussion of each of the theoretical constructs developed by these authors). These scholars have enriched my

thinking in the areas of school leadership, organizational structure, and administrative behavior. In brief, McCabe et al. (2005) expanded my understanding of the nature of school leadership by using metaphors to describe the leadership behavior and practices of the school superintendent. Bolman and Deal (2002) provided me the framework to approach the superintendent's leadership by understanding it within the context of organizational structures, politics, and culture. Similarly, Morgan's (1998) work provided me with further insight into how a superintendent behaves within particular organizational cultures (e.g. a machine, brain, organism, psychic prison).

As is true with most qualitative studies, overarching themes that described the practices of the school superintendent emerged and helped me respond to the research questions. The first theme is that of "fit". This notion of "fit" explains how the superintendent's leadership and management approach aligns with (or not) the needs and culture of the school organization. The second theme centers on situated leadership, which serves to illustrate the superintendent's leadership. The third theme describes how the superintendent engages (or not) school stakeholders, thereby building trusting relationships. Each theme is integral to understanding each superintendent's practice. That is, recognizing how the superintendents define each of these themes (his personal theory) and how he translates these themes to practice will help to better address the overall query of this dissertation.

Thematic Analysis

Theme I: Gaining Organizational Fit

What does it mean for superintendents to fit within the school organization? And, why is fit an important element of the superintendent's work?

Fit is defined in the dictionary as "adapted to the environment so as to be capable of surviving" (Webster, 1993, p. 440). According to McCabe et al. (2005), as a superintendent begins to gain fit in the organization he may act out a metaphor of leadership such as a prophet, a therapist, a coach, and a poet. Thus, if the superintendent has the insight to understand the complexities of the organization and can find the appropriate leadership approach to move the organization forward then there is successful fit. Conversely, if he misreads or inappropriately approaches the organization there is no fit. Therefore, organizational fit is an important element of the superintendent's work because it helps him to know his school organization, define his practice of leadership, which would (hopefully) result in moving the organization forward.

If the superintendent has achieved organizational fit, he is likely to be seen as a leader who has the capacity to increase the coherency of an organization. However, if the superintendent is unable to achieve organizational fit, it is likely he will not be able to function as the leader or fulfill the duties of the superintendency. As Webster's (1993) definition suggests, if the superintendent has not adapted to the environment, he may not be capable of surviving. Without survival, the goals and objectives of the organization will be unattained, creating a sense of imbalance within the organization.

The data that were collected throughout the course of this study and presented in the case studies support the importance of understanding "fit", leadership and

organizational behavior. Indeed, it is the superintendent's task to determine the needs of

the organization (its organizational framework, Bolman and Deal, 1992) and define

leadership strategies that fit his particular situation within this organizational milieu.

What was found in this study was that each of the superintendents adjusted his leadership

strategies, both appropriately and inappropriately, to fit the school's organizational

framework.

Three Superintendent's Stories of Organizational Fit

As previously suggested, organizational fit can be achieved by gaining a deeper

understanding of leadership and organizational behavior. A way to view organization fit

is by understanding how the superintendent defined the culture of his organization and

his role within that defined framework (See: Carter & Cunningham 1997; Glass 1992;

Cuban 1989; Fullan 1991; and McCabe et al. 2005). In the cases, the superintendent's

ability (or inability) to read the organization determined whether they were effective.

Mr. Goldfinch: Trapped in a political structure. Mr. Goldfinch was not a typical

superintendent who served as a prophet of an organization in which he used positional

power to move the organization forward. Rather, he appeared to be a songbird trapped in

a cage called the school organization. Major changes needed to occur in the organization,

but Mr. Goldfinch did not have the knowledge or power to make those changes occur.

For example, Mr. Goldfinch needed to make a change in the football program at

Arborville. Having been winless for the last four years, Mr. Goldfinch felt the head

football coach had more than an ample opportunity to prove himself. Therefore, Mr.

Goldfinch, with the support of the board, made the recommendation to terminate the

football coach's contract. However, the community and various stakeholders of the

organization disagreed with this decision. This time, the Arborville fans did not rally together for the football game, they rallied against the superintendent and the board. Three board members were recalled and the new members brought even more tension to the school organization.

Mr. Goldfinch didn't understand the needs of the community or the organization and he didn't process the possible consequences of his decision. Mr. Goldfinch may have been able to prevent this community uproar if he had worked to gain organizational fit. Mr. Goldfinch needed to understand the culture of the organization and the community so he could bring about change without major controversy.

Another example of Mr. Goldfinch's inability to gain organizational fit can be drawn from the Arborville case. Arborville had not passed a bond in several years and the board charged their superintendent to move forward with yet another bond proposal. Mr. Goldfinch and the board drafted another proposal that would build a new elementary school, but they didn't solicit input from the community or the stakeholders of the organization. Mr. Goldfinch's inability to understand the culture of the community and the needs of the organization resulted in yet another failed bond proposal.

In 2002, the Arborville community voted to accept the bond proposal, which resulted in repairs and renovations to current buildings. Mr. Goldfinch showed signs of organizational fit as he began to understand the needs of the organization and the community. He adjusted his leadership practice and began to seek community and staff input. Mr. Goldfinch organized town meetings and it was at that point, he began to understand that the community would not pass a bond proposal that included a new

building. Therefore, he organized a proposal that would meet the needs of the organization and fulfill the expectations of the community.

As the Arborville case suggests, a highly controlling and politicized board and volatile community, plagued Mr. Goldfinch. While he claimed that he understood the political tensions within the school and community at large, he did not appear to have a plan for dealing with these obstacles. Mr. Goldfinch didn't understand the needs of the organization as was illustrated in the turmoil surrounding the football coach and the inability to pass a bond in several years. It appeared that Mr. Goldfinch tried to understand the various interest groups, as well as their separate agendas; however, he did not employ the appropriate leadership approach to move the organization and community forward.

Since Mr. Goldfinch was unable to read the culture of the organization correctly and since he did not define his role and responsibilities in the organization appropriately, he had to rely on a small degree of legal or positional authority to make things happen within the district. This small degree of authority allowed him to keep the organization in compliance with all state and federal mandates. However, over the years the continued absence of trust and organizational fit, led to the creation of a powerful board. This shift in power ultimately contributed to Arborville's plight and their present state of being a ship without a captain. If Mr. Goldfinch had been able to adjust his leadership tactics to a more prophet-like approach, he might have regained legitimacy within the organization.

Dr. Kingfisher: The coach in a symbolic framework. Dr. Kingfisher was an example of a coach who employed charismatic authority in a symbolic framework. Within a symbolic framework, an organizational leader must understand how a

community defines and enacts their relational protocols. For instance, when the school needed a place to house the alternative education program, Dr. Kingfisher saw an opportunity to network with the local church. Because the community church has strong historical meaning for the residents, placing the alternative school in this setting would send a message that this was an important program. In addition, this presented Dr. Kingfisher with an opportunity to begin networking with church officials so that they felt included (and hopefully supportive of) in the work of the school. As would be expected, many of the church elders were against housing the alternative school at the church, however, Dr. Kingfisher worked to educate them about the students who would be attending, in an effort to re-define the stereotypes that many held about alternative students. These conversations helped reduced the tensions between the school organization and the church. Dr. Kingfisher's ability to read his school community, coupled with his leadership approach created an optimal situation for the transition of the alternative education students and staff.

An ultimate way that Dr. Kingfisher was a coach within the organization was how he used positional power to empower the teachers and other educational stakeholders to make decisions. Dr. Kingfisher understood and respected the importance of building a respectful teacher culture. During the transition of the alternative high school, Dr. Kingfisher collaborated with teachers to reassure them that he cared about their plight. He empowered teachers to make decisions that supported the organization's culture for learning and student success. Since, Dr. Kingfisher had a clear plan of action for the transition of the alternative education program to a new site prior to the sale of the existing facility, minor conflict arose within the organization and community. His ability

to plan, rethink, evaluate, and analyze each situation helped him create balance within the organization.

Unlike Mr. Goldfinch, Dr. Kingfisher had the capacity to examine his school organization as well as the organizations/groups in the community that his school served and employed these lessons to define his leadership strategies in ways that overcame obstacles and benefited the school. Because Dr. Kingfisher found a "fit" that worked, he appeared to be energetic and passionate, which enabled him to focus his leadership on developing a common vision that enhanced the culture of the organization. In the end, Dr. Kingfisher was a model and mentor to others in the school organization.

Dr. Owl: Learning to use all leadership frameworks. The Collinsville District and Dr. Owl found themselves in a volatile situation with the possible outsourcing of custodial personnel and the layoffs of paraprofessionals. Because of the financial strain on the district, Dr. Owl and the board had to make some very difficult decisions, ones that were not well received by the community. The Collinsville District needed to make major changes, they needed an educational leader that would have the expertise to address the financial crises (in a transparent way) created by the previous administration as well as construct an environment that would rebuild trusting relationships focused on learning and teaching. Dr. Owl had a plan to address this daunting task and all he needed to do was to communicate, and keep communicating by making all decisions transparent to the school community and broader community, a clear direction for the organization.

Unlike Mr. Goldfinch and Dr. Kingfisher, Dr. Owl found himself making decisions that could employ all four of Bolman and Deal's (1991) frameworks of leadership. Due to impending personnel lay-offs, Dr. Owl understood that he needed to

work with people, the human relationships framework, helping them to become a part of the solution. In many cases, helping them "heal" from the neglect and disrespect they had encountered prior to his arrival. From the political frame, Dr. Owl worked to negotiate conflicts between people and the organization (e.g., teachers and school board, teacher's union and school board, community members/parents and teachers, to name a few). As soon as it was suggested that personnel be laid off and positions be outsourced, Dr. Owl found himself in a politicized situation in which he needed to maintain a focus on teaching and learning and not on what personnel platform was better than the other.

In this situation, he held open forum meetings with the board, the staff, and the community to discuss the financial situation of the district. The human relational connections that Dr. Owl built supported his ideal of transparency and empowerment. The political frame teaches us that power is information, when Dr. Owl made the financial information transparent; the community stakeholders (in and out of school) were empowered to become a part of the solution. Indeed, various stakeholders had the opportunity to voice concerns and make suggestions, and in the end when the lay-offs were announced the community understood why the decision had been made.

As we learn, Dr. Owl believes that people are the heart of the organization. Hence, he works hard to maintain open lines of communication within the organization. Dr. Owl read the culture of the organization as needing healing and he acted appropriately. Thus began the tradition of building structures and pathways of trust building and healing within the organization. This process of trust building, transparency in decision-making, and listening to the stakeholders guided the organization through the conflicts related to outsourcing and personnel layoffs. Because he was able to adapt to the

environment and survive this challenging time in the district, he strengthened his legitimacy as an educational leader. More importantly, Dr. Owl reminded us that it is important to keep our focus on the needs of the teaching and learning organization.

Was organizational fit achieved? Mr. Goldfinch was unable to gain organizational fit, and this may have contributed to his decision to retire. Mr. Goldfinch perceived himself as having positional power and legitimate authority within the organization. However, the professional community perceived the board as having more power within the organization, so when problems arose Mr. Goldfinch was unable to resolve the tensions. As the leader, he should have adjusted his leadership tactics and gained control of the organization; instead, his inability to read the culture of the organization and adapt to a changing environment, caused him to be unsuccessful in Arborville.

Dr. Kingfisher and Dr. Owl were able to achieve organizational fit, as they were able to navigate a particular situation, understanding the culture of the organization and framing leadership strategies to meet the needs of the organization. They were also able to build trusting relationships, which in the end would help them to move the organization forward (please see my final theme). Ultimately, the ability to gain leadership approach and organization "fit" became a key construct of how they defined their practice as a superintendent.

Conceptual Summary. Organizational fit is accomplished by gaining a clearer understanding of leadership, organizational behavior, and the employment of power and authority. By achieving this understanding, a superintendent can likely bring new meaning and definition to his work as an educational leader. This can then support his practice of leadership, which can have a positive effect on the growth of the organization.

The Venn diagram in Figure 5.1 illustrates how these three concepts support this notion of organizational fit. It is unlikely that organizational fit will be achieved unless the superintendent understands all three of these lenses.
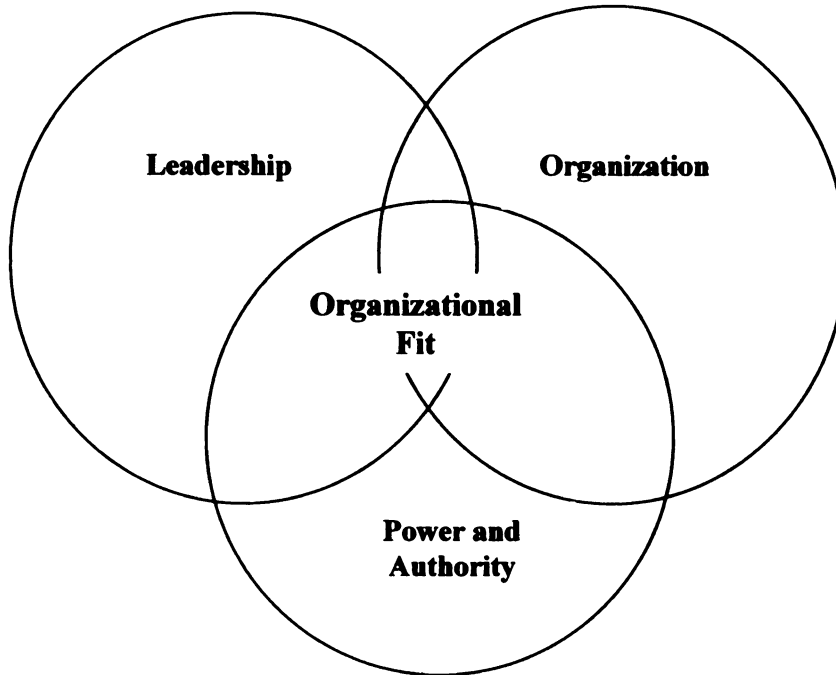
Figure 5.1 Gaining Organizational Fit

As Webster's (1993) definition suggests, if the superintendent has not adapted to the environment, he may not be capable of surviving. Without survival, the goals and objectives of the organization will be unattained, creating a sense of imbalance within the organization. Gaining organizational fit appears to be a key element in the successful practice of a superintendent because it enables the superintendent to fulfill the duties ascribed to the position. Through leadership frameworks in the organization, and power and authority, the superintendent can make decisions that enhance the organization. The superintendent can serve as a navigator, steering the organization

through difficult or turbulent times. If he has achieved organizational fit, it is likely he can have more organizational control, which will ultimately help him move the organization forward.

Theme II: Situated Leadership

What does it mean for a superintendent to "locate and practice leadership in an ethical and forward-looking manner"? And, why is this an important element of the superintendent's work?

The challenge for a superintendent is to enact leadership in an ethical and forward-looking manner within a particular school and school community context. As we learned in the first theme of "fit", the effective superintendent gains an understanding of how the organization, board, and community functions, which enables him to make appropriate decisions that benefit the organization. So how do these three superintendents appear to lead? The emergent them can be called situated leadership, that is, the leaders practice is defined by their school context/community, school community history, and place (environmental characteristics). A superintendent needs to understand the existing governance system and maneuver within that system. So when he is second-guessed by internal and external sources, he is prepared to successfully lead the organization. The data collected in this study demonstrates the struggles and tribulations a superintendent may experience as he works to define his practice of leadership.

Mr. Goldfinch: Pulling the wrong plants in the garden. Mr. Goldfinch's leadership practices did not align with the needs of his school district or his community. Mr. Goldfinch experienced difficulties in adjusting his leadership strategies to meet the needs of the school organization. An example of this was when two elementary teachers

99

went straight to the board for the purchase of language arts materials. The elementary principal followed board procedures and organized a curriculum review committee, which made the determination that new language arts materials were not needed. Mr. Goldfinch ignored the recommendation and supported the board president's decision to purchase the language arts materials. He made and enacted a decision that ethically harmed the school organization. His support of the board in this issue confirmed to the stakeholders that the power within the district lay with the board and not with the teachers.

Although Mr. Goldfinch perceived his actions were creating a positive, fruitful forward-looking pathway, he failed (miserably). For these stakeholders is was yet another instance when Mr. Goldfinch did not make the right decisions to increase teaching and learning in Arborville. They remembered that when Mr. Goldfinch arrived at Arborville, he had an opportunity to demonstrate situated leadership and work with staff to develop an aligned curriculum that would meet the needs of the students. However, he chose to meet with the board and encourage them to purchase a "canned" curriculum program. The board agreed and the program was pushed down to teachers. Mr. Goldfinch's decision not to involve teachers in curriculum development created tension and the teachers distanced themselves from their new superintendent.

Dr. Kingfisher: Developing shared meaning. As we learned through the case, the school district needed "healing" due to its long history of abuse and lies. Dr. Kingfisher's leadership practice was defined by this important need, hence, situated within the context and place of this particular school community. He served as a coach to individuals, groups, school buildings, and communities by encouraging participation in the

development of shared decision-making. For example, Dr. Kingfisher holds monthly strategic planning meetings with teachers, support staff, and community members to develop and foster a shared vision for the district. While the vision may not change from one year to the next, the goals and strategies to support the vision may need to be adjusted. This promotes a shared vision that supports the culture of teaching and learning in Bakersville.

Another way in which Dr. Kingfisher employed situated leadership was in his efforts to assure the teachers, administrators, and community stakeholders that he was listening to them, he was willing and open to change and consider new ways of thinking, and had his eye on the prize, that is, to ensure the right things are done for the learners and the stakeholders of the organization. As an example, Bakersville was one of the first districts to implement full-day kindergarten for all incoming kindergarten students. The curriculum committee researched the pros and cons of full-day kindergarten and collected data from districts currently utilizing the program. They made a recommendation that was supported with theoretical and empirical data to Dr. Kingfisher. Dr. Kingfisher then met with teachers, support staff, and community members to gain insight as to their views on the program. Once he was convinced it was the right thing to do for the students, he made a recommendation to the board. The board approved the program, which helped to create balance in the organization.

Once a new program or a change initiative is implemented in the Bakersville organization, Dr. Kingfisher reflects on his leadership practice. "I tell people often that at the end of the day the only thing I have left is my reputation and my ethics, so I think that leadership starts with being a role model and living day to day ethically and honestly. I

think that leadership from there is taking quality people, good people, talented people and kinda being a catalyst for change. Having people think outside the box and take chances and create something better than what we had when we started" (personal interview, 2004).

Dr. Owl: Listening to community can create forward-moving action. Much like Dr. Kingfisher, Dr. Owl found himself in an organization that was functioning as an organism and a brain (Morgan, 1998). Different than Dr. Kingfisher, Dr. Owl found himself on a collision course that pitted the school with the teacher's union. A decision needed to be made. Would Dr. Owl side with the school board? Would he side with the teachers? Or, was there another pathway that would help him to create a win-win situation for the players, but more importantly to ensure that the learning environment was not harmed. Dr. Owl had to work closely with the community, the various unions, and the board to overcome the fiscal challenges facing the district.

The decisions that Dr. Owl and the board made were viewed as ethical and as necessary for the survival of the district. They sought community input during board meetings and citizen meetings, which gave the stakeholders an opportunity to voice their concerns. While these meetings were extremely beneficial, there were still citizens who were outraged by the decision to outsource. Dr. Owl situated his leadership on his deep understanding of the tensions that enveloped this messy situation and especially the hostility in the environment that it had created. Skillfully including multiple voices in the problem-solving process is a leadership practice that was most appropriate and resulted in the organization developing the capacity to move past this particular situation forward through turbulent times.

Dr. Owl continues to reflect on his practice as a leader in order to become a better leader in Collinsville. He strives to be proactive in communicating his leadership; however there have been instances when he wasn't as successful. "I don't think I did a good enough job from that standpoint in explaining that the nuances of my particular leadership style would get the job done. Maybe not outwardly as fast as a more authoritative or dictatorial leadership style but when it was built, when the bridge was built it would remain standing and be very solid. I did not sell that nor make an effort to convey that and as a result I think I pulled back" (personal interview, May 2004).

Summary. The three components outlined in the Venn diagram in Figure 5.2 illustrate how the three lenses of commonplaces (McCabe et al., 2005), organizational understanding (Morgan, 1998), and reflective action (Johnson, 1996) support the ethical and forward-looking dynamic of situated leadership.
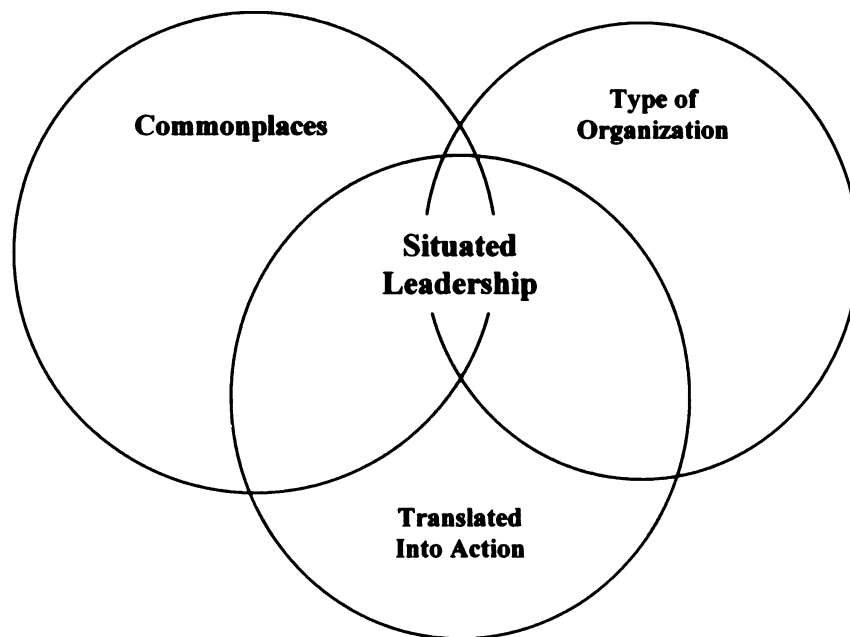

Figure 5.2: Situated Leadership

The superintendent can work to develop situated leadership where decisions are

made in a forward-looking manner so that no harm comes to the organization. His ability

to do this will help foster school-community partnerships and develop a high level of

cohesiveness within the school. Effective superintendents will recognize the value of, and

are equipped with the necessary tools to strengthen the organization. It is no longer

sufficient for the superintendent to understand leadership; he must translate that

leadership into action and adjust his leadership tactics to meet the needs of his particular

organization; situated leadership.

Theme III: The Importance of Relationships in Shaping the Organization

How do relationships help define the practice of the school superintendent?
"Establishing positive and supportive relationships is like putting money in the bank"

(Carter & Cunningham, 1997, p. 139). The three superintendents identified that school

and school-community relationships are an essential element of their practice. This

included facilitating and participating in multi-direction communication within and

across the organization and between the school and external communities and

institutions; encouraging active participation by many stakeholders in school-related

activities, and supporting a philosophy of shared and situated leadership. While all three

superintendents identified this as a key leadership practice, their ability to actualize this

varied. It is in this variability that we learn the importance of today's superintendent

moving beyond the idea of public relations, that is being the "front man" for the

organization to public engagement where he is authentically involved in the work of the school as well as the broader community.

Public engagement is a method of involving the public in designing system change and it can involve all sectors of the community and school organization (McCabe et al, 2005). These strategies create dialogue and build relationships among stakeholders to support the direction of the school organization. Such collaboration supports school reform and creates a balanced organization.

An example of how effective public engagement can transform the organization through dialogue can be found in the Collinsville case. Dr. Owl utilized community forums as an avenue to disseminate information and receive feedback from the community in regards to outsourcing. He was able to strengthen and transform his relationships by building capacity and sustainability in the school and community. By promoting ongoing dialogue about the perplexing and highly volatile issue of outsourcing while at the same time respecting the public's opinions, Dr. Owl was able to effectively address these otherwise unanticipated changes in the force field around the school (McCabe et al, 2005). As we learned in the case, this practice of respectful dialogue and inclusion resulted in many affirmative allies for the school.

Another example of the importance of building relationships is visible in Dr. Kingfisher's courageous and transparent work with the community church. He recognized the importance the support of the church elders as well as church members were to the school. This influential group needed to become school partners. His action to reach-out and engage in conversation with the church elders reveals his respect for their opinions and contributions to the school community. This symbolic move healed many

rifts and created opportunities for solutions to happen. In the end, we see in Dr. Kingfisher's case how hard he worked to engage the community around the "can do's" of solutions, not the "can't" of oppressive needs. This example illuminates an important dimension of building relationships that support public engagement, that is, when done in an inclusive and respectful manner the superintendent can create pathways and processes that build the capacity of people within the school system to create and sustain change.

Creating capacity within the organization to build and sustain change can provide the superintendent with important allies and "windows" that might allow the superintendent to see where both internal school functions and external opportunities can be bridged. Having a finger on the pulse of the organization is essential. For instance, because the teachers had been working for three years without a contract in Collinsville, Dr. Owl knew that creating bridges between the school and the union, the teachers and the administration, and the teachers and administrators with the broader school community would lead to a win-win outcome. As we learned in his case, his tireless and effective "talking with" and linking partner who "talked with" and then "talking with" again, always involving the stakeholders, gave the groups involved the relationship edge they needed to settle the contract dispute. This activity produced a model of dialogue that resulted in effective communication across the school community, the school board, and the teachers union. Because the stakeholders became partners (and not adversaries) they were able to "see" all parts of the organization, which ultimately resulted in the contract resolution.

If we think of public engagement in Morgan's (1998) terms, we know that differences of opinion are to be expected on any given occasion and hence the importance

of building relationships. We learned from the examples of Dr. Kingfisher and Dr. Owl the power of trusting and respectful relationships. Equipped with this knowledge the superintendent can help administrators, teachers, students, and families to build bridges and create partnerships that serve to improve learning programs. As Carter and Cunningham (1997) suggest, the school superintendent can create opportunities for school members to participate in providing new direction through strengthening and supporting relationships. The health of the organization depends on how the superintendent uses differing points of view to build collaborative and cohesive relationships that help "shape" a well-balanced organization.

Dr. Kingfisher: Building community relationship. Dr. Kingfisher showed how important building relationships with the community was when a thorny situation arose. In this case, the closing of the alternative high school could have created chaos and tension within the community and the school organization. However, because Dr. Kingfisher had taken the time to build strong community relationships with individuals within and external to the school community, he was able to locate a win-win solution for the school and the community it serves.

The staff of the alternative high school were fearful that the program would be discontinued when the building was sold, however, Dr. Kingfisher quickly eased the tensions within the school community by meeting with key stakeholders. Since Dr. Kingfisher had developed trusting relationships, the stakeholders had no reason to doubt him and they moved to their new location with little incident. In the end, Dr. Kingfisher stated,

> If I develop those relationships within the community and we have a difficult
> problem at school that is going to be controversial, often times there are leaders

107

within the community or the school that would say, that's probably not the way it is, our superintendent would have a reason for doing that. So it's building trust and building that relationship internal and external to the school. (Personal interview, May 2004)

Dr. Owl: Building relationships with the board. In contrast to Dr. Kingfisher's emphasis on external community relations, Dr. Owl appeared to focus much of his relationship building activity with school board members. Early on in his superintendency, Dr. Owl knew that two board members were not pleased with his leadership. At the time, he explained there were many more relationships (e.g., teachers, building level administrators, parents) that he needed to attend to, however after a couple of years into the job, he turned his attention to the school board. He understood, the importance of strong and effective board and superintendent relationships. He stated:

> I did not sell or make an effort to convey to those board members my leadership style, and as a result I think I pulled back, especially from those two more distant board members. I did not go out of my way to initiate a whole lot of communication, and again it was a two-way street. . . . You can't look for a winner or loser, you just have to fix that particular situation and foster that relationship. I think I need to reach out and be proactive in demonstrating my leadership style. (Personal interview, May 2004).

Dr. Owl began to e-mail the two board members to ask for their opinions and suggestions in regards to various situations that arose in the district. He worked to create a sense of community within the board by holding smaller committee meetings and luncheons. Dr. Owl also talked highly of the board during newspaper interviews and other public venues such as chamber of commerce meetings. Dr. Owl made a conscious effort not to be defensive when the board members criticized his tactics and he worked to foster two-way communication. His efforts helped bridge the gap between himself and the board and those relationships that he built helped minimize tension within the organization during difficult times.

108

Mr. Goldfinch: Relationship-building shortfalls. Both Kingfisher and Owl

identified the value of relationships as an effective element that engaged them in

authentic ways with their school board, school community, and public communities. In

contrast, Mr. Goldfinch acknowledged the importance of supportive relationships, but

through his interviews we learned that building and fostering these relationships was not

a priority. He stated:

> Your friends come and go, your enemies gather in the administrative world. That truly happens, so the longer you stay in the district, unfortunately, the more people you may turn off as a leader. . . . That's probably the biggest issue, you're going to have an element out there that, if you are honest with yourself, is not necessarily in your camp; you know if they had their way you would be gone. On the other hand, you're going to have a group that really supports you and are behind the actions that you have taken over the years and are committed to your leadership, and you hope that group is a lot larger than the other group. Being realistic, you are going to have both groups out there. (Personal interview, May 2004)

Mr. Goldfinch knew that he needed support to implement his vision for the

organization, but it appears that he had not yet grasped the importance of building

effective relationships. He stated:

> You start with the board of education and you get them to agree that they share those values and goals with you because then you know you have a mandate to proceed. . . . You also get, hopefully, the community to buy in; you try to share with them what's going on as much as you can, so that you can ultimately be successful. Because if you can't implement your visions, your dreams, or goals for the district, you're going nowhere. (Personal interview, May 2004).

As previously stated, public engagement is a method of involving the public in

designing system change and it can involve all sectors of the community and school

organization (McCabe et al, 2005). This will help create dialogue and build relationships

among stakeholders to support the direction of the school organization. Mr. Goldfinch

wanted to get the community to buy in, but he did not have the collaboration needed to

support the values and goals of the organization. His inability to build the school-community alliance has resulted in a fragmented Arborville community and school organization.

Chapter Summary

My primary purpose in this study was to investigate how three superintendents made sense of their role and how that personal theory defined their leadership practice. An analysis of the case stories revealed the importance of three dimensions of the superintendent's work: a) leadership approach and organizational fit; b) situated leadership that ensures ethical and insightful action; and c) relationship building that engages the superintendent in the real work of the school (see Figure 5.3). It is important to mention here that while I defined each of these elements separately in this analysis, they are not disconnected from one another. That is, each of these important elements must be seen as integrally liked in the practice of the school superintendent.

As I used the conceptual lenses to analyze the leadership practice of the superintendent, the third theme seemed to crosscut through the other themes. In order for there to be fit and situated leadership, trusting relationships need to exist. Recently, research has indicated how important trusting relationships are to educational leaders. Building these trusting relationships helps the superintendent understand the organization so that he may build pathways for the organization. The relationship-building process is key to moving the organization forward, and a close analysis of the data led me to recognize that building relationships is essential to supporting the practice of the school superintendent.

Indeed, it became clear that a superintendent must understand his leadership practice (use and balance of all three elements) in order to be successful in creating a dynamic learning organization. In addition, we have learned from their stories that the school superintendent must also understand the fluidity of the organization and prepare himself to alter or shift his leadership tactics to meet any changes that occur within the organization.
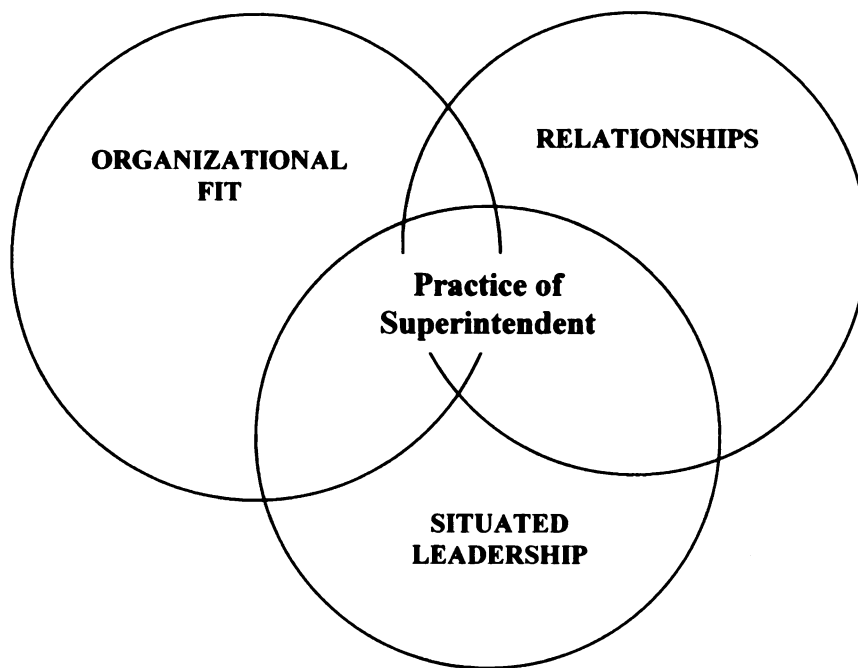

Figure 5.3 The Practice of a Superintendent

CHAPTER VI

THE PRACTICE OF LEADERSHIP

Introduction

My main purpose in this study was to investigate how three superintendents made

sense of their role and how that personal theory defined their leadership practice. By

examining the raw data, framing that information into cogent case stories of practice, and

drawing on emergent themes, I generated a new model of the superintendent's practice of

leadership. The conceptual model (Figure 1.1) that was introduced at the beginning of

this study suggested that the superintendent acts as the force that keeps the organization

in motion. This conceptual model incorporated the superintendent's roles and

responsibilities, leadership, relationships, and environment into what was deemed the

centripetal force of the superintendent. However, through the course of this study, I

discovered new research and empirical findings, which caused me to refocus the study

and develop a new model.

The new model of centripetal force moves beyond roles and responsibilities,

leadership, relationships, and the environment to the superintendent's practice of leading.

Although each of these original factors plays an important role in the superintendent's

practice of leadership, it was necessary to revise and readjust the model to correspond to

the refocusing of the study. The writings of various researchers (Bolman & Deal, 1991,

2002; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; McCabe et al., 2005; Morgan, 1998; and

Sergiovanni, 1987, 1992) challenged me to view the superintendent's work through

different theoretical lenses. This new way of viewing the superintendent's work helped

me answer the research questions posed in this study. The revised model will be described in detail as this chapter unfolds and the research questions are answered.

Illumination of Results

By examining the superintendents' theory and practice, I intended to discover whether the increasing challenges facing today's superintendents induced changes in their leadership roles. While answering the research questions posed in this study, it became evident that the superintendent's practice of leadership was also a major component of this study. The overarching question in this exploratory study was: How do school superintendents make sense of their role, and how does that personal theory define their leadership practice? The themes outlined in Chapter V laid the foundation for answering this overarching question.

The superintendent is able to make sense of his role through a deeper understanding of organizational fit, situated leadership, and relationship building. How the superintendent applies this knowledge and understanding affects how he will handle each dilemma or situation that arises in his organization. The superintendent's practice of leadership can then be defined because the superintendent must adjust his leadership tactics to meet these changing situations. In essence, each situation that arises puts the superintendent's practice of leadership in motion. The superintendent is likely to be successful if he draws from his knowledge of the organization, applies a particular leadership tactic, and utilizes the relationships he has established when making decisions.

Making sense of his role helps the superintendent define himself as an educational leader. The first research question-- how do superintendents think about their role and to what extent does this personal theory affect their practice? Superintendents, whether

intentionally or unintentionally, define themselves as leaders. This definition of leadership influences their role as a superintendent, which in turn affects their practice. The superintendent's understanding of himself and how he applies his leadership in a particular situation will ultimately define his practice as an educational leader. It is the superintendent's application of leadership tactics that creates balance within the organization and allows him to navigate through difficult times.

In this study, two subquestions were posed to further define the practice of the superintendent. These questions pertain to the external and internal organizational pressures that shape how the superintendent defines his role and practice. From the data analysis, it was evident that the superintendent cannot pick and choose the internal and external pressures facing the organization. The superintendent, therefore, should rely on his leadership abilities to sift through these pressures. In this study, it appeared that the superintendents pulled external pressures into the organization and internalized these pressures. As the superintendent pulls these pressures inward, the external pressures quickly become internal to the organization, and through this internalization process, the superintendent is able to draw on his practice of leadership within the comfort zone of the organization.

The second research question posed in this study was: To what degree do alternative leadership theories (transformational leadership, change theories, distributive theories, etc.) explain how superintendents define their role and carry out and their work? The three themes discussed in Chapter V describe how organizational, leadership, and change theories can be used to define the practice of the superintendent. Theorists such as McCabe et al. (2005), Bolman and Deal (1991), and Morgan (1998) enriched this study

by providing insight into school leadership, and organizational structure and behavior. These theories help explain how the superintendent defines and does his work.

The third research question posed in this study was: What implications does an understanding of superintendents' theory and practice have for the preparation of school superintendents? The most obvious implication of understanding the superintendent's theory and practice is that if the superintendent is able to gain organizational fit, build relationships, and apply situated leadership, he is likely to be more successful and ultimately better prepared to lead the organization. If the superintendent is successful, then teachers, students, and the community are benefited. Superintendents who are well prepared for the challenges of the job are likely to create balanced organizations.

The Revised Conceptual Model Revealed

The conceptual model of the centripetal force of the superintendent evolved during this study as the research questions were answered. The model illustrates the practice of the superintendent and how a balanced organization is created from a combination of the three themes: organizational fit, situated leadership, and relationship-building. Much like Newton's Law suggests, the superintendent should balance internal and external forces to maintain a cohesive, free-flowing organization. The organization will stay in motion with or without a leader, but the path or direction of the organization will be influenced either positively or negatively, based on the superintendent's leadership. If the superintendent applies the components that define the practice of leadership, he will be able to create a harmonious and balanced organization.

These components that define the practice of leadership emerged from the empirical findings and were explained in Chapter V. These themes support the idea that

the centripetal force is the superintendent's practice of leadership. Organizational fit, situated leadership, and relationship building all contribute to creating a balanced organization. The effective superintendent should understand and apply these themes to create a fluid, yet balanced organization. The redesigned conceptual model (Figure 6.1) shows how a balanced organization would appear if the superintendent has a clear understanding of the practice of leadership. This model provides a way to view the practice of the superintendent conceptually.
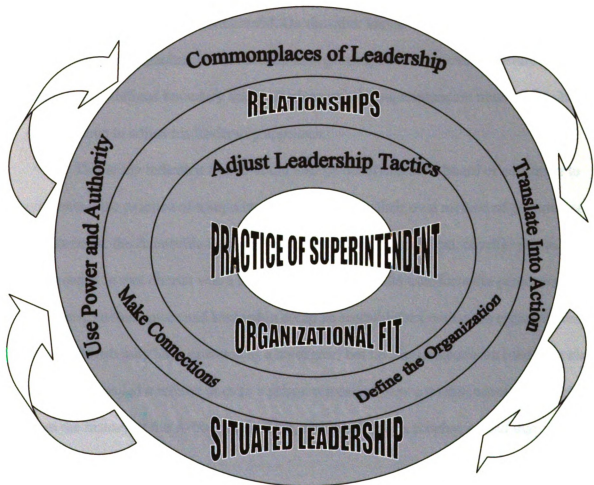

Figure 6.1 The Centripetal Force of the Superintendency

Implications and Contribution of This Study

McCabe et al. (2005) used metaphors to demonstrate how a superintendent may function in the organization, but they did not provide insight into how a prophet, a poet, a therapist, and a coach may function in a particular type of organization. They defined how a leader may "act out" a particular metaphor, but in gaining insight into the practice of the superintendent, there must be a clear understanding of how the superintendent's particular leadership style meshes with the organization as a whole. If the superintendent exhibits characteristics of a coach who is functioning in a psychic prison, there is a strong possibility that he will be unsuccessful. On the other hand, a coach could be very successful in an organization that acts as an organism, a brain, or even a culture system. There are no defined boundary lines, which means the superintendent must be flexible and continue to adjust his leadership approach.

This study indicated that it would also be beneficial for a board of education to understand the practice of a superintendent, as well as their own method of governance. For instance, the Arborville Board of Education acted as a political, psychic prison. What was needed in that district was a superintendent who could transform the perceptions of the board, so that power and leadership could be reestablished within the organization. Mr. Goldfinch may have operated as a mechanic, but he was unable to succeed because Arborville needed a referee or even a prison warden. A new superintendent will quickly learn the history of the Arborville District, and it will take a prophet to lead that organization in the future.

The findings from this study support the idea that a board of education should think about the type of organization they are governing and make decisions based on that

knowledge. They should hire a superintendents who fits their organization's type and style, to ensure long-range success. They will also want a superintendent who can apply situated leadership and build relationships so that he can lead the organization through difficult times. Bringing awareness of the practice of leadership to the board of education may ultimately reduce their costs during superintendent searches and reduce the possibility of an incompatible match. This could increase longevity in the superintendency, which can have a positive effect on the organization.

This study also demonstrated the benefit of a superintendent's having a clear understanding of internal and external pressures because such knowledge will enable him to adjust his practice of leadership. If the superintendent has established proper organizational fit, it is likely he will be successful when confronted with external and internal pressures, especially those that are politically charged. This supports the idea that the conceptual model can be a predictor of success for the superintendent.

The model, centripetal force of the superintendency, is a tool that can be shared with superintendent-search companies. As previously stated, this can be a predictor of success for the superintendent himself and for the organization. Not only will the superintendent be able to reflect on his practice and predict his own success, but the board of education or superintendent-search companies also can predict the likelihood of a particular applicant fitting into the organization. Gaining the optimal fit can enhance the success of the entire organization.

One of the most important implications of this study is that the centripetal-force model can be applied to any leadership position, across multiple contexts. Whether one is a principal of a building, the board president of a school organization, the department

head of a university, or the CEO of a company, he can put himself in the center of this model and apply the principles of leadership, thereby experiencing the same level of success as a superintendent of an educational organization.

Through the course of this study, I attempted to define the superintendent's role and to provide superintendents with possible strategies for meeting the challenges of a newly defined or redefined position in changing times. The findings from this study will support the work of the superintendent and may help current superintendents increase their longevity in the superintendency. This study expanded on current research by providing information on the theory and practice used by today's superintendents, how superintendents frame their understanding of their organizations, and the influence that superintendents' reciprocal relationships and distributive practices have on their school environment. Ultimately, this study may serve as a resource guide for superintendents that can help them maneuver through the requirements of this complex position.

Suggestions for Further Study

This study can be enhanced by testing the tenets of the conceptual model on a larger group of superintendents. This study was limited by the small sample of superintendents studied; therefore, further study with a larger and more diverse sample is needed. In this study, no comparisons were made between leaders of different genders and ethnicities. However, this study is still important, and the knowledge gained from it will be of value to future researchers.

As previously suggested, this model could be replicated across disciplines in various organizations. In particular it would be beneficial to study the practice of leadership by the board of education. The findings from such study could help avoid

potential problems, if for instance, both the district's board president and superintendent were prophets. A clash between prophets could have long-term ramifications for the organization. The model could be used as an internal criterion for selecting the board president, so potential conflict can be avoided.

Each of the themes outlined in Chapter V could be expanded on independently of one another. A multidisciplinary study could be done on organizational fit, situated leadership, and building trusting relationships. Numerous studies have been completed on the importance of building trusting relationships. This research could be expanded through the investigation of superintendent and board relationships, superintendent and principal or staff relationships, and as superintendent and community relationships. Research could also be conducted on the effect that trusting relationships have in business, higher education, and other types of organizations.

Conclusions

This study was undertaken to gain an understanding of superintendents' leadership through a research design that was interpretive, evolving, and holistic in nature. I used theories of school leadership, change, and organizations to provide a framework for this study. The comparative case study format allowed me to make comparisons across environments to determine whether the superintendents' environments induced changes in their practice of leadership. Because the focus of this study was on investigating how the superintendents made sense of their role and how that personal theory defined their leadership practice, this type of approach enabled me to understand the leadership roles of superintendents in varying organizations.

In this study, I used an inductive process in analyzing and presenting the stories of the superintendents. The elucidation of the participants' stories helped reveal common themes, which allowed me to understand superintendents' practice of leadership. The themes that emerged supported the study findings. I created Venn diagrams to provide a visual representation of the themes, which included organizational fit, situated leadership, and building trusting relationships. These themes all support superintendents' practice of leadership, if all three are applied. Last, a visual picture or conceptual map was proposed to illuminate the themes and findings; because qualitative research is not static, this picture evolved throughout the course of the study.

Several unanticipated implications and findings surfaced during the course of this study. The research questions provided direction for the study, but the magic of qualitative research was not unveiled until a thorough data analysis was completed. The primary purpose of this study was achieved, and the field of research has been enhanced due to its completion. In this study I also put forward an emergent theory that promotes future research in the practice of leadership. Through the course of this study, I discovered that the practice of leadership is not associated with one discipline versus another; it is merely an application of the tenets of leadership.

Reflection

Although this study focused on only three superintendents, it has enhanced my thinking about the practice of leadership within the superintendency. As an aspiring superintendent, I know I need to work to understand the images that stakeholders hold about the organization. As a superintendent it would be beneficial to determine the dominant story line in the district and determine what images would support the

organization. It is always difficult to find time for reflection, but it is critical to a superintendent's success to make time to think about leadership and the organization.

There will be times when the superintendent must exercise leadership in a different way, depending on his level of knowledge and the complexity of the challenge. He may act as a prophet or a therapist, depending on the situation and the type of organization. As a potential superintendent, I understand the importance of gaining organizational fit, developing deep connections, and applying leadership tactics to enhance my power base. I also have learned that it is important to have a positive exit strategy when there is disharmony within the organization. Mr. Goldfinch showed that retirement can lead to new opportunities, without bringing along the skeletons in the closet.

Through this study, I have grown tremendously as a scholar and as an administrator. I have been able to reflect on my own practice as a leader, in order to reduce the anxieties of moving to a new position. I see the benefit of gaining organizational fit, utilizing situated leadership, and building trusting relationships to develop a balanced organization. Whether I am a superintendent or a building principal, effective practice of leadership is what fosters growth within the organization.

This study has shown me that I must be open minded to new research and literature as I explore any topic. My discomfort at not finding the information I was seeking led me to further research, which enhanced my study. If I had not been open minded, I would not have been able to develop this study fully. The journey that I have taken has been filled with many sharp turns, steep grades, and unexpected potholes, but I have grown as a scholar as a result of my study.

APPENDIX A

Interview Protocols

Observation Protocols

Professional Critical Incident Map

Interview One, Two, and Three Scripts

Professional Community Interview Protocol

Professional Community Interview Script

Interview One Protocol
Critical Incident Map

Letters Represent Probes Under the Questions

The purpose of this first interview is to learn more about how the superintendent thinks about the role and tasks of the superintendency and to learn more about how he perceived that he enacts those roles and tasks. We will be using the Critical Incident Map during this interview.

"Thank you for taking the time to map-out your experiences as a school superintendent. We will be using that today to help frame our conversation."

Question One: "Tell me stories, life experiences both personal and professional that brought you to the superintendency."

Probe: Here I will probe his stories to find out what he "values" as a school leaders, where these values originate, and how he perceives he translates these values into what he does.

Question Two: "In light of these experiences, if a "new superintendent" turned to you for advice, what would you say to them about this job?"

Probe: Here I will probe his mentoring advice to better understand how he defines "leadership", "school leadership", and the "school superintendency." I will try to understand how his values are mirrored (or not) in his advice.

Question Three: "Now, let's turn to your critical incident map. Please detail each item in your critical incident map.

Probes: Here I will probe for specific examples of how he "thinks" about the superintendency and how he perceives he translates this to his practice. I will also ask, when appropriate the following probing queries:
Probe 1: What leadership and/or management approaches didn't work?
    a. What might you have done differently?
    b. What, in the particular incident were the internal/external challenges?
    c. How did you handle different points of view held by stakeholders?
Probe 2: In light of the challenges that you described, how did you adjust your practice as a superintendent? Did that change the way you defined your role as a superintendent?
Probe 3: Can you further explain, describe your relationships with members of that professional community (e.g., PTSA, community leaders, parents, etc.)?
Probe 4: It appears that you work hard to develop mutually supportive relationships with your team. Why? Can you give me other examples that reveal why this is important to you?

Final Question: "Do you have anything that you would like to add?

Appendix A

Interview Two Protocol
Artifacts of the Position

Letters Represent Probes Under the Questions

The purpose of this second interview is to learn more about how the superintendent thinks about the role and tasks of the superintendency, and to learn more about how he perceives that he enacts those roles and tasks. We will use the artifacts for this activity.

"Thank you for taking the time to meet with me again and sharing your artifacts that illuminate your experiences as a school superintendent. We will be using these artifacts today to help frame our conversations."

I will ask this first question and follow-up with appropriate probes.

Question One: Please share with me your three artifacts.
    a.   What makes this artifact significant to how you view the role of the school superintendent?
    b.   This (insert the name of the artifact) reveals that you had to deal with a number of (insert the tension point, e.g., structural, policy, union, personnel, fiscal, etc.) challenges. Can you talk about how you dealt with them? How did they change the way that you "do" your work?
    c.   This (insert the name of the artifact) illuminates the way that you think about the role of the superintendent (insert information from the last interview). Can you talk more about this element of leadership?
    d.   There appears to be a number of challenges that you had to face, both internal and external to the organization, how do you motivate yourself to keep going? How do you rejuvenate?

Question Two: Were there any additional artifacts that you wished you could have brought?
    a.   Please tell me a little about each one.

"I have a final question for you that will help me to better understand how you think about the role of the superintendent and how you do your work."

Question Three: "You're packing a briefcase for your successor. What three items, abstract or concrete, would you include to assist the new superintendent in his/her role?
    a. How does (insert item from briefcase) define your role as school superintendent?
    b. How will this (insert item from briefcase) support the work of a new superintendent?

c. Are there any additional items that need to be included in the briefcase? If so, why should they be included?

Interview Three Protocol
Follow-Up to the Observation

Letters Represent Probes Under the Questions

The purpose of this third interview is to learn more about how the superintendent thinks about the role and tasks of the superintendency, and to learn more about how he perceived that he enacts those roles and tasks. This is a reflection on my observation of him-"A Day in the Life of the School Superintendent".

The superintendent will receive a copy of my observation notes. I will ask him to review the notes before our meeting.

"Thank you for taking the time to let me shadow you the other day and to meet with me again. We will be using my observation notes today to help frame our conversation."

Question One: "Now that you have reviewed the observation notes, can you point out to me activities that you were engaged that best reflect what you value as the role of the school superintendent?"
   a.   It is obvious that you value (insert value) as the role of the school superintendent. Can you talk more about this value?
   b.   Are there any activities that I didn't observe during the day, that may occur frequently and that may reflect what you value as a school superintendent?

Question Two: "Can you point out activities that were occasions where you believe you may not have been coming from those core values?
   a.   Why do you believe (insert activity) your actions in this activity were outside your core values?
   b.   How would you change your actions to align (insert activity) with your core values?

Question Three: "Looking at your day, I noticed that you (insert an activity that caught the superintendent dealing with a complex internal issue). How did you feel? What were you thinking? Why did you do (insert activity)?"

Question Four: "Looking at your day, I noticed that you (insert an activity that caught the superintendent dealing with a complex external issue). How did you feel? What were you thinking? Why did you do (insert activity)?

Question Five: "The school appears to be an integral part of the community. Looking at your day, what actions did you take to strengthen the bond between the school and community?"

a. Were there occasions when your actions did not strengthen this mutually supportive relationship?

b. How might you change your actions to strengthen these relationships?

Question Six: "Looking at your day, I noticed that you worked to build mutually supportive relationships within the organization. Were there specific incidents where you believe you strengthened the bond between yourself and members of the organization?

a. What steps do you take to ensure the bond remains strong?

b. What measures do you take if you perceive that bond to be weakening?

"I have a final activity."

Question Seven: What would be your analogy for the role of the "School Superintendent"?

Question Eight: In what ways do you believe your actions fit (or not) this analogy?

Question Nine: In what ways do you continue to challenge yourself as a practicing superintendent?

Observation Protocol

Exploratory Questions	Time	Activities	Observations
How does a school superintendent make sense of his role and how does that define his practice?			
From the superintendents' perspective, how does he think about his role and to what extent does it impact practice?			
To what degree do alternative leadership theories (e.g., transformational leadership, change theories, distributive theories, etc.) explain how the superintendent defines and does his work?			
What implications does an understanding of a superintendents' theory and practice have for the preparation of school superintendents?			

Appendix A

Professional Critical Incident Map

Please identify 3-5 ideas that respond to the question: As a school superintendent what are the right things to do? Put your 3-5 ideas in the boxes provided and please provide an example(s) that show how you are doing the right thing in the ovals provided.

Interview One: The Journey of the Superintendent

Interviewer: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of this first interview is to learn more about how you think about the role and tasks of the superintendency and to learn more about how you perceived the you enact those roles and tasks.

As a reminder, this interview will take approximately 90 minutes. I will be tape recording our conversation and taking notes. Please know that at any time you can request to have the tape recorder turned off. You also have the right not to answer any particular questions. The tape recording will be kept in a safe place and your identity will not be disclosed.

I will be transcribing our conversation and I will send you a printed copy of the transcribed conversation. I will also return all documents you have shared with me or destroy them at the conclusion of this study.

Our interview will center your theory and practice of leadership and in what ways both internal and external school pressures influence how you "think" about and "do" the superintendency. We will focus on the Professional Critical Incident Map that you have been asked to create before this interview. Thank you for taking the time to map-out your experiences as a school superintendent. We will be using that today to help frame our conversation. As we go, please share any additional information that may shed light on your role as an educational leader.

Do you have any questions?

Okay, let's begin.

Question One: Tell me stories, life experiences both personal and professional that brought you to the superintendency.

    a.   Based on (insert story or experience) what does that tell us about what you value as a school leader?

    b.   Where do you believe this value originates?

    c.   How do you translate this value into what you do?

Question Two: In light of these experiences, if a "new superintendent" turned to you for advice, what would you say to them about this job?

    a.   How do you define leadership?

    b.   Does this definition differ from your definition of "school leadership"?

    c.   With that being said, then how do you translate those definitions into the school superintendency?

Question Three: Now, let's turn to your critical incident map. Please detail each item in your map.

    a.   What leadership and/or management approaches didn't work?

          1.   What might you have done differently?
          2.   What in the particular incident were the internal/external challenges?
          3.   How did you handle different points of view held by stakeholders?

    b.   In light of the challenges that you described, how did you adjust your practice as a superintendent? Did that change the way you defined your role as a superintendent?

    c.   Can you further explain, describe your relationship with members of that professional community (e.g., PTSA, community leaders, parents, etc.)?

    d.   It appears that you work hard to develop mutual relationships with your team. Why? Can you give me other examples that reveal why this is important to you?

Conclusion

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

Thank you for your time!

Interview Two: Investigation of the Superintendent

Interviewer: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this second interview. The purpose of this interview is to better understand the extent to which a superintendent's theory and practice of leadership are influenced by internal and external pressures.

This interview will take approximately 60 minutes. I will be tape recording our conversation and taking notes. Please know that at any time you can request to have the tape recorder turned off. You also have the right not to answer any particular questions. The tape recording will be kept in a safe place and your identity will not be disclosed.

I will be transcribing our conversation and I will send you a printed copy of the transcribed conversation. I will also return all documents you have shared with me or destroy them at the conclusion of this study.

Our interview will center on how you think about the role and tasks of the superintendency, and how you perceive that you enact those roles and tasks. Thank you for taking the time to meet with me again and sharing your artifacts that illuminate your experiences as a school superintendent. We will be using these artifacts today to help frame our conversation. As we go, please share any additional information that may shed light on your role as an educational leader.

Do you have any questions?

Okay, let's begin.

Question One: Please share with me your three artifacts.
  a. What makes this artifact significant to how you view the role of the school superintendent?
  b. This (insert the name of the artifact) reveals that you had to deal with a number of (insert the tension point, e.g., structural, policy, union, personnel, fiscal, etc.) challenges. Can you talk about how you dealt with them? How did they change the way that you "do" your work?
  c. This (insert the name of the artifact) illuminates the way that you think about the role of the superintendent (insert information from the last interview). Can you talk more about this element of leadership?
  d. There appears to be a number of challenges that you had to face, both internal and external to the organization, how do you motivate yourself to keep going? How do you rejuvenate?

Question Two: Were there any additional artifacts that you wished you could have brought?

     a. Please tell me a little about each one.

"I have a final question for you that will help me to better understand how you think about the role of the superintendent and how you do your work."

Question Three: "You're packing a briefcase for your successor. What three items, abstract or concrete, would you include to assist the new superintendent in his/her role?
     a. How does (insert item from briefcase) define your role as school superintendent?
     b. How will this (insert item from briefcase) support the work of a new superintendent?
     c. Are there any additional items that need to be included in the briefcase? If so, why should they be included?

Conclusion

     Is there anything else you would like to add?

     Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

     Thank you for your time!

Appendix A

Interview Three: Observation Follow-Up

Interviewer: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this final interview. The purpose of this interview is a follow up to the day of observations.

This interview will take approximately 60 minutes. I will be tape recording our conversation and taking notes. Please know that at any time you can request to have the tape recorder turned off. You also have the right not to answer any particular questions. The tape recording will be kept in a safe place and your identity will not be disclosed.

I will be transcribing our conversation and I will send you a printed copy of the transcribed conversation. I will also return all documents you have shared with me or destroy them at the conclusion of this study.

Thank you for taking the time to let me shadow you the other day and to meet with you again. We will be using my observations notes today to help frame our conversation. As we go, please share any additional information that may shed light on your role as an educational leader.

Do you have any questions?

Okay, let's begin.

Question One: Now that you have reviewed the observation notes, can you point out to me activities that you were engaged that best reflect what you value as the role of the school superintendent?
    a. It is obvious that you value (insert value) as the role of the school superintendent. Can you talk more about this value?
    b. Are there any activities that I didn't observe during the day, that may occur frequently and that may reflect what you value as a school superintendent?

Question Two: Can you point out activities that were occasions where you believe you may not have been coming from those core values?
    a. Why do you believe (insert activity) your actions in this activity were outside your core values?
    b. How would you change your actions to align (insert activity) with your core values?

Question Three: Looking at your day, I noticed that you (insert an activity that caught the superintendent dealing with a complex internal issue). How did you feel? What were you thinking? Why did you do (insert activity)?

Question Four: Looking at your day, I noticed that you (insert an activity that caught the superintendent dealing with a complex external issue). How did you feel? What were you thinking? Why did you do (insert activity)?

Question Five: The school appears to be an integral part of the community. Looking at your day, what actions did you take to strengthen the bond between the school and community?
  a. Were there occasions when your actions did not strengthen this mutually supportive relationship?
  b. How might you change your actions to strengthen these relationships?

Question Six: Looking at your day, I noticed that you worked to build mutually supportive relationships within the organization. Were there specific incidents where you believe you strengthened the bond between yourself and members of the organization?
  a. What steps do you take to ensure the bond remains strong?
  b. What measures do you take if you perceive that bond to be weakening?

Conclusion:
  Is there anything else you would like to add?

  Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

  Thank you for your time!

Appendix A

Professional Community Interview Protocol

Exploratory Questions	Sub Questions	Interview Questions
How does a school superintendent make sense of his role and how does that define his practice?		Give 3-5 examples of the right things for a superintendent to do.
How does a school superintendent think about his role and to what extent does it impact his practice?		Give examples of how your current superintendent has met these expectations? When has your superintendent not met these expectations?
To what degree do alternative leadership theories (e.g., transformational leadership, change theories, distributive theories, etc.) explain how the superintendent defines and does his work?		How would you define your relationship with the superintendent? Does the superintendent do the right things when building a relationship with you? If not, how could he improve the mutual relationship with you and other members of the community?

Interview One: The Professional Community's Perspective

Interviewer: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of this interview is to better understand the changes in the superintendency and how these changes influence the superintendents' theory and practice of leadership.

As a reminder, this interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes. I will be tape recording our conversation and taking notes. Please know that at any time you can request to have the tape recorder turned off. You also have the right not to answer any particular questions. The tape recording will be kept in a safe place and your identity will not be disclosed.

I will be transcribing our conversation and I will send you a printed copy of the transcribed conversation. I will also return all documents you have shared with me or destroy them at the conclusion of this study.

Our interview will center your perspective of how you think the superintendent does his job. As we go, please share any additional information that may shed light on your role as an educational leader.

Do you have any questions?

Okay, let's begin.

Question One:
     A.   What is your name?

     B.   What is your position?

     C.   What is your relationship to the superintendent?

Question Two:
     A.   Give 3-5 examples of the right things for a superintendent to do.

Question Three:
     A.   Give examples of how your current superintendent has met these expectations?

     B.   When has your superintendent not met these expectations?

Question Four:
     A.   How would you define your relationship with the superintendent?

B. Does the superintendent do the right things when building a relationship with you? If not, how could he improve the mutual relationship with you and other members of the community?

Conclusion:

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

Thank you for your time!

Appendix B

Letter of Participation

Consent Letter

Letter to Interviewees

Appendix B

Invitation to Participate to Potential Superintendent Interview Participants
April 1, 2004

Dear (Participant's Name),

You are invited to participate in a qualitative research case study. The purpose of this case study is to investigate how the superintendent makes sense of his role and how that personal theory defines his practice. The sessions will be informal, and the questions will be focused on the area of leadership, change, and organizations.

Data collection will involve one observation, three interviews (to be approximately 45-90 minutes in length and transcripts of interviews between you and me), and collection of documents (reports, meeting summaries). The information that is collected will, of course, be confidential. You will be assigned a pseudonym to further ensure confidentiality. The comments you make and the material collected may show up as a written record, but not in such a way that you will be identified specifically. Do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study if you choose to participate. I will be happy to share my findings with you after the research is completed.

There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study. The expected benefits associated with your participation are an analysis of your own leadership role and an opportunity to participate in a qualitative research study. If submitted for publication, this study will provide a byline that will indicate the participation of all members (with assigned pseudonym) of the study.

Attached is a confirmation form that indicates your interest in participating in this study. Please complete this confirmation and return it to me by April 15, 2004. Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Tina Kerr
9232 S. Vernon Rd.
Bancroft, MI 48414
Tkerr99271@yahoo.com
989-634-9303

Appendix B

Invitation to Participate to Potential
Professional Community Member Interview Participants

April 1, 2004

Dear (Participant's Name),

You are invited to participate in a qualitative research case study. The purpose of this case study is to investigate how the superintendent makes sense of his role and how that personal theory defines his practice. The sessions will be informal, and the questions will be focused on the area of leadership, change, and organizations.

Data collection will involve one interview (to be approximately 30-45 minutes in length and transcripts of interviews between you and me). The information that is collected will, of course, be confidential. You will be assigned a pseudonym to further ensure confidentiality. The comments you make and the material collected may show up as a written record, but not in such a way that you will be identified specifically. Do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study if you choose to participate. I will be happy to share my findings with you after the research is completed.

There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study. The expected benefits associated with your participation is an analysis of your superintendent. If submitted for publication, this study will provide a byline that will indicate the participation of all members (with assigned pseudonym) of the study.

Attached is a confirmation form that indicates your interest in participating in this study. Please complete this confirmation and return it to me by April 15, 2004. Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Tina Kerr
9232 S. Vernon Rd.
Bancroft, MI 48414
Tkerr99271@yahoo.com
989-634-9303

Appendix B   **Consent Form**

You agree to participate in a study that investigates how the superintendent makes sense of his role and how that personal theory defines his practice. This consent acknowledges your participation in the study entitled, <u>Making Sense of Three School Superintendent's Leadership Practice,</u> developed by Tina Kerr, Doctoral Candidate in K-12 Educational Administration at Michigan State University. You have also read the letter from Tina Kerr dated April 1, 2004, which briefly describes the purposes and procedures of the research. The letter includes her name, address, and methods of communication in case you have any questions or concerns regarding the study.

You understand that your participation in this study requires you to participate in three face-to-face interviews that may be 60-90 minutes in length. You are aware of and understand that all interview data will be held in the strictest confidence and that your identify will not be disclosed in any form during the completion of this study. You also understand the data will be used in a report about the project, may be used in published articles, in presentations at conferences, and in a dissertation. You are also aware that Tina Kerr will do one day of job shadowing, during which time she will serve as an observer only. While completing the interviews and observations, you are also aware that various documents will be collected.

You understand that your participation in this study is completely voluntary and that you may withdraw from this study at any time with no repercussions. You also understand that all the information gathered during this study that could identify me as a participant will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the rights of subjects and duties of investigators, or you are dissatisfied with any aspect of the study, you may contact anonymously, if you wish, Dr. Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D., Chair of the University Committee on Research involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) by phone: (517) 355-2180, fax (517) 432-4503, email: <u>urhris@msu.edu</u> or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824. Should you have any questions about the interviews or the study, you can also contact the student's advisor, Dr. Maenette Benham, professor at the department of K-12 Educational Administration, 419 A Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824, or email: <u>mbenham@msu.edu</u>

Your signature below indicates your voluntary agreement to participate in this study. You will be given a copy of the consent form.

Print Name:_____   Date:_____

Signature:_____   Email:_____

Appendix B   **Consent Form**

You agree to participate in a study that investigates how the superintendent makes sense of his role and how that personal theory defines his practice. This consent acknowledges your participation in the study entitled, Making Sense of Three School Superintendent's Leadership Practice, developed by Tina Kerr, Doctoral Candidate in K-12 Educational Administration at Michigan State University. You have also read the letter from Tina Kerr dated April 1, 2004, which briefly describes the purposes and procedures of the research. The letter includes her name, address, and methods of communication in case you have any questions or concerns regarding the study.

You understand that your participation in this study requires you to participate in one face-to-face interview that may be 30-45 minutes in length. You are aware of and understand that all interview data will be held in the strictest confidence and that your identify will not be disclosed in any form during the completion of this study. You also understand the data will be used in a report about the project, may be used in published articles, in presentations at conferences, and in a dissertation.

You understand that your participation in this study is completely voluntary and that you may withdraw from this study at any time with no repercussions. You also understand that all the information gathered during this study that could identify me as a participant will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the rights of subjects and duties of investigators, or you are dissatisfied with any aspect of the study, you may contact anonymously, if you wish, Dr. Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D., Chair of the University Committee on Research involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) by phone: (517) 355-2180, fax (517) 432-4503, email: urhris@msu.edu or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824. Should you have any questions about the interviews or the study, you can also contact the student's advisor, Dr. Maenette Benham, professor at the department of K-12 Educational Administration, 419 A Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824, or email: mbenham@msu.edu

Your signature below indicates your voluntary agreement to participate in this study. You will be given a copy of the consent form.

Print Name:_____   Date:_____

Signature:_____   Email:_____

Appendix B

Letter to Interviewees

I am Tina Kerr, Principal and K-12 Curriculum Director with Almont Community Schools and I am also a doctoral student at Michigan State University. I am currently studying the leadership role of school superintendents and the impact the environment may or may not have on the superintendent's theory and practice. Your district was chosen for this study due to its location, demographics, and convenience. I have long-range aspirations of being a school superintendent, which accounts for my interest in how practicing superintendents lead the organization within which they are situated. I realize the roles and responsibilities of the superintendency are constantly changing and my dissertation is centered on what impact these changes have had on the superintendents' theory and practice.

Before I conduct the initial interview, please find attached a blank Professional Critical Incident Map that I would like you to fill out prior to our first interview on (date, time, place). Look back at your (experience) years as a school superintendent of (district). First in 3-5 of the boxes, list ideas that respond to the question: As a school superintendent, what are the right things to do? Below each box you will find a connected oval. Please provide an example(s) that show how you're doing the right things. The first interview will primarily consist of an in-depth discussion of your Professional Critical Incident Map. Thank you so much for your time. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Tina Kerr
9232 S. Vernon Rd.
Bancroft, MI 48414
Tkerr99271@yahoo.com
989-634-9303

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barnard, C. I. (1968). *The functions of the executive.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Benham, M. (2002). Bringing Out the stories: Lessons about Engagement. *Journal of American Indian Education, 41,* pp. 2-8.

Bennis, W., & Nanus, B. (1985). *Leaders: The strategies for taking charge.* New York: Harper & Row.

Bittner, E. (1965). *The concept of organization.* Brookfield: Dartmouth.

Blake, R. R., & Mouton, J. S. (1985). *The managerial grid III: The key to leadership excellence.* Houston: Gulf.

Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (1991). *Frameworks for Leadership.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2002). *Reframing the path to school leadership: A guide for teachers and principals.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Byrd, J., & Moore, T. (1982). *Decision models for management.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Carter, G. R., & Cunningham, W. G. (1997). *The American school superintendent: Leading in an age of pressure.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cuban, L. (1988). *The managerial imperative and the practice of leadership in schools.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Cuban, L. (1989). *The urban school superintendency: A century and a half of change.* Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Education Foundation.

Dawson, S. (1986). Analyzing *organizations.* London: Macmillan.

Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2000). *Handbook of Qualitative Research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

De Pree, M. (1989). *Leadership is an art.* New York: Bantam Doubleday.

Fiedler, F. E. (1967). *A theory of leadership effectiveness.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Fullan, M. (1991). *The new meaning of educational change*. New York: Teacher's
    College Press.

Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Glass, T. (1992). *The 1992 study of the American school superintendency*. Arlington,
    VA: American Association of School Administrators.

Harris, S. (1994). Organizational culture and individual sensemaking: A schema-based
    perspective. *Organization Science 5*(3), 309-321.

Goldhammer, K. (1967). *Issues and problems in contemporary educational
    administration*. Eugene, Or: Center for the Advanced Study of Educational
    Administration.

Hirsch, S., & Sparks, D. (1991). A look at the new central office administrators.
    School Administrator, 48(7), 16-19.

Hoy, W. & Miskel, C., (2004). *Educational Administration: Theory, Research, and
    Practice*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Johnson, S. M. (1996). *Leading to change: The challenge of the new superintendency*.
    San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Jones, G. (1995). *Organizational theory: Text and cases*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Kaser, J., Mundry, S., Stiles, K., & Horsley, S. (2002). *Leading every day*. Thousand
    Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Louis, M. R. (1992). *Organizations as culture-bearing milieux*. Pacific Grove, CA:
    Brooks/Cole Publishing.

Lutz, F., & Merz, C. (1992). *The politics of school/community relations*. New York:
    Teacher's College Press.

Marion, R. (2002). *Leadership in education: Organizational theory for the practitioner*.
    Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Merrill-Prentice Hall.

Marris, P. (1974). *Loss and change*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (1999). *Designing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks,
    CA: Sage.

McCabe, N., Cunningham, L., Harvey, J., & Koff, R., (2005). *The Superintendent's Fieldbook: A Guide for Leaders of Learning.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

McEwan, E. K. (2003). *7 steps to effective instructional leadership.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Merriam, S. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mintzberg, H. (1976). The structure of unstructured decision making. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 21,* 246-275.

Morgan, G., (1998). *Images of organization: The Executive Edition.* San Francisco: Berrett Koehler Publisher.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Perrow, C. (1979). *Complex organizations: A critical essay.* Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman.

Reddin, J. (1970). *Managerial effectiveness.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Rogers, E. M. (1983). *Diffusion of innovation.* New York: Free Press.

Rost, J. C. (1991). *Leadership for the twenty-first century.* Westport, CT: Praeger.

Rudestam, K. E., & Newton, R. R. (2001). *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Schon, D. A. (1983). Implications for the professions and their place in society. In D. A. Schon & A. R. Luria (Eds.), *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action* (pp. 326-338). New York: Basic Books

Scott, R. W. (1992). *Three perspectives on organizations.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art of the learning organization.* New York: Doubleday.

Sergiovanni, T. J. (1987). *Educational governance and administration.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Sergiovanni, T. J. (1992). *Moral Leadership: Getting to the heart of school improvement.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Simon, H. A. (1997). *Administrative behavior* (4th ed.). New York: Free Press.

Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Tannenbaum, R., & Schmidt, W. (1973). How to choose a leadership pattern. *Harvard Business Review, 51,* 162-180.

Tyack, D., & Cuban, L. (1995). *Tinkering toward Utopia.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Weber, M. (1938). The types of authority and imperative coordination. In *The theory of social and economic organization* (pp. 324-383). New York: Oxford University Press.

Webster, M. (2002). *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary.* Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.

Weick, K. E. (1979). Management of organizational change among loosely coupled elements. In P. Goodman (Ed.), *Change in organizations: New perspectives on theory, research, and practice* (pp. 375-408). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Yin, R. K. (1989). *Case study research: Design and method.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.