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LMX Revisited: A Woman Superintendent Leading through Dyadic Relationships

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

LMX REVISITED: A WOMAN SUPERINTENDENT LEADING
THROUGH DYADIC RELATIONSHIPS

By

DIANE W. HODGINS

A Dissertation submitted to the
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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*You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience
in which you really stop to look fear in the face.
You must do the thing, which you think you cannot do.
Eleanor Roosevelt*

I dedicate this work to my husband, Tim, who understands more than anyone else that writing a dissertation can be a lonely and isolating experience. I would not have been able to complete this work without your love, support, and encouragement. Thank you for always believing in me. I love you.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this case study was to examine how a woman superintendent led her school district in the state of Florida. The approach I used to study her leadership was informed by the Leader Member Exchange (LMX) theory. At the base of this theory rests the fundamental premise that a leader forms different types of relationships with members and thus influences the outcomes of the organization (Sparrowe & Liden, 1997). Critics argued this theory was not fully developed in considering how gender may or may not influence the structure of understanding between each leader-member relationship. In this study, I examined how dyadic relationships were negotiated over time through a series of exchanges between a woman superintendent and individual members of her district.

Support for this approach was found in research on the K-12 public superintendency. Examination of this research revealed a shift in the demands on the officeholders of the superintendency, which led to a reconception of the position. This reconception meant superintendents must now effect change in their districts through the influence and critical awareness of work activities. At the base of this influence and awareness are the relationships negotiated between the leader and individual members of the district. This study contributed to the understanding of the superintendency by examining how a woman superintendent's relationships with members of her district allowed her to reconceptualize the position.

A second area of support for the use of this theory was found in the research on women superintendents. Research on these administrators was limited in the past due to the small number of women in the position. As more women entered the superintendency, there was more opportunity to gather comprehensive data. One area of limited research was how a woman superintendent's experience as a leader may challenge what is known about leadership theory. This study contributed to this area of research by examining a woman superintendent's leadership through LMX theory.

This case study utilized an ethnographic approach to research this woman superintendent's leadership. I conducted multiple interviews with the superintendent, as well as with site-level personnel in her district. In addition, I collected extensive observation data in naturalistic settings such as board meetings, planning sessions, and other district functions. Interviews and observations were triangulated with the collection and analysis of documents.

Conclusions drawn from the data indicated this woman's leadership challenged what is known about LMX theory. Specifically she challenged existing notions of leadership within a hierarchical system and ultimately created a shift in the leadership paradigm from the "good old boy" network to the "new woman" way of leading. Her commitment to equality meant she managed relationships through transparent leadership, which resulted in the creation of system-wide out-groups. Data supported gender may have been at the base of this change and thus a challenge to what is known about LMX.

*For most of history, Anonymous was a woman.
Virginia Woolf
English novelist (1882 - 1941)*

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this research was to study how a woman superintendent led her school district in the state of Florida. One approach to studying her leadership was within the context of organizational theory. This context defines the leader as an individual member of the group or organization who influences the interpretation of events, the choice of objectives and strategies, and the organization of work activities (Yukl, 1998). At the base of this influence lies the fundamental premise that leaders form different types of relationships with members of the organization and thus influence the outcomes of the organization (Sparrowe & Liden, 1997). The leadership theory that specifically examines and explains this type of leadership is the Leader Member Exchange (LMX) theory. Support for use of this approach in studying this woman superintendent was found in three fields of research: research on the K-12 public superintendency, research on women superintendents, and research on the Leader-Member Exchange theory. These three fields of research form the conceptual framework used to guide this research.

Study Rationale

In this new climate of accountability and choice in the realm of public education, superintendents face new challenges. Superintendents are challenged with understanding and explaining the importance of school reform for a sound economy and democratic society in school environments that are becoming increasingly diverse. Political and moral dimensions of the leadership of superintendents are being emphasized in order to change the nature of schooling over the past conventional management practices (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000).

Legislative mandates emphasize the need for superintendents to focus on improved learning through the school community while building community capacity to enhance learning in schools. Superintendent leadership is perceived as working with and through rather than commanding others. In this knowledge intensive environment leadership is still the notion of the moment but it is a different type of leadership. Leadership must now draw on individual skills, knowledge, and expertise for the guidance and direction of the organization to achieve the notion of shared goals. This notion of leadership has become one of creating a shared culture with a

common set of values binding the group together (Brunner, Grogan, & Bjork, 2002). This notion of shared culture has led to what Grogan (2000) calls the reconceptualization of the superintendency. The superintendency is positioned for major changes in how the occupants of this office lead a school district. This research utilized the lens provided by the principles of the reconceptualized superintendent to add to the general understanding of the office of the superintendency through a leadership theory focused on relationship building. In doing so, it added to the general understanding of the superintendency.

We know the superintendency is a key position of power and influence in U.S. public school districts. However, latest figures show that 18% of these districts are led by women (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). What makes this number perplexing is that the field of education has been historically a female dominated profession. Unfortunately even in a field where women dominate there is still a glass ceiling to the pinnacle leadership position of the superintendency.

The percentage of women superintendents is growing amid reports of superintendent shortages and concerns about equal opportunity (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). At the same time the field of research about women in the superintendency is growing. While some researchers argue the demands of the position have shifted making the position less desirable to men, others maintain the position has not changed; rather women are more positioned to break into a predominantly male dominated field (Brunner, 2002). The need for research expands as more women fill these positions.

The public education system in the United States is a direct reflection of the society at large (Blount, 1998). Although women have been gaining in numbers in the principalship, a middle management position, a glass ceiling still bars women from the pinnacle leadership position of the superintendency. It has come to the point where the field can no longer deny entrance based on old stereotypes and organizational norms. Truly the schools are at risk when leadership is denied to qualified individuals who seek to devote their skills and talents in a position that has been slow in opening to this group. However, the superintendency is not a position that should be best equalized by numbers – it is a position that needs the best person for the job. Therein lies a potentially important contribution of this research – the study of how a woman superintendent occupies and leads in this position as viewed through a specific leadership theory.

This potentially important contribution not only adds to the present day research conversation on women superintendents but also falls in line with a research paradigm laid out

more than 20 years ago (Shakeshaft, 1989). Research has documented the absence of women in the superintendency (Blount, 1998). Research has also captured the stories of women who have been in this position. Through their stories research has documented their disadvantaged position and gave a voice to the study of these women on their own terms. To further research in any of these areas would be redundant to what needs to be completed on women superintendents, namely, how might a women superintendent's experience as a leader challenge what is taught as theory in leadership administration classrooms.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to research how a woman superintendent leads her school district through individual relationships with members of her school district. Informing this study was research in the areas of the superintendency, women superintendents, and LMX theory.

Research on the Superintendency

The need to respond to external pressures have moved the role of superintendency towards reforming schools in ways that support the learning of all children. School districts require systemic restructuring of schools to decrease administrative bureaucracy and increase involvement of teachers, parents, and the community in educational leadership (Brunner, 2002). In this new climate of accountability and choice, superintendents are challenged with understanding and explaining the importance of school reform for a sound economy and democratic society in school environments that are becoming increasingly diverse. Political and moral dimensions of the leadership role of superintendents in changing the nature of schooling have taken precedence over the conventional management practices of the past (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000).

Recent discourse emphasizes the need for superintendents to focus on improved learning through the school community while building community capacity to enhance learning in schools. Superintendent leadership is perceived as working with and through rather than commanding others. In this knowledge intensive environment the superintendency is going through a process of reconceptualization (Grogan, 2000). The reconceptualized superintendency requires individuals that are comfortable with contradictions and appreciate dissent. The reconceptualized superintendency requires individuals that are more engaged in involving parents and members of the community in the school environments. These officeholders need to build a community of learners among the staff with the concept of working through others. Finally, these officeholders

must be aware of how students are best served through the utilization of an ethic of care that personalizes the learning environment for all students in an inclusive community (Grogan, 2000).

Research on Women Superintendents

Women entered the field of teaching because it was historically a position of care giving – a culturally acceptable career for women. Studies have supported the notion that women are capable of leading in this field, although perhaps in a different fashion from men. Researchers have examined how women exercise the power that comes from leadership through the empowerment of others and with others. Men, on the other hand, have traditionally exercised power over others (Brunner, 2002). While this method of leading by holding power over has met with a certain success in the past – it is proving questionable in an age of intense scrutiny, accountability, and diversity (Enomoto, 2000; Gupton & Slick, 1996; Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Shakeshaft, 1994; Shen & Crawford, 2003; Spencer & Kochan, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 1992; Whitaker, 2001).

Research has demonstrated that women need mentors, role models, and networks of support to be successful in leadership roles previously barred to them. It is no longer acceptable to place a woman into a leadership position without these safeguards. It sets her up for failure - failure that ultimately impacts the success of the school's learners (Grogan, 1996). This is especially true of women in the superintendency. Women are underrepresented in the superintendency relative to their participation in the education field. This under representation has historical documentation, which researchers have labeled as “the conspiracy of silence.” This silence has been a detriment to the full disclosure of women superintendents (Blount, 1998; Tyack & Hansot, 1982).

Major conclusions are drawn from current research on women superintendents: women still face barriers in their aspirations for the superintendency, women face many constraints while in the position, and women continue to face a lack of mentoring and role modeling (Brunner, 1999; Chase & Bell, 1994; Grogan, 1996). Nevertheless, Grogan & Brunner (2005) found that more women are aspiring to the positions and those that have made it are enjoying their positions. Thus, more research needs to be conducted on women superintendents and their leadership styles. Since the numbers studied have been so small in the past, there is now more opportunity to get comprehensive data as more women enter the superintendency.

Research on Leader Member Exchange Theory

Leaders influence the performance of an organization while operating within the confines of an organization's culture. In addition, leaders relate to organizational roles while maintaining individuality through certain attributes and ways of supervising (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995). One way to study leadership is through Leader Member Exchange theory. This theory views leadership through the building and maintenance of dyadic relationships with members of the organization. These relationships are negotiated in a series of exchanges that develop from role formation, role making to role routines. The quality of the exchanges between the leader and individual members determines the level of the relationship as well as designation between the "in-group" and "out-group" status. The quality of exchanges ultimately predicts the individual outcomes in areas such as level of responsibilities, decision influence, and access to resources, while overall level of exchanges within the organization can predict such organizational outcomes as employee turnover, commitment of staff to the organization, and commitment to goals. Research on the impact of gender in these exchanges is sketchy at best. Further studies are needed to explore the dynamics of gender in this theory (Burns & Otte, 1999; Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Engle & Lord, 1997; Graen & Cashman, 1975; Graen, Cashman, Ginsbury, & Schiemann, 1978; Liden & Graen, 1980; Phillips & Bedeian, 1994; Wayne & Green, 1993).

Design and Scope

This case study utilized an ethnographic approach to research this woman superintendent's leadership (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Wolcott, 1973; Yin, 2003). Sample selection was based on the available population that met the criteria set forth in the study. Data collection included semi-structured and open-ended interviews with superintendent and site-level personnel in her district. Extensive observation data was collected in naturalistic settings such as board meetings, planning sessions, and other district functions. Interviews and observations were triangulated with the collection and analysis of site documents. Data analysis was inductive and iterative.

In the state of Florida public school districts align with county districts to serve over 2.5 million students within the state (Florida Department of Education, 2006). Based on the state's constitution, superintendents may be either elected by the voters in the district or appointed by the local school board. There are 67 school districts, in which 44 of the superintendents are elected, and 23 are appointed. In addition, 53 of the superintendents are male while 14 are females. Of the

14 females, 9 are elected and 5 are appointed. Districts vary greatly in relationship to the number of students served. Six of the women superintendents serve in districts with fewer than 10,000 students; three serve in districts with between 10,000 and 20,000 students; four serve in districts with between 20,000 and 87,000 students; and one serves in a district of over 100,000 students (FDOE, 2006).

The site selected for this study, therefore, came from one of the districts outlined above, as the determining factor based on the literature review was the gender of the superintendent. The selection of the superintendent was purposive and convenient based upon initial feedback from the state superintendents' association. This superintendent selected for this study was a teacher, assistant principal and principal in the district where she now serves. She is the first woman to serve in the capacity of an elected superintendent. She ran unsuccessfully in 2000 for the position but won her second bid in November 2004 in a partisan election.

I organized and managed the data collected in this study by employing a coding system that assigned a shorthand designation to the data based on the conceptual framework and research questions of the study. These codes were at three levels descriptive, interpretive, and pattern (Miles & Hubberman, 1994). I used pattern coding as a way of grouping data into emerging constructs of the findings. I also made identifying notations on the interviews, field notes, and documents to have easier access when I began the analysis and write-up of my findings. I wrote reflective remarks and commentaries on issues that emerge during the analysis process. These reflections included what I felt about the data once I was off site, second thoughts I had, doubts about the quality of the data, a new hypothesis, a mental note to pursue an issue, an indirect reference to material in another part of the data set, personal reactions to remarks or actions, and elaborations of a prior incident (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Research Questions

To achieve the purpose of this study, I examined one woman superintendent in the state of Florida utilizing the following questions:

1. How does a woman superintendent lead through individual relationships with members in her school district?
2. How does a woman superintendent form in-groups and out-groups in her school district?
3. How does gender influence the development and maintenance of these relationships and exchanges?

Definition of Terms

Discursive stages of the superintendency. Brunner, Grogan, & Bjork (2002) identify the discursive stages as unique in that these stages do more than chronicle an evolution of the superintendency. Rather these stages represent the responsibilities, priorities, and activism of those who occupy the office of the superintendency.

Dyadic relationship. A unique relationship between two interacting and mutually influencing organizational entities such as a leader and a member. There are two general types of dyadic relationships. Those that are based on expanded and negotiated role responsibilities or extra roles are called the in-group. Those that are based on the formal employment contract or defined roles are called the out-group (Northouse, 2004).

Gender. Padavic (1991) defines gender as the term traditionally used to refer to the grammatical categories of “masculine,” “feminine,” and “neuter,” but in recent years the word has become well established in its use to refer to sex-based categories, as in phrases such as gender gap and the politics of gender. This usage is supported by the practice of many anthropologists, who reserve sex for reference to biological categories, while using gender to refer to social or cultural categories.

Leader Member Exchange (LMX) theory. A leadership theory that conceptualizes leadership as a process that is centered on the interactions between leaders and followers. This theory makes the dyadic relationship between leaders and followers the focal point of the leadership process. This theory challenges the assumption that implied leaders treat followers in a collective way, as a group, using an average leadership style (Northouse, 2004).

Reconceptualization. Grogan’s (2000) research of the superintendency through a feminist, post-modern lens highlighted the paradoxes of the present day superintendency. These paradoxes appeared to be the result of opposing forces at work against each other creating a different demand on the superintendency, which lead to a reconception of the position.

Superintendent. A person who has the authority to supervise or direct the education of public school children within a school district. The operational officer for education policy in a school district (Florida Department of Education, 2006).

Limitations of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine how a woman superintendent led her school district in the state of Florida. As such, data collected in the naturalistic setting of field had to bear

the weight of many interpretations. The value of this study was dependent on the detailed description, analysis, and interpretation of data gathered in the field. However, my presence as a researcher had an impact on the people who were interviewed and observed. I attempted to offset this factor by interacting in an unobtrusive and non-threatening manner.

This study was based on a single case study in the state of Florida. As such it was not the intent of the research to imply any generalizability beyond the case at hand. Any speculation beyond this study is left to the reader's interpretation. The sampling method employed throughout the study was both purposive and convenient. This entire research was based on a single researcher experience, which means all evaluations and conclusions were dependent on a single researcher's collection and analysis of data. To offset any bias from a single perspective, triangulation was utilized during data collection.

Finally, this study was framed by literature purposefully selected to design and inform this research, and as such was a perspective challenge to one leadership theory, LMX. This theory focused on relationships between the superintendent and members of her district, and may not have explained all that was going on in the study. Furthermore, other theories may have provided a "better" framework in which to examine and explain this woman superintendent's leadership.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 included the introduction to the problem, study rationale, purpose of the study, overview of informing literature, design and scope, research questions, definition of terms and limitations. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature relevant to this study as well as the conceptual framework. Chapter 3 details the setting, research methodology, data collection, and analysis used in the study. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study through descriptive narratives and analysis of the data. Chapter 5 discusses the conclusions and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to study how a woman superintendent led her school district in the state of Florida. One approach to studying her leadership is within the context of organizational theory. This context defines the leader as an individual member of the group or organization who influences the interpretation of events, the choice of objectives and strategies, and the organization of work activities (Yukl, 1998). At the base of this influence lies the fundamental premise that leaders form different types of relationships with members of the organization and thus influence the outcomes of the organization (Sparrowe & Liden, 1997). The leadership theory that specifically examines and explains this type of leadership is known as the Leader Member Exchange (LMX) theory. Support for use of this approach in studying this woman superintendent was found in three fields of literature: research on the K-12 public superintendency, research on women superintendents, and research on the Leader-Member Exchange theory. These three fields of literature formed the conceptual framework used to guide this research.

The first section of this literature review began with an examination of research on how the public K-12 superintendency was defined. This defining research began with research devoted to the historical development of the office. It was through the understanding of this development one comprehends the present expectations placed on those who occupy the position. Unfortunately, a detailed historical account of the superintendency was not available, perhaps due in part to the evolution of the position as a product of growth in the educational arena. Therefore, history of the superintendency was pieced together from sketchy recordings dating back to the end of the eighteenth century (Konnert & Augenstien, 1995). Next, the examination highlighted the paradoxes of the present day position that led researchers to reconceptualize the superintendency as a more complex and conflicted set of roles and activities. This reconceptualization resulted in the need for more research on the day-to-day operations of those who lead in this ever-changing position. The examination concluded with an overview of the superintendency within the state of Florida. The Florida Constitution and Florida Statutes define and operationalize this position in a unique manner.

The second section of this literature review provided an overview of research specifically on women superintendents. This review began with a national perspective of women in the workforce and channeled down to women administrators in the public school setting. Next, the review provided an analysis of research completed on women superintendents. This review concluded with the tying of this research into a paradigm that was established nearly 20 years ago.

The final section of this literature review examined the organizational leadership theory known as LMX. This review provided an overview of the model as well as the evolution of this theory. Next, the review covered the notion of exchanges, leadership making, as well as organizational outcomes. The final part of this review provided a general analysis and application of this theory as well as implications for this research project.

The concluding portion of this literature review was devoted to explaining the conceptual framework used to inform this research. As previously indicated this framework was designed from the three informing fields of research. In addition to this explanation, a conceptual map is provided to facilitate a better understanding of the framework. Lastly, a final defense is provided for the appropriateness of this topic of research based on the three informing fields of research.

The K-12 Public School Superintendency

According to Webster's (2006) dictionary a school superintendent is one who directs and manages a school system or organization. While many people recognize the position within our public education system, few can eloquently explain the function and responsibilities of the modern superintendent. To understand this office it is important to step back from a microscopic examination and review the superintendency in a historical perspective. Thus, the first part of this section of the literature review examined this office from a historical perspective specifically the development of the superintendent through seven stages. These seven stages describe the office of the superintendent not from an evolutionary standpoint but rather from a perspective of the development of responsibilities along a continuum. In viewing the office from this standpoint, researchers are able to create a paradigm that evokes the need to take a different view of the office. Research of this nature lends itself to what Grogan (2000) described as a reconceptualization of the office due to existing paradoxes. Examination of this reconceptualization is provided in the second part of this section. The final part of this section provides a snapshot of the office as defined and operationalized within the state of Florida.

What does it mean to be a Superintendent?

The first informing body of research for this study was on defining the superintendency in the public K-12 education setting. History is “an unending dialogue between the past and present” (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995, p. 3), and knowledge of the history of the superintendency helps one comprehend the present. Existing expectations placed on those who hold this office are to some extent a product of this history. Unfortunately, a detailed historical account of the superintendency is not available, perhaps due in large part to the evolution of the position as a product of growth in the educational arena. History of the superintendency must be pieced together from incomplete records dating back to the end of the eighteenth century (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

Brunner, Grogan, & Bjork (2002) identified seven discursive stages of development in the office of the superintendency. These discursive stages were unique in that these stages do more than chronicle an evolution of the superintendency. Rather these stages represent the responsibilities, priorities, and activism of those who occupy the office of the superintendency. Thus the discussion that follows, for the most part, is a direct reflection of an analysis utilizing the discursive stages approach.

Stage one - superintendents as clerks (1820 – 1850). The profession of the superintendency slowly evolved within American public education during the mid-1800s as cities grew during the industrial revolution. As states developed a commercial and industrial base, cities started to grow and the school systems serving those cities also grew (Candoli, 1995). With growth, city councilmen recognized the need for more direction and supervision of these systems and consequently found it necessary to appoint school committees to coordinate day-to-day operations (Chapman, 1997).

By the early 1800s several of the major cities explored the addition of an educator as the head of the entire school system because local school committees found they could no longer handle the intricate administrative responsibilities of the day-to-day operations. The first local superintendents were established in Buffalo and Louisville around 1837 (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995). However, some local school committees were generally more reluctant to turn the supervising of the schools over to one individual. Thus administration of these early school districts was shared between the board, the superintendent, and sometimes, a business manager who independently reported to the board.

By the Civil War, twenty-seven large eastern and mid-western cities had established a superintendent as the chief administrative officer. These boards decided they needed a person apart from board members to fulfill these administrative responsibilities. As cities continued to grow, the number of superintendencies grew parallel to increases in school population. However, the day-to-day governance in thousands of small rural districts was left in the hands of farmer-populated school boards. Furthermore, with few exceptions, early superintendents were men, as single women typically stayed in the classroom. In the nineteenth century, married women were rarely allowed even to teach in American public schools (Hoffman, 2003).

While the duties of the early superintendents varied from district to district, the primary responsibility during this period was as a clerk to the school committee. Educational discourse was based on religious ideology with schools viewed as a force for national unity (Brunner et. al., 2002). Thus, many early superintendents resembled circuit-riding preachers, traveling far away from their cities and school districts to preach the gospel of a free public education. These pioneers were moral role models, champions of the democratic ethic, and perhaps most importantly, builders of the American dream (Chapman, 1997). The lay board members, sensitive to local taxes, usually handled the budget and finances of the schools. Overall fiscal affairs, school building construction, and maintenance did not become normal superintendent duties until the early twentieth century (Sharp, 1997). Common school ideology advocates promoted the notion that individual schoolmen were to serve schools while collective bodies of citizens were to govern them (Brunner et al., 2002).

Stage two - superintendent as instructional leader (1850 – 1900). Increasing diversity in the nation led to debate over the religious focus of public education. Tyack and Hansot (1982) indicate this debate was seen most in urban areas where priests and party bosses sought to dampen the controversy by eliminating all religious teaching from the schools. Horace Mann's speeches in regard to public school helped soften the debate by highlighting the benefits of public school in eliminating delinquency and crime. This shift in discourse leads to the rise of the superintendency as the connector between public schools and the government. The superintendent shifted from one that reflected Protestant morals to one that strongly reflected patriotism and governmental agendas. Superintendency discourse reflected that the superintendent was the master educator as schools became more responsible for educating young citizens for a democracy. Superintendents were concerned with furthering national education goals.

In 1870, a group of superintendents formed the Department of Superintendents as part of the National Education Association. Papers presented at their first annual meeting indicated that the efforts of the superintendents should be focused on acquiring enough power to be an effective executive within the educational organization. Thus at the turn of the century the superintendents themselves believed that business management and instructional supervision of the school system should be controlled by the superintendents, which constituted a reform for school boards. As a result superintendents gained executive power and credibility while boards shifted more into policy-making bodies less concerned with school management (Brunner et. al., 2002).

Superintendents did not immediately gain control of the day-to-day control of school districts. School boards at times were the nemesis to superintendents such as Elwood Cubberly, George Strayer, and Frank Spauling who are considered to be the pioneers of the superintendency. They not only championed the cause of the common school movement but also wrestled with boards that saw school dollars and jobs as political spoils to be spread among their constituents (Chapman, 1997). Some of the early superintendents soon found their way into university teaching and founded departments of educational administration. One of the most notable of these was Elwood Cubberly who became Dean of Education at Stanford University (Tyack & Hansot, 1982).

Stage three - superintendent as expert manager (1900 – 1954). In the early 1900s the superintendency was established and legitimized with school boards and the public (Chapman, 1997). According to Brunner et al. (2002) several events drove the discourse and practice of the superintendency during this stage. World War I increased the federal government's involvement in business and industry, which impacted the educational system of the nation. A great wave of scientific management, based on the work of Frederick Taylor swept the private sector of corporate management. At the same time speeches at the 1913 meeting of the Department of Superintendents asserted that schools should forge into industrial models and school management must induct the principles of scientific management (Chapman, 1997). Superintendents, especially in cities with rapidly increasing populations saw scientific management as a way to tie together their expanding organizations and to measure production while maintaining accountability to taxpayers (Sharp, 1997).

A business-focused description of the superintendency held control in training programs, and these programs became almost exclusively concerned with technical and business aspects of

the position. Superintendents and principals were recognized as the educational “experts” of local school districts and were seldom challenged unless a political question was at hand (Brunner et al., 2002).

Incidental to the scientific management movement within the profession was the fact that by the 1930s most states had spelled out in statute the role of the local school superintendent and local board of education. Codification clearly drew lines of authority, making the superintendent responsible to the local board, thereby specifying the organizational form for the modern school districts (Chapman, 1997).

Stage four - superintendent as communicator (1954-1970). In the beginning of the 1950s the public began to express dissatisfaction over declining student achievement. In addition the civil rights desire to resolve the contradiction between racism and values of democracy in the public schools began to be played out in the Supreme Court. Political challenges put new pressures on superintendent to respond to external demands for social justice. These challenges broadened the role of the superintendent to district spokesperson and community advisor. Although superintendents were expected to be more responsive to the community the rhetoric that superintendents be communicators gave them the positional power to decide what and when information would be delivered (Sharp, 1997).

In the 1960s professors of educational administration took the training of school administrators from the world of real life into the theory bases of sociology and psychology. Many of these professors had no previous experience as superintendents. By the 1970s these professors would dominate the educational administration professorate. Prospective superintendents were taught theoretical models of management and instructed on how to test these theories in the field setting. Education of future superintendents was no longer left to practitioners who taught the positions as an applied craft (Chapman, 1997).

Stage five - accountable superintendents living with conflict (1970 – 1980). In the 1970s, superintendents were under great pressure to respond to public demands for accountability for the education of all children within public education. Superintendents came under attack from special interest groups and state legislatures, which were assuming more control of education. It was during this stage that composition and focus of school boards shifted. Many board members came into their roles bearing special interest platforms. In previous decades, school boards were generally comprised of businessmen and professional people interested in public education for the

general welfare of the district. However, beginning in the 1970s more blue-collar workers, homemakers, and others were elected as single-issue candidates intent on changing the system (Chapman, 1997).

Cuban (1998) identified how the social tensions in the community spilled into the schools and encroached upon the authority of the superintendency by a more involved citizenry and school board. The superintendent's vulnerability to the political agendas of school boards increased during this stage, changing the landscape of this leadership post. Issues such as equal educational opportunity for minority students, community control of schools, intergovernmental and interagency cooperation, and compensatory programs resulted in a greater focus on the performance, training, and selection of superintendents by policy makers (Candoli, 1995).

Stage six - superintendent as political strategist (1980s-1990). In 1983 the release of the report, *A Nation at Risk*, resulted in a heavy focus by politicians on educational programs that would improve the quality of public education. This focus affected educators at all levels. Educators were to focus on higher standards, increasing productivity and excellence as well as provide more choices. The waves of reform that followed were large-scale and systemic. As a result, the definition of the superintendent's work became one of formal management knowledge. Previous emphasis on organizational efficiency was replaced with management issues of student learning, teacher professionalism, and decentralization. Superintendents had to improve learning while generating broad-based community support. Leadership was instructional and distributed.

Political strategies for superintendents became less about maintaining positional power and more about personal survival (Brunner, et al., 2002). Significant control of public education moved into the hands of state and local bureaucracies. According to Glass (1992), the policy-making pendulum swung between the superintendent and the school board in regards to what constituted policy-making and what constituted management. Most researchers on the superintendency favored a model of the superintendent as chief executive officer, a concept partially borrowed from the corporate world. Ironically, what was viewed as policy development in the world of public education was seen as management prerogative in the private sector. Even at this point in time, the argument continues with strong beliefs on both sides of the debate (Candoli, 1995).

Stage seven - superintendent as collaborator (1990s and beyond). Diminished power and the need to respond to external pressures moved the role of superintendency towards reforming

schools in ways that support the learning of all children. School districts require systemic restructuring of schools to decrease administrative bureaucracy and increase involvement of teachers, parents, and the community in educational leadership (Brunner et al., 2002).

In this new climate of accountability and choice, superintendents are challenged with understanding and explaining the importance of school reform for a sound economy and democratic society in school environments that are becoming increasingly diverse. Political and moral dimensions of the leadership role of superintendents in changing the nature of schooling have taken precedence over the conventional management practices of the past (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000).

Recent discourse emphasizes the need for superintendents to focus on improved learning through the school community while building community capacity to enhance learning in schools. Superintendent leadership is perceived as working with and through rather than commanding others. In this knowledge intensive environment distributed leadership is still the notion of the moment. Distributed leadership must draw on individual skills, knowledge, and expertise for the guidance and direction of the organization to achieve the notion of shared goals. The notion of leadership has become one of creating a shared culture with a common set of values binding the group together (Brunner et al., 2002).

The next section of this literature review builds on this analysis of the superintendency by examining the position as it is defined today in the public education organizational setting. One major piece of research informs this section, namely the reconceptualization of the profession. The reconception of the office is brought about by specific paradoxes that are explained in detail in the following section.

Reconception of the Superintendency: A Paradigmatic Shift?

Grogan's (2000) examination of the superintendency through a feminist, post-modern lens brought to the greater conversation the paradoxes of the present day superintendency. These paradoxes appeared to be the result of opposing forces at work against each other creating a different demand on the superintendency that led to a reconception of the position. These paradoxes were the paradox of vision, the paradox that successful reformers need not reform, the paradox that public schools adopt private sector values and the paradox of decentralized authority with increased accountability.

Paradox of vision. Grogan (2000) explained this paradox within the context of the hiring process of prospective superintendents. Prospective superintendents are expected to articulate a vision for the district five years out from the moment of application for the position. The paradox of this situation is that in articulating a vision before hire the superintendent does not actually have intense knowledge of the district nor is there a likelihood the superintendent will even be around to fulfill this vision. If the superintendent is in place, the district may substantially change over five years thus negating the articulated vision.

Paradox of successful reformers need not reform. Superintendents who are highly visible and proactive in their reform efforts are often recruited elsewhere before the results of their reform are apparent. Grogan (2000) explained the superintendency was associated with reform activity but not with measuring the outcomes of reform efforts thus the paradox of successful reformers need not reform.

Paradox of public schools adopts private sector values. Grogan (2000) explained this paradox within the realm of education policy. Policymakers are looking at the private sector to rescue public education, thus the movement toward charter schools and vouchers. Competition and the threat of privatization of management hang over districts as central offices share the blame for poor student achievement. Superintendents with more non-traditional education experience are leading school systems. This new breed of superintendents is coming from professions such as law, military leaders, and fiscal experts (Grogan, 2000).

Paradox of decentralized authority and increased accountability. As superintendents become more accountable for student achievement they are also pushed to decentralize authority and empower others according to Grogan (2000). Additionally, multi-dimensional communities have created agendas that are often conflicting with each other. In hopes of creating a democratic community, superintendents are forced to spend time with community members at the expense of their teaching force. Teachers and administrators consequently have difficulty gaining access to the superintendent (Grogan, 2000).

As Grogan (2000) pointed out these paradoxes allow researchers to critically examine the superintendency because current practice is burdened with contradictions. These contradictions reflect the different external forces that are at work in the larger society. Grogan (2000) argued that new theories of leadership for the superintendency must emerge from the questioning of resolution to the paradoxes. These new theories will in essence lay the groundwork for a

reconception of the position. She asserted that for a person to survive in the superintendency office long enough to effect change that promises improvement in student achievement, a superintendent must display comfort with contradiction, work through others, appreciate dissent, have a critical awareness of how students are being served and employ an ethic of care.

Comfort with contradiction. Because districts are becoming increasingly more fragmented, superintendents must have the capacity to be at ease with being pulled in opposite directions according to Grogan (2000). Attentive to the existence of multiple perspectives and responsive to the unique community environment, the reconceived superintendent empowers others. Leadership then becomes the capacity to involve others in the kinds of relationships that are needed to form and maintain a community focus on what is important, predicated on care for those the superintendent serves (Grogan, 2000).

Working through others. Superintendents as agents of change must reflect on who will benefit from the changes and model the kind of leadership that will inspire others such as listening attentively, asking good questions, and explaining their commitment to important principles (Grogan, 2000). Thus the reconceived superintendent engages in reflection prior to implementing change. It is only through the development of attentive relationships and sharing of important principles that a change is instituted. In other words, change for the sake of something new is no longer sound leadership practice at this level.

Appreciating dissent. Grogan (2000) explained that superintendents who focus on the local power mechanisms will be better informed about the opportunities to improve the learning opportunities for all students. These superintendents will take into account how differing perspectives contribute to a better understanding of the community. Guided by a focus on the students the superintendent will not stifle dissent in the name of consensus (Grogan, 2000).

Critical awareness of how children are being served. In order to change practices and policies that disadvantage children outside the mainstream, the superintendent must ask tough questions and consider issues from multiple perspectives. This means the superintendent must take a stand on issues of social justice and communicate that stand into what is actually occurring in the district (Grogan, 2000).

An ethic of care. An ethic of care allows the superintendent to deal with individuals as unique beings and not as representatives of social groups. Care prompts positive working relationships that emphasize high educational standards and a commitment to equity (Noddings,

1992). Grogan (2000) saw this ethic of care as a core component of the reconceptualized superintendent.

In examining Grogan's (2000) reconception of the superintendency, it was apparent that the superintendency was indeed positioned for major changes in how the occupants of the office led a school district. The models that were developed during the discursive stages of the superintendency no longer described and explained the responsibilities, priorities, and activism that are required of the 21st century superintendent. This research utilized the lens provided by the principles of the reconceptualized superintendent to add to the general understanding of the office of the superintendency through a leadership theory focused on relationship building. In doing so, it added to the general understanding of the seventh discursive stage of the superintendency

The Superintendency in the State of Florida

Moving from an overview of the superintendency and the reconceptualization of the position, this next section of this review dealt with the superintendency in the state of Florida. Florida aligns its school districts along its political county lines. That means there are currently 67 school districts within the state of Florida responsible for the education of over 2.5 million students (Hoffman & Sable, 2006). This part of this section provides an overview of how Florida defines the position as well as the legal requirements to occupy the position. The Florida Statutes define the general powers of the superintendent as well provide the statutory duties of this office. A brief discussion of these powers and functions is necessary to better understand the day-to-day functions of the superintendent. In addition, the Florida Constitution outlines the qualifying attributes of those who hold the position – namely that the individual must meet the criteria of any public office official. The concluding segment of this section highlights the key legal parameters for individuals desiring to occupy this position.

General powers and statutory duties. According to Florida Statutes 1001.49 the general powers of a school superintendent in the state of Florida includes the general oversight of the district in regards to problems, needs and improvement of the education of Florida's school aged children. This general oversight includes the responsibility for the efficient operation of any and all aspects of education within the district. In addition, it is the superintendent who advises and counsels the local School Board in regards to the district. In essence, the superintendent is the operations manager and policy enforcer for the school district.

While the general powers enable the superintendent to function as a public servant in the area of education, it is the statutory duties found in Florida Statutes 1001.51 that give a detailed description of the day-to-day job. The statutory duties are numerous and perhaps cumbersome, therefore, the following overview captures the essence of the responsibilities of this position:

A Florida superintendent has the duty to

- preside over board meetings;
- enforce laws and rules of school board;
- be the custodian of school property and supervisor of instruction;
- direct work of district employees and human resource component;
- maintain proper attendance accounting of children;
- recommend textbooks, plans for transportation and plans for facilities;
- coordinate action between government entities;
- attend Department of Education conferences;
- recommend tax levy, prepare annual school budget and submit monthly financial statements;
- recommend system of improvement and accountability;
- visit schools and suggest improvements; and
- inform the general public about programs, needs, and objectives.

Legal qualification for the position. The present Florida Constitution establishes the qualification criteria for the position of school district superintendent in Article IX, Section 5 that states:

In each school district there shall be a superintendent of schools who shall be elected at the general election in each year the number of which is a multiple of four for a term of four years; or, when provided by resolution of the district school board, or by special law, approved by vote of the electors, the district school superintendent in any school district shall be employed by the district school board as provided by general law. The resolution or special law may be rescinded or repealed by either procedure after four years.

As a result of this constitutional provision, Florida has 67 district school superintendent positions of which currently 44 are elected while 23 are appointed (Florida Association of School Superintendents, 2006). In the case of an appointed superintendent, the local district school board may prescribe specific educational background qualifications, however, there is no state requirement for licensure/certification. Furthermore, there is only one statutory provision specifically addressing this position and it regards salary. The statute requires each district pay the

school superintendent a reasonable annual salary that takes into account such factors as size of the district, educational qualifications and professional experience of the candidate.

The present Constitution also establishes criterion for disqualifying persons as candidates for any public office in Article VI, 4(a). This provisions states that no person convicted of a felony or adjudicated of a mental illness may seek office unless all rights are restored and/or the disability cleared. The Article also contains a disqualifier for re-election bids in the form of term limits of eight consecutive years for specific public officials of which the superintendent office is not listed. Therefore, school boards may consider the educational background and experience of an individual for pay purposes, however the state places no other qualifying criteria on the position other than those similar to any elected public official namely exclusion of those individuals with either a felony conviction or mental illness.

The Florida Constitution has gone through three dramatic changes in regard to the qualification of public officials and as a result the lack of state licensure/certification of superintendents has not always been the case. The Florida legislature has, on numerous occasions, attempted to specify additional qualifications for election to this office and others beyond those prescribed in the Constitution. However, the Florida Supreme Court has consistently ruled against these statutes even though the Constitution itself has changed. The follow is an overview of the cases that set the legal precedence in this matter. In all, the Florida Supreme Court declared unconstitutional any statute requiring criteria meant to upgrade minimum requirements for public offices from the superintendent of schools to the county commission.

In *State of Florida, ex rel. the Attorney General v. Wm. H. H. George* (1887) the legal issues was the eligibility of William George for the offices of Marshal and Collector of Taxes in Deland even though he had not been a resident for six months, and was not a registered voter. The Florida Supreme Court ruled that the Constitution prescribed no qualifications for office except for Governor, Senators and Representatives, and Judges of the Supreme and Circuit Court. Therefore, the Court inferred that the framers of the Constitution deemed it best to leave rigid restriction to local control because local citizens could best identify and select those individual that would best fit the interest of the local community.

The *Thomas v. State ex rel. Cobb et al.* (1952) case dealt directly with the office of the superintendent. The legal issue in this case was whether or not Duval County could require a valid Florida Graduate Certificate for an individual qualifying as a candidate for the Office of the

Superintendent of Public Instruction. At that time Section 230.25 of the Florida Statutes required that in order for a person to be eligible for nomination, election or appointment to the office of county superintendent in any county in Florida the person must meet the requirements for candidacy for public office as well as hold a valid Florida graduate certificate based upon graduation from a four-year course in a standard institution of higher learning. The court ruled that the office of the county superintendent was a public office and that the Legislature was prohibited from adding to or taking from the superintendent so as to make it different from those prescribed in the Constitution thus the additional qualifications listed in the statutes were unconstitutional. The Court made it clear that the Legislature did not have the power or authority to prescribe additional qualifications for this office and had not authority to delegate to any board the authority to prescribe additional qualifications. The case ended state mandated licensure/certification for the office of the superintendent.

In *Wilson v. Newell* (1969) the Court dismissed a complaint seeking to enforce a Florida statute which required a candidate for either the office of county commission or county school board be a bona fide resident of the district for a period of at least six months prior to the qualifying date. The Court ruled the statute was unconstitutional and invalid because it prescribed qualifications in addition to those listed in the Constitution.

The Supreme Court of Florida has consistently ruled that Florida's Constitution's is the guiding legal document in regards to the qualifications for public office. The Court has demonstrated any legislative mandate that attempts to place additional qualifiers on these positions is unconstitutional. While the Constitution itself has gone through dramatic changes in regards to public official's qualifications it has maintained that local control is in the best interest of the public. The Florida Supreme Court ruled over 45 years ago that state mandated licensure/certification of the superintendents was unconstitutional. Furthermore any attempt by the Legislature to place additional qualifiers on individuals seeking this public office, such as residency requirements, is beyond the boundaries set forth in the Florida Constitution. Any changes in the state level qualifications for the office of the superintendent will have to occur as the result of a change to the constitution.

Florida has a strong legal history of non-licensure of superintendents, however, it is not alone in this endeavor. To date Colorado, Washington, D.C., Hawaii, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Wyoming do not require a superintendent to be either license or certified. (National Center

for Education Information, 2003). While some states are considering non-licensure as a solution for the lack of superintendent candidates; others are relaxing their certification requirements to expand the pool of qualified applicants for an ever-increasing number of superintendent vacancies. Florida, like other states is wrestling with projections that more than 70 percent of the present superintendents may retire within the next 10 years (NCEI, 2003).

The next section of this literature examines the research on women superintendents within the broader framework of women administrators within the public K-12 system. Specifically the next section examines women superintendents from a broader perspective of women in educational leadership and concludes with an overview of research on women superintendents. The section ties this research into a paradigm that guides research on women in educational administration and specifically guides this research design.

Research on Women Superintendents

The previous section of this literature review provided an overview of research on the office of the superintendency. This was accomplished through an overview of the development of the office with an historical emphasis and included research on how the office has become reconceptualized in large part due to the paradoxes of demands placed on the office holder. The section concluded with informing research on how the office is defined in the state of Florida. The next section of this literature review will examine the research on women superintendents. Perhaps the most obvious question at this point would be why focus on women superintendents at all? As outlined in the previous section, Florida is looking at an approximately 70% retirement in its current superintendents ranks holding, of course, for the dynamics of those elected to the position. According the Florida Department of Education (2006) the “average” Florida superintendent is a white male, 56 years old, earns \$112,900 per year, has an educational background, and is between 50 and 60 years old. With that average in mind, it is best to examine an untapped pool of potential superintendents – the current women in educational administration. To understand the importance of this untapped pool it is best to begin this examination with a national perspective of women in the workforce and then move on to a discussion on women in educational administration. The concluding section provides an overview of the research completed on women superintendents. In addition, an explanation is provided on how this project fits into the greater research conversation, which is guided by a paradigm.

National Perspective of Women in the Workforce

Women have made great strides in workforce on a national level. The following is a highlight of current statistics on women in the United States workforce (U.S. Department of Labor, 2005):

- With a labor force participation rate of 59.2 percent, women represented 46 percent of the total United States labor force.
- Women are projected to comprise 47 percent of the total labor force in 2014. They will also account for 51 percent of the increase in total labor force growth from 2004-2014.
- There were 65.8 million employed women in the U.S. in 2004. Seventy-four percent worked full time, while the remaining 26 percent worked part time.
- The largest percentage of employed women (38 percent) worked in management, professional, and related occupations, while 35 percent worked in sales and office occupations
- Undergraduate enrollment has been higher for women than men since 1978. More than three-quarters of degrees in health, education, and psychology went to women. In addition women earn the majority of bachelor's degrees in business, biological sciences, social sciences and history.
- Women account for about half the enrollment in professional programs such as law, medicine, and optometry. That is up from 22 percent a generation ago.

The U.S. population is 51 percent female, the same as it was three decades ago. Yet legal and cultural barriers have fallen during that time period, creating unprecedented opportunities for women according to the Institute of Women's Policy Research (2006). Women have become knowledgeable about boosting their income for themselves and their families by recognizing the value of an advanced degree. Ironically, as more women are pursuing advanced degree they are still underrepresented in full-time faculty jobs in the higher education setting especially in fields such as physical science, engineering, and math. Yet in another stroke of irony, women who work full time earn about 76 percent as much as men (IWPR, 2006).

Overview of Women in Educational Administration

Throughout most of the history of American public education, women have been underrepresented in administrative positions in elementary and secondary schools, relative both to their participation in the teaching force and to their proportion of the general population (Kaestle, 1983; Tyack & Hansot 1982). Although women have recently gained a larger share of school-level administrative positions they have not yet approached parity with men (Blount, 1998; Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Hoffman, 2003; Tallerico & Tingley, 2001; Theobald, 1993; Weiler, 1998).

Women comprise about 80% of the elementary teaching force and hold about half of the jobs in secondary education, yet they have been less successful in entering the ranks of school administration. For a brief time, women held the majority of elementary school principalships, but as the position became “professionalized,” they lost ground to men. Women’s representation in elementary principalships declined from 62% in 1905 to 55% in 1928, reaching a low of about 20% in 1972 (Biklen & Brannigan, 1980; Shakeshaft, 1990). Women were never more than a small minority of secondary school principals. Only about 6% of the secondary principals in 1905 were women, and by the early 1970s this had dropped to about 1% (Tyack & Hansot, 1982). By the mid-1970s women represented only 13% of all public school principals in the United States (Jones & Montenegro, 1985).

Prospects for women in school administration gradually improved in the next two decades. In 1993-94, a total of 79,618 principals worked in public schools across the United States, of that total 52,114 were men and 27,505 were women. Women held 34% of the school principalships and 41% of the assistant principalships in the nation’s public schools (Montenegro, 1993; National Center for Education Statistics, 1995). In 1996 women comprised 83% of the elementary and 54% of the secondary teaching populations and constituted 52% of the principalships in elementary schools and 26% of high school principalship positions (Henke, Choy, Geis, & Broughman, 1996).

More recent demographic analyses place more women in administrative positions. A review of the chart below indeed seems to support this statement.

Table 1: Gender of School Principals

Characteristic	All	Elementary			Secondary		
	Principals	All	Public	Private	All	Public	Private
Total	100.0	76.7	79.0	21.0	23.3	88.5	11.5
Male	53.7	44.9	48.2	32.4	76.9	78.3	66.3
Female	46.4	55.1	51.8	67.6	23.1	21.8	33.7

Note: Adapted from U.S. Department of Education, 2004

In the state of Florida, for the 2003-04 school year, the average profile of school principals is described as follows:

Table 2: Florida's Average Principal Comparison

Level	Race	Gender	Age	Average Salary
Elementary	White	Female	52 years	\$ 73,907
Middle/Junior High	White	Female	51 years	\$ 75,684
High School	White	Male	51 years	\$ 80,670
Superintendent	White	Male	56 years	\$112,900

Note: Adapted from Florida Department of Education, Public School Data Base, 2006

In examining the women in the superintendent's office the accounting of historical percentages is at best suspect. Blount (1998) pointed out that the number of women reported in the superintendent's position differed by sources. What was at first thought to be careless scholarship turned out to be the lack of reliable, uniform database collection. This lack of data collection lessened the reliability of any counting system. Blount (1998) refers to this as

conspiracy of silence and insinuated that it could hardly have been unintentional.¹ The following table gives an overview of the percentage of women superintendent in years that researchers have documented with some reliability. According to Shakeshaft (1990) only 7% of the school superintendents in the United States were women at the end of the 1980s. However, at the start of the new millennium that percentage appears to have moved up to 18% (Grogan & Brunner, 2005).

Table 3: Percentage Overview of Women Superintendents

Author	Year	Percentage of Women Superintendents
Blount (1998)	1910	9.0%
	1930	11.0%
	1950	9.0%
	1971	1.3%
Shakeshaft (1990)	1990	7.0 %
Glass (2000)	1992	6.6%
	1999	13.2%
Grogan & Brunner (2005)	2001	18.0%

These figures seem to tell an optimistic tale: more women are working and more are filling school-level administrative positions. Nevertheless, it is important to look more deeply into research on women superintendents to ascertain whether this optimism is warranted. This scrutiny is warranted for several reasons. One is that in the United States, educators are given the task of transforming students into adults by teaching knowledge, understanding, and skills. They are charged with teaching young citizens how to become participants in the community and society as

¹ The lack of data on women in leadership between early 1900's through the 1970's is in part due to the fact that the gender information of school leaders was not systematically collected during this period. For example, Blount (1998) found in researching women superintendents from 1873-1995 that employment statistics reports were based on limited surveys rather than comprehensive tallies. She attributes this lack of statistical reporting to what Tyack and Hansot (1982) labeled as a "conspiracy of silence."

a whole. In brief, schools socialize. If schools themselves constrict opportunities, permit discrimination, reflect inequities, and stingily preserve internal power, they will tell students to prepare themselves for a world in which such practices rule (Biklen & Brannigan, 1980).

Another reason is that gender imbalance becomes crucial when there is general agreement that the administrative leadership of a school is the key element to the effectiveness of a school (Griffin, 1997). When examining women's capacity to serve as school leaders, some researchers believe that males and females have different leadership styles (Nogay & Beebe, 1997). However, research supports the fact that females are at least as effective in their leadership as men (Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Hoffman, 2003; Shakeshaft, 1990). There is no apparent reason why women should not fill these positions in proportion to their presence in the education field.

A final reason is that the United States is entering an era in which there will be a significant increase in the demand for leadership in the K-12 system due to retirement and individuals leaving the profession. If there are factors that hinder the recruitment and retention of able women into leadership positions, then public education will pay a price in the underutilization of available resources. This underutilization will affect the potential of school systems to secure quality leaders.

Women in Educational Administration from 1980-2004

In this section, a review is provided on current research of women in K-12 administrative positions within the United States with a focus on what questions and issues remain unresolved in this gender imbalance. This review will provide evidence on how the structural features of the organization have created sorting rules that have impacted the selection, retention, and promotion of women leaders even though there are laws to prevent discrimination. Furthermore, a paradigmatic framework developed by Shakeshaft (1989) will be utilized to support the argument that research on this topic has progressed through stages and still must progress beyond its current parameters to impact the perception of the women in administrative positions.

Legal context. According to many authors (Biklen & Brannigan, 1980; Blount, 1998; Hoffman, 2003; Weiler, 1998;) the most common argument extended early in this examination is that the gender imbalance in K-12 leadership is due to discrimination. While there is truth in this argument, it is perhaps an oversimplification in an age where sex discrimination and segregation are prohibited by law. Various sex equity laws impacting elementary and secondary education have been enacted to open the door to women.

The first federal law having a direct impact on women in the workforce was the 1963 Amendment of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to include what is commonly referred to as the Equal Pay Act (EPA). The EPA mandates that equal wages must be paid to women and men for equal work on jobs which require equal skill, effort, and responsibility, and which are performed under similar working conditions. The EPA was subsequently incorporated into Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Dardaine-Ragguet, Russo, & Harris, 1994).

Title VII prohibits employment discrimination based not only on gender, but also on race, religion, and country of national origin. Title VII was quickly followed by Executive Order 11246 (1965), which was aimed at doing away with gender-based discrimination in programs associated with the federal government. Title VII was amended in 1972 to extend coverage to educational institutions. Regulations by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) significantly strengthened the rights of women, especially in the higher education setting, to include sexual harassment (Dardaine-Ragguet, Russo, & Harris, 1994).

Title IX of the Civil Rights Act, adopted in 1972, prohibits discrimination based on sex in any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance (Dardaine-Ragguet, Russo, & Harris, 1994). Athletics have created the most controversy regarding Title IX, but its gains in education and academics are notable. Before Title IX many schools refused to admit women or enforced strict limits. Some statistics highlighting the advancements follow:

- In 1994, women received 38% of medical degrees, compared with 9% in 1972.
- In 1994, women earned 43% of law degrees, compared with 7% in 1972.
- In 1994, 44% of all doctoral degrees to U.S. citizens went to women, up from 25% in 1977.

The Glass Ceiling Act of the Civil Rights Act of 1991 was designed to combat gender-based discrimination in the workplace. A study conducted by the Glass Ceiling Commission offered ways in which women and minorities could be given greater representation in management and decision-making positions. The study and subsequent recommendations focused on barriers and opportunities in three areas: the filling of management and decision-making positions; developmental and skill-enhancing activities; and compensation and reward systems (Dardaine-Ragguet, Russo, & Harris, 1994).

However, occupational discrimination still appears to exist in public school administration (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). A glass ceiling has been virtually impervious to challenges that are

preventing many qualified females, especially minority women, from assuming administrative roles. Simply stated, it appears women dominate in numbers but men dominate in power. Reliance on the conjecture that discrimination is the primary explanation may be an oversimplification and deserves closer examination through the analysis of literature written about women in K-12 leadership positions.

Guiding paradigm for research on women administrators. Shakeshaft (1989) offers a guiding light in the analyses of research on women in leadership positions within the K-12 system. In accepting her guiding perspective on proposed stages of research, this study is better informed through a review of the research viewed with an analysis of gender and work within the timeframe of each decade since the 1980s. Shakeshaft viewed most of the research completed in educational leadership as androcentric, i.e. viewing the world and shaping reality through the male lens. It can be considered biased since only one point of view, male, is consistently given attention. When viewing education leadership scholarship based on this point of view, one is quick to understand that gender is a cultural term. Gender refers to the characteristics that society ascribes to people because of their sex and the cultural expectation of what is male and female.

According to Shakeshaft (1989), research on women and gender in educational administration will have to progress through six stages to reshape what is “known.” This progression is essential for a paradigmatic shift in order to grasp an understanding of all administrative functions, specifically at the school level and generally for society at large. The following discussion gives an overview of this paradigm, which is followed by a more detailed analysis of research in this field.

The first stage of research on women in educational administration is characterized as providing documentation about the number of women serving as school and district administrators. This line of research was typical of research during the 1970s and 1980s. The second stage of research focuses on investigating and chronicling the lives and accomplishments of noteworthy women in educational administration. Examination of women at this level contributed to a more complete picture of women in school administration. The third stage of research, which began in the 1970s and 1980s, raised the issue related to barriers experienced by women aspiring to administrative positions. Researchers investigated factors contributing to women being disadvantaged, and inquired in to the effectiveness of corrective policies and practices (Chase & Bell, 1990).

The fourth stage of research, which emerged in the 1990s used female perspectives to guide research on women's experiences in administration – how women administrators perceive, construct, and enact their roles in a male-dominated profession. The fifth stage of research focuses on the effects of gender on human behavior in school organizations and the effectiveness of women in educational administration. Shakeshaft (1994) raises two pertinent questions during this stage of research. Are male-oriented theories germane to women leaders? If not, how can these circumstances be rectified by empirical research and theories of leading that are relevant to women working within the school context? The sixth and final stage of this research paradigm focuses on understanding both the woman and man's experience together. This level of research is directed toward developing an understanding of leadership that is sensitive to differences in gender, ethnicity, and race. Furthermore, this level of research redefines the administrative positions and builds theory. In theory building, this research questions rather than corroborate generalizations.

The following analysis of research on women in educational administration documents the development of research along this paradigm. The majority of research in educational leadership that addresses women and/or gender has been concentrated in the first three stages. In this analysis, progression through the stages appears to correlate to specific decades in the history of U.S. education. Conclusively, it affirms the need for additional qualitative studies at the fourth, fifth and sixth stages. It is only in completely understanding the female perspective that research can begin to move to a comparison of women and men serving in administrative capacities (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). The remainder of this section will explore this progression.

The 1980s: A decade of documentation. Research in the 80s was about the documentation of factors that contributed to the maldistribution of women in education leadership positions. Early studies described perceptions while later studies labeled and defined reasons. The conclusion of the decade witnessed research devoted to explaining the differences in treatment based on gender.

Weber, Feldman, and Poling (1981) found three categories of perceptions came into play in the explanation of male dominance in the field: (1) personal and social roles, (2) personal and family constraints, and (3) discriminatory patterns in training, hiring, and promotion.

Personal and social roles were those perceptions held by society that there were appropriate roles based on one's gender. The male role was defined by such traits as dominance,

achievement, autonomy, and aggression, whereas traits such as emotionalism, passivity, timidity, deference, and self-abasement defined the female role. Traits consistent with the male role were accepted characteristics of people in leadership positions. For women to assume traditional male roles, they had to project traits commonly associated with being male. Indeed women who moved into administrative positions were viewed as deviant from the female norm.

Personal and family constraints were those perceptions held by society that women experienced achievement and satisfaction only in a supportive capacity. Conflicts were bound to arise for women between family responsibilities, career aspirations, and perceived characteristics of leadership. Most female administrators, consequently, were single and, among those who were married, very few had young children. Men were expected to have identified long-term career goals in education earlier in their employment than women. Furthermore, women with administrative credentials were not expected to actually apply for administrative jobs.

Discrimination patterns in employment practices were identified that facilitated leadership mobility for men and discouraged it for women. Men had more degrees and certification in education administration than women. The disparity may have been due to lack of female role models in training institutions or in the field, negative attitudes of counselors and professors towards women in administration, and lack of encouragement from administrators within the profession. Two facts emerge from this research: first, men were the gatekeepers to the profession of education administration, and, second, women were not gaining ground in administration.

Adkison (1981) found that women were behaving in self-limiting ways because they were locked into low power, low visibility, and dead end jobs. Furthermore, male dominance led to conditions that kept women from advancing into positions of power and prestige. This research would prove valuable later in the construction of external organization barriers.

Vogel (1985) incorporated perception categories into a four-part model that identified, labeled, and explained why there were so few female administrators. The four models were Women's Place, Discrimination, Meritocracy, and Economics. The chart below provides an overview of each model.

Table 4: Vogel's Four-part Model

Model	Description
Women's Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women were absent due to different socialization patterns of men and women. • Women are caregivers and should focus on teaching. • Men should lead because they sought power, prestige, money, and recognition.
Discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on patterns of training and hiring that promoted men over women for no other reason than gender. • Support for this model was found in the number of years it took qualified women to become leaders. • Studies found that selection committees for school boards favored men over women for leadership positions.
Meritocracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Founded in Social Darwinism, which held beliefs that the cream of the profession would rise to the top. • Belief that women were on a lower rung of the evolutionary ladder than men. • Believed that men averaged five to ten percent more from the mean in intelligence than women. Thus, women should capture the teaching profession and men the leadership positions.
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations are concerned with getting the lowest cost possible for employees. • A school system needed more teachers than leaders. • Female teachers worked for lower wages due to the larger available numbers; thus economically sound to hire female teachers. • School systems have fewer leadership positions and available credentialed personnel, thus the positions command a higher wage.

Note: Adapted from "Economic Agendas and Sex Typing in Teaching," by B. E. Vogel, 1985, Contemporary Education, 57, p. 16-21.

Pounder (1988) focused on the Economic Model for explanations of salary differentials in male and female administrators. The earning gap in male and female administrative salaries was attributed only marginally to gender itself and more directly to job-related factors such as position segregation and professional experience profile. Women tended to be principals at the elementary level, which carried a lower pay rate. Women stayed in the classroom longer which equated to less professional experience than men and resulted in lower wages.

Mitchell & Winn (1989) focused on the Women's Place Model and found that men visualized a career as a progression of jobs on a path leading upward with recognition and rewards. Women, on the other hand, saw a career as personal growth, self-fulfillment,

satisfaction, contribution to others, and doing what one wants. Due to these differing career perspectives women spent more time in teaching and were viewed as less serious candidates for administration. Those who did gain position were often seen as a token, which may have hindered their ability to function effectively. Recommendations coming out this study called for formalized hiring processes to offset the mindset of those in charge of school systems, adherence to published hiring guidelines, development of interviewing competence, and the implementation of district mentoring.

Calabrese and Wallich's (1989) research pointed to external organizational barriers that prevented women from gaining administrative positions. These barriers were based on gender discrimination over which women had little control. Male hiring authorities within the organization truly believed that the organization was not at fault for the lack of women in the field and that the real "blame" lay within the female candidates. This belief shifted the entire focus of "blame" from the external barriers to individual female internal barriers.

Shakeshaft's (1989) research shifted the focus from explanations for the lack of female administrators to differential treatment between genders. She found that male administrators were less likely to give direct feedback to females and more likely to give it to males. When a female erred, she was often not even informed. Instead, others corrected the mistake without her knowledge. The reason most often cited for this treatment was the fear of tears.

Men admitted they felt uncomfortable in a close working relationship with an attractive women administrator. The reasons cited were concerns that board members would see something unseemly in the relationship, marital friction, and the male might be sexually attracted to her. Because of this discomfort, women were advised to dress and act in ways that suppress or hid their sexuality. Shakeshaft asserted that men and women had very little training or practice in working together as people, rather than representatives of another sex. She dispelled the Queen Bee Syndrome – that other women threatened women. Her study pointed out that women tried to hire other female administrators but many times the school boards were often reluctant to do so for the fear of creating a "henhouse."

The conclusion of the 80s brought a call for a change in the focus of education research in the field. Barriers had been identified and labeled and the acceptance of "norms" had been questioned. Laws were in place to provide remedy for overt discrimination. Women were able to enter professions that had previously been reserved for the male. Education was losing its best and

brightest women to other professions such as engineering, law, and medicine. Documentation of the female perspective became the call in the field of education research.

The problem was not so much the singular white male orientation of research and theory as it was the lack of balance from other perspectives and experiences. When the behaviors of women and other minorities contradicted the accepted androcentric theories those truths were found inadequate.

It is easy to speculate that much of the research of this decade can be used to support Acker's (1990) theory on gender and work. Gender is embedded in the structure and division of labor within the leadership ranks of the K-12 system. While the formation of a Glass Ceiling is documented, discrimination does not suffice in the explanation of gender imbalance. Indeed the decade gives evidence that the imbalance lends itself to be a structural argument. Much like what Padavic (1991) provides in her argument, gender is constructed and recreated in the workplace. In essence, gender is created on the job. Acker's argument of organization then supports the structural imbalance. The very way the leadership cadre is set up lends support – it is more who you know and who you are rather than what you know.

The 1990s: cracks in the Glass Ceiling? Research in the 90s was about giving the female perspective a voice. Previous research documented the number of females in leadership positions and the barriers in place to restrict large numbers from succeeding (Shakeshaft, 1994). These barriers were not isolated to education. The nation would come to recognize in this decade the concept of the glass ceiling and its impact on the promotion of women into positions of power.

Little (1993) documented what many had speculated about – that male power brokers had negative perceptions of female administrators. This research voiced the women's unmet challenge of getting to the top. Men received encouragement from board members to administrative positions while women remained isolated from this encouragement. Men in teaching positions received more recommendations for positions in school level administration. Women were denied access to the well-established male networks.

Napier and Willower (1991) found that women principals believed they had to work harder and longer to obtain evaluations equal to that of their male counterparts. The job, as it was structured, made it almost impossible for women with family commitments. Women felt they were passed over in favor of males for promotions. Furthermore, women often felt that higher expectations were placed on female principals than males by school boards.

The U.S. Department of Education (1992) found that entry-level women and minority administrators had more needs than white males. These needs required a strong support system and mentoring to assist the individuals in unfamiliar terrain. In other words, so few were in the position that those who did make it needed assistance in order to flourish. Hiring practices of districts were highlighted as well. Women were more likely to be hired by school administrators when there was at least one woman on the screening committee, when the superintendent supported the hiring of women, and when there was already a successful woman administrator in the district.

Shakeshaft (1994) stirred up the debate when she found that the numbers of women reported in school administration differed by sources. What was at first thought to be careless scholarship turned out to be the lack of reliable, uniform database collection. This lack of data collection lessened the reliability of any counting system. Shakeshaft supported what previous researchers called labeled as a conspiracy of silence and likewise insinuated that it could hardly have been unintentional.

In the middle of the decade researchers began to realize that women were increasingly becoming principals in urban areas. Mertz and McNeely (1994) found that the reason could be attributed to either a tradition in education where the newest person hired is placed in the toughest situations, the position is one that others do not want, or at which others have been unsuccessful. It appeared both easier and less risky to place women in such positions. Whatever happened did not reflect badly on the system. If the female succeeded, the system would take credit for making a good appointment. If she failed then general perceptions would either be that the woman couldn't handle it; that women, in general, couldn't handle it; or no one could handle it. In any case it was generally accepted that the system was not at fault.

Gupton and Slick (1996) found that more women were pursuing advanced degrees in administration but staying longer in the classroom. That meant women were older than most men upon entering the administration ranks thus leaving less time for professional experience. This lack of professional experience was used by school systems to merit lower pay for women. Furthermore, women overwhelmingly occupied positions that wielded less political power and carried less financial weight in the overall scheme of the profession. Women did not command the high-level salaries of larger school districts. The problems women now faced were not the formal,

tangible barriers, such as education or certification, but the intangible ones that required an aspirant to be accepted as “one of us” by those already at the apex of the organization.

Women in administration tended to cope with gender identity by remaining self-oriented. They dissociated themselves from their female identity because they were the minority. These women tended not to identify with other women and instead identified with male gatekeepers of the profession. Too often the consequence of these women’s denial was the perpetuation of the status quo because they did not offer a different voice.

Riehl and Byrd (1997) found that while barriers for women were more permeable concerns were raised over the retention of those who entered. While increase in numbers may have been a good sign the real telltale signs would come years later when accounting for longevity. A further dark cloud was cast by this study when it was found that demographic changes were often accompanied by changes in the nature of the work and by a loss of autonomy, prestige, and even pay.

Fennell (1999) studied four women principals’ experiences with power in the course of their daily leadership. These women’s experiences were remarkable in that they were extensively engaged in interpreting, experiencing, and using power as “power through” and “power with” rather than the traditional framework of “power over.” In all four instances staff moral and student achievement improved.

The 90s was a decade about the legal destruction of overt discrimination. Along with this great stride came the voice to the women’s perspective. Women were gaining in numbers but were not necessarily welcomed with open arms from the power within the system. Much of the voice revealed the backlash of a system based on tokenism. These voices support Kanter’s (1977) theory on power and tokenism. Women developed mechanisms of survival to fit into the established power structure. Success for women, at this point, would mean more than just getting a job but rather getting it, flourishing at it, and staying at it for years to come. Research of this time period supports the analysis that the gender imbalance is structural and organized to support the division of labor based on gender. Women still needed access to hiring networks, support systems, and mentoring. This was not a case of needing more – it was only a case of making it a fair playing field.

In applying Shakeshaft’s paradigmatic model to this decade, progress indeed appears to have been made in positioning the study of women administrators on their own terms – stage four

research. The research conversation moved decidedly from documenting the absence of women ,searching for women administrators and finally recording women as disadvantaged or subordinate. Research in the first three stages of the paradigm held itself up to rigors of developing the view of the world from the woman administrator's perspective. Counting women, surveying women and using observational studies had changed the way the community viewed the research on women administrators.

New millennium, new research issues. The new century opened with the knowledge that women had made great strides in the workplace over the previous years. Women were gaining in numbers in leadership positions at the elementary and middle school level as well as in the central office. Unfortunately research revealed that the percentage of women in the top seat of the nation's school districts was the same in 2000 as it was a century ago. One possible explanation is that society still wants women as the teachers- to take care of the students.

However, this explanation only highlighted the issue from an external perspective. Another plausible explanation was that there was a serious pipeline issue in that only a small percentage of high school principals are female nationwide. This is significant because high school principals are traditionally the pool of candidates for the superintendency when there is a vacancy. Compounding this situation is the ongoing trend to choose male candidates with experience outside the field of education thus diminishing any perception of gain held by women in this top position.

Spencer and Kochan (2000) found that women's entrance into the principalship had increased in recent years. But the low number of females in the principalship relative to their numbers in the teaching force may have been the result of many factors: tradition, hiring practices, unwillingness or reluctance to seek the role, or issues related to the family need. The study examined the hiring practices and established programs used to groom and prepare leaders. The overall perception was that theses programs needed to be handled in a systematic fashion that provided equal opportunities between the genders. Mentoring opportunities still needed to be provided for support and guidance. Women friendly promotion structures needed to be considered that recognized the special career patterns of females related to childbearing and childrearing.

Enomoto (2000) found that men had indeed sustained their dominance in the field despite the majority of women in teaching and school leadership preparation programs. Tallerico and

Tingley (2001) found that women educators offered a key to resolving the declining supply of administrative candidates, but only if certain policies and practices were improved. Among the recommendations was the examination of certification programs for discrimination, initiation of policies that facilitate experienced teachers movement into leadership positions, and equity training for school boards, administrators, selection committees and others who influence administrative hiring.

Whitaker (2001) identified five major reasons why fewer individuals, not only women, sought to become principals: (1) the changing demands of the job; (2) salary; (3) time; (4) lack of parent and community support; the negativity of the media and public towards schools; and (5) the lack of respect for the profession. It was found that 90% of superintendents indicated a moderate to extreme shortage of principal candidates. The good news was that half of all application pools were female. Unfortunately negative responses to the status of the application pools still prevailed in regard to the number of female candidates. The most negative responses came from smaller districts in which the complaint was that the female candidates were long on academia and short on leadership skills.

Shen & Crawford (2003) found that salaries for female secondary principals were slightly more than male secondary principals, which ran contradictory to salaries for most other professions. According to U. S. Department of Labor (2003) the following was true:

- Women earn only 77 cents nationally for every dollar earned by men
- Female high school graduates earn 34% less than male high school graduates
- Female college graduates earn 33% less than male college graduates

Several reasons were given for this finding. One possibility is that principals' salaries are related to teachers' salaries, and because teachers' salaries tend to be uniform, rather than gender driven, the principals' salaries tend to vary less by sex. Second, the percentage of female secondary principals in urban and suburban school districts is higher than rural school districts. Principals in urban and suburban district are paid more – a higher percentage of female principals in these positions raise the average salary for female principals. Finally, female teachers tend to teach longer before being promoted into the principal position, a factor that may have lead to a higher average salary for women. Female secondary principals had a total of 15.1 years of teaching experience, whereas the corresponding statistics for their male colleagues was 13.4.

Evans (2003) produced evidence in her research that women were most likely promoted based on their performance as teachers, while men were most likely promoted based on their potential. Women, on the average, were doing a job for 10 years before they were promoted because they had to prove they knew how to do it. Men, on the other hand, were promoted in less time with less evidence of successful leadership.

The structural and organization argument still retains prominence in the explanation of the gender imbalance in education leadership. In addition, Braverman's Labor Process Theory (Hahnel & Albert, 1990) supports the idea that the job is structured in such a way to explain continued discrepancy. However, some of the structures have changed, namely women are being groomed and promoted into the leadership positions. Organizations such as the American Association of School Administrators now have support mechanism aimed at women and minorities to overcome the structures in place that have caused the imbalance.

The question of "why" the imbalance is not fully explained by either the Labor Process Theory, discrimination model, or organization argument. Perhaps the real reason runs deeper than these perspectives can conjecture. Perhaps the reason for the imbalance is as Chetkovich (1997) pointed out, it is in the construction of identity surrounding the job that lies at the heart of the issue. When a person in this society is asked to describe the typical leader in the K-12 education system – what comes to the forefront is that a male must fill the position. The concept of K-12 leadership embracing a female has yet to bear fruit. It is only when the identity construction is disproved and destroyed that women will gain in the positions of power.

What will the rest of this decade hold for women leaders in the school system? Only time will tell. One reads the most recent research and senses that for every step forward in the advancement of women in the field of education leadership comes another study that places women two steps back. However, it is only through diligent research on the subject that any strides are made at all. If identity construction is at the heart of the imbalance future research must focus on the unraveling of this concept. Particular attention will have to be paid to what makes the system perpetuate a gender imbalance. Research will have to be completed in what Shakeshaft describes as Stage 5 and 6 of the research paradigm.

Summary. Roland Barth (1990, p. 9) expressed his vision of a good school as a "community of learners." If schools are to be learning communities it requires the discarding of the notions of others, them, and those in an effort to make the most of our collective human

resources. Schools are human enterprises, nothing more and nothing less, and therefore the relationships in them are complex.

The public character of the school and the characteristics of school constituents have changed dramatically over the last several years. It seems that this should have significant implications for how and why we conduct schools as we do and who is allowed to lead them. However, we have only modestly addressed and tentatively embraced these issues in research as seen in this analysis.

Leadership based on gender maldistribution is an important issue. One cannot bury one's head in the sand and dismiss the notion that something is amiss when women have not been allowed to lead in a field where they have historically outnumbered their male counterparts. Something is wrong. Women entered the field of teaching because it was historically a position of care giving – a culturally acceptable position for women. Studies have supported the notion that women are capable of leading in this field although, perhaps, in a different fashion from men. Women exercise the power that comes from leadership through the empowerment of others and with others. Men, on the other hand, have traditionally exercised power over others. While this method of leading by holding power over has met with success in the past – it is proving questionable in an age of intense scrutiny and accountability.

Research has shown that women need mentors, role models, and networks of support to be successful in leadership roles previously barred to them. It is no longer acceptable to place a woman into a leadership position without these safeguards. It sets her up for failure - failure that ultimately impacts the success of the school's learners.

No one succeeds in this single perspective, male-dominated model of leadership. It is perhaps in the difference of leadership styles that the key to success for future schools has been hidden from view. The key has always been there, just securely layered in a culture of norms awaiting its discovery through research. Twenty years of research have slowly questioned why education leadership should be reserved for the male. This questioning has perhaps had a direct impact on the number of women in leadership positions. Women have made numerical gains at the elementary, middle school, and central office levels. Women have documented, individually and collectively, success at the helm of schools. Unfortunately these gains have yet to be seen at perhaps the most powerful positions in the system – the high school principal and superintendent's office.

Research is a political and ideological act, no matter what the topic, and gender research is no different. Without renewed activism on the part of a great number of people, we are likely to see many of the gains that have been made in practice, scholarship, and advocacy disappear. It is no longer acceptable to view education leadership from a single perspective. It is only with the blend of multiple views that leadership functions at the school level and for society at large can be understood.

The purpose of this portion of the literature review was to provide a historical perspective of the realities of the gender imbalance within the administration of the public K-12 education organization. Through this perspective critical issues were highlighted that support Scott's (1991) contention that the demographic characteristics of participants do have an important consequence for many aspects of organizational structure and functioning. In addition, sociological theory was intertwined to support the argument that the structural features of the public education organization, namely the sorting rules for selection, retention, and promotion have critical consequences for its participants. Lastly, in highlighting Shakeshaft's model for research in this area, a map is provided to guide the conversation on the stages of research, thus highlighting where we have been and where future researchers need to go. It is important to understand that documentation of numbers and identification of barriers has been researched. Future research must move into the analysis of women as a challenge and transformation to theory. In moving into these higher levels of inquiry, research can perhaps reconceptualize theory to include both the male and female experience, not remain stagnate locked in stages already completed.

The next portion of this literature review examines the research on women superintendents. Obviously, much of the research completed on superintendents parallels what has been completed on women administrators. After all, one cannot examine the superintendency without casting thought into the broader realm. Thus, the discussion on women superintendents will be for the most part a discussion on research that highlights what is unique to these women.

Women Superintendents

The superintendency is a key position of power and influence in U.S. public school districts. Most recent figures indicate 18% of the superintendents are women (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). However, what makes this number perplexing is that the field of education has been historically a female dominated profession. Unfortunately even in a field where women dominate there is still a glass ceiling in the pinnacle leadership position of the superintendency.

The percentage of women superintendents is growing amid reports of superintendent shortages and concerns about equal opportunity. At the same time the field of research about women in the superintendency is growing. While some may argue the demands of the position have shifted making the position less desirable to men, others maintain the position has not changed, rather women are more positioned to break into a predominantly male dominated field. The need for research expands as more women fill these positions.

Women getting into the position. As the previous section points out women have faced barriers on their journey to educational administration. This section reviews current research addressing the question of barriers specifically to women superintendents. The position is still overwhelmingly a white male dominated profession. In 2001, 18% of school superintendents were women, whereas 82% were men (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). While this percentage represents the highest percentage achieved, women still deal with issues of gender when seeking out the position.

Many studies raise the issue of lack of mobility as a barrier for women in obtaining a superintendent's position (Brunner, 1999; Grogan, 1996; Chase & Bell, 1994). Women reported they had a more difficult time relocating for career advancement than do their male counterparts. This was primarily due to their families and marriages. In fact, Grogan (2000) found in her two-year study of a woman superintendent that marital difficulties may have rendered the superintendent less capable of dealing with political conflicts within her district. In this study the husband, for professional reasons, did not accompany the superintendent to her district, thus creating a commuting marriage, which complicated the relationship. Furthermore, the husband's lack of transfer to the community may have contributed to the community's questioning of her commitment to the district.

Kowalski & Stouder (1999) studied 15 women superintendents in Indiana. They specifically looked at the eight career barriers thought to obstruct female applicants. The barriers were classified as either internal (associated with the individual) or external (associated with society or institution). Internal barriers were identified as low aspirations, personal beliefs, personal attitudes, motivation, and self-image. External barriers were identified as gender discrimination, family responsibility, lack of mobility, lack of sponsorship, and lack of mentoring. The conversation for these researchers did not end with a discussion on barriers; the women they studied also talked about their successful coping strategies of networking, mentoring, and goal

development. They also emphasized their personal characteristics that had a positive impact on their work, namely their interpersonal skills, their ability to build consensus through collaboration, and their effective and creative communication.

Grogan (1996) researched women aspiring to the superintendency and found that the women she studied agreed that it was desirable to have access to a male network. Furthermore, many described the importance of sponsorship as a practice to gain access to networking. However, Grogan points out this behavior may be perceived as behavior that has consequences, namely that in following the rules women are in essence complying with the way power is exercised.

Other documented barriers include lack of mobility (Grogan, 1996; McCreight, 1999; Brunner, 1999; Sharp, Malone, Walter, & Supley, 2000) and gender discrimination by gatekeepers of the position; namely search consultants and school boards (Chase & Bell, 1994; Sharp, Malone, Walters, & Supley, 2000). Furthermore, women aspiring to the superintendency may find restrictions in larger districts. Three differing opinions have been formulated in regard to restriction by size of districts. McCreight (1999) reported that vertical job advancement for women in smaller districts was more difficult because there were fewer job openings, which translated that there were fewer opportunities. She maintained that women have a better chance of moving up in larger districts because more opportunities exist. However, Glass, Bjork, & Brunner (2000) found in their national superintendents' survey that women were more likely to obtain a superintendency in a smaller school district. Conversely, Sharp, Malone, Walters & Supley (2000) reported that the respondents of their study did not feel restricted in terms of the size of the district.

Researchers have found that sex role and gender discrimination have often constrained women's role as superintendent. Sharp, Malone, Walters and Supley (2000) found that 9.9% of the female superintendents surveyed reported that male board members seemed supportive, 11.3% reported that female board members were supportive, and 78.9% said that they were the same. However, Skrla (1998) found that gender played a role in all aspects of the relationship and defined three levels in which gender constructs operated. These three operating levels are on the personal level, in the community, and in the society. Skrla found that the conflict of constructs made it difficult for board members to support female superintendents even though the board hired them. Brunner (2000) found that women superintendents were expected to act in a

particular manner and if they behaved contrary to this expectation they were labeled in negative ways by the board, colleagues, peers, and subordinates.

Researchers have also attested that gender-related issues were not addressed in their university training programs. Skrla (1998) pointed out that none of the superintendents she studied received training on gender-related issues. Furthermore, school board members did not receive training on gender-based issues. However, Sharp, et al. (2000) found that their women superintendents reported that their state superintendents' organizations provided training in this area. Skrla (1998) indicated that superintendent preparation programs needed to provide training for aspiring superintendents in the area of gender in superintendent/school board relations.

Tallerico (2000) identified that in the culture of school administration, mentor, role models, and networks serve a very important function. It appears women have a hard time breaking into organization networks, therefore mentors are needed who will encourage, supervise and promote them. Gardiner, Enomoto, and Grogan (2000) wrote specifically about the need for mentoring women aspiring to the superintendency, which stated the same conclusion as Tallerico (2000).

Grogan & Brunner (2005) surveyed the perceptions of individuals who aspire, those who do not aspire, and those who were seated superintendents on barriers to the position. What the researcher expected to find was that those who aspired to the position would respond that barriers were important factors. However, these researchers found that a larger percentages of aspirants over non-aspirants reported that barriers were important factors in assessing the superintendency. In other words, non-aspirants did not believe the barriers to be as important.

Is it a pipeline issue? In response to the public education leadership crisis Grogan and Brunner (2005) surveyed 723 superintendents and 3000 central office administrators to gain a pulse on what is happening in the field. Results from this research produced some interesting results. Women do aspire to be superintendents. Their research indicated that 40 percent of women they surveyed aspire to the superintendency, furthermore, 74 percent have either earned or were working toward their certification. Not surprising, 58 percent of the women held undergraduate degrees in education, and were more likely to be appointed outside the district than promoted from within. However, the larger the district the better the chance of being hired from the inside. Women have a better chance than men of being hired through professional search firms. Women's academic preparation for the position is more current. Both men and women

superintendents cite interest in and focus on instruction and curriculum as beneficial for advancing career opportunities for women. Most women superintendents believed their boards hired them to be instructional leaders.

Again it is the research completed by Grogan & Brunner (2005) that sheds the most light in this area. The traditional pipeline for the superintendency has been the ascension of white men from teaching to assistant principal to principal in a high school to the superintendency. However currently the majority of educators are women, and women comprise at least half of the students in education leadership programs. Furthermore women do aspire to the superintendency. Of those in the position, their research indicates the women are successful and enjoy their work. Thus the issue of low representation is not due to the numbers in the pipeline. Rather these researchers point to the tradition that women have not been considered seriously for the superintendency. Coursework in leadership still presents the traditional male model of leadership, which often stresses managerial efficiency over instruction and community engagement. Furthermore, women are not often encouraged to think about the superintendency as a career goal.

This study indicates that attitudes are changing. As more women serve as superintendents the individuals within the organizational culture of the public education system may begin to consider the office of superintendent less as a male-occupied position. School boards may begin to view women with backgrounds in curriculum and instruction as highly attractive candidates in an era of high-stakes testing and accountability (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). Furthermore, as more women occupy this position more aspiring women will see these occupants of the office as role models. But as these researchers point out, occupying the role is not enough. Women must engage in networking, mentoring, and support systems to ensure success. This statement holds especially true for women of color aspiring to and occupying this position.

The public education system in the United States is a direct reflection of the society at large (Blount, 1998). Women leading in pinnacle leadership positions in education still run into the glass ceiling. As pointed out in the opening section of this literature review, women have been gaining in numbers in the principalship, a middle management position, which has been slow in coming in a field dominated historically by women teachers. A glass ceiling can no longer bar women from the pinnacle leadership position of the superintendency. It has come to the point where the field can no longer deny entrance based on old stereotypes and organizational norms. Truly the schools are at risk when leadership is denied to qualified individuals who seek to devote

their skills and talents in a position that has been slow in opening to this group. However, as pointed out in previous sections, this is not a position that should be best equalized by numbers – it is a position that needs the best person for the job. Therein lies an important contribution of this research – the study of how a woman superintendent leads her school district.

This important contribution not only adds to the present day research conversation on women superintendents but also falls in line with the research paradigm laid out more than 20 years ago. As this portion of the literature review as demonstrated research on the absence of women in this position has already been completed by individuals such as Blount (1998). Research has captured the stories of women who have been superintendents and through their stories research has documented their disadvantaged position and gave a voice to the study of women superintendents on their own terms. To further research in any of these areas would be redundant to what needs to be completed on women superintendents, namely, how might a women superintendent's experience as a leader challenge what is taught as leadership theory in the classroom of leadership administration programs. This strand of research falls within level five of the Shakeshaft paradigm and demand for this type of research has clearly been documented thus far in this literature review.

The next section of this literature review will delve into the study of leadership within an organization. While numerous theories have been proposed in this very broad area of research, it is the purpose of this study to focus primarily on leadership as it relates to the relationships between the leader and the members of an organization. It is through this portion of the literature review that the study will be informed by the importance on how such relationships develop and change within an organization. In addition, this line of research will inform this study on the potential impact of these relationships on the outcomes of the organization.

Organizational Leadership: The Leader-Member Exchange Theory

The third informing body of research for this study came from the area of organizational leadership as applied to the K-12 public education setting. Research on leadership is the core of the scholarly field of educational administration. As such there is a multitude of ways to define leadership. According to Northouse (2004) there have been as many as 65 different classification systems developed to define leadership in the past 50 years. Yukl (1998) indicates researchers have come to define leadership according to their individual perspectives and interests. Perhaps the most widely accepted classification system of leadership is according to the types of variables

emphasized in a theory. Utilization of this classification system emphasizes research based on the trait approach, behavior approach, power-influence approach, or situational approach.

Yukl (1998) defines leadership in an organizational context. He explains that a leader is an individual member of a group or organization who influences the interpretation of events, the choice of objectives and strategies, and the organization of work activities. In addition, the leader influences the motivation of people, the maintenance of cooperative relationship as well as the development of skills and confidence by members. Lastly, organizational leadership elicits the support and cooperation of people from outside the group or organization.

The concept of leadership as an organizational feature is not new. Tanenbaum empirically established that leadership varies across organizations and within organizations over time (Pounder, Ogawa, & Adams, 1995). He also found that under some conditions, a positive relationship exists between the level of organizations' leadership and their overall performance. Ogawa and Bossert (1995) asserted that most theory and research on organizational leadership are rooted in four basic assumptions: (a) the function of leadership is to influence the overall performance of organizations; (b) leadership operates within organizational cultures; (c) leadership is related to organizational roles; and (d) leaders are individuals who possess certain attributes or act in certain ways.

Application of these four basic assumptions in the educational setting suggests that leadership in schools will affect school performance by shaping the organization of work, developing solidarity among organizational members, managing schools' relations with their external environments, and building members' commitment to their schools (Pounder, et al, 1995).

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory and research is one approach to studying organizational leadership. Over 30 years ago, Vertical Dyad Linkage was presented by Graen and his colleagues as an approach to understanding supervisor-subordinate working relationships. The dyadic approach focuses on the relationship between a leader and a member of the organization who is usually a follower. Most dyadic theories view leadership as a reciprocal influence process between the leader and the member. This approach has an implicit assumption that leadership effectiveness cannot be understood without examining how a leader and follower influence each other over time. Key issues to this theory are how to develop a cooperative, trusting relationship

with a follower, and how to influence a follower to be more motivated and committed (Yukl, 1998).

Model Overview

Vertical Dyad Linkage evolved into what is known today as the LMX theory. The theoretical basis of LMX is that dyadic relationships and work roles are developed or negotiated over time through a series of exchanges between the leader and a member of the organization. Each member of the dyad, through their relationship, invests resources in the development of the relationship in which the leader may offer increased job latitude or delegation in return for a member's strong commitment to work goals or high levels of performance (Dienesch & Linden, 1986). It is argued that early in the relationship building process, factors other than behavior affect how the relationship develops (Dienesch & Liden, 1986).

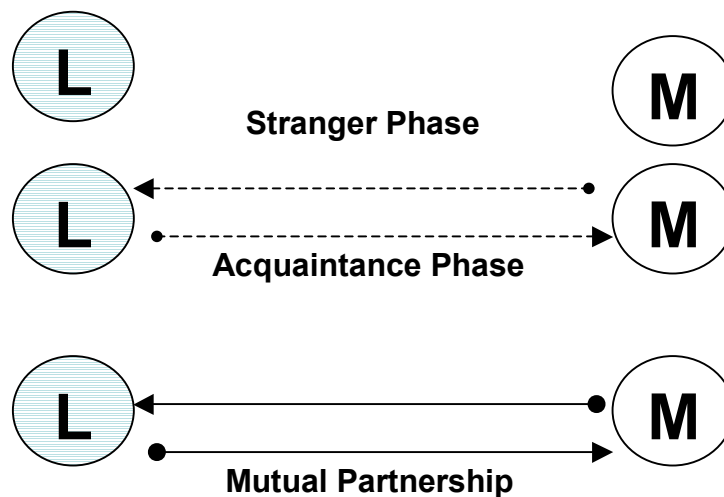


Figure 1. The Dyad and Relationship Building

Note: The dyad is created when the leader forms individualized working relationships with each member of the organization. The exchanges between the leader and member define their dyadic relationship. Adapted from "Leader-Member Exchange Theory" in Leadership Theory and Practice (3rd ed), by P. G. Northouse, 147-168.

As a consequence of this relationship building, the member having high levels of responsibility, decision influence, and access to resources characterizes develops what is known as a high quality relationship. Members who enjoy a high quality relationship are said to be in the "in-group." On the other hand, members with low levels of responsibility and decision influence

are characterized as having a low quality relationship and said to be in the “out-group” (Schriesheim, Castro & Cogliser, 1999).

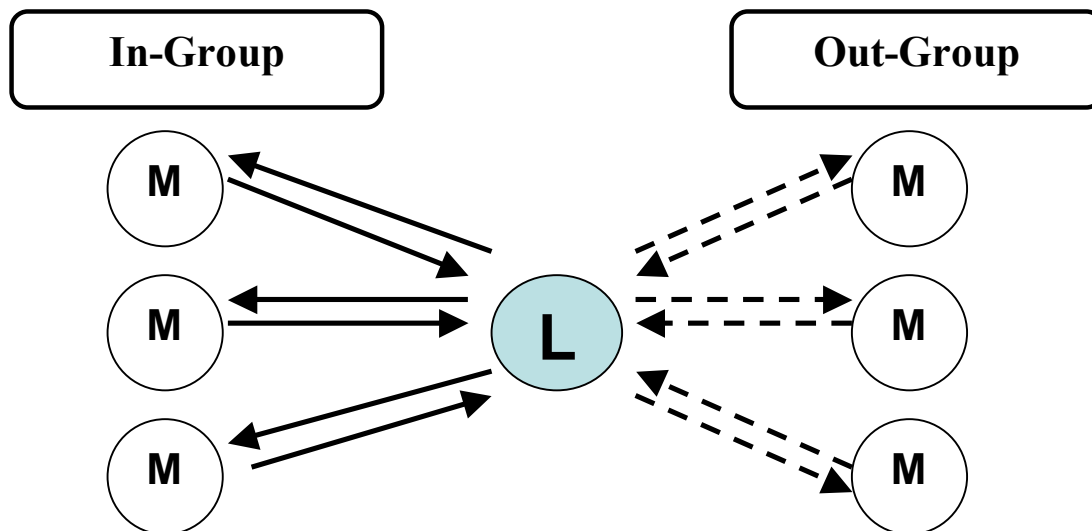


Figure 2. In-Groups and Out-Groups

Note: The leader (L) forms unique relationships. Relationships within the in-group are evident by mutual trust, respect, liking, and reciprocal influence. Relationships within the out-group are less evident of these attributes and are based on formal job descriptions. Adapted from “Leader-Member Exchange Theory” in Leadership Theory and Practice (3rd ed), by P. G. Northouse, 147-168.

The theoretical development of LMX is based on the idea that leader-member relationships emerge as the result of a series of exchanges or interactions during which leader and member roles develop. This role formation process involves three phases. During the first phase, role taking, the member enters the organization and the leader assesses the member’s abilities and talents. Based on this assessment, the leader provides opportunities for the member to take a specific role. During this stage, mutual respect is essential. Leaders and members must each understand how the other views and desires respect (Schriesheim, et. al, 1999). This may be difficult in mixed-gender relationships due to differences in discourse patterns and social constructions based on gender and stereotyping (Fairhurst, 1993). The leader-member relationship will not develop and progress to the next stage if there is a lack of respect.

During the second phase, role making, the leader and the member engage in unstructured and informal negotiation as the member begins to make a role. It is during the second phase that trust must be developed in order for leaders and members to further develop the relationship and

influence each other's attitudes and behaviors (Schriesheim, et al, 1999). This role-making is critical in diverse dyads. If trust is violated the relationship may be destroyed. Trust is especially critical in diverse relationships because violations may reinforce prior stereotypical experiences and reinforce discriminatory practices (Fairhurst, 1993).

During the third phase, role routinization, an ongoing social exchange pattern emerges. It is during this phase that mutual obligation and shared meanings have formed (Schriesheim, et. al, 1999). Any gender relevant issues have been addressed by this phase (Fairhurst, 1993).

Evolution of LMX Theory Research

Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) suggested that LMX theory has passed through four stage-building phases in terms of theoretical clarification. Stage one research found that leaders developed differentiated relationships with their members, which was a departure from the prevailing approach to leadership, which assumed that leaders displayed consistent behavior toward all members in their work units. Stage two research focused on the different relationships the leader had within the work unit and began the explanation of the network surrounding the LMX construct; the majority of LMX research has been conducted with a stage two focus according to Graen & Uhl-Bien (1995).

Stage three research moves the emphasis from the leader's delineation of members to how a leader may work to form a partnership with each member. This research culminated in what has become known as the Leadership Making Model. Stage four research broadens the scope from the dyad to larger collectives, exploring how dyadic relationships are organized within and beyond the organizational system.

The Exchanges

The theoretical base of the LMX theory is the concept of a "developed" or "negotiated" role (Burns & Otte, 1999). In essence role development results in varied role definitions and quality of leader-member exchanges. Therefore, the interpersonal exchange relationship is essential to modifying the role of the member. In addition, the level of exchange is predictive of subsequent organizational events.

Due to time pressures and need for efficiency and performance, the leader develops a close relationship with only a few key subordinates. In leadership exchanges, the leader provides influence and support beyond what is called for in the employment contract in high quality exchanges (Graen & Cashman, 1975). High quality leadership exchanges are characterized by

positive characteristics such as more reciprocal support, mutual trust, respect and liking, greater interaction and greater responsibility for the member (Dienesch & Liden, 1986). On the other hand, the leader relies mainly on formal authority rules and policies to ensure adequate performance from the rest of the work group. These low quality leadership interactions are termed supervisory exchanges (Liden & Graen, 1980). Supervisory exchanges are characterized by a downward influence in the dyad, by role-defined relations, and by fewer positive dimensions characterizing leadership exchanges (Burns & Otte, 1999).

In further conceptual work, Graen, Cashman, Ginsbury, and Schiemann (1977) extended the research of the leader-member dyad to the dyad immediately above the relationship between the leader and the leader's supervisor. They found that the quality of the upper dyad in the organizational hierarchy was related to the resources available to members a level below. Those leaders who developed high quality exchanges with their bosses produced greater resources for their members than did those leaders who developed low quality exchanges. Therefore, members may benefit or suffer in resource flows as a result of these exchanges. The quality of the leader-member exchange relationship is theorized to be related to work and attitudinal outcomes. For example, exchange quality has been demonstrated to predict such outcomes as employee withdrawal or resignation, salary and promotion, productivity, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Phillips & Bedeian, 1994).

Perhaps the most interesting influence on the development of a high quality LMX relationship is affect. The role formation process develops through a mechanism referred to as "negotiating latitude." This negotiation is hypothesized to occur through the series of exchanges or interactions between the leader and the member. The exchanges, or interactions, of interest were assumed to be primarily work-related in terms of content. However recent empirical findings suggest that person-related variables may contribute to LMX in addition to, or instead of, competence and performance (Engle & Lord, 1997).

Thus, in addition to work-related variables the leader's and the member's affective responses to their initial interaction may be important components in the development of the LMX relationship. The affective responses are influenced by the perceived similarity between the leader and the member. The more the leader and the members perceive that they are similar, the more they will like each other and the more likely they are to develop a high quality LMX relationship (Engle & Lord, 1997). Persons who perceive themselves to be similar will be attracted to one

another, and therefore will like each other. It is this level of attraction, or liking, during the initial interaction that often dictates the quality of the LMX relationship.

In addition, attraction might be affected by the amount of interaction that occurs between the leader and the member. Persons who are similar are more likely to interact frequently causing an increase in the level of familiarity, which might also influence the level of attraction within an LMX relationship. Leaders and members who share a high quality LMX relationship tend to interact more about personal topics than about work-related topics. This may occur because these leaders and members develop a high level of communication comfort and they may feel that they can broach any topic with each other (Phillips & Bedeian, 1994).

Increased interaction may result in higher levels of trust. Leaders tend to trust in-group subordinates and therefore empower them with decision-making authority. Leaders use delegation, not as a test of the member's abilities, but as a reward for excellent past performance and as a sign of respect and consideration. Therefore, as trust between the leader and the member increases, the number of delegated responsibilities from the leader to the member, and consequently, the quality of the LMX relationship also increases (Phillips & Bedeian, 1994).

Leadership Making Model

According to Northouse (2004) later studies on LMX theory focused on a more prescriptive approach to leadership and how a leader should develop high quality exchanges with all of the members of the organizations. This leadership creation develops progressively over time and in three phases: (a) the stranger phase (b) the acquaintance phase, and (c) the mature partnership phase.

During the stranger phase the leaders and members relate to one another within prescribed organizational roles creating low-quality exchanges. Motives of members during this phase are directed towards self-interest rather than organizational objectives. Members comply with the leader because the leader has hierarchical status and control over economic rewards (Northouse, 2004).

In the second phase, the acquaintance phase, the leader or member seeks improved career-oriented social exchanges that ultimately involves sharing more resources and personal/work-related information. The exchanges shift away from interactions that are strictly governed by job descriptions and move towards new ways of relating. In the acquaintance phase the member and

leader develop a greater trust and respect for each other. Each becomes more focused on the organizational objectives (Northouse, 2004).

Phase three, the mature partnership, is characterized by high-quality leader-member exchanges with a high degree of mutual trust, respect, and obligation to each other. During this phase the leader and member are tied together in a more productive way that moves them beyond their own self-interest towards the greater good of the organization (Northouse, 2004).

Organizational Outcomes

LMX theory research, therefore, is used to describe leadership through an examination of the exchanges between the leader and members of both the in-groups and out-groups within an organization. On the other hand, the LMX theory is also used to prescribe leadership. Research that is prescriptive shows that relationships between the leader and member become transformational. Transformational leadership assists both the member and the leader to move beyond their own self-interest and towards the greater good of the organization (Northouse, 2004).

Whether descriptive or prescriptive, research on this theory focuses on the dyad and the building of high quality exchanges. A key component in building a high-quality leader-member exchange appears to be the development of interpersonal trust within the dyad that goes beyond the formal employment contract (Dienesch & Liden, 1986). High-quality leader-member exchange is related to important organizational outcomes such as member turnover (Graen, Liden, & Hoel, 1982), member job satisfaction (Scandura & Graen, 1984), promotions (Bauer & Green, 1996), ratings of member performance (Scandura & Green, 1984) and member extra-role performance (Wayne & Green, 1993). In addition, high quality relationships include sensitivity of the leader to the member's job, attention, information, and support (Wayne & Ferris, 1990).

Analysis and Application of the Theory

LMX theory is one way to view organizational leadership. This theory directs researchers to assess leaders and their leadership from a dyadic relationship perspective rather than characteristic perspective. At the center of the dyadic relationship is the notion of exchanges. Central to exchanges is the importance of communication. Communication, in a high quality exchange, is characterized by trust, respect, and commitment, which have been linked to positive organizational outcomes such as performance, commitment, job climate, innovation, empowerment, and career progress (Northouse, 2004).

Critics of the theory highlight that the theory supports the development of privilege with the notion of in-groups and out-groups. This concept contradicts the notion of fairness and non-discriminatory practices within any organizational culture. In addition, studies conducted on leader-member exchange have not resulted in a clear set of definitions, concepts and suggestions about the about the theory. This has allowed many to criticize the theory as not fully developed (Northouse, 2004).

In this study the LMX theory will be one of the conceptual frames used to analyze the relationships between the superintendent as the leader and members of her district. In examining and determining the quality of exchanges between the numerous dyadic relationships this theory will allow for the construction of a greater understanding of the patterns associated with how this women leads in her position. At the center of each exchange will be the concept of communication and how gender may or may not influence the structure of understanding between each leader-member relationship.

The next section of this literature review provides the conceptual framework guiding this research. The framework is based on three informing fields of research, which culminate into the topic of research for this dissertation. Each field of research required a tapering of research from the broad to the narrow to better formulate the topic of this dissertation. In approaching the literature in this manner a common pattern emerged. This pattern calls for research on the day-to-day leadership of a woman superintendent through relationship building with individual members of her district. In understanding these relationship it is hoped this research will be able to shed light on how this particular woman superintendent's leadership impacts the events, objectives, strategies, and work activities of this school district.

Conceptual Framework

This research sets out to study how one woman superintendent leads her district. One approach to studying her leadership is within the context of organizational theory. This context defines the leader as an individual member of the group or organization who influences the interpretation of events, the choice of objectives and strategies, and the organization of work activities (Yukl, 1998). At the base of this influence lies the fundamental premise that leaders form different types of relationships with members of the organization and thus influence the outcomes of the organization (Sparrowe & Liden, 1997). The leadership theory that specifically examines and explains this type of leadership is known as the LMX theory. Support for use of this approach

in studying this woman superintendent has been discussed in the literature review which is based on three informing fields of research: research on the K-12 public superintendency, research on women superintendents, and research on the LMX theory. These three informing fields of literature form the conceptual framework used to guide this research.

Research on the superintendency. Diminished power and the need to respond to external pressures have moved the role of superintendency towards reforming schools in ways that support the learning of all children. School districts require systemic restructuring of schools to decrease administrative bureaucracy and increase involvement of teachers, parents, and the community in educational leadership (Brunner et al., 2002).

In this new climate of accountability and choice, superintendents are challenged with understanding and explaining the importance of school reform for a sound economic and democratic society in school environments that are becoming increasingly diverse. Political and moral dimensions of the leadership role of superintendents in changing the nature of schooling have taken precedence over the conventional management practices of the past (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000).

Recent discourse emphasizes the need for superintendents to focus on improving learning through the school community while building that community's capacity to enhance learning in schools. Superintendent leadership is perceived as working with and through rather than commanding others. In this knowledge-intensive environment the superintendency is going through a process of reconceptualization (Grogan, 2003). The reconceptualized superintendency focuses on moral stewardship, the officeholder as an educator, and as a community builder. A superintendent who is comfortable with contradictions and appreciates dissent is more engaged in involving parents and members of the community in the school environments. The superintendent builds a community of learners among the staff with the concept of working through others. Finally, a superintendent who is aware of how students are best served utilizes an ethic of care to personalize the learning environment for all students (Murphy, 2003; Grogan, 2003).

Research on women superintendents. Women entered the field of teaching because it was historically a position of care giving – a culturally acceptable position for women. Studies have supported the notion that women are capable of leading in this field although, perhaps, in a different fashion from men. Women exercise the power that comes from leadership through the empowerment of others and with others. Men, on the other hand, have traditionally exercised

power over others. While this method of leading by holding power over has met with success in the past – it is proving questionable in an age of intense scrutiny and accountability (Enomoto, 2000; Gupton and Slick, 1996; Riehl and Byrd, 1997; Shakeshaft, 1994; Shen & Crawford, 2003; Spencer and Kochan, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 1992; & Whitaker, 2001).

Research has indicated women need mentors, role models, and networks of support to be successful in leadership roles previously barred to them. It is no longer acceptable to place a woman into a leadership position without these safeguards. It sets her up for failure - failure that ultimately impacts the success of the school's learners (Grogan, 1996). Women are underrepresented in the superintendency relative to their participation in the education field. This under representation has historical documentation even though many researchers point to barriers such as the conspiracy of silence as detriments to a full disclosure of the representation. In addition, three major deductions are drawn from current research: women still face barriers in their aspirations for the superintendency, women face many constraints while in the position, and women continue to face a lack of mentoring and role modeling.

More sophisticated research needs to be conducted on women superintendents and their leadership styles. Since the numbers studied have been so small in the past, there is now more opportunity to get comprehensive data as more women enter the superintendency. One area that appears to be lacking is research on educational leadership specifically with a lens on how gender may reconceptualize existing information on leadership theory.

Research on LMX theory. Leaders influence the performance of an organization while operating within the confines of an organization's culture. In addition, leaders relate to organizational roles while maintaining individuality through certain attributes and ways of supervising (Ogawa & Bassert, 1995). One way to study leadership is through the LMX theory. This theory views leadership through the building and maintaining of dyadic relationships with members of the organization. This relationship is negotiated in a series of exchanges that develop from role formation, role making to role routines. The quality of the exchanges between the leader and individual members determines the level of the relationship as well as designation between the "in-group" and "out-group" status. The quality of exchanges ultimately predicts the individual outcomes in areas such as level of responsibilities, decision influence, and access to resources, while overall level of exchanges within the organization can predict such organizational outcomes as employee turnover, commitment of staff to the organization, and commitment to goals.

Research on the impact of gender in these exchanges is sketchy as best (Burns & Otte, 1999; Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Engle & Lord, 1997; Graen & Cashman, 1975; Graen, Cashman, Ginsbury, and Schiemann, 1978; Liden & Graen, 1980; Phillips & Bedeian, 1994; & Wayne & Green, 1993).

The following diagram provides a visual depiction of the conceptual framework employed for this study. The diagram highlights the three fields of research in an overlapping relationship culminating in the topic for this research project.

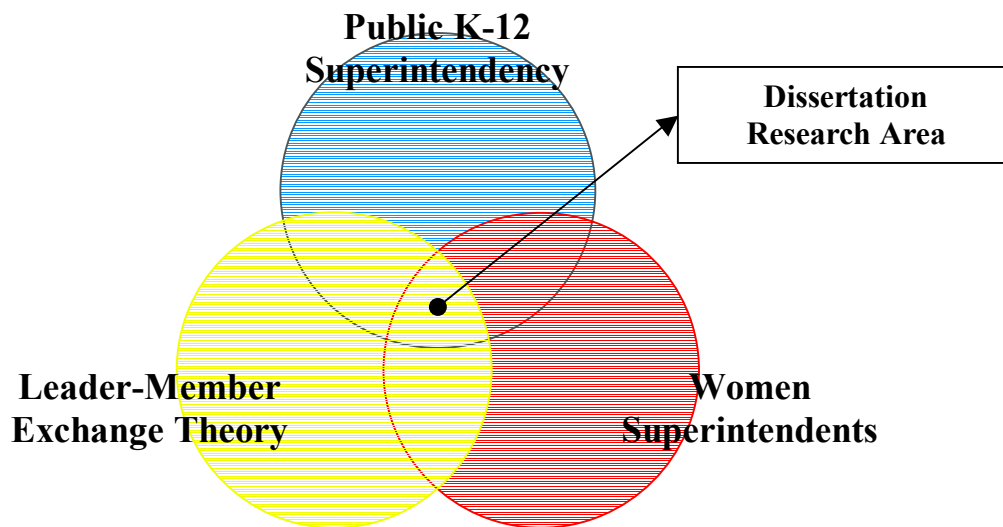


Figure 3. Informing Conceptual Framework for Study

Note: The informing research of the K-12 Public Superintendency, Women Superintendents, and Leader-Member Exchange Theory culminated in the research area for this dissertation.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to develop a greater understanding of the leadership of a woman who held the office of district superintendent in the state of Florida. The conceptual framework used to inform the research questions was developed through the literature on the superintendency, women superintendents, and LMX theory. Based on this informing literature, I sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How does a woman superintendent lead through individual relationships with members in her school district?
2. How does a woman superintendent form in-groups and out-groups in her school district?
3. How does gender influence the development and maintenance of these relationships and exchanges?

Design

This case study utilized an ethnographic approach to research this woman superintendent's leadership (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Wolcott, 1973; Yin, 2003). Sample selection was based on the available population that met the criteria set forth in the study. Data collection included semi-structured and open-ended interviews with superintendent and site-level personnel in her district. Extensive observation data was collected in naturalistic settings such as board meetings, planning sessions, and other district functions. Reciprocity was practiced with the participant and all interviewees (Merriam, 1998). Reciprocity involved asking the participant and interviewees to give feedback on their transcriptions. It also included asking the participant to give feedback on the interpretations of the data, and the identification of emergent themes. Interviews and observations were triangulated with the collection and analysis of site documents. Data analysis was inductive and iterative.

The research questions were answered employing the case study strategy of inquiry as defined by Stake (1995) to be a bounded to a unit of study. Since I used the lived experience of this participant as data by focusing on her behaviors within the context of the district setting, I employed an ethnographic case study. I developed a descriptive and explanatory case study that presented information about an area of education where little research has been conducted namely

how a woman superintendent promotes relationships with members of her district through the Leadership Member Exchange (LMX) theory.

Methodology

According to Merriam (1998) qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, in other words, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world. This understanding is an end in itself. The key concern in this study was the understanding the work of the superintendent from this participant's perspective, which means I was involved in fieldwork. Furthermore, I was the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. Since qualitative research employs inductive research, which builds abstractions, concepts, or theories, I was not testing a preconceived notion of how this leader defined her space. The product of this qualitative study was richly descriptive and involved a small purposeful, nonrandom sample. In this research I spent a substantial amount of time in the natural setting of the study, the school district, with often-intense contact with the participant.

Qualitative research is an umbrella term that has numerous variations. Depending on the writer, such variations may be called traditions (Creswell, 1998), genres (Wolcott, 1992), or strategies of inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). One strategy of inquiry is the case study. According to Merriam (1998) case studies are differentiated from other types of qualitative research in that they are intensive descriptions and analyses of a single unit such as an individual, program, event, group, intervention, or community. However the confusion surrounding case studies is that the process of conducting a case study is confounded with both the unit of study and the product of this type of research. Yin (1994) defines a case study in terms of the research process. Stake (1995) focuses on trying to pinpoint the unit of study. Wolcott (1992) sees it as a product of field-oriented research rather than a strategy or method. For the purpose of this research I employed the notion of a case study as a bounded system, a single unit around which I studied and produced a product of field-oriented research. The bounded system in this case was the woman in the superintendent's office. I examined this one woman's leadership in her district through the parameters of a leadership theory known as LMX. As explained in the literature review, little research has been completed on women superintendents' leadership either as defined by or as a challenge to current leadership theories.

The special attributes of a case study include acknowledgment of particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic features. Particularistic means the case study will focus on a particular

situation. In this research the district selected for study was based on the gender of the superintendent. Descriptive means the end product will be a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study. This research emerged from the intensive study of a single woman superintendent's leadership over a period of time. Heuristic means the case study will illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study. Insights into how things get to be the way they are can be expected to result from this case study (Stake, 1995). Therefore, in researching this woman in the superintendent's office, I focused on her leadership through a description that was rich and thick to shed meaning on what I observed, understood, and analyzed through this leader and subsequent members of the district.

Qualitative case studies in education can be further defined by categories or types based on disciplinary orientation or by function. Case study in research in education is usually conducted so that specific issues and problems of practice can be identified and research. Disciplinary orientation includes the ethnographic case study, historical case study, psychological case study, and sociological case study. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003, p. 38) the ethnographic case study teaches readers how to behave according to the cultural setting, whether it is "among families in an African American community (Stake, 1995), in the school principal's office (Wolcott, 1973), or in the kindergarten class (Florio, 1978)." Selection of this method best aligned with the purpose of this research, namely to add knowledge of women leaders as perhaps a challenge and/or transformation of leadership theory.

A descriptive/explanatory case study in education is one that presents a detailed account of the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 1998). These types of case studies are useful in presenting basic information about areas of education where little research has been conducted. In addition, innovative programs and practices are often the focus of descriptive case studies. It is possible to devise a conceptual framework based on descriptions of the subject being studied. This aspect of the descriptive case study is especially important in this proposed research. As indicated in the literature review, research on women superintendents has now entered Stage 5 and Stage 6 of Shakeshaft's (1990) research paradigm. This research contributed to the field's understanding of how a women leads a district through collaboration, a notion associated with the reconceptualized superintendent, as viewed by the LMX theory.

Site Selection

The purposive sample selection of site and participant was based upon the review of literature and the “network” technique (Bogden & Biklen, 2003). The site in this study was picked by accessibility to a female superintendent and subsequently key leaders and members of her district in Florida.

In the state of Florida public school districts align with county districts to serve over 2.5 million students within the state (Florida Department of Education, 2006). Based on the state’s constitution, superintendents may be either elected by the voters in the district or appointed by the local school board. There are 67 school districts in which 44 of the superintendents are elected and 23 are appointed. In addition, 53 of the superintendents are men while 14 are women. Of the 14 women, 9 are elected and 5 are appointed. Districts vary greatly in relationship to the number of students served. Six of the women superintendents serve in districts with fewer than 10,000 students; three serve in districts with between 10,000 and 20,000 students; four serve in districts with between 20,000 and 87,000 students; and one serves in a district of over 100,000 students (FDOE, 2006). The following table provides an overview of the 14 women superintendents and their districts.

Table 5: Florida School Districts led by a Woman Superintendent

District Number (coded)	Location w/in State	Elected/ Appt. Position	Education Level of Superintendent	Years in Office	Student Population	# of Schools	Expense per FTE	% Free or Reduced Lunch
1	NE	Elected	M.Ed	10	4,606	10	\$5,548	40%
2	NW	Elected	Ed.S.	2	2,307	9	\$6,129	53%
3	Central	Elected	M.A.	2	15,509	27	\$5,943	43%
4	NW	Elected	M.S.	6	1,347	10	\$7,802	62%
5	Central	Appt.	Ed.D.	5	19,587	29	\$5,678	44%
6	SW	Appt.	N/A	1	181,755	275	\$6,418	48%
7	Central	Elected	M.S.	2	33,988	62	\$5,406	N/A

Table 5: continued

8	NW	Elected	M.Ed.	2	3,180	12	\$6,160	62%
9	SE	Elected	Ph.D.	12	17,853	41	\$6,538	32%
10	SE	Appt.	Ed.D.	2	7,275	22	\$6,022	54%
11	SW	Elected	B.S.	2	60,615	85	\$5,857	44%
12	Central	Appt.	Ph.D.	6	86,057	156	\$6,472	53%
13	NE	Appt.	Ed.D.	2	64,046	90	\$6,064	39%
14	NW	Elected	M.A.	2	6,546	19	\$6,379	51%

Note: Data complied from information available from Florida School Superintendent Association (2006) and Florida Department of Education (2006).

The site selected for this study, therefore, came from one of the districts outlined above, as the determining factor based on the literature review was the gender of the superintendent. This selected district is coded district number two in the above table. The site selection process began with the interview of a member of the local superintendents' association, I made contact with the superintendents for initial feedback in regards to interest in participation in the study. While seven indicated a strong interest, logistics of travel and expenses narrowed the selection to a nearby district. I was able to shadow the superintendent for one day prior to selection of this district for the study. This superintendent was a teacher, assistant principal and principal in the district where she now serves. She is the first woman to serve in the capacity of superintendent. She ran unsuccessfully in 2000 for the position but won her second bid in November 2004 in a non-partisan election.

Data Collection Methods

The theoretical orientation of this research informed the techniques of data collection as well as what constituted data in this research. The philosophical assumption guiding this research process was hermeneutic (Creswell, 1998). This perspective questions what was the nature of reality and realizes that reality was subjective and has multiple meanings. Reality then is uncovered by utilizing multiple methods to understand the reality of the participant and interviewees in this study (Creswell, 1998).

This case study focused on the behavior of one woman superintendent. The study took approximately one academic year. I conducted multiple interviews with the superintendent, school

board members, central office staff, principals, assistant principals, and teachers. Interview data was triangulated with extensive observation data collected in naturalistic settings such as board meetings, planning sessions, committee activities, professional development training, and other district functions. Observation of these “formal” activities was augmented with several days of participant observations of the superintendent; that is, I accompanied her on several full day schedules. I utilized document analysis at the site. I secured the approval of the FSU Human Subject’s Committee for this project (see Appendix A). I also included a copy of the approved consent form (see Appendix C), interview protocol (see Appendix D), and recruitment form (see Appendix E). I secured the written permission of the superintendent (see Appendix B). In compliance with the Human Subject Committee’s requirement as well as good ethical research practice, I secured the written permission of individuals involved in this research project, namely those individuals that agree to interviews.

Interviews

Interviewing is a common means of collecting qualitative data (Merriam, 1998). The most common form of interview is the person-to-person encounter in which one person elicits information from another. The purpose of the interview is to obtain what is “in and on someone else’s mind” (Patton, 1990, p. 278). The type of interview to use is determined by the amount of structure desired. Interviews may be anything from highly structured, questionnaire-driven interviews to open-ended, conversational formats. The semi-structured interview is halfway between these two extreme formats. This type of interview may either have all the questions flexibly worded or the interview may be a mix of more and less structured questions. Usually specific information is desired from all the interviewees, in which case there is a highly structured section to the interview. However, the largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the question is determined ahead of time.

For this study semi-structured and open-ended interviews were utilized. I used an interview guide that will contained several specific questions that I asked everyone (see Appendix D). In addition to these specific questions I used open-ended questions that were followed up with probing questions. I also used a list of some areas, topics, and issues that I wanted to know more about but did not have enough information at the outset of this study to form specific questions.

The key to getting good data from interviewing is to ask good questions. According to Merriam (1998) there are four major categories: hypothetical, devil's advocate, ideal position, and interpretive questions. All of these types of questions were utilized during the interviewing process. Multiple questions, leading questions, and yes/no questions were not utilized thus minimizing confusion and poor responses.

Collecting data through interviews involves determining whom to interview. Since I was determined to get a holistic picture of this school district I elicited the experiences and perceptions of people having different associations with the district – school board members, central officer administrators, principals, assistant principals, and teachers. An initial on-site observation of the district led to the discovery of who should be interviewed in depth. A second means of locating contacts was by asking for referrals from initial informants.

The three basic ways to record interview data are tape recording, taking notes, and writing down as much as can be remembered after the interview. In this research, interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for analysis. In addition, I maintained an interview log to supplement the taped interviews. While personal perspective was sought in qualitative research, information elicited from the interview process may have been distorted or exaggerated. Comparing individual accounts with accounts given by other individuals checked for such distortion. In addition, document checking and direct observations were used as validity and reliability checking (Merriam, 1998).

Observations

A second data collection device I employed in this study was the observation. Observations are a research tool that serve a research purpose, are planned deliberately, are recorded systematically, and are subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability (Merriam, 1998). Bogdan and Bilken (2003) presented a list of things to observe such as the physical setting, the participants, activities and interactions, conversations, subtle factors and the researcher's behavior. The process of collecting data through observations was broken into three stages: entry, data collection, and exist. I was an observer as participant since the group knew my research activity.

Since the constructs of this research dealt with leadership and relationships, I observed interactions between the superintendents and members of her district. These interactions occurred in various locations throughout the district, between various members of the district, and in

activities related to the functions of a school district. This method allowed me more access to many people and a wide range of information, but the level of the information revealed was controlled by the group members investigated. Field notes were utilized while observing which included descriptions, direct quotations, and observer comments.

Documents

The third data collection tool I employed in this study was the retrieval of documents. School districts produce documents for specific kinds of consumption. These documents include memos, minutes from meetings, newsletters, policy documents, proposals, codes of ethics, records, statement of philosophy, news releases, brochures, and pamphlets. Photographs that turned up provided a sense of individuals no longer in the district as well as particular events that have shaped the school district (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). While many of these documents presented an unrealistically glowing picture of how the school district functioned it was precisely these properties that gave me insight into how the school district was defined by various members of the district.

Once documents were located, authenticity was an issue and had to be assessed. This was accomplished by determining under what conditions the data was originally constructed as well as who authored the document, why it was authored and the context in which it was written. Other issues I considered included the history of the document, how I came into contact with it, the bias of the maker, to what extent the maker wanted to tell the truth and what other documents, observations, or interviews shed additional light. If possible written documents and photographs were copied, as well as artifacts, if any, photographed. However, despite these limitations, documents were a good source of data because they were usually easily accessible, free, and contained information that would take an enormous time and effort to gather otherwise.

In any qualitative study, ethical issues relating to protection of the participants are of concern. It was my responsibility to be informed about the basic tenets of ethical qualitative research, I informed participants about the research, and respected the participants' ownership of materials they generated (Merriam, 1998).

Data Analysis

In keeping with methods associated with traditional qualitative research, data analysis was continuous and performed at many different times and levels of the research. Since this research utilized a hermeneutic philosophical assumption I used quotes and themes in the words of

participants and interviewees to provide evidence of different perspectives (Creswell, 1998). To that end the methods utilized in this study included field analysis, corroboration and collaboration with participants, juxtaposition of data sources to each other and analytic coding of the narratives (Bogden & Biklen, 2003). I coded the data and organized it by emergent themes into taxonomies and categories. I constructed continuums based on the emergent taxonomies and categories. I used the constant comparative approach in the initial phases of data analysis to set the stage for further and fuller analysis.

This case study was completed in a traditional model in which I studied the participant in her setting. Prior to the collection of data I met with the superintendent and formulated an agreement based on questions suggested by Miles & Huberman (1994):

1. How much time and effort will be involved?
2. What kind of data is involved?
3. Is participation voluntary?
4. Who will design and steer the study?
5. Will material from participants be treated confidentially?
6. Will participants' anonymity be maintained?
7. Who will produce descriptive and explanatory products?
8. Will Participants review and critique interim and final products?
9. What benefits will accrue to participants-both informants and researchers?

Data collection and analysis was a simultaneous activity in this qualitative study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Analysis began with the first interview, the first observation, and the first document read. Emerging insights and tentative hunches directed the next phase of collection, which in turn will led to the refinement, and reformulation of more questions.

Analytical Method

I utilized ethnographic analysis in that I developed a classification scheme derived from the data itself. The scheme employed terms commonly found in the district setting as well as terms that I constructed based on the collected data. When the topics or variables within the system resulted in a concurrence, a relationship was converted into a cognitive map (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This method was especially important when I examined the dyadic relationships between the superintendent and members of her district.

Coding Strategy

While collecting data I made decisions that narrowed the study as well as focused on the type of study I was conducting. I planned data collection sessions according to what I found in previous observations and interviews. I wrote observer's comments as I went to stimulate critical thinking about what I saw. I wrote memos to myself about what I am learning. I continued to explore the research literature while I was in the field (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

I organized and managed my data by employing a coding system that assigned a shorthand designation (i.e. word, phrases, numbers or combinations of these) to it based on the conceptual framework and research questions of the study. I created codes on a provisional start list prior to fieldwork. These codes were at three levels descriptive, interpretive, and pattern (Miles & Hubberman, 1994). I coded the information about the data as well as the interpretive constructs. In addition, I made identifying notations on the interviews, field notes, and documents for easier access when I began the analysis and write-up of my findings. Furthermore, I utilized a word office software program to manage the data and used the line numbering function, word searching, search and replace, and check spelling.

I coded by hand rather than use any qualitative software package for this study. I found the software available to me was not user friendly and difficult to adapt as the data increased. In addition, the software available to me negated the inclusion of documents in the system. Since I coded by hand I kept a separate notebook in which I listed the codes with a clear structure and rational. To help me get started coding I utilized the following codes designed by Bogdan & Biklen (2003): setting/context, definition of the situation, perspectives, way of thinking about people and objects, process, activities, events, strategies, relationships and social structure, and methods. Revision of codes occurred as data was collected. Perhaps the most important aspect in codes was the operational definition of each code. I interspersed written-in marginal remarks with coding. These remarks provided insight into what I looked for in the next field visit.

I wrote reflective remarks and commentaries on issues that emerged during the process. These reflections included what I felt about the data once I was off site as well as second thoughts I had about the study. My reflections included doubts about the quality of the data as well as comments from my major professor addressing these doubts. I outlined several new hypotheses and made notes on issues to pursue on my next visits. I made notions where data supported current research. I also made references to other parts of the data set, personal reactions to

remarks or actions, and elaborations of a prior incidents. These remarks and commentaries evidenced not only what I gathered in the field but also provided a record of my growth as a researcher (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Since this study was in part descriptive I had to compress the data and link it together in a narrative that conveyed the meaning I derived from studying this superintendent. However, I had to move beyond basic description to the next level of analysis, which was pattern coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Pattern coding was a way of grouping summaries into constructs. Pattern coding served four important functions in this study: reduced large amounts of data, allowed analysis during data collection, allowed mapping of incidents and interactions, and laid the groundwork for themes and directional processes.

Reflective remarks, marginal remarks, and pattern coding lead up to memoing. I wrote memos to myself. I also met weekly with my committee chair, Dr. Brooks to share and discuss this study. I took notes during these weekly meetings in a separate memo pad. This process helped me conceptualize the data and make sense of what was being analyzed. These memos and meeting notes were dated. I highlighted in yellow marker the key concepts and outcomes discussed as well as any special considerations. I then linked these concepts, outcomes, and considerations to particular places in the field notes. They were coded according to the concepts they are about and were kept separate from the data files.

Validity, Reliability, and Ethics

Validity

I used the following six basic strategies suggested by Merriam (1998) to enhance internal validity in this study:

1. Triangulation – I relied on a holistic understanding of the situation by constructing plausible explanations about what I studied and observed through the use of interviews, observations, and document review.
2. Member checks – I took data and tentative interpretations back to the people I derived them from and asked if the results were plausible.
3. Long-term observation – I was in the district gathering data over a period of time in order to increase the validity of the findings.
4. Examination by committee chair and peers – I discussed my emerging findings with my committee chair as well as other committee members and peers.

5. Participatory modes of research – I involved my committee chair in all phases of the research from conceptualizing the study to writing up the findings.
6. Researcher's biases – I clarified my assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientation at the outset of this study.

Reliability

Qualitative research seeks to describe and explain the world as those in the world perceive it (Merriam, 1998). Since there are many interpretations of what is happening, there is no standard by which to take repeated procedures and measures to establish reliability in the traditional sense. Therefore, in this study I insured the results were consistent with the data collected. I utilized the following techniques suggested by Merriam (1998) to ensure the results were dependable:

1. Researcher's position – I explained the assumptions and theory behind the study in relation to the superintendent studied, the bases for selecting informants and as well as a description of them, and the social context from which data was collected.
2. Triangulation – I utilized interviews, observations, and documentation collection to strengthen reliability as well as internal validity.
3. Audit trail – I explained how I arrived at my results in detail. I described how data was collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the study.

External validity

I left the extent to which this study's findings apply to other situations up to the reader. This is known as case-to-case transfer (Merriam, 1998). I was less concerned with generalizing, however I provided enough detailed description of the study's context to enable the reader to compare the generalizability with their situations. To enhance this possibility I utilized the following techniques suggested by Merriam (1998):

1. Rich, thick description - I provided enough description so that the reader was able to determine how closely the situations of this study match the research situation, and thus, whether the findings can be transferred.
2. Typical - I described how this woman superintendent who regards herself as a career education leader was compared to others in the same situation so that that comparisons were drawn.
3. Multi-site designs – Since this is a single case study, I maximized diversity by using the perspectives of several individuals within the district to study this superintendent. Through the use of purposeful sampling I gained access to different voices within the

organization (i.e. school board members, central office administrators, principals, assistant principals, and teachers) to recognize the multiple constructions of reality.

Ethics

Although I turned to guidelines and regulations for help in dealing with some of the concerns that emerged in this research, the burden of producing a study that was conducted and disseminated in an ethical manner rested with me. I met weekly with my major professor, Dr. Brooks, and questioned ethical issues that arose within this study. I also sought the counsel on occasion of my department chair, Dr. Gary Crow as well as the Associate Academic Dean for my college, Dr. Lynn Wicker.

Ethics in data collection. My task was to gather data not change or evaluate people. I was honest with everyone I came into contact with about the purpose of my study and my role as a researcher. In the interviewing process I referred back to sources used in the literature review for assistance in dealing with problems that surfaced especially in the area of confidentiality. In the observation process I was aware that the act of observing influenced behavior. While I planned to take a nonintervention approach, I had to come to terms with situations in which this was not appropriate. This occurred when it came to the safety of children in the school I was observing. In the area of document collection I utilized the documents for the purpose in which I stated from the onset of this study. I did not collect data for one purpose and the use it for a different purpose.

Analysis and dissemination. I was as nonbiased, accurate, and honest as was humanly possible in all phases of this research. I planned, conducted, analyzed, and reported my work as accurately as I could by reporting any of my biases. I reported on enough data to allow readers to draw their own conclusions.

I conducted myself in an ethical manner throughout this research process. No regulation were able to tell me when my questioning of an individual becomes coercive, when to intervene in an observation, or how to ensure that the study's findings would not be used to the detriment of those involved. I was conscious of the ethical issues that permeate this process and examined how my own philosophical orientation reflected on these issues. On issues that I could not resolve myself, I sought the advice and counsel of my major professor, Dr. Jeff Brooks.

Limitations

The purpose of this study was to examine how a woman superintendent led her school district in the state of Florida. As such, data collected in the naturalistic setting of field had to bear

the weight of many interpretations. I understood that I had to rise above some of my own biases from the onset of this study, however, the methods I employed aided in this process. I spent a considerable time in the empirical world collecting and reviewing data. The data had to bear the weight of any interpretation so I constantly confronted my own opinions and prejudices with the data. The data I collected provided much more detailed rendering of events than I was able to prejudice. My primary goal was to add to knowledge, not to pass judgment on the setting. The worth of this study was to the degree that it generated description and understanding. I guarded against my own biases by recording detailed field notes that included reflections on my own subjectivity.

I was aware of the impact of my presence as a researcher on the behavior of the people I interviewed and observed. To offset this observer's effect I interacted with the people in this study in a natural, unobtrusive, and non-threatening manner. I attempted to act in a way that the activities that occurred in my presence did not differ significantly from those that occurred in my absence. I modeled the interviews after a conversation between two trusting parties rather than a more formal question and answer session.

It was my goal to better understand the human behavior and experience in this research. I sought to grasp the process by which this women superintendent constructed meaning and described those meanings. I encouraged all informants in this study to gain control over their experiences in their analyses of them. My goal was to immerse myself into the study and let the findings emerge from the data.

However this study still has its limitations. In doing a single case study I was not be able to grasp the understanding for all women superintendents in the state of Florida. I had to rely upon the experience in this one district and one woman. Since I relied on the superintendent for contacts with other informants I understood the limitations of those initial contacts in that they may have held a single perspective. This study was framed by literature I purposefully selected to design and inform this research. This entire research was a single researcher experience, which means I had to rely predominately on myself for data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter was to present data I collected and analyzed to answer the three questions guiding this research. I spent nine months in the field conducting interviews, making observations, and collecting numerous documents in order to identify and understand what I was studying. Wolcott (1990) points out a good starting point in disclosing the findings of any research project is with basic description – what happened? With that in mind I began this chapter with an overview of the district in which this project took place and introduced the woman who was the center of this project. The next section of the chapter developed what was communicated to me by individuals in the district who agreed to participate in this study. Every participant communicated his or her perception of this woman's leadership as viewed through the development of relationships. In all, 32 individuals agreed to share their perceptions of her leadership. I grouped these individuals according to their formal job function in the district: school board, central office administrators, principals, assistant principals, and teachers. I analyzed the verbatim transcripts of each participant and triangulated that information with my observations notes and collected documents. I transformed the data to protect the confidentiality and identity of the participants (Wolcott, 1990). What complicated this process was the zeal with which the participants' member checked their transcripts and their repeated requests to read the findings. Therefore, I took extreme measures to protect each individual's identity in this small rural district.

Analysis of collected data provided insights and rich description of how individuals in this school district perceived this woman's leadership through the development and maintenance of relationships. As I analyzed each source of data, three themes and patterns emerged: relationships, job performance, and trust. These themes were relevant to the research questions and I presented the findings to support these themes throughout this chapter. I organized my findings from this research by the theoretical constructs presented in Chapter 2. The findings in this chapter are presented through segments of documents, observation notations, and verbatim quotes from participants as well as the superintendent. This process is known as a theoretical narrative and employs the use of constructs to organize people's experiences into a story (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995).

Baldwell County

Baldwell County was created in 1838 and named after a southern Vice President and member of the United States Senate. The majority of residents of Baldwin County remain much more attached to Southern culture and lifestyle habits than is common in the other regions of the state that are influenced by large amounts of migration. This area holds much more in common culturally with states such as Alabama, Georgia, or Mississippi than with much of Florida. Historically, the county has a rich relationship in the lucrative business trade of cotton, lumber, and turpentine. As such the county at one time was site to numerous sawmills and large lumber/manufacturing companies. Today the county is seen more as a bedroom community for those employed in the state capital or beachfront communities. Two of Baldwin County native sons were elected to high state offices: Florida's Chief Executive and Chief Justice of Florida Supreme Court. A number of Baldwin natives served in the Florida Legislature.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), Baldwin County has a total area of 574 square miles with approximately 1.22% of it water. The county is bounded and bisected by two rivers one of was made famous by Jesse Earle Bowden's book *Look and Tremble*. There are two major towns in the county with 23 unincorporated areas. As of the 2000 U.S. Census, there were 13,017 people, 4,468 households, and 3,132 families residing in the county. The racial makeup of the county was 79% White, 15% Black or African American, 4% Hispanic, 1% Native American, and 1% other and two or more races. The median age in the county was 36 years. Males outnumbered females about 2:1. The median income for a household in the county was \$26,575. The per capita income for the county was \$12,379, with the major employer being the school system. About 14% of families and 20% of the population were below the poverty line. Baldwin County votes heavily Republican in presidential and congressional races, although still occasionally supports conservative Democrats in local and state contests.

The county seat is located at the intersection of two major highways and consists of two signal lights. The downtown is composed of a main road littered with boarded-up storefronts, a restaurant and two thrift stores. Away from the downtown section but located on the main highway are the gas stations and fast food chain restaurants typical of any small town in the United States. Standing in the middle of downtown, I was impressed by the number of lumber trucks barreling by and barely stopping for traffic signals. The "new" courthouse is located directly across from the "old" courthouse and the sheriff's office. This little town gave me the

sense of an era gone by – one that is struggling to stay in existence with the alluring conveniences of larger nearby cities. Every hour on the hour one hears the ringing of bells from the local Methodist church steeple. No one does business downtown anymore; there are always ample parking spaces.

The Superintendent's Office

The superintendent's office was located in the basement of the "new" courthouse. "New" in this district was relative as this structure was dedicated in 1972 as opposed to the "old" courthouse, which was constructed in 1904. The easiest entries to the office were either through the side or rear entrances. Both were a steep and treacherous descent from the ground into the basement. I logged in my memos numerous times the same question – what kind of statement does this make? On the walls outside the office were pictures of veterans, honoring those who have served as early back as the Civil War. Careful study of the pictures revealed family lineages to the military service. Betty Lou's father was one of the pictured veterans. Over the doorway of the superintendent's office hung a white plastic sign approximately 2 feet by 4 feet; on it, emblazoned in blue words, was "Closing the Gap: Moving to Higher Achievement."

I opened the door and walked into the office a bell rung. A young woman, Bonnie, was seated at a desk holding a standard phone handset to her ear. Next to her were piles of paperwork and a typewriter. This was significant because as my observation time lengthens, the typewriter was replaced with a modern PC, and the phone handset was replaced with an earpiece – little signs of the changes Betty Lou was making in the district. The office was paneled in dark wood and the office furniture looks as if it was from the 70s. Everything was very clean and functional. The Assistant Superintendent's office was located next to the reception area and was clearly visible to all visitors. On one wall of the reception area was a bulletin board decorated by an elementary school. This too changed over the research period with each school in the district taking a month to honor the accomplishments of their students.

Bonnie was friendly and quickly drew me into conversation – she was warm and inviting. She let Betty Lou, the superintendent, know I was present – Betty Lou came out to greet me. She welcomed me with a smile and a handshake. This too changed over time as I move from a stranger into a more routine figure in the district – the handshake was replaced with a hug and noted feelings of awkwardness were replaced with the feeling of being home. We walked into her office – it was located across from the school district's vault – literally a walk-in bank vault. Betty

Lou's office was much like the rest of the office space – a wood paneled room with adequate furnishings. There were bright spots with her personal touch on the bookshelf. Everything was very clean and organized. The only signs of a personal life were two small wedding photos and two photos of her daughters. On the credenza behind her desk was a row of books and binders. Lying directly behind her chair on the credenza was the Holy Bible. After months in the field I realized the symbolism behind the placement of this Bible. It went beyond an indication of Betty Lou's Christian beliefs. In Baldwin County, those in the position of authority and power attended the local southern Baptist church. Indeed deals were made in the choir loft of that church.

On the wall directly in front of Betty Lou's desk was a clock. Based on the material in her office, Betty was a reader – she had current educational journals on her desk and copies of articles marked to send out to members of the administrative team. Clearly Betty Lou worked when she was in her office – her daily planner was opened on her desk and a pencil was nearby to fill it in. Betty Lou answered her own phone and set her own appointments. Her first comment to me, "We are a small district without a lot of money so we all wear many hats." As this project progressed I learned the truth of this first statement.

Betty Lou Hartford

Betty Lou was the essence of Southern charm and beauty. Upon meeting her for the first time I was struck by her dignified good looks and her quick disarming way of putting me at ease. As true with many Southern women there was a "Steel Magnolia" under this beautifully coutured look. Betty Lou graciously agreed to this research project because as she said, "...this job is tough and this district can be tougher." She gave me open access to the district but I knew when it came time to conduct her interviews it would be on her terms. At times she was comfortable with tape recording of our conversations but most of the time she talked when we were in her car visiting the district. When that happened I furiously jotted notes then dictated the conversation for transcription as soon as we parted ways.

Betty Lou was born and raised in Baldwin County. Betty readily admitted she grew up hard and poor – the third child of four. By today's standard she points out, "You know I guess I would be labeled as emotionally abused because father and mother were constantly arguing...and mother was very, very strict. She disciplined us but...you know, as you grow older you understand things that you were not aware of as a child. Mother had it rough. She wasn't from here and she didn't have any money." Her father left her mother when Betty Lou was young and

remarried. Her mother remained single. Betty Lou admits, “It was the best thing that ever happened to my family...it stopped the constant fighting.”

Her mother was born and raised in the mid-west and was never really accepted into the inner network of Baldwin County. Her father was the second son of the community’s medical doctor. Unfortunately, his father died when he was young, leaving his mother to raise their two young sons. Betty Lou easily recounts the thrift of her paternal grandmother that was passed on to her father. She remembers asking her father to put electricity in her bedroom, “...as a birthday gift so I could do my homework.” Family tragedy followed Betty Lou early in life when she lost her younger brother to cancer. Perhaps the most compelling story told to me about Betty Lou was recounted by a participant who remembered Betty Lou was forced to sleep with her dying brother during the night to comfort him during his last days.

Betty Lou’s childhood poverty impacted what she is today. She recounted to me, “I remember sitting on the couch in the front room of my house looking out the front window at the rain...I think I was about eight years old...and I remember saying to myself I had to depend upon myself and myself alone if I ever wanted to get anything out of life.” Betty Lou worked very hard to get where she is today. She understands the value of money and what a difference it can make in one’s life. These memories linger with her today.

Betty Lou did very well in the public schools of Baldwin County. Her dream career was physical therapy, but her profession of choice for employment in her home county was teaching. She secured a scholarship to the local junior college and later transferred to a nearby university where she received her degree in science. Armed with this degree, she returned home and began her career as a high school science teacher. Betty Lou was able to obtain a Master’s degree in Educational Leadership after her father agreed to pay the expenses. Betty Lou married a fellow science teacher and had two daughters. Personal happiness eluded Betty Lou as she divorced the love of her life and entered the ranks of administration as a single mother under the tutelage of one of her mentors, Mr. Brad Barnes. Under Mr. Barnes’ guidance and with the emotional support of his wife Betty Lou later received a Specialist degree at a nearby university and became a principal. At this point she married again and began a “commuter-marriage” splitting her time between her home in Baldwin County and her new husband’s nearby beachfront home.

Betty Lou ran an unsuccessful bid for the superintendency in 2000 – she lost to her cousin who at that time was an unsuccessful furniture storeowner. She admitted, “The brutality of

politics drove my two daughters away from this county each vowing not to return – a promise they have both upheld.” The campaign took its toll on Betty Lou both mentally and physically and almost cost her another marriage. Betty Lou left the district to pursue employment in a consortium and later as a principal in a neighboring county. Rather than serve out her years toward retirement successfully in her new principalship, Betty Lou returned to politics in 2004 and ran again for the superintendency. She explained, “ I was concerned over the complacency in the district – no one seemed to care that the students were not achieving. It seemed to be okay just to get by.” She knew the children of Baldwin County deserved better than they were getting under the present administration. She won the election but her work had only begun. I first met Betty Lou the summer after her election.

Betty Lou was competitive and would do what it took to get the job done. Each year, Florida grades its school districts as well as individual schools as a result of the state accountability system. Under Betty Lou’s leadership the district received an “A” both years. However, two of the schools received a “B” and one school received a “C” last year. Betty Lou took these grades personally. She made it clear she expected improvement next year. Due to this burning desire and competitive nature, Betty Lou was in the office before 7:00 a.m. and did not reach home until the late hours of the evening. She recognized the need to attend as many school functions as she could because she had to know what the students were doing in the classroom as well in their extra curricular activities.

The constant pace of 12-15 hour days placed a strain on her personal life but one that she accepted without complaint. As is true of many boomers, Betty Lou was sandwiched between helping her daughters begin their adult lives and taking care of her ailing 82-year-old mother. Spending time with Betty Lou was never dull and never the same thing. Getting to know Betty Lou, however, was difficult as she places a protective barrier between her and the people with whom she comes in contact including, - and at times – especially, me. Betty Lou found it hard to trust anyone, especially co-workers and colleagues. She did have one informal mentor – an extremely influential mentor in the state political arena – whom I learned she telephoned at a moment’s notice to seek advice. She readily heeds this mentor’s advise without question.

She had two very close friends within Baldwin County and both were teachers. It took me a while to undercover these two individuals. Neither of the teachers was political but they admitted they steadfastly protect her. I was able to find these two teachers after repeated

interviews and conversations with other participants. Their stories only add to the knowledge of the incredible strength and character of Betty Lou. This woman's life was indeed a modern-day Horatio Alger story.

Adding to the uniqueness of this woman's leadership is the fact that Baldwin County School District has historically been lead by male superintendents. As revealed in details in the findings that follow, Baldwin County's superintendency has been one of "heir apparent," wherein the next successor was elected from the central office. This lineage of leadership gave the participants in this study a chance to reflect on a woman holding the office while recognizing the way things had always been under a man's occupancy of the office. While the literature was reflected back to me in most of the data, I was astounded ease in which these participants readily admitted in their interviews what they perceived as differences. This district's rich history of continuity of leadership set the background for exploration of gendered leadership through relationships.

Betty Lou's theme for the 2006-07 school year was "Closing the Achievement Gap - Moving to Higher Achievement." This theme was presented at the district wide in-service meeting at the beginning of the school year. Betty Lou articulated her vision for higher achievement and outlined necessary changes in the system. Repeatedly she shared how her vision was inclusive of all students. Following her presentation, the principals acted out a play on the possible responses to change. Her message was well received by the audience of teachers. At the heart of this need for change was the desire to break the complacency that had developed in the system over the previous four years. Betty Lou sent out a strong message; the district was in need of change. Change indeed – the first change came in the restructuring and privatization of the schools' lunch program, and the second major change came in the push to consolidate the two high schools. Both changes met with resistance and could ultimately cost Betty Lou her next election bid. Betty Lou was not deterred, however, and only time will tell if the course she set for change ultimately will prove successful.

I organized my findings from this research initially by the job functions of the participants: school board, central office administrators, principals, assistant principals, and teachers. Initial observations uncovered a strong sense of hierarchical order within the school district thus organization by job function made better sense of the data. Following this initial categorization, the findings were presented along my theoretical constructs of relationship with the

superintendent, job performance, and trust. I presented the findings through segments of transcripts and verbatim quotes from participants supported by observations and documentation. Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) called this process a theoretical narrative, namely “the process that the research participants reported in terms of your theoretical constructs. It uses your theoretical constructs to organize people’s subjective experience into a coherent story. It employs people’s own language to make their story vivid and real” (p. 73).

The next section presented the findings on the relationships between Betty Lou and the school board members. Findings were presented along the three themes of the study: relationships, job performance, and trust. First, the data on the School Board members’ perspectives was presented. Second, the data on Betty Lou’s perspectives was presented. Finally, the conclusions were based on the analysis and interpretation of the data presented.

Betty Lou and the School Board

Introduction

The purpose of this section was to describe the relationships between Betty Lou and members of the School Board. According to the Florida Statutes, the governing body of each school district is the district school board. Criteria for the positions on the board are set at the local level. The School Board of Baldwin County consists of five elected members who are citizens of the district and in good standing. Each member represents a single-member district and serves a four term, while the superintendent, who is the executive officer and is elected by the entire county. There are no term limits for board members and each receive an annual salary in the amount of \$24,185.00. During my time in the field, two seats on the board came up for election. One of the current members did not run while the other ran unsuccessfully. While I continued to gather data with the new members, I have reported only what was researched under the previous school board. At that time there were four men and one woman, with a racial composition of one Black and four White members. Fellow board members elect the Chairman of the Board for a term of two years. Observations of school board meetings were uniform in that there was little interaction between the School Board members and the superintendent. Conversations between the members and the superintendent took place during the meetings, with the Chairman and Betty Lou staying after the meetings to secure signatures.

The School Board of Baldwin County

It was October 10, 2006 – the second Monday of the month. I was on my way to Baldwin County for the monthly Baldwin County School Board meeting. What made this meeting different from any other was that Betty Lou brought the issue of school consolidation to a vote that night. The last time this issue was brought up at a School Board meeting was in 1952, and consolidation was successful. I usually arrived 20 minutes before a meeting to chitchat with Betty Lou. That night was different; there was no time for chitchatting and Betty Lou reminded me by email on Monday that...

...the meeting will be held in the circuit courtroom. Plan on getting here at least an hour early so you can get a seat. It has been a tough week with all the articles in the newspapers and on television. If you get a chance check out the front page of today's News Herald.

I subscribed to the local newspaper for this research project and knew the last three weeks of headline stories and editorials had been about the proposed consolidation. What I didn't know was that a nearby city in another county had picked up the story. Sure enough on the front page in bolded all caps letters was the lead story, "**CONSOLIDATION CONTROVERSY: RACE, TRADITION, TAXES AT PLAY.**" The first line read, "The Baldwin County School Board is scheduled to vote October 10 on the issue." The News Herald article covered both sides of the controversy, but was the first to address the issue of race within the debate.

I knew this story would only add to the controversy. The last two School Board meetings had been heated, with packed attendance, but tonight was going to be different. Discussion time was over and the Board had to vote. At the center of the controversy was Betty Lou's effort to consolidate the two high schools. Construction of new school facilities in Baldwin County had never been a priority. The oldest existing and still occupied school in the district was built in 1906. The newest construction in the district was a wing on the high school completed in 1984. I had been in each of the schools. They were all very clean and well maintained but in a constant state of repair. As one maintenance worker commented,

We are proud of our schools and we take good care of them. But they are old. We have to prioritize our daily jobs and that is always changing. No sooner do we take care of one thing but you turn around and have to take care of another. It is

constant. Sometimes I think it would be easier just to tear some of these old buildings down and start over.

As I approached the Courthouse I noticed two sheets of white paper taped to the front glass doors – this was unusual. When I got close enough to read the signs I was perplexed and shocked. Typed in bold letters on one sheet was the statement, “ **Speakers must register at the 2nd Floor Elevator.**” This was perplexing because there had never been a speaker sign up before – citizens had been allowed to raise their hands and address the board. Boldly typed on the second sign was the following, “**Cell Phones, knives, scissors, metal nail files, etc. are not allowed in Court Room. Everyone will be searched for tonight’s School Board meeting.**”

The next surprise came when I stepped off the elevator. An armed county deputy greeted my fellow elevator passengers and me. The deputy politely instructed us to turn off our cell phones and proceed through the security checkpoint. Since we were the first group to arrive we all were in a state of disbelief. I lead the pack through the security checkpoint and found my spot three rows back from the School Board table in the middle of the courtroom. Four armed Sheriff’s deputies were stationed throughout the room along with the courtroom Bailiff. I was physically uncomfortable sitting on the old wooden pew benches; moreover emotionally, it began to sink in – this peaceful little town was expecting trouble tonight. In less than 20 minutes every old wooden bench was filled - there were no seats left in the courtroom. I noted that it was unusually quiet now – there were not the usual greetings among those in attendance. Everyone was just sitting, waiting for the meeting to begin. The technicians for two nearby television stations came in and set up their equipment an hour before the meeting was to begin. Everyone watched as they set up the equipment. The two local celebrity anchors came in, hesitated, and appeared to be appraising the situation. I heard one say to the other, “Wow, I thought we were getting here too early. I see now that we are late. This is unbelievable.”

A notation in my observation notes indicated that at 10 minutes before 5:00 p.m., the School Board members begin to enter, one at a time. Betty Lou was already seated at her assigned chair in the middle of table. She was looking through a notebook. She appeared to be calm and ready for the meeting. Solemnly each member took his or her seat according to his or her nameplate. The School Board members enter in the following order Marsha Meltzer, Sam Perkins, Kenneth Grigley, Wayne Walker, and Steve Sanders. Each nodded at the other and softly

spoke standard greetings. The Chairman of the Board called the meeting to order at exactly 5:00 p.m. No one moved or made a sound.

In order to understand the events of the evening, it is best to introduce each member of the School Board and present the findings of the data along the three themes that emerged to answer the research questions of this study. The outcome of this School Board meeting is presented at the conclusion of this section. Careful analysis and interpretation of all the collected data enabled me to make sense of what happened that night.

Marsha Meltzer – Lone Woman. I began this revelation with Ms. Marsha Meltzer – the first School Board member to appear at the meeting. She wanted me to call her Marsha – so out of respect for her request I called her by her first name. Marsha was the lone woman board member. She was a petite woman in her early 60s with short black/gray hair. She wore “grandmother” glasses. Marsha was the longest serving member on the board with 16 years. She was always the first to arrive at meetings and tonight was no different. Marsha was married and had one grown son. Her passion for the school system came from the fact that her grandchildren were being educated in the same county in which she was born and raised. Upon graduation from high school, Marsha attended the local junior college where she received her AA degree in dental hygiene.. She was a licensed hygienist for a prominent dentist in the community. She attended the Baptist church in Mt. Vernon. She served on the board when Betty Lou was a principal at one of the high schools.

In the six months I observed school board meetings, Marsha was by far the one that appeared to be the best prepared. She read the material and always had a prepared list of questions to ask at the meeting. She asked tough questions and had a reputation for being very thorough. More than once I overheard comments at the board meetings made by individuals in the audience. I heard statements like, “She doesn’t let anything slip by her,” and “She always asks too many questions.” Betty Lou even made the statement more than once she had “a school board member that gives her a hard time.” Regardless of other people’s perception of her, that was the way Marsha was and the way she saw herself in the position. I asked Marsha for an interview to go over my observation notes and ask her some questions. I only had to ask once –she immediately gave me a date and time. She was easy to talk to and told me she would be glad to answer any of my questions. Marsha lost her re-election bid for her School Board seat. While it appeared she was popular in the meetings, the voters in her district gave their votes to a younger,

inexperienced woman. Marsha was matter-of-fact about the election; she stated she counted on her reputation and less on putting signs out all over the place. I had to ask if she would run again. Her response, “At this point I really can’t say. I have done the job so long that I never really saw myself not doing it. But the voters have made their choice.” And so our conversation began. I first asked questions that dealt with her relationship with Betty Lou. The next several questions and answers delve into that relationship.

I asked Marsha how would she characterize her working relationship with this superintendent. Without hesitation she commented, “It is professional and very cordial. We are both trying to accomplish the same thing.” I prompted her further by asking what was it like working with this superintendent. Marsha responded,

She knows all the ins and outs - like with the classroom as well as in management of the schools. She has worked at the principal, and I thought that was a good background for someone coming in on the school board. She has made a few mistakes, and she has done a few things that I really don’t agree...but her heart is in the right place and she is a strong leader. One of my favorite things about her was when she was principal at Sharpsville High School - when you went on that campus you didn’t hear any grumbling from anybody – she had the complete support or either you didn’t hear it that she didn’t. She kept me as a board member very well informed when she was at the high school...of issues that were taking place especially if she thought it was - something that was going to come out as a controversy in the community.

Clearly she valued communication in her relationship with Betty Lou. Since Marsha had served on the School Board for such a long time, it was easy for her to respond to my next question. I asked her how she would characterize her working relationship with past superintendents. She responded,

Okay. Mr. Jones was very conservative and very strong in leadership as was Mr. Barnes. Their regime was real similar - they had been in the school system a long time, had very good character background, they just had a broad base in knowledge and when under their leadership they would – when they made a recommendation you could bet they had all their ducks in a row. They knew where they were coming from - they knew where the money was coming from - they

knew what the people needed, but they were very conservative and that carried over from the regime prior to them which was a long term with Mr. Steve Smith. He was superintendent for many, many, many years and I don't know how many but he was ultra conservative. That might have been to a fault now in retrospect in some ways but I don't think that Mr. Jones was probably a little more conservative than Mr. Barnes but they were both real conservative. They came up in a time – they were older gentlemen and they knew how to make do with what you had and how to get by with shortcomings when funding wasn't good and they believed in people working hard and they worked hard and they were very, very good leaders. I enjoyed being under them a great deal. Although I cannot remember a lot of difficulties with that I just – there was always I think a joke around that until Mr. Jones took over there had never been a split vote on anything on the school board and there was a few split votes probably during his term and Mr. Barnes but not many. They always just pretty much had unanimous approval or disapproval, however, the thing came along, but they were just really strong leaders. Then Mr. Dinkens came, I cannot say that his leadership was helpful. He often would let people come to the board rather than making a decision himself when it was matters he could have handled. Under Mr. Jones and Mr. Barnes I don't feel like people ever were told or had the impression that they couldn't come before the board about stuff, but they just knew how to handle things to the point that seldom happened...but under Mr. Dinkens you know if the band needed some more instruments rather than dealing with the situation and making a recommendation - he would let that employee come to the board and plead their case...and if the football team needed their turf redone the coach came to the board and on and on. It was - he was - he couldn't tell people "no." It seemed then you ended up with politicians that sometimes could tell - make good judgment and tell no and sometimes not. So that was just an uncomfortable situation a number of times and it was just – he was a good man but he just couldn't tell people he just wanted to do everything for everybody it seemed...and there is just not enough money or time or need to do everything everybody wants. He went through the salary schedule and gave some big raises – some of them were probably needed but

some of it would jump so much like in maintenance to almost you end up with no where to go after that – when you give a person a 10 or 15% raise one year just because you have reworked the salary schedule then where do you go after that? We worked through some of it but some of it you have to give and take and but some of it was – it was hard to deal with it was just harder to deal with – you didn't know whether you were dealing with need or if you were just trying to – I'll give you an example. Right at the last of his term we had already when you are getting ready to do the budget and the salary schedule you have like 5 meetings – you have workshop and you preliminary budget then you have another preliminary budget and then you get about the third month you get to the final, final act of a budget at that final enactment of a budget he came in with an increase salary request for an employee and at that stage of the game it was an individual employee that was the head of lunchroom service.

Marsha's comments indicated that David Dinkens was not the same caliber as the previous superintendents; however, the words she used to describe the other superintendents could be applied to Betty Lou. With regard to authority, I asked Marsha what type of formal and informal authority this superintendent had in her present position in regards to her. Marsha responded,

She frequently would communicate with me about things that were happening and were going to happen. I would go – I have been during this last year - when we have been dealing with the consolidation issue there was quite a lot of meetings between she and I and at that point she would even relate to me sometimes the error of the other board members. She and I can talk all we want to. The Sunshine Law disallows any communication especially where anything that is going to come before the board because I guess they think you can make a decision before that and when we have workshops concerning consolidation there was always public in that and you can talk back and forth in that but it is different talking in front of the public then it is carrying on a conversation with each other.

Again, communication was key for Marsha, However, her experience and training on the school board gave her a broader understanding of the constraints of the positions. I next asked her if there was a difference in working with this superintendent and previous superintendents. It was in this question that Marsha spoke freely about the issue of gender and leadership. She told me,

Yes, and just like I feel like it has a difference even in board members. When I came on the board there was one female board member but I was the first that ever represented my district - and now there is not a female board member but I think when I came on that and, just as well as Ms. Hartford does, I think that sometimes you see a different side of things than the man does...for example, there had always been a womanless beauty pageant at one of the schools - it was kind of a tradition and Ms. Hartford has offense at that and nobody else ever saw that. So little things like that come along and some of the men would probably focused more on facts...and I think myself, I focus as much on feelings. I want our people to be happy. I want our students to be happy. I want our constituents - and so I just think that sometimes the female just sees a little different edge on things.

Clearly Marsha felt gender made a difference in leadership in that a woman leader was more focused on feelings. She understood that Betty Lou interpreted situations differently and emphasized different problems. Moving beyond her relationship with Betty Lou, I next asked Marsha about her trust in Betty Lou. Here was where the issue of consolidation played into her response,

Umm...I trust her, yes. When she was first campaigning to get ready for running for the office...she and I had discussions about consolidation because I felt like it would come up. It had kind of been discussed before her term when Mr. Dinkens was on. We had some issues with construction but the four years he was on we constructed nothing...and so I knew we've got to build something. So we talked about consolidation before she was elected, and she convinced me that she would not support consolidation but she has now. And quite a number of voters told me they talked about that to her too and she said she wouldn't support consolidation - and I feel like she has totally embraced it and was trying to really...I still feel like she is trying to push it and not accepting any other course because there has never been any support from her for any plan other than consolidation - so that is what I hesitated about on trusting her.

Clearly, Marsha understood the challenges of leadership in the district. However understanding the challenges did not mean she was necessarily closer to Betty Lou. She valued communication and Betty Lou communicated with her. Their relationship as perceived by Marsha

was based on the function of the job. Their exchanges were low-quality thus the relationship was classified in the stranger phase. On the issue of consolidation, Marsha stated at a previous School Board meeting she would vote against consolidation.

Sam Perkins - Lame Duck. The next School Board member to take his assigned seating at the meeting was Sam Perkins. Mr. Perkins, as he likes to be called, was a short, thin, older gentleman. He was always clean-shaven and dressed in jeans, a button-down white shirt, and cowboy boots. You would expect him to wear a cowboy hat but every time I saw him outside the building he had on a John Deer baseball cap. Mr. Perkins was always tanned, suggesting that he earned his living working outdoors. Mr. Perkins did not run for re-election. He had served two terms and in his words at the last meeting, "I've had enough." Mr. Perkins was married and had three grown children. His grandchildren attended the same schools that he attended while growing up in Baldwin County. He attended the local community college but has spent his life working in the construction business. He went to school with the superintendent. He attended the Baptist church in Sharpsville. Mr. Perkins was very reluctant to talk to me. Although always friendly and respectful, he was hard to pin down for a date and time. When I met with him he was cordial but distant and difficult to talk to. It was only after my persistence that he agreed to answer some questions. Our conversation was brief and to the point. As with Marsha, the first questions I asked him dealt with his relationship with the superintendent.

I asked him to characterize his working relationship with this superintendent. He responded, "It is very good." I asked him to explain what it was like to work with this superintendent. He responded,

Well, people are quick to call the superintendent. They elected her and they have the final say - especially in a rural area like this if it is nothing more than taking a child's cap and they are apt to call the superintendent and it does – it puts a lot of pressure on her because she is the superintendent - she is responsible to the public and for her not to get involved in that cap that has been taken away from a child at school it is politically – it will kill you in a small area so she has special problems and I recognize that.

Clearly he attempted to answer the question but skirted around what I was asking him. I asked him to characterize his working relationship with past superintendents. Here he gave me more information. He stated,

Mr. Smith was the product of the depression and real conservative background... where a dollar - he was conservative to the point of being a detriment so he was a real conservative but he had real goals for Baldwin county. Steve Smith was a very hands on type person - he would visit the schools and help...almost micro manage - I mean today you would call it micro manage the system. He gave the principals a lot of leeway but he knew what was going on - he was very hands-on as far as decision-making - he knew what was going on - it was a slower time and he was able to do that. He was very good at crunching the numbers and he made time to be in on policy hearings. I enjoyed working with him. He taught me a lot - really in educational finance during that time we went to full time equivalent students when it used to be teacher units. So we went through that finance system - and now I guess that is the reason I was able to know a lot about finance because we really had to go from one complete system to another - and so it really let me understand more how the system works because I was forced because I was a board member I was forced to learn it.

David Dinkens who was from 2000 - 2004. His leadership style was more laid back and he put all the responsibility on the principal - he backed his principals but he made them make the decisions too - and he wasn't much of a hands-on person as Ms. Hartford is as far as school direction and this kind of stuff. He had high expectations but he didn't - it was up to the principal pretty much to get there.

Clearly, Mr. Perkins had a closer working relationship with some of the previous superintendents than he did with Betty Lou. He viewed Betty Lou as an involved superintendent. I next asked him about the formal and informal authority of the present superintendent. He responded, "She sets the agenda and makes sure we get our notebooks before the meetings. She is also good about calling me and keeping me up to date with what is going on in the district. I try to get out into the schools every week but sometimes that is impossible to do." Like Marsha, he appeared to value communication with the superintendent. He perceived Betty Lou's communications with him as satisfactory.

I next asked him if there was a difference in working with this superintendent and past superintendents. He responded,

I think all three were concerned about the children even though all three had different talents and personalities and ideas of how it should be done or how school leaders should accomplish that task. I think it is more in the process than it is in their desire to see our students excel. I think most of them have been around and seen what is needed from the outside – they went off to college - and in the case of Mrs. Hartford - she has been principal in another district so she has been able to see what is going on there too on a day to day basis which is an advantage for her. But I do I believe she has the best interest of our children at heart. The process...people are going to disagree with any process you come up because everybody has a better wheel - but as long as the goal is the same and we don't mess around too long with something that is not working we will get there.

Again it appeared he evaded a direct answer and highlighted the qualities he liked in Betty Lou. He appeared to see the process as part of the issue and not necessarily the people involved in the process. This may be part of the reason he decided not to run for re-election. Mr. Perkins was getting restless during the interview. It had only lasted 15 minutes but he kept glancing at his watch. I inferred that he was ready to go. I asked my final question directly, "Mr. Perkins, do you trust the superintendent." He responded, "Well...yes, until this consolidation issue – she campaigned that she would not be for consolidation and now we are dealing with it. I support her on the consolidation but it makes things a little difficult for me because she promised the voters one thing and is now asking for another. But, yes, otherwise I do."

Mr. Perkins' statements during the interview supported what I observed at the board meetings. Their exchanges were entirely related to the function of their jobs. Their low-quality exchanges supported the finding that their relationship was classified as the stranger phase. While Marsha had been an outspoken opponent of the consolidation issue, Mr. Perkins had been an outspoken proponent. He told me off-tape that the schools were "just too old and inferior. Baldwin County needs to step up to the plate and give the kids something better and it needs to be done now." I never saw Mr. Perkins again after our interview. It appeared the constant phone calls and demands from constituents created a lifestyle he no longer wanted to live.

Kenneth Grigley – Chairman of the Board. The next board member to enter the meeting that night was the Chairman of the Board, Mr. Kenneth Grigley. Mr. Grigley was a tall, distinguished looking African American man. He was always dressed in dark dress slacks, a long

sleeve dress shirt, and a silk tie. Tonight his choice in color was purple. He was married with three children. He was born and raised in Baldwell County. He attended the local junior college before his employment with a detention facility in the state of Florida. He was an officer in a neighboring county with the hopes of becoming a counselor. He attended the African Methodist Episcopal church in Sharpsville. He was a student of the present superintendent, and has been on the Board for the last 10 years. He was in his last term as Chairman of the Board. Mr. Grigley was not an eloquent speaker and had to be cued constantly by Betty Lou. He struggled with his words when speaking to a large audience. He impressed me as a quiet, shy man, uncomfortable with a lot of attention. This controversy meant he had to exert control over the audience to maintain order. Insofar as professional expertise, he was probably the best prepared for the task but never demonstrated his expertise. One School Board meeting nearly resulted in an exchange of blows between two men before other Board members diffused the situation. As a result, Betty Lou asked an outside agency to come in and train the Board on Robert's Rules of Order.

Mr. Grigley was not an easy man to contact. Like the other board members, I had access to his home and work number. While the others indicated a preference, Mr. Grigley did not. I called his home telephone number twice in an attempt to get an interview. His wife returned the second call and asked me who I was and why I was trying to contact him – facts that I had left in the message. Although I answered her questions, Mr. Grigley never returned my calls. It was only through the assistance of his administrative assistant at his work that I was able to get a telephone interview. The interview was short since Mr. Grigley did not engage in any conversation other than what was necessary. I asked Mr. Grigley to characterize his working relationship with the superintendent. He responded, “Good.” I asked him what was it like working with this superintendent. He responded,

Well, I am excited to have new leadership and...certainly someone who has an open mind to what the community needs. I think our working relationship is good -but I would really like to – for her to be thinking of the schools within the city as she is deeply about the schools in the district.

I was a little confused by this statement as there were no city schools, only district schools. I could hear talking in the background and a telephone ringing. I tried to clarify what he said but he did not respond. I moved on to the next question in regard to his working relationship with past superintendents. He responded,

Well in a way it was good but we differed on a lot of our goals. There were just some subjects that we just didn't always see eye to eye on. I learned a lot from them and it has helped me now. I learned to give and take but I sometimes felt like they didn't really understand what my district needs were.

I asked him to tell me whom the first superintendent was that he worked with and I think I confused him because he stated Mrs. Hartford. Rather than take up any more time I moved on. I next asked about the superintendent's formal and informal authority hoping to get a better perspective on his relationship with Ms. Hartford. He responded, "She always calls me to keep me informed. She has also set up a lot of training for us that helped especially with the consolidation board meetings." Again I am not sure whether or not he understood the question – I thought perhaps I was not communicating very well. I moved on and asked him if there was a difference working with the superintendent and previous superintendent. He was quick to respond directly to the question. Clearly he felt this superintendent was willing to take risks. She was the first to address the issue of race even though he did not directly state it. He answered,

Definitely yes. She is not afraid to address the real issues in this county. She understands that there are sometimes two communities in this district. She works hard for all the children in our schools and treats them all the same. She wants what is best for our children like we all do.

While he did not mention gender as the possible reason for this difference in addressing the real issues clearly he thought her leadership was different due to her willingness to take risks. I next asked him about his trust in this superintendent. He responded simply, "Yes, things have been hard for a while but yes I do." Mr. Grigley would neither engage in conversation about his family nor his upbringing in Baldwin County. He did not want to share why he selected a career in the correctional field. In less than 20 minutes he had stated all he was going to tell me. I don't know why he was so guarded – I can only speculate that perhaps what I surmised as shyness was truly the case. I also knew there would be perceived risks in talking to a person from the university. Whatever the reason, based on observation and this conversation he did not have a close working relationship with this superintendent. All of his interactions with her were based on the functions of the job. Clearly all communication was low-quality thus this relationship was in the stranger phase. In regards to consolidation, Mr. Grigley made it clear in previous meetings he supported consolidation.

Wayne Walker – Inexperienced. The fourth school board member to take his place at the meeting was Mr. Wayne Walker. Mr. Walker was the youngest board member since he was a man in his mid-30s. He was always dressed in khaki pants and a polo-type short sleeve shirt. His hair was cut short and like Mr. Perkins, he was always clean-shaven. He had piercing blue eyes and a hawk-like nose. He was always friendly with the other board members but at times his shuffling through paperwork suggested that he was confused about what was going on. He was always quiet spoken but generally asked questions that were relevant to what was being discussed. He had served on the Board for three years. Mr. Walker was married with two small children. He and his wife were born and raised in Baldwin County. They attended the Baptist church in Sharpsville. He worked for elderly services while his wife stayed at home raising the children. I met his wife at the elementary school open house. She explained her hobby was woodworking and had the reputation as an accomplished artist. While Mr. Walker was quiet and reserved, Mrs. Walker was talkative and animated.

It was easy for me to gain access to Mr. Walker to secure an interview. Once again the first question I asked Mr. Walker was to characterize his working relationship with this superintendent. He responded, "I think it is really good. We are both born and raised here and we both know what the community needs for our children." I prompted him with the follow-up question of what was it like working with this superintendent. He responded,

Working with this superintendent has been good for me personally. When I first got on the school board I was hoping to be one of the positive people that would work for change and even though I don't agree with everything with this superintendent we always seem to work together again for the community.

Clearly his perception of the working relationship was that it is good. As before, I asked about previous superintendents. He confirmed what I already knew when he stated, "I have never worked with another superintendent. This is my first time on the school board." While Mr. Walker was new to the school board, I still needed to find out from him what formal and informal authority the superintendent had in her position in regards to him. Mr. Walker responded, "She always keeps me informed and agrees to my agenda items. Her notebooks are very helpful." To stay true to the protocol I asked him if there was a difference working with this superintendent and previous superintendents. While he told me he couldn't answer the question, he did share his perception of a woman's leadership, "I can't really answer this question but what I can tell you

when I compare my relationship here and working other women in my state job... this person is a leader and is very focused.” My final question to Mr. Walker was in regards to his trust of this superintendent. He stated,

Yes, I do but everybody on the school board must work together as a team and we cannot solely rely upon the superintendent for guidance. We must look into things on our own and visit the schools on our own to formulate our own opinions. Like the superintendent we are elected by the people in the district – we should be doing what is best for the people and not our own personal interests.

Mr. Walker was new to his job as a School Board member. I did see him at several of the schools during my observations, suggesting to me that he wanted to be involved as a school board member. While he attempted to answer all of my questions thoroughly, Mr. Walker’s answers confirmed his interactions with the superintendent exchanges were related to the function of his job. His low-quality exchanges with Betty Lou placed their relationship in the stranger phase. On the issue of consolidation, Mr. Walker was openly in support until the day of the Board meeting. Betty Lou later admitted he did not return her phone calls on the day they were to vote.

Steve Sanders – Hard worker. The next School Board member that entered the meeting was Mr. Steve Sanders. Mr. Sanders came in right before the meeting started. Typical of residents of Baldwin County, he had never been late for any other meeting. His tardiness left many spectators to question whether or not he would appear. Three people seating in front of me whispered to each other, “Do you think he is not coming?” One responded, “He’ll be here - to not show would be cowardly.” As everyone speculated, Mr. Sanders entered the courtroom and took his seat. Unlike the others he entered from the rear of the room. All the members were now in their seats and Mr. Grigley struck the gavel. The meeting began.

Mr. Sanders looked like a hard-working gentleman. He was a middle-aged man with a pot-belly. He was always dressed in blue jeans, a long-sleeved, button-down plaid shirt, and cowboy boots. He always had a day-old growth on his face and talked with a southern twang. Mr. Sanders addressed women by ma’am and spoke deliberately during the board meetings. Like the other board members, he was born and raised in Baldwin County. He was married with two children. He attended classes at a nearby junior college before he became a landscape engineer. He served on the board for 10 years and has been employed with the county for 25 years. He was a student of the present superintendent, and served on the board when she was a principal. He did

not hesitate to question me at my first board meeting. He wanted to know who I was and why I was there. Needless to say, I never felt comfortable in his presence. It was only after he agreed to an interview that my perception of him changed. Mr. Sanders was easy to contact and was very clear about his time schedule. He did not have to refer to a calendar to set up our appointment; he recalled from memory when he could be reached. He was unavailable on Wednesday nights and on Sundays because he went to church in Livingston. He was not available on Tuesday because he watched the kids so his wife could go to one of her meetings.

It was easy to talk with Mr. Sanders. He appeared to be very honest about what he thought. He took the time and had the patience to explain what he was trying to say. The first question I asked him was to characterize his working relationship with this superintendent. He replied, "It is good." I asked him what he thought it was like working with her, he responded,

I have been pleased. Not as pleased probably as with the other two, but I have a good working relationship with her. She and I don't agree on everything, and we don't see eye to eye on everything...but as far as a working relationship I have a good working relationship with her and I haven't had any major problems - I have had a couple concerns that I went and talked to her about and one of those concerns is not being informed as much sometimes as I think we as board members need to be. But she is new too and it is things that she has to learn...and shifting from a high school principal to a school superintendent I do give her the benefit of the doubt and know that she is in the learning mode too.

I asked him how he would characterize his working relationship with past superintendents. He replied,

Mr. Barnes was a very good superintendent and when I say that he was a very conservative but - very how should I say it - open to all the business going on in the schools. Always kept the school board members informed whether it was a little matter or a large matter. He never failed to let us know exactly what was going on if any incident happened or anything happened he didn't wait until meeting time to discuss it with us - he would always give us a call and let us know exactly what had happened and what was going on...and that we might get some calls on it or we might not - but he always kept us very informed. He was financially conservative – he was a very conservative school superintendent and did

a fantastic job. I enjoyed working with Mr. Dinkens. Mr. Dinkens wasn't quite as conservative as Mr. Barnes was - he done a good job on keeping us informed and keeping us up to date on things. Had a good working relationship with him I could actually probably – well I could talk to either one of them but I could talk to Mr. Dinkens on a day to day bases. He was always welcoming in his office and I enjoyed having a good working relationship with him. If there is anything that was a problem with Mr. Dinkens...he was too easy to get talked into things.

Constituents, employees, and all he was just a very giving person and sometimes when he should have said no he said yes...and I mean he and I have talked about that before. In some cases he was too good. I think you know he was just to the point that I really feel like that if he had got to serve another four years terms we could have seen lots of good things – Mr. Dinkens didn't get re-elected after his first term but in his defense about the time he got elected the 911 thing hit and money went to getting cut - and we went to having to shift money around and...it was just a rough three years there and then when it went to get leveled out where we could start doing things again then it come up time for him to get elected and then he did not get re-elected - so I think if he had gotten to serve a second term we would have seen some real good things out of Mr. Dinkens.

Mr. Sanders felt closer to the previous superintendents than he did with the present superintendent. He obviously valued a conservative approach to running the district as well as open lines of communication. The implication of these statements was that the present superintendent did not necessarily meet those expectations, which he explained as a lack of experience. He used national events to explain why Mr. Dinkens lost the election. He did not acknowledge Betty Lou's vast experience in the district. I asked him about the formal and informal authority of the present superintendent in regards to him. He stated,

The first couple years I was on the board – I was at the schools and I was calling constantly and then after I went to the orientation I found out as a school board member...that really it is not our job to do - we are to get our information from the superintendent but she was very good to always inform me if I went by to visit or to have any questions...she was always really good just like all of our principals have always been good to answer any questions we ever had...or if there is a new

building that went up or a new project going they would take us to see the new project...and have always been real nice and helpful when I would go by the schools.

Mr. Sanders saw the authority of the superintendent to be that of keeping him informed. This sense was further clarified when he answered the question in regards to the contrast between working with this superintendent and previous superintendent. He responded,

Well this is me speaking as a man. The men to me were more easy to sit down and reason things out and the lady is kind of...when she gets her mind made up it is that way or no way. Does that make sense? She is more headstrong and I don't really know if it has to do with the different type person or if it the woman and the man - but if I have noticed any difference that is the difference I have noticed – the two men superintendent and the things that I had to go talk about or go ask about...it was easier to reason things out and Ms. Hartford she is very good to sit down and talk to you, however, if she has got her mind made up - to me I have just left there thinking I didn't do anything to help change her mind.

Mr. Sanders was quick to state that he perceived a difference based on gender namely that the woman was “headstrong” and hard to reason with on certain matters. I asked him about his trust in this superintendent. He answered,

Yes, I do as a whole. So far I haven't had any reason not to trust her. One little thing we had come up that we was not informed about - that she made the decision to settle on - when I thought it was a board decision that should have been brought before the board - a special meeting should have been called - but out of the decision it was the right decision to make...and since then - and we had a good discussion about that - and she was...she apologized to all the board members and let us know that it wouldn't happen again, and so far has never happened again so I have – I don't have any reason not to trust her.

Mr. Sanders appeared to be honest in his responses to me. What he said validated what I saw in the meetings. He stated his mind and was clear about his opinions. He had thought about his relationship with this superintendent and voiced he was frustration with her reactions and stances. Their exchanges were low-quality and limited to their job functions. Their relationship

was at the stranger phase of development. Mr. Sanders, like Ms. Meltzer, was adamant on his stance against consolidation.

It appeared Betty Lou had the support she needed for a passing vote on consolidation from the Board. On the day of the meeting, she contacted each of the members to confirm their votes. Four of the members held true to their previous stance; only one, Mr. Walker did not return her phone calls. With two hours left before the board meeting, Betty Lou telephoned her mentor for input. Unbeknownst to all of us, Betty Lou changed tactics. She announced at the beginning of the agenda that there would be no vote that night. She read the following statement,

I am concerned about the continued controversy and divisive nature of this issue. Rather than continue to divide this community, we need to build a consensus that meets the education needs of all the students in Baldwin County. Therefore, I am removing this item from the agenda. I will immediately appoint a diversely populated task force to review all data and research pertaining to the issue. The task force will address the economic, curriculum and social issues facing this district and the generations to come. All of the meetings will be advertised and open to the public. Tonight, if the Board wishes, we are prepared to listen to anyone who wants to provide us with input or areas that the task force needs to address. We will agenda this item at a future date. I appreciate the openness, candor, and intensity that the members of this community have expressed over this issue. I know that everyone has the students' best interests at heart.

There were audible gasps. Several of the people sitting around me wanted to know what had happened. One young man commented that someone had gotten to Betty Lou. However, one woman sitting in front of me guessed that one of the Board members had changed his vote. I later found out Mr. Walker changed his vote due to the pressure his family received from outspoken citizens in the community. Betty Lou's decision to table the consolidation vote was quite simple: she was not willing to risk her career for the vote of the School Board. The next portion of this section reveals Betty Lou's perspective of her relationship with the members of the School Board.

Betty Lou's Perspective

Betty Lou would not talk about individual members of the Board. I had to rely on data gathered from my observations of her interactions with these individuals and her comments on the Board as a whole. While state law prohibits Board members from contacting each other, the same

was not true for the superintendent. Betty Lou was in constant telephone contact with the School Board members. Each day I observed her she was either making phone calls to or receiving phone calls from the members. She prepared and delivered notebooks to each member in preparation for the monthly meetings. She also kept members abreast of events in the district. For example, she notified all members immediately of the time and location for the state playoff athletic events. She also notified them when two students in the alternative school were found in a compromising position in one of the school's bathrooms. She was quick to notify the members when the district received a grant from the Department of Education. Betty Lou also cleared her calendar if a Board member wanted to come in and visit with her.

When I asked her about her perception of the Board members, Betty Lou responded, "I respect each board member and the job they are trying to accomplish." However, it was with Betty Lou's insistence the Board members began the process of national certification. She was also the one to arrange a training session on Robert's Rules of Order. While Betty Lou admitted her respect for the members, she was not as clear in regards to her trust.

Her perceptions confirmed the data I collected from observations and documents. Her individual relationships with members of the Board were based on the functions of their jobs. While the Board members and Betty Lou shared the same organizational goals each protected their self-interest in terms of their political goals for re-election. Exchanges were low-quality, which placed her relationship with the members at the stranger phase. This was difficult for me to reconcile, I assumed since these individuals had personal knowledge of each other their professional relationships would translate into a high phase. My preconceived notions of work in a small rural district were quickly challenged.

Conclusion

The following conclusions were based on the analysis and interpretation of collected data for this section of the study. The relationships between Betty Lou and the School Board members were as follows:

- A. The School Board members perceived their relationships with Betty Lou to be a function of their jobs. Data supported each viewed their exchanges as low-quality and prescribe by organizational routines. All admitted their trust in this superintendent but indicated current issues in the district strained their relationships. In addition, the political nature of their positions required the members to place their self-preservation

over current district goals. Analysis and interpretation of the data supported the finding these relationships were in the stranger phase of relationship building.

- B. Betty Lou perceived her exchanges with the School Board members to be low-quality and closely regulated by the confines of the job descriptions. Analysis and interpretation of the data supported Betty Lou's perception of low-quality exchanges associated with the stranger phase of relationship building.
- C. All members of the Board perceived a difference between Betty Lou's leadership and the previous superintendents. Members used words such as strong, focused, and headstrong to describe Betty Lou's leadership. One member stated gender made a difference because a woman could see a different side of things. Another indicated Betty Lou understood feelings and her heart was in the right place. One admitted his frustration with her because he felt like she always had her mind made up and would not listen.

The next section presented the findings on the relationships between Betty Lou and the central office administrators. Findings were presented along the three themes of the study: relationships, job performance, and trust. First, the data on the central office administrators' perspectives was presented. Second, the data on Betty Lou's perspectives was presented. Finally, the conclusions based on the analysis and interpretation of the data was presented.

Betty Lou and the Central Office Administrators

Introduction

The purpose of this section was to describe the relationships between Betty Lou and the central office administrators. Each administrator was interviewed to triangulate data collected through observations and collected documents. These data were then coded and analyzed to develop an understanding of these relationships from each administrator's perspective as well as from Betty Lou's perspective.

My first encounter with the individuals who comprise the central office administration was at the first School Board meeting I observed. While I did not know whom these individuals were the man seated next to me identified each person with each corresponding job function. He also gave me each person's family background and how they were "all tied together." I hurriedly wrote down his overview of these key individuals in the district because he said, "I've known them all my life." I learned that it was not unusual to find individuals who, though they were not

associated with the school system, were able to give minute details about individuals within the system.

The six positions that comprised the central office administrators were Assistant Superintendent, Chief Financial Officer, Director of Assessment, Director of Auxiliary Programs, Director of Related Services, and Director of Maintenance. The offices for the Assistant Superintendent and the Chief Financial Officer were located in the Superintendent's Office in the basement of the county courthouse. The offices for the Director of Assessment, Director of Auxiliary Programs, and Director of Related Services were housed in a separate building known locally as the White House. This office building was a two story white house that was located approximately three blocks from the county courthouse. Together, the three administrators shared one administrative assistant. The Director of Maintenance was located in his own office building on the high school property.

The location of these offices immediately identified what had been historically viewed as the most important jobs within the district office staff. Within the superintendent's office the Assistant Superintendent's office was located off the reception area, and was clearly visible to all who entered the office. The Chief Financial Officer was located down a hallway where she and her staff of six women occupied a room cut into offices by bookshelves and temporary walls. I noted several times in my observation log I had the feeling I was in a rat's maze every time I went back into that space. The area was packed with notebooks, folders, and filing cabinets. I noted there was no space for any additional equipment. Since the desks were so close together, individual staff members had to be mindful of the person sitting just a few feet away from them. I always observed the same behaviors – quiet telephone conversations and intense concentration on work before them.

The Directors in the White House occupied individual rooms within the facility. The Director of Related Services was located on the ground floor next to the entrance door in what use to be the dining room, the Director of Auxiliary Programs was located upstairs in a former bedroom that occupied half of the upstairs, and the Director of Assessment was located downstairs in the formal living room with the Administrative Assistant in the foyer area. The house was old and visibly in need of repair. Walking in the house was much like walking in any old house; the wooden floors creaked every time someone moved around. I noted to myself how distracting the creaking noise was during the interviews and observations. Every time I was at the

White House I noted maintenance workers were present. One memo included a line that the bathroom could not be used on the day I visited. The next time I was in the building the electricity went on and off numerous times during the three-hour visit. Audible groans were heard each time the electricity cut off because the situation adversely affected the computers. Yet another time, maintenance workers were working on the sagging front steps making it difficult to hear what was being said. Each of the Directors took the difficulties in stride and continued as if nothing had occurred. Like the Chief Financial Officer's suite, what impressed me each time I entered the White House was the large amount of paperwork and the lack of office space.

All of the offices revealed the same decorating sense – whatever was available was used. All contained furniture and chairs that revealed colors that I can only imagine were used in the 70s. Interior decorating had never been an expense item in this district. Coming from a central office, I expected to see the finery of the district revealed in these offices but I quickly realized these administrators made do with what was available and did not complain. Each was grateful for what they had – in spite of old pieces of furniture, all appeared to be clean and neatly organized.

Much like the office spaces they inhabited, these individuals' days were packed with details that competed for their attention. Each administrator wore many hats, since as each explained, "this is such a small district and we don't have a lot of money." Job descriptions were complex and long. Each administrator took out a piece of paper to list all their responsibilities and job functions. These people worked hard and consistently indicated there was simply not enough time in the day to do all that needed to be done – not to complain, but just to state how they felt.

The next section presents the findings on the relationships between each central office administrator and Betty Lou. These findings were based on the analysis and interpretation of data collected through interviews, observations, and documents. Embedded in the findings are the three themes of relationship with the superintendent, job performance, and trust. The concluding portion of this section discloses the findings on Betty Lou's perspective of her relationship with these administrators.

Baldwell County Central Office Administrators

Kevin Burnett – Heir Apparent. The first person I met within the central office administrators was the heir apparent of the superintendency, Mr. Kevin Burnett. Mr. Burnett had a huge set of bullhorns hanging in his office behind his desk. I asked him about the set of horns and he replied, "One of my students brought them back from Mexico for me." That was the extent

of his answer to my question. Mr. Burnett was a man of few words but had a certain gentleness about him. He was a big man, appearing to be in his late 50s. He had a handle bar mustache that he kept trimmed and neat. He had silver gray hair and had to put on his glasses to read a document. He readily admitted that he would rather be “hunting and fishing than sitting behind a desk.” His family was one of the founding settlers in the Livingston area. He easily recalled when mules were the mode of transportation and the reason the local highways took so many curves was because “they use to be the paths used by the cattle.” He effortlessly recounted how his grandmother cleaned the front porch of her house “with a corncob broom and lye soap. She would scrub that porch so clean that you could eat off of it.” He also admitted, “I am the first in my family to have to leave the land in order to earn a living. My people never had to work for anybody but themselves.”

Mr. Burnett was a proud man and quickly related that he came from a family of farmers. He was born and raised in Baldwin County. He attended the local junior college before he studied agriculture at a state university more than three hours away. He completed his upper division studies in less than two years and earned a degree in agriculture. Rather than going to work for a large chemical company, he returned home to become an agriculture teacher at the local K-12 school. He later obtained a master’s degree in leadership from an extension campus of a local university. Mr. Burnett has worked in the district for 31 years.

Superintendent Brad Barnes, his neighbor and friend, hired him for his present position 10 years ago. He said that he should have run for the superintendency in 2000 but decided against it because, “I didn’t want the headaches.” Mr. Burnett was married and had two grown daughters. One of his daughters returned to Baldwin County and lived on property that belonged to the family. His other daughter was away at college and he doubted she would return. Mr. Burnett stated he has known the present superintendent since they were children and attended high school together.

Mr. Burnett wielded a lot of influence in the community. His job description included supervision of certification, school lunch program, FTE, vocational programs, transportation department, facilities and maintenance, GED program, food safety trainer, fingerprinting, textbooks, substitute teachers, county-wide spelling bee coordinator, purchaser (vehicles, mowers, portables, paper products, and home school contact. What I noticed immediately was that everyone deferred to him during meetings – it appeared he was the resident historian and

parliamentarian. If he said something was so, it was accepted as fact and never questioned. Since his office was located off the reception area he saw and heard everything that went on in the superintendent's office. He was easy to get in touch with for setting up an appointment. He moved our interview from his office to the school board meeting room to make it easier for me to take notes. He was the only administrator to make such a gesture. He quickly pointed out that his wife worked in the office as well and was on the other side of the wall, "probably listening to everything we say and do."

The interview began with my asking Mr. Burnett about his relationship with this superintendent. I asked him to characterize his working relationship with her. He answered,

Very good. We are very open and honest and we said that on the day she came here...and I said we are going to have to be honest with each other and have to look out for each other and watch out for things...and I'm going to have to be able to say things as I see because a lot of this work is for the district and the kids. She agreed 100 percent and that is the way we have been able to do it. We have to say whatever needs to be said – I might say you better be careful here, so she is very receptive of that - and I feel like I can say anything to her. She knows I am trying to help in that way. I don't have an agenda – I'm just trying to run ahead and run interference.

Based on the guarded responses from the School Board members, I was surprised at the length and depth of this first answer. It was important to him that his working relationship with the superintendent was honest and supportive from the beginning. In fact he admitted he set the parameters for the working relationship. He found it important to gather information for the superintendent and relay that information to her. Interestingly, he felt a lot of his work, rather than all of it, was for the district and kids. I next asked him what it was like to work for this superintendent. He responded, "It is fine. I have known her since I was in the 9th grade so I know her." I asked him how he would characterize his working relationship with past superintendents. I thought he would go into more details with this answer since I had seen him demonstrate his vast historical knowledge of the system, but he gave only a guarded response. He indicated,

Same way – all three. I was very fortunate – you know with some people it is not that way but all three would listen to me...and they knew I was trying to help and I

wasn't trying to make a name for myself or anything...I was just trying to help.

They honestly listened and would try to do things to help the school district.

Mr. Burnett viewed his working relationship with Betty Lou as the same as those of past superintendents. This appeared to contradict the statement he was a personal friend of one superintendent and, in fact, his friend hired him for his present position. I asked him what type of formal and informal authority the present superintendent had in her position in regards to him. He answered straightforward, "She is my supervisor, and I respect the position she is in." To determine how closely they worked together, I asked him if this superintendent had ever used her power to help him solve a problem in his work. This answer was a little more detailed. He responded,

Oh yes, several times...I've said I cannot - but if you want me to - you will have more clout. I can call so and so if you want me to, but your word as superintendent is going to carry more weight than mine. I have done that several times. As far as my use of my power within the district I always say - they would listen to me and understand - but I always make sure to say that I will have to check with the superintendent further or let me check with Ms. Hartford before we do this - even though we made the deal I would say - now that we have decided let me check with Ms. Hartford and she if she has a problem with that ...I always make sure there is a separation there that I'm not dictating - let me check with Ms. Hartford and make sure it is alright or something like that. There are many, many people that come into this office that don't want to talk to me - they go...they want to talk to her - she is the boss - that has been with all three of them. They usually - especially with problems.

Mr. Burnett saw a hierarchical order to their relationship. She was his boss and he knew not to overtly cross that line of authority; however, he pointed out he would make "a deal" and then run it by Betty Lou. I wanted to find out if this was true of his previous experience with other superintendents, so I asked him if there was a difference working with this superintendent and previous superintendents. He said,

There is differences in just - you know - men and women are different and think differently but as far as professionally - I really don't see much difference - we have the decorations but literally there is difference in that way but as far as

professional I'm – not that much difference, really. They are all different personalities.

Mr. Burnett admitted he saw no difference in his working relationships; however he articulated gender did have an impact since men and women think differently. He also commented on the changes in the office décor. While I observed Mr. Burnett to be quite affable with others before meetings, he never approached the superintendent to engage in small talk. Any exchanges I overheard were strictly focused on the business at hand.

The next series of questions focused on job performance. I wanted to know if he knew how satisfied the superintendent was with what he did. He responded,

I think she thinks I do it alright – I know she depends on my experience a lot and she asks me a lot – my opinion on what we need to do – I think she values me – that is my experience and my judgment. We never really talk about that much about evaluation type thing but I really feel like if I wasn't doing what needed to be done I think she would tell me. I really do.

Mr. Burnett was unable to give a definite answer to her level of satisfaction with his work. He recognized her dependence on his experience and knowledge but outside the formal evaluation process he was unable to gauge her perception of his work. I asked him if this superintendent understood his job problems and needs. He stated,

Yes. If there are problems that we need to do something different or something has changed...basically if I think we need something – I try to make her understand – she would get something to help in my position – some duties assigned somewhere else – I think some of it you are just simply complaining to a co-worker – like Jessica Lunsford is gonna put a tremendous burden on me – a tremendous burden on me and she knows it.

When I asked him how well this superintendent recognized his potential he stated, Yes I think so. I was here when she got here but I think she did. Yes I believe she does. Well...with Ms. Hartford when she came in...she said she was going to evaluate everyone including me for six months which you would expect – you know to see if everything fit and there were no problem with egos and - or with confidence for that matter.

Mr. Burnett admitted he tried to make Betty Lou understand his job problems and needs. It appeared he was confident enough in his present position as assistant superintendent to complain to her as a co-worker. I next asked him about his trust in this superintendent. He responded,

Sure. I feel I can say anything I want in that office...like I could say I would rather you not mention that because I don't think it will go anywhere – yeah, I tell her things that I think she needs to know that I hear and I tell her to please don't say anything – I don't know if it is true – she feels like I think that she can tell me and it doesn't leave that office. We all agree that we all need to be able to say things to each other and it doesn't go anywhere...and you understand that I am not doing for my ego- making points for me it will hurt the district if we don't do this right. I think she feels exactly the same way. We are not doing it for any other reason – we have to do the job – we have to take care of the job and we have to trust each other to do that. I feel like she trusts me as I do trust her. I believe she is a woman of her word and she is honest about it and I just trust her. Handshake is better than a contract. But not with everybody – not with everybody.

Obviously he trusts her more than he trusts other people but it appeared a lot of that trust was due to her position. He believed her to be honest because she appeared to be a woman of her word. While he did not give any examples, it appeared to him he could trust her not to harm the district in any way. I pressed on with whether or not he had enough confidence in this superintendent to defend and justify her decisions even if she were not present. He answered,

Yes. I don't – she's got savvy enough she is not going to say anything stupid and even if she did – there may be a miscommunication there now – that doesn't sound like her – I think there may be a misunderstanding here or something but the only way we can find out is to talk to her. That is how I would handle something like that. But I think she is savvy enough she is not going to say anything that may be considered dumb or off cut and not make sense. There is a strain in this office due to the consolidation issue but people have been civilized and talk about it. It has not split up the office.

Mr. Burnett appeared to be saying he would defend her decisions by using the statement there was a miscommunication. Mr. Burnett was loyal to his position and the district he served.

He was very knowledgeable and experienced, which was apparent in all my observations; however, his exchanges with the superintendent were job-related and thus fell within the range of low-quality. His relationship with the superintendent fell along the stranger phase. This analysis and interpretation was supported by an incident I witnessed at a luncheon held at Mt. Vernon Comprehensive School. I saw Mr. Burnett appear at the doorway of the dining room. Betty Lou and I were seated among a group of parents and teachers in clear view of the doorway. The room was not crowded; there was approximately 20 people seated at five round tables. Mr. Burnett walked next to our table on his way to the kitchen area. As he entered the room and I waved. He nodded back to me and proceeded towards the kitchen. He did not stop to speak to Betty Lou and Betty Lou did not speak to him. I thought it was odd until I realized we were seated next to individuals who were opponents to the consolidation. This incident supported my analysis of their low-quality exchanges based on the functions of their jobs. Their relationship was in the stranger phase.

Gladys Gavin – Legislator’s Daughter. The next administrator I interviewed was Ms. Gladys Gavin, the Chief Financial Officer. Her responsibilities included the supervision of payroll, personnel, insurance, risk management, federal projects, accounts payable, journal entries, and computerized financial accounting system. Ms. Gladys Gavin was a petite, middle-aged woman with short black hair and glasses. She looked like the type of person you would find working either in a library, bookstore, or accounting. She was very quiet and hard to engage in conversation. Since she was the Chief Finance Officer for the district, she carried a lot of authority at the meetings I observed. All the principals commented she was one of the individuals they counted on the most. If Mr. Burnett was the historian for the district, Ms. Gavin was the financial guru.

Ms. Gavin was married with no children. She was born and raised in Baldwell County. Her grandfather was a state legislator and school board attorney. Her family was one of the founding settlers that established one of the local Christian churches. Nevertheless, she was an active member of the Baptist church in Sharpsville. She attended the local junior college, then transferred to a university located four hours south of Baldwell County. Her husband’s family was prominent in the community and for years owned the only automobile dealership. She worked in the district for 29 years. She was an elementary school teacher prior to assuming a position in the district’s finance department. Superintendent Steve Smith appointed her into the department 22

years ago. Unlike the other administrators she was never a principal or assistant principal. Furthermore, she did not have a degree above a Bachelor's degree. She had experience outside the school system in accounting, which made her a candidate for a position in the finance department. She did volunteer work in the department over the summers, which she attributed to her getting the job because, as she said, "I was willing to work and help them out." She has known the present superintendent since childhood and admitted Betty Lou's sister was a member of her wedding party.

Ms. Gavin's interview lasted over an hour. While she was reserved, she was willing to share her perspective. I found her to be engaging and interesting as the interview progressed. Later as I observed her, I realized the person I observed was not the same person I interviewed. She definitely has a professional persona and a private persona. It was apparent to me she felt more comfortable in the intimate setting of our conversation. Like Mr. Burnett, I conducted the interview in the school board meeting room since she did not have an office per se. Her office was located in the same area as the other six individuals in her department. It was separated from the others by three bookcases and a credenza. She had no privacy. Her workspace projected no ego and gave no indication of the authority she carried in the district.

I asked Ms. Gavin to characterize her working relationship with this superintendent. She responded, "Extremely good. We were in high school at the same time. I was a senior and she was a freshman I think – she is younger than I am. Her sister was in my wedding." It was apparent from her answer that she had known the superintendent for many years and felt it impacted their working relationship. I asked her what it was like working for this superintendent. She responded, "She is very energetic and very focused on her goals. But she – I guess "her goals" is the best way to say it...what she thinks needs doing or needs changing or she wants to see – she is focused on that."

Ms. Gavin explained her working relationship with Betty Lou in terms her focus on her goals for the district. I asked Ms. Gavin to characterize her working relationship with past superintendents. She went into more detail and revealed more about herself in this response. She answered,

Now, Mr. Smith was one of those hands on – he knew everything – he was the one that really brought the district out of the red. But we had a good working relationship and still have a good relationship I go to church with him. He was

hands-on – and you see they were already out of the red before I got here because he was superintendent 20 years and I didn't come until like his last three or four maybe four years I guess. But he did it through being frugal. Made everybody check prices – you know little things. And that mindset still goes on today – I mean it doesn't matter if we are going to buy something small as a tape recorder like we are using – I mean people even though we have a limit they have to get quotes on – it doesn't matter how small they encourage them to look in two or three places to make sure you are getting the lowest price...but the best quality - we don't try and skimp that way but he was very hands on with that. If somebody bought something – picked up the phone and called it and didn't get a purchase order - he expected them to pay it out of their pocket. I mean he was very strict on that – he just used good financial management.

Mr. Jones worked as the assistant superintendent under Mr. Smith for a while, not all his time but part of his time right at the last couple of years. And so, yes, it was just like a mindset with everybody and most of the ladies in my office worked under Mr. Smith too. There is only – well all of them did...because the one that came from the school was the secretary at the school during his time so see they all have been through all the superintendents too.

Mr. Barnes was extremely conservative so...and he is Mr. Smith's nephew. You may not know that. He was not as hands on as Mr. Smith, he left...I guess I could say he left more of it to me – the detail end of it. I have to say that Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones were probably more detailed; of course, I wasn't in this office either until Mr. Barnes took over but I was an assistant. I became an assistant when Mr. Jones was in office. They actually – I don't remember – I hate to tell you with Mr. Smith – so I was involved in that side of it and Mr. Jones – I think we did more of the detail after he became superintendent – he wasn't but he was very much hands on because his wife was finance officer too. But he let us do some of it that Mr. Smith had always done himself. And then when Mr. Barnes came in it was – pretty much okay – you do it. So that was kind of the evolution through the three. Mr. Dinkens was very much just...you do your job and I trust you just do it and do it right – and not as hands on. But was very supportive.

This was the first conversation I had with an individual in the district who laid out the heir apparent system of the superintendency. It was not an accident all the previous superintendents lived Livingston and two were related. Mr. Smith, Mr. Jones, and Mr. Barnes had created a dynasty in their appointment of the Assistant Superintendent. I understood it was a turning point in this system when Mr. Burnett decided not to run. He, in essence, had broken the system. Surely that was part of the reason he was reluctant to speak about the past superintendents, even though I sensed he was closer than he was revealing. At the same time, I realized Mr. Dinkens might have won the first election against Betty Lou but that he lost the respect of the administrative team because he was not like the previous superintendents. I later learn this discontent was felt all the way to the teachers' ranks. I continued my questions concerning Mrs. Gavin's perception of her relationship with the superintendent. I asked her what type of formal and informal authority this superintendent had in regard to her. Her answer was detailed and revealed more about her perception of those who sat in the superintendent's office. She replied,

I report to her and answer any question she may have before she makes a decision. You know every superintendent is different and you think and every time you change you are going what – all right there is going to be some adjustments but – that thought has never – the thought always crosses your mind because as administrators we are on annual contracts – they could get rid of us but I have to say all the superintendents...usually when they are running they will call you and say - don't worry and they will all tell you – hey, everybody tells me don't ever mess with these office people. And it is good advice but it is like I have always and the staff we all – we have always – whoever the superintendent is we are going to support 'em. That is the thing – we are in there to do our job so they don't have to worry about our end – they have way more to worry about and I don't see why anybody wants ever wants to be superintendent. I have no clue and that is what I tell them all and I have seen two of them have health problems and you know I worry about them from that standpoint I have to tell them this is not the be all and end all of everything. It is a job don't forever forget that and but I guess – I know I have gone kind of around here but it goes back to that communication and that trust. I have never thought about no I couldn't and quit.

Ms. Gavin addressed the apparent hierarchical order in the system. Superintendents were the elected leaders for the district but candidates for the position always sought the central office administrators' support. She alluded to their power when she stated candidates for the office realized they did not want to "mess with them." She was loyal to the occupant of the superintendent's office. I next asked if this superintendent had ever used her power to help her solve problems in her work. She answered, "When we are having meetings with the school board she will always let me know what is going to be discussed so I can be prepared. She lets me know ahead of time what is going on. She always keeps the staff informed so I don't have to all the time." Ms. Gavin valued the communication between the superintendent and her staff especially in preparation of Board meetings. I asked her if there was a difference working with this superintendent and the previous ones. Her response highlighted that one of the differences was gender. In her opinion, women had to work harder than men. She also believed Betty Lou was scrutinized more as a superintendent because she was a woman in a position previously defined by male leadership. She stated,

I think most females feel like that they have to go over and above what a male in that same leadership position has to do because there – and I am not feminist and all – but I think that they just feel like all eyes are on you because you are sitting in a position that has been held by a male. And people are just looking at you differently – okay, now we have this male for so many years let's see what this female can do – especially since this is the first one this county has ever had – so you are like up on this pedestal – all right now, let's see what is going to happen and so I think that just because of that you feel like you are always on display – everybody is always watching what you are doing – always - more critically not necessarily to criticize but just more critically to see – oh are you going to stumble and that you just have to go above and beyond and do more than a male would have to – that is just part of it – that is.

I next questioned her in the area of job performance. I asked her how satisfied this superintendent was with what she did as the Chief Financial Officer. She answered,

As far as I know, yes. Evaluation...she had nice comments on the evaluation and just our communication all the time. Well, we have always been real honest and I tell her all along if you want me to something different, if you are not satisfied with

something I do please tell me and you know we keep that interaction going a lot. I am just one to let me know if I need to do something different if I am not doing something you want me to do and I try to be real honest with her when we started. I would say things don't ever ask me for a figure off the top of my head because I said I can't do that - that is not my strong suit I look at too many figures every day and I said I'm always - I always have to go look it up don't ever ask me I am just not one of those people that can do that.

Ms. Gavin relied on the formal job evaluation process to inform her about the superintendent's perception of her job performance. I asked her how well this superintendent understood her job problems and needs. She answered,

She does. She is a real intuitive person - I mean just her nature she takes the time to ask she takes the time to come back in the office and visit with the ladies they feel real free to go to her and talk to her just that interaction that communication. She and I talk a lot. You probably have seen that - we do we communicate a lot just in little things. We just do that but I have done that - I did the same thing with all of them - with the men too. That has not changed.

Communication was important to Ms. Gavin, and she equated communication with understanding. On one hand, she indicated that Betty Lou was intuitive and explained that meant she was open and approachable. On the other hand, she clarified this same level of communication and openness was apparent with all of the superintendents thus indicating her perception her relationship with this superintendent was no different than the others. I asked her how well this superintendent recognized her potential. I expected this answer to be long and detailed based on the behaviors I had observed at the School Board meetings. After all, Betty Lou and members of the Board deferred to her on numerous occasions for input on financial and personnel matters. I was surprised at her short response. She stated, "She knows I understand my job, and will do whatever it takes to get the job done and get it done right. She knows I am not afraid to call and ask questions until I have a complete understanding."

I moved on to the next area of questioning. I asked her about her trust in this superintendent. She answered,

Yes, I trust her. It is always been like that...it has never been a mistrust - and I talk to the superintendent and board members all along and I thank them - Gee, I

appreciate all you do and your support of my office and me and I do...and I tell them regularly because they do and I think it is the same of the superintendent - it is just that trust and concern. We have never had one...treat us in a way that would make you not want to be loyal. I need to say it that way. We've never had one they have always been supportive of us.

It is clear in this statement that Ms. Gavin equated trust with loyalty. She stated her trust in the present superintendent but went further to indicate she had the same level of trust with all of the superintendents. Indeed, to her all the superintendents were supportive, thus she had trust in them. I asked one last question to ascertain if there was a difference in her perception of this superintendent and the previous ones. I asked her if she had enough confidence to defend and justify this superintendent's decisions even if she were not present to do so. Mrs. Gavin stated,

Yes. If... I mean if they ask my opinion I will usually tell them. If it ...I mean I feel like they have decided to run for that office I mean there is going to be decision I don't agree with me - any two people are never going to totally agree but if I saw that I thought it was going to ... harm the district in some way or harm them you know I might very likely say just because I care ... I feel this way but I'm not going to agree with everything they do. No I'm going - and a statement I made and I did to Ms. Hartford when she came in our job is not to let you be blindsided. That is the philosophy we go by in here. I mean that is our job to us we have our jobs to do but one of them is to watch out for the superintendent and if we know something that we feel is going them we tell them. That is loyalty and caring. We don't have to do that is not on the job description but we try to do it.

Based on the answers Ms. Gavin gave in her interview, I realized the turnover in superintendents had little impact on her and the way she perceived her job. This security in longevity made her feel comfortable with whoever was in the superintendent's office. This level of comfort, however, should not be confused with a higher-quality relationship with the present superintendent. Although she had known Betty Lou for a long time her exchanges were low-quality and defined by their jobs. For example, during one of my visits Betty Lou and I were working on a report at the conference table in the Board room. Betty Lou was called away to answer a phone call from her mother. She returned to the table visibly upset by the conversation, and for a brief moment I saw a very fragile woman carrying a tremendous load on her shoulder.

As she was drying her eyes, Ms. Gavin walked in to ask a question. Rather than walking out and returning later after Betty Lou composed herself, Ms. Gavin persisted with her question and even argued against Betty Lou's response. Although Ms. Gavin respected the position, it appeared to me she lost sight of the individual in the office. Yes, Mrs. Gavin recognized the hardship these individuals endured and she believed she had to be supportive, but that extension of humane treatment still remained within the realm of stranger phase. After all, she was willing to offer the same support and treatment to any person who occupied the position.

Beatrice Potter – Prominence by Marriage. The next administrator I interviewed was Mrs. Beatrice Potter, the Director of Assessment. Her job included the supervision of PK-12 curriculum and instruction, grants management, technology, professional development, school improvement, SACS, volunteer coordinator, assessment, and beginning teacher program.

Beatrice, as she wanted to be called, was 65 years old but looked like she was in her early 50s. Talking to Beatrice was like being on a circus ride. I never knew if she really understood my questions, and I never really knew when she had finished her answer. I was not surprised by this behavior; after all, Beatrice could make a 10-minute presentation last for 30 minutes during an administrator meeting. One of the principals remarked, "I always know a meeting will last more than an hour if Beatrice is presenting." Although she loved to talk and could absolutely leave you breathless after one question, Beatrice appeared to be a soft and warm-hearted person. It was not a surprise to me when she revealed she was married and had three children. She was very active in the Baptist church located in Sharpsville. She was quick to point out she loved staying home and raising her children but wanted a profession because she knew one day "the children would leave me." She was born and raised in a neighboring county. She moved to Baldwin County when she married the local pharmacist. She married into one of the prominent families in the county. In fact, the courthouse was dedicated to her father-in-law. People were quick to point out to me one additional fact – her son was a medical doctor. She received her undergraduate degree from a nearby university and received her Master's degree in Educational Leadership with a cohort from a university that held classes in the school district. She worked in the district for 32 years. She was an elementary teacher prior to becoming an assistant principal. Superintendent Brad Barnes hired her into her present position seven years ago. She has known the present superintendent all her life. She recalled seeing Betty Lou come into her husband's store in search of her father. She

told me, “I always knew she would amount to something. She was such a driven little girl – always so serious.”

Beatrice and I had scheduled our interview well in advance. The morning of the interview I went to the courthouse early to set up. I waited for her 15 minutes beyond our scheduled time before I went to Bonnie, the receptionist to find out if she knew where Beatrice was that morning. She didn’t know and so began our pursuit of each other. As it turned out, Beatrice was waiting for me at the White House while I was waiting for her at the courthouse. I expected her to reschedule our interview but she insisted she could clear her schedule for me. I was grateful to her for allowing me the time to talk to her. As we talked for over an hour, I was breathless trying to keep up. Just as in the other interviews, I asked her how she would characterize her working relationship with this superintendent. She answered simply, “It is good.” Amazed at the short answer, I pressed on and asked her what it was like to work for this superintendent. Again I got a short answer. She responded,

Well, this job is very demanding and a lot has to do with this being such a small district but some has to do with the demands of Ms. Hartford. You know she only wants the best for our children but sometimes it is hard to meet all her demands.

Based on my own experience in the central office and reading between the lines, I believe she was telling me this was a very difficult job and that what made it so difficult was that she had a demanding boss. Although she cushioned her reply, she was still letting me know that in this high stakes environment her already stressful job was being compounded by the demands of the superintendent. To see whether I was interpreting her statement correctly, I pressed on and asked her to characterize her working relationship with past superintendents. She stated,

I have had a good relationship with all of them and I have – in a small community you know everybody and in fact Mr. Smith was in our church – so I knew him from church a strong, fine Christian man a good man and he really brought our district out of the kinks. We had kind of been had different leaders and some of them had not been as strong but he came and put us on a financially fiscal strong bases and academic. His wife was in the educational system and he is just I have high regard for him too – I still have high regard for him too. I feel like he got us started on the right path and then our next superintendent Mr. James Jones he was one of the deacon’s in the church and they a couple of friends of ours. So I felt and

his wife was the finance officer she was a lady finance officer under Mr. Smith before he got into office and he was very good a quite leader. Mr. Smith was more vocal – but Mr. Smith had set up things and somebody else could come in and quietly lead and that is kind of how Mr. Jones and then Mr. Barnes – he was only a one term and Mr. Jones was two terms and Mr. Barnes only did the one term. They were both strong, quiet leaders. You felt like you could go – I never felt that I could not approach any of them – I felt they were all very approachable and we have just been blessed with that. And then Mr. Barnes only stayed the one term – I think he would have stayed longer but his father's health was poor – his wife was getting ready to do something different and I think he just felt it was time and I think it was. The stress level was getting more and more. I think he has not been disappointed with what he did but like I said he is my special Mr. Barnes. I don't even know if he knows it – in my life before I get totally retarded and pass on I want to sit down and compose a letter to him just telling him what he has meant to me because he really can't know what all he has meant to me. Mr. Dinkens is a personal friend – his wife was my best friend. She passed away before he ran for office with cancer. And that was very emotionally hard for him. A good-hearted man did not have the background that all the others did really. He had been out of education in the business field and came back and taught again and decided to run. He won and I think everyone was a little surprise when he ran and not that he did anything terrible he was not a strong leader but he had good strong folks that he relied on and he let them – he pretty much let the folks running it we kept informed – he wanted to be informed and we did. He was a more hands off and let my folks that know their business run it that was kind of his philosophy. But nothing terrible happened while he was here – we were fortunate like I said I think we had strong leaders and they continued on as professionals as they should with whomever is in power – you should do our job and I think they did so anyway that how he led that was his leadership style and of course he was only in for one term and he and Ms. Hartford had run against each other with a pool of several – it was so funny there was four or five of them and they were all personal friends. Three of the four were in our church.

Beatrice was clearly closely connected to leaders of the school district. She was the first to indicate that her church has been a common element that bound the community of leaders together. Although Betty Lou was demanding, it was clear Beatrice was concerned over the leadership of Mr. Dinkens. She felt fortunate that the district was able to survive his relaxed leadership without apparent harm; however, as the stakes continued to rise in the state, Betty Lou pressured Beatrice to bring in fresh ideas and programs to elevate the learning in the district.

I next asked her what type of formal and informal authority the superintendent had in her present position in regards to her. She again answered simply, “She is my supervisor.” I was beginning to worry because the person I had seen at meetings went into great detail, but Beatrice’s answers at this moment were sparse and succinct. I pushed on with the next question regarding the superintendent’s use of power. Again she gave a short answer. She answered, “We needed her help in getting a grant through – a big grant and she stopped what she was doing to help us by calling the people and talking with them for I don’t know several hours. She does that sort of thing all the time. She wants us to have the best and give our children the best.”

I stopped asking questions for a few moments to let her answer sink in before I proceeded. Clearly there was something going on here that I was not recognizing. So, I asked her if there was a difference working with this superintendent and previous ones. She responded,

Well, I am just going to tell you. Women are more detailed-oriented. That is one thing. And I think women sometimes tend to be more intense. Those two things and she is that – Mr. Dinkens was a laid back person where she is not now - the other three superintendents – I mentioned Mr. Smith he was probably the most intense of the three superintendents. But Mr. Smith had to be to get the job done because there were some big jobs to do. Whereas the other two – but it was just personality – it boils down to personality a lot. Because he was a fairly intense person too. But was strong and sometimes he did things people didn’t like but he thought it was the best thing. Then Mr. Jones and Mr. Barnes were very much more laid back personalities. They of course they were strong men and they did what was right but they were a little more hands-off.

Beatrice was clearly telling me now that it was more difficult working for Betty Lou. While the previous superintendents were intense, they were not as detailed-oriented as Betty Lou. Beatrice attributed this difference to gender. Again a pattern appeared to be emerging in the

interviewing process. While the district leadership had maintained status quo for such a long time, Betty Lou was perceived as a different type of leader. Beatrice was not the first to mention that she was more detailed oriented than the others. I next asked questions in the area of job performance. I specifically asked her if she knew how satisfied this superintendent was with what she did. Based on her previous answers I expected to hear something about not meeting Betty Lou's demands. Again, I was perplexed by her brief answer. She stated, "I think she is happy with what I do." I asked her how well does this superintendent understand her job problems and needs. This answer was a little lengthier. She responded,

I think so because she has been a similar position – now she has never worked at this district level but she has worked all these other levels and I know she and Mrs. Barnes have been dear friends and she knows the struggles Mrs. Barnes was under. In fact she told I don't know why in the world you are taking this job – I see Mrs. Barnes and goodness gracious said I've seen what it does to her so I think she knows because she is always saying what can I do to help you. And she encourages me to just take off – just leave early – just go do something, you know, I think she does understand – I do. I really do – she expects a lot but I think she truly does but she expects this much or more of herself. She is that kind – she sets high standards on herself.

Beatrice stated she did not communicate her problems to Betty Lou; rather she depended on the fact that Betty Lou previously held a similar position to hers. There are no clear statements that she and Betty Lou talked about the specifics of her job and the demands placed on her. She consoled herself with the statement that Betty Lou was as demanding on herself as she was with her. I pressed on with the question as to how well the superintendent recognized her potential. She again answered with a short response, "I don't know." In this response Beatrice could not rely on her formal role for acknowledgement of her potential. Beatrice clearly engaged in only low-quality exchanges with Betty Lou. Not to be deterred, I asked her about her trust in this superintendent. She answered,

Yes, I do because - well I have always known her and I have always known her to be a hard worker and a person of integrity. And I have no reason not to trust her and I mean that never entered any doubt of me not to trust her.

Beatrice explained it was not so much that she could trust Betty Lou but that she has no reason to not trust her; after all, she has known Betty Lou for a long time. Furthermore, her trust was embedded in what she knew about the present superintendent. The interview was now reaching the hour mark. It was taking a long time to get Beatrice to answer the questions but it was not for lack of talking. Beatrice had filled the hour with stories that were both warm and moving. Her evasions of the questions at hand made me question whether or not she felt comfortable with the interview. Perhaps the interview was harder on her than she realized. She appeared to be sending the message that she was not secure in her relationship with this superintendent.

My final question to her was whether or not she had enough confidence to defend and justify the present superintendent's decisions, even if she was not around. This normally talkative person answered with a simple, "Yes." While we continued the conversation for an additional 20 minutes I could not bring Beatrice back to the question at hand. I ended the interview sensing an immense relief from her. Although very friendly and outgoing, Beatrice gave me the impression she was not telling me her whole story. When I later ran into her at district events, we always spoke but only in passing. I knew that Beatrice's relationship with Betty Lou was in the stranger phase. Perhaps I was reading more into the situation than was meant. But I do know, ironically, that Beatrice and Gladys Gavin were close. I made the mistake of sitting between the two of them during a meeting. Throughout the meeting I felt as though I was back in high school; I had to move physically so the two of them could exchange comments. They made me promise that I would not include their comments to each other in my research. I made the promise. Their conversation only revealed how close they were to each other.

Rhett Rowell – Image Controller. The next administrator I interviewed was Rhett Rowell. I telephoned Mr. Rowell two days before our interview to remind him of the time and place of our interview. I had to make special arrangements for his interview to take place at the courthouse near closing time. He confirmed the specifics and hung up the phone. At our appointed meeting time and place, he was not to be found. My cell phone did not work at the courthouse so I had to locate a pay phone. I called Mr. Rowell only to be told he remembered but was running a little late. Normally I would not have been irritated at this response. After all administrators are extremely busy people, but Mr. Rowell had the habit of always being late for any function where he was expected. I should not have been surprised on that day.

Mr. Rowell was a very tall, slender white man with gray hair and thick-rimmed glasses. He was a principal at the middle school before the previous superintendent moved him to his present position. Mr. Rowell told me he was moved into his present position as a result of a heart attack. He and the person in the position switched jobs so that he could continue to work until his retirement. Mr. Rowell reminded me of Colonel Sanders of Kentucky Fried Chicken. He appeared to be the consummate southern gentleman on the surface. But after watching him at meetings I realized he was a shrewd businessman – he understood the rules of the game and played them well. I always had the sense I needed to watch myself around him. Fortunately for me, he could never remember who I was – it was a fresh meeting each time we ran into each other.

Mr. Rowell kept me for 2 ½ hours, during which time he answered all my questions thoroughly and thoughtfully. He was the Director of Auxiliary Programs. This job included the supervision of Title I, Title II, Title III, IV, V, VI-b, policy updates, code of conduct, employee handbook, special services, student services, media services, students' records, property inventory, HRMD, safe schools, drop out prevention, teenage parent program, Concern (the Alternative School), PE and athletic programs, GED, school bus inspection and re-certification test administration, first aide, CPR, OPPAGA, safety and security best practices, truancy learn fair, department of motor vehicles program, missing/abused/neglected children, healthy/safety and nutrition, substance abuse and coalitions (i.e. Juvenile Justice Council, Take Stock in Children, School Readiness Coalition). Mr. Rowell was married and the father of two grown children. He was born and raised in Baldwell County. He told me very proudly that he was the fifth generation. He was active in the Baptist church in Sharpsville. He attended the local junior college, then transferred to a college in a nearby state. He received his Master's degree in Educational Leadership from a university that offered courses in a nearby town. He worked in the district for 34 years. He was a middle school teacher prior to becoming an assistant principal and then principal. Superintendent David Dinkens placed him in his present position six years ago due to health reasons. He attended school with the present superintendent.

I asked Mr. Rowell to characterize his working relationship with the present superintendent. He stated, "It is good. I highly respect Ms. Hartford – we went through our master's program together and did actually the work that we did on the advanced masters...that is not common term for it." I asked him what was it like working for this superintendent. He responded, "This job is ever changing and the demands placed on districts from the state level

have increased tremendously over the years. I have seen a great deal of change so I understand why this superintendent has to be so demanding.” Again I heard from an administrator how demanding Betty Lou was; yet there appeared to be a depth of understanding to her demands. Perhaps I was onto something here – would this play out with the other two administrators? I pressed on. I asked Mr. Rowell to characterize his working relationship with the past superintendent. Mr. Rowell articulated his answer in detail. He stated,

Each one the relationship has been distinctly different – Mr. Smith was a very dynamic leader. I still have a lot of respect for Mr. Smith – he is a tremendous manager but he is a lot more – management sounds weak – he is a lot more than that – I would not say that I felt the social association as far as a friend type association with Mr. Smith as I have with the other superintendents. Part of that may have been being a little bit younger than I am now. Mr. Smith is the next generation up from myself – his daughter and I are the same age so I have a lot of respect for him but never associated with him on a friendly basis I guess.

But Mr. Jones is kind of – not quite as old as Mr. Smith is I suppose but anyhow I felt a lot more nurtured and directed by him and mentored by him. He was a mentoring person. With the leaders in the education field the ones that are at the district I think everybody would say that he was there for those in an administrative position. He was a leader of the leaders – he was the leader of the administrators and was the same way when he was the principal of his school. He was almost a paternal figure – a very good leader and Mr. Barnes was an extremely good leader too. Again a different personality and different style of leadership.

Mr. Dinkens - to reiterate each one being distinctly different in personality – Mr. Dinkens was a strong believer in being a facilitator and being a supporter. A totally different leadership style than what I was use to. On the other hand he was extremely supportive. It was right at the end of Mr. Barnes superintendency that I came into this position into the position I am in now at the district level. But Mr. Dinkens was very receptive to me as the director of special services. Always very supportive and he trusted me in a lot of ways. Mr. Dinkens and the word trust is a kind of thing – he may have trusted more than I would have trusted. He trusted

that everything was going all right unless someone told him that it wasn't and it was extremely different than what we were use to – Mr. Smith was very hands on and micro- management; Mr. Jones very much hands on and very involved in the schools and in the classrooms all the time, Mr. Barnes same way – in the classrooms knowing what was going on. But you know I really feel like that because the different style of management that Mr. Dinkens had I felt like the principals changed and the district administrators changed to support him. He didn't ask anybody to but that we felt like that he might – I felt like that he might actually be a little bit vulnerable because of his style. So I think we adjusted to that. I am thinking right now of some others that have done some things that were done out of concern for Mr. Dinkens because he wasn't the monitoring, goal setter that others were that we had had – in other words out of loyalty to the system and out of loyalty to the position that he is our superintendent I felt like everybody adjusted to that and became extremely supportive of him and earned the trust in a lot of ways beyond what he even expected. It was – I don't there is a lot of loyalty that runs through Baldwin County schools it and it is not just loyalty – political type loyalty it is not just loyalty to your favorite it has more to do with loyalty to the system, loyalty to the person in the position desires loyalty period kind of thing. But anyhow out of loyalty not only to each individual school but out of loyalty to the system that we put our lives into we wanted him to look just as good as he could look and did everything on the face of the earth I feel like to give him that favorable impression I guess.

The discussion had turned up the use of loyalty to a position but not necessarily to the person. It was clear that Mr. Rowell was loyal to the position of the superintendency and felt the person holding the position deserved his respect. Although commendable, it did not indicate Mr. Rowell was especially close to any of the superintendents. In that area Betty Lou was viewed through the same lens as the other superintendents. I questioned him in regard to the formal and informal authority of the present superintendent in regards to him. He answered directly, "She is my supervisor, and I think I can speak for everyone at this level we have respect for the position – that is anyone in that position. Call it old fashioned but I believe that is how everyone feels."

This statement supported the previous interpretation of Mr. Rowell's high regard for the position regardless of the person occupying the office. I asked him if this superintendent had used her power to help him solve problems at work. He directly answered with the statement, "She is always willing to pick up the phone and make the calls that are necessary for us to get our jobs done. She is very much a bottom line type of person and is willing to use the power of her position to help us do what is best for the children in this district." It appeared Mr. Rowell had a concept of how a superintendent should perform. He believed this superintendent performed her duties appropriately.

I asked him if there was a difference in working with this superintendent and previous ones. I expected his answer to include some noted difference due to gender. While he stated that gender made no difference to him, he admitted it made a difference to some of the people in the community. He stated,

We have always had high goals and high aspirations. But we have also – we've always had dynamic leadership – I saw we have always had - we have had in the past dynamic leadership and we went for a period of time where it was more of a management style more than it was a dynamic leadership and during that time that we tried to continue to do the same things that we had done that had worked and worked well without the dynamic vision that is required to stay on top – they were good methods but things changed. But, Ms. Hartford also has to deal with the fact that she is the first woman superintendent. Candidly...let me say I think that she thinks that there may be an impression. I don't think it makes one ounce of difference - I don't think it makes an ounce of difference with the education profession. Do I think it makes a difference in the rural community that we live? Yes, I do and it shouldn't. I think it is just the old way of looking at it – I think it is just old prejudices. Those prejudices come from roles that were established 100 years ago or longer than that for women and that's – I don't know anymore specific way to say it than that. It is just the old way that some of the old families and some of the old families – some of the younger members of the old families still see it that way and it is just prejudice is all that it is.

Well again, I think there is a difference between the ways she is has been perceived as a female leader – I think there is a difference in the way she is perceived in the

educational community versus the way she is perceived by parts of the community.

I think Baldwin County, as a community, I believe appreciates what she is doing and trusts her very much so. But there is the old element that is still there. I'd say it is a minority and I believe it is shrinking every year that goes by but it has held on for a long time and it needs to die (laughter) excuse me.

I moved from questioning him about his relationship with the superintendent to job performance. I asked him how satisfied the superintendent was with what he did. He answered, "I think she is satisfied with my performance in this job or I think she would tell me otherwise." This very brief statement told volumes. While he admitted he was not particularly close to the superintendent, he believed he knew her well enough that she would let him know if he wasn't performing satisfactorily. This was evidence of low-quality exchanges as well as his comfort and security in his position. I asked him if the superintendent understood his job problems and needs. He answered, "She does – she asks me all the time. She meets with us individually...and of course she meets with us as an administrative team. We meet at least once a month and sometimes several times a month." His communications with Betty Lou were job related and on a regular basis. I asked him if this superintendent recognized his potential. He answered, "I think she does." I asked him about his trust in this superintendent. He responded,

Sure because of experience. Just life experience. The period of time where we were in training in the specialist program – I learned to trust her judgments, I learn to trust her leadership style, I was very comfortable working with her during that period of time. After that...and after we were working in the school system together as professional...again it was experience. I agreed with the way that she did things – the stands that she took knowing when to take a stand and when not to. On the other hand, to add that more than experience just because of the way that I view leadership. Just...I think loyalty is due to the one who is your leader period.

Again here was a response based on previous experience. Mr. Rowell had worked with her, observed her, and learned to trust her leadership. I was beginning to think that perhaps the level of exchanges between these two went beyond the typical job function. Analysis of all the data did not support this conclusion. Perhaps they did, while the two of them were attending classes; however, there was nothing in the data to support the exchanges had continued - only that

he made this judgment based on his past experience. I then asked him if he had enough confidence in this superintendent to defend and justify her decisions even if she were not present to do so. He answered,

Yes, I do – I would do that. Again that comes from experience. Let me think (long pause). I was trying to think there was – I was trying to think of the details there was a parent that called me I think probably by mistake they were just calling someone – an administrator I guess. But really what they wanted was for me to agree that a decision was wrong. That an administrative decision was wrong and again I was just thinking back on Mr. Barnes's advice and listen to them you don't have to agree with them but on the other hand, you can sympathize with them so to speak to the fact that they are upset. But at the end of that discussion I told the person I was talking – I said I cannot speak for my superintendent because I was not there I didn't hear what you said and I didn't hear what she said. I don't know the entire basis of the decision that was made. I said but let me suggest what I think and I started going through the process of what I would have thought if I had been in that situation and I – thinking of her and her leadership and knowing the values and everything, I tried to put myself in her position just to try to diffuse a very angry person and as we talked somehow or another the person began to understand that their might have two sides to the issue. And it involved their child and they were very, very upset because it involved their child and I just felt like – what I tried to get across to them was that I trusted her and that if she had made that decision there might have been some very solid reason behind it and if the shoe had been on the other foot and their child had been the victim rather than the aggressor that how would you have wanted her to have handled it. And the fact is they would want her to protect their child and so, anyhow, it was a small thing not a very major thing but I feel like I can anticipate I really do I feel like I can anticipate what her decision are in most cases.

Mr. Rowell gave me the answer he thought was correct – that he would defend a decision but it took him a few minutes to come up with an example. The example he used was somewhat vague and abstract. Mr. Rowell articulated responses to my questions that indicated he and Betty Lou engaged in low-quality exchanges associated with the stranger phase of relationship building.

Mr. Rowell went on to tell stories of his experiences in the district, which were at times hilarious, and at other times sad. My last dealings with Mr. Rowell involved his member checking of his interview transcripts. He was asked to check for accuracy and authenticity but what he gave me back was marked up like it had come out of a security system. His 25 page transcribed interview was turned into a five page report. I verified that the data was correct and thanked him for taking the time to edit his responses. He was the only person I interviewed who edited their transcript. This told me a lot about Mr. Rowell. He was very concerned about his image. He wanted to control what was attributable to him even when it came to a research project in which he was only a participant.

Florence Glimpse – the Fighter. The next administrator I interviewed was Florence Glimpse. Florence was a slight, older woman with shoulder-length brown hair. She was easy to meet and quickly scheduled an interview. In the administrative meetings she was outspoken and quick to point out issues under her supervision. Ms. Glimpse had a very difficult job; partially due to the demands for high performance on the state's accountability testing – it was hard to keep the students served in her programs motivated because their performances on the state's tests were often targeted as lacking. She was the Director of Related Services. Her job included the supervision of the entire district's special needs students, teachers, and parents. In addition to this supervision component, the Director and her staff wrote and scheduled all the individualized plans for each of the students. She was also in charge of getting the waivers for students unable to take the state's accountability test. The state allowed a 2% waiver in the population but anything above that meant she had to get the state's permission. Ms. Glimpse worked hard and worked late. Often, I passed by the White House late in the evening and saw her car parked out front. She readily admitted her most difficult task was finding and retaining teachers who were highly qualified. Ms. Glimpse was divorced and the mother of two children. She was born and raised in Baldwin County. She was member of the Baptist church in Sharpsville but pointed out she had "moved away from that group." She received her undergraduate degree from a major university in a neighboring state and returned to Baldwin County. She received her Master's in Educational Leadership through the cohort system offered in her district. She worked in the district 22 years. She was a teacher and then an assistant principal. Superintendent Brad Barnes appointed her to her present position. She has known and worked with the present superintendent for many years in other capacities.

I asked Ms. Glimpse to characterize her working relationship with this superintendent. She answered,

We understand each other's positions. We further respect and appreciate what each is trying to accomplish. Ms. Hartford must view everything from a district level and concentrates on the state accountability of each of the school's – that is her job. Perhaps the greatest challenge for me at this point is the conflict raised by the state testing standards, on the one hand, and the requirements for servicing all students.

Ms. Glimpse was caught, as the saying goes between a rock and a hard place. During one of the administrative meetings a principal noted, "It is hard on us when it comes to grades because we have a higher percentage of special education students taking the state's test." Ms. Glimpse responded quickly, "Yes, that is true but if the students had been included in the classes for a longer period of time we would not be fighting the learning curve we are now. I have submitted additional paperwork to have the testing of more students waived. It is up to the state now to render a decision." Although the conversation never got personal, I sensed the principal felt other schools within the district had an unfair advantage in that they did not have the same number and level of special education students. Having heard that conversation and understanding the demand for improved grades, her comment to my question made sense. I then asked her what was it like working for this superintendent. She answered,

It is really no different than working with any superintendent. Superintendents just have a different perspective. This superintendent has a different approach than the previous. She is more involved and wants to know more on what is going on. Her emphasis is on making the school grades where it has to be – that is what the public is looking at and her emphasis is on making this county competitive. This superintendent is accessible and I understand how she works so I know what I must do in order to do my job.

Ms. Glimpse admitted her job function did not change with the new superintendent; however, she acknowledged the emphasis on making school grades meant this superintendent was more involved. In other words, Ms. Glimpse was accountable for what was going on in her area. While she admitted little had changed in her job area, I asked what it was like working with past superintendents. She responded,

I can only comment really on the one before the present superintendent. He was less involved which meant he expected directors to run their department - he wanted to be informed. But again it is a different perspective – he had a county to run and I am looking at it from my perspective. Working in a smaller district is different because we all know each other – we basically grew up together – we know each other’s families. When I was an assistant principal...and my son went to high school... he knew he couldn’t get away with anything because I would know about it before he even thought about doing it.

Ms. Glimpse shed some light on the fact that it was different working in a small district where everybody knows each other. She stated there was a difference between Betty Lou and the previous superintendent in that he was less involved in the daily operations of her department. I asked her what type of formal and informal authority this superintendent had in regards to her. She answered,

In a small district we all wear so many different hats – her formal authority is like that of any superintendent. As a director I report to her, and she really wants to know what is going on with my staff. Informal authority is a little harder to describe. For example, I knew we needed to hire three new office staff members. I found out how much funding I had available through the Finance Officer - she is one that has a lot of power in this district - and recruited these people from neighboring districts. Although I could not promise them a lot of money I was able to get these people to join my staff. I was able to get creative. For example, one of the new staff lives in another town so we were able to work it out so that one week she comes in 3 days and the next week she comes in 2 days – she works from her home on the other days.

Ms. Glimpse expressed a direct answer to the question, and used an example to explain her perception. She knew the limitations of her authority were defined by the functions of her position. Ms. Glimpse used this knowledge to her advantage to recruit teachers into positions that were open in the district. I asked her if this superintendent used her power to help her solve problems in her work. She responded,

Well, like I mentioned the biggest problem I am facing is the shortage of teachers at the high school level. In our district all of the applications come to the central

office for principals to go through. Well, in June I took the initiative to go through the applications early and I started making contacts – one new hire worked for the television station in a nearby town. Because I know that the teachers must pass the certification test I designed a packet that helps them prepare for the test. I also send them to training through our consortium.

In this case, the applicant was hired and is doing a great job. I know I may lose her to become a subject area teacher, but she is a good teacher and an asset to our students. Unfortunately, making sure that every classroom has a highly qualified teacher has meant that I may lose a few teachers. However, everyone knows that I will fight for what is right. I understand how this superintendent needs to see all the perspectives so I prepare accordingly. As a result she will usually make the decision that is best for the students and not that is necessarily best for a single school or a single administrator. In preparing in such a way the superintendent then used her power to make the decision that I was pushing for her to make for the students involved.

Ms. Glimpse again used the example of recruitment of teachers; however, this use of power by the superintendent did not help her solve a problem. Rather it created problems for her. While she acknowledged the decisions were probably in the best interest of the system she did not admit these decisions assisted her in her job. It was apparent the state accountability system had placed increased pressures on Ms. Glimpse, and that at times it placed her at odds with the superintendent, both in the testing of students and the transferring of teachers into the general curriculum area. I asked her if there was a difference working with this superintendent and previous superintendents. She answered,

I think there is a difference between this superintendent and the previous one because just like other female administrators – we have to work harder and longer. We have to prove that we know what we are doing. I also know that people will generally listen to a man before they will listen to a women because I think that is just the way our society is – we just have a tendency to listen to a man more than we would a woman. I don't think it will ever change. I think our society will have to change before we actually see a difference for women in leadership. There have been women in other key leadership positions and they have faced the same issues.

Ms. Glimpse perhaps afforded me insight to what she experienced as a leader in the district. She admitted that leadership by a woman was different from that of a man but only because a woman worked harder and had to prove herself. She personalized the question and acknowledged that working with a woman leader was different. I next asked questions in regard to job performance. I asked her if she knew how satisfied this superintendent was with what she did. She replied,

Yes, I think she is very satisfied – she knows and appreciate what I do and understand the difficulties of serving students. However, it is like I mentioned before – she has a different perspective and is responsible for the school grades. That does bring about special considerations for both of us. But I think she appreciates what we are doing. She understands how hard we work - she knows we are putting in a lot of hours and really appreciates that we have a tremendous demand placed on us.

Ms. Glimpse answered the question one way but used clarifiers that appeared to contradict her answer. She worked long hours, and knew the superintendent was aware of this. I asked Ms. Glimpse how the superintendent knew. She said, “She sees my car at the office early in the mornings and late in the evenings.” Her statement indicated it was not that she had engaged Betty Lou in conversations on this subject rather she inferred Betty Lou understood because she saw her at work. She speculated on Betty Lou’s satisfaction with her as an employee. I asked her if the superintendent understood her job problems and needs. Ms. Glimpse paused while she thought about the question. She responded,

She really understands the issue with staffing - she knows how hard it is to find teachers especially in the high school setting. She understands that we are now serving a growing population with limited resources. She also knows with the staffing issues we still have to serve our students. Inclusion will have to be done at the high school setting – it will be a difficult process but one that I need to make sure that I get the information and support out to the administration and staff. Right now there is a lot of fear...but with more information and support I think we can overcome the obstacles. Plus inclusion is being practiced at the elementary and middle school – we started with the elementary school.

I talked to the administrator at the elementary school - who happens to have a child that received services – so the administrator understood from a parent’s perspective. Once we discussed the details and provided the staff development inclusion was smoother to implement. The same with the middle school. But that is not to say full inclusion is the way to go – it has to be based on the needs of the individual child. With inclusion at the lower level it will help that staff has experience and students have experience and with that experience comes a better understanding of how the system works. I know that I will have to talk it up to the high school on inclusion but it is just a matter of time especially since it is so difficult to highly qualified teachers in the subject areas of math and science.

Ms. Glimpse related the superintendent understood her problems in staffing and services. She did not indicate this understanding was based on information not readily available to everyone in the district. I asked Ms. Glimpse if the superintendent recognized her potential. She replied,

Very well. She understands my expertise – we have known each other for a long time. She knows that I am concerned about the children – I’m here to do what is best for the children. When a neighboring county decided not to serve our students any more the superintendent knew that I would do what was right and that we would staff the children to best serve their needs within our county. I think this superintendent respects what I do and appreciate what we are trying to accomplish on limited resources.

Her response to this question supported the delineation of duties and respect for specialty; however, it did indicate that this director had higher-quality exchanges with this superintendent. I asked about her trust in this superintendent. She answered, “

Yes, because we just know each other very well. We have all worked together...that is what makes a small district so different. We truly know each other. I also know that she is in it for the children just like the rest of us. I know that while her decisions may not be at time popular she is doing what she thinks is best for the children.

The first sentence in her response lead me to believe that perhaps their relationship went beyond the functions of the job; however, the second sentence clarified the relationship as one enjoyed by nature of the size of the district and length of service together. Ms. Glimpse did not

articulate this understanding and knowledge went beyond the confines of the job. I asked the final question in regards to confidence. Her response was one simple word, “Yes.” I pressed her for additional information but she merely shrugged. Our conversation continued and we discussed the consolidation issue. Ms. Glimpse finished her interview in little over an hour.

I found Ms. Glimpse to be passionate about her job. She cared deeply for the teachers and the students served in her program. I saw her more than once defend her department at administrator meetings. She felt the pressures associated with high stakes testing and federal accountability. She also felt the sting of accusatory fingers pointed in her direction when principals commented on the impact her students had on the school grade. This pressure may have impacted her relationship with the superintendent. Analysis of the observations, interviews, and documents clearly support the conclusion this relationship was constructed around the functions of the job. Exchanges between Florence and Betty Lou were low-quality and the relationship was at the stranger phase.

Barney Fowler – the Deliberate Talker. The last administrator interviewed was Mr. Barney Fowler. Mr. Fowler was a middle aged, average height, white male with jet-black hair. Each time I saw Barney he was dressed the same – dark trousers, white button-down short-sleeve shirt, a dark tie and dark work boots. Barney needed glasses to read so he kept them propped on the top of his head. He was in a constant state of motion and always engaged in a conversation. Barney wore three hats for the district. One of the hats was as Director of Maintenance. This job included the supervision of maintenance for all facilities, and oversight of new construction. A second hat was as principal of the Concern program. In other districts the program would be known as the alternative school. The third hat was as supervisor of the adult education program. I had observed Barney wearing each and all of these hats. In all situations Barney was the same – always late, always talkative, always methodical, and deliberate in his responses. He answered questions asked of him in such a way he always had room to change his statement without contradicting himself.

On the day of this scheduled interview I asked if we could talk about his position as Director of Maintenance. We had to reschedule the interview for later in the day when he realized he had an appointment at the central office. The appointment had to be rescheduled even later when he got a call one of the school’s new oven was delivered and ready to install.

We sat down together in his office at the adult education program. His office was approximately half of the building and felt like a construction site with equipment piled around the

room and blueprints spread out on one table. The walls were paneled in dark wood and the only noted decorations were a calendar and his college diplomas. He had one for his Associate's degree, one for his Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education, and one for his Master's degree in Educational Leadership. His desk looked like a government issued gray steel desk. His chair was a huge leather executive roll around that appeared a little shabby. Throughout the interview, Mr. Fowler rocked back and forth in his chair as he deliberated his answers. It was later difficult to transcribe the tape due to the constant squeaking noise made by the rocking of the chair. Everyone liked Barney, and I was no exception.

Barney was married to an elementary school teacher and had two young children. He admitted he was tired that day because his family had traveled to a neighboring county to watch his daughter cheer for a peewee football team. He was upset that the game lasted until 10:00 p.m. because they still had an hour of travel to endure, which meant his daughter would get to bed far beyond her normal bedtime. Furthermore, she had school the next day. He commented, "There should not be late activities for kids this age during the school week. After all, the most important thing for them right now is school and everyone knows kids don't do well in school without sleep." Mr. Fowler lived in Livingston - the same area of the county as the four previous superintendents. He was in the construction industry and shipbuilding before he returned to college to earn his degrees. He earned a degree in elementary education because he was told he could get a job with that degree. Ironically, he never taught at the elementary level; he was hired as an agricultural teachers at one of the high schools. He was born and raised in Baldwell County. He attended the Baptist church in Sharpsville. He worked in the district for 11 years. He was a student when the present superintendent was a teacher, and a teacher when she was a principal.

The first question I asked Mr. Fowler in the interview was to characterize his working relationship with the superintendent. He answered, "Great, great because I can tell her what I think and she calls me a lot because of my job – that is part of my job, to give her the best recommendation that I can of what needs to be done. That is what is expected of me and she listens and a very good working relationship." It was clear from the start that Mr. Fowler valued communication in a working relationship, and in this case he felt he could tell the superintendent what he thought. He also thought it was important to note she called upon his expertise. Based upon my observations at Board meetings, his expertise was called on quite a lot especially in light of the consolidation issue. There were always numerous questions about the conditions of the

schools. Mr. Fowler made it clear at all times that “the schools are in a constant need of repair. There comes a point when you can’t repair old equipment anymore and must be willing to take the hit expense wise to invest in new equipment and new schools.”

I was anxious to see how this past statement would play out in the interview. I asked him what it was like working for this superintendent. He answered, “Great, because we are both here to educate kids the best way we can and keep the buildings up the best way we can. That type theory – I mean we are all in it together.” This was a short answer but he definitely saw leadership as a group effort rather than as an individual one. Next I asked him to characterize his working relationship with the past superintendents. Midway through this answer he slipped into one of his other hats as a principal but clearly the response was applicable to his duties as a Director. He said,

Mr. Dinkens and Ms. Hartford are two different people. Each has their own strengths. When you have the guy that put you in the position you are in that is now working under you it is different and I will be the first one to say. It is different – I try not to treat him any different but I try to be the same with all the people that work under me because I have been on the other side and I will never forget it. And I have worked out in construction and I have seen how you can be treated in a private company. We have it pretty good as far as the way your treatment is coming from your employees and communication is the biggest thing. Communicate with your teachers. I try to be down there as much as I can. I try to be visible. When I have a problem I try to get them to decide and try not to come at it with this is a problem that is going to stop everything we are doing and this is a problem I have what can you do or what can we do to stop it. Anything can be solved and I think you need to go in it with that mindset that even if you have to compromise you can work it out it can be worked out if you’ve got two willing parties and I think they should always be willing and I am always willing and I will tell I am up for any suggestions you’ve got. You are there everyday you know more of what is going on than I do because of coming in I mean I see things but if you’ve got any suggestions any way to improve, change my door is open.

Here his response was less about his relationship with the previous superintendents and more about his own leadership. The fact that the former superintendent was now one of his

teachers bothered him. He also suggested that this change in roles made him re-examine how he handled his job. He relied on his experience in private industry to reassure himself that it was not so bad. Again his response indicated communication was a key component of his relationships with his employees; thus I surmised it was important to him as an employee of the superintendent.

I pressed on with the question in regard to formal and informal authority of the superintendent. He answered matter of factly, “She is my boss – bottom line she makes all the decisions and has to live with those decisions.” This answer indicated to me that he saw responsibility and authority in an hierarchical schema. Ultimately the leader was responsible and had the authority. I asked when this superintendent had used her power to help him solve problems at work. He answered rather succinctly, “Not very often - not very often – in fact I can’t really remember her solving any of my problems. I just keep her informed on what is going on.” What he later said off tape was that maintenance was an area about which superintendents tended not to ask a lot of questions, but that they expected the work to be done. I inferred, therefore, that this superintendent practiced the same approach.

I asked him Mr. Fowler if there was a difference in working with this superintendent and previous superintendents. He answered,

Mr. Dinkens was – like I said it was two different styles – he was more kind of letting you go I mean you know you do your job, if I had any problems I’ll contact you if you don’t hear from me you are doing a good job keep doing it – call me if you need me. Ms. Hartford is more of a hands on person wants to know more of what is happening. Bothers me none I am glad to tell her anything she wants to know. I’ll be honest men and women are different in the way they go at I think women have a lot of strengths that men don’t. I really can’t explain it.

Mr. Fowler admitted the two superintendents he worked with were different in their leadership. Interestingly, one of the differences he pointed out was gender but was unable or unwilling to articulate the perceived difference. Whatever the reasons, he was at least willing to recognize that gender did make a difference in the working relationship. I moved on to the next questions in regards to how satisfied Betty Lou was with what he did. Mr. Fowler quickly commented, “I think she is satisfied.” This answer was a speculation rather than a definitive statement. I then asked how well does Betty Lou understand his job problems and needs. He responded,

Very well. She is very understanding sometimes she will tell you to suck it up. And you know and I tell all my employees every one of them needs a little push sometimes. I mean that is just the way human nature is. She understands what my job is – she has been it and she remembers what it is like being in the trenches and being the leader and being in the position we are in. That is never important you never forget where you come from.

Again I picked up that because Ms. Hartford has been a principal and teacher in the district this participant was able to make the statement that she understood his job problems and needs. The flip side of that statement is that if she had not been in those positions she would not have understood. I asked Mr. Fowler if this superintendent recognized his potential. He answered,

I feel like she does. That is one thing that she does. She has told us she does. She will move you around, I may I think that with my construction background, and I am not saying it to brag, – who is going to come in behind me that has the construction background you know?

Here Barney equated lateral movement in the administrative ranks with recognition of potential. He was quick to point out his security in his present position in that no one else within the administrative ranks shared his expertise.

I next asked about his trust in this superintendent. He responded, “Yes, because she is from here and has worked here.” It would appear that anyone from Baldwin County and employed in the district had the same level of trust from Barney. The next question I asked him was in regards to his confidence to defend the present superintendent’s decisions even if she were not present. He answered, “Yes, last year there were some problems and it was internal with employees and one I thought really needed to be moved somewhere else and she did it. And there is a total different atmosphere down there today because of that and that decision was not a popular one.”

Based on my analysis of the data, the interactions between Barney and Betty Lou were based on the functions of the job. Barney’s trust and confidence in Betty Lou were based on criteria he applied to any individual from within the system. His exchanges with Betty Lou were low-quality. Therefore, data supported the finding their relationship was in the stranger phase of relationship development.

Betty Lou's Perspective

It was impossible to obtain Betty Lou's perception of the central office administrators in tape-recorded settings. It was easier for her to speak openly about them as a group in our car rides; thus, I had to rely on my notes for her perspective. Betty Lou depended on the administrators at each of the board meetings I observed. She expected the administrators to present responses and supporting documents on any agenda item that was under their supervision. She never called the administrators by name when she needed their input; rather she merely nodded in their direction. As if on cue, an administrator would take the floor and inform the discussion of the board. I later discovered she met with the administrators one week prior to the board meeting to go over the proposed agenda. She cued them as to what was expected as a response. During these "rehearsal" meetings she asked questions and assisted each director in the preparation of materials.

She admitted she preferred the board heard directly from the administrators so they could understand what was going on in the various departments and programs. As a result she felt it was her duty to ensure board members never caught the administrators off guard. Since she set the agenda for the board meetings she admitted she felt confident in her preparation.

Betty Lou expected a great deal of her administrators – they were in the position to make sure the staff at the school level had the materials and knowledge to "move the district into the 21st century." Her demand for current resources and ideas meant that in most cases the administrators worked harder in the past two years than the previous four. Betty Lou placed these same high demands on herself.

My observations of her conversations with the administrators were always job-related. She quickly addressed the issue at hand. Betty Lou was not a chit-chatter with these administrators in their day-to-day interactions. At the same time, she was compassionate and concerned about their personal lives if the occasion called for it.

Betty Lou admitted gender at times interfered with her interactions with the administrators. She said,

I have to be careful when I am out in public especially when I am working with one of the men. I can't just jump into the car, for example, with Mr. Burnett and go visit a school. I have to be aware at all times of the public's perception. Someone may get the wrong idea if they see us traveling together in a car. It just

makes me uncomfortable and I feel it puts an extra strain on us. I am the same way with the women – I don't want to treat anyone different. But we handle it.

Betty Lou respected the administrators for their “knowledge and long service to the district.” She made it clear she expected this group of individuals to be on the cutting edge in their support of the teachers and students. She saw their jobs as one of support to the classroom.

I asked Betty Lou about my perception of similarities among the central office administrators. I asked whether or not it was coincidental each of the administrators appeared to be related to a founding family of the district. Although she did not comment I discovered later from a teacher each of the administrators came from a “powerful family.” I also asked about their membership to the Baptist church in Sharpsville. Betty Lou committed a lot of matters about the district were discussed in the walls of that church. She admitted she was a member of the congregation, too.

Betty Lou stated on numerous occasions, she found it difficult to trust anyone and understood the limitations of her position. Based on data, Betty Lou engaged in low-quality exchanges with all the administrators. She saw her relationship with each of them defined by their jobs. At times she questioned their commitment to her goal of equitable treatment of all students especially in dealing with issues such as the privatization of the lunch program and consolidation of the high schools. She understood the political nature of their self-interest to appear neutral in situations that could appear controversial within the community. Betty Lou's perception of the her relationships with the central office administrators was at the stranger phase.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn based on the analysis and interpretation of data collected for this section of the study. The relationship between Betty Lou and the central office administrators were as follows:

- A. All administrators perceived their relationships with Betty Lou to be a function of their jobs. Data supported each viewed their exchanges as low-quality and prescribed by organizational roles. In addition, trust in this superintendent was perceived as the same with previous superintendents. Analysis and interpretation of the data supported the finding these relationships were in the stranger phase as defined by theory and the social norms of the school district.

- B. Betty Lou perceived her interactions with the administrators to be low-quality and closely regulated by the confines of the job descriptions. Analysis and interpretation of the data supported her perception of low-quality exchanges associated with the stranger phase of relationship building.
- C. The administrators articulated perceived gender differences in their working relationships with Betty Lou and previous superintendents. Betty Lou was perceived as energetic, focused on her goals, demanding, and very hands-on. She was also described as intense, detail-oriented, and understanding. Two of the women administrators stated she worked harder to “prove” herself as a women. All admitted Betty Lou was evaluated by the community as a woman leader in a position that had been defined historically by male occupants.

The next section presented the findings on the relationships between Betty Lou and the principals. Findings were presented along the three themes of the study: relationships, job performance, and trust. First, the data on the principals’ perspectives was presented. Second, the data on Betty Lou’s perspectives was presented. Finally, the conclusions based on the analysis and interpretation of the data was presented.

Betty Lou and the Principals

Introduction

The purpose of this section was to describe the relationships between Betty Lou and the principals. I met the members of this group early in the study. I was invited to attend one of their monthly meetings with Betty Lou. Initial introductions were cordial but distant with the exception of one principal, Alfred Alford, who was engaging and conversational. Review of my notes at my more recent observations of this formal meeting revealed much had changed in the demeanor towards me. Each principal now greeted me on a first name basis and asked the same two questions – how was the research going and when would I be finished.

During the first two meetings, I received the occasional glance in my direction before each spoke. Later as the year progressed, I was a forgotten entity in the room – much like an unoccupied office chair. At more recent meetings I was repeatedly invited to sit at the table with the group but I steadfastly declined for observation note taking purposes. Earlier, I only watched, as papers were dispersed; later I was always included as a recipient of materials. The meetings always took place in the school board conference room, which consisted of dark paneled walls,

one large rectangular conference table, 12 metal chairs, a wall full of metal filing cabinets, and the district's fingerprinting equipment.

I always noted in detail the seating arrangements of the principals in regards to Betty Lou's position at these meetings. It remained the same - one male principal consistently sat to Betty Lou's left, followed by the lone female principal. The remainder of the principals sat at the foot of the table, where they often engaged in conversation to the exclusion of the other two. Conversation before the meeting was easy and always revolved around light teasing and banter. The principals always appeared to be comfortable with each other and at times were quite humorous. As if on cue, when Betty Lou entered, the banter ended and a more serious, business demeanor prevailed until the conclusion of the meeting. I never observed the banter and humor outside the setting of these meetings. It was during these formal monthly meetings that the principals were quick to share insights, weaknesses, frustrations, and request assistance among themselves at the school level.

The principals of Baldwin County were not required to attend school board meetings and, in fact, only one appeared before the board during my time in the field. That appearance was at the request of school board member Marsha Meltzer. While I did not see the principals interact with each other outside the monthly meeting, I was able to follow Betty Lou on her weekly visits to each of the schools. At each school she went directly to the front office to check in with the principal. Each time the interactions between the principal and Betty Lou were structured around an event that had just occurred at the school or an update on previous correspondence. Betty Lou's interactions with each of the principals were consistent and appeared to share exchanges that were formal and part of the job. Only twice did I see her deviate from this behavior and both times it was with the same principal. I later found out he had been her assistant principal for many years. Both times she shared a past memory and commented on how things had changed at the school.

What I saw in the school board conference room during the monthly principal's meetings played out in the interviews and observations completed at each of the schools. The findings based on collected data for this group were presented in the following section. I began this section with an overview of each of the schools in Baldwin County. It was important to understand the schools because each principal identified his or her role according to their school. The presentation of findings was organized in the sequence I interviewed and observed each principal.

As stated in previous sections of this chapter, the findings were presented along the three themes that emerged in this study: relationships, performance, and trust.

The Schools of Baldwin County

The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) recognized nine schools in Baldwin County; however, there are five actual school buildings. The schools break down as follows: one elementary school (grades PK-5) known as Sharpsville Elementary School, one middle school (grades 6-8) known as Sharpsville Middle School, one high school (grades 9-12) known as Sharpsville High School, one school for grades PK-8 known as Carriage PK-8 School, and one school for grades PK-12 known as Mt. Vernon Comprehensive School. The nine schools accounted for under the FDOE system emerged as a result of the accountability of schools based on the traditional grade clustering. Therefore Carriage PK-8 School, under the state's accountability system, was viewed as two schools, and Mt. Vernon Comprehensive School was viewed as three schools. The ninth school recognized under the FDOE system was the alternative school/adult school known as Concern Alternative School.

Concern Alternative School was located on the back section of the Sharpsville High School campus near the football stadium. The school housed the alternative program for the entire district. In addition, Concern was the site for the in-school suspension program for the district as well as the adult education program. Concern School had an administrative team, which consisted of a principal and assistant principal. Mr. Barney Fowler, the principal was also the district's Director of Maintenance. I conducted separate interviews with Barney to secure his perspective of the superintendent's leadership in his different roles. After I analyzed the data I came to the conclusion that, for Barney, his perspective did not change with the responsibilities of these two roles. Therefore, since it did not impact the findings concluded in this section I did not included the data collected from his role as a principal.

The following is an overview of each of the schools in Baldwin County. Each overview provides information about the construction of the school, demographics of the school, the school grade based on the state's accountability grading system derived from student achievement on the state test and information regarding assessment based on adequate yearly progress.

Mt. Vernon Comprehensive School. Mt. Vernon was founded in 1906 and served grades PK-12. The school served approximately 660 students with a capacity of 654 students. Approximately 48% of the students received a free or reduced lunch rate. Around 3% of the

students were minorities. The school grade for the last two years was a “B.” The school was cited the last two years for not making adequate yearly progress. As a result of this action four middle school and three elementary school students transferred to Carriage PK-8 School.

Carriage PK-8 School. Carriage School was built in 1948 and served grades PK-8. The school served approximately 299 students with a capacity of 302 students. Approximately 49% of the students received a free or reduced lunch rate. Around 3% of the students were minorities. The school grade for the last two years was an “A.” The school made adequate yearly progress. Since Carriage School has received stellar marks within the state’s accountability system, 12 students transferred in from two schools within the last year. Seven of the students came from Mt. Vernon School and five came from Sharpsville Middle School. While 12 students would not appear to be a large number in some systems the Coordinator of Transportation indicated, “It is a hardship for this district. We have three kids who ride a bus for two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon.” The Director of Maintenance stated, “The increased number does not appear large but when you have a school that is old and operating near capacity that makes a difference. We already have four portables at the school and no place to put another.”

Sharpsville Elementary School. Sharpsville Elementary School was built in 1967 and served grades PK-5. The school served approximately 626 students with a capacity of 839 students. Approximately 68% of the students receive a free or reduced lunch rate. Around 32% of the students were minorities. The school grade last year was a “B” with the school receiving an “A” the previous year. The school made adequate yearly progress.

Sharpsville Middle School. Sharpsville Middle School was built in 1954 and served grades 6-8. The school historically served the African American students until desegregation, which occurred in this district around the late 1960s. Latest district figures indicated the school served 266 students with a capacity of 419 students. Approximately 55% of the students received a free or reduced lunch rate. Around 33% of the students were minorities. The school grade last year was an “A” with the school receiving a “B” the previous year. The school was cited the last two years for not making adequate yearly progress.

Sharpsville High School. Sharpsville High School was the original site of the first public school in Baldwin County, acquired in 1895. The original building was demolished and rebuilt in phases dating back from 1934 to 1984. More recently, the school served 423 students with a capacity of 543 students. Approximately 40% of the students received a free or reduced lunch

rate. Around 23% of the students were minorities. The school grade last year was a “C” with the school receiving a “B” the previous year. The school did not receive the funds to qualify for evaluation under the adequate yearly progress standards.

The Principals

Cora Mae Ayers – The Quiet Principal. Cora Mae Ayers was the principal at Sharpsville Elementary School. She was a middle-aged woman with short brown hair and glasses. Cora Mae was a quiet and intense person. She rarely spoke at the principal’s meetings, but when she did the other principals listened intently and visibly reacted by leaning in towards her. When I visited her school I was constantly surprised where I would find her. One time she was at the front desk answering the phones, another time she was at the bus ramp helping students get on buses, and yet another time she was in the cafeteria eating with the students. I only saw her in the principal’s office once and that was on the day we had an interview. Curious about this, I asked a teacher in passing about Cora Mae. She replied,

She is the best person to work for and I really enjoy working for her. She eats and sleeps this school and does what it takes to keep this school on top. At one moment she may be in her office dealing with a parent and the next minute she will be in one of the bathrooms cleaning a toilet. She is a hard worker and is extremely competitive. It just about killed her last year when we got a “B.” She will do whatever it takes to bring that grade up. I have had offers to go to other schools and even other systems but I have been here for a long time and I don’t have any intention of leaving.

I always enjoyed walking into Sharpsville Elementary, even though my experience as a teacher had been at the high school level. Many times I did not understand what was going on and always either a teacher or administrator would patiently explain the situation to me. I learned a lot while spending time at Sharpsville Elementary. The climate of the school was always positive and upbeat. The bulletin boards were current and cheery. The students’ work was proudly displayed in the hallways. The students were happy and friendly. The teachers always greeted me, even though they were very curious about me in the beginning. Clearly teachers and students enjoyed being in this building.

Sharpsville Elementary was built when the pod classroom structure was popular. This setup meant that the classroom areas were very large with two to three teachers assigned to a

room. Since that system of operation was no longer in practice, the classrooms were now subdivided with temporary walls into three to four “classrooms.” At first I had a hard time understanding the setup and routines, but as my observation time and visits lengthened I realized that these teachers had come up with a system that worked. Consistently I saw students actively engaged in learning and teachers enthusiastically presenting the lessons for the day. When it was time for students either to eat lunch or go to physical education, they quickly lined up and were quiet so not to disturb another class within the room.

It was easy to get Cora Mae to set up an interview; significantly she was the only principal to use the email system for contact. Cora Mae admitted up front that she did not like to talk about herself so I knew the interview was difficult for her. Cora Mae always reflected before she responded to my questions. I asked her if she had always been that way. She responded,

Yes. You can’t take back words once you have spoken them. I always try to think about my answers before I speak them. I always try to make sure that my meaning is direct and cannot be misinterpreted. That is the greatest challenge sitting in this chair – making sure what I say is exactly what I mean.

I noted this on the interview protocol. Later I reflected on this statement and understood why in my observations I always saw her pause before she responded to a teacher, parent, student, and even Betty Lou.

Cora Mae was married and had two grown children. She was born and raised in Baldwin County. She attended the local junior college before she transferred to a nearby university to obtain a bachelor’s degree in elementary education, teaching endorsements in math and exceptional student education. She received a master’s degree in educational leadership from a university that offered the degree on site through a cohort. She had been in the school system for 22 years as a teacher, assistant principal and now principal. She was in her present position when Betty Lou took office; however, she had worked with Betty Lou in other capacities. Betty Lou and she worked together as fellow teachers, and Cora Mae continued to work as a teacher when Betty Lou became Assistant Principal and Principal. She has worked with four superintendents throughout her career in Baldwin County.

I asked Cora Mae to characterize her working relationship with this superintendent. She responded simply, “Excellent.” I asked her what it was like working for this superintendent and she answered,

She is visible and very approachable. But yet she has some standards that she wants to – she expects teacher to follow. She communicates those standards very well. She is very, very focused on student achievement and she is willing to do whatever it takes to get that student achievement. She has a passion for children making progress. As a teacher she was always a leader. She was a teacher leader. She was that teacher that would always do the extra – go the extra mile. She was the teacher when the principal needed someone to be on a committee for this, that or the other – she could do that she was opinionated and did not mind letting people know her opinion. But yet if someone else presented a different way to do something she wasn't rigid. She would change it if she saw a better way. That type of leadership is still with her today.

Based on this response it became clear to me that Betty Lou and Cora Mae had a history of working together and this history enabled Cora Mae to understand Betty Lou. Cora Mae based her answer on personal observations and events from their shared pasts. I asked Cora Mae to characterize her working relationships with past superintendents. She told me,

Mr. Smith was very authoritarian. Whatever he said, that was what went. I don't think anyone had a lot of input into the decision making process. Mr. Jones was a little more laid back and easier to approach with suggestions and those kinds of things. Mr. Barnes had his own ideas about things. He was intimidating but fair. You always knew where you stood with him. He wanted the best for the students and had a lot of compassion. He could walk up to any teacher in a building and ask how is aunt so and so. Although he was strict everybody was comfortable enough even today to hug his neck. Mr. Dinkens was laid back and was just the opposite of all the other superintendents. He surrounded himself to a degree with competent people. He didn't make any suggestions and we never had an agenda if we ever had a staff meeting. Meetings tended to be haphazard. He was approachable and he did make a point to come to the school every week – there might be weeks that I didn't see him. We didn't have as much confidence in him as a superintendent as we had with the others.

Although her response was not lengthy, Cora Mae had told me volumes. For her, three of the past superintendents fell into one category while Mr. Dinkens was in another. Based on what I

had discovered from previous interviews, Cora Mae was verifying what the other participants had already revealed. I asked Cora Mae about the formal and informal authority of the superintendent in relation to her. She answered,

She is my supervisor. But she pretty much talks to me. For instance she had seen a teacher or somebody in a negative way and she said “you need to address it.” I was at the school board office and she called me in her office and she explained the situation and she said - you know that is not giving a good light on our school - or you need to address it. She left it up to me to handle.

To Cora Mae the formal authority of the superintendent fell along the hierarchical line of her position as supervisor. Interestingly the superintendent used that formal power to point out a behavior of one of the staff members but did so in what Cora Mae interpreted as an informal method. While the superintendent expected the matter to be handled, she left it up to Cora Mae to resolve the matter. This was the first sign that there might be a higher relationship between these two. Betty Lou had delegated the follow-through in this example.

I asked this principal if the superintendent had used her power to help solve problems at work. She answered, “Never, because I don’t know that I have had something that needed to be resolved.” Perhaps it was due to her experience in this position that she was able to handle problems at the school level without involvement of the superintendent. I re-examined my observation and interview notes when I was focused on Betty Lou. Sure enough, while there were notations on the other principals, but I did not have a notation or statement on Cora Mae. I went back to Cora Mae and told her what I had realized reviewing my data. I asked her about the fact that I had no notation of interactions between the two of them in matters that happened at the school. Cora Mae responded, “No, I don’t call her with problems. I may call her to let her know about something but I don’t call her to ask for permission or get help to resolve an issue.” I pressed her further and asked why. She stated, “A lot of it has to do with experience and the fact that I take ownership for what happens at this school. But Betty Lou and I have worked together in the past and that may be part of it.” At this point I knew I had uncovered important data – Betty Lou and Cora Mae had a different relationship than what I had found to date in this research. What puzzled me was that I could not discern a pattern in their exchanges – it did not appear to be ongoing. So I asked Cora Mae if there was a difference working Betty Lou and the previous superintendents. She replied,

Each of their leadership has been different. I would say that working with Betty Lou is different because I have known her for a long time, I have respect, but I don't feel like I am intimidated. You know if she comes in and says "so and so called to complain" I am going to respond in the right way, but when she comes in I don't feel like I have to act differently because her presence does not upset me. I think gender makes a difference in how Betty Lou leads – women are just more detailed than men and women interact in a different way. You know women want all their i's dotted and our t's crossed or most of them do. Where the men are more sort of laid back – if it gets done it gets done.

Cora Mae articulated a difference in each of the superintendents, but interestingly she articulated a difference based on perceived difference along the lines of gender. It was becoming very clear to me that gender made a difference in perceived leadership based on the historical male leadership. While this statement was very powerful to me I still wanted to know if her relationship was different in other ways so I prompted her further by asking if that was the only difference she perceived. She answered, "Yes." I asked if the other superintendents were more directive or had she been able to follow through with actions on her own. She answered, "Well, for the most part I did what they told me to do but I think, especially with Mr. Barnes, after I got more years under me he was able to let go a little more." Based on this statement there was indeed evidence that Betty Lou allowed more leeway earlier in their working relationship than had any of the other superintendents.

I next asked her if she knew how satisfied this superintendent was with what she did in her position. She responded, "Yes, because she has kept me in this position. If she wasn't satisfied I think she would have told me." Again the answer is centered on the idea that if she were not doing her job she would have been moved. This response is not the same as articulating the evidence on how she knows the superintendent is satisfied with her. Once again her response supported evidence of the hierarchical status of the superintendent. I asked her if this superintendent recognized her potential. She answered,

Yes, I think she does because we have talked and I knew – I also knew when this assistant principal job became available a long time ago that she was going to be the principal at the middle school and so we had already communicated that I was

going to be trying out for the assistant principal at the middle school but it didn't work out that way and I guess it was for the best.

Cora Mae thinks this superintendent recognized her potential because they have spoken about career moves in this past. In this case it was early in Betty Lou's leadership career when she took her first principalship. This example demonstrated a prior mutual relationship between the two; however, in Baldwin County the principal only recommends individuals for positions within a school. Ultimately the decision falls to the superintendent. Again, Cora Mae gave no indication her relationship had developed over the years to clarify her potential. I next asked about her trust in the superintendent. She said,

Yes, because I know that she has a passion for children and for them – you know and we say making a learning gain but really it is more than that she has a passion for them to be successful individuals when they leave us. Because I think coming through the ranks together I think our thoughts are similar.

The trust Cora Mae had for this superintendent was based on her past experiences and a perceived mutually shared goal. Cora Mae did not state that current exchanges between the two had built on this previously held belief or trust. I then asked if she had enough confidence in this superintendent to defend and justify her decisions even if she were not present. She answered,

Yes, and I have. I try to tell them she is a superintendent and she sees things that we don't see she knows things that we don't know – she is looking at the big picture – she is not just looking at what effects this school and we've got to trust her judgment to make the right decisions.

While Cora Mae had confidence in this superintendent and had defended her, the explanation she used did not demonstrate any high-quality exchanges had occurred between the two since her superintendency, only that she was aware the higher level of leadership enabled a larger view of issues. Perhaps Cora Mae and Betty Lou had at one time held higher-quality exchanges; however, based on my observations and Cora Mae's responses to questions it did not appear these high-quality exchanges had continued to occur. Our interview concluded in a little over an hour. I spent over two days working in the school with Cora Mae and her staff. I came away from the experience with a clear understanding and appreciation for an elementary school.

Billy Bob Smith – Family Ties. The next principal I observed and interviewed was Billy Bob Smith. Billy Bob was the principal at Sharpsville Middle School. He was an older gentleman

with silver hair. He was average height and robust. He had an odd twitch to his nose I noticed became pronounced when he was keyed up. Billy Bob was the nephew of the retired superintendent Steve Smith. As previously mentioned by a district office administrator, Mr. Smith was credited with “turning the district around by getting it out of the red.” Billy Bob was also a cousin to retired superintendent Brad Barnes. Billy Bob did not tell me about these relationships; Rather, I asked him about them because he shared the same last name. Billy Bob was married and had three grown children as well as several very young grandchildren. He was born in south Florida where he attended school until the 7th grade. His family then moved to a neighboring county to Baldwin. He attended junior college and later earned his Bachelor’s degree while he served in the military. His degree allowed him later to work in the correctional system. Upon his return to Baldwin County he entered the school system as a counselor during his uncle’s last term in the superintendent’s office. He was never a teacher but moved up into the administrative ranks as an assistant principal then principal. He worked in the central office prior to returning to his present position. He had approximately 20 years of experience in Baldwin school system and had worked with five superintendents during his career. The present superintendent was at one time his assistant principal. He was in his present position when this superintendent took office. He lived in a Livingston, which was home to four of the previous superintendents.

Betty Lou visited Sharpsville Middle School more than any other school in the district during my observations. When I later asked her about it she replied, “I didn’t realize that I did, but you know that is a very special school and I just enjoy going there.” Indeed, the staff at Sharpsburg Middle was by far the friendliest. We always had to stop in the cafeteria to see Ms. Fran. Ms. Fran had worked in the cafeteria since Betty Lou was principal. We always had to accept a glass of sweetened ice tea from Ms. Fran because as Betty Lou put it, “It would be an insult otherwise.” I was anxious to talk with Billy Bob to see if my observation hunches would turn up a relationship with a higher-quality of exchanges – after all these two had worked as an administrative team at Sharpsville Middle School.

Billy Bob was not anxious to schedule a time for our formal conversation. He told me he didn’t know why I wanted to interview him and wondered what help he might be on my project. The day of our interview I arrived early and checked in at the front office. As was customary for me, I waited for the principal in the front office since I had confirmed our appointment the previous day. Billy Bob came into the office just before our appointed time and said to me, “Well,

if you were worth your salt you would have come looking for me.” Before we started the interview Billy Bob asked me several questions - specifically what I planned to do with my degree. I responded, “I hope to find gainful employment.” He laughed and said, “Okay, now we can begin.” Billy Bob told me about his morning, which he related meant he had to take care of a paralyzed brother and a convalescing mother who had a heart attack. In explaining what that involved he commented, “If I had a sister this wouldn’t be a problem.” After taking care of his family Billy Bob had sideswiped a mailbox, denting the entire right side of his truck. He was very upset about the whole string of events. I complimented Billy Bob on the cleanliness of the school. He took great pride in how well the old school was maintained and remarked, “It was one of things that I learned in the military.” At this point I asked him to characterize his relationship with the superintendent. He answered,

I think it is fantastic. I respect her. I think she has brought respect to the district. She is a hands on type superintendent she gets out in the schools. She communicates with her staff. She visits classrooms. I have an excellent relationship with her.

The first two sentences directly answered the question I had asked him; however, his clarifying remarks left me to question why he had made them since they were not directly related to the question. What I later realized in analyzing the data is that he thought their relationship was fantastic because she met his criteria for a superintendent – he respected her, she visited the schools, she communicated – thus they have a fantastic relationship. I noted at the time of the interview that perhaps this comment fell into the results of their previous working relationship as administrators. I then asked what was it like to work for this superintendent. He answered,

Well, I think it is good in part because we learned to work together previously –we earned a respect of each other. I think it was a mutual respect that we got through working together. We knew each other and knew what each one of us stood for...and knew what our goals were...and we both had our students’ best interest at heart.

This was the first indication that their exchanges and relationships were perhaps at a higher-quality. I was hoping to find additional support that their relationship had developed a greater trust and respect for each other allowing them to be focused on organizational objectives. I had to ask more questions to find out. Next, I asked him to characterize his working relationship

with past superintendents. His answer was surprisingly short based on his experience in the district. He said,

Well, I will just briefly. Now the first superintendent (Steve Smith) I worked for pretty much brought Baldwin County from the dark ages to the forefront. The next superintendent (James Jones) was very thorough, very respected superintendent stayed in two terms and had an excellent relationship with him. Then Brad Barnes came on board – and Brad certainly had the same values and perpetuated the same things. Mr. Dinkens was a nice man but did not fit that same mold.

Billy Bob gave his opinion about each of the previous superintendents but did not directly answer the question. Perhaps he thought that in giving his opinion he had given me enough information to infer his working relationship with each of them. I noted my suspicion was that he did not completely trust the confidentiality of this research project and elected to “play it safe.” I pressed him further and asked what formal and informal authority this superintendent had in her present positions in regards to him. He answered,

She is my supervisor. But we talk to each other but not in formal meetings. She comes down and visits – we walk around and talk and sometimes I go to the county office and I – like yesterday I stopped in and we sat down and I talked. I don’t keep anything hidden at all – I mean I keep it all out on the table and every time I have an adversarial situation and here being a small district what they like to do is run from here to the superintendent’s office I try to give them a heads up on what is going on before it gets there if I can and sometimes I get blindsided and don’t even know and she might call me and this is what has happened but if I have a situation or see a problem I try to communicate it immediately. I say you are probably going to get a phone call or a visit, you know.

Billy Bob began his answer with the affirmation of the hierarchical order in the district; however, it appeared to him the informal talks they had together may have been different from others. Unfortunately, when I observed Betty Lou at the different schools, the behaviors of Betty Lou and the principals were pretty much on par with what I had observed between Billy Bob and Betty Lou. I always knew when she really wanted to talk to a principal because she would ask the individual to take a walk with her. It appeared Betty Lou preferred the privacy of walking the

school grounds to talking in a principal's office. Therefore, the informal style of meeting was not exclusive to this relationship. I also knew from my observations that Billy Bob immediately called Betty Lou when an incident occurred and asked for input towards resolution. This, of course, was at the opposite end of the spectrum from Cora Mae.

The interview continued when I asked him when this superintendent had used her power to help solve problems at work. He responded,

Well, had a situation and this seems trivial and this one jumps out at me as far as running the school this seems trivial but we had a parent that was up here and in fact the same one I got the phone call from earlier who his wife came up here and just lambasted – going to get a lawyer and we are going to sue and everything else because their child did not make the softball team and she didn't have to do this but she did – she came in and sat down and endured the same thing and then took the woman to her office and got it pretty much taken care of.

Ironically, earlier the previous week, Billy Bob had called on Betty Lou to assist him in handling two situations on the campus – one involved an electrical fire in a classroom and the other involved a poisonous snake on the main breezeway. In both instances the issues were resolved with her assistance. I was left to speculate if Billy Bob realized how much it appeared he depended on Betty Lou's power. I next asked if there was a difference working with this superintendent and the previous superintendents. He answered,

This superintendent is very strong and much likes the other strong superintendents. You know and I want to be honest – I have not noticed that being a woman makes a difference – I really haven't if there is I haven't noticed it. I think our district is with one exception had very strong male superintendents and Betty Lou is a very strong superintendent and I really – I have never given it a lot of thought. She shares many of the same characteristics of the previous – strong superintendents but she has her own too – she is probably a little bit of a micromanager.

Billy Bob stated that to him there was no difference between her and the previous superintendents. He highlighted the strength in all of them. While to him gender did influence his perspective, he indicated he found Betty Lou to be more of a micromanager. I asked if he knew how satisfied this superintendent was with what he did as a principal. He answered, "Yes because she has kept me on the job." Again his response elicited his perspective of a hierarchical order to

their relationship. I asked if this superintendent recognized his potential. He again stated, “I think she does.” These two very brief statements related volumes in regards to their leadership. While previously he alluded to higher-quality exchanges in their relationship when it came to his performance on the job, he responded with a hierarchical perspective of a worker.

Hoping that my initial hunch would prove wrong, I went on to the next question, which touched on the matter of his trust of this superintendent. He answered, “Yes because I know her – because I have worked with her, because I respect her. And I think she respects me.” Billy Bob defined trust as a matter of knowledge and experience. He respected this superintendent, therefore he trusts; however he was not definitive in his examination of whether or not she trusts him. Again, there was mounting evidence this relationship in based on low-quality exchanges.

Finally, I asked him if he had enough confidence in this superintendent to defend and justify her decisions even if she were not present to do so. He answered,

Absolutely, I had to defend her- try to defend her to as well as I could on the consolidation issue...and so I have tried to do that but it has to be – I can’t get out in public and stand up and you know – do you understand what I am saying? Small town – small community and I don’t need to there is a correct word – polarize myself with certain members of the community and create a hostile environment between me and certain elements of the community over a political issue – does that make sense?

It was perhaps in this final answer that I was able to resolve my observations and analyses of his answers. While Billy Bob had worked closely with this superintendent in other capacities and perhaps knew her better than others, when the final word was said he sensed a hierarchical order with self-preservation in mind. He was a school leader in a political arena, but understood his relationship with this superintendent did not supercede his desires for longevity – at least until he retired. Based on this analysis, I concluded that while the relationship teetered from his perspective between low- and high-quality exchanges, data supported it was based on low-quality exchanges and was more in line with the stranger phase.

Toby Jones- Son of a Superintendent. The next principal I collected data on was Mr. Toby Jones. Toby was a tall, lanky man in his early 40s with jet-black hair. The first two physical attributes I noticed about Toby were his ears and his freckles. Mr. Jones was a quiet man but one who was very comfortable in his own skin. He appeared to be easy going, but underneath it all he

was very competitive and understood his place within the district. Unlike Billy Bob, Toby did not use his family connections to secure a position in the district. He readily admitted he sought employment elsewhere while his father was in office because he did not want to “create a situation for my father.” Toby was the principal at the Carriage PK-8 School. At one of the monthly district meetings, I overheard two principals tease Toby by saying, “Ahh, you don’t have it that rough. After all, you run Carriage PK-8 School. You know that is where we all would like to be.” Toby quickly responded, “You know it is not as easy as you think but I have indeed been very fortunate.” Toby told me that for the sake of his alma mater he would be happy to talk with me.

The first time I drove to Carriage PK-8 School I thought I would never get there. It was at least 15 miles from the other schools but felt more like 100 miles. It was located near a river surrounded by woods. The oldest school building in the district was housed on Carriage PK-8 School’s property. It was totally renovated to accommodate four classes. Ironically one of the teachers in the building occupied the same room her grandmother and father had occupied. She worked at the same desk they both had used as teachers. Carriage PK-8 School was also the land of portables – there was more square footage in the total number of portables than in the main school building. The main school building was built in the 40s and retained most of its’ original fixtures. Everyone in the district was proud of the accomplishment of Carriage School’s students. Toby was no exception.

Toby was married to an elementary school teacher and had two children. He was born and raised in Baldwin County. He attended the Baptist church in Sharpsville. Unlike Billy Bob, Toby chose to live in Sharpsville away from the extended family in Livingston. He attended the local junior college before he earned a bachelor’s and master’s degree at a nearby university. He had approximately 10 years of experience in Baldwin County where he worked as a teacher, guidance counselor/assistant principal and now principal. He had worked directly with three superintendents. Although his father was a former superintendent for the school system, Toby had never worked with him. Toby later told me that his father was the principal at Carriage School when he was a student. He was in his present position when the present superintendent took office. He was a student of the superintendent and was a teacher at the same school in which she was the assistant principal.

It was easy to schedule a time to talk to Toby, but as with any principal’s day he had an unexpected visit, this one from a candidate running for the school board. Toby invited me to join

him on the candidate's tour and then finish our conversation. Watching Toby interact with the students and staff was always entertaining. The students clearly vied for Toby's attention, and the staff went out of their way to talk to him. He knew every detail about the faculty, staff, and students and as he told me, "No detail is too small." Toby liked what he did and it clearly showed when I observed him. When I reviewed and analyzed my memos I realized back at the system wide meeting at the beginning of the year the only faculty that sat together was from Carriage School. I knew that because Betty Lou had asked faculty members to stand up and be recognized when she called out their school. I did not realize at the time how important that one act of solidarity would become in understanding the exceptionality of Carriage School.

Toby was attentive during the candidate's visit and answered each question directly and positively. He was much like a polished politician, which led me to ask whether he considered following in his father's footsteps. He responded, "I'm happy right where I am at, doing what I am doing." I asked Toby to characterize his working relationship with this superintendent. He answered,

Fine, I have seen her from a teacher to a superintendent. She has been around the system and so forth for years and you know – knows the job, knows the jobs that we all face, and is a person you can call and talk to if I need to I call her with to get input on things such as discipline matters.

His answer made me wonder if he was going to answer my questions as he had the school board candidate's inquiries. Clearly Betty Lou's experience in the system made a difference in how he perceived this superintendent. I asked him what was it like to work for this superintendent. He answered,

Much like the others. As generally speaking with respect to superintendents and leadership in this county it has been people that have come in – they have been at all different levels and progressed through they know lots and have worked at lots of different sites and jobs and capacities and work in and among it for years so they've got that working knowledge of experience that's there.

Again this answer spoke to experience as a major indicator for him. Interestingly he did not articulate any difference; this made me believe his exchanges with this superintendent were low-quality. I asked him to clarify his statement by characterizing his working relationship with the previous superintendents. He answered,

Times are lots different as far as expectation and the jobs pertaining to education from superintendent to anything have evolved a tremendous amount since that particular time. There has always been the focus on the classroom and the teacher and having the right person in there. That has always been a major – that has always been our strength in this county in my opinion was people trying to get the right person in the right position.

I mean from our superintendents - the ones that I have worked for - they have always been people that I could talk to, people that if I had a conversation with a parent and it didn't go real well and I knew it was going to the next level that I could call any one of them - and tell them look here I will need to bring you up to pace because you are probably going to get a call or a visit and I have to tell you this is what's happened and you are going to hear this complaint again sometime in the near future I expect. So, it always been a situation in which it was a person that you could talk with, that was not removed from the school's situations, the communities in which they are going to – you know throw you to the wolves or try to just tell them something to appease somebody they generally tried to work through the matter. And sometimes they would say – get on to me if it was necessary or needed or if it was something I needed to change or do or do different or maybe a way I could handled something differently. Or...also from the standpoint of explaining why maybe we did act this way and this is the policy and nobody means to disenfranchise anyone for any particular reason but we made this decision and this policy is because of this and I am sorry that it has worked out this way this time but we are doing this in an effort maybe – whatever.

So our folks have always been people you can talk with and are supportive and do whatever they could to help you or to provide you with something that you need or whatever. So it has been a similar circumstance all the way through.

Based on this response I was beginning to believe that indeed Toby engaged in low-quality exchanges with this superintendent. What appeared to be important to him was the common thread throughout the superintendents, namely the ability to communicate and support long-standing district visions. I asked him about the formal and informal authority of this superintendent in regard to him. He responded,

Bottom line, she is the boss and I am on an annual contract and she can do what she wants to but she – I don't think – she doesn't want to operate that way she does not want to – she's I think feels or acts along the same lines of you work with people not just turn them on and off like a light switch. You talk with them – you work with them – you communicate with them.

His response indicated to me he viewed the authority of this superintendent to lie within a hierarchical spectrum. He tried to take the dehumanizing aspect away from this perspective when he remarked that he believed she did not want to operate in that manner. I, therefore, asked him when this superintendent had used her power to help him solve a problem at work. He responded, "Yes, and I would think she has done that with all the principals at some time or another." He acknowledged the superintendent had used her power to help him but offset that statement with the idea that she had done the same for all the principals. It was becoming apparent he did not view their relationship as any different from what she had with the other principals.

I asked Toby if there was a difference working with this superintendent and the previous ones. He answered,

I would have to say - yes and no - at the same time. She holds the same values as the others but there is a difference between a male and female superintendent. It is in the little things – detail things – little things – from – women notice things more so than men do – little detailed things and so forth. I would say one of the things - and it is something that I believe has been - and it has been something brought to my attention more is dress by faculty. I think men are more oblivious to that and I think that was the something that's a little different. I think women notice other women and what they are wearing and if it is proper business attire. and that - whereas I think men are more oblivious to that a little bit. That is just an example. But it is detailed things I see as the biggest difference between the men that we have had and the female that we now have. As far as educational decisions and things of that - I mean I think that is more of an experience I don't think that is a gender thing you know I think that is more of an experience thing for decision making. But little detail things like the courthouse basement was renovated.

Toby stated the superintendents held the same values but he did see a difference between Betty Lou's leadership and the others, which was based on gender. Again, the results of this

interview picked up on the notion that a woman leader paid more attention to the details of the business as well as the décor. I moved on to the next question. I asked Toby if he knew how satisfied this superintendent was with him. He answered, “I think so. After all, I still have a job.” Again, his response indicated a hierarchical sense of order for him. So, I asked if this superintendent recognized his potential. He answered,

Fine I guess. She had talked to me about moving me she wants to stretch you – you know and get you use to other things. Don’t need to get too use to one thing and with that – and I have talked with her and I told her this... whenever we talked about it last year. I think that is good to a point – I don’t think you should uproot and change for just the sake of uprooting and change because I think a person is going to give you their best in a situation where they are happy and where they are comfortable to some degree and I think that –you know that is a consideration that needs to be taken into account as well and I think that is part of the reason our district has done well like with like we were talking about with the superintendents and so forth you know. I think most folks have had that philosophy.

Here, Toby hints at his apparent difference in opinion with the superintendent. While he thought the superintendent recognized his potential based on her willingness to move him laterally, he tried to let me know that he had a different perspective on that approach. He stated that he told her how he felt but then couched this comment in the supporting evidence in past successes and inclusion of other people. I asked Toby about his trust in the superintendent. He answered,

Yes, because I have seen her for years – observation, personal experience. You trust a person and then you trust a person in their job as well if you know and trust them as a person there is going to be a greater likelihood that you will trust them as an employer.

Again, as other individuals had indicated, they trust this superintendent because she has been in the system for a long time. Toby alluded to personal experience but did not clarify when prompted. I asked Toby if he had enough confidence to defend and justify the superintendent’s decisions even if she were not present. He answered,

I think the key into that would be do I agree with – am I in support of the decision that she made. If I am in agreement with her - no question...if I am in

disagreement with her I can explain and I could argue her reasons for that because I may could see and understand that. I might would recognize why that decision was made that particular way. Might not have been my personal preference but you know like Psalms says sometimes unanswered prayers are what you need so... I trust the person to make the decision and, therefore, if that decision that they have made and I feel like they made it for the right reasons whether I agree with it or not I could still explain or defend to somebody why that may have been done that way.

Toby responded to this question with support from his Christian belief system and a personal belief that those higher up would make the best decisions. This answer alluded to his trust in a hierarchical order – after all they were in that superior position for a reason. While this answer revealed how he felt, it did not give any evidence that the exchanges he had with Betty Lou were more than that associated with their job functions. The repeated reference to hierarchical status substantiated this evidence. There was never a notation within the observations that indicated that exchanges between these two individuals went beyond the job function. Therefore I concluded that their exchanges were low-quality and the relationship appeared to be in the stranger phase.

Alfred Alford – the Politician. The next principal I studied was Mr. Alfred Alford at Mt. Vernon Comprehensive School. Alfred was a tall, slender older gentleman with white hair and glasses. Alfred was always dressed in khaki slacks, a white long-sleeve button-down shirt with the sleeves rolled up, and a tie. His shoes were clearly made for walking and he had put some miles on them. Mr. Alfred was friendly and outgoing. He was easy to meet and truly interested in the research. He was married and had one grown child. He lived in Livingston and attended the local Baptist church in Sharpsville.

He was born and raised in Baldwin County. He attended a nearby university where he obtained a Bachelor's and Master's degree. He was a teacher early in his life, but left teaching to join the family construction business when he started his family. While working in his family business, he served two and a half terms as a school board member. He lost his seat when the county voters decided to go from board members-at-large to single member districts. After he retired from the family business, Alfred became a central office administrator and later moved into the principalship. He had approximately eight years of service with the school district and had

worked with three superintendents. He was a fellow principal with the present superintendent, was a school board member when she was a teacher at the middle school, and was a teacher at the time she was a student. The present superintendent moved him into his present position shortly after she took office.

Alfred's experience in the construction industry came in handy when he became principal at Mt. Vernon. When the maintenance staff couldn't get to his school, he was able to resolve most of the problems himself. One problem that he was powerless to resolve was a citation from the Environmental Protection Agency for unsafe levels of petroleum vapors in one wing of the "newer" building. What this meant for Alfred was closing down that wing and relocating those classrooms. What frustrated him was the fact that the petroleum tanks had been removed years before and there was not sign of existing spillage. He monitored the installation of the in-ground ventilation system. He believed that once the site was tested again, he would be able to move the classrooms back thus eliminating crowding in another area.

Whenever I visited Mt. Vernon I always saw Alfred outside talking with students, checking out the classrooms, and picking up the grounds. It was clear he enjoyed the outside openness of the school to his closed-in office. Alfred opened up his school to me and allowed me to wander around at my leisure - after I checked in with the front office. This privilege was not granted to me at any other school. Mt. Vernon was comprised of nine out buildings in addition to the modular classrooms. The most prominent building was the original old white two-story school building. This building reminded me of my grandfather's schoolhouse, and I was astounded to see that it was occupied. My grandfather's school had been torn down over ten years ago.

At Mt. Vernon the old white building still housed the high school. Inside its hallways were graduating class pictures dating back to the 1920s. Age had not been good to the building. While the community steadfastly protected the building it was clear major repairs were in order. While observing one of the teachers in an upstairs classroom, I noticed a metal heavy gauge wire running across the ceiling. Curious, I followed the wire to the other side of the building. As luck would have it a maintenance worker was on the partial roof doing some repairs at that time. I leaned out the window and asked him about the wire. He remarked very simply, "That is what is holding this building together." He was hard at work so I went back to my observations.

One last item I noted several times in my visits to Mt. Vernon was the fact that the school was located off a major highway. Ironically, there were no chain link fences around the school

with the typical barbed wire. When I asked Alfred about this he stated, “Well, really there is no reason for a fence. We don’t need to keep our kids in...or people out. That is one of the benefits of a true community school. Unfortunately, we have put up security cameras in the back around the bus ramp. We may one day have to fence our school in but not right now.”

Alfred had his hands full. It was his second year as principal of the school and turmoil had been with him since the first day. Betty Lou had transferred the previous principal to another school. This previous principal had led the school for 18 years and was a “local gal.” While the community supported the transfer for the most part, the faculty and staff were not so forgiving. Alfred had to literally win the faculty and staff over to him and put to rest the rumors that he was the superintendent’s “lackey.” The first year had been rough but he survived well. No sooner had the dust settled from that controversy than school consolidation hit the School Board. As Betty Lou pointed out, the consolidation would not close down Mt. Vernon School. It would have meant the high school portion of the school would move out of the old white building and into a new high school, along with Sharpsville High School. Nonetheless, the community of Mt. Vernon held anti-consolidation meetings and plastered the local newspaper with scathing editorials against the move. While some were against consolidation for identity reasons, others were against it just because it meant a change. Perhaps the most controversial element of the anti-consolidation movement were the rumors that race was at the heart of it; after all, Sharpsville High School had black students while Mt. Vernon had only one or two. A nearby city newspaper had picked up on the rumors and published it, much to the chagrin of the Mt. Vernon residents. Weary from all this turmoil, Alfred had to tread lightly to institute the changes he saw as necessary for the school to pull up students’ achievement.

Since I had knowledge of all these events, I was very interested to see how Alfred would handle all these prying questions in regard to his relationship with the superintendent. I asked Alfred to characterize his working relationship with the superintendent. He answered,

It is very good. Ms. Hartford, when she came on board - I was principal at the another school and there was some changes and she moved me here which at that time it made me feel like that maybe I wasn’t doing the job and she assured me that was not it and it made me feel like maybe I had done half a job and wasn’t through – you always have plans and goals and whatever else. I know that we had gone from a C to a B and you know you want to go on up to an A school and you have

all these plans with whatever you are doing. Like I am now with this school so it all turned out fine – I was a little disappointed that I didn't get to stay there but I looked forward to the challenge of being at this school and it has been rewarding.

Alfred was not sure as to why he had been transferred to Mt. Vernon, even though he had been assured that it was not because he hadn't been doing the job. I asked a central office administrator about Mt. Vernon's reputation. He simply stated,

That school was always good to me. I know that at any time I can go up there and be invited to dinner. In fact, if I didn't stay for dinner it would be an insult. I grew up at that school. But, it is a tough little community that will have things their own way.

I pressed the administrator further especially in light of what Alfred had said and asked if being sent to Mt. Vernon would be considered an ideal assignment. This administrator responded, "Now, why would you ask a question like that?" I remained quiet, hoping I had not crossed some magical line. I noted to myself to tread lightly from this point on. He continued, "But you are probably picking up that school can be tough to lead. It takes the right person and the right time. They really don't like change and they really just want to be left alone." That was all I dared to ask him about the situation. It was clear to me that Alfred's hesitations and doubts were warranted. Based upon his response to this question, I inferred that Alfred did not have a close enough relationship with Betty Lou to really understand the change, thus the self-doubt.

I next asked him what it was like to work for this superintendent. He answered, "Ms. Hartford is a go-getter and, bottom line, it is about the children of the district." I then asked him to characterize his working relationship with past superintendents. He answered,

Steve Smith was a very hands on type person – he would visit the schools and help almost micro manage – I mean today you would call it micro manage the system. He gave the principals a lot of leeway but he knew what was going on – he was very hands on as far as decision-making – he knew what was going on – it was a slower time and he was able to do that. He was very good at crunching the numbers and he made time to be in on policy hearings. I enjoyed working with him. He taught me a lot. Mr. Smith was the product of the depression and real conservative background where a dollar - he was conservative to the point of being a detriment so he was a real conservative but he had real goals for this

county. I remember one of the early discussions we had he said the facilities weren't very good when he got it much like we are with Ms. Hartford right now and he said, we didn't even have air conditioning in our schools back then when he first came on and I was a teacher and he hired to come in and do the help him with those vocational programs and it was at one of the schools – he had definite goals I remember saying – salaries were low – he said I am going to get these facilities fixed up and then I am going to work on teacher's salaries and he did and salaries did increase during his time tremendously but his conservative nature made it happen and it was a good thing and it came at the right time. He remodeled a lot of schools... maybe not build a lot of schools - but every school was remodeled to a certain level and he did do some building and later years in his administration we built the high school and these facilities at another school.

The next superintendent I worked for was Mr. Dinkens. His leadership style was more laid back and he put all the responsibility on the principal – he backed his principals but he made them make the decisions too and he wasn't much of a hands-on person as Ms. Hartford is as far as school direction and this kind of stuff. He had high expectations but he didn't – it was up to the principal pretty much to get there.

Alfred was able to articulate his perspective of each of the superintendents as asked. It appeared as though his working relationship with Mr. Smith was different in that he learned from this superintendent. Interestingly he stated that he had enjoyed working with Mr. Smith, which he did not state with the other two. I asked Alfred what type of formal and informal authority this superintendent had in regard to him. He answered in one sentence, "Principals serve at the pleasure of the superintendent." This answer definitely indicated Alfred's perspective of the hierarchical order of the district. It appeared to him the superintendent held all the authority in regard to his position.

I next asked if the superintendent had ever used her power to help him solve problems at work. Based on the data I had collected about the school I was very interested to hear his response. He answered,

She is always there – she is real good about when I have a problem and I feel an obligation to let her know what is going on especially with issues that may come

before her. Well people are quick to call the superintendent they elected her and they have the final say especially in a rural area like this if it is nothing more than taking a child's cap and they are apt to call the superintendent and it does – it puts a lot of pressure on her because she is the superintendent she is responsible to the public and for her not to get involved in that cap that has been taken away from a child at school it is politically – it will kill you in a small area so she has special problems and I recognize that and I in turn I need to solve as many problems as I can before they get to her and so I do feel the pressure to do that it is not that I don't want her to know about it or anything but she has other things that as educational leader for Baldwin County she needs to be doing – it is kind of like being principal when you get bogged down in discipline all day and you are not able to visit the classrooms and stuff like that and be that educational leader you know you haven't done the job you could have done (lawnmower crossing in front of window) so from that standpoint it is a – there are a lot of challenges in a rural area.

I found this response interesting. He really didn't answer the question directly, but he articulated that he felt he had an obligation to let her know about the problems. In two of my visits to the school with Betty Lou, I witnessed Alfred present two issues to her. While he clearly stated the facts of the events he left any decision making up to her. He asked her on both occasions how she wanted the matters handled. Later I reviewed the data on the other principals, and with the exception of Cora Mae, the other principals behaved in the same manner. While it is true that in a small district the superintendent is much more available, I wondered why they depended on Betty Lou for input on detailed situations. Later when I reanalyzed this data I realized that Alfred had given me insight into that question. In essence, for four of the principals everything that happened at a school ended up at the superintendent's office.

I asked Alfred if there was a difference working for this superintendent and previous superintendents. He told me,

I think all three are concerned about the children even though all three had different talents and personalities and ideas of how it should be done or how I should accomplish that task. I think it is more in the process than it is in their desire to see our students excel. Ms. Hartford, she has been principal in another

district so she has been able to see what is going on there to on a day-to-day basis, which is an advantage for her. But I do I believe she has the best interest of our children at heart. The process people are going to disagree with any process you come up because everybody has a better wheel but as long as the goal is the same and we don't mess around too long with something that is not working we will get there. Personally, gender does not matter to me but I think it matters to some people in the way they disagree with what is going on. I do think she pays attention to more details than the other two and that has been my experience with other women leaders. But overall I don't really think it makes a difference.

Alfred gave me a lot of insight in this one answer. He maintained that all the superintendents had the same general goal. He felt that the difference was in the process of getting to that goal. He commented on the state of disagreement, which clearly reflected his current experience. He did articulate that gender made a difference in the community. While I tried to find out about his relationships, I believe that in his own way he justified some of his own thoughts in the process – generally this woman superintendent was more detail oriented. It appeared he felt his working relationship with all of them had been at the same level. Therefore, it is safe to assume he was not any closer to this superintendent than the others.

I next asked him how satisfied this superintendent was with him. He answered, “Yes, I am still working in this school system.” Clearly his answer addressed the hierarchical nature of his relationship with the superintendent. He basically felt that since he was employed she must be satisfied. I asked him how well the superintendent understood his job problems and needs. Expecting a very lengthy response he only said,

Oh yes – she has been a principal so she understands real well what you are going through with – she has been there and has done that – I don't know the only experience she probably doesn't have is the same way I was when I came to this school – she probably doesn't have the elementary experience but as far as the other she has.

Alfred again stayed within the realm of job functions and experience in those functions. Even though I was not a resident of the community, I clearly had uncovered hints that working at Mt. Vernon was different. In light of the current events that had been in the paper, Alfred could have been alluding to community involvement in the school; and the special problems that

presented. Alfred never directly alluded to these issues and maintained that the superintendent had once been a principal, thus she had to understand. Clearly, his relationship with Betty Lou was not one in which he confided his innermost concerns, or perhaps he was excluding that information from the interview. I carefully re-examined my observation notes – Betty Lou had never walked off with Alfred to exclude me from hearing what was going on. I can only conclude that indeed what Alfred said triangulated these observation notes.

I asked Alfred if the superintendent recognized his potential. He replied, “I think she recognizes my potential – we are kind of in stages – I am at the end of my career probably and she is still in hers strong. I say that but I may be here 20 years.” Again, Alfred was not able to give a definitive answer with corresponding evidence. It appeared Alfred’s exchanges with this superintendent are low-quality, heavily influenced by his perception of a hierarchical order to the system.

I next asked Alfred about his trust in this superintendent. He answered, “I do. She has never given me reason not to do. Even – and she will tell you this – she knows I did not want to leave the previous school to come here but it ended up being a good decision. I think I have been good for this school as well.” It appeared, based on this answer, Alfred trusted an individual as long as there was no perception of mistrust. In other words, if he didn’t mistrust a person than he felt he could trust them. Based on that information it did not appear to me that he could trust this superintendent based on his own experience with her, only that she gave him no reason to mistrust her. In addition, it appeared Alfred felt he had sacrificed his own self-interest in his career for the better good of the district’s goals. He made it clear that, although he did it willingly, based on his previous answer I believe he felt if he didn’t accept the move to the new school he would not have a job.

I asked Alfred if he had enough confidence in this superintendent to defend and justify her decisions even if she were not present to do so. He answered,

Yes. I support Mrs. Hartford and what she is trying to do because I think she wants the best for the children of this county. I really believe do believe she wants the best for the kids of the county.

In this answer Alfred indicated his belief that the superintendent’s actions were towards the goals of the district – to do what was best for the children. He did not give any information in this statement that he had actually believed in what she was doing because he had conversations

with her about her motives. I came across my observation notes in regard to a girls' volleyball game between the two high schools in the district. While I did not attend the entire session, I watched part of the game between the two varsity teams. During the game students from each school held up signs that had the following slogan, "We are against consolidation." Betty Lou saw the signs and told both principals to stop their students for the sake of safety. While the other principal quickly followed through, Alfred asked Betty Lou, "What about their First Amendment rights?" I did not hear the rest of the conversation, but as I analyzed this answer I realized that indeed Alfred, at times, may not be able defend Betty Lou's actions based on his assumption that all her actions are towards the goals of the district.

It was at that volleyball game that I was told by a parent that Alfred ran for the superintendency in 2000. According to this parent, Alfred and Betty Lou ran against each other on the Democratic ticket with Betty Lou winning the primary. Betty Lou then lost the election to David Dinkens, her cousin, in the general election. This parent speculated that Alfred threw his support to David Dinkens. It was interesting to me that Alfred and Betty Lou never mentioned this in the interviews; however, undoubtedly the results of that election did add another layer to their relationship.

Alfred was in a very hard spot during my observations and clearly he did not feel that he could divulge to me his innermost thoughts in the interviews. I could only speculate on his responses based on my observations. Alfred enjoyed his job and wanted to keep it. That was clear to me. In regard to his relationship with Betty Lou, there was nothing in my observations and his interview that indicated they engaged in anything but low-quality exchanges. His responses indicated he felt the superintendent's hierarchical status had the most impact on him. It was clear to me that current events at the school and in the district strained their relationship; however, neither ever directly responded to my questions about past events. Based on the analysis of this data it was clear to me that Betty Lou and Alfred had a stranger relationship.

Ted Tonka – the Avoider. The last principal I studied for this project was Mr. Ted Tonka. Ted was the principal of Sharpsville High School. He was married and the father of one child. He revealed in an interview that he had a child born with special needs; however, that child died at an early age. He said, "That is something you don't get over." Ted was a middle aged, balding gentleman who wore glasses. He was always dressed smartly in dress slacks, a long sleeved dress shirt, and tie. His clothes were always pressed and even showed the press line at the end of the

day. He was always manicured and his shoes were at all times polished as if they had been spit-shined. Ted was born and raised in a nearby county. He attended a nearby junior college and later transferred to the closest university, where he obtained his Bachelor's degree. He earned his Master's degree in Educational Leadership at the same time as Cora Mae. He had been a teacher, assistant principal and now principal. He was a football and baseball coach before he joined the administrative ranks. He had autographed baseball cards and photographs displayed on his office walls. In addition to these prominent items, he had a picture of his daughter playing softball. Ted had approximately 25 years of experience in Baldwin County and had worked with five superintendents. He had served as assistant principal to the present superintendent at both the middle school and high school. The present superintendent moved him into his present position shortly after she took office. He lived in a neighboring county.

Before I met Ted I was told by one of the teachers I interviewed, "Ted is Betty Lou's boy. Whatever she wants he will do. He is not a very good principal though, because discipline is his weakness." I had observed Ted at Sharpsville High School on six different occasions. I noticed he wore the school keys on a lanyard around his neck, much like the women teachers at the school. He was the only principal I observed who engaged in this behavior. Ted was always talking to someone when I observed him. Sometimes it was a student, once in a while it was a teacher, but most often he was talking to one of the coaches. Ted always engaged in another behavior when I walked up to him, as if to avoid contact with me. I found it difficult to hold a conversation with him unless other people were present. Unlike in Alfred's case, I had to have an appointment to visit the school, and the person I was to visit had to be told when I arrived. I always found the school grounds neat and well maintained. The students were extremely friendly and always a little curious about me. I felt comfortable in the hallways of Sharpsville High, but perhaps that was because I spent my teaching career in a high school.

I had to reschedule my interview with Ted two times. The only reason I was concerned over the rescheduling was because it was a month between appointment times, and I was concerned about triangulating the collected data. The first appointment was rescheduled because the boys' football team made it to the play-offs. The second appointment was rescheduled because he had a special assembly. As always, I made sure the next one was convenient for him. When I finally interviewed Ted, the entire process took less than 30 minutes. Clearly, he did not want to say too much to me. I can only speculate that he was concerned that any information he

told me would get back to Betty Lou, even though I had clearly explained the confidentiality of the research.

Our conversation began with me asking him to characterize his working relationship with the superintendent. He answered,

Very good relationship. It is one that we have been working on together for years and years we both understand how each other work. I use to tell her that when she would get rolling on something that I would kind of slow her down and maybe (phone ringing) we needed to think this thing a little bit better. And then she would give me a good kick in the seat of the pants to get me rolling.

Based on this statement, it was clear that Betty Lou and Ted had developed a working relationship that appeared to be based on mutual respect and obligation to each other. He felt as if they offset each other's weaknesses. This was a sign that perhaps a mature partnership existed between Betty Lou and a member of her administrative team. I asked him what it was like working for this superintendent. He answered,

Like I said before, I have worked for her so long that it has pretty much stayed the same. I enjoy working with her and really understand where she is coming from. We just have good understanding of each other and that makes a big difference.

Again the response seemed to indicate to him that their working relationship was one of mutual respect and understanding. I asked him how he characterized his working relationship with past superintendents. He responded,

Mr. Smith was very authoritarian. He is the person (phone ringing) that brought the district into really sound financial, really sound academically. He retired after 20 years and Mr. Jones took his place – Mr. Jones was a little more laid back and not nearly as threatening – I don't like to use that word – but he was a little more laid back and little easier to talk to. Mr. Barnes that took his place was authoritarian but also he thought things through real well (knocking on door). Mr. Dinkens that took his place was pretty much a manager he just let all his principals and all of his directors to pretty much run things. And he pretty much handled people.

This was an interesting response to me. Clearly the previous relationships had been based on a hierarchical system until Mr. Dinkens. Mr. Dinkens was more of a manager. What Ted did

not indicate was whether he had a close relationship with any of these superintendents. Perhaps this was more evidence of a mature relationship between Betty Lou and him. To really test him, I asked what type of formal and informal authority this superintendent had in her present position in regard to him. He replied, “She is my supervisor and makes the final decisions in regard to my career.” This was not the response I had anticipated. If their relationship had continued to be close I would have expected to hear less emphasis on the hierarchical status of her authority. As it was, it appeared he now viewed the relationship through a boss/employee lens. I continued and asked him if the superintendent had used her power to help him resolve problems in his work. He answered, “Absolutely. In a small rural district people are always going to the superintendent. She is very good about keeping me informed if someone comes to her about me.” This response relayed a concern for self-preservation of his career. In other words, it was important to him that he knew when someone went to see her and this discussion was about him. Perhaps he was not as secure in his relationship with the superintendent as he had previously indicated.

I then asked him if there was a difference working with this superintendent and the previous ones. He answered, “The thing that I always say is that she is on duty 24/7. That is just her personality. As far as anything else I really haven’t noticed.” At this point I noted that I was concerned that he was not going to give me the full story. Again, there was nothing in this comment that would lead me to believe their exchanges were ever anything but low-quality, as I had observed. Granted, concern and mistrust of a researcher could have been part of the issue. I then asked if he knew how satisfied this superintendent was with what he did. He answered, “Yes, I am still working in this school system.” This statement supported what I had observed in the field. Betty Lou did not treat this principal any differently than the other four. Ted, in spite of his statements about a close working relationship, was now giving answers that supported evidence of a hierarchical status between the two.

I asked Ted how well this superintendent understood his job problems. He answered, “She understands them very well. She has sat in this seat and in this office. She understands the special dynamics of this school and the challenges those dynamics present to me on a daily basis.” In essence, he indicated that she understood his problems only because she had been in his position. This indicated perhaps that had she not sat in that chair she would not have understood his problems. There was nothing to support he communicated his problems to her in any way. Rather, his behaviors around Betty Lou had been one of limited conversation. Next, I asked if this

superintendent recognized his potential. He replied, “We have worked so long together that she knows my strengths and weaknesses.” This indicated that their relationship had perhaps become static. It was hard for me to believe that over the years since they had last worked together he had not engaged in any professional development that had in some way changed his leadership. Perhaps he had not, but again this seemed to be more evidence that the present relationship reflected more of the past for him.

I ask Ted about his trust in this superintendent. He answered, Sure. Just based on the trust that we have built up over the years, and she has always been one that has given me the opportunity. She wanted me when she became a principal one time. I was the one that she wanted to be her assistant and even when she came to another school she wanted to bring me with her. The superintendent at that time wouldn’t let her.

It appeared Ted recognized that his career was closely tied to that of this superintendent. As her career had progressed so had his. This understanding indicated that perhaps this relationship had enhanced his self-interest in career development. His response did not indicate that they had worked together toward a common goal that was paramount during the time they had spent together as an administrative team. What I found lacking in his response was a commitment to the greater good of the school district; rather, I interpreted his response to be one resemble of self-interested goals.

I asked Ted if he had enough confidence in this superintendent to defend and justify her actions even when she was not present. He answered, “Oh definitely, I have especially on the consolidation issue.” The consolidation issue directly impacted his school. If consolidation went through his school would merge with Mt. Vernon’s high school. The Mt. Vernon community was outspoken against consolidation; however, the community around Sharpsville High appeared to be silently in support of consolidation. In stating his support he was not affirming a stance that was politically unsound.

At the following principal’s meeting Betty Lou talked about the new state policy mandated to recognize teachers in a financial incentive program. While she went over the details of the plan and what Baldwin County had to do in order to comply, she mentioned her appraisal of last year’s school grades. In a matter of fact manner, Betty Lou stated that the grades had to improve or there would have to be some changes. That statement hung in the air, and I placed

huge question marks in my notes. Only later, when I analyzed the collected data on Ted Tonka, did I realize that at the time of my interview he had probably already heard that statement from Betty Lou. Therefore, based on the analysis of all the collected data it appeared that from Ted's perspective that his relationship with the superintendent was stagnant from the time they had worked together as a school administrative team. It would have been simple to label his perspective on the relationship to be one engaged in high-quality exchanges and based on a mature partnership, based on the majority of his interview; however, the interview was only a small portion of the data I collected. I am certain that Ted's responses were guarded, and he was not willing to divulge his complete thoughts. I struggled with this perspective, but once I walked away from the data and returned after another month in the field, I realized that indeed the underlying information was that Ted was not as certain in his present relationship with this superintendent. His observed behaviors and most statements in his interview supported that he was now engaged in low-quality exchanges, which made him perceive their relationship in a hierarchical status. Their relationship at one time may have been a mature partnership but now it was at the stranger level.

Betty Lou's Perspective

I have interwoven Betty Lou's observed behaviors and statements in with this section because so much of the interactions had to be told to explain the principals' interviews. Throughout my data collection I knew that Betty Lou respected the position of the principal. Immediately upon visiting a school she went directly to the front office. She always checked in with the school secretary and inquired about the principal. If the principal was available, she initiated a conversation and stated why she was at the school. If the principal was not in, she let the school secretary know why she was at the site before she proceeded.

During this research Betty Lou visited each of the schools throughout each week. There was only one school she frequently visited more than the others. When I asked her about this occurrence, she stated her heart was at that school and it had the "sweetest children"; she had been a teacher and administrator at the school. Like her relationships with the central office administrators, Betty Lou maintained a standard meeting time and open lines of communication. She interacted professionally and stated directly the business at hand. She stated to me on numerous occasions that she understood the problems and concerns that each of the principals face, and in some cases more so than the principal assigned to the school.

Betty Lou made a principal change early in her administration. While it was not a popular decision at Mt. Vernon Comprehensive School, she clearly articulated her reasons and stated simply that the change was necessary for the good of all the students at the school. It seemed the principal treated some students better than others. She also admitted that making the change was difficult because it created other changes that unsettled a lot of people. But in the bottom line way that she had of articulating her goals and plans, it was a situation that needed to be rectified.

Betty Lou stated rather quickly and succinctly the strengths and weaknesses of her current principal team. She had clearly analyzed the current situation and had drafted a plan if the school grades did not improve this upcoming evaluation. Much like her previous statements in regard to her central office administrators, she understood the challenges and problems of this group but did not include the word “trust” in her conversations about them. Based on the analyses and interpretation of the data collected on this group of individuals, it was clear to me that Betty Lou perceived her relationship to be the same with all of her principals. She was this way in part because she had a very strong sense of fairness. In other ways, it was her bottom line approach towards the achievement of the students in her district. She knew a principal was doing the job correctly when the students were achieving. All her interactions with the principals that I observed were low-quality and based on the functions of the job. Even in the solitude of our car rides, Betty Lou said the same thing, “The hardest thing about a small county is that sometimes you have to make tough decisions. I never want anyone to think I am not aware of what needs to be done and that I am not afraid to take the necessary actions.”

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn based on the analysis and interpretation of the data collected for this section of the study. The relationships between Betty Lou and the principals were as follows:

- A. Alfred and Toby perceived their relationship with Betty Lou in terms of their prescribed organizational roles, thus creating low-quality exchanges. This perception was triangulated with observations and documents. Cora Mae, Billy Bob, and Ted perceived their relationship in some instances to be beyond the prescribed organizational roles, with a certain level of respect and obligations to Betty Lou. However, I was unable to triangulate these perceptions with data collected through observations and documents. I therefore concluded that their perceptions were based

upon their previous relationships with Betty Lou that may have been mutual partnerships. Unfortunately, I could not substantiate their current relationships at this level and therefore concluded that while at certain times they perceived they had high-quality exchanges, analysis and interpretation of data supported their exchanges were low-quality embedded in a perceived hierarchical environment. Thus, their relationships were now at the stranger phase.

- B. Betty Lou perceived her interactions with all the administrators to be low-quality and closely regulated by the confines of the job descriptions. She admitted she placed her goals for the district above past working relationships. Analysis and interpretation of the data supported Betty Lou's perception of low-quality exchanges associated with the stranger phase of relationship building.
- C. The principals noted a perceived difference in their working relationship with Betty Lou and previous superintendents. Two principals were reluctant to assign the difference to gender; however, when they described their perceptions of differences their descriptors aligned with the identified gender differences articulated by the other three principals. Betty Lou's leadership was perceived as gendered because she was non-threatening, detail-oriented, and hands-on. One principal labeled her as a micro-manger and another admitted her gender made a difference to the community.

The next section presented the findings on the relationships between Betty Lou and the assistant principals. Findings were presented along the three themes of the study: relationships, job performance, and trust. First, the data on the assistant principals' perspectives was presented. Second, the data on Betty Lou's perspectives was presented. Finally, the conclusions based on the analysis and interpretation of the data was presented.

Betty Lou and the Assistant Principals

Introduction

The purpose of this section was to describe the relationships between Betty Lou and the assistant principals. Each school in Baldwin County maintained a web page within the school district's Internet site. Perusal of these pages revealed there were five assistant principals in the school system. Sharpsville Elementary School, Sharpsville Middle School, Sharpsville High School, Mt. Vernon Comprehensive School, and the Concern Alternative School each had one assistant principal. Carriage PK-8 School did not have an assistant principal. I was confused when

I telephoned each school and tried to contact each of these people. Along with the typical issues of outdated contact information, I found that at some of the schools the title for the assistant principal was General Support Curriculum Coordinator. I found out this job title had historical bases within the district and had something to do with certification issues associated with the Department of Education. I could never properly identify which title was used at each school. It appeared that it depended upon the perspective of the person speaking to me. Finally, since I could not delineate between the two titles I gave up and called people in these positions the “assistant principal.” Neither the person in the position nor Betty Lou corrected me when I referred to all of these individuals as assistant principals.

Analysis of notes revealed all assistant principals were easy to get a hold of and were very quick to respond to my attempts for interviews and observations. All five agreed to participate in this study but were quick to point out that I would have to fit into their schedules. I noted that appointments had to be at the assistant principals’ convenience. What I eventually learned from all of them was that it was not a matter of convenience but that schedules were never kept. Each observation and interview was subject to change, and changes occurred quickly. Interviews were either conducted on the run or were filled with interruptions. While each school was different, thus making each job description special, I found a common theme running throughout my notes – these people were busy; their schedules were controlled by school events.

All of the assistant principals at that time of this study were female and only one was African American. Throughout my observation notes and interview there was evidence all readily admitted they contacted each other for support. This behavior was in spite of the fact this group never met formally as a team – not even with Betty Lou. During my time in the field there was only one occasion in which this group was brought together. Unfortunate for me, they were sent for training in another part of the state. I would have liked to observe this group together at some point. Regrettably I was only able to piece together their stories through individual perspectives. The following section unfolds their stories individual by individual.

Baldwell County Assistant Principals

Sue Ellen Gatsby- Next Principal? Sue Ellen Gatsby was the assistant principal at Sharpsville Middle School. Sue Ellen had a slow deliberate way of speaking, peppered with a strong Southern accent. I could tell she was athletic by the slacks and jackets I saw her wear each time I met with her. She was married and had two children. She was born and raised in Baldwin

County. She attended the local junior college and later transferred to a nearby university and earned her Bachelor's degree in elementary education. She received her Master's degree in educational leadership through the cohort system offered within the district. She was a classroom teacher for 10 years at the elementary level in special education and later as a physical education teacher. She was promoted to assistant principal at the middle school. She was in that position for seven years. Sue Ellen mentioned she was in high school when Betty Lou started her teaching career at the high school.

Sue Ellen's office was in the front administrative building. She strategically placed her desk so that when she was in the office she had a clear view of the front counter as well as the school's circular drive reserved for visitors. I rarely found her in her office. I usually found her somewhere on the campus conducting an inspection of the grounds. Sue Ellen appeared to never miss a single action on campus— she was in a constant surveillance mode with her piercing blue eyes. She could stop a student in his or her track with a single glance. A teacher remarked to me, “Students don't mess with Ms. Gatsby.” I also witnessed that piercing look disappear quickly as she hugged a student and issued words of encouragement. I asked Sue Ellen to characterize her relationship with the superintendent. She answered,

I think it is a good relationship. She is a very hands-on superintendent...she is in the schools a great amount of the time. It is nothing for her to pop up out front.

You see her car drive up and in and out – if there is a problem she will call ahead and say be somewhere where she can locate you when she is coming. She is real good to just pop in and she will go into classrooms – she will sit down and eat lunch in the lunchroom - and that is not just here from what I hear it is all over the county.

I was with Betty Lou on one of those occasions when she ate lunch at Sharpsville Middle. That day Betty Lou and Sue Ellen were intensely involved in confirming their schedule to attend the high school girl's volleyball state playoff game. The game was in the southern part of the state so they made plans to drive to the game together in Betty Lou's car. They strategically planned their trip to maximize their workday, and still have time to watch the one game and return home. I asked Betty Lou about this arrangement hoping it meant something special. She remarked, “We are going together because she is going and taking personal time to go down there.”

I asked Sue Ellen what it was like to work for Betty Lou. She answered, “It is very positive. She pushes us, but what she expects of us she expects of herself.” I asked Sue Ellen to clarify what she meant by “us.” She explained it was she and the principal. She viewed them as a team and together they were pushed as a team to make the students at the school excel.

I asked Sue Ellen how she characterized her working relationship with past superintendents. She answered,

Steve Smith was a wonderful money manager. He could kind of be harsh dealing with people but financially he had a great track for that county direction and when he took over things were tight – but there had been some administrations previous to him where it was just show up and put your time in and money was not managed that well, facilities – Steve walked in and the high school building at that point was overcrowded they had to make some changes so that I think they did a bond issue that is how the new elementary – it is what 35 years old and it is still the new elementary to me but that is how it was built was I think off of bond issue but I am sure he stepped on toes doing things like that but he got that new school in and they moved the middle school had previously been June He school which was the black school

After he no longer ran, Jim Jones was superintendent and we lost our principal at that point and we were upset at the elementary because Brad Barnes left to become assistant superintendent...so Mrs. Barnes came in as our principal at the elementary and she was there for about 2 years - and then she went on to the county office for instruction and curriculum and another man came in as principal. Mr. Jones was in for two terms and then Brad Barnes ran for superintendent. Well, I was in the classroom so I knew Mr. Barnes more – I was closer with him but I think James kind of stayed back and let his principals run their schools and I am going to talk about Brad Barnes a little bit. Now see, I am biased because Mr. Barnes was my principal for many years even in elementary school and then I went off and I came back and needed a job and was out a year and he calls me and come talk to him about it and I did and he was remorseful and he said I know it is a lot and you are probably going to have 12 students and I said well whatever I have to do well it ended up with 20 that year by myself first grade through 6th grade and

like I said the only thing that I had and in PE you don't have enough equipment and you have to adapt you do small groups and you rotate them in stations and all this kind of thing well you did it in EMH too – that training helped me and honestly I had good teachers when I came through so I knew reading groups so I did what had been done to me but let's see I think I had 5 reading groups and 4 math groups and 5 spelling groups and it was just getting them work they could do and trying to rotate and get with all of them through the day and it was busy. If I had known anything I would have probably cut my throat, but I didn't know enough to "think this is crazy." But the next year they hired another teacher and we split so we wound up with 12 or 15 a piece at that point.

But that was Mr. Barnes and to me he was the same yesterday as he is today and he will be tomorrow. He is just real steady and I felt like he treated everybody across that faculty equally. I said that working for him was like being under a huge umbrella – he was the umbrella and stuff could rain down and it would bounce off his umbrella and he protected his teachers now if a parent came to him a lot of time you would never know it if it was a complaint or something you would never know it – if he calls you in and talked with you then it was worthy – that parent had a very valid point or he would call you in to see now is this what is going on – he would get your side but if he bothered you it was worthwhile and it was a legitimate concern and worth being addressed – he did not waste your time on trivial mess – there was no back then no initiative to things like that the last initiative that they had at that point was when the had prep specialist brought in – I mean this was way back – there were no initiatives and data and all this stuff right but that I have wrote this several years ago and a letter for him and I don't know what it was about but it was a letter of recommendation but I said that Brad Barnes had school improvement before anybody knew about it or it had a name but he would take test scores every year – then we took the CTBS or whatever and he would come back and he had broke those down – he looked at every teacher's scores and he called them in and talked with them about it and sometime he would move teachers based on that or he might group teachers differently somebody he thought had potential he would bring over and we were in the pod

then and he would make sure they got some mentoring – this young teacher would come in and he would put them with somebody with good test scores and this was not written or it was not research based or anything like that – that we have now he just did it.

No not then...but as the years went on I figured out and I could see the method to this I understand what he is doing. I did recognize when he was up there he had committees each year – you had the bus duty committee and stuff like this but his curriculum committee was the heavy duty folks the people that I knew that were good teachers from across the school – he would have strong reading and strong math and he had that curriculum group – I don't think curriculum was probably his forte but he needed that and he needed these people that he trusted to help drive where he wanted to go the next couple of years but to me he was a very good principal – he handled parents well like I said he was so fair with everybody and I got my share of visits up there – he was just a very good principal to work for.

Now Mr. Dinkens, just my perspective, he was even more hands off with the schools and he was kind of put it on the schools to make decisions and directions.

In characterizing her working relationship with past superintendent, Sue Ellen vividly recalled past memories and incidents. It was apparent to me Sue Ellen understood Mr. Barnes because she had the closest and longest working relationship with him. Mr. Barnes hired Sue Ellen and helped her through her first years as a teacher. She did not share this same level of closeness and understanding with the other superintendents. Indeed, she did not make the same type of statements about Betty Lou.

I asked Sue Ellen what type of formal and informal authority this superintendent had in her present position in regards to her. She answered, “She is my boss and is responsible to the voters in this county for what happens in this school district. She will do whatever it takes to make sure our students have the best education possible.” Again, a reoccurring account in this area was the emphasis on the hierarchical order of the school system. I pressed on and asked if Betty Lou had ever used her power to help her solve problems in her work. She answered, “She never really has, because I go to the principal for resolution of any problems I may have in my job.” Again, there is evidence of a respect for hierarchical order, and the concept of a chain of command. She did not

have a close enough relationship with Betty Lou to pick up the phone and call her on an issue. It was evident that this would never have entered her mind.

I next asked if there was a difference in working with this superintendent and previous superintendents. She replied,

I just couldn't make a comment on that I mean I – my dealings with Ms. Hartford has been very positive but they were with the other superintendents too. I don't want to say gender doesn't have anything to do with it...I don't know if I worked arm and arm with them I might see some differences in how stress affected them but I don't work that close with them. I can't make any comment on it.

Sue Ellen had given a very long and detailed account of her relationships with the previous superintendents. Interestingly her response to this question was “no comment.” The only difference she alluded to was gender and then she clarified it didn't make a difference. She mentioned “stress” but she did not clarify why she mentioned it when I prompted her. That left me with questions I could not resolve in the analyses process. She did admit she did not work close with superintendents to comment on their differences. I moved on and asked her how satisfied Betty Lou was with what she did. She answered,

I guess she is satisfied. There are some things I still don't fully understand at the principal level...like I don't know which funds to use for which projects. Things like that concern me - but I have asked the principal before and he is good about including me on some things - but he said... he has indicated that a lot of that is decided at the county level and that the Finance Officer is your best resource.

Sue Ellen was unable to articulate her answer to this question and diffused it with what I believed were her concerns for her next position in the district. It seemed to concern her that she was not privy to information that she believed would prepare her for the principalship. To her there was a hierarchical order to training and disbursement of information. Her relationship with Betty Lou was not one in which she could get answers to questions that her principal had not satisfactorily explained. I asked her if Betty Lou understood her job problems and needs. She responded, “Very well. She sat in this chair, at this desk, and at this school.” Again, a reoccurring response, Betty Lou understood problems associated with a job because she had occupied the position. While that may have been true in the past, the dynamics of the job had changed over the years in ways Betty Lou may have not understood unless she was informed by the assistant

principal. It was apparent that Sue Ellen did not talk to Betty Lou about problems specific to her job; rather she relied on prior experience to compensate in this area. I asked if Betty Lou recognized her potential and she answered,

I think she does but like I told her I would like to become a principal. But if it happens I am not going to go out and backstab anybody or anything like that to get a principalship...I am just not going to do that. But if the opportunity were presented...then I would like to see what I could do with it. But I am not going to play politics, and I am not going to cut somebody down or sabotage him to get that opportunity.

I found this statement to be very interesting because Sue Ellen believed the progression to the principalship was political and not necessarily based on qualifications. She told Betty Lou she wanted to become a principal but did not clarify if Betty she approached her first. There appeared to be the assumption of “natural” progression; however, at the same time recognition that seniority did not guarantee placement. That type of knowledge was based on low-quality exchanges that were prescribed by organizational roles influenced by some type of political system of favors.

I asked Sue Ellen about her trust in this superintendent. She answered simply, “Yes, I know she does what she can for the children in this district.” I then asked if she had enough confidence to defend and justify Betty Lou’s decisions if she were not present. She responded, “Yes and I have by telling people that ask me that I am sure she has reasons for what she does – we just don’t know the whole story at this level.”

Sue Ellen admitted she did not have the superintendent’s confidence in matters that occurred in the district. She relied on peripheral knowledge that included duties prescribed to the leadership of the district. What she knew about Betty Lou was based on the organizational order of the system. Her exchanges with Betty Lou were based on their respective positions. I asked Sue Ellen if she had a better knowledge of the superintendent since she traveled with her to the volleyball game. She answered, “No, we never really talked about the job. We talked about everything else.” I understood what she meant. Betty Lou was not a talker when she did not want to be one. Data supported Sue Ellen’s perception of low-quality exchanges associated with the stranger phase of relationship development.

Meredith Stapleton – Looming Retirement. The next assistant principal I studied was Meredith Stapleton at Mt. Vernon Comprehensive School. Meredith was a middle-aged woman who reminded me of Mrs. Santa Claus in appearance as well as in her infectious laugh. Meredith never interacted with me directly beyond the interview although I observed her in action through my many visits to the school. It was at the end of my work at Mt. Vernon that I had time to reflect on this nagging situation. I finally realized Meredith was nearing retirement and perhaps did not want to be bothered with an outsider interloping on her time.

On the day of our scheduled interview, Meredith walked into the front office, greeted the secretary, and went directly into her office. She did not acknowledge my presence nor did the secretary tell her who I was, which was customary in cases of visitors on campus. This struck me as very strange since I was the only person sitting in the office at that time. I was left to sit and ponder the mysteries of the situation until the principal, Alfred Alford, walked in ten minutes later. He greeted me and walked back into the administrative hallway. He returned a few minutes later to let me know the plans for the day had changed. My interview with Meredith was pushed back to the afternoon and he rushed off to a meeting. In the midst of this change, a drama unfolded in the front office. A student in the high school building came up absent in homeroom so Meredith was immediately called to the front desk. Homeroom at Mt. Vernon occurred after 1st period. This particular student was present in 1st period and Meredith told the secretary she saw the student's car in the parking lot while on bus duty. I learned from their conversation this student was not from Mt. Vernon but had transferred in from south Florida that appeared to make a difference in their perception of the student.

Tracking down that student consumed Meredith's morning. Meredith went out to the parking lot to look for the student's car, she interviewed other students as she called them into the office, she called the student's home, and finally she called the mother's cell phone. I gathered all this information while I sat in the front office and witnessed the swirling conversations between Meredith and the school secretary. A flurry of phone calls came in for Meredith. I later found out from the secretary that the phone calls were from teachers and parents of other students who had heard about the incident. Eventually the mother of the student called, and the student was located. Apparently the student decided to take the rest of the day off from school. I noted my amazement at the intimate knowledge school personnel and members of the community had in regards to this one student.

I jotted down the irony of the situation. While locating a missing student was paramount, my experience in other school districts revealed incidents of this nature would have been one among many in the daily workings of an assistant principal. I also noted my concerns that confidentiality had been breached since I was able to learn intimate details about this student by merely sitting and waiting in the office. I don't know if that was a reflection of the perceived comfort in my presence or presumed lack of the need to keep some information out of a public setting. I wondered how much was discussed in that front office in front of other people. Much to my amazement, phone calls on this incident continued until the end of the day. It appeared everyone in the school and the community wanted in "on the action" for the day.

Meredith was born and raised in another state and moved to Baldwin County after she married her husband. She attended a state university where she earned a Bachelor's degree in math with a minor in music. Meredith was a classroom teacher for 25 years, nine of which were at Mt. Vernon. She was a guidance counselor at Mt. Vernon for four ½ years before she became the assistant principal. She attended classes at two universities to obtain the necessary coursework for certification in administration. She was an assistant principal at Mt. Vernon for approximately 10 years, and claimed this was her last year before retirement. She had never worked with the present superintendent in any other capacity than assistant principal.

I asked Meredith to characterize her working relationship with the present superintendent. She answered,

She is a very strong leader – she is much like Mr. Barnes to me – she wants to know everything that is going on – she kind of backs off and lets you run it as long as she agrees with what you are doing. She hasn't been anything but supportive of me so I can't fault her there in any way. I don't always agree with her ideas but that is just personal opinion.

Meredith viewed Betty Lou as a strong leader, which she clarified to mean if Meredith did things Betty Lou's way, she was left alone. On the hand, if Meredith didn't do things Betty Lou's way she expected a high-quality of interactions. She felt confident enough to state that she did not always agree with Betty Lou but that did not seem to interfere with Betty Lou's obligation to support her. I asked her what was it like working for this superintendent. She answered succinctly, "It is just like working for any other superintendent." It seemed Meredith viewed all the superintendents with the same lens.

I asked Meredith to characterize her working relationship with past superintendents. In this response Meredith opened up and said,

Steve was pretty much a real hands-on person...he was very controlling. He was pretty much in control of everything and everywhere that was his personality he had to be in control and if he wasn't – when I first came here we had a gentleman that was principal here and Mr. Smith just gave him a terrible time. He retired not too long after and Ms. Ostrich had become principal and then James Jones became superintendent and she had worked under James as a teacher – James was her principal so she had a really good relationship with him and I worked under James – the first year I came here I taught half a day here and a half day at another school and James was principal there and I would leave every day at lunch and go there and teach in the afternoon so I worked under James too and I enjoyed working for Mr. Jones very much. He was not near hands on as Mr. Smith was. He was pretty good about letting each principal run their school as long as they were effective and if there was a real problem he would get involved and he handled a lot of parent complaints but he always referred them back to the school. I really enjoyed Mr. Jones as a superintendent.

Mr. Barnes was a very good superintendent – he was more hands-on than Mr. Jones – there were certain things where he drew the line and you didn't step over them and sometimes I would get a little frustrated with him because he would question things I thought – do you think I am really stupid? I know better than to do that and so I have already gone through that process and made sure that when I was spending money – he was a little tight wad and you had to have really done your research with him before he would approve anything. But I like Mr. Barnes very much and I think he was a good superintendent. He of course had family problems and he resigned – he just didn't run again because his dad was so ill and he wanted to spend some time with his dad and actually I think his dad died two weeks before he actually went out of office. But he didn't run so.

Then we had Mr. Dinkens who was the sweetest man in the whole world but didn't know his head from a hole in the ground (laughter). He had been in education some but he had never been in any capacity except as a teacher – he had

not been any kind of supervisory position at all – well I take that back they did put him at the adult school. I hate to be negative because I like him very much – he is a very nice man. He just simply didn't have the knowledge that he needed to know. He made lots of mistakes because he didn't know and he made a lot of statements sometimes that you go "oh, God I can't believe he said that." Like for example a person called here and wanted to know about a child and we asked "who are we speaking with" and they told us they were such and such...well they weren't on the emergency card and we said "we can't give out any information about this particular child" and so they called the superintendent and he told them so when his office called us and said he told them because his secretary knew that was not the thing to do we immediately called the parents and informed them so they would be aware that this person had this information. I mean just dumb things like that – just didn't have the knowledge that he needed to have. If he had worked in the front office he would have known not to do those sorts of things.

I was floored at the amount of information Meredith revealed and the intimacy of her answer. Perhaps with retirement looming she did not feel to need to be guarded in her responses. Ironically, while she gave her opinions it was always evident she viewed the past superintendents as leaders who had ultimate control of the district even at the school level. Her statement supported the emerging perception this school system followed a strong hierarchical system with the superintendent at the pinnacle of control and power. This system at times frustrated Meredith because leaders appeared to question her competence.

I next asked Meredith what type of formal and informal authority this superintendent had in her position in regards to her. She answered, "She employees me – enough said." I pushed on with the question about the superintendent's use of power in Meredith's work. She answered, "Hmmm... I can't really say on that. If I have a problem I go to the principal and he may follow-up with her." I next asked if there was a difference working with this superintendent and the previous ones. She answered,

I am not sure - I think the best principal I ever worked for was Ms. Ostrich, and she of course was a female and I don't know whether she was because she related better to women...although the majority of the men here seem to respect her opinion. I think men and women have different leadership styles to a certain extent

- I can't say what makes one better or worse than the other – I just think they have a little different style of leadership. Ms. Hartford is a lot like Mr. Barnes in a lot of ways she reminds me of Mr. Barnes – I don't know.

Again a noted difference in the superintendents was based on gender. However, Meredith grouped Brad Barnes and Betty Lou in the same category in regards to their leadership. These three responses supported my hunch that Meredith viewed herself as a cog in a system that had a clearly delineated line of power and authority. There was nothing in her responses to support she ever had a relationship with the superintendents beyond the bounds of her job.

I asked Meredith if she knew how satisfied the superintendent was with what she did as an assistant principal. She answered, "I think she is satisfied with me – I know that I disagree with her and she knows it but I think because I am close to retirement she really doesn't bother with me." I asked how well the superintendent understood her job problems and needs. She replied, "She has been an assistant principal and principal at different schools so I think she has a grasp of what goes on here." I then asked if the superintendent recognized her potential. She said, "I can't answer that question."

These three statements further supported my speculation that Meredith and Betty Lou engaged in low-quality exchanges. Any exchanges between these two individuals appeared to be centered on the status of their positions. Furthermore, Meredith believed imminent retirement insulated her from a certain number of these exchanges. I next asked Meredith about her trust in regards to this superintendent. She answered, "To a certain degree. I mean I understand why she does things to a certain degree like how she changed her mind on consolidation. She had her reasons I am sure." I then asked her if had enough confidence in Betty Lou to defend and justify her decision even if she were not present to do so. She answered, "Most of the times yes – but I really try to take the middle ground on anything that goes on in the district."

The interview with Meredith lasted almost two hours. I came out of the interview with very mixed feelings. Meredith had broken down into tears when she shared her experiences with the previous principal of the school, Mrs. Ostrich. Betty Lou had involuntarily moved Mrs. Ostrich to another school, and Mr. Alford replaced her. Meredith easily admitted it took Alfred and her many months before they negotiated their relationship with each other. Meredith was passionate about her job. She stated over and over how much she loved what she did and was going to miss her interactions with the students. It was strange to me that Meredith and Betty Lou

worked so many years together in such a small system and their relationship remained associated with their job titles. These two women had to cross paths many times in the past yet there was no sense of solidarity. I knew from observing the anti-consolidation meetings that part of the issue for Meredith was the concern for the loss of the community school. Although, at another level, it appeared to run deeper than that, Meredith would go no further. Only after hearing all the citizen comments at the October School Board meeting did I learn that residents of Mt. Vernon considered themselves separate from the rest of the county. As one citizen said in his speech to the board, “We just want to be left alone.” I saw Meredith like other Mt. Vernon residents applaud this statement. I can only speculate how this sense of community segregation further impacted Meredith’s relationships with individuals in the superintendent’s office. Data collected in my observations, interviews, and documents supported Meredith’s perception of low-quality exchanges with the present superintendent. This level of exchanges supported the conclusion Meredith perceived her relationship with Betty Lou’s relationship as one in the stranger phase.

Mary Beth Armbrester – Barrier Breaker. The next assistant principal I studied was Mary Beth Armbrester at Sharpsville Elementary School. Mary Beth allowed me the rare opportunity of actually working side-by-side with her for an entire day. She warned me in advance, “Wear something comfortable and bring some sunglasses.” She also told me, “You won’t understand what you are seeing until you actually do it.” She laughed at me when I responded, “I think this will be fun.”

Of course, I was confident bordering on arrogant that I was more than prepared for any challenges presented to me for a day at a very “sweet,” rural elementary school. After all, I was a veteran teacher of an inner city high school where my daily bathroom duty entitled me to “combat pay.” Moreover, I was the lone female teacher on breakfast and lunch duty. That job entailed the hazardous duty of asking belligerent students to get their meals, eat quickly, clean up their trash, and return to class. I had to make sure no food left the cafeteria, ended up on the floor, and, most importantly, did not end up on another student.

Years of experience at this urban school had given me the ability to sense trouble before it manifested itself. I knew how to break up fights between male students who were bigger and stronger than I. Self-preservation had given me the ability to separate two fighting female students without receiving a single scratch. On the other hand, I worked as a consultant in the central office of a very affluent suburban school system where the word “no” was not part of the

vocabulary. I had to tactfully convince teachers, administrators, and staff to do their jobs while making sure I did not hurt their feelings. I convinced parents through their child's nanny that I understood the special qualities of the child; however, the school system was not "picking" on their child because the Porsche had to be parked in the student's lot.

I paid dearly for my arrogance and, borrowing a cliché from my grandmother, I left the school that day with my "tail between my legs." I was utterly exhausted and woefully unprepared for what happened. I left with a new appreciation and understanding of the elementary school setting. My only hope was that I would never go through a day like that again. Elementary students never stop moving, always vie for attention, and can turn the simplest tasks into a disaster.

Mary Beth first assigned me the task of inspecting students' desks to determine the winners of the character-building award for neatness. I was totally clueless because all the desks appeared the same to me - messy. I was placed in charge of supervising the cafeteria during lunchtime. I learned little people and food trays do not go well together. I supported students' purchase of ice cream during snack time which was like corralling a heard of jumping fleas. I watched students at recess and learned the importance of making children keep their toys in their backpacks to avoid squabbles. My last assignment was to assist at the bus ramp. "Finally," I thought, "an assignment I can handle." I was doing well until hundreds of little pieces of paper were handed to me with special instructions for bus changes and permissions to ride home. Amidst the flurry of papers and commotion, a student suffered an asthma attack. I was in a panic until the bus driver calmly told me what to do. I found a new appreciation for bus drivers.

While each duty presented special challenges I did not anticipate what hit me the hardest – the level of personal discomfort. There was no time to go to the restroom let alone grab a bite to eat. My clothes were stained from little hands grabbing me to get my attention. I was covered in dirt and sweat from my constant motion on the playground. I literally ached all over and my brain had turned to pudding. Mary Beth earned my respect and my appreciation for what she does for a living. I was profoundly thankful that she wanted to do this job every day.

Mary Beth was born and raised in Baldwin County. She graduated from a nearby university with a Bachelor's degree in English. She received her Master's degree in Educational Leadership from a cohort system that was offered in the district. She was pursuing her doctorate in Educational Leadership at the time of this study. Mary Beth was a classroom teacher for 10

years, some of which were in another district in the southern part of the state. She was promoted to the assistant principal position at Sharpsville Elementary two years ago. She was divorced and the mother of two young children. She was the only African-American administrator in the district. She admitted she was a student of the superintendent at both the middle and high schools.

I asked Mary Beth to characterize her working relationship with the superintendent. She said,

I think we have a good working relationship. She pops in from time to time and checks on us. And she is always very friendly, and always concerned about how things are going and if I had a problem or something ...I think I could go to her.

I asked her what it was like working with this superintendent. She answered, "It is fine." I asked her to characterize her working relationship with past superintendents, she responded,

Mr. Dinkens – I didn't – he was visible – he came to the schools and ate lunch and stuff but in passing he would ask how are you and that was about it. I did go see him once – I was looking for a future position and he had told me if that position came open he would consider me for that position. He talked about insurance and he talked about he appreciated us but he didn't show us – I mean we were status quo...we remained the same the four years that he was here. Curriculum wise - we were the same.

Mr. Barnes hired me – technically the principal hired me but through Mr. Barnes. I talked to him and told him I needed a job and he paved the way for me. Mr. Barnes was my principal when I was at the elementary school and Mr. Barnes – I always called him the man because if you messed up here at the elementary school he was going to take care of you. And you didn't want to go see him. He had a strap – he didn't have a paddle – he had a leather strap and you did not want to go see him – if you went to see Mr. Barnes you had really, really, really did something. Because back then they use to paddle in the middle of the pod – if you got in trouble they would paddle you in the middle of the pod. We had a good working relationship – I mean I did my job and as long as I did my job I had no problems. Mr. Barnes had to come to see me one time – I paddled somebody and that child said she went home and says she was bruised but Mr. Barnes handled that and he just told me then when you paddle somebody you take your certificate

in your hand so be very careful. He was – I wouldn't say he was stern but you knew where he stood and when he is telling you something you got the message.

Based on these answers, Mary Beth saw her relationship with the superintendents as a hierarchical process. The superintendents were the authority and in the position to hire and make decisions over such areas as curriculum and discipline. She perceived her relationship with Betty Lou as one in which she might be able to approach her with problems but was not certain. I never observed her interacting with Betty Lou one-on-one. I knew the next three questions would clarify how close she actually perceived their relationship.

I asked Mary Beth what type of formal and informal authority the superintendent had in her present position in regards to her. She answered, "She has a lot of authority – she is the one that put me into my present position." I then asked when had the superintendent used her power to help her solve her problems at work. She responded, "Never that I know of." I asked if there was a difference working with this superintendent and previous superintendents. She answered,

Regarding Ms. Hartford, she is a smart lady. She wants to be on top and that means we are going to be on top...so if there is anyway she can turn it she is going to push us and that is what she does – she pushes us. She pushes you but she is pushing you in the right direction to move forward. I think she has tried to be more in tune to what teachers need. I mean we got raises for two years – 7% raise where we haven't got that much of a raise in like 5-6 maybe 10 years. I think she does appreciate what teachers do because she was a teacher – she knows what we do and she wants us to know that she appreciates it and she has worked with the finance officer to try to see what they could do for us. I think she is working on the insurance too that is another mountain and I think she is trying to do something about that and her hands may be tied on this but I think she has given it her effort. I think her being a woman makes a difference. She is detail – women pay attention to details. We have the Teacher of the Year awards – voting for teacher of the year and... before it was just something like our Baldwin County - teachers or educators something like that - organization – in place of the union – they would get together and get the nominations from each and they would look at the stuff and they would vote for somebody. When Ms. Hartford got here we got the nominations but she wanted outside people to come from different counties and

choose the one – you know make it objective - and she also made a little ceremony to honor those people who were nominated and to honor the person that was selected as Baldwin County Teacher of the Year. Details – okay? And they were not like something major but the little things that was to say you know I appreciate you and then the salaries.

Mary Beth saw Betty Lou as the force leading the system and as the one in the position to hand out rewards. She noted gender as a difference between Betty Lou and the previous superintendents; however, rather than just state it as a difference she articulated how gender impacted that difference, namely in the attention to details. Betty Lou had in essence used her position and authority to note and change existing patterns in the district. One of these changes was in the allocation of raises to teachers, something Mary Beth felt was long overdue.

I asked Mary Beth if she knew how satisfied the superintendent was with what she did as an assistant principal. She answered,

I would say she is satisfied – I think she is one who knows what is going on and she has heard some good things about me and I hope that I haven't done anything bad because I think she would let me know.

I then asked if the superintendent understood her job problems and needs. She replied, Somewhat. She was basically secondary; she taught at the high school. When she was principal she was principal at a middle school and a high school, so I wouldn't say she knows in depth what problems are at the elementary school because they are totally different. And I know that because I was secondary but things like bus duty and supervision here is paramount – I mean supervision at the high school is a big deal – it should be but it is not – you actually have to walk people to class here – you just can't send them on an errand and say you know go get my mail or go tell this teacher this – you just can't send them anywhere you have got to take them and show them. And the afternoon bus duty – we have bus duty until 3:15 – other schools their kids leave at 2:30 – we are here until 3:15 watching kids still.

I next asked her if this superintendent recognized her potential. She answered, “Yes she does. She always tells me - you know you can make history you can be the superintendent and I am like – I told her I'm not looking to make that kind of history.”

Mary Beth viewed Betty Lou as her boss and in that position had the authority to decide her fate as an administrator. She related Betty Lou had been an assistant principal; thus she understood the problems associated with her position. She did not indicate that Betty Lou understood problems that were specific to her. She recognized that experience and school setting made a difference, but she did not identify any exchanges between the two of them that demonstrated a greater understanding beyond the normal functions of their jobs.

I asked Mary Beth about her trust in the superintendent. She answered, I do I think she is in the job for the right reasons. With this whole consolidation piece if she wasn't in this for the right reasons she wouldn't have brought this up. We would have remained status quo like we are but I think she has a vision that we need to move forward and what I mean if she didn't believe that this was the right thing to do she wouldn't have tried to get us to consolidate she would have let it stay as it is – she would just concentrate on getting re-elected. But by doing this she is not guaranteed to get re-elected.

I asked her if she had enough confidence in the superintendent to defend and justify her decisions if she were not present to do so. She responded, “Yes, I can defend her on this consolidation thing – I know why she is doing this.”

Mary Beth trusts the superintendent because she thinks she is doing her job for the right reasons. Furthermore, on the most controversial issue in the district, she supported the superintendent. Certainly Mary Beth was aware of the consequences of this support because she knew that Betty Lou might not be re-elected. In her public support of Betty Lou she also knew she risked her position in the future. Mary Beth articulated her perception of the superintendent as the leader of a hierarchical system wherein rewards could be withheld or awarded. While her responses informed this research in regards to her perception of the superintendent, there was no data to indicate her relationships with any of the superintendents in the district was anything beyond the expected working roles of the system. Analyses of the collected data supported her perception of their relationship was based on low-quality exchanges associated with the stranger phase of relationship development.

Mandy Winn – Preacher's Daughter. The next assistant principal I observed and interviewed was Mandy Winn. Mandy was the assistant principal at the Concern Alternative School. She was married and mother of two children. She was born in another county but

considered herself raised in Baldwin County. She pointed out early in the interview she was the daughter of the preacher for the local Christian church that “everyone attended.” She received her Bachelor’s and Master’s degree from a nearby university. She was a teacher for 19 years before she left teaching to work at a state level bureaucratic job. She stated she has known the present superintendent for several years but never actually worked with her.

Mandy was a slight, middle-aged woman who always wore what I considered to be the typical bureaucrat uniform: black pumps with sensible heels, beige hosiery, and a dark skirt suit with a white blouse. I perceived her as being quite arrogant at times with students and fellow staff members. Students did not dare to give her any trouble because they knew misbehavior at Concern carried grim consequences with the school and court systems. The first time I was introduced to Mandy I thought she was not particularly friendly. Mandy was quick to point out her vast experiences at the state education level. I wanted to ask her why she had left her state job but I knew in time she would tell me the story. I spent two days with Mandy and learned to appreciate where she had been and why she was in her present job.

Mandy was the only assistant principal that I observed to present at a School Board meeting. This observation occurred before I formally met her. I reviewed my notes from that meeting and found that I thought she was from a state organization because of her dress and demeanor. She sat by herself, did not interact, and wore the bureaucrat uniform. During the meeting I found out she had taken on the responsibilities for a new scholarship program for the district. Her experience with the state had prepared her for this new responsibility. Betty Lou had asked her to present the program to the Board. Her name and job title were not on the agenda and she was not formally introduced to the board. Betty Lou called her by name, and Mandy presented the material. It was never stated she worked for the school system as an assistant principal. No one sitting around me knew who she was, and I only made the connection after I met her.

I asked Mandy to characterize her working relationship with this superintendent. She answered,

I respect her very much. I really do respect her and trust her. She makes a decision I am going to back her up because I know where she has come from and the instructional leadership positions – the classroom teacher to principal to superintendent – she is very aware and very visionary. She has an idea of where we

are heading for the future and she has high expectation. I respect those that have high expectations – that push us to a higher level. Basic skills are essential but they are no longer adequate and so she has that vision and she knows that and it is hard for a small rural district when you don't have the understanding and necessarily it is not a priority for you but she has that global economy – thinking ahead and trying to prepare our future students because many of them will not be able to make a living in this county because this county does not have a whole lot to work for unless you work for education or the correctional institutions. There is just not any industry, so that anybody that wants to make a decent living they are going to have to move. To be employable you are going to have to be trained and skilled. No longer are the days where like in a rural county where my father was a fisherman or my granddaddy was a fisherman so I can make a fisherman's living and not necessarily learn Algebra II and so those days are about gone.

I found this answer to be interesting because I asked a very simple question, and Mandy felt compelled to demonstrate her loyalty and support for Betty Lou. Her respect for Betty Lou was based on her high expectations for the district. She alluded that her relationship with Betty Lou was such that they shared the same organizational goals and mutual trust, which was not governed by job descriptions. I asked her what was it like working for this superintendent. She quickly replied, "I think it is fine – she hired me for this position." This statement negated her previous indications of a higher order relationship and pointed out the hierarchical standing of their job relationship. I then asked her to characterize her working relationship with past superintendents. She answered,

Well, Steve Smith hired me when we were in the choir loft and I looked at him and I said "I need a job" and he said "come see me Monday." I went and saw him Monday and I was hired on Wednesday and started work on Monday. But for the most part all of the superintendent's -they were almost all one in the same. They would pretty much pass the torch. Philosophy was leadership pretty much most of them and you understood where you stood and that expectations were there – high expectations. Well see now Betty Lou actually taught under Mr. Barnes' leadership and Mrs. Barnes' leadership. And she truly was brought up in that way of thinking and also she worked under Mr. Jones and I am not sure about Steve

Smith. I'm not sure when she moved in. I know she started teaching at the high school not long after I graduated.

Smith, Jones, Barnes were all in my mind the same. I have had arguments with every one of them – I look to them as father figures – I spent the night at Mr. Barnes' house when I was in high school because I was friends of his daughter – he fussed at me and probably would have spanked me if he was given the opportunity. He has gotten on me many times even when I was still teaching. He got onto me many times – I have been in his office and reprimanded – yes, I have. He would say “now you know” – and I would say “yes sir” and I mean we had a heated argument once and he said – we were standing in the hallway face to face and I wanted co-teaching and I had this wonderful idea I had worked on it and I had pages and pages and I handed it to him and I wanted him to read it. He said “I am opposed to it” – didn't even give me a second thought. And I said “why not? I don't understand why you would not agree with this” and I started – preceded to state my case and he said all it would take for me to do is just to pick up the phone and I could have you moved to another school less desirable than this one right now. And I went yes, sir.

Mandy explained since her father was the pastor of the local Christian church, he was viewed an influential community leader. As such she felt it gave her a certain social standing in the community. In fact, it was due to this social standing that she felt comfortable enough to ask one superintendent for a job while at church rather than apply at the district office, as was protocol. This perceived comfort continued with the following superintendents. She alluded that one relationship was particularly close because she was a friend of Mr. Barnes' daughter. I compared this answer with the previous ones in regards to Betty Lou. I discerned a difference between them. While to her they were all the same type of leaders, it was clear she felt closer to some of the previous superintendents based on her personal experiences and interactions.

I asked Mandy what type of formal and informal authority this superintendent had in her present position in regards to her. She answered, “She is my boss.” I asked if this superintendent had ever used her power to help her solve a problem at work. She answered, “Never really – I report to the principal and I don't know what he does from there but many times he will come

back to me and let me know what a decision has been.” I then asked if there was a difference working with this superintendent and previous superintendents. She replied,

I think it is harder for acceptance of an idea for Ms. Hartford and you may have a little more opposition with a female. And I am thinking of a nearby county – a woman is the superintendent in the panhandle, and I know several pieces that she wanted to get passed and she had a difficult time with the Board. Also, I know with this consolidation, I am not so sure if it were Brad Barnes we would have this opposition. I’m thinking that maybe a little different approach and maybe a little more acceptance, whereas, she may say something and he may say exactly the same thing...and they may pay attention more to him than they do to her. That is due to bias – gender bias is my opinion. A lot of the old school...I mean my mother still tells me “you should be seen and not heard.” I mean I still hear that today. You still have a lot of the old school. Oh yeah, it is changing more so in your larger district than it is in you small rural districts. But I know only two superintendents in the general region that I know of – are females the rest of them are males. But there are several more throughout the state...then there are in this general region.

Mandy’s first two responses supported the hierarchical order to their relationship. She indicated she reported to the principal and she was reliant on the principal for information. Interestingly, the difference she perceived between the superintendents was gender. Her response included her past experience working with the state in which she traveled and worked in various districts. Based on that experience she articulated gender bias namely in the form of community opposition and lack of acceptance. Mandy alluded this bias interfered with Betty Lou’s leadership because norms in the community dictated women were seen but not heard.

I asked Mandy how satisfied this superintendent was with what she did as an assistant principal. She answered, “Absolutely – she is the one that recruited me.” I asked how well does this superintendent understand her job problems and needs. She answered, “I think so. She walks through here at least twice a month.” I asked how well this superintendent recognized her potential. She responded, “I think so.” To Mandy, the fact that the superintendent recruited her meant she was satisfied with her as an assistant principal. Mandy later explained she wanted to leave her state job because it required her to be on the road too much. She lived in Baldwell

County and had a two-hour commute to work each day. The job also required extensive travel throughout the state. This time on the road placed a strain on her personal life. She applied for the assistant principal's job at the elementary school when it came open but didn't get it. Later, she received a phone call from Betty Lou asking her if she was interested in the assistant principal's position at Concern. Mandy perceived this action as recruitment even though her application and status in the assistant principal pool had not changed. According to district protocol, individuals in the administration pool were called first upon an opening. In essence, everyone in the pool received the same consideration.

I asked Mandy about her trust in this superintendent. She answered, "Yes, absolutely since she is from this district and I know she has the children's best interest." I asked her if she had enough confidence in this superintendent to defend and justify her decisions even if Betty Lou were not present. She answered, "Yes and I have."

I struggled in my understanding of this assistant principal's relationship with Betty Lou. Some of her responses in the interview alluded to a perception of higher-quality exchanges especially in her belief they shared the same goals. She believed they both were directed less toward self-interest and more towards the greater good of the school system. Other responses indicated her reliance on the perceived hierarchical organization of the district. Once I triangulated her statements with observations and district documents, I realized her perception was perhaps influenced by her close relationships with previous superintendents. In addition, it appeared her working experience at the state level gave her a broader perspective of the organization. This broader perspective, in turn, better informed her perceptions and understanding of the superintendent's actions. There was no evidence other than some of the interview responses that Mandy engaged in any high-quality exchanges with Betty Lou. Triangulation of data supported interactions between Mandy and Betty Lou were governed by job descriptions and a perceived hierarchical order to the organization. Therefore, their exchanges were low-quality associated with the stranger phase.

Lori Morgan – Mother Hen. The last assistant principal to participate in this study was Lori Morgan, the assistant principal at Sharpsville High School. Lori was a middle-aged woman who appeared younger than her years. Lori was a quiet person with a gentle demeanor. The students, especially the girls, gravitated to her. I observed her in the hallway between classes and

noted she always reminded me of a mother hen clucking after her brood. She was always smiling and on the move. She walked out of her way to tidy the school grounds.

Lori was born and raised in Baldwin County. She was married and had two children. She was expecting her first grandchild, a fact that clearly excited her. She attended the nearby junior college and later transferred to a local university. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. Years later she earned her Master's degree in Educational Leadership from the cohort system offered within the school district. Lori was an elementary school teacher for 14 years prior to becoming an assistant principal. She was an assistant principal for 10 years at the elementary school. Betty Lou transferred Mandy from the elementary school to her present position at the high school. She told me she did not want to leave the elementary school because it was "home" to her. She accepted the transfer because it was presented as a challenge – the school needed discipline. She knew the present superintendent while working in the school system; however, this was her first time working with her.

Lori was answering the school phone on the day of our interview. The school secretary was not required to be at the school until 8:00 a.m.; nevertheless, the phones did not wait so Lori took on the responsibility. Her first duty every morning was to cover the front desk until the secretary arrived. Today was no different except students were getting notes approved to check out early for the girl's volleyball playoff game. Lori examined notes, asked questions, made phone calls, and answered the phone in fluid, effortless motions. She made comments and teased student. Lori knew the students at Sharpsville High and perhaps, more importantly, she knew their families. Our interview time had to be pushed back 30 minutes due to the extra activity at the front desk. Once we made it to her office, students kept knocking on her door and her phone kept ringing. I jotted down this activity as interruptions. Ironically, while I viewed them as interruptions, I later realized Lori viewed them as her job and perhaps saw me as the interruption. Lori was not so sure she could answer my questions but plunged ahead when the dust settled down from all the activity.

I asked Lori to characterize her working relationship with this superintendent. She answered, "I think it is very good." I asked her what it was like working for this superintendent. She answered, "It is fine." Lori was a woman of few words. I pressed on and asked her to characterize her working relationship with past superintendents. She answered,

When Steve Smith hired me the deal in Baldwin County -in this small county was that hiring was more political. There was a lot of folks going into teaching then - they liked for you to be appreciative of hiring you. He would say at the meeting at the beginning of the school -I had a stack this high of applications and I would have liked to have been able to give everyone a job but it didn't work out that way so if you are here you very fortunate to be here. In their job I don't ever remember seeing him in the school. It was like his job was down in the palace. And it was only men -only men were principals -women at that time were not principals. He wasn't excited about you working when you were pregnant and he thought that when you were pregnant you should stay home. That was just the kind of atmosphere it was. Like everybody knew he went to the county office as assistant superintendent and then he would be superintendent -at the time Steve was in office Mr. James Jones, Sr. which meant he would be the next superintendent of schools. And then, it kind of, then Brad Barnes went up with James Sr. -he would be the next superintendent and it worked out that way for years until the person who is assistant superintendent now did not want to be superintendent when Betty Lou ran. So he didn't run against her. David Dinkens -David ran and won and he had not been assistant superintendent but he did not -Mr. Barnes -you know he came into the schools some but not in the capacity of visiting classrooms -they kind of left that to principals and Betty Lou has really been the first superintendent to be in the schools.

I noted Lori seemed to relax at this point. I did not react while she was talked nor did I question her perspective. It seemed as though once she was able to share these past memories she felt more comfortable with the interview process. It was clear from her responses the superintendency appeared hierarchical to her. Previous superintendents were quick to point out their control over the reward system.

I asked Lori what type of formal and informal authority this superintendent had in her present position in regards to her. She answered, "She is really my supervisor and the one that signs my checks – she is the one that decides where I will be working next year if there is to be a change." I asked her if the present superintendent used her power to help her solve problems in

her work. She replied, “Not that I am aware of – I usually talk with my principal.” I asked if there was a difference working with this superintendent and previous superintendents. She answered,

Well, I don’t know how to say this but men and women - they just do they see things differently. The things that are really important to boys and men that may not be important to women. For example, I don't know -men are into football they don't recognize the value of cheerleading as much and those kind of things. Girls are emotional-men kind of blow off those problems, which are sometimes serious problems you know boyfriend problems. They think that everything is going to be all right and those kind of things -I don't think they recognize the emotional kind of things that go on in a high school that can lead to those tragic things that happen at places. I don't think they understand hormones and girls. You know girls are the ones that fight. Boys talk about it -girls fight. Just little things -cleanliness of the school -building things -they worry about if the air conditioners working. But I want the commodes cleaned and all that kind of things.

Not surprising she indicated the difference between the present and the previous superintendents was gender. She articulated what she perceived as the gendered differences and related beyond the question to her working environment. Lori indicated she understood her relationship with the present and past superintendents from her perspective as a worker. I pressed on and asked her how satisfied this superintendent was with what she did. She answered, “I think she is happy with me – she is the one that moved me here.” I asked if this superintendent understood her job problems and needs. She replied,

I think she does because she has really done the job. She really is sympathetic towards your problems -she taught school when I came through. She started when I think I was in 10th or 11th grade when she started teaching science ...and then she was assistant principal, she was principal. She has done the job -she knows. I do think so and I think she knows that she has to be involved with all the high stakes things now. You can't really do business the way you did 20 years ago -20 years ago when you were the principal it was building maintenance -it was facilities -it was making sure the carpet was clean -I had a principal once that his thing was not putting any tape on the walls -those kind of things. Now there is a shift from the building -you have to do that but that is not your main focus now. Test scores -

curriculum -is more of the focus now and before it was just teachers did their thing
-you stayed in the office and I think it is a totally different environment.

Again this individual believed the superintendent understood her problems and needs on the job because she had experienced the positions. It was not that Lori communicated her problems and needs to the superintendent rather she believed an understanding was inherent based on experience. She articulated high stakes testing had changed the job but did not change her stance that the superintendent understood her problems based on experience.

I asked Lori if the superintendent recognized her potential. She answered, "I think so." I then asked Lori about her trust in regards to the superintendent. She replied, "Yes, I know she is trying to do what is best for this district." I then asked if she had enough confidence in this superintendent to defend her decisions even if she were not present to do so. She answered, "Yes." It appeared as though Lori did not have much to say. Her answers were succinct and to the point.

I had observed Betty Lou and Lori interact several times when we visited the school. Betty Lou always spoke to Lori and asked her how things were going. Lori always responded with the affirmative. As I continued through my notes I realized that I saw two sides to Lori. I saw a Lori that interacted with the superintendent and the principal in the same manner. She answered questions politely and directly, and then physically moved on. She never stood by the principal when Betty Lou and I were present – she never attempted to join in a conversation. The other Lori I saw was with the students. With the students she was animated and appeared to be engaging. Data triangulation revealed that Lori's perception of a hierarchical order to the school system was supported by her observed behavior at the school level. Her exchanges with Betty Lou appeared to be low-quality and directly related to the job thus placing her relationship at the stranger phase.

Betty Lou's Perspective

Betty Lou understood the strengths and weaknesses of the assistant principal staff. While she never directly visited with any of these women, she always made a point to stop by and check in with them. She always asked the same question, "How is everything going?" The answer she wanted and expected to hear was that everything was "fine." On one visit, Betty Lou witnessed one of the assistant principals engaged in what she labeled "negative body language." Rather than talking directly with the assistant principal she pulled the principal to the side and pointed out the

behavior. Her final words to the Principal were to “have the situation corrected.” While I never observed Betty Lou interact with this group of administrators I did not note any difference in her treatment of any of these individuals. As was to be expected, Betty Lou did not indicate any special relationship with any of these assistant principals. Again, Betty Lou never mentioned trust when she spoke about any of them. She did, however, mention several times that she had confidence that these individuals would get the job done. Analysis and interpretation of the data support her exchanges with the assistant principals were low-quality placing her relationships with them in the stranger phase.

Conclusion

The following conclusions were drawn based on the analysis and interpretation of data collected for this section of the study. The relationships between Betty Lou and the assistant principal were as follows:

- A. All assistant principals perceived their interactions with Betty Lou to be as a function of the job. Data supported each viewed their exchanges as low-quality and prescribed by organizational roles. In addition, trust in this superintendent was perceived as a function of the job rather than individual in the position. Analysis and interpretation of data supported the finding these relationships were in the stranger phase as defined by theory and the social norms of the school district.
- B. Betty Lou perceived her interactions with the assistant principals to be low-quality and closely regulated by the confines of the job descriptions. Analysis and interpretation of the data supported Betty Lou’s perception of low-quality exchanges associated with the stranger phase of relationship creation.
- C. The assistant principals articulated perceived differences in their working relationships with Betty Lou and previous superintendents. She was perceived as sympathetic, detailed-oriented, hands-on, and strong. In addition, she was perceived as a democratic leader of a district in which resources were historically allocated on a political award system. In addition, she was described as a leader who worked harder for acceptance and attention while facing more opposition in the community.

The final section presented the findings on the relationships between Betty Lou and teachers. Findings were presented along the three themes of the study: relationships, job performance, and trust. First, the data on the teachers’ perspectives was presented. Second, the

data on Betty Lou's perspectives was presented. Finally, the conclusions based on the analysis and interpretation of the data was presented.

Betty Lou and the Teachers

Introduction

The purpose of this section was to describe the relationships between Betty Lou and teachers. Baldwin County did not have a local teachers' union. In fact, it never had one, and as School Board Member Jenkins put it, "We will be blessed that it never occurs." This non-union status was sometimes a bitter contention among the teachers, superintendents, and school board members, as noted in historical school board meeting records. At the Back to School Meeting this year one of the questions asked of the guest speaker, the state representative for the Superintendent's Association concerned the benefits of a teachers' union. The guest speaker, a true politician, sidestepped the question and led a dialogue on the high cost of health care insurance.

Betty Lou understood this contention and upon taking office instituted a quarterly teacher representative meeting. The Teacher Advisory Council consisted of individuals selected by each principal to represent their school at these meetings. Service on the Council was for one year. At the first gathering, teachers voted in favor of closed meetings. From that point on only representatives and the Superintendent were allowed to attend. Every teacher and staff member I spoke with identified the individual selected from their school. All representatives followed the same business format. First, a notice was sent out two weeks prior to the meeting, asking teachers and staff to submit questions or concerns. Second, each representative compiled a list of concerns and brought the list to the meeting. Finally, the results of each meeting were published at each school, with special attention given to the issues brought up by that school. The process was not censored, and individuals were given the opportunity to give input anonymously. This process, let alone the Council, was unique to Betty Lou's leadership. Based on the responses of the individuals I spoke with, formally and informally, the system appeared to be "successful." Each defined "successful" to mean that the meetings were well attended by the representatives and selection to this Council was coveted. Unfortunate for this research, I was not allowed to attend the meetings.

This Teacher Advisory Council was one important example of Betty Lou's commitment to the teachers. There were also other ways Betty Lou demonstrated her assurance to teacher

participation in the system. As noted previously by an assistant principal, Betty Lou democratized the Teacher of the Year system. Perhaps the most striking example to me was what I noted as routine behavior on the part of the teachers. It was only after I completed my interviews with the teachers that I realized my assumptions during the observations were incorrect. I observed at various times seven teachers present at School Board meetings. In fact, each addressed the Board on matters that were not related to their job functions. Each independently gave a speech against consolidation. While I immediately recognized the risky nature of their actions, I discovered later from a retired teacher this type of behavior would not have been allowed under previous superintendents.

The supporting evidence for this assertion came in two forms. The first was the fact that Board meetings were held during school hours, and teachers had to ask for personal time to attend if their presence was not job-related. The second was in the process wherein only pre-approved items were placed on the agenda. Betty Lou changed this system. She made sure the Board meetings were held in the evening at a time when attendance was more convenient to the citizens. She also made sure the agenda included an open discussion wherein citizens could address the Board. She instituted a card system where those present could address the Board during the meeting if they filled out a card and dropped it in a designated box. Since the system was new, citizens had a hard time following the process at first, but I observed that as the year progressed so did the ease of using the system.

Unlike the administrators I observed and interviewed, the teachers selected for this section of the research were more difficult to locate. First, there was no formal process of representative teachers for the district. Second, many indicated they were too far removed to really comment on this superintendent's leadership. Third, for whatever reason, some indicated reticence for fear of presumed retaliation. The final issue I encountered was the lack of interest. Therefore, I had to rely on snowball sampling to locate the following eight teachers. Teachers and administrators recommended some of these individuals, while Betty Lou recommended others. The common element among all seven of these teachers was the indication from many sources that these voices needed to be heard. In other words, more than one person in unrelated positions recommended seven of these teachers' names. One, however, was chosen because an administrator insisted I interview her. Some of these teachers were considered star veteran teachers while others were thought of as average. Interestingly, one was a beginning teacher. It proved to be a remarkable

combination and at times very insightful. It would be among this group that I found two individuals with the closest relationship to Betty Lou. The following is the presentation of findings based on the data collected for this group. As with the other sections, the findings are presented along the three themes of relationships, job performance, and trust.

Baldwell County Teachers

Abigail Princeton – Program Specialist. Abigail Princeton was a middle-aged woman with glasses, short blonde hair, and dressed in dark slacks with a bright green jacket on the first day I met her. She had on teacher shoes – those ones that laced up and looked like a black sneaker but weren't. She had a huge smile and was very fidgety. She talked with her hands almost to distraction and was always looking around. She made me look behind myself several times because I thought from her expression and stare that someone was standing behind me. She worked as a teacher at the high school in several capacities but the one that she mentioned to me was program specialist. Abigail was born and raised in Baldwin County, married, and the mother of two grown children. She attended the local junior college and later graduated from a university located in another part of the state. She had worked in the district for 33 years and had more teaching certifications than I had room on the page to note. She was a math teacher, department chair, and later became the program specialist. As a program specialist she acted as a support person between the faculty and special projects. She had served on the Teacher Advisory Council. She told me she worked with the present superintendent as a fellow teacher and later under her principalship. Interestingly, I also found out later from the school's Athletic Director that Abigail started the first girl's athletic team in Baldwin County.

Abigail easily agreed to the research and was always willing to let me "hang" around. She appeared to be comfortable with the process and never hesitated to answer my questions. The formal interview took approximately 45 minutes, but our conversations spanned the entire time I was in the field. She always had a story to tell me. The first question I asked Abigail was to characterize her working relationship with the present superintendent. She answered simply, "Fine." So, I asked her to explain what it was like working for her. She answered, "Same as any of the other superintendents." Not to be deterred, I asked her to characterize her working relationship with past superintendents. At this point Abigail began to open up a little bit more. She answered,

I think that in a small county all of our superintendents have kind of come up from the school system so –from the teachers perspective- and directly involved in the school system, so they have been real familiar with the system or with the community... and been real perceptive about the needs of our system and things. We have really been fortunate. I can't think of a superintendent that we have had that who has not been really dedicated themselves to the job, and just been really aware of the needs of our schools and worked really hard to meet those. Of course they all have different personalities. It has been great transitions – I think in that, they all have been in the system previously – kind of almost been seamless in that the goals for the system, and the things have run well. I can't really visualize great differences between them. Some of them have a little more - a little more direct input and control than others.

It was apparent to me Abigail viewed her working relationship with all the superintendents from the same perspective. They came up through the system, understood the system from different positions, and were dedicated to the perpetuation of system's goals. To gain further insight into her relationship with the present superintendent, I asked her what type of formal and informal authority Betty Lou had in regards to her. She answered simply, "She signs my checks." I asked her when this superintendent had used her power to help her solve problems at work. She answered, "She has helped me get some grants for some equipment."

I knew that she characterized all the superintendents the same but I wanted her to answer if there was a difference in working with this superintendent and the previous ones. She replied, Maybe in how people perceive her, but I don't think it makes a difference in how she does her job. I mean she is just as driven and dedicated, and commands respect as much as any male who has preceded her to me. I really – now actually when I moved to the high school - I went into the position that she left here when she first went into leadership. She was the biology teacher here and I came here when she went to the middle school as assistant principal... at the time and she of course has moved on up to superintendent.

She has always been a really forward thinking, hard-working, motivated person – always – so I knew her as a teacher and assistant principal when she came back here as a principal a couple, three years and then also I have been acquainted with

her and how she works and how she does things for a long time in different roles. She is just really striving for the best and the newest, and everything that can be done for the students in our school system. She really wants to move forward and keep us on track and in line with what is happening and what is available.

To Abigail, Betty Lou was more progressive, hard working, and motivated. She recognized those attributes were true throughout the various positions Betty Lou held in the district. Interestingly, she recognized that other people perceived working with Betty Lou as being different. I asked her in what way Betty Lou was perceived to be different. She stated, "She is a woman and that seems to make a difference to some people."

I asked Abigail if she knew how satisfied this superintendent was with what she did as a teacher. She replied, "I think she is satisfied I really don't know though." I asked her if this superintendent understood her job problems and needs. She answered,

I think so because she has been very supportive. The person in this position before me really worked hard on getting grant money and things to put the computers in the media center so students will have access to come during study halls, breaks and lunches... to work on projects and things. We have enough now that teachers can actually bring their classes in to do research because we don't have just a lab that is available for teachers to take their classes to so they are able to bring them into the media center. Mrs. Hartford has been supportive of this, and trying to help us to keep computers updated and has them available for the students to do those kinds of things. Oh...she is in and out all the time to see what is going on and she will ask how things are going or what you need or what is good. Yes, and if I need something from her or if I am interested or need her support – I feel comfortable to let her know what it is – if you can help me out with this or this is something we would like to have or need to have could you help us with it. I really don't feel as though I have to go through the principal.

What I found fascinating was that all the assistant principals told me they needed to go through the principals for their problems and needs. Here was a teacher, however, who apparently was at ease calling Betty Lou directly and seeking help. She knew when it came to computers she could count on the superintendent to assist her without going through the school level administrative ranks. Abigail's predecessor perhaps set the foundations for this maneuvering but

Abigail felt comfortable enough to utilize a direct contact approach with Betty Lou. She recognized that the underlying issues were the need for up-to-date technology for the students. She knew Betty Lou stood by her campaign words – she was committed to the students of Baldwin County.

I asked Abigail if the superintendent recognized her potential. She said, “Well I know some of the projects at this school were started by the person before me but Betty Lou knows that I was the best person for this position. She knows how involved I have always been.” I next asked her about her trust in this superintendent. She said, “Yes, just like I have all the others.” I asked about her confidence to defend and justify this superintendent’s decisions even if Betty Lou were not present to do so herself. She responded,

Many times over the year, especially at times when she has been trying to accomplish things for our system that I felt like were worthwhile and good things. I don’t feel that I personally supported her, I feel like I am supporting our school system and our kids and the needs of our kids. So, I don’t feel that I personally had to support her as much as the things I thought she was trying to do for the system. Well. I know there is a district advisory committee that Mrs. Hartford meets with periodically where she gets teachers – the principals assign teachers from each of the schools to attend and - she will open the floor for concerns or problems or whatever kinds of comments they want to make or concerns that they have and...anything that is new or on the backburner that coming along or that might be coming up that is going to affect the schools – she will try and let us know about it so we can go back and inform our faculty. It was a very positive thing for me just because you find out about programs and things that the school board is working toward...that you may not have known and then you do have opportunities to come back...and you always type up a memo of whatever the things that were discussed and points that were made by all the people that attended and just distribute it to all the teachers. So, that was one really positive thing. Now I don’t know that superintendents before her have done that but I know that she has done that. Now the ones that I have been involved with – there are touchy subjects from all of the schools, and you have people that may ask things that are controversial from all the schools but the members...and Mrs. Hartford...has been

receptive and congenial about any of the concerns. I have never felt uncomfortable.

Abigail surprised me. She was the first teacher I interviewed, and I later realized I had some preconceptions of what I would find out based on the results with the assistant principals. On one hand, Abigail articulated the same recognition of a hierarchical order, especially when she related her perceptions of working with superintendents in general. Her statements supported that “cut from the same cloth” view of all the superintendents. She also indicated her interactions with Betty Lou fell within the hierarchical system of order. Interestingly, when it came to needs of the students Abigail felt secure enough to bypass the chain of command system to engaged directly with the superintendent. At first, I noted significance in this relationship but upon further analysis of all the data, I realized Abigail engaged in exchanges that brought rewards to the students of the school and not to her individually. Indeed this behavior could be perceived as part of her job function as a program specialist.

Abigail also articulated the difference based on gender. She acknowledged others perceived working for Betty Lou as different because she was a woman. However, she also associated terms such as progressive, hard-working, and motivated with Betty Lou in such a way as to imply those terms made her different. Abigail had a long working relationship with Betty Lou; however, there was nothing in the data that indicated their relationship and exchanges at this point were anything other than related to their job roles.

Hillary Anderson – English Teacher. Hillary Anderson was not what she appeared to be. She was a tiny woman in her mid-30s with jet-black shoulder length hair and intense blue eyes. When she spoke, you couldn’t miss her heavy Southern accent. She always looked like she had come out of a fashion magazine with her stylish clothes, matching shoes, and coordinating jewelry. I knew I had let her appearance fool me when I saw her in action.

Hillary was a no-nonsense teacher that started her classes when the bell rang and ended them the same way. Her high school students came into the room, took out their materials, and got to work. No one dared to put materials away before the class ended. There was no eating, no playing around, and no talking out of turn. It didn’t matter if it was a senior level honors course or a remediation FCAT class, Hillary was passionate about her subject - English. She passed that passion on to her students. There was never a reading that she couldn’t find some way to relate to

her students. I saw her take a difficult poem, related it to a car engine, and watched students eagerly raise their hands at her questions. It was, as teachers say, a “light bulb” moment.

Hillary was born and raised in Baldwin County. She was married and the mother of two young children. She attended the local junior college and then graduated from a nearby university with a degree in secondary education. She later received a Master’s degree in Educational Leadership through the cohort program offered in the district. She has been a high school teacher in the district for 13 years. She admitted she was a former student of the present superintendent.

On the day of our interview, Hillary was working with five students after school on some make-up assignments. She asked me if it would be okay if we started a few minutes later because the students needed her help. I quickly agreed and watched her patiently work her way around the room. In less than ten minutes the room cleared and we started our conversation. I asked Hillary to characterize her working relationship with this superintendent. She answered, “I think it is fine.” I asked what it was like working for this superintendent. She replied, “I think it is fine.” I asked her to characterize her working relationship with past superintendents. She answered,

I feel like all our – even going back to Steve Smith – I think Steve Smith was very good because – now he was a very controlling superintendent is what I hear...I don’t know that for a fact but he was an excellent superintendent because he looked ahead for the future, and he was tight with the money but it has paid off for us now – we are thankful for that now – he was very tight but he gave teachers tremendous amount of raises during his time – he put the money to the teachers and put the money back to save for future and so he didn’t – you didn’t get a lot of classroom supply money...he was very tight in that aspect but the teachers – it went towards their salaries so that was a good thing. To keep your people happy you know.

I don’t know why I think James Jones was good. I guess he was one that nothing major happened during his administration -I don’t know- I just thought he was a good principal. He knew me personally. I just think he was a good one. He cared about education, and he tried to hold the tradition, I think, of Mr. Smith but he was very approachable and very nice superintendent – you could approach him. I am trying to think about Mr. Barnes, I think he had good leadership too. He was one that would stay in control. He would stay in control of what was going

around, and I do remember...Mr. Barnes being superintendent when I got hired because that was when I was at another school – Mr. Jones was the one that actually – the superintendent when I got hired, but I remember the transition when Mr. Barnes became superintendent, and I remember them being very visible in the schools. I remember seeing them in the schools.

They would say “hey,” and “how are you doing,” and “how are things going” but only common talk not really wanting to know information (laughter) probably not. I think he was very supportive. He had one term so he was not there very long but I know he...again...education still was the front of his – you know making sure our schools were maintained and our facilities looked nice and education was very important I know to him.

When Mr. Dinkens came along...I am being honest...to me his top priority was not about education; it was about the athletic program, and it changed a little bit in the previous superintendents we had if they – now I am being honest okay – when they came around you straightened your back when Mr. Dinkens came around it was more laid back. You did not quite feel the leadership maybe, so you got more relaxed - things became more relaxed because of his leadership role. He was not as strong – he is a very nice man but was not as strong in leading our education forward...it was more about the athletic program. Now we never went without if we needed it, he would get it. I never lacked anything in the classroom as far as instructional material – I never lacked in any area but I - also during his leadership we kept going down. Our salaries every year I took a pay cut because of our insurance – it was going up and they were not putting money into us but into the athletic programs for the raise, and I am not saying that he was trying to raise that up but to me the primary concern was education not the athletics. That is a – we come to school to educate students that is just an extra curricular thing. But it is sad that all schools are revolved around that.

In recalling her working relationship with the past superintendents she revealed her perception of the individuals. She respected Steve Smith for his reputation as a tough financial manager. She was hired by James Jones but could not articulate why she thought he was a good superintendent. She remembered Brad Barnes somewhat, but really articulated what she thought

about David Dinkens in that he put athletics before curriculum. Although she tried not to sound harsh or judgmental, she gave her perspective of the leadership of each of these individuals but not necessarily what it was like to work for each of them. In regards to Betty Lou, she was not as detailed and indicated the working relationship was fine.

I next asked her about the formal and informal authority of the superintendent in regards to her. She answered, “Well, she is the one that moved me into this position – actually she recruited me to come to this school and take over the programs.” I then asked her if the superintendent had ever used her power to help her solve problems at work. She replied, “Not that I am aware of.” So, I asked her if there was a difference working with this superintendent and previous ones. She answered,

I think Ms. Hartford is very good. She is on top of things. I think the one thing about her leadership is that she always looking at the future. She is a control – she is in control to be a woman she is in control of her leadership. I think she looks at education – I think she really does what is in the best interest of the education. She was very organized as a teacher and very – you never went against Ms. Hartford. But she was – her classroom was very well run, and now once she said when and when, she made a rule she stuck by it.

No, the only thing- and this is not in regards to her – the only thing I could see about females being in the leadership role, and this is my personal opinion, is sometimes they will think with emotion and not - and I think men in most times do not think that way with emotion. I really don’t think men are that way. Women will be emotional thinkers sometimes, and sometimes, for example, if you are – if they heard something that you said about them – yes, will that come out? Yes, I think it will come out, and I think they can make decisions based on emotions that they regarding that person sometimes I do – I feel like that way.

I think now this is just women in general. I think they are emotional thinkers instead of men they may be made - and then it is a done deal they are very - that is it. So it is not like holding a grudge type thing. I am not saying that some men don’t hold grudges, because I think that is in everybody’s personality but they are usually over it and it is over for them. Where women are going to hang on it and gnaw on it for a while, and we know that though women...being married and a

fight could happen and a man will drop it and that is the end and he will never throw anything back up to you...but a woman is going to keep gnawing and throwing and throwing it and - so if they bring that to the leadership that is not wisest thing to do - but do I think a woman is smart and capable enough to hold the leadership position – yes and Ms. Hartford is -and for our candidates we had she was definitely the best one for the job because she still has that element inside of her that education is first - she still has that element inside of her she is an overachiever she wants the best. She wants us to perform and it is not okay to get by. She strives for excellence and because she is that way she is a good leader. She does do well in her leadership role. Where most - and the thing about the one ahead of her - it was just about getting by – it was okay just to get by.

Hillary perceived the difference between the superintendents to be based on attributes associated with gendered leadership. She clarified Betty Lou was more capable and, in fact, more dedicated to the education of students. However, to her, women had a tendency to lead through emotion, which was not necessarily a positive attribute. To Hillary, leadership with emotion meant holding on to past sentiments when the passage of time should have ended those feelings.

I asked Hillary if she knew how satisfied this superintendent was with what she did as a teacher. She answered, “I think she is satisfied.” I asked if this superintendent understood her job problems and needs. She answered, “I think she understands them very well – she use to be a teacher.” I asked her if this superintendent recognized her potential. She answered,

You know, I don’t know because there has been a question about me leaving the field a little bit so I think she is – now if she ever thought that I was going to leave the field she was constantly coming to me and saying to me...we need you and you are an asset to the school. You know, she is very positive and she is very complimentary where sometimes a man won’t do that probably. You know it really depends on the man in the leadership...okay, it really does because you know – it really does because I have been in a situation where a principal was not as strong, and they were a man and I have had a lot of women – actually a lot of women principals - and my women principals were more stronger than my men principals...you know I just realized that because my first principal was a woman,

and then, when I moved here it was a woman, and there was another woman and then I have had two males.

Hillary perceived the superintendent recognized her potential because she positively reinforced her when she was considering leaving the field of education. Since the superintendent indicated she was an asset, to Hillary it was the same as recognition of her potential. Interestingly, Hillary also appeared to be qualifying her previous statement about gendered leadership. She ruled out the idea that women leaders were not strong leaders. I next asked about her trust in this superintendent. She answered,

Yes, I do trust her. I do trust her to make decisions. I think because of her experience, and I think because...if she does not know the answer she is going to be out there finding it. Man, she is a go getter and that does make her a very effective superintendent - and I don't say that most - I am really - you know it sounds like I am down on women and I am not...but she is a go getter - it is her work ethic. It is her personality that I think that makes her an effective superintendent. She was effective in all areas. She stayed on top of everything now...she was very effective.

Hillary's trust in the superintendent was at the decision making level for the district as a whole. While she continued to wrestle with her articulation of gendered leadership, her trust in this superintendent was based on her motivation level and work ethic. I next asked if she had enough confidence in this superintendent to defend and justify her decisions even if she were not present to do so. She answered very simply, "Yes."

My conversation with Hillary lasted a little over an hour. It was clear she respected Betty Lou in Hillary's role as a former student and now as a teacher. Hillary struggled with her perceptions of gendered leadership. She articulated Betty Lou was different from the previous superintendents and that somehow gender made a difference. However, analysis of data gathered through observations and this interview indicated Hillary's exchanges with the superintendent were based on job roles. The superintendent, upon hearing rumors Hillary might leave the profession, made it a point to validate Hillary. This, of course, would be considered part of her job function. Although Hillary knew the superintendent for a while, there was no supporting data to indicate her relationship was anything different from all the others I interviewed.

David Dinkens – Science Teacher. Unlike Hillary, David Dinkens was everything he appeared to be. David was an older gentleman, slightly bent over, with grandpa glasses, and a balding head. He was soft-spoken and extremely kind to everyone. I met David several times before I interviewed him. Every time I saw him he was wearing baggy blue jeans and a plaid long sleeve shirt. When I observed him in the classroom, he was always at the podium, talking in a non-stop monotone voice. The middle school students habitually had their heads down on their desks and appeared to be sleeping. On one particular day, he was teaching evolution in his classroom. At least that was what was written on the board, but in reality his lecture covered creationism. Interestingly he kept saying creationism was the one and only true perspective. At other times David would hand out worksheets to the students, tell them to open their books, and do their work. He would then sit at his desk in the front of the room and look at his computer. I knew why administrators and teachers guided me to David; he was a former superintendent. In fact, Betty Lou lost to David in her first bid for the superintendency.

David was born and raised in Baldwin County. He was a widower with no children. He attended the local junior college before leaving the state to get a Bachelor's degree in science. He obtained a Master's in Educational Leadership within the cohort system offered in the district. David managed his family's hardware store until it went bankrupt. He was then hired as a teacher and later became a principal. He returned to teaching after his unsuccessful re-election bid for the superintendency. He chuckled when I asked him how long he had known the present superintendent. He explained they were cousins – their grandparents were siblings. David liked to talk and had a lot to say, so the interview process took two days. It was at times difficult to keep David on the questions at hand. For once I wisely kept quiet and let David continue with his talking. At the conclusion of the interview I began to understand the informal political power and authority within Baldwin County.

I asked David to characterize his working relationship with the superintendent. He answered simply, "I think it is okay." I asked him what it was like working for this superintendent. He answered, "Same as any of the other superintendents." I asked him to characterize his working relationship with past superintendents. He answered,

Well, Mr. Jones hired me and sort of encouraged me to go ahead and get my Ed leadership, which was what I was thinking about anyway. And strive toward that goal. And of course, Mr. Jones gave me the job as principal over there at another

school— and of course I worked for Mr. Barnes there and he was supportive...and then when Mr. Barnes decided not to run for superintendent that is when the position was open...and his father had real ill health at that time...and Mr. Barnes, I think had been in the school system like 45 years and he just decided to step down. So the position was wide open.

I asked him what formal and informal authority the superintendent had in her present positions in regards to him. He responded, “Same as any of the other superintendents.” I asked if this superintendent had ever used her power to help him solve problems at work. He answered, “Well, she did get me into this position after I left teaching for a while.” I asked if there was a difference working with this superintendent and previous ones. He answered, “Well, I really don’t want to say this...but women are just different and sometimes I think...Ms. Hartford doesn’t listen...especially when it comes to sports. She is not very supportive of sports programs.” David went on to tell me how important the sports programs were to him. He told me stories about his star athletic days and how, based upon those experiences, he wanted the high school to have winning sports programs. He explained how he fought the School Board and ultimately got approval for the changes he wanted to make in the athletic programs.

I asked him if he knew how satisfied this superintendent was with what he did as a teacher. He answered, “I guess she thinks I am okay.” I asked if the superintendent understood his job problems and needs. He answered, “I think she understands.” I asked how well Betty Lou recognized his potential. He answered, “I really don’t know about that questions.” I asked about his trust in this superintendent. He answered, “Well, I guess I would have to say yes.” I asked if he had enough confidence in this superintendent to defend and justify her decisions even if she were not present to do so. He answered, “Well, I guess I should say yes.”

David freely talked about his superintendency. When he asked me to turn off the recorder I knew he wanted to talk about the past. Most of his memories were about how well he perceived his leadership but once in a while he let information slip. He was encouraged to run for the superintendency when Mr. Burnett decided not to run. When I asked him who encouraged him, he replied, “Oh, just people in the county.” Later he related he saw himself more as a manager in the position and less as a leader. He said, “I just let people do their jobs without any interference from me.” I also asked David why he decided to go back into teaching after his second bid for the superintendency. He told me, “I love children.”

David was not going to tell me anything that he didn't want me to know. It was more in what he didn't say that left me with questions he would not answer. Clearly his relationship with this superintendent was confined to their formal roles and positions. Their exchanges, based on his responses, were low-level thus indicating a relationship in the stranger phase. The research questions were answered, but this time spent with David opened my eyes to a larger picture. There were indeed unnamed individuals in the county who seemed to wield power; after all, David was teaching in the district even after he ran a smear campaign against Betty Lou. I also knew from observations and our conversations that Betty Lou would not tolerate David's teaching method by any other teacher. Something was amiss here and I knew I had to dig deeper. Betty Lou refused to talk about David.

Gerta Martin – the History Teacher. I knew Gerta Martin was different from the other teachers in her school. She was a distinguished looking older woman who was always impeccably dressed. She never had a strand of hair out of place and her rosy pink lipstick was always fresh, no matter the time of day. Unfortunately, the same could not be said for her peers. It really bothered Gerta that women teachers at her school wore blue jeans, dungarees as she called them, to school in front of the children. Yes, she called her high school students "children." She said in her soft southern voice, "It is getting to be where you can't tell the teachers from the children. I cannot believe these teachers come to school looking like they just came in from working in their gardens. They wonder why the children don't respect them."

Students didn't want to get on Gerta's bad side. One student made the mistake of forgetting to remove his baseball cap before he entered her room. Before Gerta said a word, the rather large, older student immediately removed his hat and profusely apologized by saying, "Ms. Martin, I apologize for not removing my hat. It will not happen again." Gerta faintly nodded as she prepared for the start of the class before the bell rang. Gerta's classroom was different as well. Gerta explained she had to make the room more comfortable for the children. It was a traditional classroom with desks, bookcases, and a podium, but Gerta had added lamps, window treatments and refinished the furniture. The walls were devoid of the "typical" high school classroom posters. Instead, on her walls were seven framed works of art given to her by previous students. On her blackboard written in chalk were the assignments for the day. Her penmanship was impeccable. Gerta had spelling tests every Thursday even though she taught history. She sent written notes to parents through her students on Friday. Gerta was definitely "old school."

Gerta was married and the mother of two grown children. She was born and raised in a nearby county. She attended the local junior college in that community before setting off for a nearby state to earn her Bachelor's degree in history. As she told me, she did not attend a traditional college; rather she graduated from a "traditional southern woman's college." Gerta later earned a Master's degree in Educational Leadership at the same college. Gerta was a history teacher for 35 years and never left the classroom. She did, however, retire once but came back after one year having discovered that traveling and retirement were not for her. She has known the present superintendent for approximately 12 years.

Betty Lou introduced me to Gerta, something she didn't do with the other teachers at this high school. I thought it was odd at first and noted this in my observation notes. I came back several times to visit and observe Gerta. On the day of our interview I arrived early to find Gerta at her desk grading papers. She invited me to sit where I was comfortable and could take notes with ease. We chatted about the weather and events at the school. To do otherwise would have been considered rude by Gerta. I could tell by Gerta's demeanor when she was ready to get down to the business of the formal interview. I asked Gerta to characterize her working relationship with this superintendent. She responded,

It is excellent. I always look out for her and she does the same for me. She and I take care of each other especially with what has been going on recently. I am one of the two people she turns to really talk – she knows she can trust me and I know I can trust her. We are friends.

I stopped writing and looked up. Gerta smiled. I asked her about this friendship and she said, "We are friends." I asked her what did she think it was like working for this superintendent. She answered,

It has been one of the richest experiences in my life. Ms. Hartford is honest and true. She has the students in mind first; that is her priority. She is very organized – this is the job description as a teacher these are and she expects no more of her teachers than she does of herself as an administrator – I have seen her use a weed eater on the lawn and things like that when she was a principal but she has high expectations and she expects her teachers to have the same attitude towards students to expect a lot and to get the work out of them.

It was clear Gerta perceived a close friendship as well as working relationship with this superintendent so I was interested in how she characterized her working relationship with the past superintendents. She replied,

Well, I would have to say the previous were all about the same except the one before Ms. Hartford. He was more laid back. Ms. Hartford by far is the best superintendent – she is trying to bring this district into the 21st century.

I asked Gerta what type of formal and informal authority this superintendent had in her present position in regards to her. She answered, “She is ultimately my supervisor, and although she never has to say anything to me, I don’t ever presume with our friendship.” I asked her if the superintendent used her power to help her solve problems in her work. She answered, “She helped me get my first job in this district.” Gerta explained later that she and her husband moved to a house on the river after her retirement. One year later she wanted to return to work as a substitute teacher. Even though she was qualified for the position she wasn’t able to get job. She said, “You see, I was not from here and I think that mattered to these people.” She then met with all the principals individually and Betty Lou was the only one to give her substitute teacher jobs. The next year Betty Lou hired her as a teacher at her school. I asked if there was a difference working with this superintendent and previous superintendents. She answered,

I think to me she is more personable. She is a mother. She can recognize and try to fulfill the needs of the children more readily rather than a professional paper pusher. She is in the school system and she is on campus here at least once a week...yes she is...something I didn’t see before her. She attends almost all extra curricular activities – basketball games, plays, anything – the things that the schools have – she is there- day or night. Her life is education. If they only knew and could accept and appreciate her.

Gerta revealed her relationship in details and descriptions that identified she had a close relationship with Betty Lou. She admitted she got her first job in Baldwin County because of Betty Lou. She also articulated that people in the district did not accept Betty Lou and appreciate her. When I asked what she meant by people she answered, “Those that are so opposed to her – not just the ones that are out there making statements.” Based on previous interviews and observations I was beginning to understand the informal dynamics of the school system. I now had collected more data that revealed this notion of another source of informal authority or power

in the system. I was beginning to understand why Betty Lou allowed David Dinkens to continue to teach.

I asked Gerta if she knew how satisfied this superintendent was with what she did as a teacher. She answered, “I know she is very satisfied with my work. She knows what I do in my classroom because she comes by and observes much like she did as a principal. We talk about it.” This was the first definitive answer I had to this question. The usual comments had been vague and unclear. Gerta communicated directly with Betty Lou. I asked Gerta how well this superintendent understood her job problems and needs. She answered, “She understands very well and makes a point to really understand.” Again, an answer that indicated there was a difference in this relationship than with others that I had interviewed. I asked Gerta how well this superintendent recognized her potential. She answered, “Absolutely. I know if I need anything I can get it. She knows I only do what is best for the children.” It was clear Gerta engaged in higher order exchanges to benefit from a relationship that went beyond each job descriptions. In addition, it appeared Gerta and Betty Lou shared the same vision and goals. I asked Gerta about her trust in this superintendent. She answered,

Very much. She has always proven to be professional and to be trustworthy and to carry out and to do what she says she will do. She is not – she does not want to close one of our schools...she wants to consolidate – she did not fire the principal that was there...she transferred her to another position which the principal did not accept. Change is good. But that has not been done here.

Yet these people don’t drive the automobile that their mothers drove but they want their child to sit in the same classroom their mothers sat in...their mindset is such that they think –“we have always gone to school here and we have always done this.” Their graduation is in that little gym with the bleachers only on one side. A play is at the gym floor and there are props and things – it is pathetic. But they don’t want to change – we have always done it this way. A few kids would like to change but their parents did not grow up here. The property has always been in the family. See I am an outsider...had I not been hired by Betty Lou, I probably would never have gone back to work.

This response supported a more personal level of understanding and knowledge of events in the school district. Gerta had given explanations that supported the reasoning behind those that

opposed Betty Lou's efforts. She also admitted that her relationship with Betty Lou had brought an economic reward – her job. I asked Gerta if she had enough confidence in this superintendent to defend and justify her decisions if she were not present to do so. She answered, "Absolutely I do and I have... and will continue to support her. She is really trying to do what is best for all children in this district, not just a select few."

Gerta was the first individual in this research to admit she had a higher-level relationship with the Betty Lou. She was quick to point out they were friends. She was also able to articulate the trust and respect she had for Betty Lou beyond the formal roles of their positions. In her answers to the questions she indicated their mutual focus on the greater organizational objective – to educate all children in the district. Gerta admitted she benefited from this relationship with her first job in this district. Interestingly, Gerta also articulated a perception of a gendered leadership with Betty Lou. She described Betty Lou as a mother and one who fills the needs of the student. On the other hand, she perceived Betty Lou as professional and one who would take action to support her vision for the district. She stated Betty Lou was not a paper pusher, which perhaps indicated she did not see Betty Lou in a bureaucratic manner. It was later in reviewing observation notes that I recognized the subtle special recognition Betty Lou had given Gerta. Betty Lou went out of her to introduce Gerta and at that time I noted the difference. It was only after this interview that I realized the foundation for the difference was their close relationship.

Tammie Dunwoody – The Physical Therapist. Gerta insisted I talk with Tammie. It was the only person she recommended to me. Tammie's name was also mentioned by a central office administrator, principal, and another teacher. Wisely I followed their recommendations. Tammie was a slight woman in her late 50s with shoulder length brown hair and crescent moon red eyeglasses. She always appeared to be gliding among her students and, despite her job, was always dressed fashionably. The tools of her trade were carried in a Dooney and Bourke duffle handbag – not the typical tote for a teacher in the public school setting. I met Tammie at the district's teacher retirement luncheon at the beginning of the school year. We talked about the difficulties of finding physical therapist willing to work in the public school setting. I saw her again on one of my observations of Betty Lou. Betty Lou stopped to talk to Tammie, and I knew from Betty Lou's body language I needed to move on and let her talk in private. I also saw Tammie at three School Board meetings although she never addressed the Board. I was not

surprised, then, that Gerta recommended Tammie; after all, I realized I had missed my clue on Gerta.

Tammie was in her second marriage, with no children. She was born and raised in a neighboring state and moved to Baldwell seeking her first job. Part of her family lived on the beach and fresh out of college she wanted to live near them. She told me she wanted to retire soon and leave Baldwell County but admitted that probably will not happen since her second husband is a native. Tammie graduated from her home state's flagship university with a degree in physical therapy. She also received her Master's in Educational Leadership from the same university. She has been in the public education system for 35 years. She knew the present superintendent from the time when Betty Lou was a middle school principal - approximately 12 years ago.

My observation notes revealed that Gerta and I met at one of the schools on a day when she had a break between sessions. Although I knew where to meet her, I was surprised to see Tammie at the front office waiting on me. We headed to her assigned working area, which was a closet size room in the back of the media center. The first thing I noticed was that the door to the room was wide open and expensive equipment was on a table in clear view. I commented on this to Tammie. She looked at me like I had said the silliest thing and answered, "We don't have that kind of problem in our schools." Clearly she was telling me she knew none of her equipment would come up missing even though it was in an area easily accessible by students and staff. We had 30 minutes for this interview, and I knew we had to get down to business quickly. Tammie admitted she was a little nervous about the interview but the first thing she stated on tape was, "I don't care what you do with this information – you can take it to the newspaper and get it published." I assured her that was not my intention and was a little surprised at the statement.

I asked Tammie to characterize her working relationship with this superintendent. She answered,

I usually don't have with what I do – I don't have to a lot of dealings with her. I don't have discipline problems and one of the central office directors is usually who I go through to get materials...and need support and that kind of thing, but she has always been extremely supportive. She would even volunteer to order things if she thought I needed them when I was just kind of mention some things...and she would say, I think we can order that – I think we can work that

out. So she was very – she has been great to work for in all capacities. Beyond that, we are good friends and we both have a lot in common with our backgrounds and that makes a great bond – we just clicked.

Tammie revealed after the tape recorder was turned off that she always felt like an outsider in the district because she was not born and raised in Baldwell County. She experienced difficulties and feelings of isolation when she divorced her first husband who was born and raised in the county. At that time, she said, it was not considered respectable for a woman to be divorced. She admitted Betty Lou and she were dealing with their divorces at the same time. They looked to each other for a lot of support during that period in their lives.

I asked Tammie what was it like working for this superintendent. She answered, Oh yes, she knows everything – I'm serious and she wants to – she wants to know about everything – she has got to be the most qualified and knowledgeable one we have ever had because she knows curriculum and she has been through it – she has done it from the gamut...you know, the facility kind of thing...but she has people under her that know all about that but she and budgets – she is amazing – she knows from the get go – she knows inside to out – she knows the system.

Like Gerta, Tammie was answering these questions differently from the other individuals I had interviewed. While she articulated the personal experience aspect like the others, she also alluded to a more personal insight into what Betty Lou was actually thinking. She was giving evidence that her perception of their relationship was based on higher-level exchanges. Coupled with her previous statement about materials, it became apparent that Tammie benefited in resources from this relationship. I next asked her to characterize her working relationship with past superintendents. In this response Tammie confirmed what I was seeing and hearing. Tammie revealed information that was crucial to my understanding of the dynamics of the school system. She confirmed there were in-groups/out-groups based on a pre-existing structure. She explained that Betty Lou, although a leader in the district, was perceived as an out-group based upon her gender, family standing, and most of all her driving force for equal treatment of all students. Tammie said,

There is a lot of negative attitudes about Steve Smith – it was- we just operated on a shoestring – he would take money that – I don't know I have a bad attitude – his main interest was to build up the savings account – we have like 4 or 5 million

dollars and that was taken from our salaries and from programs. We were forced to have this program – we just didn't have materials – we operated – of course, I did not know it at the time because I had never known anything else and that was his advantage – most people were born and raised here and had only worked here and didn't know and he didn't want us to know. He would keep information from us – information like you really do have certain rights. We couldn't even take a personal day...they would tell us no, that is not important enough. Oh, they pulled – under his reign - they tried to start a teachers' union and it was criminal...what...how they prevented that from happening. He prevented it from happening, not the School Board. It was him period. Him. The phrase would come out of his mouth – be glad you've got a job there is a lot of people out there that want a job. He would just control things – if anybody was going to run against him - he made sure they got a good job – they would get a good paying job. They said he went to a meeting one time at a superintendent meeting and they were talking about how some are elected and some appointed and then some of them are anointed. I don't think anywhere else ever operated – the county next to us now they have some worse war stories. But anyway. Hardly anyone ran against him. I guess he was just that good. Manipulative and politically good.

He hand picked the next two superintendents, and then Brad Barnes all the way down to Betty Lou – but now Betty Lou was another situation...that was an ugly deal so I have a real attitude there. It was like the torch was passed from one to the next. Steve Smith would still try to control each one in there and still get aggravated that they would not do things exactly like he wanted. The reason we are not building a new school is because of him – that is why – he always says he built this school building from the money he saved from our salaries and our programs and the material and this is the Steve Smith Building – it is not the high school – but is the Steve Smith Building and there is a bust of him up there – we walked right by it – go back by it and check it out. But that bust was privately funded. He made sure his in-laws – daughters in-laws who are very wealthy at that time – they paid for it. He lived next door to the next two superintendents - he

lived next door to James and was related to Mr. Barnes. They were related. Yes, they are related and James was next-door neighbor. Might have been related too. Then along came David Dinkens...and yes...and Betty Lou should have won that. David was just...oh well, there was so many that worked maliciously, criminally – the things they did – they just didn’t want to see Betty Lou, the woman get it – she was just a regular hard-working person that spent her whole life in the school system...and David had been a failure at everything he had ever done. And he even had a federal – I know he didn’t mention he had something worse...a adjudication and somehow that undid – because that was a federal offense he was taping – making illegal videotapes and porno stuff and all – I mean all that kind of stuff and he got busted for that. He got elected because the ones that did not want Betty Lou – of course David was easy to – he will do what they wanted him to do – and people were like...hey, that is who that population wanted somebody we can tell what to do. Yes, exactly, the ones that were so against having a woman being there – I mean it was criminal what they would do.

Quite a few actually said they didn’t want a woman superintendent. They have the 40s –50s mentality so many are - of course, David was popular...he was popular and he had a big family, big family. Now, Mr. Barnes did support her but he and his wife were ostracized because they did. Yeah, he supported Betty Lou but it was more face-to-face – he didn’t go to the general public, but he would tell...and then he and his wife caught repercussions for it. But then what happened...there were three running or four during the last race and then it ended up David lost...so it was between two women - another woman and Betty Lou so it was going to be a woman.

Tammie’s response to this question told me a lot about her relationship with Betty Lou as well as her perception of the system. With retirement looming she felt “safe” enough to reveal her thoughts about previous leaders. She felt compelled to tell me how the previous system of leaders viewed Betty Lou. Tammie saw Steve Smith as the individual who created the present situation. She revealed how he used his position to reward individuals who were a threat to his position as superintendent. She also supported what my other observations and interviews revealed that individuals residing in Livingston were the “elite” of the district. It was not coincidental that

Livingston was a common element linking individuals in the district administration. Tammie also articulated the reasoning to the acknowledgement that gender was an issue in the superintendency race. One previous superintendent covertly supported Betty Lou due to fear of being ostracized. Mr. Burnett's decision not to run for the superintendency created a situation wherein the powerbrokers of the school district supported a less qualified candidate perhaps, as Tammie pointed out, because they knew he would continue the legacy of leadership. Betty Lou, according to Tammie, was not part of this group and would never be by nature of her gender. This perception is supported by her interpretation of the last race wherein the remaining two candidates for the officer were women.

I asked Tammie about Betty Lou's position as a principal. Tammie answered, "Betty Lou was a great teacher and they recognized her...as a principal she is still...she took the job when no one else wanted it -controlled by the them and the School Board, but as a superintendent it is very different. Betty Lou is going to do what she thinks is best for all the students, not just some." Apparently this group of individuals did not perceive Betty Lou as an issue in a middle management position within the system. It was only when she stepped above that status that the political nature of the system reacted. It appeared Betty Lou was a threat to this system because she was a woman, an outsider, and committed to her equal treatment of all students. Betty Lou's transfer of the Mt. Vernon principal was one example of her commitment to this equal treatment. Her privatization of the lunch program and mandate that all students eat the school's food was a second example. She was not popular with the local restaurant owners as I observed by the billboard signs denouncing her when she ended their lunch deliveries to the schools. In fact, it explained why Betty Lou risked the outrage from these individuals beyond fiscal and health reasons. I was beginning to understand her deep commitment to all students.

I asked Tammie what type of formal and informal authority this superintendent had in regards to her. She answered, "She is my supervisor and makes recommendations to the School Board in regards to all personnel issues." I asked if this superintendent had used her power to help her solve job problems. She answered, "She has helped me get some much-needed supplies." I asked if there was a difference in working with this superintendent and previous superintendents. She answered,

She is definitely more caring towards the teachers. She always wants to know how we are doing. I am always honest with her because she really wants to know. She

holds everyone accountable for the students in our district. She wants the best for all the students. She is very personable and she is genuine – she genuinely wants – I think any one else has every really wanted the best thing for the school system – it has always been – David just didn’t care – but it has always been about money – can’t do anything because it will cost money – got to save the money and so she is really willing to do what – if you can convince her that this needs to be done – we need this program because we have been able to hire an aide and we have had some kids with horrendous problems and it takes a one-on-one aide...and we have hired and we have done that – we have money where it needs to go and that is for kids.

Tammie saw Betty Lou beyond the bounds of her formal role. She saw her as a supervisor but also as one who was in the position to negotiate resources with the School Board. She did not see a difference between Betty Lou and the previous superintendents based on gender. Her deeper understanding of Betty Lou was based on their close relationship. This enabled her to articulate the difference in the emphasis of each administration. Prior leaders were either focused on money or didn’t care, but Betty Lou was focused on the needs of the students in the district and directed resources accordingly. The thrifty leadership of previous superintendents had clearly been documented by other interviews. The laid back leadership of Mr. Dinkens had also been supported. Betty Lou’s focus on the needs of the students had been supported by other interviews. Through the last two interviews, I realized how Betty Lou’s actions were in contrast to the existing status quo of what many perceived as a system that was good at educating the district’s students. Betty Lou was more focused on allocating resources to the teachers and the classrooms. She demanded the central office staff find the best programs to assist teachers. Her constant push for closing the achievement gap in the school system was more than a competitive nature for top grades. I realized that Betty Lou saw herself as that student who was entitled to the same treatment as every other student in the system. Compounding this desire was the fact that she was a woman now in the position to make the necessary changes in the system. She was, as the saying goes, willing to rock the boat and suffer the consequences.

I asked Tammie how satisfied this superintendent was with what she did as a physical therapist. She answered, “She is very satisfied with me.” I asked how well this superintendent understood her job problems and needs. She answered, “She understands very well and makes a

point to really understand.” I asked how well this superintendent recognized her potential. She replied, “She has always encouraged me in whatever I have wanted to do...or any conference I wanted to attend.”

Tammie’s last comment alluded to the district policy Betty Lou had instituted upon taking office. Like her predecessors, Betty Lou was concerned with unnecessary expenses. She instituted a new policy that teachers were no longer allowed to attend conferences just to attend. In order to be approved, conferences had to clearly support the district’s initiative, the teacher had to demonstrate a need, and finally, as a result of the conference, the teacher had to demonstrate an impact in the classroom. Tammie’s responses to these questions indicated she had a close relationship with Betty Lou and was rewarded accordingly.

I asked Tammie about her trust in this superintendent. She answered, “Absolutely yes – like I have never trusted anyone in this position before.” I asked her if she had enough confidence in this superintendent to defend and justify her decisions in she were not present to do so. She responded,

Absolutely yes, and I have on numerous occasions because I know she is doing for the right reasons and not just to put her own needs before the rest of the district. It is not about her ego but what is best for the children.

Tammie perceived she had a mature partnership with Betty Lou. Her exchanges with Betty Lou were high quality. She knew Betty Lou recognized her potential and supported her with her problems as a physical therapist. Tammie respected Betty Lou and was able to comment on the issues Betty Lou faced as the first woman superintendent in the school district. She recognized what it meant for Betty Lou to pry open the district’s financial resources, and direct these resources to the teachers and classrooms. Tammie articulated her understanding of Betty Lou’s decisions based on the greater good of the school district. She also gave evidence of the rewards she had received as a result of this closer relationship; she was able to hire an aide, secure additional materials, and finally to attend conferences that enabled her to do her job better. She understood and respected Betty Lou. She understood the risks Betty Lou took in redirecting the allocation of resources. She understood the risks Betty Lou took in placing high demands on people in positions within the system to produce the results. Finally, she understood the risks Betty Lou was taking in instituting policies that treated all students equally.

Kali Lincoln – The Career Coach. Kali Lincoln had a heart attack and was transitioning back to work while I was in the field. Four people recommended Kali - a principal, an assistant principal, a teacher, and Betty Lou. I was unable to observe Kali at work in part due to her reduced working load but mostly due to the sensitive nature of her job. She dealt with at-risk students and their families. I only communicated via telephone for several months until I was able to schedule an interview. She was concerned that she needed to prepare for the interview because she knew I would ask her for facts and figures that she could not remember off the top of her head. After several reassuring conversations, we set the date and time for our interview. Kali apologized in advance; she knew we would be interrupted because that was “the nature of my job.” True to her word, we were interrupted six times by representatives of different state and local agencies. Part of Kali’s job was to coordinate the services her students and families were entitled to receive. She was the glue that held the services together and made them communicate with each other.

Kali was an older woman with chin length silver hair. Her hairstyle resembled the same hairstyle I had seen in pictures of Jackie Kennedy during her White House years. Kali was wearing a heavy sweater on a sweltering hot day because her office was freezing. She was seated behind her desk in front of a large floor length window. I could see the school’s parking lot behind her. The majority of her office was taken up with a round table, chairs, one wall length bookcase loaded with books and binders, and finally a box of toys. The box of toys, she explained, were for the children who always accompanied the parents to their sessions. The décor of her office was like the rest of the offices in the district – practical, old, and very clean.

Kali was married and the mother of two grown children. She was born and raised in the mid-West. She graduated from the state university in her hometown with a degree in special education. She earned her Master’s in Educational Leadership from a university near Baldwin County. Her marriage brought her to Baldwin County. She had been a teacher in the system for 23 years. She had never worked with the present superintendent until Betty Lou took office two years ago.

I asked Kali to characterize her working relationship with this superintendent. She answered, “I feel it is good.” I asked her what it was like working for this superintendent. She replied,

I feel like it is very good. She is very involved in all the schools and very visible and she makes you feel like you can express your opinion freely and not be penalized or given trouble. So there is just more openness, a lot more openness than there use to be.

This response from Kali supported previous evidence that Betty Lou had changed pre-existing norms for the system. In Kali's perspective, this change was in the openness of the communication between Betty Lou and herself. She felt she could voice her opinion without being labeled as a troublemaker. This openness deviated from previous norms of behavior, between those that occupied the leadership position and members of the organization. I asked her to characterize her working relationship with past superintendents. She answered,

Okay, well let's see. I would say the first three that I worked with here - Mr. Smith, Mr. Jones, and Mr. Barnes - things were quite different then and I can speak because I have always attended school board meetings...so, and I did this because I wanted the big picture of things - not just to know what was going on in our little school, but to find out county wise what was going on and it has been very interesting. At that time during those first three - Mr. Smith, Mr. Jones and Mr. Barnes things were different in that people were not as involved. People did not - were not as concerned about being involved or about their rights or this...or the other things were not as openly handled because I guess there was not a need for it to be...starting with Mr. Dinkens he came there was more openness and gradually the last few years people want to voice their opinions more and want their opinions to be heard and are more aware of their rights...so from Mr. Dinkens through Mrs. Hartford there has been much more vocalness from the community.

Kali attended school board meetings to get a broader perspective of the district. Based on her experience she was able to articulate a change in the system. Before Mr. Dinkens the system was closed and individuals were not involved. This non-involvement meant that individuals in the district were not aware of their rights. Under Mr. Dinkens' leadership, this began to change with Board meetings becoming more open. She also noted this openness meant people were inclined to voice their opinions because they understood their rights. She articulated a breakdown in the norms of the "old" system wherein only certain individuals were privy to information. This

breakdown in the “old” system came as a consequence to the enlightenment of individual rights within the system.

I asked Kali what formal and informal authority this superintendent had in her present position in regards to her. She answered, “She ultimately makes all personnel decisions.” I asked if this superintendent had used her power to solve problems in her work. She answered,

Yes, she has. I had a very hard time one time getting records from a charter school...and I had done all my little tricks...and so had the parents - and they did not even respond to the parent - so finally the kids were out of school because we were waiting to get – we needed the records. So, I did contact the superintendent’s office, and she contacted the superintendent of that district and that definitely helped because that superintendent got things rolling.

I asked if there was a difference in working with this superintendent and previous superintendents. She answered,

It has changed and it has become more difficult with each term I would say. More difficult because there’s more people involved – more community involvement and you know you cannot make everybody happy...but when everybody wants to be happy, then it is more difficult as different things come up - and people are expecting their opinions and everybody wants a piece of the superintendent – they all want their way with the things that they want...so it is not an easy job.

As far as gender, I don’t think it has an impact even though this is our first woman superintendent. I just think times have changed, and the job is more difficult. Partly because of her background and partly because she is very attuned to what is going on in each school. She listens to parents, and she hears their concerns. She talks to students – she comes to lunch. She comes to all of our events and activities - as many as she can - I won’t say every one of them but she does that for all the schools. I think she had so many Thanksgiving dinners she had turkey coming out of her ears probably! She is very hands-on, and I know a lot of parents discuss their concerns with her.

Okay well, let’s see...she is probably the most aggressive one and progressive one. That is she is doing what she thinks is best whether it means she is elected the next time or not. So she is probably the most progressive and aggressive. That is a big

difference and I truly believe that she is going to do what she thinks is best for the students.

While Kali articulated the superintendent had helped her solve a problem once, there was nothing in her statement to indicate that type of assistance was ongoing. Once again, due to her district-wide perspective, she was able to indicate a difference in Betty Lou's administration. She described Betty Lou as aggressive, progressive, and one who listened to parents and students. To Kali the biggest difference was not based on gender but on the fact that Betty Lou was committed to her vision. This commitment to vision, according to Kali, placed Betty Lou in the position of possibly not getting re-elected. Her statement alluded once again that Betty Lou's actions somehow contradicted the norms of the system. Kali recognized in a previous statement that the nature of the job meant a superintendent would not please all the constituents, but Betty Lou's actions went beyond that condition. Somehow Betty Lou's leadership represented a deeper challenge. Kali recognized Betty Lou's commitment moved her beyond self-interest and more toward the greater good of the organization.

I asked Kali how satisfied this superintendent was with what she did in her job. She answered, "I think she is satisfied." I asked how well this superintendent understood her job problems and needs. She responded,

I think she understands the problems of the teachers very well. She has really began to loosen up, and has continued on more so. One thing that she has that I think is very good...and I can't remember what it is exactly called - maybe a district planning committee, but she has representatives from each school and they meet periodically and bring with them to the meeting any concerns or questions that come from their schools. And they can discuss that at that time and I think that has been very good.

I asked Kali how well this superintendent recognized her potential. She answered, "Well, I really don't know about that questions." Kali's responses to these questions support that her relationship was not close enough for her to indicate a deeper understanding of the superintendent's perception of her as an employee. She once again demonstrated her respect and value of Betty Lou's leadership especially with the establishment of the Teacher Advisory Council. Again, her broader perspective of the system meant she understood the implications of this decision.

I asked Kali about her trust in this superintendent. She answered, Yes, I do. Well I think, here again it probably goes back to her personality, but I feel like she tells you exactly how she feels – she is not out to win a popularity contest – she is out to get the job done...and if she doesn't agree when you make a suggestion and she doesn't agree with it I feel like she will say I appreciate that – in fact I have heard her say this at board meetings – I appreciate your thoughts on this...so I feel like she considers what you said – your suggestions, and thinks about them, but in the end she is going to have to do what she thinks is best and that of course is her leadership she provides. But I feel like she does hear everybody out that goes to her and makes suggestions, and then listens to that, and does her other research and makes what she thinks is the best decision.

I asked Kali if she had enough confidence in this superintendent to defend and justify her decisions if she were not present to do so. She answered very simply, “Sure.” Kali's insight into this superintendent had less to do with the level of personal exchanges with Betty Lou and more to do with her knowledge of the system. As she admitted in the beginning, she wanted to understand the broader picture of the school system. As a result of this perspective she was able to give insight into the risks associated with some of Betty Lou's decisions. She also saw a difference in the participation of individuals within the district. While she pointed to Mr. Dinken's superintendency as the turning point, she articulated the difference in Betty Lou's leadership. To her it had less to do with gender and more to do with the progressiveness of Betty Lou's leadership. While her responses were not couched in the hierarchical language of the other individuals I interviewed, there was nothing in the data to support a higher-level relationship. Interestingly, Kali was able to provide evidence on the larger issues at hand namely the impact and dangers of Betty Lou's commitment to educate all students in the district.

Brandi Glover – The Math Teacher. I interviewed Brandi Glover because Principal Billy Bob Smith pointed me in her direction. Mr. Smith appreciated having a hand in the selection of the teachers I interviewed at his school. This behavior frustrated me. The other principals made suggestions and recommendations but never insisted on the interviews. I understood from the data I collected on Mr. Smith that I would not be able to obtain any of his faculty's perspectives unless I agreed to interview Brandi. Mr. Smith was in control of his school and everything that happened in it. I was not in the position to argue on this matter but I knew that Mr. Smith was trying to

control my sample for some reason. While it may have interfered with the teacher sample, it supported my ongoing analysis and interpretation of the data I collected on Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith was part of the pre-existing authority structure and I certainly didn't want to create any issues for Betty Lou. The other teacher Mr. Smith recommended was an individual that snowballing had led me to – so I interviewed Brandi.

Brandi was a middle-aged woman with short brown hair. She was very friendly when I entered her classroom. She was worried about the smell of the classroom even though I assured her I did not smell anything offensive. Not to be deterred, she doused the room with six long sprays from an aerosol can, which I think was supposed to improve the situation. Her classroom was packed with furniture, books, papers, and what appeared to be projects. She sat at her desk while I sat in front of her in a student's desk. We began the interview with the typical background questions. She was married and the mother of four children. She was born and raised in a neighboring county and moved to Baldwell County when she married her husband. She told me she was a late bloomer, which meant she went to college after her children were older. She attended the local junior college and later received her Bachelor's degree from a nearby university. She was a teacher for twelve years and admitted she worked under the principalship of the present superintendent.

Brandi told me she was nervous. Her hands were constantly touching items on her desk. She straightened papers, moved the stapler and tape dispenser, and kept picking up a pen. In the hopes of calming her a little, I asked her how she liked teaching. Brandi proceeded to tell me stories about her students. In the midst of the stories, she started crying. I pulled out the tissues I carried and gave her the entire pack. She continued to cry. She related a story of a student of hers that was in a coma and responded to her voice once while she was visiting him. The memories were clearly painful to her. I offered to reschedule our conversation but she insisted we continue.

I asked Brandi to characterize her working relationship with this superintendent. She answered, "I think it is good." I asked what did she think it was like working for the superintendent. She answered, "She is a very strong leader. She is fair, and I truly enjoy that." I asked her to characterize her working relationship with past superintendents. She replied, "All of our superintendents were by the book and very consistent." I asked what type of formal and informal authority this superintendent had in regards to her. She answered, "She signs my checks." I asked if this superintendent had used her power to help her solve her problems at work.

She answered, “Not that I am aware of.” I asked if there was a difference in working with this superintendent and previous superintendents. She answered, “They are all the same.”

Based on these responses, Brandi did not have a close working relationship with this superintendent. Although she had been quick to share her stories in the beginning, she was either unable or unwilling to expound on her perceptions of this superintendent. I continued with my questions. I asked her if she knew how satisfied this superintendent was with what she did as a teacher. She answered, “I think she is satisfied.” I asked how well this superintendent understood her job problems and needs. She answered, “Since she used to be a teacher I think she understands them. I asked if this superintendent recognized her potential. She answered, “I can’t say.”

I wasn’t getting anywhere but I continued on with the hope that the next question would spark a deeper response. I asked her about her trust in this superintendent. She responded, “Yes, like I could any other superintendent.” I asked if she had enough confidence in this superintendent to defend and justify her decisions if she were not present to do so. She answered, “I’m sure I can.” Just as we ended our conversation Mr. Smith walked into the room. He asked me to help him detain a teacher while the faculty prepared a surprise birthday party.

Brandi’s responses indicated her exchanges were low-level with the superintendent. Her interactions, if any, were limited to her role as a teacher. She expressed respect and trust but it was clear she felt the same way towards the other superintendents. Brandi’s relationship with Betty Lou, based on the data, was in the stranger phase.

Gina Michaels – The Social Studies Teacher. Gina was the other teacher Principal Smith recommended I interview. Two central office administrators, one assistant principal, and two teachers, who were interested in the research but unwilling to be interviewed, also mentioned her. Gina was a woman in her mid-40s with jet-black shoulder length hair. She was always dressed in slacks, a blouse, and a smock like cover up. She also wore teacher shoes. In her classroom she never sat at her desk during instruction, especially when the students were taking their seats. Gina was always at the doorway welcoming her middle school students into her classroom. She always explained what was going on in her class and made sure the students knew what was expected of them. Students appeared to like Gina as they always said hi to her in the hallways. Gina kept one bag of chocolate candy in her top right hand desk drawer and a bag of hard candy in the far left

work cabinet. I know this because during her planning period other teachers were always coming in to get candy.

Gina was married and the mother of three children. She was raised in Baldwin County. Her father was in the military stationed overseas when he married Gina's mother. They lived at various military bases in the United States before her father left the service and decided to move his family of six children to Baldwin County. Gina was a career changer and this was her first year of teaching. She had been a financial consultant for a local investment firm before she decided to go to college and pursue a degree in teaching. She explained she started out as a receptionist at the investment firm and over the span of 23 years worked her way up to a consultant position without obtaining a college degree. Once her youngest child entered middle school she decided she would follow her dream to become a teacher. She received a Bachelor's degree in social science education from a nearby university in less than three years. She was working on her Master's degree in Educational Leadership from a nearby university at the time of this research. She admitted she never work for the present superintendent until this year. But she did tell me,

Well she has two daughters and I had two sons that are just about the same age - so my children went to school with her children and...she also was the principal at the high school at one time when my boys were going there and also she was the - actually she wasn't the principal here - she was at one but not when my boys were going - we went to church together -and I have known her mom actually...I went to school with her brother - he had cancer and died when he was in the 5th grade - his name was Bill- anyway I knew her mother and her brother before I ever knew her - it was like as a 5th grader over at the elementary school...I knew her brother and he had cancer, to begin with he lost his legs and then he still came to school but then it progressed to a point that he just wasn't able to come.

I asked Gina to characterize her working relationship with the present superintendent. She answered, "I think it is okay." I asked her what was it like to work for this superintendent. She replied, "I think she is very well organized and I think she is very focused." Since she was a first year teacher, I asked her if she would be able to comment on past superintendents. She said, "Sure." I asked her to characterize the past superintendents she answered, "

I knew the previous superintendents because my kids were in school here but I really didn't work with them in any capacity so I can't really tell that way.

The superintendent when I was going to school – it was Steve Smith was for a long time, James Jones was during that time – now Paul Anderson was the principal – at one time we were all in one big school when I first started – we were all together because there was segregation –there was the white school and the black school - then desegregation came into play like in the 70s and in fact my brother and my sister the older one – they are just a little bit older than I and they actually were the first – my brother was one of the first classes that came to the middle school under desegregation. I actually – until I was in the 6th grade - we didn't have any African American students in our classes or very, very few we might have maybe had one or two that year. I didn't have a problem with it all but there were a lot of people in the community that were very upset. I remember my parents talking about all the problems other people were having with it.

Steve Smith always did a really good job I thought because he was kind of like the peacemaker so if different ones and he was really in control - people would talk to him, he would be respected...his opinion even after he got out and he was no longer superintendent people would still go... and even today...and ask him before they would go ask the present superintendent. People still thought he was still in office even though he wasn't.

Mr. Jones is still seen as a pillar – he and his wife both – his wife use to work with the school board for years – she retired from the school board – she was in the finance office and she and I are very good friends now. I got to know her once I joined the church and had a lot of contact with her.

Mr. Barnes was our principal at the elementary school and also when my kids were growing up...so that was for quite a while. And also Mrs. Barnes, his wife, was the principal at the elementary for several years – I don't know if it was like two, three or four years when my kids were going to school there. I think it must have been my daughter.

Although Gina was not an employee of the school system at that time, she was able to recount her perspective of the superintendents. Interestingly, she knew Steve Smith

superintendent as a student and as an adult. It was not surprising to hear that Mr. Smith's opinion still counted in the community since previous interviews indicated the depth of his influence. Gina commented that people continued to seek his input before going to the present superintendent.

Before I could ask my next question, Gina began talking. I am glad now that I let her talk without interruption and, furthermore, that I recorded this portion of our conversation. Here is what she said,

Actually the males are probably seen more – because this is a small town and we are still kind of backwards if I can say that word and we are at a man's world. It has always been that way and it is changing some because we are getting more people in from other places being a little bit more diverse because before, seriously, if you weren't from Sharpsville, born and raised then you are an outsider. I don't care if you have lived here for 75 years but if you weren't from here – now they accept me I think as from here because I have been here as long as most people have known me and my dad is from here and my grandfather was from here so I am considered part of the community.

When I was young...and the reason for that I think...see my mother is Asian she is from Korea. When I first moved here there were no Asian kids at all and even my teacher – and she was the sweetest lady – but when I first come in 2nd grade – everybody else would sit there and my seat was put over here away from everybody else because for some reason they thought I was different...because I looked different...and so they-all the kids- would say, “you got to leave that girl alone she knows karate.” Well that in those days - they had all these karate movies and such - and so that is how they perceived me and in my case, well you know, I don't see the Asian in me and I would always say my mother is Asian but I never considered myself Asian. I was probably in high school before they really started treating me like part of the rest of them.

Of course, now I was very shy anyway so I think maybe my self esteem wasn't as high as it could be because I would always think they are either talking about me - or you know down the hallway I would think they are laughing and for some reason I thought they were laughing at me for whatever reason...and maybe they were and maybe they weren't.

My sister her attitude is like she didn't care – she is totally opposite to me – I care about what people think about me...her attitude was I don't care it didn't really bother her. My older brother, he really never made friends, of course he is kind of like me – he is kind of introverted and he doesn't necessarily make lots of friends - and I know at times we had people that would try to pick on us and then my oldest brother - which he did know karate by the way – and he would see them picking on some of us...he would take them to the side and say look if you don't leave my brother – sister alone because we had a lot of kids in the same room and the oldest - I have a brother that is older and a sister that is older and then I am the third one so we always took care of the younger ones. So, if anybody picked on us we congregated and we would take care of anybody. You know, I never had to, all I would have to say – they would say do you know karate and I would say - would you like me to show you and they say oh no leave her alone – leave her alone. So I just took that they perceived of me - and I let that be – I just let them think that I knew and I never had any problems as far as that.

I think it was easier on my younger brothers and sisters because people knew more and more people were coming in and more people deciding that – and that is the thing about a small town because I went to school in south Florida– no problem there, but I don't remember any Asians being in my class or anything...but I wasn't treated differently as far as that.

Now that I really think about it - I think it is because physically I was different and see at that time they didn't – people didn't know...they had never seen Asians so all they saw was what was on television and so they had this little stereotype about what Asians are all about - that I think it is ignorance in a way. You could have somebody come from somewhere else like New York or wherever and to begin with – yes, they are not going to be your best friends to start with they don't know you and people are funny like that in small towns. In small towns I have a very good friend her husband use to be our youth minister. But they are never considered part of the group even though they are there...and they are never considered part of the group because they are not from here they are from Kansas.

I don't think it is quite as bad because now days we are more diverse honestly then when I was growing up and people come in and out more often. When I was going to school we very seldom had anybody new come in. Very seldom because who would want to come to Sharpsville - in fact when people do come to Sharpsville we are always suspicious and we would say - what brought you to Sharpsville- if you don't have relatives here then they wonder... Sharpsville is such a little, insignificant place why do you want to move here...that is the way it is. And people will ask several times - what brought you here - how did you find Sharpsville if you are from - now if you were from Mt. Vernon already or a nearby county but if you say I am from Kansas or I am from Georgia or Alabama - how did you get to Sharpsville- you know somebody here?

For a brief moment, I was able to understand what Gina had experienced in a school system where she was viewed as different from the rest of the children. Apparently, it was painful for her to experience exclusion at the hands of her 2nd grade teacher because she recalled the incident after so many years. To be different in the community bore repercussions even, as in this case, the person had no control over the difference. Gina stopped her recollection as quickly as she had started. She looked at me and there was silence.

I asked her what type of formal and informal authority this superintendent had in her present position in regards to her. She answered, "Well, my principal has more authority so I go to him but I really don't go to Ms. Hartford." I asked if this superintendent had used her power to help her solve problems at work. She answered, "No." I asked if there was a difference between this superintendent and previous superintendents. She answered, " Well, I can only say like I did before that this is a man's world. A woman can say the same thing as a man but they will only listen to the man. But is she different - no, she is very focused and organized."

I asked Gina how satisfied this superintendent was with what she did as a teacher. She answered, "I hope she is satisfied." I asked if this superintendent understood her job problems and needs. She said, "I think she understands them very well since she use to be a teacher." I asked how well this superintendent recognized her potential. She answered, "Hmm...I haven't really thought about that." I asked about her trust in this superintendent and she responded, "Yes, like anyone in that office they have a lot of responsibilities." I asked her if she had enough confidence

in this superintendent to defend and justify her decisions even if she were not present to do so. She answered, “Sure.”

The rest of the interview was spent talking about Gina’s experiences as a first year teacher. She concluded our conversation by telling me how happy she was with her decision to become a teacher. As she shared her last story about leadership in the classroom the students were knocking on the door. It was time to go.

Gina’s responses in this interview indicated she had very few exchanges with the superintendent. Her understanding of the superintendent came from her prior interactions as a parent and student. Gina’s relationship with Betty Lou was based on low-level exchanges. Furthermore, it was confined to the formal role of her position as a teacher. Gina, in revealing her personal experience, articulated the boundaries of a society that had definite lines in regards to who belonged and who didn’t. She had experienced the fall-out of being different, and had witnessed it as an adult in her church with her friends. Perhaps having once been the brunt of the stereotypes of the system made her more perceptive of similar incidents. She perceived the district as a “man’s world” where men were actually seen more. She also supported the evolving data that the former superintendents still held a respected informal position within the district.

Betty Lou’s Perspective

Betty Lou told me on numerous occasions, “The most important relationship in this district is between the students and the teachers. What happens in the classroom is paramount.” She insisted meaningful learning took place at all time in the classrooms. Many school visits were spent walking the hallways visiting classrooms. She never visited schools on a scheduled time because as she told me, “I want the teachers and students to know I care. It also gives me a chance to see what is going on in the classrooms.” She always engaged in the same behaviors during her visits to the classrooms. She quietly entered a room, looked around, and listened to the lesson. At the conclusion of her observations if she had any questions or comments she would locate the principal and go over them. I never saw Betty Lou address a classroom teacher directly during classroom instruction other than smile and nod. She expected teachers to carry on their lessons as planned with minimal interruption from her. I did see Betty Lou interact with students directly during non-instructional time. Many came up to her and said hello. Others she called by name and asked about their grades. The students always reacted by smiling sheepishly and ending their sentences with the word “ma’am.”

Betty Lou and I attended a pep rally at one of the high schools on a Friday afternoon during homecoming week festivities. Betty Lou told me about each of the teachers standing among the students during the pep rally. She also told me about the teacher leading the pep rally and why she was selected to perform that function. This type of easy recall of teachers was apparent during all my observation times with her. She knew these individuals, their families, their history and, most important to her, their strengths and weaknesses as teachers.

Betty Lou was aware of the grumbling about a teacher's union. She also understood the need for the teachers to have a voice in district policy. She set up the quarterly teacher representative meetings as a result of this awareness. I was not able to attend any of the meetings because the teachers voted to close the meetings. I asked Betty Lou why the meetings were quarterly. She answered, "It is so difficult coordinating schedules that we decided on quarterly rather than monthly." I found out that no one had ever missed a meeting, and those selected considered it an honor. The teacher representatives I spoke to said the same thing - they were there to represent the school no matter how controversial the subject. Many suggested the meetings were very intense at times. Betty Lou admitted, "I listen to the teachers at these meetings. I want to understand and help them. I respect what they are doing and appreciate their hard work. I want to make sure they have everything they need to do their jobs." She took their recommendations and concerns under consideration because, "They really need to be focused on all the students and what happens in the classroom. Our students deserve the best education."

It was during the interview process with these teachers that I discovered two individuals who admitted they shared a close friendship with Betty Lou. The friendships developed over the years and were based on mutual personal experiences. Interestingly, both of these people were not originally from the county. These two people were loyal to Betty Lou and fearlessly protected her. I know this because they were the only two individuals I interviewed who spoke openly and directly about what was going on "behind the scenes" in the district. One spoke directly about the "criminal" behavior of past superintendents. Both teachers told me directly about Betty Lou's tragedies and struggles. Each admitted that they listened to her and that she sought their counsel.

When I questioned Betty Lou about these two teachers she admitted, "They are my friends, and I know they will be honest with me. I've known them for a long time. I also know I can trust them not to repeat anything we talk about." Analysis of data supported Betty Lou's perception of these two teachers. Her interactions with these two teachers were different but so

subtle that I almost missed the cues during observations. She engaged in higher-level exchanges with these two teachers that went beyond their organizational roles. It was clear she had a high degree of trust and respect for each of these teachers. Analysis and interpretation of data supported Betty Lou's perception of their relationships as a mature partnership.

I asked Betty Lou about the other six teachers. She admitted, "I have a lot of respect for each of these teachers. They are very good at what they do. I know they work hard to provide the best education for all our students." I asked about her interactions with these individuals. She replied, "Well, two of them served on the Advisory Council so I probably had more interactions with them than the others. But I can't say I am any closer to them than the others. Of course, in a small town you know everybody. I am very pleased with all these teachers." I asked about special requests for equipment and supplies as indicated by one of the teachers. Betty Lou answered, "Yes, she can call me directly with her requests and has in the past. But you have to realize when you are talking about high dollar purchases it has to be brought to my attention. I like them to keep their principals informed but a lot of times teachers will deal directly with me or someone in the central office." Analysis and interpretation of data supported low-level exchanges between Betty Lou and these teachers. Although she admitted great respect for each, it was within their role as teachers. Betty Lou perceived their relationships as prescribed by the organizational roles of superintendent and teacher.

Conclusion

The following conclusions were drawn based on the analysis and interpretation of data collected for this section of the study. The relationships between the Betty Lou and the teachers were as follows:

- A. Six teachers perceived their relationships with Betty Lou to be a function of their jobs. Data supported each viewed their exchanges as low-quality and prescribed by organizational roles. In addition, trust in this superintendent was perceived as the same with previous superintendents. Analysis and interpretation of data supported the finding these relationships were in the stranger phase as defined by theory and social norms of the school district.
- B. Betty Lou perceived her interactions with the six teachers to be low-quality and closely regulated by the confines of the job descriptions. Analysis and interpretation of

- the data supported Betty Lou's perception of low-quality exchanges associated with the stranger phase of relationship creation.
- C. Two teachers perceived their relationships with Betty Lou as friendships rather than a function of their jobs. Analysis of the data indicated their exchanges were high-quality. In addition, each perceived their relationship with Betty Lou as one based on mutual trust, respect, and obligation to each other. Analysis and interpretation of the data supported the finding these two relationships were in the mature partnership phase.
 - D. Betty Lou perceived her relationship with the two teachers as friendships rather than a function of their jobs. Analysis and interpretation of the data supports Betty Lou's perception of high-level exchanges associated with the mutual partnership phase of relationship creation.
 - E. The teachers noted perceived difference in their working relationships with Betty Lou and previous superintendents. She was perceived as hardworking, motivated, and progressive. All articulated the needs of the students were paramount in her administration and goals were focused on the academic achievement of all students. Seven of the teachers characterized the difference in gender in that she was more caring and genuine, while one indicated she did not listen. One teacher noted the tendency of all women administrators to be emotional. Another teacher articulated the county was a man's world, thus alluding to a pre-existing framework where gender was recognized as a difference between Betty Lou and the previous superintendents.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present the findings based on data I collected and analyzed to answer the three questions guiding this research. This research explored how this woman superintendent led her school district through individual relationships with members of her district. I spent nine months in the field conducting interviews, observations and collecting numerous documents in order to recognize and understand what I was studying. I presented the findings of this research with the simple understanding I would describe what happened. To understand this woman's leadership was to understand the county in which the research took place and ultimately the woman herself. Furthermore, I had to delve into discovering what the individual relationships between this leader and members of the district appeared to me, were

perceived by each individual, and, finally, reflected in documents from both sides of the partnership.

I organized my findings by the job functions of the participants. Specifically, I organized the findings by school board members, central office administrators, principals, assistant principals, and teachers. Preliminary observations uncovered a strong sense of hierarchical order within the school district thus organization by job function made better sense of the data. As I triangulated and analyzed the data three themes emerged: relationship to the superintendent, job performance, and trust. I presented the findings along these themes through segments of transcripts and verbatim quotes from participants supported by observations and documentation. Conclusions were presented within each section of the data organized by job function.

Every participant was given the opportunity to communicate to me his or her perception of this woman's leadership as viewed through the development and maintenance of relationships. In all, 32 individuals agreed to share their perceptions. I analyzed the verbatim transcripts of each participant and triangulated it with my observation notes and collected documents. I transformed the data to protect the confidentiality and identity of the participants. All the participants member-checked their transcriptions and anxiously awaited the findings of this research.

In the final chapter, I explore the contributions of this research to the literature. Specifically, I articulate the implications of this study in terms of how this woman superintendent's leadership revisited what is known about leadership through dyadic relationships. Chapter Five summarizes my findings and provides my recommendations for additional areas for further research.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The research studied how a woman superintendent led her school district in the state of Florida. One approach to studying her leadership was within the context of organizational theory. This context defined the leader as an individual member of the group or organization who influenced the interpretation of events, the choice of objectives and strategies, and the organization of work activities (Yukl, 1998). At the base of this influence lay the fundamental premise that leaders form different types of relationships with members of the organization and thus influence the outcomes of the organization (Sparrowe & Liden, 1997). The theory used in this study to examine and explain this type of leadership was known as the Leader Member Exchange (LMX) theory. Three informing fields of literature supported this approach: research on the PK-12 public superintendency, research on women leadership, and research on organizational theory. The conceptual framework used to guide this research emerged from this literature and informed the research questions.

The Research Conversation: Contribution of this Study

These three fields of research converged into an overlapping relationship culminating in the topic for this research project. The following section of this chapter discusses this convergent point and explains how this study contributed to the research conversation in educational administration.

Research on the PK-12 Public Superintendency

According to Webster's (2006) dictionary a school superintendent is one who directs and manages a school system or organization. While many people recognize this position within our public education system, few can eloquently explain the function and responsibilities of the modern day superintendent. Existing expectations placed on those who hold this office are a product of history. Unfortunately, a detailed historical account of this office is not available, perhaps due in large part to the evolution of the position as a product of growth in the educational area as well as the changing demands of the greater society.

History is "an unending dialogue between the past and present" (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995, p. 3), and knowledge of the history of the superintendency helps one comprehend the present. The history of this office must be pieced together from sketchy recordings dating back to

the end of the eighteenth century (Konnert & Augenstien, 1995). Brunner, Grogan, & Bjork (2002) identified seven stages of development in the office of the superintendency. The last stage of development identified the role of the superintendent as a collaborator. Diminished power and the need to respond to external pressures moved the role of superintendency towards reforming schools in ways that support the learning of all children. School districts require systemic restructuring of schools to decrease administrative bureaucracy and increase involvement of teachers, parents, and the community in educational leadership (Brunner et al., 2002). In this new climate of accountability and choice, superintendents are challenged with understanding and explaining the importance of school reform for a sound economy and democratic society in school environments that are becoming increasingly diverse. Political and moral dimensions of the leadership role of superintendents in changing the nature of schooling have taken precedence over the conventional management practices of the past (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000).

Successful superintendents no longer lead by commanding and demanding compliance rather they lead through alliances developed through collaboration. Leadership as a collaborator requires working with and through rather than commanding others. This new circumstance challenges superintendents to focus on improved learning through the school community while building community capacity to enhance learning in schools. This notion of leadership has become one of creating a shared culture with a common set of values that bind stakeholders of a school district together to form a cohesive community while respecting and appreciating diversity (Brunner et al., 2002).

Grogan (2000) examined this stage of the superintendency through a feminist, post-modern lens and reconceptualized the position. She uncovered contradictions or paradoxes inherent in the performance of leadership as a collaborator. At the base of these contradictions are the different external forces at work in society at large. These contradictions were the paradox of vision, the paradox that successful reformers need not reform, the paradox that public schools adopt private sector values and the paradox of decentralized authority with increased accountability. She asserted that for a person to endure in the superintendent's office long enough to effect change that promised improvement in student achievement, a superintendent must display comfort with contradiction, work through others, appreciate dissent, have a critical awareness of how students are being served and employ an ethic of care.

The public perceives the office of the superintendent as the pinnacle leadership position within the PK-12 public school organization. In this new climate of accountability and choice, superintendents are expected to lead systemic restructuring of schools to decrease administrative bureaucracy and increase involvement of teachers, parents, and the community. In addition, external pressures have moved the role of superintendency towards reforming schools in ways that support the learning of all children. Previous understandings of this leadership position no longer describe and explain the responsibilities, priorities, and activism that are required of the 21st century superintendent. Superintendents are now expected to be collaborative leaders. This expectation for collaboration reconceptualized the position (Grogan, 2003). The relationship between the superintendent and the school district community serves as the foundation for collaborative leadership. Any research on this position must be informed by what is known about the dynamics of these relationships. This research added to the understanding of the reconceptualized superintendency by examining how a woman superintendent led her district through relationships with members of this district.

Research on Women Superintendents

Throughout most of the history of American public education, women have been underrepresented in administrative positions in elementary and secondary schools, relative both to their participation in the teaching force and to their proportion of the general population (Kaestle, 1983; Tyack & Hansot 1982). More recent national demographic analyses of the public school system revealed women made up 65% of the teaching force, 46% of the principals, 57% of central office administrators, 33% of assistant or associate superintendents, and 18% of the superintendents (Grogan & Brunner, 2005; U.S. Department of Education 2004). Although women have recently gained a larger share of school-level administrative positions they have not yet approached parity with men (Blount 1998; Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Hoffman, 2003; Tallerico & Tingley, 2001; Theobald, 1993; Weiler, 1998).

The percentage of women superintendents is growing amid reports of superintendent shortages and concerns about equal opportunity. At the same time the field of research about women in the superintendency is growing. While some may argue the demands of the position have shifted making the position less desirable to men, others maintain the position has not changed; rather women are better positioned to break into a predominantly male dominated field. The need for research expands as more women fill these positions.

Guiding the research on women superintendents is a paradigm articulated by Shakeshaft (1994, 1989, 1990, 1994). Shakeshaft (1989) viewed most of the research completed in educational leadership as androcentric, i.e. viewing the world and shaping reality through the male lens. This perspective was considered biased since only one point of view, the male, was consistently given attention. According to Shakeshaft (1989), research on women in the superintendency must progress through six stages to reshape what is “known.” This progression is essential for a paradigmatic shift away from a single perceptive of leadership to one that is inclusive of multiple perspectives.

Getting into the position. Many studies outlined career barriers thought to obstruct female applicants for the superintendency. The barriers were classified as either internal (associated with the individual) or external (associated with society or institution). Internal barriers were identified as low aspirations, personal beliefs, personal attitudes, motivation, and self-image. External barriers were identified as gender discrimination, family responsibility, lack of mobility, lack of sponsorship, and lack of mentoring (Brunner, 1999; Chase & Bell, 1994; Grogan, 1996; Grogan, 2000; Kowalski & Stouder, 1999).

Women aspiring to the superintendency may find restrictions in larger districts. Three differing opinions have been formulated in regard to restriction by size of districts. McCreight (1999) reported that vertical job advancement for women in smaller districts was more difficult because there were fewer job openings, which translate to fewer opportunities. She maintained that women have a better chance of moving up in larger districts because more opportunities exist. However, Glass, Bjork, & Brunner (2000) found in their national superintendents’ survey that women were more likely to obtain superintendency in a smaller school district. Conversely, Sharp, Malone, Walters & Supley (2000) reported that the respondents of their study did not feel restricted in terms of the size of the district.

Researchers found that sex role and gender discrimination have often constrained women’s role as superintendent (Sharp, Malone, Walters and Supley, 2000; Skrla, 1998). Brunner (2000) found that women superintendents were expected to act in a particular manner and if they behaved contrary to this expectation they were labeled in negative ways by the board, colleagues, peers, and subordinates.

The pipeline. The traditional pipeline for the superintendency has been the ascension of white men from teaching to assistant principal to principal in a high school to the superintendency

(Glass, Bjork, & Brunner; 2000; Grogan, 1996). Grogan & Brunner (2005) found women do aspire to the superintendency. Their research surveyed 723 superintendents and 3000 central office administrators. Their results indicated that 40 percent of women surveyed aspired to the superintendency; furthermore, 74 percent have either earned or were working toward their certification. Of those in the position, findings indicated women were successful and enjoyed their work.

These researchers concluded the low representation of women in the superintendency was not due to the numbers in the pipeline. Instead, they pointed to the tradition that women were not considered as serious candidates for the position. In addition, leadership preparation for these women still utilized the traditional male model, which often stressed managerial efficiency over instruction and community engagement. Last of all, educational leadership did not encourage these women to make the superintendency a career goal.

Research indicates women need mentors, role models, and networks of support to be successful in leadership roles previously barred to them. It is no longer acceptable to place a woman in a leadership position without these safeguards. It sets her up for failure - failure that ultimately impacts the success of the school's learners (Grogan, 1996). Women are underrepresented in the superintendency relative to their participation in the education field. This under representation has historical documentation even though many researchers point to barriers such as the conspiracy of silence as detriments to a full disclosure of the representation. In addition, three major deductions are drawn from current research: women still face barriers in their aspirations for the superintendency, women face many constraints while in the position, and women continue to face a lack of mentoring and role modeling.

More research needs to be conducted on women superintendents and their leadership. Since more women are entering the superintendency, there is now more opportunity to gather comprehensive data. This study added to the field of research on women superintendents by examining one woman's leadership through a theory focused on relationship building.

Research on Leader-Member Exchange Theory

There are multitudes of ways to define leadership; one way is through organizational theory. Yukl (1998) explained leadership in an organizational context as a process in which a leader is an individual member of a group or organization who influences the interpretation of events, the choice of objectives and strategies, and the organization of work activities. In addition,

the leader influences the motivation of people, the maintenance of cooperative relationship as well as the development of skills and confidence by members. Lastly, organizational leadership elicits the support and cooperation of people from outside the group or organization. Ogawa and Bossert (1995) asserted organizational leadership is rooted in four basic assumptions: (a) the function of leadership is to influence the overall performance of organizations; (b) leadership operates within organizational cultures; (c) leadership is related to organizational roles; and (d) leaders are individuals who possess certain attributes or act in certain ways.

The model. Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory is one approach to studying organizational leadership. The theory seeks to understand the supervisor-subordinate dyadic working relationships (Graen, Cashman, Ginsbury, and Schiemann, 1977). The dyadic approach focuses on the relationship between a leader and members of the organization. This approach has an implicit assumption that leadership effectiveness cannot be understood without examining how a leader and member influence each other over time. Key elements of this theory are: how to develop a cooperative, trusting relationship with a member, and how to influence a member to be more motivated and committed (Yukl, 1998).

The exchanges. The concept of a developed or negotiated role serves as theoretical base of the LMX theory (Burns & Otte, 1999). In essence role development results in varied role definitions and quality of leader-member exchanges. Therefore, the interpersonal exchange relationship is essential to modifying the role of the member and may be subsequent organizational events. The quality of the leader-member exchange relationship is theorized to be related to work and attitudinal outcomes. For example, exchange quality has been demonstrated to predict such outcomes as employee withdrawal or resignation, salary and promotion, productivity, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Phillips & Bedeian, 1994).

An additional influence on role formation development lies within the affective domain. The role formation process develops through a mechanism referred to as “negotiating latitude.” This negotiation occurs through the series of exchanges or interactions between the leader and the member. The exchanges, or interactions, of interest were assumed to be primarily work-related in terms of content. However recent empirical findings suggest that person-related variables may contribute to relationships in addition to, or instead of, competence and performance (Engle & Lord, 1997).

Thus, in addition to work-related variables the leader's and the member's affective responses may be important components in relationship development. The affective responses are influenced by the perceived similarity between the leader and the member. The more the leader and the members perceive that they are similar, the more they will like each other and the more likely they are to develop a high quality relationship (Engle & Lord, 1997).

In addition, attraction might be affected by the amount of interaction that occurs between the leader and the member. Persons who are similar are more likely to interact frequently causing an increase in the level of familiarity, which might also influence the level of attraction within the relationship. Leaders and members who share a high-quality relationship tend to interact more about personal topics than about work-related topics. This may occur because these leaders and members develop a high level of communication comfort and feel that they can broach any topic with each other (Phillips & Bedeian, 1994).

The increased interaction may result in higher levels of trust. Leaders tend to trust in-group subordinates and therefore empower them with decision-making authority. Leaders use delegation, not as a test of the member's abilities, but as a reward for excellent past performance and as a sign of respect and consideration. Therefore, as trust between the leader and the member increases, the number of delegated responsibilities from the leader to the member, and consequently, the quality of the LMX relationship also increases (Phillips & Bedeian, 1994).

Role relationship phases. The theoretical development of LMX is based on the idea that leader-member relationships emerge as the result of a series of exchanges or interactions during which leader and member roles develop (Northouse, 2004; Schriesheim, Castro & Cogliser, 1999). This role formation process involves three phases. During the first phase, the stranger phase, the leader and members relate to one another within prescribed organizational roles creating low-quality exchanges. Motives of members during this phase are directed towards self-interest rather than organizational objectives. Members comply with the leader because of the leader's hierarchical status and control over economic rewards. Mutual respect is essential during this phase. Leaders and members must each understand how the other views and desires respect. This may be difficult in mixed-gender relationships due to differences in discourse patterns and social constructions based on gender and stereotyping (Fairhurst, 1993). The leader-member relationship will not develop and progress to the next stage without respect.

During the second phase, acquaintance phase, the leader and member seek improved career-oriented social exchanges that ultimately involve sharing more resources and personal/work-related information. The exchanges shift away from interactions that are strictly governed by job descriptions and move towards new ways of relating. In the acquaintance phase the member and leader develop a greater trust and respect for each other. Each becomes more focused on the organizational objectives (Northouse, 2004; Schriesheim, et. al, 1999). This acquaintance phase is critical in diverse dyads (Fairhurst, 1993). If trust is violated during this phase the relationship may be destroyed. Violations of trust may reinforce prior stereotypical experiences and reinforce discriminatory practices.

During the third phase, mutual partnership phase, the partnership is manifested by high-quality leader-member changes with a high degree of mutual trust, respect, and obligation to each other. During this phase the leader and member are tied together in a more productive way that moves them beyond their own self-interest towards the greater good of the organization (Northouse, 2004; Schriesheim, et. al, 1999;). Any gender relevant issues have been addressed by this phase in mixed-gender dyads (Fairhurst, 1993).

Grouping of relationships. As a consequence of this dyadic relationship building, the members with a high-quality relationship with the leader develop high levels of responsibility, decision influence, and access to resources. Members who enjoy a high-quality relationship are categorized as the “in-group.” On the other hand, members with a low-quality relationship with the leader have low levels of responsibility and decision influence. These members are characterized as the “out-group” (Schriesheim, Castro & Coglisier, 1999). This designation not only predicts individual outcomes, but also can predict such organizational outcomes as employee turnover, commitment of staff to the organization, and commitment to goals.

Research on the impact of gender in these exchanges and relationship building has not been fully explored (Burns & Otte, 1999; Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Engle & Lord, 1997; Graen & Cashman, 1975; Graen, Cashman, Ginsbury, and Schiemann, 1978; Liden & Graen, 1980; Phillips & Bedeian, 1994; & Wayne & Green, 1993). This study added to the field of research on LMX by examining how a woman superintendent built and maintained relationships through exchanges with members of her district.

LMX Revisited: A Woman Superintendent's Leadership

The research sought to develop a greater understanding of the leadership of a woman superintendent by examining her individual relationships with members of the district. Research in the fields of the PK-12 public superintendency, women superintendents, and LMX theory informed the conceptual framework for this study. This framework, in turn, informed the research questions that guided the study. This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How does a woman superintendent lead through individual relationships with members in her school district?
2. How does a woman superintendent form in-groups and out-groups in her district?
3. How does gender influence the development and maintenance of these relationships and exchanges?

I employed the case study method utilizing the ethnographic approach to answer these questions. I spent nine months in the field conducting interviews, making observations, and collecting numerous documents in order to identify and understand what I was studying. The findings based on the analysis and interpretation of the data was organized by the job functions of the participants: School Board, central office administrators, principals, assistant principals, and teachers. Initial observations uncovered a strong sense of hierarchical order within the school district thus organization by job function made better sense of the data. Following this initial categorization, the findings were presented along the three themes of the data: relationships, job performance, and trust. The following section of this chapter presents the conclusions of this study.

Context: Baldwin County School District

Baldwin County was created in 1838 and named after a southern secessionist Vice President and member of the United States Senate. The majority of residents of Baldwin County remain much more attached to Southern culture and lifestyle habits than is common in the other regions of the state which are influenced by large amounts of migration. Baldwin County is home to one of the oldest school districts in the state. The social norms of the school system were based on traditional Christian values and preferences afforded members of prominent families. Although voters elected the superintendent, traditional norms in the system based its occupancy on an heir apparent system reserved for men of prominent families. Three “generations” of superintendents ascended from the school administrative ranks into the assistant superintendent's position and

then were elected into the superintendency. The last assistant superintendent ended this cycle when he decided not to run for the office. This afforded other individuals in the county the opportunity to run for the office. Betty Lou, a woman principal in the district, ran against a local businessman who earned the support of the three previous superintendents. Betty Lou lost the election but returned four years later to run against another woman candidate who was not an insider. Betty Lou became the first woman superintendent in the district's history.

The Woman in the Superintendent's Office

Betty Lou was born and raised in Baldwell County. She was born into poverty and endured the divorce of her combative parents. Her mother, a native of a mid-Western state, was awarded custody of Betty Lou and her three siblings. Her mother could not emotionally handle the demands of single parenthood. Betty Lou became the caregiver for her younger siblings. Unable to afford medical assistance, Betty Lou became the surrogate nurse to her brother who was dying from cancer. Betty Lou persevered through these hardships and was determined to break the barriers of this upbringing. She obtained a Bachelor's degree through scholarships and grants to become the first woman high school science teacher in Baldwell County. In spite of the fact that Betty Lou did not meet the standards for the social norms of this system, she continued her education and was eventually promoted into a principalship. Betty Lou understood the value of education and the importance of access to resources for all individuals in the county not just those from the "elite."

When Betty Lou assumed the superintendency she stepped into a position that had historically been defined by male leadership. This gendered notion of leadership created a hierarchical authority and power system. In addition, deference was expected for those in this pinnacle leadership position. Teachers were told repeatedly they were fortunate to have their jobs and were not allowed to form a union. Trust in leadership was based on the concept that the person occupying the position deserved that behavior. Betty Lou was a product of that system; however, her background and gender did not afford her any of the rewards. Upon election in the superintendency, Betty Lou by virtue of birth and gender redefined what was known in this system. In essence, she represented a threat to the existing status quo "good old boy's" network.

"Messing" with the System

Immediately upon taking office Betty began instituting changes in the system. Her vision and goals were summed up in one sentence, "Closing the Gap: Moving to Higher Achievement."

To that end she articulated clearly to all members of the system her primary focus was on the equal treatment of all students in Baldwin County. Betty Lou focused all the district resources on what she considered to be the most important relationship in the district: the classroom teacher and the students. In addition, Betty Lou held to her campaign promise of equal treatment to all individuals within the system. The following provides an overview of the changes Betty Lou instituted within the first two years of her term.

School Board. Betty Lou instituted the follow changes in the practices of the School Board:

1. She changed the monthly School Board meetings from the afternoon to evenings to increase the opportunity for participation of local citizens.
2. Betty Lou requested publicly all members of the Board participate in the state's school board training program. She secured their cooperation.
3. Betty Lou requested publicly the Board go through the process for national certification. She secured their cooperation.
4. She instituted order to the monthly Board meetings by providing training in Robert's Rules of Order to all members. Prior to this training, Betty Lou had to secure Sheriff Deputies to maintain order.
5. Betty Lou made sure all Board members had the necessary supporting documents for agenda items scheduled for their monthly meetings. She made sure the packet was delivered at least one week prior to the meeting to ensure members had time to review the material.

Central Office. Betty Lou instituted the follow changes in the norms of the central office administration:

1. Immediately upon taking office Betty Lou placed each administrator on a 30-day probation. This act notified each administrator that prior appointment into the position did not guarantee continue employment.
2. She instituted regular monthly meetings with all administrators of the central office. These meetings were held one week prior to the School Board meetings. She insisted on full disclosure of work from each administrator at these meetings.
3. Betty Lou added a new duty to each administrator. Each was required to attend and present at the monthly School Board meetings.

4. Betty Lou limited their conference attendance and travel.

Principals. Betty Lou instituted the follow changes in the norms of the principals:

1. Betty Lou instituted regular monthly meetings with all principals.
2. Betty Lou privatized the school lunch program. She banned the delivery of food from local restaurants for health reasons but more importantly since the system identified the “haves” and “have-nots” among students. She enforced the existing contract with school employees thus preventing the practice of leaving campus during the school’s lunch period.
3. Betty Lou instituted an in-school suspension program and merged it into the existing alternative school. She required the teaching of appropriate level academic curriculum with highly-qualified teachers within each of these programs. Prior practices had been to forgo all academics for a behavior modification curriculum. This practice placed students academically at-risk upon their return to their home schools.
4. Betty Lou pursued the consolidation of the district’s two high school. This consolidation was as a result of state mandated reform to high schools as well the deteriorating conditions of the old school buildings. Betty Lou faced intense opposition to this plan from one community on two fronts: the alleged fear of loss of community identity and the alleged fear of racial integration.
5. Betty Lou demoted a popular high school principal when she uncovered the practice of preferential treatment of some students within the building. The preferential treatment had created a two-tier system within the school. Members of the staff and community requested an end to this long standing, accepted practice.

Teachers. Betty Lou instituted the follow changes in the norms of the teachers:

1. Since the teachers were not allowed to form a union, Betty Lou created a Teacher Advisor Council. The Council was comprised of individuals selected from each school site. The Council held quarterly closed session meetings with Betty Lou.
2. Betty Lou democratized the district’s Teacher of the Year recognition process.
3. Betty Lou gave teachers their first raise in eight years.
4. Betty Lou made sure each teacher had access to a new computer in each classroom.

Conclusions: A Discussion on the Relationships

The case study led to several conclusions based on the analyses and interpretation of the collected data. I organized my conclusions by the job functions of the participants: School Board, central office administrators, principals, assistant principals, and teachers. Initial observations uncovered a strong sense of hierarchical order within the school district thus organization by job function made better sense of the data. In addition, I synthesized and presented these conclusions in a format that directly answered the research questions of this study. I intertwined the conclusions with the informing research to discuss the implications of this study.

Betty Lou and the School Board

The following conclusions were based on the analysis and interpretation of collected data for this group of individuals. The relationships between Betty Lou and the school board members were as follows:

- A. The school board members perceived their relationships with Betty Lou to be a function of their jobs. Data supported each viewed their exchanges as low-quality and prescribe by organizational routines. All admitted their trust in this superintendent but indicated current issues in the district strained their relationships. In addition, the political nature of their positions required the members to place their self-preservation over current district goals. Analysis and interpretation of the data supported the finding that these relationships were in the stranger phase of relationship building.
- B. Betty Lou perceived her exchanges with the school board members to be low-quality and closely regulated by the confines of the job descriptions. Analysis and interpretation of the data supported Betty Lou's perception of low-quality exchanges associated with the stranger phase of relationship building.
- C. All members of the board perceived a difference between Betty Lou's leadership and the previous superintendents. Members used words such as strong, focused, and headstrong to describe Betty Lou's leadership. One member stated gender made a difference because a woman could see a different side of things. Another indicated Betty Lou understood feelings and her heart was in the right place. One admitted his frustration with her because he felt like she always had her mind made up and would not listen.

Therefore, I concluded that Betty Lou and the members of the school board were in the stranger phase of relationship development based on the low-quality exchanges (Northouse, 2004; Schriesheim, et. al, 1999). Since these relationships were at the stranger phase, members of the school board were therefore designated as an “out-group” (Northouse, 2004; Schriesheim, et. al, 1999). The pre-existing social norms of the organization as well as Betty Lou’s commitment to her vision created changes in the standard accepted practices between these two groups. The trust articulated by the members was based on pre-existing norms of the organization while Betty Lou articulated limited trust. As Fairhurst (1993) pointed out, if trust is violated during relationship building these violations reinforce prior stereotypical experiences and reinforce discriminatory practices.

Members of the board articulated differences in leadership between Betty Lou and previous superintendents along the lines of gender. They used words, such as headstrong and uncompromising, to describe her leadership in terms that were not associated with her predecessors. As Brunner (2000) pointed out women superintendents were expected to act in a particular manner and if they behaved contrary to this expectation they were labeled in negative ways by the board, colleagues, peers, and subordinates.

Complicating this relationship was Betty Lou’s commitment to her campaign promise of equal of treatment and access for all individuals. Betty Lou by nature of birth and gender was considered an outsider by the existing norms of the system. As a result, she maintained her stance that resources of the system focused on the support of all students at the classroom level. She was a transparent politician. She held true to her platform and implemented changes accordingly without a “hidden agenda.” To that end, she violated the existing reward system based on hierarchical order. Her changes challenged the established norms for the relationship between School Board members and the occupants of the superintendent’s office. The school board members admitted the changes strained their relationship with her. Betty Lou, the outsider, violated and ultimately made changes to a system lead by the “good old boys” network.

Finally, Betty Lou was a collaborative leader. She created a shared culture with a common set of values. She articulated these values to be inclusive, respectful, and appreciative of diversity as reflected in the greater community. She drew on the political and moral dimensions of her leadership role to change the nature of schooling in Baldwin County from the conventional management practices of the past (Glass et al., 2000).

Betty Lou and the Central Office Administrators

The following conclusions were based on the analysis and interpretation of collected data for this group of individuals. The relationships between Betty Lou and the central office administrators were as follows:

- A. All administrators perceived their relationships with Betty Lou to be a function of their jobs. Data supported each viewed their exchanges as low-quality and prescribed by organizational roles. In addition, trust in this superintendent was perceived as the same with previous superintendents. Analysis and interpretation of the data supported the finding these relationships were in the stranger phase as defined by theory and the social norms of the school district.
- B. Betty Lou perceived her interactions with the administrators to be low-quality and closely regulated by the confines of the job descriptions. Analysis and interpretation of the data supported her perception of low-quality exchanges associated with the stranger phase of relationship building.
- C. The administrators articulated perceived gender differences in their working relationships with Betty Lou and previous superintendents. Betty Lou was perceived as energetic, focused on her goals, demanding, and very hands-on. She was also described as intense, detail-oriented, and understanding. Two of the women administrators stated she worked harder to prove herself as a women. All admitted Betty Lou was evaluated by the community as a woman leader in a position that had been defined historically by male occupants.

Therefore, I concluded the relationships between Betty Lou and the central office administrators were in the stranger phase of relationship development based on the low-quality exchanges (Northouse, 2004; Schriesheim, et al., 1999). Since these relationships were at the stranger phase, the central office administrators became an “out-group” (Northouse, 2004; Schriesheim, et al., 1999). The pre-existing social norms of the organization as well as Betty Lou’s commitment to her vision created changes in the standard accepted practices between these two groups. The trust articulated by the members was based on pre-existing norms of the organization while Betty Lou articulated limited trust. As Fairhurst (1993) pointed out, if trust is violated during relationship building these violations reinforce prior stereotypical experiences and reinforce discriminatory practices.

The central office administrators articulated differences in leadership between Betty Lou and previous superintendents along the lines of gender. They used words, such as demanding, hands-on, and focused, to describe her leadership in terms that were not associated with her predecessors. As Brunner (2000) pointed out women superintendents were expected to act in a particular manner and if they behaved contrary to this expectation they were labeled in negative ways by the board, colleagues, peers, and subordinates.

As with the school board, Betty Lou's transparent and collaborative leadership challenged the norms for this group. These changes at times strained the relationship between Betty Lou and the central office administrators. From the moment she took office, she challenged their notion of security and entitlement as the perceived informal power brokers in the district. In essence, their last names held no special meaning to her; rather, their performance on their jobs as support personnel to the classroom became paramount. If she had accepted the status quo and not tried to implement a cultural change, she would have been perceived by this group as less threatening and more in tune with traditional values.

Betty Lou and the Principals

The following conclusions were based on the analysis and interpretation of collected data for this group of individuals. The relationships between Betty Lou and the principals were as follows:

- A. Alfred and Toby perceived their relationship with Betty Lou in terms of their prescribed organizational roles, thus creating low-quality exchanges. This perception was triangulated with observations and documents. In some instances Cora Mae, Billy Bob, and Ted perceived their relationship to be beyond their prescribed organizational roles and articulated a certain level of respect and obligation to Betty Lou; however, I was unable to triangulate these perceptions with data collected through observations and documents. I concluded their perceptions were based on their previous relationships with Betty Lou, which may have been mutual partnerships. Since I could not substantiate their current relationships at this level, I concluded they perceived high-quality exchanges but analysis and interpretation of data supported low-quality exchanges embedded in a perceived hierarchical environment. Thus, their relationships were now at the stranger phase.

- B. Betty Lou perceived her interactions with all the administrators to be low-quality and closely regulated by the confines of the job descriptions. She admitted she placed her goals for the district above past working relationships. Analysis and interpretation of the data supported Betty Lou's perception of low-quality exchanges associated with the stranger phase of relationship building.
- C. The principals noted a perceived difference in their working relationship with Betty Lou and previous superintendents. Two principals were reluctant to assign the difference to gender; however, when they described their perceptions of differences their descriptors aligned with the identified gender differences articulated by the other three principals. Betty Lou's leadership was perceived as gendered because she was non-threatening, detail-oriented, and hands-on. One principal labeled her as a micro-manger and another admitted her gender made a difference to the community.

Therefore, I concluded that the relationships between Betty Lou and the principals were in the stranger phase of relationship development based on the low-quality exchanges (Northouse, 2004; Schriesheim, et al., 1999). Since these relationships were at the stranger phase, the principals became an "out-group" (Northouse, 2004; Schriesheim, et al., 1999). Evidence indicated that Betty Lou's relationship with three of the principals had at one time been at a different phase; however, she admitted she changed her interactions with these three principals upon taking the superintendent's office. These three struggled to understand and articulate their new relationship with "Betty Lou the superintendent" as opposed to "Betty Lou the fellow administrator." The pre-existing social norms of the organization as well as Betty Lou's commitment to her vision created changes in the standard accepted practices between these two groups. Members based their trust on pre-existing norms of the organization while Betty Lou articulated limited trust. As Fairhurst (1993) pointed out, if trust is violated during relationship building these violations reinforce prior stereotypical experiences and reinforce discriminatory practices.

The principals articulated differences in leadership between Betty Lou and previous superintendents along the lines of gender. They used words, non-threatening, detail-oriented, hands-on and micromanager to describe her leadership in terms that were not associated with her predecessors. As Brunner (2000) pointed out women superintendents were expected to act in a

particular manner and if they behaved contrary to this expectation they were labeled in negative ways by the board, colleagues, peers, and subordinates.

As with the two previous groups, Betty Lou's transparent and collaborative leadership challenged the norms for the principals. Her changes to the system at times strained the relationship between Betty Lou and the principals. From the moment she took office, she redefined her relationship with this set of administrators, which at one time were her peers. She challenged their notion of rewards and guarantees based on their perceptions of a prior working relationship with her. She articulated to each of the principals her bottom line approach to improved school grades and equal treatment of students. Betty Lou demonstrated her willingness to break her bonds of camaraderie early in her superintendency by demoting a popular principal, privatizing the schools' lunch program, and pushing for consolidation of the high schools. Betty Lou was transparent in her support of her vision. This vision was the political platform upon which she was elected. Betty Lou empowered the principals to embrace this vision and in doing so redefined the norms of their jobs.

Betty Lou and the Assistant Principals

The following conclusions were based on the analysis and interpretation of collected data for this group of individuals. The relationships between Betty Lou and the assistant principals were as follows:

- A. All assistant principals perceived their interactions with Betty Lou to be as a function of the job. Data supported each viewed their exchanges as low-quality and prescribed by organizational roles. In addition, trust in this superintendent was perceived as a function of the job rather than individual in the position. Analysis and interpretation of data supported the finding these relationships were in the stranger phase as defined by theory and the social norms of the school district.
- B. Betty Lou perceived her interactions with the assistant principals to be low-quality and closely regulated by the confines of the job descriptions. Analysis and interpretation of the data supported Betty Lou's perception of low-quality exchanges associated with the stranger phase of relationship creation.
- C. The assistant principals articulated perceived differences in their working relationships with Betty Lou and previous superintendents. She was perceived as sympathetic, detailed-oriented, hands-on, and strong. Additionally, she was perceived as a

democratic leader of a district in which resources were historically allocated on a political award system. In addition, she was described as a leader who worked harder for acceptance and attention while facing more opposition in the community.

Therefore, I concluded that Betty Lou and the assistant principals were in the stranger phase of relationship development based on the low-quality exchanges (Northouse, 2004; Schriesheim, et al., 1999). As a result, the assistant principals were an “out-group” (Northouse, 2004; Schriesheim, et al., 1999). The trust articulated by the members was based on pre-existing norms of the organization while Betty Lou articulated limited trust. As Fairhurst (1993) pointed out, if trust is violated during relationship building these violations reinforce prior stereotypical experiences and reinforce discriminatory practices.

As in other levels of the organization, the assistant principals articulated differences in leadership between Betty Lou and previous superintendents along the lines of gender. They used terms such as sympathetic, detailed-oriented, hands-on, and strong. She was perceived as a democratic leader of a district in which resources were historically allocated on a political award system. In addition, she was described as a leader who worked harder for acceptance and attention while facing more opposition in the community. Unique to this group was the first divergence from descriptions of differences that implied Betty Lou’s contrary behavior was labeled negative (Brunner, 2000). In fact, this group articulated her differences with labels that appeared to be more positive. The perceptions of these individuals supported what researchers have found that sex role and gender discrimination often constrain women’s role as superintendent (Sharp, Malone, Walters and Supley, 2000; Skrla, 1998). In this case, the assistant principals recognized Betty Lou had to work harder than her predecessors to gain attention and acceptance in the community.

The assistant principals perceived Betty Lou as hardworking, motivated, and progressive. All articulated the needs of the students were paramount in her administration and goals were focused on the academic achievement of all students. One assistant principal vocalized her trepidation for promotion into a principalship because, prior to Betty Lou, award of these positions was based less on merit and more on politics. Truly her sense of hope was based on Betty Lou’s selection of an African-American woman for an assistant principalship over the daughter of an influential community leader. Betty Lou’s selection criteria for this position was based on best qualified rather than an agreement negotiated in a choir loft.

Betty Lou's actions as a collaborative leader were less concrete with this group in that she did not formally meet with them. I was left to question whether this was a leadership mistake or something that was driven by existing culture – the “big boss” does not meet with this level of administration. Her interactions with these individuals for the most part were side notes to her visits to school. Nevertheless, all admitted they saw her more than others. Her changes to the system at times gave a sense of hope for this group of administrators many of which had aspirations beyond their present positions. Rather than an overwhelming sense of foreboding this group of women for the most part articulated hope in a system undergoing change.

Betty Lou and Teachers

The following conclusions were based on the analysis and interpretation of collected data for eight teachers. The relationships between Betty Lou and teachers were as follows:

- A. Six teachers perceived their relationships with Betty Lou to be a function of their jobs. Data supported each viewed their exchanges as low-quality and prescribed by organizational roles. In addition, trust in this superintendent was perceived as the same with previous superintendents. Analysis and interpretation of data supported the finding these relationships were in the stranger phase as defined by theory and social norms of the school district.
- B. Betty Lou perceived her interactions with the six teachers to be low-quality and closely regulated by the confines of the job descriptions. Analysis and interpretation of the data supported Betty Lou's perception of low-quality exchanges associated with the stranger phase of relationship creation.
- C. Two teachers perceived their relationships with Betty Lou as friendships rather than a function of their jobs. Analysis of the data indicated their exchanges were high-quality. In addition, each perceived their relationship with Betty Lou as one based on mutual trust, respect, and obligation to each other. Analysis and interpretation of the data supported the finding these two relationships were in the mature partnership phase.
- D. Betty Lou perceived her relationship with the two teachers as friendships rather than a function of their jobs. Analysis and interpretation of the data supports Betty Lou's perception of high-level exchanges associated with the mutual partnership phase of relationship creation.

- E. The teachers noted perceived differences in their working relationships with Betty Lou and previous superintendents. She was perceived as hardworking, motivated, and progressive. All articulated the needs of the students were paramount in her administration and goals were focused on the academic achievement of all students. Seven of the teachers characterized a difference in leadership based on gender in that she was more caring and genuine. One of the seven further characterized her gendered notion of leadership in that Betty Lou did not listen, another indicated Betty Lou was an emotional leader. One of the seven teachers articulated the county was a man's world thus alluding to a pre-existing framework based on gender.

Therefore, I concluded the relationships between Betty Lou and six of the teachers were in the stranger phase of relationship development based on the low-quality exchanges (Northouse, 2004; Schriesheim, et al., 1999). Since these relationships were at the stranger phase, these teachers were therefore designated as an "out-group" (Northouse, 2004; Schriesheim, et al., 1999). The trust articulated by the members was based on pre-existing norms of the organization while Betty Lou articulated limited trust. As Fairhurst (1993) pointed out, if trust is violated during relationship building these violations reinforce prior stereotypical experiences and reinforce discriminatory practices.

Betty Lou and two of the teachers were in the mutual partnership phase based on the high-quality exchanges marked with a high degree of mutual trust, respect, and obligation to each other. These relationships were more productive and went beyond their own self-interest towards the greater good of the organization (Northouse, 2004; Schriesheim, et. al., 1999). Since these relationships were at the mutual partnership, these teachers were therefore designated as an "in-group" (Northouse, 2004; Schriesheim, et al., 1999). Furthermore, there was no evidence of gender relevant issues (Fairhurst, 1993). Discovery of these two mutual partnership relationships greatly increased my understanding of what I was hearing and seeing in the district. I realized in this district the social norms meant everybody knew each other in intimate detail; however, knowing did not equate to a high degree of mutual trust, respect, and obligation. In essence, these two relationships became the litmus test for reanalysis and interpretation of the data.

All the teachers articulated differences in leadership between Betty Lou and previous superintendents along the lines of gender. She was perceived as hardworking, motivated, and progressive. All articulated the needs of the students were paramount in her administration and

goals were focused on the academic achievement of all students. Seven of the teachers characterized the difference in gender in that she was more caring and genuine while one indicated she did not listen. One teacher noted the tendency of all women administrators to be emotional. Another teacher articulated the county was a man's world thus alluding to a pre-existing framework where gender categorically assigned individuals to a specific role .

As with the assistant principals, this group articulated descriptors that implied Betty Lou's contrary behavior appeared to be labeled more positive (Brunner, 2000). In fact, her contrary behavior was seen in such terms as progressive, caring, and genuine limited by the constraints of the existing norms of the district (Sharp, Malone, Walters and Supley, 2000; Skrla, 1998). All teachers recognized her commitment to all students in the district thus supporting her democratic stance within the system.

Betty Lou's leadership as a collaborator was seen strongest at this level. Cognizant of the lack of teacher input into the system, Betty Lou created a Teacher's Advisory Council. The Council became a "safe" place for teachers to actively participate in the decision-making process of the district. She was aware School Board salaries based on part-time work were higher than a beginning teacher's salary. In addition, she understood resources of the district had not focused on the teachers. Consequently, she fought and won the first pay salary increase for all teachers in eight years. Not to be deterred she took additional steps to ensure all teachers had access in the classrooms to updated computers.

Betty Lou was a transparent leader and held true to her promise to the students of Baldwin County. Her changes to the system did not constrain this group of members. She challenged a system in which prior superintendents openly told teachers they were lucky to have a job. This challenge sent a clear message to the teachers – they knew her focus was on the classroom. She was quick to demonstrate her appreciation for their hard work but at the same time they understood she said what she meant.

Woman Superintendent: Leadership as a Challenge to Theory?

The simple answer to this question is yes. Betty Lou's leadership proved to be a challenge to what is known about LMX theory. Her leadership incorporated her marginalized experiences within the system. Her experience as a member of the out-group in a system supportive of a "good old boy" network placed her in a position to critically analyze the inequality of the social norms. Those who had benefited under this network system quickly realized the threat Betty

Lou's candidacy represented. Any political race is fraught with mudslinging and innuendos; however, the campaign against Betty Lou was especially vicious causing her two daughters to permanently leave the district. As one teacher put it "their behavior was criminal" thus supporting Betty Lou's contention "they knew they couldn't control me."

In assuming the pinnacle leadership position in the district she used her power and resources to influence change. These changes challenged the system wherein previous in-group members no longer received the benefits of their high-level relationships with occupants of the superintendency. Betty Lou was transparent in her leadership and commitment to equity. As a result, Betty Lou treated everyone the same. She purposefully managed her relationships with members of her district at the stranger phase. In doing so, she challenged the notion of linear relationship building as purposed in LMX. The two exceptions to the stranger phase were discovered after prolonged and intense searching. There was nothing evident in Betty Lou's behavior to indicate a higher relationship existed with these two individuals. This, of course, was yet another example of her challenge to the existing system and theory.

Betty Lou's leadership toppled the status-quo. The "in-group" was now the "out-group." She transformed the "good old boy" system to the "new woman" way of leading. In other words, she challenged the system, creating chaos that ultimately created a shift in the leadership paradigm. The new paradigm strained relationships, which was apparent in data collection. Members of the district articulated their sense that the system had changed but were unable at times to explain the change. They were required to perform their jobs in a system they no longer clearly understood.

Gender influenced these relationships. Members identified and defined the office of the superintendent along the lines of its previous male occupants. Betty Lou behaved contrary to this male notion of leadership. Her leadership brought a different perspective – one that viewed situations "from a different side." Her exchanges were viewed as contrary to the pre-existing norms. This led members to describe her leadership as different. In essence, that which was different was negative. While Fairhurst (1993) challenged LMX to include the mixed gender dyad, Betty Lou's perceived gendered leadership challenged relationship building in a system in which leadership was defined in terms of maleness and prominence. Her dyads reflected her leadership – equality.

Betty Lou was different, in part, because she was a woman. Her difference defined her leadership. Her leadership redefined the superintendency in Baldwin County. This new superintendency challenged and changed the system. She continues to pay both physically and emotionally for her challenges and changes to the system.

Reflection: Areas of Future Research

This study answered the research questions for which it was designed. It also joined into the research conversation on what is known about leadership and leadership theories. Betty Lou challenged what is known. To that end, I have gained valuable information that helped me make sense of what I know and learned. However, this is only a small step in that direction. Researchers long before me have challenged what is known and taught in the higher education setting. I recommend future researchers replicate this study with a variety of modifications, as suggested below:

1. It would be beneficial to undertake a comparative case study of the experiences of a appointed woman superintendent. Results from this study can then be compared and contrasted for impact on relationship building;
2. It would be beneficial to undertake another qualitative study that took a longitudinal approach to studying a woman superintendent. For example, collect data over an entire term of office to provide a portrait of this leadership rather than a snapshot;
3. It would be interesting to conduct a qualitative study of a woman superintendent in a reverse district. For example, conduct research in an urban district with a high-turnover in the superintendency.
4. It would be interesting to replicate this study in a different geographic location other than in southeastern United States. This research could be conducted in a district with similar demographics in the state of Washington.
5. It would be interesting to conduct a qualitative study that included other marginalized groups in this position, specifically, African-American, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American;
6. It would be interesting to conduct a qualitative study on a woman superintendent's leadership through the lens of a different theory to see if the woman's perspective challenges or changes what is known about that theory;

7. Finally, it would be interesting to conduct similar studies on woman administrators in different levels of the organization. For example, this study could be conducted on a woman assistant superintendent, high school principal, or even assistant principal.

Concluding Comments

The purpose of this research was to study how a woman superintendent led her school district in the state of Florida. One approach to studying her leadership was within the context of organizational theory. This context defined the leader as an individual member of the group or organization who influenced the interpretation of events, the choice of objectives and strategies, and the organization of work activities (Yukl, 1998). At the base of this influence lay the fundamental premise that leaders form different types of relationships with members of the organization and thus influence the outcomes of the organization (Sparrowe & Liden, 1997). The theory used in this study to examine and explain this type of leadership was known as the Leader Member Exchange (LMX) theory. Support for use of this approach in studying this woman superintendent was found in three informing fields of literature: research on the PK-12 public superintendency, research on women superintendents, and research on LMX theory. The conceptual framework used to guide this research emerged from this literature and informed the research questions.

I spent nine months in the field conducting interviews, making observations, and collecting numerous documents in order to identify and understand what I was studying. In addition to this triangulation of data, all participants member-checked my data. I coded, analyzed, and interpreted the collected data into themes, which answered the three guiding research questions. I disclosed the findings and conclusions of this research project in such a way to describe what happened.

It is likely that as this research was read and the analysis considered, readers did not support my process and conclusions. My goal was not for all readers to agree with my interpretations but perhaps be persuaded by my argument. I know my observations and interpretations were influenced by my experience in the PK-12 system. My reasons for this research began for purely selfish reasons – I wanted to understand and make sense of my own experiences. This research process and product, however, have changed and enlightened me. Along the way I gave up my initial limited reasons, and accepted the task of continuing this type of research. My experience in the design, research, data collection, analysis, and writing of this dissertation stretched and enriched me. I sincerely hope readers of this product will be enlightened

and challenged by it beyond the academic sense. I hope this single voice will serve as a call for change in how leadership is taught, perceived, and occupied.

APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8633 · FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 6/30/2006

To:
Diane Hodgins
7238 Old Chemonie Court
Tallahassee, FL 32309

Dept.: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas Jacobson".

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
A Woman Superintendent Leading a School District Through Leader-Member
Exchange Theory

The forms that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Human Subjects Committee at its meeting on **6/14/2006**. Your project was approved by the Committee.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals which may be required.

If the project has not been completed by **6/13/2007** you must request renewed approval for continuation of the project.

You are advised that any change in protocol in this project must be approved by resubmission of the project to the Committee for approval. The principal investigator must promptly report, in writing, any unexpected problems causing risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols of such investigations as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Protection from Research Risks. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

cc: Jeffrey Brooks
HSC No. 2006.0511

APPENDIX B: SCHOOL DISTRICT APPROVAL

Supporting documentation withheld for purposes of confidentiality.

Please direct any questions or concerns to:

Dr. Jeffrey S. Brooks, Assistant Professor
Florida State University
College of Education
113M Stone Building
Tallahassee, Florida 32306
jbrooks@coe.fsu.edu
(850)644-1258

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I am a doctoral student under the direction of Professor Jeffrey S. Brooks in the Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies, College of Education, Florida State University. I am conducting a research study entitled *A Woman Superintendent Leading through Leader-Member Exchange Theory* to understand the leadership of a woman superintendent through individual relationships with members of her district.

Your participation will involve interviews, observations, and document collection. Interviews may last up to 30 minutes each. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. The results of the research study may be published, but your name and location will not be used. Your interview will be tape-recorded by the researcher, the researcher will keep these tapes in a locked filing cabinet, and only the researcher will have access to these tapes as well as to their transcriptions. All tapes and transcripts will be destroyed by August 8, 2010. The information you provide may be used for additional research at a future time. All your answers to the questions will be kept confidential and identified only by a participant code name; your true name will not appear on any of the results. The results of the research study may be published, but your name and location will not be used and information obtained during the course of the study will remain confidential, to the extent allowed by law.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you if you agree to participate in the study. Information obtained during the course of this study will remain confidential, to the extent allowed by law.

Although there may be no direct benefit to you, the possible benefit of your participation is contribution to the general knowledge in the field of leadership especially at the district level.

If you have any questions concerning this research study, please call me at 850/668-3557 or via email at dwh03@fsu.edu or Dr. Jeffrey S. Brooks at (850) 644-1258 or via email at jbrooks@coe.fsu.edu.

Sincerely,

Diane W. Hodgins

I give my consent to participate in the above study. I understand that I will be tape recorded by the researcher. The researcher will keep these tapes in a locked filing cabinet. I understand that only the researcher and directing professor will have access to these tapes and that they will be destroyed by August 8, 2010.

_____(signature)_____ (date)

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Committee, Institutional Review Board, through the Vice President for the Office of Research at (850) 644-8633.



APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Go over Informed Consent Form and ask participant if there are any questions. If yes, address them. If no, ask the participant to sign two forms – one for the participant and one for the researcher.

Introductory Remarks: Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. This interview will probably take about 30 minutes to complete. As I mentioned to you before, we're doing these interviews with some of personnel in this district. The information from these interviews will be pulled together and used to inform the research for a doctoral dissertation. This interview will be used for this purpose only and will be confidential. (I will not identify you by name in the report or in any conversations with other people.)

1. Please share with me a little background information about yourself:
 - What is your present position?
 - How long have you been in this position ?
 - How long have you been working in this district?
 - In what other capacities?
2. How long have you worked with the present superintendent?
3. How would you characterize your working relationship with this superintendent?
4. Please share with me what you think it is like working for this superintendent.
5. Have you worked for a previous superintendent in this district?
 - In what capacities?
 - How long?
 - What was the gender of this previous superintendent?
6. How would you characterize your working relationship with this past superintendent?
7. Do you know how satisfied this superintendent is with what you do?
 - Why or why not?
8. How well does your superintendent understand your job problems and needs?
9. How well does your superintendent recognize your potential?
10. What type of formal and informal authority does this superintendent have in her present position in regards to you?
11. When has this superintendent used her power to help you solve problems in your work?
12. Do you trust this superintendent?
 - a. Why or why not? (give examples)
13. Do you have enough confidence in this superintendent to defend and justify her decisions if she were not present to do so?
14. Is there any difference in working with this superintendent and previous superintendents?
 - a. Explain or give examples
15. Please share any additional comments or insights.

Thank you so much for taking your time for this interview and for all you've shared with me.

APPENDIX E: VERBAL SCRIPT FOR RECRUITMENT

Verbal Script for Recruitment by Personal Contact

I am a doctoral student under the direction of Professor Jeffery S. Brooks in the Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies, College of Education at Florida State University. I am conducting a research study to examine a woman superintendent through leader-member exchange theory.

I am recruiting subjects by referral procedures from other participants to give interviews, which will take approximately 30 minutes.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty; it will not affect your employment in this district. The results of the research may be published, but your name will not be used.

Information obtained during the course of this study will remain confidential, to the extent allowed by law.

If you have any questions concerning this research study, please call me at (850) 668-3557 and dwh03@fsu.edu.

Name of Participant

Date of Consent



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- Wolcott, H. F. (1973). *Man in the principal's office*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, Inc.
- Wolcott, H. F. (1992). Posturing in qualitative inquiry. In M. D. LeCompte, W. L. Millroy, and J. Preissle (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research in education*. Orlando, FL: Academic Press.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Yukl, G. (1998). *Leadership in organizations* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

DIANE W. HODGINS

*Florida State University
Tallahassee, Florida 32303*

ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY, TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

<i>Degree</i>	Doctor of Philosophy Graduation May 2007
<i>Specialization</i>	Educational Leadership & Policy Studies
<i>Dissertation Title</i>	LMX revisited: A Woman Superintendent leading through Dyadic Relationships
<i>Certificates</i>	Educational Policy; Women Studies; Educational Leadership/Administration

UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA, CARROLTON, GEORGIA

<i>Degree</i>	Master of Arts, August 1997
<i>Specializations</i>	Special Education

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA

<i>Degree</i>	Bachelor of Arts, December 1985
<i>Specialization</i>	Secondary Education – Social Sciences

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Leadership theory
PK-12 public school administration
Gender and work
Organizational theory
Qualitative Research
Research Overview

PUBLICATIONS

Brooks, J.S., Jean-Marie, G., & Hodgins, D. (in press). Distributed leadership for social justice: Influence and equity in an urban high school. *Journal of School Leadership*.

Hodgins, D. (2006). The principal as instructional leader [Review of the book *The Principal as Instructional Leader: A Handbook for Supervisors* by Sally Zepeda]. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 44 (5) 528-531.

Hodgins, D. (2007). Listening to Leaders: Linda Tillman's insights on "Mentoring graduate students of color." *AERA Division A Newsletter: School Leadership News*, Spring 2007.

Council for Education Policy Research & Improvement (2005). Edison College baccalaureate degree proposal review. *Florida House of Representatives and Florida Senate*, December 2005.

Council for Education Policy Research & Improvement (2005). Impact of the class size amendment on the quality of education in Florida. *Florida House of Representatives and Florida Senate*, November 2005.

Council for Education Policy Research & Improvement (2005). Daytona Beach Community College baccalaureate degree proposal review. *Florida House of Representative and Florida Senate*, October 2005.

Hodgins, D. (2005). Listening to leaders: Margaret Grogan's insights on "Women leading systems." *AERA Division A Newsletter: School Leadership News*, Summer 2005.

Council for Education Policy Research & Improvement (2004). An analysis of the need for new or expanded apprenticeship and workforce education programs. *Florida House of Representatives and Florida Senate*, December 2004.

Council for Education Policy Research & Improvement (2004). Medical education needs analysis. *Florida House of Representatives and Florida Senate*, November 2004.

Council for Education Policy Research & Improvement (2004). Career and professional education: Preparing students for the knowledge economy. *Florida House of Representatives and Florida Senate*, September 2004.

Milton, S., Niles, M, Hodgins, D., & Flood, P. (2004). Alternative teacher certification in Florida: Formative evaluation of the Florida Alternative Certification program, *Florida Department of Education Bureau of Educator Certification*, January 2004.

Flood, P., Milton, S., Hodgins, D., & Dukes, M. (2003). Report of field study of non-highly qualified teachers in the state of Florida in compliance with the NCLB, *Florida Department of Education*, November 2003.

Milton, S., Shin, J., Niles, M., & Hodgins, D. (2003). Alternative teacher certification in Florida, *Florida Department of Education Bureau of Education Certification*, August 2003.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Hodgins, D. (2006-07). *LMX revisited: A woman superintendent leading through dyadic relationships* [Doctoral dissertation, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL expected graduation date May 2007].

Hodgins, D. & Brooks, J.S. (revise/resubmit). *Paradigm Shift or paradigm stasis? An analysis of research on women in educational leadership from 1980-2004. Leadership & Policy in Schools.*

REFEREED PRESENTATIONS

Brooks, J.S., Jean-Marie, G., & Hodgins, D. (2007). *Distributed leadership for social justice: Influence and equity in an urban high school.* Accepted for paper presentation at American Educational Research Association, Chicago, Illinois

Hodgins, D. (2007). Selected to serve as discussant for American Educational Research Association, Chicago, Illinois.

Hodgins, D. & Brooks, J.S. (2006). *LMX revisited: A Pilot Study of a Woman Superintendent.* Accepted for paper presentation at Annual Convention of the University Council for Educational Administration, San Antonio, Texas

Hodgins, D., Marineau, S., Wojtalik, J., & Zimmerman, F. (2006). *Clark Scholars: A discussion of leadership & diversity.* Accepted for discussion presentation at the Annual Convention of the University Council for Educational Administration, San Antonio, Texas.

Hodgins, D. (2006). Selected to serve as session chair for Annual Convention of the University Council for Educational Administration, San Antonio, Texas

Hodgins, D. & Brooks, J. S. (2005). *Paradigm shift or paradigm stasis? An analysis of research on women in educational leadership from 1980 to 2004.* Paper presentation at the Annual Convention of the University Council for Educational Administration, Nashville, Tennessee.

Brooks, J.S. & Normore, A. (2005). Symposium: *Socialization for social justice: How educational leaders learn to fight for equity.* Panel discussant at the Annual Convention of the University Council for Educational Administration, Nashville, Tennessee.

Flood, P., Hodgins, D., & Raiford, S. (2005). *Differences in perceptions of the principalship and leadership aspirations among educational leadership master's degree seeking students.* Paper presentation given at the 19th Annual Women in Educational Leadership Conference, Lincoln, Nebraska.

INVITED SPEAKING PRESENTATIONS

Hodgins, D., Ingle, K., & Burgess, K. (2007). *Insights into doing qualitative research*. Class presentation for EDA5461 Introduction to Program Evaluation a master level class at Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida.

Hodgins, D. (2006). *LMX Revisited: A woman superintendent leading through dyadic relationships*. Class presentation for EDA6475 Qualitative Methods a doctoral level class at Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida.

Hodgins, D. (2006). *A Woman in the superintendent's office*. Class presentation for EDA 5931: Publishing Educational Research a graduate level class at Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida.

Council for Education Policy Research & Improvement (2005). *Impact of the class size amendment*. Presentation to Florida House Choice & Innovation Committee, November 8, 2005, The Capitol, Tallahassee, Florida.

Council for Education Policy Research & Improvement (2005). *Bachelor applied science degree*. Presentation to the State Board of Education, March 15, 2005, The Capitol, Tallahassee, Florida.

Hodgins, D., & Niles, M. (2003). *Florida's Alternative Certification Program*. Paper presented at Florida Department of Education Fall Workshop, Florida Department of Education, Tallahassee, Florida.

Hodgins, D., & Niles, M. (2003). *Florida's Alternative Certification Program*. Paper presented at Florida Department of Education Summer Workshop, Saint Petersburg College, Tarpon Springs, Florida.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

GRADUATE ASSISTANT/TEACHING ASSISTANT

Florida State University

2003 – present

Tallahassee, Florida

- Graduate Assistant to Assistant Dean, Director of Academic Affairs. Facilitate prepared and recruitment of master level students for Educational Leadership/Administration Program. On-going revision and updating of web page for program as well as contact for partnering satellite colleges and universities. Preparation of program of studies for newly admitted master students. Research and prepare department goals for SACS accreditation.
- On-line mentor for multiple professors to master level students for on-line courses. Courses include *EDA5192 Educational Leadership*, *CS5310 Information Management & Technology in Education*, and *EDA5503 The Principalsip*. Responsibilities include facilitate and assess on-line discussions for courses. Assess and provide feedback on various on-going projects within each class.

- Teaching assistant for *EDA4060 Organization and Control of Education*. Design of course including selection and preparation of multi-media presentations and lectures while maintaining integrity of syllabus, coordinate and facilitate shadowing experience for students in public school setting, evaluation of final products and ongoing assessment opportunities.
- Teaching assistant for *EDA1005 Introduction to Education*. Worked with professor and cohort of graduate teaching instructors to streamline course for consistency across multiple sections. Facilitated implementation of organized placement and documentation of undergraduate placement in secondary schools. Taught once section of course.

LEGISLATIVE POLICY ANALYST

2003-2005

Council for Educational Policy Research & Improvement

Tallahassee, Florida

Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability

Florida Legislature

- Conducted special studies, analyses, and evaluations requested by the State Board of Education, the Legislature and other policy makers.
- Analyzed and objectively summarized proposed legislation to determine its effectiveness and the impact of its passage on the state, other entities, and individuals.
- Prepared oral and written reports on research and council work such as committee reports, interim projects, and oversight reports which included recommendations for legislative action.
- Assisted with longitudinal studies and provided policy recommendations based upon their findings.
- Identified educational, social and economic indicators, which would impact on state policies and developed alternative policy recommendations.
- Maintained liaison on effectiveness and research issues relating to education with state agencies, education boards, and institutional research directors.
- Participated in research studies related to student and institutional performance.

GIFTED CONSULTANT

1999-2002

Williamson County School District

Franklin, Tennessee

Central Office

- Interacted with all levels of decision-makers including management personnel, chief executive officers, and superintendents to develop policies and implement procedures to increase efficiency of operations.
- Trained teachers to work with gifted students, incorporating challenging lessons and projects into classroom curriculum.

- Initiated transitional program to prepare students for college, including preparatory classes for ACT and SAT tests and scholarship searches that netted over \$4 million in scholarships for graduating class of 200.
- Implemented transitional program into other classes, coordinating organization and instruction with colleagues and administration.
- Began initial development of service learning project for high school seniors, including researching available community service programs, and matching individuals to appropriate projects to coincide with career interests.
- Planned, developed, and presented numerous educational workshops and seminars to 50 to 100 participants, applying creative methods to create and sustain interest.
- Established trust and rapport in problem situations to develop win-win scenarios and institute creative resolutions between individuals, local systems, and state and federal agencies.
- Mediated conflicts, instituting pacts and contracts to analyze problems, identify solutions, and implement plans to work toward resolution.

CLASSROOM TEACHER

*Clayton County School District
High School Teacher*

1993-1999

Jonesboro, Georgia

- Taught AP U.S. Government, U.S. Government, U.S. History, and Business Law
- Served on school's gifted student selection committee
- Developed curriculum guide and co-authored book for US Government class that was adopted by county, working in cooperation with two team members to develop learning objectives, hands-on demonstrations, and supplemental activities.
- Created new business law class, developing learning goals and lesson plans to establish objectives in line with state standards.
- Organized and trained team for mock trial contest sponsored by American Bar Association, preparing arguments and achieving second place at regional competition, eliminating larger and more prestigious schools.
- Coached varsity, junior varsity, and freshmen cheerleading teams as well as varsity swim team.

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR CERTIFICATE

State of Florida

- Licensed to teach secondary social science (Grades 6-12)
- Gifted endorsement (K-12)
- Expect to gain administrator license June 2007

State of Tennessee

- Licensed to teach secondary social science (Grades 6-12)
- Special Education - Gifted, Mildly Intellectually Deficient, Learning Disabled

State of Georgia

- Licensed to teach secondary social sciences (Grades 6-12)
- Gifted endorsement (K-12)

GRANTS AND AWARDS

**OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DISSERTATION RESEARCH GRANT**

Florida State University

October 2007
Tallahassee, Florida

Recipient of research grant awarded to 30 doctoral candidates. All dissertation research proposals were selected by faculty members from all the schools and colleges in the University with doctoral programs

**DAVID L. CLARK NATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENT
RESEARCH SEMINAR**

University Council for Educational Administration

April 2006
*San Francisco,
California*

Selected among field of national doctoral students in educational leadership and/or policy for two day of presentations, generative discussion, and professional growth at American Educational Research Association.

DEAN'S OFFICE RESEARCH GRANT

Florida State University

April & October 2006
Tallahassee, Florida

Recipient of grant in recognition of selection as David L. Clark National Graduate Research Seminar participant and invited presentations.

COUNCIL OF GRADUATE STUDENTS

Florida State University

2005-2007
Tallahassee, Florida

Recipient of three grants totally \$2,000 to present research at Women in Educational Leadership Conference, American Educational Research Association, and University Council for Education Administration.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

HIGHER EDUCATION

2003- present

EDA4060 Organization and Control of Education – Teaching Assistant

Senior level undergraduate course offered in collaboration with the College of Communication for speech pathologist and therapist

EDF1005 Introduction to Education – Teaching Assistant

Undergraduate course offered for students interested in pursuing a career in public K-12 education

EDA5192 Educational Leadership - On line Mentor

Master level course in Educational Leadership/Administration

CGS5310 Information Management & Technology in Ed – On line mentor

Master level course in Educational Leadership/Administration

EDA5503 The Principalship – On line Mentor

Master level course in Educational Leadership/Administration

PUBLIC K-12 EDUCATION

Gifted Consultant

Central office position in a school system with more than 27,000 students

High School

Teacher of U. S. Government, U.S. Government (Gifted), U. S. History, World History, Sociology and Business Law in schools settings located in urban, suburban and rural settings.

SERVICE EXPERIENCE

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

October 2006

Selected to serve as graduate representative for recruitment at *GradQuest*

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

Spring 2006-present

Served as graduate representative for graduate student recruitment

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

Spring 2005

Served as graduate representative on professor search committee
Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

1999-2003

Initiated and served as Vice-President for University of Florida (Middle Tennessee) Alumni Association, increasing membership to 300 and instituting community service projects such as donations to child abuse center and scholarship grants.