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Reva L. Mathieu
University of New England

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THROUGH THEIR EYES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF PERCEIVED
LEADERSHIP IN SPECIAL PURPOSE PRIVATE SCHOOLS

By

Reva L. Mathieu

BA (University of Maine) 2007
M.Ed (University of Maine) 2013

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Reva L. Mathieu
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify perceptions and experiences of leaders and followers

within a special purpose private school during on-going crisis events to better understand

demonstrated behaviors, values, and characteristics of leaders. The study site was the state of

Maine, USA. The participants completed a survey and semi-structured interview. Four leaders

and eight followers participated in the study from four schools and two agencies. A survey

asked participants to prioritize leadership characteristics in the areas of relationships,

operational style, and personal qualities; and to describe the five most challenging crisis

experiences they have encountered working in their role. Semi-structured interviews addressed

perceptions of leaders and followers based on demonstrated characteristics, behaviors, and

values that leaders within each of the schools encompass and whether these characteristics,

values, or behaviors are effective or beneficial within ongoing crisis settings. Analysis

generated four major themes including (a) presence, approachability, and availability of leaders,

(b) the ability for leaders to demonstrate a high level of emotional intelligence when working

with followers specifically in the area of emotional regulation, (c) leaders assisting followers in

order to be heard and feel valued, and lastly, (d) a leader who understands the complexity of

responsibilities, competing interests and needs within special purpose private schools. Most

areas identified included leaders' and followers' agreement on areas of need, however, the

leaders tended to have a bigger picture outlook on the areas of need which suggests that

followers may not perceive the implications of competing responsibilities outside of their

immediate roles at the schools. Further areas of study include expanding to other schools

outside of Maine with similar populations, other follower roles, and conceptualizing the notion

of supervision of staff in order to operationalize support for leaders and followers.

University of New England

Doctor of Education
Educational Leadership

This dissertation was presented
by

Reva L. Mathieu

It was presented on
November 26, 2018
and approved by:

Marylin Newell, Ph.D., Lead Advisor
University of New England

Jennifer Galipeau, Ed.D., Secondary Advisor
University of New England

Nicole Boivin, Ph.D., Affiliated Committee Member
Melmark New England

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the State of Maine there are 36 schools that are defined as special purpose private

schools. A special purpose private school is a private school program "established specifically to

serve children with disabilities and/or developmental delays" (Maine Unified Special Education

Regulation (MUSER), 2015, p. 154). The purpose of these schools is to support students who

demonstrate behaviors so severe that they are unable to receive an education in their public

school settings (MUSER, 2015, p. 120). These behaviors can include physical aggression,

sexualized behaviors, significant elopement behaviors, self-harm etc. Students are placed within

these schools by their individualized education teams (IEP Team), and the team is required to

consider the least restrictive environment (LRE) for the student when such a placement is

recommended (MUSER, 2015, p. 121; Johnson, Merrill & Sloan, 2016).

In special purpose private schools, teachers and administrators are required to maintain

safety by managing challenging, maladaptive behaviors demonstrated by students while

simultaneously providing an educationally appropriate program to meet the students' individual

needs as outline in their IEP. As a result, teachers and administrators are asked to be skilled

educators, as well as work in an environment that is inundated with long-term constant crisis

situations (Maine Department of Education: Restraint and Seclusion Data, 2016; Smith & Riley,

2010). In 2016, special purpose private schools in Maine reported having to perform

approximately 5,350 restraints due to students' lack of ability to remain safe in their school

environments. This inability can subsequently result in students engaging in behaviors including

hitting, kicking, spitting, biting, significant property destruction, pica (i.e. attempting to ingest

non-food items such as rocks, paper, plastic, etc.), and smearing of feces and urine (Maine

Department of Education: Restraint and Seclusion Data, Section 1.6, 2016). To compound an already challenging situation, teachers and administrators within these settings are often attempting to maintain safety while working with students who have been diagnosed with emotional disabilities, learning disabilities, and students who have a history of significant trauma. According to Maine Kids Count Data Book (2013), 25.1% of children in Maine have experienced two or more adverse experiences in their lifetime, which is higher than the national average of 22.6%. Furthermore, children with developmental disabilities are two to three times more likely than a typically developing youth to experience exposure to trauma (Sullivan, 2009; Turner, Vanderminden, Finkelhor, Hamby, & Shattuck, 2011). Given the special purpose private schools' work with students with disabilities and increased likelihood of trauma exposure, there is a significantly higher likelihood that some form of crisis will occur on a more frequent and regular basis. Due to the intensive nature of these student-demonstrated behaviors, teachers and administrators in these schools are required to have a strong working knowledge of tools and strategies for understanding the cycle of crisis, crisis de-escalation techniques, and crisis responses. They must also demonstrate the ability to appropriately and effectively respond to instances of crisis to maintain safety for the staff and students in the school program. This may at times include the use of physical restraint. According to the Maine Department of Education data from 2016, which attempted to quantify and monitor the use of restraint and seclusion within Maine schools, an average of 826 students were educated in special purpose private schools. When compared to all schools in the state, special purpose private school students accounted for less than 1% of a total 166,000 students that were involved in restraint and seclusion; however, students in special purpose private schools accounted for 55% of the total restraints and/or seclusions in all Maine schools (Disability Rights Maine, 2017; Maine Restraint

and Seclusion Data, 2016). This statistic demonstrates the high level of crisis scenarios occurring in special purpose private Maine schools and indicates that a unique skill set is needed by leaders in these settings. Given the unique requirements of a special purpose private school leaders including multiple and varied roles and responsibilities, and given the seriousness of crisis events that can at times escalate to the use of restraints with multiple students in the school, an understanding of what makes these leaders effective within these settings could potentially hold major implications for operational practices when working with students and staff in these settings.

Problem Statement

Common Scenario: The Story of Adam

Adam, a 4th grade special education student, arrives for school at his out-of-district special purpose private school placement. This placement is an hour away from his home school and includes a 60 minute ride on a school van each way to the school. There is no special purpose private school that is closer and that can meet his needs at this time. He is unable to ride the bus with multiple children at this time as he has demonstrated physical and verbal aggression towards peers on multiple occasions when this was attempted. He has been placed in this school due to his substantial history over the last four years of engaging in behaviors in the school setting including physical aggression, verbal aggression, property destruction, and elopement. He receives special education services under an identified disability of emotional disturbance. These behaviors have required his individual education planning (IEP) team to look at an alternative placement for him to maintain safety and still allow him to access a free and appropriate education within his least restrictive environment. The team has placed Adam in four

different schools during his five years of school with the last two placements being

special purpose private schools outside of his regular school district. His teachers at his

new school meet him in the driveway and assist him to transition into the school. Based

on previous placements this has always been a challenging transition for Adam as he has

frequently attempted to run away from school or refuse to leave the school van and

transition into the school. Adam reports that he had little sleep from the previous night.

Adam often experiences challenges in many social situations which can trigger his

violent reactions and behavior. When asked to leave the bus to transition into the school

by the bus driver he becomes verbally aggressive and refuses to transition into his school

or classroom. He starts yelling at teachers, calling them names, and verbally targeting

other students as they enter the school building. The staff members attempt various

strategies to assist Adam in his de-escalation including offering him known coping

strategies, providing reminders around incentives, changing the expectation to allow him

to transition to a separate place other than the classroom, or offering for him to speak

with a trusted adult that he has a solid relationship with at the school. Adam refuses or is

unable to engage in any of these strategies to assist in de-escalation at this time, and

unfortunately his behavior escalates, and he becomes physically aggressive towards the

staff member who is currently working with him. This physical aggression continues

through the next hour of the school day and at one point requires the use of a restraint

after Adam uses his shoe to break a light and attempt to obtain glass shards to harm

himself and another student attempting to access the bathroom next to the area where

Adam is currently de-escalating. The educational staff seeks support from school leaders

to maintain safety and assess next best steps for Adam in order to assist him with moving

forward in his school day. This starts when Adam arrives at school. Often the teachers and educational technicians will follow up with the principal of the school in order to gain feedback and problem-solve how to assist Adam's move from the bus to the school. If Adam were to attempt to run away, the educational leader would need to work with the team both proactively and reactively to ensure that Adam was stopped or potentially followed depending on his intervention plan and if he remained out of sight for a period of time police and parents would need to be notified for support. Furthermore, when Adam enters the school, he is not in a place where he can learn so it must be determined what Adam's LRE is constantly throughout his day. Additionally, when significant safety concerns arise such as Adam's example of breaking a light bulb and attempting to harm others with it, the educational leader must decide the current needs of Adam from an emotional, educational, and physical safety standard, and assess the school and staffs ability to safely manage Adam's challenging behaviors and their need for outside support. The educational leader's role does not stop there. Follow up must occur with many stakeholders involved in Adam's larger treatment team including clinicians, parents, sending schools, teachers, etc. Debriefing must also occur with educational staff specific to the incident and crisis events that have occurred to ensure reflective practice, access the effectiveness of current interventions and identify if changes should occur in Adam's programming.

Scenarios similar to the story of Adam provide educational leaders in this setting with a unique challenge. These leaders are asked to complete all the requirements of a public school educational leader such as administrative tasks, organization management, day-to-day instruction, development of instructional curriculum, teacher growth and professional

development, developing internal and external relationships (Horng, Klasik & Loeb, 2010) and also are required to effectively guide staff and students through multiple incidents of on-going crisis throughout the school year, some of which can include extreme violence and numerous instances of unsafe situations. According to Smith and Riley (2012) "leadership in times of crisis is about dealing with events, emotions, and consequences in the immediate present in ways that minimize personal and organizational harm to the school and school community" (p. 57). Furthermore, leadership during times of crisis must also take into account school leadership's capability to "providing certainty, engendering hope, engaging a rallying point for effective and efficient effort (both during and after the crisis), and ensuring open and credible communication to and for all affected members of the school community" (Smith & Riley, 2012, p. 57). As a result, there is a significant complexity of challenges faced by leaders in special purpose private schools that requires a better understanding of how these leaders operate, synthesize information, develop relationships with students and staff, create and maintain a team environment, and provide others with well thought out decisions, especially during times of crisis.

Given the multiple and varied responsibilities of these leaders, a better understanding of effective use of time for principals offers some insight. Previous studies reviewed and attempted to define effective uses of time for school leaders, specifically principals (Horng et al., 2010; Parks & Thomas, 2005) as well as effective school leadership during short-term severe crises such as school shootings, student suicide, school bombings, etc. (Astor, Benbenishty, & Estrada, 2009; Lipshy & LaPorta, 2013; O'Donnell, 2016). However, few researchers have attempted to understand the specific qualities and characteristics required by special purpose private school leaders including their behaviors, their ability to problem solve, think critically, and understand how their held values may affect their overall decision-making process. While a relationship has

been established that school leadership during crisis is different from schools that are not

experiencing crisis (Smith & Riley, 2012), leadership within special purpose private schools

working within systems of on-going, long-term crisis has not been sufficiently researched, and

Disability Rights of Maine (2017) has noted the need for more information as to how these

schools work with students at these schools. Given the high amount of noteworthy and

potentially dangerous crisis situations occurring in these schools including the use of restraint,

police involvement, high-cost of out of district placement for schools and communities, and a

dearth of available research on these schools, this study will help educators and others to better

understand if these leaders require different skills, values, behaviors, or qualities than their public

school counterparts and identify what might makes these leaders effective in their role of support

to students and staff (Disability Rights of Maine, 2017; Maine Department of Education:

Restraint and Seclusion Data, 2016). Two agencies were identified and selected to be part of this

study. Those agencies include Sweetser and Spurwink. Both agencies are mental health non-

profit agencies which have a day treatment component as part of the comprehensive services that

they provide to students with disabilities and mental health needs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify perceptions and experiences of leaders and

followers within a special purpose private school during crisis events to better understand

demonstrated behaviors, values, and characteristics of those leaders. A phenomenological

approach was used. The purpose of a phenomenological study is to "investigate various

reactions or perceptions of a particular phenomenon [to] gain insight into the world of his or her

participants and describe their perceptions and reactions" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, p. 436).

Within this study these perceptions and experiences were gathered from leaders (i.e. Education

Directors and Associate Directors) and followers (i.e. Special Education Teachers and

Educational Technicians) within four special purpose private schools across two agencies in the

state of Maine. The information gathered was geared toward identifying common and effective

characteristics, behaviors, and values demonstrated by the leader within these educational

settings that are perceived as valuable by leaders themselves and followers within these schools.

The methodology included a short introductory survey and follow up semi-structured interviews

rooted and constructed based on previous typical crisis scenarios experienced within the schools

and analyzed through the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Pietkiewicz &

Smith, 2012).

Research Questions

The principle research question serves as an overarching guide for the study and asked:

How do leaders and followers understand and describe the behaviors, characteristics, and values

of those in leadership roles in special purpose private schools? More specifically, the study

sought to understand which of those behaviors, characteristics, and values were perceived as

effective when leading during situations of long-term constant crisis according to the perceptions

of leaders and non-leaders within the same school?

Conceptual Framework

Research on leadership in special purpose private schools requires a comprehensive and

complex look at their roles and responsibilities. These leaders are asked to manage and lead

through ongoing constant crisis, develop curriculum, educate and assess students, and provide

thorough and evidenced-based mental health services to students. Additionally, the traditional

model of leadership does not work for rapidly changing, crisis-ridden schools (Baltaci and Balci,

2017; Smith & Riley, 2012). The research conducted was based on the theory of complexity

leadership which is built on the idea of a complex system much like the school environments in special purpose private schools. They include a complex environment as described by Cilliers (2000) that is highly interactive and constantly changing. According to Baltaci and Balci (2017) complexity leadership is an "alternate approach for contemporary organizations to survive that function in a rather volatile, unpredictable, competitive, chaotic environment" (p. 31). According to Uhl-Bien, Marion, and McKelvey (2007) and Uhl-Bien & Marion (2009), organizations in contemporary times have working environments that are complex and sometimes chaotic. This research also builds on theory specific to crisis leadership in school environments in an effort to understand what leaders and followers identify as effective leadership characteristics and behaviors within these settings (Smith & Riley, 2012).

Definitions of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions are provided to identify the focus and scope within this research project:

Crisis. In the context of a school, a crisis can be regarded as any urgent situation that requires the school leader to take fast and decisive action (Smith & Riley, 2012).

Short-Term Crisis. A crisis that is sudden in arrival and swift in conclusion (Smith & Riley, 2010).

Long-Term Crisis. A crisis that develops slowly and then bubbles along for a very long time without any clear resolution (Smith & Riley, 2010).

Special Purpose Private School (SPPS). A private program which is established specifically to serve children with disabilities and/or developmental delays (MUSER, 2016).

Physical Restraint. An intervention that restricts a student's freedom of movement or normal access to his or her body and includes physically moving a student who has not moved voluntarily (Maine Chapter 33 Regulation, 2016).

Maine Chapter 33 Rule Governing Physical Restraint and Seclusion. This rule establishes standards and procedures for the use of physical restraint and seclusion. The rule sets forth permitted and prohibited uses of restraint and seclusion, required notification and documentation of incidents of restraint or seclusion, aggregate reporting of incidents to administrators and the department of education, notification of parents, response to multiple incidents of restraint or seclusion of a student, local and state complaint processes and department approval of training programs. (Maine Chapter 33 Regulation, 2016).

Maine Chapter 101 Maine Unified Special Education Regulation. This rule governs the administration of the child find system for children age birth to twenty, the provision of early intervention services to eligible children birth to under age three (B-2) with disabilities and their families, and the provision of special education and related services to eligible children age three to twenty with disabilities and their families (MUSER, 2016).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, shall be educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of students with disabilities from the regular educational environment shall occur only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (MUSER, 2016).

Emotional Intelligence. "An array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures" (Bar-on, 1997).

Emotional Regulation. "measures short, medium, and long-term control of one's own feelings and emotional states" (Petrides, 2001, p. 3)

Principals and Education Directors. For the purposes of this research, the focus of leadership was with staff members at the principal, educational director, or assistant/associate educational director level of leadership. A principal, education director, or assistant/associate education director was defined in the context of the functions they carry out and the duties that they provided to the school itself, students, and staff. For example, according to the Maine Department of Education certification requirements, in order to be certified as a principal or building administrator the candidate must have a master's degree, three years of satisfactory teaching experience and coursework, and/or documented experience within the following content areas:

1. School finance and budget

2. Supervision and evaluation of personnel

3. Organizational theory and planning

4. Community relations

5. Educational leadership

6. Instruction leadership

7. Curriculum development

8. Cultural differences

9. Ethical decision making

The certification also requires the principal to serve as an assistant principal for a year under a certified principal or to complete an internship or mentorship for a total of 220 contact hours (Maine Department of Education Certification Office, 2017).

Significance of the Study

Students are placed in a special purpose private school to assist them in gaining the necessary skills for transitioning back into a less restrictive educational setting. Due to the nature of the student population served, these school environments are different from those in a public school setting; however, the leadership training provided to those in both settings is seen as one and the same. According to a report issued by the Maine Education Policy Research Institute at the University of Southern Maine in 2016 for the Maine Department of Education, when interviewed, special education directors throughout the state indicated a perception based on their experience of an "increase in the complexity of students identified with special needs" (p. 8) over the last several years. Directors also shared they felt that "increasing poverty and stress in children's home lives was resulting in problems in school, including more aggressive behavior and attention problems for students already facing those challenges" (p. 8). Special purpose private schools are tasked with educating the most complex and challenging special education students in a population of students that is perceived to be growing more complex and challenging. A review of the literature has identified that these crisis-permeated environments create a different culture than those schools that do not have to work with on-going crisis scenarios (Smith & Riley, 2012). This research has provided an unprecedented, in-depth view of the perceptions of leaders of four special purpose private schools from those directly within the school at two separate levels (i.e. leader and follower). The study explored what makes these leaders effective when providing guidance and direction to a school in constant crisis.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of the study included the use of four schools across two organizations. This may have decreased the ability to generalize these findings across other special purpose private schools, those in other states, and public schools. The use of surveys and semi-structured interviews may have been a limitation as the researcher asked leaders to discuss how they perceive their own leadership. Non-leaders were also asked about their perceptions of leadership, behaviors and characteristics. Given that leaders were asked to self-report, this may be a limitation to the study; however, interviewing both leaders and non-leaders provided opportunities for comparisons within the data and allowed for identification of common trends or stark differences within each population's perceptions.

Conclusion

Chapter one introduced the study and major themes embedded within the research in order to familiarize the reader with the overall topic. This included definitions and roles of special purpose private schools in Maine and the populations they serve, the impact of long-term crises on leadership, how the effectiveness of leadership may be identified, and the introduction of complexity leadership within educational settings. Chapter two will unpack each concept in more detail and delve further into the impressions supported by previous research through an in-depth review of the literature. Chapter three will review the methodology of phenomenology through structured and retrospective interviews followed by a review of collected data in chapter four and finally an analysis and discussion of results in chapter five.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review unpacks the following key elements as they relate to perceptions of leaders (i.e. principals) based on information gathered from leaders (i.e. principals) and followers (i.e. teachers and educational technicians). The three major elements throughout this review included a general understanding of the make-up of special purpose private schools, effective leadership within special purpose private schools in Maine, and how the element of on-going crises throughout these types of schools impacts the effectiveness of leadership within these complex settings.

Special Purpose Private Schools in Maine

According to the Maine Department of Education Chapter 101 Special Education Regulations, a Special Purpose School is "a public or private program which is established specifically to serve children with disabilities and/or developmental delays" (2016, p. 12). The focus of this research was specific to the private sector of these schools. In 2016, there were 35 special purpose private schools approved within the state of Maine. The schools are spread across most Maine counties and run by private agencies with the majority of the schools concentrated within the southern Maine region. Each of these schools is required to complete a school approval process annually through the Maine Department of Education that requires the school to provide information based on an overview of their curriculum, admissions procedures, adequacy of providing related services to students, and professional supervision (Letter of Instruction, 2016, p. 1). Typically these programs are run and maintained by nonprofit, private organizations that specialize in education programs for students with disabilities, mental health

services, and community-based supports (Spurwink Services, 2017; Sweetser Children's

Services, 2017).

Student Populations

Students are placed in special purpose private schools only if they have been identified

with a disability that adversely affects their education and if they cannot be effectively and safely

be programmed within their sending district. This determination is based on the Individuals with

Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which ensures that "all children with disabilities have

available to them a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) that emphasizes special education

and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education,

employment, and independent living" (IDEA, Subchapter I, Section D, 2004) and that children

with disabilities are provided the "right to receive individualized education special services and

assistance in school at no cost to their parent" (IDEA, Subchapter I, Section D, 2004). Children

with disabilities are eligible for special education and related services when they meet IDEA's

definition of a child with a disability. IDEA's definition of a child with a disability in

combination with Maine's Unified Special Education Regulations (MUSER, 2017) lists 14

district disability categories under which a student can be found eligible for special education

and related services. These categories include: Autism, Visual Impairment, Specific Learning

Disability, Deaf- Blindness, Emotional Disturbance, Other Health Impairment, Traumatic Brain

Injury, Deafness, Hearing Impairment, Orthopedic Impairment, Multiple Disability, Intellectual

Disability, Developmental Delay, and Speech or Language Impairment (MUSER, 2017).

Students can receive services under the category of multiple disabilities; however, in order for

this category to be selected the team must show there is no way to determine a primary disability.

More specifically, the classification indicates that the IEP team is "unable to determine a primary

disability" and the conditions under section (a) are met which state that the child will have a diagnostic report articulating the distinct disabilities, then "the child should be categorized as a child with multiple disabilities" (MUSER, 2017, p. 80).

Staff Qualifications

Special purpose private schools also use a variety of specialized professionals to provide specialized instruction and related services to students who attend the school. All of the schools' teachers are certified special educators serving students with mild to moderate disabilities and/or moderate to severe disabilities. Education technicians are also used throughout many of the schools along with staff that are certified as behavioral health professionals (BHP). Often the education technicians hold dual certifications including an educational technician and behavioral health professional (Behavioral Health Professional, 2017). The schools also employ licensed clinical social workers, speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, board certified behavior analysts, psychologists and at times will also consult with additional experts as needed on a case by case basis dependent on the student's disability and instructional needs. The schools are typically led by an administrative team comprised of a special education director and assistant director with principal or assistant principal certifications granted by the State of Maine.

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Effective Leadership in Schools

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Leadership is a necessary requirement in all schools, can encompass several levels, and can be formal and informal. Formal leadership within schools usually consists of staff members including school superintendents, principals, or vice principals (Sheridan, 2014). These staff can have other names, especially within the private school settings including senior directors of

education, education directors, or assistant/associate directors but serve the same role in these schools (Spurwink, 2016; Sweetser, 2016).

Roles and Practices of Principals and Education Directors

Principals play a critical role in the everyday operations and development of high quality schools (Horng et al., 2010) in that they are responsible for essentially every decision that is made within the school. According to Smith and Riley (2012) "strong and effective leadership is considered to be the critical ingredient in driving change and strategic innovation" (p. 57). Specifically, this can include the curriculum taught, behavior management strategies used, culture and climate of the school, hiring of school personnel, and the overall upkeep of the school building and affiliate buildings.

There is also a plethora of educational research that has attempted to understand what principals do on a daily basis and what about those activities makes them effective or ineffective within their role (Donaldson & Marnik, 2012; Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013; Horng et al., 2010; Parkes & Thomas, 2007). According to Donaldson & Marnik (2012), "the professional knowledge and skills of these key educators [principals] can spell the difference between a school where everyone knows that every child is learning and one where many doubt the quality and focus of the educational program" (p. 3). Further they asserted that "the principal's ability to work well with a wide variety of people, their capacity to address with others the many educational challenges in a busy school, and their personal resilience are extremely important" (p. 3).

Daily Tasks of Principals by Time. Horng et al., 2010 attempted to uncover what principals do on a day-to-day basis and where they spend their time. The researchers used observational methods, survey data from teachers and parents, and administrative data that

included demographic information about the school and principal and how long the principal was in the position. Results of the study indicated that principals spend the most time on administrative tasks "to keep the school running smoothly" (Horng et al., 2010, p. 502). This included managing student discipline and completing compliance-based requirements of the school. This accounted for almost 30% of the principal's day, followed by 20% of their time managing budgets and hiring staff. The next largest activity was devoted to internal relations, which included about 15% of their time focused on developing relationships with students and staff and interacting socially with those in the school. The principals observed spent the least amount of their time (6%) on instructional-related tasks including teacher observations, coaching teachers, evaluating curriculum, or development of professional planning activities.

Another longitudinal study by Grissom, Loeb, and Master (2013) reviewed how much time principals spent specifically focused on instructional time based on full-day observations of 100 principals. The researchers found that, on average, principals spent an average of 12.5% of their overall time on instruction-related activities including brief classroom walk-throughs (5.4%), formally evaluating teachers (1.8%), coaching teachers to improve instruction (0.5%) and developing educational programming and curriculum at their school (2.1%).

In addition, a longitudinal study conducted by Donaldson and Marnik (2012) in the State of Maine found that principals self-reported through surveys that they spend the most time engaged in student management, at an average of 2.91 on a scale from 1-4 (1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree) and personnel management activities at an average of 2.97 on a scale from 1-4. They noted they devoted the least time to instructional leadership (i.e. curriculum development, curriculum assessment, teaching students and attending school improvement workshops) at an average of 2.55 on a scale from 1-4 and resource management

activities (budgeting, monitoring school grounds, and purchasing items for schools) at an average of 2.55 on a scale of 1-4 (p. 25-27).

The study conducted by Horng et al. (2010) used descriptive analysis and survey statistics in an attempt to understand how a principal's time spent made a school more or less effective overall. Results indicated the job of a principal was complex and that on average a principal engaged in 43 different tasks per day (p. 493). Principals' time use was compared to two measures of student achievement. It was noted that principals who spend the most time on administrative tasks were assigned a D or F in the school accountability system which is a grade assigned to the school based on a survey of various school related elements primarily focused on the results of state mandated assessment (p. 508). In contrast, principals with high accountability grades spent more time on day to day instructional tasks. When reviewing student achievement, defined as results of state-mandated accountability measures, it was found that principals at higher-performing schools spent more time on organization management, day-to-day instruction, external relations, and other tasks (p. 512).

Values Demonstrated by Principals. For principals to effectively make important decisions for the overall wellbeing of the school, they must fully explore their decision-making process to consider various details and perspectives from a variety of stakeholders. This may include the value system that principals internally consult when making important decisions and interacting with one another (Hodgkinson, 1991; Parkes & Thomas, 2005). According to Parkes and Thomas (2005), "values that are acted on repeatedly become life patterns" (p. 207). The tighter a person holds onto a value, the more likely that value may influence a person's life and decision making (Rokeach, 1973). Further Rokeach (1973) believed that people's values were based on five assumptions including:

1. People hold a small number of overall values

2. People hold the same values but they emphasize and prioritize them differently

3. Values can be organized into overall value systems

4. Values are developed and influenced through one's culture, community, and the institutions they are a part of

5. The values of humans are important to understand and investigate.

Begley and Leithwood (1998) and Moorhead and Nediger (1991) indicated that school principals' values are a key component in their everyday professional work. Research conducted by Beck and Murphy (1994) indicated that values have been frequently overlooked when attempting to understand effective leadership and decision making processes as a primary focus of decision making has emphasized only observable outright behaviors. According to Parkes and Thomas (2005) "principals operate within a value laden organization and are often faced with situations that challenge their value system to determine one course of action over another" (p. 207), thus emphasizing the importance of better understanding these value systems in the principal leadership role. Furthermore, if these values were better understood, they may provide a partial framework around decision making processes, especially those involving crisis and heightened emotions.

Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Regulation in School Leaders. In order to lead others during high-stress situations or conflict, leaders are often required to interact with followers in a way that offsets their agitation or defuses interpersonal conflict. To show success in these areas, leaders must demonstrate a certain level of emotional intelligence and more specifically emotional regulation. Emotional intelligence has been defined in many ways by those researching the construct. In his seminal research specific to emotional intelligence in

leadership, Bar-On (1997) defined emotional intelligence as "an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures" (p. 16). Further, Goleman (1998) indicates while the qualities traditionally associated with leadership include characteristics such as "intelligence, toughness, determination, and vision" (p. 82), they are insufficient. Goleman (1998) believes that "truly effective leaders are also distinguished by a high degree of emotional intelligence" (p. 82). In more contemporary research, Petrides (2010) defines emotional intelligence "as a constellation of emotional self-perceptions located at the lower levels of personality hierarchies" and include facets such as emotional regulation, emotional expression, and emotional perceptions among others (p. 137). Therefore, an emotionally intelligent person can provide a way to deliver difficult information, but still maintain the relationship with the follower. Research by Ingram and Cangemi (2012) indicate that emotionally intelligent leaders can (a) perceive other people's emotions, (b) control their own emotions, (c) and are skilled in the way they construct their own response to an emotional situation.

During situations of crisis, these skills may need to be more pronounced. Bradberry and Greaves (2009) note that "our brains are wired to make us emotional creatures; your first reaction to an event is always going to be an emotional one. You have no control over this part of the process" (p. 16). However, Roy (2015) argues that, if a leader can show the ability to emotional regulate as part of their emotional intelligence, then the leader can alter this initial psychological response before acting on it. Wong (2016) stated the ability to identify and understand people's emotions provides a leader with necessary skills to respond and support others. Wong (2016) noted that leaders who demonstrate strong regulation of their own

emotions can modulate these emotions and avoid allowing them to have a negative impact on their work.

Further, the experience of stress can have a significant impact on the way that leaders and followers interact and respond to crisis events. Research by Mackinnon, Bacon, Cortellessa, and Cesta (2013) suggest that when people experience stress, they often fail to adopt rational-choice models which means that they do not always base their decisions on the "utilities and probabilities associated with all available courses of actions. Rather, they devote insufficient time to the consideration of available alternatives; make decisions before considering all potential information; consider alternatives in a disorganized manner" (Mackinnon et al., 2013, p. 11). Further "the level of emotional intelligence exhibited by the leader [or person] in this situation will determine how realistic their response is to the anxiety [or stress] they are feeling" (Spielberger, 2010). Leaders with higher levels of emotional intelligence can support their followers by demonstrating rational-choice models in their decision making process, especially when their followers are under high levels of stress due to interaction with a crisis situation or multiple situations.

Principal Roles and School Effectiveness

Leaders often strive to understand if the practices and strategies they are implementing make a positive difference within the school that they are tasked to lead (Donaldson, Buckingham, & Marnik, 2006). There are a number of key factors that contribute toward overall school effectiveness that have been found to include the amount of time that principals spend in classrooms developing relationships with teachers and students (Parkes & Thomas, 2006). These factors commonly include:

overseeing a [large] number of staff, developing [and monitoring large] budgets, designing curriculum for numerous subject areas, effectively mete out meting discipline to employees and minors, developing professional learning communities, maintaining a safe working environment, building rapport with parents, [teachers] and children, and lifting test scores of underperforming students. (Martineau, 2012, p. 53)

It is reasonable to attempt to understand how a principal's behaviors and actions affect various outcomes associated with the school (Horng et al., 2010). Furthermore, due to schools having a variety of confounding variables when connected to overall effectiveness, "it is worth comparing principal's actions to a range of school outcomes while controlling for other characteristics" such as student achievement on standardized testing, student assessment of the school, teacher assessment of the school, teacher satisfaction and parents assessment of the school (Horng et al., 2010. p. 508).

Values and characteristics of principals can also play a key role when determining perceived effectiveness. According to Parkes and Thomas (2012) "values can be defined, identified and articulated" (p. 215), and doing so allows researchers to "bridge the gap between exposed and practiced values in the workplace" (p. 215). Results of values identified within research by Parkes and Thomas were categorized into three primary areas including interpersonal relationships, operational style, and personal qualities and attributes of principals (p. 218). Values and attributes identified most consistently across observations in the interpersonal relationship category included quality relations (i.e. being identified as compassionate, pleasant, collegial, willing to listen, approachable, and understanding working with others); true friendship (i.e. close companionship); politeness (i.e. being courteous and well mannered); and cooperative and helpful (i.e. caring for the well-being of others) (p. 223). Values and attributes identified

most consistently within operational style included being capable and competent; possessing

knowledge, wisdom, and intellect; being efficient and effective, dependable, reliable,

accountable and decisive; holding high expectations for those they lead as well as expectations

for excellence and quality of work; and, lastly, encompassing a personal sense of

accomplishment in order to provide lasting contributions (p. 223). Furthermore, in the area of

personal qualities and attributes, the research indicated that effective principals demonstrated

qualities or attributes that were characterized as open, honest, and sincere and that they

encompassed ethical practice and integrity and were courageous (p. 223).

Crisis

Special purpose private schools in Maine work with student populations that frequently

engage in unsafe behaviors which can create periods of long-term constant crisis within the

school environment. According to the Maine Department of Education, special purpose private

schools engaged in 5,350 physical restraints throughout the duration of the 2016 school year, and

54% of overall students restrained were enrolled within Special Purpose Private Schools

(Disability Rights Maine Report, 2017; Maine State Restraint Data, 2016). This information

reiterates the importance of understanding what constitutes a crisis and the effects of crisis within

a school's environments and on leadership.

Crisis can be defined in many ways. According to Comer (2010) crisis can be defined as

a "low-probability high consequence event [or] an unstable situation that poses grave danger or

challenges, regardless of the likelihood of its occurrence" (p. 782). Smith and Riley (2012)

defined crisis as "an urgent situation that requires immediate and decisive action by an

organization and, in particular, by the leaders of the organization" (p. 58). Elliot, Harris, and

Baron (2005) looked at what features may be common to crisis. The researchers indicated the

features involve a wide variety of stakeholders, require an urgent response, and generally have little warning before they occur. Further, they noted the cause and effect of the crisis often remain unclear, and the crisis is often viewed as a threat to the overarching structure of the organization. More specifically, in the context of a school, crisis can be defined as "any urgent situation that requires the school leader to take fast and decisive action" (Smith & Riley, 2012, p. 58)

Types of Crisis

Crisis within schools can manifest in a variety of ways and can be classified based on a multitude of factors. Scholars have organized crisis based on normal versus abnormal situations (Mitroff & Alpaslan, 2003), if the crisis is predictable and if others have the capacity of influence the crisis (Grundle, 2005), or if the attack of the resulting crisis has originated internally or externally to the organization (Coombs, 2006). Smith and Riley (2010) presented an approach which categorizes crisis into five typologies and has specifically been used when discussing school-based crisis. These include short-term crisis, cathartic crisis, long-term crisis, one-off crisis, and infectious crisis. Short-term and long-term crisis definitions are particularly relevant to this study. Short-term crisis is defined as "ones that are sudden in arrival and swift in conclusion" (p. 53) compared to long-term crisis which is defined as "ones that develop slowly and then bubble along for a very long time without any clear resolution" (p. 54).

Educational Leadership Responses to Crisis

A common response to crisis for many organizations includes a linear three step process. Mayor, Moss, and Dale (2008) identified this as a "present, respond, and recover" model. This model asserts that each crisis can be seen as an isolated single event. This model does not take into account the complexity of a school environment with various people interacting within it

(Smith & Riley, 2012, p. 60). It also presupposes that every crisis has a defined start and end which is not always possible, especially within special purpose private schools that are working with multiple crises of varying lengths, complexities, and intensities.

As an alternate to the linear models, Gainey (2009) offered a cyclical strategy for crisis management built on the concept of "reflection, review, and open two-way communication" during all phases. This model allows for the on-going reflective practice and review needed for special purpose private school leadership and staff and provides an opportunity for information to flow from the leaders to the followers and from the followers to the leaders. This model is specifically relevant to special purpose private schools as it is similar to the process that schools use for debriefing significant crisis incidents within the school setting and emphasizes the importance of reflective practice.

Non-Educational Leadership During Crisis

In attempting to understand crisis, crisis response, and crisis leadership in educational settings, it is beneficial to look outside of the education realm to fields experiencing similar situations in a different environment. Those areas may include the fields of mental health, emergency medicine, and military research in order to expand on how leaders in these environments have attempted to define and respond to leadership in crisis situations. Current educational research described may be lacking depth when addressing long-term levels of crisis or be one-dimensional. Leading others during crisis scenarios may require a change in tactics, models, and strategies. Given this often linear view of leading through crisis, other modalities of strategies for leading through crisis should also be reviewed, considered, and discussed from areas outside of education. Such additional areas may include leading through natural disasters, military national security management initiatives, medical emergencies which may result in

death or a serious illness (Fox, 2016; Kayes, Allen, & Self, 2012; Lipshy & LaPorta, 2013).

Some of this research held themes in common such as (a) when experiencing a crisis event,

leadership strategies may need to change compared to regular leadership strategies; and (b)

typical leadership approaches that work as effective leadership strategies during times of non-

crisis may not have the same effect as when a community is experiencing crisis. Examples

included the work of Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009), who discussed the need for adaptive

leadership during times of a permanent crisis. This model emphasizes the need to accept change,

the ways to accept change, and how to move forward from such change; however, it did not

make clear who makes the distinction that change was actually necessary.

Additionally, the work of Croswell and Yaroslaski (as cited in Kayes et al., 2012)

explained how "military doctrine has shifted from recognizing leadership as a process that

emphasizes the exercise of authority [over someone else] to recognizing it as the interaction of

parts and processes" (p. 191). Based on this model, there is a shift from following orders in the

crisis to developing relationships with others that can build trust and potentially lead to a positive

shift in culture that may assist in understanding the system as a whole. Finally, in the area of

emergency medicine, Fox (2016) provided a recommendation for a more top-down approach

with a caveat for building of relationships. Fox (2016) stated that during times of crisis within

the emergency medical and surgical fields, the most senior medical professionals are deferred to

when dealing with crisis scenarios. There is also reference to procedures and manuals that

include specific trainings that should be carried out in the time of a crisis. Interestingly, one

particular scenario noted the value of relationships when faced with crisis with co-workers and

the importance of teamwork. This was noted as not something that is discussed in procedures

and manuals but that it was a notable factor when having to function with crisis and crisis

scenarios (Fox, 2016). Understanding an emphasis on building relationships with people during times of crisis may hold particular relevance for leaders in special purpose private schools both in working with staff and students.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is rooted in complexity leadership theory and based on an ontological and axiological framework of study which implies that it is concerned with both the essence of existence (Creswell, 2005) in this case for leaders and followers within special purpose private schools--and the study of values as they relate to value-based realities for this population of perceived leadership by the leaders themselves as well as the followers. In a complex system with many working parts, an organization must provide opportunities for flexibility and innovation. Drucker (2012) stated that management theories and practices must provide solutions to today's contemporary issues as the environments of these organizations are complex and competitive. Many traditional leadership strategies offer a model that is static and not flexible. According to Baltaci and Balci (2017), complexity leadership "is an alternate approach to survive that functions in a rather volatile, unpredictable, competitive, chaotic environment" (p. 31). According to Uhl-Bien, Marion, and McKelvey (2007) and Uhl-Bien and Marion (2009), organizations in contemporary times experience environments that are complex and sometimes chaotic. This type of environment described by complexity leadership theorists parallels many environments seen in special purpose private schools and as a result, many leadership characteristics of these schools' effective leaders. Complexity leadership theory has the potential to offer guidance in understanding how a principal may effectively lead in special purpose private school settings.

Complexity leadership is comprised of three functions: administrative, adaptive, and enabling. The administrative function controls and standardizes the work process to promote organization and progress (Baltaci & Balci, 2017). In an education setting this would include progress on academic goals, test scores, or graduation requirements. The administrative leadership component of complexity theory is based on control and bureaucratic hierarchy (Baltaci & Balci, 2017). This aspect of leadership applies traditional management strategies designed to control behavior around organizational goals. The adaptive function is based on creative problem solving, resonating with new conditions, and employing learning and action-centered leadership that may include immediate decision-making mechanisms employed during crisis (Baltaci & Balci, 2017, p. 30). In relation to special purpose private schools, this style of leadership could offer important strategies when working in situations that involve on-going crisis. Lastly, the enabling function serves to provide a balance between the administrative and adaptive functions (Baltaci & Balci, 2017). This type of leader understands the importance of different organizational needs thus requiring the leader to continuously revisit the degree to which administrative or adaptive functions are utilized. This leadership style is also starkly different from many traditional top-down approaches and views the stability of the environment as a key factor when applying leadership techniques and practices. Marion and Gonzales (2014) described complexity leadership as "uniquely different from other theories and, in many ways" that "flies in the face of our commonsense (or culturally defined) attitudes about how to do leadership" (p. 249). Marion and Gonzales (2014) offered a comparison of complexity leadership which highlights the difference between this theory and others. They stated that "complexity leadership is a process rather than events" and that it is to be conceived as a "stimulus response phenomenon" (Marion & Gonzales, 2014, p. 250). More specifically, this type of leadership

provides the leaders and followers with an opportunity to be part of the solution and to be "effective actors in that process rather than thinking that they are events that transform the organization" (Marion & Gonzales, 2014, p. 250). This is especially significant within special purpose private schools as there are many actors or employees that have direct contact and experiences within crisis settings and environments due to the high levels of crisis scenarios that students engage in on a daily basis. Each of these employees, whether identified as leaders or followers, provides an experience and a possible solution for moving forward in developing plans for working with students. This is a relationship which the leader many never experience in the same capacity as those with direct, daily, full-day contact with the students. Complexity Leadership Theory tells us that the organization or school will change and will change often and that it is the leaders' job to provide opportunities for others within the organization to share their experiences and offer insight to a rapidly changing and unstable environment (Marion & Gonzales, 2014). Special purpose private schools have high student turnover due to their rolling enrollment, frequent changes in student population as students make progress, and the overall school design of a short-term placement due to its restrictive nature (Disability Rights of Maine (2017); Maine Department of Education Restraint and Seclusion Data (2016); Maine Department of Education: Chapter 33 Regulation. The schools also experience high turn-over rates with staff due to the intensive populations and situations involving crisis. Complexity Leadership is relevant to this model and it works within environments that are frequently experiencing change.

The theoretical perspective of complexity leadership underlies the challenges that many leaders face within special purpose private schools and their ever-changing environments. Complexity leadership theory could lend itself well to these settings as these school environments are also complex and at times chaotic. Comparing how leaders (administrators)

and followers (teachers and educational technicians) in these settings view effective leadership through the lens of complexity theory may shed light on exploring what makes leadership's behaviors, characteristics, and traits effective within these settings.

Conclusion

Chapter two provided a review of the literature in the areas of the multifaceted duties and expectations of principals within school settings as well as behaviors, characteristics, and values demonstrated by principals. The literature review also provided a framework for consideration around previous research attempts to define what makes a principal effective within his/her leadership role. In connection with effective leadership, the concept of leadership in crisis was explored in the way that it may offer varying outcomes on how an identified leader within an educational setting may be effective including areas outside of leadership that experience on-going crisis. Lastly, chapter two explored the theory of complexity leadership and its relevance to the complex, crisis-ridden environments of special purpose private schools. Specifically, complexity leadership offers an overarching framework to consider when attempting to understand leadership values and behaviors of principals within special purpose private schools. Chapter three will explore the methodology required to gain an understanding of the perceptions of effective leadership values and behaviors within special purpose private schools from the perspective of leaders and followers.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to identify perceptions and experiences of leaders and followers in special purpose private schools during crisis events to uncover and better understand demonstrated behaviors, values, and characteristics of those identified leaders. Chapter three focuses on identifying the populations, settings, and conceptual framework within this study and discusses the methodology that allowed the researcher to uncover the perceptions of leaders from the perspectives of leaders and followers within a special purpose private school.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the question of how leaders and followers understand and describe the characteristics, values, and behaviors of effective leadership at special purpose private schools by answering the question: What characteristics are perceived as effective when leading others during situations of long-term, constant crisis based on perceptions of leaders and non-leaders within the same school?

Methodological Considerations and Selections

The research methodology is qualitative. According to Creswell (2012) the purpose of qualitative research is to "explore a problem and develop a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon [and is best suited to] address a research problem where you do not know the variables and need to explore" (p. 16). According to Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) qualitative research tends to focus on "meaning, sense-making and communicative action, that is, it looks at how people make sense of what happens, what the meaning of that happening is" (p. 44). Results from qualitative data allow for exploration to identify broad categories or

themes in order to represent findings (Creswell, 2012). Creswell (2012) also noted that when choosing a methodology, it is important to match the approach to the research problem and that qualitative research problems "must be explored to obtain a deeper understanding [and] the approach must fit the audience" (p. 19). This research was designed to provide a deeper understanding of the characteristics, behaviors, and values of effective school leaders during long-term crisis.

More specifically, the research method is phenomenological. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) a phenomenological study "investigates various reactions to, or perceptions of a particular phenomenon" (p. 436). The researcher's goal was to gain "insight into the world of his or her participants and describe their perceptions and reactions" (p. 436). This study included a short survey and interviews gathered from two agencies that provide insight into the perceptions of leaders and followers in special purpose private schools. Questions from the survey and follow-up interviews focused on their perspectives of effective leadership during long-term crisis in special purpose public schools.

Setting

The study took place in four special purpose private schools in Maine that are supervised through two mental health agencies. The two agencies were selected as they were similar in their mission, vision, and values as well as similar in the services they provide and the challenges experienced for leadership operating under conditions of crisis. The agencies were also experiencing significant staffing challenges due to the state's shortage of special education teachers during this time and the intensive nature of the student population. Each agency was also selected as part of a convenience sample as the researcher has worked in each setting. The

schools provide services for students in grades K-12. All students receive special education services and require an individualized education plan.

The Agencies and Special Purpose Private Schools

The two agencies selected to be part of this study were Sweetser and Spurwink. Both agencies are non-profit mental health agencies that have a day treatment component as part of the comprehensive services they provide.

Spurwink Services. Spurwink Sevices is a nonprofit mental health and special educational agency founded 1960 with eight boys in one therapeutic home. Since the opening of the initial home, the agency has grown substantially over the last several years employing over 1,079 people in 2015 and serving over 6,000 clients across the state of Maine (Spurwink, 2017). The agency supports four individual day-treatment educational programs serving students in Pre-K through 12th grade. The agency also has adult and children's residential service programs (Spurwink, 2017). Spurwink has various offices throughout the state that provide clinical services, case management services, and psychiatric services (Spurwink, 2017). The programs serve clients in all 16 counties in the state. The highest concentrations of services provided are in Cumberland County where almost 50% of the total clients are served.

The mission and vision of Spurwink Services is to assist children, adults, and families affected by behavioral health challenges and developmental disabilities to live "healthy, engaged lives in their communities" (Spurwink, 2016, para. 2).

Spurwink operates four special purpose private schools. The schools are located in Cornville, Chelsea, Lewiston, and Portland. Each of the schools has an Educational Director or Associate Program Director of Education. Typically these school leaders are certified special education teachers as well as certified special education directors or assistant special education

directors. The agency also employs two Senior Directors of Education with similar credentials who provide consultation to each of the schools. The agency also employs a Vice President of Education who provides educational oversight to all programs and represents educational interests at the executive level in the organization. The two Spurwink schools included in the research were the Cornville program and Glickman Academy. Cornville is located on a rural campus with a maximum census of 25 students. The school has four multi-age classrooms each led by a special education teacher and supporting educational technicians. Glickman Academy is located in an urban area of Portland. The school has a census of 50 students with eight classrooms, each led by a special education teacher and supported by educational technicians.

    Sweetser Children's Services. Sweetser is a private nonprofit behavioral health care organization serving children, adults, and families within the state of Maine. The agency offers services that include client populations experiencing "emotional disturbances, mental illnesses, behavioral disorders and learning disabilities through an array of educational programs, preventative services, community-support services and residential homes" (Sweetser, 2017, p. 2). The agency is the oldest known child welfare and behavioral health organization in Maine. (Sweetser, 2017) and developed from the combining of four orphanages. Over time, the use of orphanages declined, and Sweetser refined its position and mission providing "community-based care of special needs children [to] address the psychological needs of children" (Sweetser, 2017 p. 3). Currently, the agency supports and runs special purpose private schools, outpatient clinical services, crisis services, residential services, services specific to eating disorders, medication management, peer-based support services, and targeted case management.

The mission and vision of Sweetser is to "provide quality treatment, support and hope to children, adults, and families through a network of mental health, behavioral health, and educational services [and] help people create promising futures" (Sweetser, 2017, p. 4).

Sweetser operates two special purpose private schools. The schools are located in Saco and Belfast. Each of the schools has an Educational Director. Typically these school leaders are certified special education teachers as well as certified special education directors or assistant special education directors. The agency also employs a Senior Director of Education with similar credentials who provides consultation and oversight to each of the schools and represents the educational interests of the agency at the executive level in the organization. The two Sweetser schools included in the research were the Saco and Belfast Schools. The Saco school is located in an semi-urban area with a maximum census of 80 students. The school has eight multi-age classrooms each led by a special education teacher and supporting educational technicians. Belfast is located in a rural location, and the school has a census of 40 students.

Participants

The participants included educational directors and associate/assistant directors who were identified as the formal leaders within the schools. Educational directors and associate directors are the private schools' equivalent to principals and vice principals. The requirements for these positions usually include a principal or assistant principal certification from the state of Maine.

The participants also included teachers and educational technicians who were considered followers within the school. One director was selected from each school (i.e. four total) and two teachers or educational technicians from each school were selected (i.e. eight total) to participate in the study. The directors held slight variations in titles; however, their roles were the same in each case as they served as acting principals of the schools. Participants identified as leaders

were recruited based on their position at the schools. The schools were selected as part of a convenience sample as the researcher has worked in each of these agencies, and there is only one identified educational leader available at each school. The participation was voluntary. The followers were recruited based on their willingness to participate, but also based on a range of experience levels and demographic characteristics. The researcher attempted to obtain both male and female followers as well as followers with a variety of total experience years to take care not to exclude new followers but ensure that they had enough experience to detail their accounts and have had an opportunity to develop a relationship with the leader. Therefore, followers had to have been employed at the school for at least a 6 month period to participate. This provided a total sample size of twelve. The sample size is purposely small and homogenous given the phenomenological approach which is "concerned with the lived experience of a particular phenomenon, thus it prefers a small, homogeneous sample as it aims to balance the identification of shared themes/experiences with the idiographic nature of experience" (Smith, 2004, p. 42). The Consent for Participation in Research form (Appendix A) provided an explanation of the study, expectations for involvement, identified potential risks and benefits to the participants and outlined privacy protections.

The researcher worked with each of the participating agencies to obtain permission to conduct research at each of the day treatment sites gained permission to use the names and a description of each agency and school within the research. A letter was provided from the vice president or president of each agency after consultation with senior leadership teams to certify that permission was granted to conduct research at each site. An IRB application for exemption was completed with the University of New England to grant permission to start the data collection process. After permission was granted, the researcher emailed each vice president to

inform them of the targeted start date of the surveys and interviews. A copy of the approved

application was provided to each agency once approval was granted.

Potential participants received an email (Appendix B and C) including the description of

the research and an invitation to participate in the research as well as the informed consent form

(Appendix A) to review, sign, and return if they agreed to participate. The email identified that

one leader and two followers from each site would be included in the study. Although the

researcher anticipated that if more than two followers responded, they were to be selected based

on an attempt to include male and female participants, followers who had been working at the

school for at least six months, and were a variety of age ranges, only two followers from each

site responded during the actual recruitment, therefore random selection was not possible. After

informed consent forms were returned and the participants had formally agreed to participate, the

researcher provided the participants with a short survey (Appendix D) that asked them to identify

demographic information, to categorize the top five crisis incidents they have experienced within

the school, and to identify their behaviors, values, and characteristics that they prioritize as a

leader or when working for a leader in a special purpose private school. After receiving the

completed survey by email, the researcher scheduled a time to meet with each participant for the

subsequent interview (Appendix E). Interviews with each participant were completed in person

at the location of the school the participant worked. Information from the survey was used to

confirm the appropriateness and relevance of the interview questions and ensure that the

participants had experience working in the setting to be able to describe events and experiences.

There was also a check for reliability after completion of the interview by asking participants to

review their interview transcripts for accuracy and provide any follow-up information to sections

that they felt were misrepresented or unclear in the transcript document.

Data collection included the use of surveys and interviews to gather information from participants. Surveys provided the opportunity for participants to be selected based on their roles and experience. The survey also provided an opportunity for participants to identify some overarching perceptions of behaviors and values of leaders in special purpose provide schools that allowed for refinement of interview questions. Interviews allowed for more intensive exploration of themes and provided participants an opportunity to give details outlining their experiences working with these leaders based on their unique perspectives.

Survey

The survey contained 10 questions that asked participants about their roles in the schools, years of experience, gender, and age. The survey also asked participants to prioritize leadership characteristics in the areas of relationships, operational style, and personal qualities. Finally, the survey asked participants to briefly describe the five most challenging crisis experiences they have encountered working in their role. Information from the survey was used to confirm the appropriateness and relevance of the interview questions and ensure that the participants had experience working in the identified setting and were able to describe events and experiences as they related to leadership in the setting. They were also used to check for reliability after completion of the interview.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The additional data set was in the form of semi-structured interviews. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain information specific to the perceptions of leaders and followers based on demonstrated characteristics, behaviors, and values that leaders within each of the schools encompass and whether these characteristics, values, or behaviors are effective or beneficial within ongoing crisis settings. Semi-structured interviews are appropriate to a qualitative

approach as they are "flexible enough to allow unanticipated topics or themes to emerge during analysis" (Smith, 2004, p. 43). Semi-structured interviews also allowed the researcher to follow-up on topics that emerged during the interview using additional probing questions before analysis actually occurred. The interview questions (Appendix E) included topics such as effective characteristics, values, and behaviors of the leaders, the impact of crisis within these school settings, and open-ended questions that allowed for other themes that emerge to be discussed. It also allowed for the detailed and in-depth information to be gathered about the participants' experience. Using a semi-structured interview, survey results, and brief descriptions of leaders and followers' most difficult incidents to collect data provides opportunities for triangulation, and therefore, increasing validity (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

The researcher recorded each interview and recordings were professionally transcribed through Rev.com. Member checking occurred with all participants as soon as the interviews were transcribed in order to confirm that the transcript was an accurate reflection of their responses and allowed for any additional comments after reviewing. Questions during the member check included if the transcripts seemed complete, accurate, and provided a realistic interpretation of their experience in special purpose private schools. After transcription, interview recordings will be destroyed within one year of the study's completion. All records of this research will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the home of the researcher or on an encrypted, password protected computer. A copy of the signed consent forms will be kept in a locked file by the researcher up to three years after the project is complete and then destroyed. All individually identifiable data will be destroyed one year after the study is complete. Participants may request copies of the study's findings once available by calling or emailing the researcher. Interviews occurred in an office or conference room with no other participants.

Participants received a pseudonym during the interview and results were reported and analyzed under that pseudonym. Results of the project will be shared after completion. Examples may include a presentation of results at state or national conferences, submission or publication in a journal article, and/or report to a third-party agency. Possible follow-up studies may be conducted based on the results.

Participant Rights

Participant rights were protected in many ways. The study was voluntary and participants were given the option to discontinue their participation at any time even after starting the interview. Descriptive statistics were collected; however, the researcher did not and will not release or publish information at the individual level. Responses from participants will not be traced back to individuals in any way. Informed consent forms (Appendix A) were provided to the participants and outlined the risks and benefits of participating in the study. The participant received a copy and the researcher retained one copy.

Analysis

The researcher determined Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the most appropriate way to analyze the data collected within this study. IPA is designed to analyze data "by looking in detail at how individuals talk about the stressful situations they face, and how they deal with them, and by close consideration of the meanings they attach to them" (Smith, 1996, p. 270). IPA generally has three steps. The first step involves the gathering of rich and detailed experience information. The second involves an interpretation or understanding of that information based on themes and contexts of each individual person. The final stage involves the collective interpretation of those first two steps in order to provide insight to the meaning of those shared living experiences (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Descriptive statistics were

used on a macro level and included the age, gender, years of experience, and role of the

participant through the survey. The results of the surveys were hand tallied and analyzed.

For this research project, the first step included gathering information that included data

specific to cross-checks that interview questions were representative of crisis scenarios the teams

were experiencing, detailed information gathered from surveys, semi-structured interviews, and

member checking. According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012), "semi-structured interviews

allow the researcher and the participant to engage in a dialogue in real time [and also] give

enough space and flexibility for original and unexpected issues to arise, which the researcher

may investigate in more detail with further questions" (p. 365).

The second step included hand-tallying of information from the surveys. The researcher

chose to hand-tally the information since the sample size was relatively small and allowed the

researcher to engage with the data at the raw data level. After tallying information from the

surveys, interviews occurred and were recorded via a digital audio recorder and transcribed using

the professional transcription service Rev.com. After transcription, the information was

organized into themes and coded. IPA offered a flexible protocol and guidance around how to

code data and identify themes. This process advised that "researchers totally immerse

themselves in the data or in other words, try to step into the participants' shoes as far as possible"

as well as getting a sense of the "participants' making sense of phenomena under investigation,

and at the same time document the researcher's sense making" (p. 366). This included a close

reading of the transcripts and listening to the recordings multiple times, which allowed for the

researcher to be immersed in the information and provided an opportunity for various

interpretations over multiple readings and audio reviews. At this stage in the process, the

researcher made notes specific to "observations and reflections about the interview experience or

any other thoughts and comments of potential significance" (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012, p. 366).

According to Pietkiewicz & Smith (2012), focuses may include:

> content (what is actually being discussed), language use (features such as metaphors, symbols, repetitions, pauses), context, and initial interpretative comments[and] comments associated with personal reflexivity (e.g., how might personal characteristics of the interviewer, such as gender, age, social status, etc. affect the rapport with the participant). (p. 366)

The next step involved transforming this information into themes. Specifically, this called for engagement with the notes rather than the transcripts. The goal at this point in the analysis was for the researcher "to formulate a concise phrase at a slightly higher level of abstraction which may refer to a more psychological conceptualization" and takes into account the participants unique experience (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012, p. 366). The final step in analysis focused on seeking relationships and clustering themes. This included identifying "connections between emerging themes, grouping them together according to conceptual similarities and providing each cluster with a descriptive label" (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012, p. 366).

Limitations of the Study

The potential limitations of this study included that the researcher had a professional relationship with the schools and some of the staff being studied as the researcher worked for both agencies and in three of the schools being sampled. The researcher was also an administrative leader in two of the special purpose private schools, which showed that she had a vested interest in the topic. A final limitation was with the small sample size that was limited to the two agencies studied and may not allow for generalization to other populations.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This study was conducted to better understand the perspectives of leaders and followers in special purpose private schools who had experienced on-going crisis while working in the school environment. The participants were recruited from two different mental health agencies in Maine and came from four different schools. Participants were divided into leaders and followers based on their current position in the schools and as defined by the researcher. This provided a unique ability to attempt to understand the phenomenon of the experience of leaders and followers during long-term constant crisis scenarios from the perspective of those in leadership and follower roles, but also from multiple schools and agencies.

Review of Methodology

Data were collected over a four-week period which started with consent, followed by asking participants to complete a structured survey. Questions on the survey were designed to collect demographic information and also served as a tool to refine the semi-structured research questions to ensure relevance related to topics of crisis and allow for greater breath during the interview process. After the completion of the survey, the researcher engaged each participant in an individual semi-structured interview. Questions focused on understanding and sharing their experiences specific to leadership during crisis events. Each participant was asked to reflect on characteristics, traits, values, and behaviors they felt were particularly important during crisis events in these specialized schools. They were also asked to define what they considered a crisis event and the intensity and frequency of such events in the school where they currently worked in order to better understand the phenomenon of crisis in special purpose schools and how crisis effected the experience of the participant and their understanding of what made up an effective

leader. Results of the definitions and incident types were compared for similarities and differences. Participants were encouraged to provide details and examples of such situations and were also given the opportunity to review their transcripts after the interview to ensure the accuracy and fidelity of their statements. Following this process each interview was transcribed and participants agreed that it was an accurate reflection of their experience, the researcher hand-coded each of the transcripts. Pre-set codes were identified through the completion of surveys. Those codes included complexity, crisis, and the various styles of leadership identified in the survey. Emergent codes were also considered as the interviews were read. After broad codes were identified, codes were collapsed in order to identify overarching, emergent themes. Each transcript was read several times and notes taken in the margin. Common themes were color coded by hand and then reviewed to find common themes (Gibbs, 2007). The researcher then employed the methodology of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) for data analysis and followed the data analysis model put forth by Creswell (2013, p. 89-90) which outlines the following framework:

- read through the transcripts several times

- highlight certain phrases or sections which identify the experience of the participant as they relate to topic of interest

- group each highlighted area of interest into themes of common threads

- validate findings of the participants through an in-depth analysis of the common threads and themes

Results were analyzed and separated based on individual responses, but also in a way that allowed for the possibilities of themes to be different or prioritized based on the leader and

follower role. Threads included commonly identified words or phrases which were then grouped into themes based on their overarching similarities.

Leader and Follower Survey Experience and Results

Participants were provided with a survey after agreeing to participate in the study as a precursor to participating in the interview. This survey provided the researcher with opportunities to structure questions in a way that allowed for more detail and thematic questioning based on primary demographic information asked within the survey (Appendix D).

Leader Survey Results

Results of the survey for school leaders indicated 1 male and 3 females were included in the leadership survey. The participants ranged in age from 34-69 years old. Additionally, 1 out of 4 leaders were identified as associate or assistant directors and 3 out of 4 were educational directors. Leaders had various roles within special purpose private schools including 2 out of 4 being educational technicians, 1 out of 4 being an integration specialists (which was described as a combination of an IEP coordinator and liaison between the specialized school and public sending schools), and all 4 participants had previously served as special education teachers. Three out of four leaders identified their highest level of education being a Master's degree with one leader stating they had completed all doctoral level coursework with the exception of a confirmed dissertation (ABD). Leaders shared that they had a number of years of experience within various roles of education. In the area of educational technician, leaders had an average of 1.5 years working in this role. In the area of special education teacher, the leaders shared an average of approximately 13 years of experience with a low of 4 years and a high of 34 years. Within the educational director role, leaders had an average of 17 years of experience with a low number of 5 years and a high number of 38 years.

To better understand the leader's preferences in the area of leadership qualities, they were asked to identify and prioritize the top two qualities in the area of relationships, operational style, and personal qualities. In the area of relationships, leaders chose *approachable* and *helpful* as their top two choices followed by *compassionate* and *collegial*. In the area of operational style leaders prioritized being *reliable* followed by *competent*, *knowledgeable*, *dependable*, *decisive*, and *having high expectations for self and others*. In the last area of personal qualities, leaders chose *ethical*, *honest*, and *possessing integrity*, followed by *being sincere* and *courageous*. The final item on the survey asked leaders to identify five of the most challenging incidents that had occurred within their schools. Leaders identified the use of glass to harm oneself or others most often, followed by students fighting one another, police being called due to physical aggression towards another person, an inability to calm the student using crisis de-escalation strategies and working with students and staff involved in multiple restraints (greater than six) in one school day. Additional examples included elopement from the school with the student being found by police several days later, a student severely biting a staff member (which required medical attention), metal being used as a weapon towards a staff member, a client trying to break down a door to get to another peer in the classroom, the police intervening and restraining a child within the school setting, and a staff member being punched in the face and sustaining a broken nose.

Follower Survey Results

Results of the survey for those identified as followers in the study indicated 3 were male and 5 were female. The participants ranged from 18-64 years old. Additionally, 6 out of 8 followers had previously been educational technicians and 2 out of 8 had held special education teacher positions. Participants identified holding other roles in education including a general

education teacher and a reading specialist. Six out of eight leaders identified their highest level of education being a bachelor's degree and 2 of the 8 participants identified a Master's degree as their highest level of education. Followers had an average of 2.86 years within the educational technician position with a low number of .5 years in this role and a high number of 13 years within this role. Followers also identified an average of 3.6 years in the special education teacher role with a low of 2 years and a high of 7 years.

To better understand the followers' preferences in the area of leadership qualities, they were asked to identify and prioritize the top two qualities in the area of relationships, operational style, and personal qualities. In the area of relationships, followers chose *willing to listen* and *approachable* as their top two choices followed by *helpful* and *compassionate*. In the area of operational style, followers prioritized *being dependable* and *knowledgeable* followed by *effective* and *reliable*. In the last area, personal qualities, followers chose *honest* and *ethical* followed by *possessing integrity*.

The final item on the survey asked followers to identify five of the most challenging incidents that had occurred within their schools. Followers described significant incidents including medical emergencies due to students becoming violent and breaking a body part of a staff member, students engaging in significant self-harm including breaking their own nose, choking on their own blood, cutting themselves with metal or glass, assaulting police officers, fighting other students, and eloping from campus to the extent that they were gone for hours or days.

The leader and follower survey results indicated leaders were generally older and held more experience in the director and special education teacher role then followers; however, in the Educational Technician role, the followers held more experience. The survey results also

indicated that more females than males were included in the study, especially in the identified leader group. Based on the survey results, leaders also held a higher level of education and a greater range of previous positions within the special education setting.

In the area of perceived effective leadership, leaders and followers identified similar important traits including being *approachable, helpful, compassionate, knowledgeable, honest, ethical, and possessing integrity.* Leaders also highlighted collegial, decisive, and having high expectations for oneself and others as important, where followers focused more on being *willing to listen, dependability*, and *reliability* in their area of importance.

In the area of crisis experience, leaders and followers both identified self-harm with students, students fighting one another, police involvement, and significant elopements off the campus in their most challenging crisis experiences. Followers also highlighted specific staff injury including broken bones and noses within their most significant experiences.

Participant Semi-Structured Interviews

Given the analysis method of IPA, the researcher highlighted the experience or perspective of the individual participants. The following section outlines the account of each individual's perspective on crisis within special purpose schools. The surveys were used to shape and refine the questions for the interview. Based on this refinement, a question was added specific to the amount of time leaders and followers perceived spending time in crisis situations. No questions were removed. The survey provided insight to more specific examples of crisis and also identified overarching themes of perceived effective leadership to further explore during the individual interviews. Following the individual analysis and accounts, the researcher identified major themes connected to each detailed perspective.

Leaders' Semi-structured Interview Results

The following section outlines individual leader interviews and direct quotes as part of the semi-structured interviews. Leaders were provided with pseudonyms to ensure their confidentiality sharing their experience leading through long-term crisis situations at their own special purpose private school.

Annie. When asked to identify traits, characteristics, and behaviors important for a leader in a special purpose private school, Annie identified it was important to have *competence* and *knowledge in the special education field* but also to be *reliable*, *available*, and *approachable*. She highlighted approachability as "a big one as far as staff feeling comfortable in doing their jobs and wanting to stay in an environment like this." She noted that building relationships with staff was another essential component for a leader in this environment. She stated,

> If you have a relationship with someone, I feel like it is easier to have a conversation with them that might be challenging, versus if you don't really know your staff and then all of a sudden you are having to pull them in and have a tough conversation.

The simplicity of *being present* and *available* also resonated with her as she was asked to reflect on important leadership qualities for this setting. She stated that it is "helpful for the staff to know that you're around, that you know what is going on, that you're there if they need anything." This included *being physically present* within the school but also when not physically present ensuring that staff know "how to be able to reach you if needed or what the plan is when you're not around."

Annie also talked about the importance of *following up with staff* so that they knew she was taking care of items they had brought up concerns or needs around. This took the form or

theme specific to the importance of *communication* between leaders and followers. She noted
when she first started in her leadership role, she would

> …follow through with things but sometimes I wouldn't think to loop back and
> communicate with the person or group of people to let them know I followed through on
> it, and so sometimes people thought I didn't. It was a lesson that I learned, to send an
> email or stop in and say, hey, I did check in on this rather than just doing it and waiting
> for the results to happen a week later so that they'd know.

As she talked, she reflected on the need to provide balance in her leadership approach during
crisis. She noted "being present but doing all the other job duties to that keep the program
running" were important. She talked about the need to "be *approachable* but also set limits and
boundaries so everyone's not running around crazy and things are not falling apart." She noted
"it's a *hard balance*." When asked to reflect on her personal definition of crisis she noted a
lower and higher level of crisis within the school. She offered her thoughts that staff working in
special purpose private school settings are frequently experiencing some level of crisis and as a
result are "fortunately and unfortunately *desensitized to those lower level crisis scenarios*…kids
yelling or maybe trying to hit someone or leaving school property" because they are things that
occur "all the time." She also offered an understanding of high-level crisis including a "kid
really trying to assault someone or fight with one another…windows getting broken and glass
around, and self-harming." When asked to quantify the amount of time her school is
experiencing a crisis she notes 100% of the time for those low level crisis scenarios and at least
50% of the time for the high-level ones. She reflected it can cycle. When asked about tools or
strategies that she uses to support her staff during times of crisis she noted using her past
experience as a teacher and educational technician is helpful, assisting staff physically when

needed, and going to check and *support* staff when she "hears something going on that seems a little outside the norm." She also noted the need to provide educational staff involved in the crisis with an *opportunity to debrief* the incident and to *engage in meaningful supervision*. She felt that lack of time was a limiting factor when attempting to support her staff in this role. She stated "trying to meet all the education requirements, special education requirements…changes to standards-based learning on top of dealing with kids' behaviors and helping them to cope and learn skills and even being able to be in a school building…it's just a really tough *balance*."

  Willy. When asked to reflect on characteristics, behaviors, and values Willy asked to use his survey to supplement his responses. He noted the importance of what he called *executive skills* in a leader role in this school setting. Due to "*priorities shifting rapidly*" the ability to "*reprioritize* and be pretty *fluid* in kind of an ongoing way" is a necessary skill. Willy also noted the need for a leader to have their own "*good emotional regulation*" because it's natural for people to "get excited when things are happening that are not typical…it can put people on edge…and being able to manage my own emotional reaction, to those situations is important…because if I am not managing that, I can't certainly being supportive to other people who also need to manage it. He also commented on the need to use his previous experience and perspective when leading in crisis situations. He noted the importance of time in the role and defined this as a *practice effect*. He offered,

   The first time…anyone experiences a situation, it's problematic and then…as you

   experience situations more, you have more opportunities to experience similar

   situations…I'm certainly more capable after…I had to practice…and the more

   opportunities I had to practice an event, the better I think I can do.

Willy also highlighted the need to be *tolerant* and *forgiving* in this position. He said that

he has *high expectations* but at the same time must be "*tolerant of less than perfectly competent*

responses."

When asked to define a crisis in special purpose private schools Willy offered that he

referred to the situation as an incident as opposed to a crisis when a student was exhibiting

"dysregulated, unsafe behavior" and the event was one that "could be anticipated." He stated "I

like the concept of incident, because the student is having a crisis, the staff isn't in crisis." He

reserved the word *crisis* for things such as a bomb scare, fire, or some sort of school violence

situation. When asked to expand on his reasons for the distinction, he noted that if the student

showed a history of these high-risk intensities he did not think it was helpful to define this as a

crisis, because "we want kids to become trauma resistant, not trauma sensitive so…if we start

calling stuff a crisis all the time, we're diminishing our ability…to say we can handle the

situation." When asked to assign a percentage of time the school was in crisis or experiencing a

significant incident based on his definition, he stated that his staff experience this at a greater

frequency than he does in his role, possibly resulting in his percentage being less than that of

those who engage in the direct care of students. He noted there are likely many incidents

occurring that the staff are safely deescalating but offered around 20% of the time as a

percentage. When asked what he could do to support the direct care staff working within a

crisis, he stated "trying to be more supportive…give feedback… and provide *coaching in a*

supportive way." He also noted that there are *times to lead and times to follow* and that it is

important for a leader "to figure out which situation requires which." When asked about the

complexity of Special Purpose Private Schools, he noted *"there's a lot of layers"* and that "you

have all the same obligations as a public school with the department of education regulations but

you're also dealing with mental health issues." Support for those initiatives must be "seamless and supportive…so there's alignment between medical necessity and educational appropriate stuff."

Lynn. When asked to describe leadership qualities especially important in special purpose private schools, Lynn indicated it was important to be honest and provide staff with goals that were "*attainable and reachable*." She also noted the importance of leaders being able to "keep their cool…and "*to not have your emotions take over in situations* that are troubling or hard." She indicated that shared leadership was important in these environments and added the need to be a "leader and not a dictator." She noted the importance of role modeling and helping people take risks to promote "talking, interacting, and being able to share things in difficult situations." When asked what supports she offers staff in these settings she indicated offering help during crisis, accessing the situation, and *even switching out with them sometimes*. She indicated that this is particularly important because

> some staff are burnt out...have just had a rough day, or you can sense they're at their end. I think that it's important to recognize that it's not anything that's wrong, it's just to offer them an opportunity to go back, take care of yourself, take care of some kids that need something positive, and we'll help here, and then come back in a few minutes…and we'll go from there and see what this kid needs.

She also noted the importance of giving staff an opportunity to *debrief* by "checking in and walking into classrooms at the end of the day and just talking to people…asking how their day was, or if there are things they need." Additionally, she noted the need for open communication and responding to "things that might be minor to me but big to them." In terms of complexity in special purpose private schools Lynn described this as being a "square trying to

fit into a circle." She provided examples of working with multiple school districts, having an educational, clinical, and at times residential component to the program and how this can be challenging. She stated "if we are not working together as a full unit" it can be very difficult. She furthered the complexity by adding the need to be in compliance with various standards and regulations including the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services. When asked to define crisis she indicated it would include "a feeling of unsafeness." She gave examples including multiple restraints for multiple students in a short period of time or multiple students needing a high level of support from staff at one time. When asked to quantify how often the school experiences crisis based on her definition, she indicated about 40% of the time, sometimes more.

     June. When asked to detail leadership qualities that she found to be important based on her experience June noted the need to be fully *present* for her staff. She used the term *visible* and defined this as "going out into the school and to the classrooms every day, even if it is to just say hello or stop and talk to people specifically about things that they've asked for follow-up about." She also noted the need to provide a good understanding of general education and special education and to know policies and procedures, hiring practices, and how to manage curriculum. She also noted the importance of being *compassionate* and *understanding*, "both for the students and the staff because of the intensity of the work, you really have to be connected emotionally to the people, and have each other's back, so to speak." She also highlighted the need to at times "just listen" and that listening can "open the door to an *honest space* and if you set up an atmosphere where you are willing to listen, people will tell you all kinds of things." During a crisis June highlighted the need to focus on safety and be decisive. When asked what she does to support her staff she talked about how she provided them time-away from a serious

crisis right away as an opportunity to "decompress" and "ease that intensity, that adrenalin rush." When asked to define crisis she stated crisis occurs when a student becomes "very dysregulated, [so much so that] their mental health is at stake." When asked to quantify how often this occurs, she stated about 20% of the time. June indicated that special purpose private schools are complex due to the leadership position being one of a "combination of principal, special education director, superintendent…so you really need a unique skill set to make the job work" as you are "drawing on these very different pots [referring to different types] and skills."

Followers' Semi-structured Interview Results

The following section outlines individual follower interviews and direct quotes as part of the semi-structured interviews. Followers were provided with pseudonyms to ensure their confidentiality when sharing their experience as followers interacting with leaders through long-term crisis situations at their own special purpose private school.

Lisa. Lisa highlighted *trust* as being important for a leader in this setting and defined trust as a "trust to know that somebody is going to have your back in crisis situations." She also noted that she valued a leader who shows "*respect* to the lower people" implying leadership respecting the work of those staff doing direct care work with clients. She also identified the importance of a leader being able to delegate responsibilities. When asked to clarify she indicated a preference for *coaching*. In her ideal world, the leader would "give me some idea of what I'm supposed to do and the effective way to do that." She also highlighted the importance of a leader being *approachable* "so that I can feel comfortable asking for help and asking questions and feeling like I am going to be understood." Lisa noted it was important to be *competent* as a leader and for her this meant being knowledgeable and "doing what is best for kids." Lisa also highlighted the importance of *supervision* as at times "there are things that come

up during the week that have been difficult for me during the week…I get to voice that during supervision and my leaders are *emotionally supportive*, and they'll listen to me and they'll give me *honest feedback and wisdom* about what I should do next." When asked if she felt special purpose private schools were complex she stated that these schools "take in kids nobody else would, the behaviors are complex, the children themselves are complex…you're walking into a school every day and you really have no idea what you might get each day." When asked to define crisis she stated that it was when "kids don't have control over their own bodies anymore." When asked to quantify the amount of time that school experiences crisis she stated 30% of the time.

 Vivian. Vivian indicated she felt it was important for a leader in a special purpose private school to be *personable* and to "get to know their staff's characteristics so they can better work with them." She noted it was important they be *reliable* and "do what they say they're going to do." Vivian also talked about the need as a leader to meet regularly with people "to hear their concerns and how they're feeling" as this is a

> high stress job so it is important for them to be able to hear people out and know their
> concerns and either deal with those concerns or let them know why they can't deal with
> those concerns at the moment.

Vivian described the need to be *compassionate* and *developing relationships with people*. She said "you can't really function in this line of work unless you have built some sort of relationship with your staff and kids" because "it is easier to critique their work and tell them what you think they can do better if you have that relationship." Being *approachable* is also an important characteristic to have. She stated as a leader, the "staff should feel like they can come to you and talk to you about concerns they have." She noted a leader in this setting should be *ethical* and

know that whoever is in charge "has your back." When experiencing a crisis, Vivian felt like the focus of leadership changes as you have to be "narrow-minded to the crisis and accomplish whatever the goal is to calm down the situation." She noted that this often includes "calming down the staff involved in the crisis, which can be challenging." When asked to define crisis from her perspective in this type of school, she noted that crisis is an "out of the ordinary behavior…that you do not see every day…they are out of control…and nothing in your tool box is working to help them." When asked how often crisis occurs, she noted 50% of the time. When asked what a leader could do to support staff working directly with kids experiencing crisis in the school she noted that offering things the team has already tried is not helpful; however, hearing the staff person out as to what has been tried and "appreciating the fact that the staff might know what they're talking about" can go a long way in terms of feeling validated and appreciated. She also noted the need for staff to know that the leaders *truly care about the level of stress the staff are experiencing*. Being *present* and *responding sometimes immediately* were examples given. She also mentioned the importance of *coaching* by giving the example of a time when she experienced a crisis early in her career, and backed away from a situation as she was scared; however, the leader was assisting with a restraint and coached her through the situation, offering modeling, *emotional support*, and feedback after the incident related to her performance. When asked if she felt special purpose private schools were complex she stated that trying to balance the residential world and educational world is difficult and that you're trying to "mash it all together and flow, it rarely ever does" and that adding the clinical component within the school setting can make it even more challenging, along with the "cake topper" of other specialties such as occupational therapy, speech therapy, and physical therapy.

She notes "there is a lot that goes into it…and you're trying to make it work all seamlessly…

with lots of people."

        Johnny. When asked to reflect on his work with effective leaders in special purpose

public schools, Johnny first reflected on the importance of *flexibility* and *having the ability to*

shift priorities rapidly. He said

> you know this goes for whether you're a manager or whether you're an ed tech and you're
>
> the new kid on the block. You know, you gotta be able to kinda roll with whatever comes
>
> your way that day. I don't think I've had any lesson plans actually go the way that they've
>
> been written up.

Johnny also reflected on the need to *feel the leader's presence* or at least have a way to contact

and connect with them. He reflected that effective leaders in these settings

> …touch base with people…they make sure that they're in contact, and that they have the
>
> pulse of the building, especially for someone like [name retracted] or [name retracted],
>
> who are often out of the building looking at new clients, or you know whatever. The
>
> supervision becomes very important. Sometimes I sit with [name retracted] for an hour
>
> just talking about different things, different things I might like to try.
>
> When asked if the physical presence, in his opinion, has to be immediate in order to be

successful during crisis he indicated he indicated

> well, at times, yeah. If there's a kid that's in crisis, yes, sometimes you do need the answer
>
> right then and, particularly in the case of new staff. You can have people that aren't really
>
> willing to pull the trigger. They're just not sure enough of themselves.

When asked if successful leaders change when dealing with crisis he stated that they are more

straightforward and *directive*. When asked about complexity of special purpose private schools,

Johnny stated that these schools are complex because they are "constantly changing". He further noted "beyond changing diagnosis [mental health], some kids arrive with one thing and leave with another. Changing staff, changing laws, and now increasingly inclusion of so many different cultures…we are definitely getting more challenging complex clients". Lastly, Johnny's interview encompassed a strong element of *trust*. He stated that he feels a *leader must trust in him and his skills* and he must be able to *trust in the leader* to feel confident that he is able to handle challenging situations. He felt it was important to know as a staff member that leaders "trust you to make the right decision" and that you can "trust them to make the right decisions."

Johnny did not identify a definition for crisis during his interview as this question was not specifically asked; however, he did indicate that crisis occurs approximately 30% of the school day. He also noted that this number can fluctuate depending on the day and is not static.

Waylon. When asked to identify his experience with effective leadership in special purpose private schools Waylon started by talking about *approachability*. He said

approachability is the first word that pops into my head, somebody who I can go and talk to…I can blow off steam to. They have to be able to separate what I'm feeling from what I'm saying so that if I've had a rough day, I could sit down and blow off steam and they'd be like [understanding].

He also talked extensively about the importance of a leader in this setting being *available* due to the high-level crisis scenarios. Waylon stated having a leader

. . . physically being there is helpful. There have been also times where leaders in the building have opted for deflection [referring to the use of physical restraint]…so when we started seeing that pattern emerge we could call a leader and a leader would come up

and not take the target, but take the student because they were a preferred staff member.

So it was, I'm a leader and I can take a little bit of time to take you, give the ed techs a

break, give us a chance to recharge and refresh, and it's what's best for the client at the

time too, brings the client back down to baseline so they can make repair work.

Specific to crisis and changes in effective leadership skills, Waylon continued to talk

about the heightened importance of *approachability*. He reflected, in a similar fashion, talking

about having approachability, after a restraint or after a crisis "I'm much more concerned about

approachability [as a follower] than I might be about the other ones [referring to other leadership

skills], so I feel like that shifts the priority." He furthered this thought by saying

> It [*having leaders be present*] keeps us from burning out, honestly, that's the big one. It
>
> also helps us feel like we're being *supported* and if we need to ask for help, we can. I
>
> know that sometimes people take on the superhero concept in this job, and I can do it
>
> myself and say I don't need any help, but if I know for a fact that my supervisor is
>
> waiting just around the corner and any minute I can say, I need a switch, they'll either pop
>
> in themselves or they'll point to somebody and send them in to have them switch with
>
> me. It gives me that piece of mind that I can take a break if I need it.

Rosanne. When asked what characteristics and behaviors were most important for a

leader in special purpose private school settings, Rosanne said that *compassion, balance in*

responsibilities, and *effective role modeling* are priorities for her. In the area of compassion, she

noted compassion is needed from leadership for the students and the staff. Specifically, she

stated "I feel like in this profession you do get a lot of people on different areas of the

continuum." She noted that she felt "in terms of experience and being able to understand the

staff's anxieties and where they're coming from and be able to help them kind of build their skills to be able to support their kids better" compassion was important.

In the area of balancing responsibilities, Rosanne stated

I feel like the leadership has a lot of responsibilities…that are very technical and being able to balance that with the fact that the support that you need to have for your work family is…a really big job to have to try to balance.

In the area of role modeling, Rosanne talked about the importance of modeling good *emotional regulation skills* for staff as a leader and demonstrating these skills with the students and staff. She stated,

I think definitely role modeling for what they [leaders] expect of the other people. I know that using that ability to communicate in our setting has been big deal with the direct communication [and] I think that in leadership role you have to be able to model what that looks like because if you expect your staff to be able to do these things, you have to be able to do these things."

Rosanne also noted *honesty* as an important characteristic for leaders to show support to followers in this setting because

as an administrator you have to be able to be real with the people that you are working with and if there is something that's going on that needs to have some honesty involved in it I feel like without embarrassing the person [you have to be able] to pull them aside…because I feel like this is such a high anxiety field that we lose a lot of really good people because they don't feel supported.

She also noted the importance of *not feeling alone* and *being connected* as part of a larger team as significant factors for leadership teams to consider. She stated that it is essential "to

keep your staff feeling like they can be happy and come in every day without bribing, without the big stuff, the surface stuff, if you feel supported you're going to do a lot more for your community then."

Lastly, she noted the importance of *effective communication* from her leader being pivotal to feeling supported. She talked about the need for *timely feedback* around if she is reaching out to her supervisor because she needs to feel "comfortable to ask for help." When asked if special purpose private schools were complex, Rosanne confirmed. She indicated,

I understand that my job as a teacher is not only academic. My role as a teacher [in this setting includes teaching] social skills, coping skills, support[ing] each other [referring to students] as well as support for themselves [as individuals], regardless, I mean I care about their academics and their educational progress but I also respect that they are not able to pay attention to this at times...I do need to meet them where they're at daily and it's my job to keep them safe and to teach them how to do that themselves. So yes, I'm probably not going to find some of those skills in the Maine Learning Results and Common Core Standards.

When asked about her definition of crisis, she noted "crisis…looks like throwing things...it looks like getting angry and stomping feet…hitting people…it can be physical safety but also emotional safety." She felt this occurred 30% of the time during the school day based on her perceptions.

Amy. Amy highlighted the importance of *trust* when working with her educational leader because "working in this kind of environment takes a lot of trust to know that somebody is going to have your back in crisis situations". She also indicated the need to feel *respected* by her leader. Amy notes "just knowing that somebody is going to appreciate what you're doing for

them" is important. She also indicated that it is "important for leaders to be able to respect the lower people [referring to followers] as much as it is for the lower people to be able to respect the leaders. It should go both ways. Otherwise, there's a power struggle." Amy also discussed the need for coaching and feedback from a leader in order to feel that person was effective for her in their leadership role. She noted she looks to her leader to "give [her] some idea of what I'm supposed to be doing and the effective way to be able to do that…I'm not always sure exactly what my expectation is." For Amy, a leader that possess *knowledge* about the job and school is important as well as she indicated relying heavily on this person to support and guide her within her own role.

When asked about her definition of crisis Amy noted a crisis in this environment is "a situation where the child is so escalated that they don't have control over their emotions or their body anymore". She felt like the school experienced this level of crisis approximately 30 percent of the time.

Sarah. When asked about important characteristics of leaders in special purpose private schools, Sarah talked about the importance of *building relationships* with staff. She notes "I think it's important for them to be personable…get to know their staff and their staff characteristics so they can better work with them." She also indicated the need for leaders to be "reliable…and do what they say they're going to do." Sarah also indicated that it is important for a leader to be *approachable* as this work carries a great deal of stress and followers need an opportunity to process some of that stress with a leader.

In the area of crisis situations, Sarah identified a crisis as

An out of the ordinary behavior.   I don't consider it something that you see every single

day with the same kid, but something that ... for example, if a kid has a restraint every

day at lunch time, crisis for that kid would be if the kid has ten restraints in one day, and

they're just out of control, and nothing in your tool box is working to help them.

In the area of crisis events taking place at the school, Sarah noted that approximately 50 percent

of the school day is spent working during crisis scenarios. She indicated that some days are

higher than others.

When asked about the notion of complexity in special purpose private schools, she

indicated that special purpose private schools are complex because

We have the residential component, and [those are]…two different worlds [referring to

education and residential programs], and you're trying to mash it all together to [make it]

work, and it rarely ever does. Then you have the clinical pieces within the school setting.

You're [also] trying to teach these kids who [require] special education [services] and all

have IEPs, so you're trying to follow the goals, plus, you're trying to do the clinical work,

plus you're trying to do occupational therapy…physical therapy, and speech and language

therapy and all five million, trillion other things… it's complex!

Jack. Jack described the importance of special purpose private school leaders to have

integrity, *a moral compass*, be a *direct communicator*, be someone that staff members can *trust*

and *offer support*. He noted that

people in a position like this [working with this population of students], I think, get

spoken to pretty roughly most of the time throughout the day by the students, so I think it

helps to have a voice that reminds them that they're not what they hear being called all

the time.

From his perspective, the leader can provide this support. Further, he noted the importance of

being *present* in order to offer the support. He stated that a leader in this setting should be

physically present at times. People need an opportunity to obtain feedback from more seasoned

staff during times of student escalation or difficult interactions. Jack noted,

> I think if you're there and you're staying there [during a time of crisis] and you're not just
>
> walking up to them and saying, well you need to take their iPad away and then you walk
>
> away and then they're kind of dealing with that whole thing. I think, like I said…that
>
> doesn't mean just giving them information and walking away. That means being there for
>
> at least a period of time while they're implementing that technique to again make sure
>
> that it's being implemented appropriately and to know if it works or not. Because that's
>
> what's constantly changing, what works with kids, what doesn't work with kids, how we
>
> approach them, and how we speak to them and get them to meet expectations.

Jack identified crisis as "something that we can't deal with. If it's a crisis than something

else needs to come in to intervene." He gave examples such as police intervention or crisis team

evaluations. When asked how often the students experience crisis in the school from his

perspective, he stated at this high level 5% of the time however, at lower levels including

physical aggression, sexualized behavior, minor self-harm, and short elopements this can occur

around 30% of the time.

Jack was asked if he felt special purpose private schools were complex in nature, Jack

indicated

> I do see them as complex [and]…the reason why…is because I don't think there's enough
>
> funding or space for most of these kids, and I also don't think that anyone takes it
>
> seriously how much not changing these kids' behaviors will affect a community in the
>
> long run…people think kids should come in here and get fixed and then be out and done.

Research Questions and Thematic Findings

At the beginning of the study the researcher posed the central question which asked, "How do leaders and followers understand and describe the behaviors, characteristics, and values of those in leadership roles in special purpose private schools?" The goal was to understand the experiences of both leaders and followers within these unique settings experiencing on-going crisis. Based on the results of the survey, individual interviews, and researcher-generated codes and meaning units, common themes were generated to better understand the experience of effective leadership in special purpose private schools working in environments of on-going crisis. These themes included presence, approachability, and availability of leaders, leaders demonstrating a high level of emotional intelligence and self-emotional regulation, leaders helping followers to be heard and valued, and important in the work that they do, and a leader who understands the complexity in responsibilities within these schools.

Being Present, Showing Availability, and Being Approachable

Both leaders and followers described a notion of needing a leadership presence when working in on-going crisis scenarios. Leaders used terms such as *available, being present, plans for contact when not in the school, approachable, responding when called, switching out, offer help, checking-in, walking into classrooms, responding, being visible.* Three out of the four leaders identified the need to ensure that staff feel and understand a physical presence from them as leaders within the school, but also an emotional presence from the leaders. Leaders understand that followers need to be able to reach out to them or understand the plan of who to contact when if a situation arises that is out of their perceived control. In contrast, leaders identified the challenges associated with competing responsibilities around the notion that they would always be available for crisis scenarios, especially given the high amount of crisis

incidents within the schools and wanted to at times challenge followers to develop their own

levels of crisis de-escalation and planning skills. Followers indicated the same level of need in

the area of presence, followers noted terms such as *needing a leader who has their back, keeps a*

pulse on the building, is available, open, will give them an idea of what to do, model for them,

approachable, depend on, help them, reliable, do what they say they are going to do.

Direct quotes from leaders and followers indicated an awareness specific to being present

within the school in order to be an effective leader and included:

- I think also just being present is helpful so that staff know that you're around, that you
  know what's going on, that you're there if they need anything and also when you're not
  physically present, knowing how to be able to reach you if needed or what the plan is if
  you're not around (Follower).

- Being present and available often so that people can touch base with me on a daily basis
  and making sure that people feel like you're around and available if they need you
  (Leader).

- I think that checking in with staff and walking into classrooms at the end of the day is
  important, just talking to people and asking how their day was or if there are things they
  need provide them with a way to feel grounded to you and that you are there to help them
  (Leader).

- I think that you need to be visible, actually going into the classrooms every day, even if it
  is just to say hello, checking in. Stop and talk to people specifically about things that
  they have asked about to follow-up (Leader).

- Be available so that I can ask for help and ask questions when I am unsure (Follower).

- They need to touch base with people, check in, and made sure they are keeping the pulse of the building (Follower).

- Being available, present, and reliable so you get to know your staff and their characteristics so you can better work with them, you obviously can't do the job if you're not here and you're not following through with the issues that come up (Follower).

- I want them to know that I am here for them (staff) and that I want to support them (Leader).

- If there's a kid that's in crisis, sometimes you do need the answer right then. And, particularly in the case of new staff. You can have people that aren't really willing to pull the trigger [specific to intervening when there is a crisis]. They're just not sure enough of themselves (Follower).

- I've noticed my supervisors come out of offices when they haven't been directly working with kids at that moment and say, "Are you okay. Do you need anything?" Or "Do you think you're going to need an extra person for, say a restraint or say a different face?" I've had many times with one of my kids where just my face was not working. So just sometimes a change of person can be helpful and if they know that at this point my other staff members are unable to support me in this moment, they will step in and try to help (Follower).

High Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Self- and Co-Regulation

Both leaders and followers recognized the importance of leaders possessing a high-level of skill related to their ability to maintain their own emotional regulation and simultaneously support others in doing the same during high-stress situations involving crisis. Leaders and followers indicated a need for leaders to be *decisive, take the lead, possess the most emotional*

stability, manage the follower's emotional reaction, show more composure, be more

pronounced, keep their cool, not allow emotions to take over, be stronger, stay calm, not over-

react, and at times know when to call on others who have individualized experience in order to

support the child and team. Leaders recognized the importance of this skill however, they noted

that often followers are unable to engage in this work due to the direct level of interaction and

exposure they have working with clients. On the contrary, followers expected the leaders to have

this ability and often felt that if they were unable to engage in this work with students as well as

followers, they were often unsuccessful in their leadership approach.

Direct quotes from leaders and followers provide examples from their own experience

specific to the importance of demonstrated the importance of emotional intelligence and

emotional regulation of leaders:

- You would want someone who is able to assess the situation quickly, make a decision,

  not overreact, and stay calm (Leader).

- I think I have to be a little stronger, make sure to keep my cool, and not allow my

  emotions to take over in situations that involve crisis (Leader).

- Emotional regulation of one self in this type of leadership position is very important

  because it is natural for our bodies and our systems to get excited when things are

  happening that are not typical, that require a lot of staff coordinator, follow through, and

  specialized training not to react in a counterproductive way (Leader).

- Being able to manage that emotional reaction, my own emotional reaction to that

  situation is important, if not critical because if I am not managing that, then I certainly

  can't be supportive to other people who also need to manage it (Leader).

- Be able to provide level-headed support and call the shots when we have exhausted our toolbox during a crisis event (Follower).

- During a crisis the primary goal is to calm the situation down, for a leader a lot of times that means calming down all the staff that are involved in the crisis, as well, which can be challenging (Leader).

- Because if you expect your staff to be able to do these things [provide emotional support for a student and deescalate emotional dysregulation], you have to be able to do these things (Leader).

Being Heard and Feeling Valued

This theme resonated strongly with followers but also was present during the leadership interviews. The notion of having one's ideas, thoughts, and feelings heard was a strong presence in the perspectives shared. Leaders and followers talked about the need for leaders to be *compassionate, understanding, connect emotionally, have their (follower's) back, listen, provide an opportunity to decompress, be personable, build relationships, hear people out, provide people an opportunity to voice their concerns, appreciate their work, understand the work they are doing is difficult, show trust.* Leaders identified that, in order to be effective, they needed to be able to have strong relationships with their followers. Followers identified that in order to be able to trust their leader, they had to feel that the leader would support them unconditionally even during very difficult times, and concurrently value the challenging work that they are engaging in with students involving high levels of crisis each day. Without these reciprocal interactions, leaders and followers were unable to engage in a solid relationship and would not be fully available for their students. The balance of the relationship between leaders and follower is therefore integral to fully engage in the work at these schools.

- Being approachable helps me to have a relationship with my staff as my staff can feel confortable doing their jobs and wanting to stay in an environment like this (Leader).

- Having respect for me as a staff and trusting me in a way that makes me feel good about the work that I am doing and that they appreciate me and the work I am doing (Follower).

- It is important to meet with people regularly so that you can hear their concerns and how they are feeling. This is a high stress job, so it is important to be able to hear people out and know their concerns and either deal with those concerns or let them know why you can't deal with those concerns right this moment (Leader).

- You can't really function in this line of work as a leader unless you build some kind of relationship with staff and kids (Follower).

- Building a relationship with staff makes it easier to critique their work and offer what you think they can do better, and also highlight what they are really good at (Leader).

- Hear me out and appreciate the fact that I have been doing this for X years and I might know what I am talking about (Follower).

- Show me as a leader that you care about the hard work that I am doing and this job is not easy (Follower).

- There is a time to lead and a time to follow…and being able as a leader to figure out which situation needs which (Leader).

- Finding a balance between being a leader and not a dictator by influencing people positively through good role modeling (Follower).

- I have to trouble-shoot with staff often in order to get a real sense as to why they are struggling but also challenge them to sometimes look at things a different way (Follower)

- I feel like in this profession you do get a lot of people on different areas of the continuum in terms of experience and being able to understand the staff's anxieties and where they're coming from [so as a leader you have to be able to] help them kind of build their skills to be able to support their kids better (Follower).

Understanding the Complexity of Responsibilities

Leaders and followers noted the challenges related to the complex nature of special purpose schools. All but one leader described special purpose private schools as complex and all followers noted this was the case. Overall, they indicated that students were increasingly complex in their presentations, mental health diagnosis, family relationships, academic needs, and intense behavioral problems. These especially created challenges with the relationships between leaders and followers to ensure that students are well served given these students are increasingly difficult to meet the needs of and require specialized leadership and staff. Leaders and followers talked about students having *higher, more intensive needs, a need to balance multiple responsibilities when working with such students, and the intensive behavior that they experience working with these students on an on-going basis.* Leaders possessed a higher level of education, overall years of experience, and focus on understanding the school at a macro-level whereas followers focused more on the day to day challenging interactions with students on an individualized level.

- I think trying to meet all of the education requirements of the IEPs and then just the general education requirements, as well, to put into place all the changes with standards-based learning and all that on top of dealing with the kids behaviors and helping them cope and learn new skills and even being able to be in a school building successfully. It's just a really tough balance. Then staffing sometimes is difficult to have in place (Leader).

- These regulations that come along that can affect our budget, and those kinds of things, I think that makes it complex (Leader).

- Working with the variety of districts can be very complex with some of the things that can be brought up and are hard, or challenges with different regulations (Leader).

- The work is hard, and not just the restraint side of things, the emotional investment we give to our students who are very difficult. So part of managing staff is also managing burnout, which is a huge task and makes everything complex (Follower).

- Definitely complex. I think because they are multiple layers. Most schools, while they might have to deal with minor behaviors, we have a whole slew of behaviors. And there's procedures and protocol on how to handle those behaviors. I think…the kids that come into our school…have so many issues on their plate and so many expectations, everything from family finances to dysfunctional families and alcoholism and all that kind of stuff, but…I feel like a piece of that complexity is the fact that we really don't want to give up on kids (Follower).

- I teach a class of fourth to seventh graders… so trying to adapt work that I can still do direct instruction is very difficult to meet the needs of everyone without one kid's getting overwhelmed or upset because he has no idea what's going on, just because it's too over his head. Or, on the other end, having a student that knows what's happening and is like, "This is too easy. I don't care," and to walk out. So trying to have that balance and make sure that you're meeting the academic needs of each kid, I think, is the hardest part. And also, not even just grade level-wise. They [students] are not able to do that task because of what's going at home, or what's going on with their own mental status. Because I mean, they can be so anxiety-ridden about going home that night that they can't even sit

still in their seat. Kind of just being: How can we provide for them at those times and have them also still get their academics met? That is why they're here, but a lot of the time, they're also learning life skills (Follower).

Summary of Findings

Leaders and followers identified challenges in multiple areas while working in special purpose private schools. Leaders and followers also provided thoughts and ideas around how special purpose private schools are complex in nature and require a unique approach from leadership in response to crisis-ridden environments. The primary themes of focus which emerged from the shared experiences included (a) the need for presence, approachability and availability of leaders, (b) the ability for leaders in this setting to be able to demonstrate a high level of emotional intelligence and self-emotional regulation, (c) the ability for leaders to support followers in order to be heard and feel valued important in the work that they do, and (d) a leader who understands the complexity in responsibilities within special purpose private schools and the strain that this places on leaders, followers, and students in these types of schools. Chapter five will provide a discussion of the results, conclusions, and recommendations for subsequent research.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through the review of relevant literature, detailed analysis of the survey and semi-structured interviews, and a holistic overview of the interactions and perceptions experienced by leaders and followers, this chapter presents a discussion of findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future study. The qualitative phenomenological study explored the phenomenon of perceived effective leadership in special purpose private schools during on-going crisis through the method of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and generated four major themes including (a) presence, approachability, and availability of leaders, (b) the ability for leaders to demonstrate a high level of emotional intelligence when working with followers specifically in the area of emotional regulation, (c) leaders assisting followers in order to be heard and feel valued, and lastly (d) a leader who understands the complexity of responsibilities, competing interests and needs within special purpose private schools. Previous research focused heavily on effective leadership in traditional schools (Donaldson & Marnik, 2012; Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013; Horng et al., 2010; Parkes & Thomas, 2007), the amount of time leaders engaged in certain activities during their school day (Horng et al, 2010), or effective strategies for how to lead during high-intensity one-time crisis school events (Smith & Riley, 2007). Throughout the exploration of the environment, shared experiences of leaders and followers, and a more detailed understanding of on-going crisis events through the complexity lens of special purpose private schools (Baltaci & Balci, 2017; Cilliers, 2000; & Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009) further focus on the experiences of perceived effective leadership would provide opportunities to better understand effectiveness of leaders in these settings and if differences in effective leadership exist when working in school environments experiencing on-going crisis.

Interpretations

The interpretations of findings are connected to the research question which asks: how do leaders and followers understand and describe the behaviors, characteristics, and values of those in leadership roles at special purpose private schools? More specifically, how do the leaders and followers perceive effective ways to lead when working in an on-going, crisis-ridden environment? The findings suggest that followers and leaders were able to identify multiple behaviors, characteristics, and values of leaders that they perceived to be important when leading through long-term crisis. The modes for perceiving effective leadership were strikingly similar across leaders and followers with the exception that followers tended to focus on more micro-level needs at the classroom and individual student level or follower needs while the leaders' focus was more global in attempting to meet the needs of multiple stakeholders (followers, students, parents, Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Services).

The primary themes identified and presented throughout chapter four indicated that an environment that included on-going crises provided an element that may make leadership in special purpose private schools settings somewhat unique. This most likely could be due to the complexity of the environment; students served and focus on not only educational needs but mental health needs as well. Not surprisingly, the data suggested a heavy emphasis for both leaders and followers on the intensity and complexity of the work being done with challenging students and the heightened level of complexity that both leaders and followers worked within. Leaders and followers expressed significant concerns around being able to meet multiple and at times, competing needs and interests; followers often looked to leaders to be able to problem solve sometimes immediate solutions to crisis level events with significant frequency.

Due to the layers of complexity, followers also expressed a need for leaders to be available to them frequently and often during times of crisis. They expressed a need to feel like the leader had a good pulse of the building and could physically respond to most crisis events. This notion posed challenges when a leader simultaneously attempted to meet the various needs of the organization as often there was an unrealistic expectation around their ability to be involved and make decisions specific to crisis events happening at such a high frequency. Leaders expressed a desire to be available and present, however, noted the challenges around meeting multiple demands of the organization and outside stakeholders often feeling pulled in multiple directions.

Followers also expressed a sincere desire to feel valued and supported by their leader. They expressed a need to feel like the work that they were doing was meaningful and that their leader supported the challenging work and stressful events that they were engaged in. This related to crisis events as well as complexity of the environments. They noted that, due to the difficult and at times chaotic environments, the need to feel supported and the feeling that their leader cared and understood the challenging situations that they were often engaged in, played a significant role in their beliefs about leadership. Related to this finding, the notion of a leader with high emotional intelligence, specifically in the area of emotional regulation, was identified as important by both leaders and followers likely due to the stressful events coupled with crisis scenarios. Followers indicated that they often used leaders for their own emotional regulation as their energy is focused on supporting children with very little ability to regulate their own emotions or make meaningful connections with people. The findings suggested that the leader's ability to provide emotional stability was a key element to their perceived effectiveness.

Implications

Themes presented within this section provide an opportunity to better understand the lived experience of those leaders and followers working in special purpose private schools during times of on-going and constant crisis. The themes also provide an opportunity to identify perceived important leadership values and characteristics during times of crisis in specialized schools as they connect to the pre-existing related literature and subsequent research.

Complexity and Crisis

Throughout the findings leaders and followers both noted a need for understanding the notion of complexity as it related to crisis that occurred in special purpose private schools. This theme permeated other identified themes from leaders and followers. Leaders identified the challenges of working with students from various districts and communities and functioning within a mental health and educational system. Followers also identified the challenges of responding to many needs students had. Interestingly, followers also noted the heightened concern that they had in wanting their students to make academic progress. This notion of complexity is of particular importance in that it affected leaders and followers but more broadly impacted their ability to feel satisfied in their work. The complexity leadership model supported these concepts and also emphasized the need for leaders to provide a flexible leadership approach. The theory draws on the strengths of both leaders and followers (Baltaci & Balci, 2017), thus creating a shared leadership approach and possible ways for leaders and followers to support one another and take ownership in decision making processes; decisions are required in the context of crisis events and decision making at the schools. In addition, crisis leadership theory asserts that during times of crisis, leadership must be thoughtful, innovative, and provide a clear direction for next steps (Smith & Riley, 2012). The study data indicated a need for

leaders to provide a clear sense of direction as related to crisis events and for leaders to support their followers during crisis scenarios by making decisions in a timely and competent fashion.

Availability, Presence, and Approachability

The findings suggested a strong perception by followers that leaders needed to be *available, present*, and *approachable*. In these settings, the availability for guidance, modeling, and general support related to crisis intervention was highlighted by followers, but these notions require exploration beyond the literal interpretation. Leaders also felt that *availability, approachability,* and *presence* for their followers was important; however, they also experienced and expressed difficulty with being responsible for many competing priorities outside of crisis responses including special educational regulations, curriculum development, agency-wide initiatives, and compliance-related needs. This value was at times noted as a significant challenge in the relationship between the follower and leader and could include times when followers expressed not feeling supported by their leadership. Previous research specific to principals' time confirmed that a significant amount of time was spent engaging in administrative tasks to keep the school running smoothly (Horng et al., 2010) and accounted for almost 30% of the principal's day. Previous research also noted a lack of time spent in the area of coaching teachers (Grissom et al., 2013). Being available to provide modeling, coaching, and general support during crisis management was identified as important by followers specific to perceived effective leaderships strategies and has been seen as insufficient in previous studies related to dedicated time of leaders. Such inconsistencies could lead to challenges with the concept of congruence across staff members within the school meaning that followers could feel that their leader was unavailable or not supportive of their needs.

Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Regulation

An additional theme was identified and explored the need to provide opportunities for leaders and followers to build high and complex emotional regulation skills, emotional intelligence skills, and competence. Interviews identified the challenges with the high turn-over rates and followers in general having a relatively smaller amount of experience to fall back on. The survey indicated that followers had an average of 2.5 years working within the follower role in these settings compared to leaders having an average of 13 years working within the leadership role. This significant discrepancy of experience highlights the need for support especially during times of crisis management, given a genuine feeling of lack of safety and heightened emotional responses. Findings align with results of the survey, interviews and previous research related to stress and emotional intelligence research (Mackinnion et al., 2013). Mackinnon et al. (2013) completed research in the area of crisis management and leadership in the United Kingdom. Specific to crisis leadership they indicated "when a crisis occurs, the resources to control and manage all the services and functions necessary to enable an effective response have to be released, coordinated and targeted, within the shortest possible time, to minimize the impact of that crisis" (p. 67). In the situation of the school setting, followers are looking at leadership to make specific decisions related to crisis, however these are events that are on-going and happening between 20%-80% of the school day based on the interviews completed when leaders and followers were asked about the amount of time the school experiences crisis scenarios. Realistically, a leader is not able to respond to these scenarios and directly support followers during each of these incidents due to the amount of time in the school day that crisis occurs as indicated in the data as reported by followers and leaders.

Feeling Valued and Supported

An additional theme explored the followers need to feel valued and supported. Followers identified that the work that they are engaging in is difficult and fosters a *high burn-out rate* due to the significant stress and anxiety that can result from engaging in crisis scenarios. They indicated a need to *feel connected* with their leader and feel that the leader will *support* them during times of crisis or events that are unsafe. Research in the area of stress suggests that individuals under stress and anxiety often fail to adopt rational-choice models (Mackinnon, Bacon, Cortellessa, & Cesta, 2013). In other words, they do not always base their decisions on the "utilities and probabilities associated with all available courses of actions. Rather, they devote insufficient time to the consideration of available alternatives; make decisions before considering all potential information; consider alternatives in a disorganized manner" (Mackinnon et al., 2013, p. 11) and "the level of emotional intelligence exhibited by the leader [or person] in this situation will determine how realistic their response is to the anxiety they are feeling (Spielberger, 2010, p. 11). This may be specifically true for followers and leaders in special purpose private schools as when crisis occurs, the level of stress associated by leaders and followers will be heightened and occur often.

Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Regulation

Bar-On (1997) defined emotional intelligence as "an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures" (p. 16). In special purpose private schools, data from the semi-structured leader and follower interviews indicated that it is important for leaders to possess an ability to develop strong emotional intelligence specifically in the area of emotional regulation. This skill allows for management of the initial crisis responses which was identified as important

throughout the data from leaders and followers as well as through the crisis leadership literature (Smith & Riley, 2012), but would also provide followers with feelings of support and offer opportunities for the leader to show that they valued the work the followers were engaged in. (Bar-On, 1997; Mackinnon et al., 2013; Speilberger, 2010). In order to potentially curb the feelings of stress and anxiety, leaders and followers need to see crisis as an opportunity for learning that they have the skills to work in rather than a stressful event that is out of their control. A leader with high emotional intelligence will be able to provide followers with an ability to take the time to respond to a situation before reacting which is an important component of emotional intelligence. The results of the data for followers and leaders indicated a need for followers to feel like their leader could support them with emotional regulation during crisis situations, and specifically provide a high-level model to be the most decisive and emotionally stable even when they could not demonstrate this skill.

Leaders also identified the importance of *building relationships* with their staff that can help them have more difficult conversations with staff members, especially during highly escalated situations. Both leaders and followers indicated that the risks of working with the identified student population are high and the reward is often low. Building of relationships provides an opportunity for followers to connect with leaders, even when it is difficult to connect with students and is an element of emotional intelligence (Petrides, 2011).

Recommendation for Action

The phenomenological study allowed for the understanding of perspectives of leaders and followers from two schools and two agencies in one state. The results and implications provided an opportunity to reflect on action steps which assisted in identifying ways that leadership in these schools can better support their staff and students.

Complexity

Leaders and followers both identified the challenges specific to complexity of the environment and students while working in special purpose private schools specifically when responding to on-going situations involving crisis. Given this notion of complexity, finding a way to identify informal leaders within smaller teams would be beneficial to increase feelings of support and competence versus feeling overwhelmed and lacking support from one person. Complexity leadership theory provides a framework for identifying others within the organization who can act in a way that promotes opportunities for leaders and followers with an organization to be part of the solution and to be "effective actors in that process rather than thinking that they are events that transform the organization" (Marion & Gonzales, 2014, p. 250). Further, identifying informal leaders that have influence and clout within the smaller direct care groups and are able to be physically present throughout the school day can provide consistency, structure, and support, during complex situations and times of need, even when a leader was not available.

Availability, Approachability, and Presence

A second recommendation as a result of the findings includes articulating ways for leaders to show followers that they are *available, approachable* and *presence*. These may include strategies to increase awareness of schedules, visual supports identifying availability, and identifying effective ways to communicate emergencies and needs. Further, the follower must be able to understand and accept that the leader will not always be available to diffuse a potentially crisis-ridden situation, so the need to develop the skills of followers in managing crisis and decision making during difficult scenarios is also paramount. This could take the form of specific trainings around crisis management, role plays, and identifying informal veteran staff

members in the milieu to take on a pseudo-leader or primary role during times the leader is not directly available. Throughout the research, leaders and followers both identified a need for support during crisis management and although at times that would need to be a leader, building competencies of staff and identifying informal leadership who can respond to crisis will potentially increase the ability for staff members to feel supported in their work.

Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Regulation

Additionally, based on research in the area of emotional intelligence (Bar-on, 1997; Ingram & Cangemi, 2012; Mackinnon et al., 2013; Speilberger, 2010), it is theorized that increased emotional intelligence specifically in the area of emotional regulation can support leaders and followers before, during, and after a crisis (Ingram & Cangemi, 2012). Finding opportunities to identify emotional intelligence, especially in leaders, as well as assist them to understand the importance of skills associated with emotional regulation would increase the ability for leaders and followers to make rational-choice decisions (Mackinnon et al., 2013) and therefore increase their likelihood of defusing a potentially violent crisis versus reacting to it and potentially increasing the likelihood of violence or injury. This has significant implications for safety both emotionally and physically within special purpose private schools for leaders, followers, and students.

Feeling Valued and Supported

An additional area of action may be quantifying and operationalizing ways to help followers and leaders feel *valued* and *supported*. Many followers identified a need to feel *valued* and *connected* to their leader given the difficulty and complexity of the work. Followers felt like this was a necessary component in order to feel good about the work that they engaged in and what kept them in their roles at the school. It is also likely that the connection and relationship

building with staff members may be more important in these environments as many of the

student relationships are short-term and layered with many reactive, and at times violent,

responses. It is human nature to want to connect with people, and it is likely that staff in these

settings, both leaders and followers, need deeper connections with one another as they lack of

opportunity for staff connections while having more lengthy connections with students.

Additionally, many leaders and followers highlighted the need for supervision in order to

feel supported and valued during times of crisis. Although identified as a need within the

interviews from followers, there was a general lack of detail noted around how often to engage in

supervision and the content that would benefit followers (i.e. special education teachers and

educational technicians) in this area. It is recommended that supervision be further explored to

identify the components of its value meaning that leaders and followers identify what

supervision should look like and what makes this oversight and collaboration helpful and

supportive. This should be explored through reflective practice with the supervisee and also

include the complex concepts required in order to feel competent and successful in these settings.

Suggested topics for educators might include effective communication (i.e. peers, parents,

students, and leaders); time-management; development and assessment of crisis intervention and

de-escalation skills; special education teaching topics (i.e. assessment, differentiation,

curriculum, classroom management); and oversight and support of educational technicians. This

would also provide an opportunity for followers to be clear about their level of focus but also

provide a gauge for the leader to be able to understand strengths and build on skill areas of need.

Recommendations for Further Study

One area in particular for recommendations specific to further areas of study is the notion

of *complexity* for leaders and followers working within these settings. It will be important for

on-going, continued research to identify a working conceptual framework that would allow for the ability to quantify the skills needed to be successful when working with these populations and provide specific supervision from a leader and for a leader around how to systematically develop those skills.

The second area for further study involves the followers' concept of feeling *supported* and *valued.* Further exploration is needed to better understand and conceptualize how leaders and followers can engage with one another in a way that assists each in feeling valued and supported. It was emphasized specifically by leaders and followers that the relationship between the two parties must be of quality and importance. More specifically, followers wanted to feel valued for the difficult work that they are doing, especially considering the high level of stress they experience. Operationalizing content areas for leaders and followers should be further explored and identified.

A third area to explore is the need to expand the research to other specialized schools in order to compare the experience of leaders and followers, as well as the needs they have. The two agencies compared were from the same state, but also have similar populations and organizational structures. It would be beneficial to expand the research to other agencies within the state, as well as outside the state. Further, other followers outside the educational technician and special education teacher are included in these specialized schools. For example, speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, and clinical social workers are intricate parts of the team. Further exploration around these followers' needs and interactions with the leader would provide a richer understanding of the follower experience.

Conclusion

This research provided an opportunity to better understand a sub-set of the special education setting that primarily works with students in crisis over extended periods of time. As a result, both leaders and followers highlighted the role crisis plays and the way that it permeates their environments and relationships with one another. Although the population sampled was small, it provided experiences and input from both leaders and followers and identified particular areas of increased importance specific to a leader being successful in the leaderships view, but also the followers' view. Most areas identified included leaders and followers' agreement on areas of need, however, the leaders tended to have a bigger picture outlook on the areas of need which suggests that followers may not perceive the implications of competing responsibilities outside of their immediate roles at the schools. Further areas of study include expanding to other schools outside of Maine with similar populations, other follower roles, and conceptualizing the notion of supervision of staff in order to operationalize support for leaders and followers.

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Appendix A

Study Invitation (Leader)

February 2018

Dear Potential Study Participant:

As a doctoral student completing her dissertation study through the University of New England, I am inviting you to participate in a survey and interview ***to share your experiences working as an educational leader in a special purpose private school.*** As an education director or assistant/associate director, you have significant experience and knowledge working as a leader in these specialized school settings. This study focuses primarily on your perceptions and experiences in your current role. By completing this interview, you are providing a valuable contribution to better understand what makes leaders within these specialized settings effective in their roles and how they may be able to better support staff and students within these schools. If you agree to participate, you will be asked complete a short survey after providing informed consent and then be invited to participant in a follow-up interview.

Research Questions:
1) How do leaders and followers understand and describe the behaviors, characteristics, and values of those serving in leadership roles in special purpose private schools?

2) What characteristics are perceived as effective when leading others during situations of long-term constant crisis based on perceptions of leaders and non-leaders within the same school?

Study's Purpose: The purpose of this qualitative study is to identify perceptions and experiences of leaders and followers within a special purpose private school during crisis events to better understand demonstrated behaviors, values, and characteristics of those identified leaders.

Procedures: Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. The study includes a survey and follow-up interview. The study will run from February 2018 through July 2018, with results/findings published by July 2018. Upon your request, I can send you a copy of your individual completed survey and interview notes, as well as a copy of the completed dissertation. I do not foresee this study presenting any risks or hardship on you, other than the time you will invest in completing the survey and interview which would last up to two and a half hours.

Confidentiality: Your identity will be protected throughout the study and thereafter. Only I, the researcher, will have access to your information. Follow-up verbal/signed and written reports and discussions will identify you by the pseudonym that you select or that I provide to you if you choose not to identify your own. Your name will not be shared with anyone else. Your agency has given permission for their information to be shared and will be identified within the research;

however; individual responses will not be connected to specific schools or agencies. Your confidentiality will be protected in compliance with the University of New England's research with human participants' policies and procedures.

Compensation: No monetary or non-monetary compensation will be provided for your input or time.

Questions: If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and your participation, you may contact the researcher, via e-mail at rmathieusher@une.edu or via by at 207-858-3209. You also may contact Dr. Marylin Newell at the University of New England at mnewell@une.edu or by phone at 207-345-3100.

If you choose to participate, please review, sign, and return the attached consent form no later than (date).

Thank you for your willingness and time to participate and provide information for this research study.

Sincerely,

Reva Mathieu-Sher, Doctoral Student
University of New England's Transformative Leadership Program

Appendix B

Study Invitation (Follower)

February 2018

Dear Potential Study Participant:

As a doctoral student completing her dissertation study through the University of New England, I am inviting you to participate in a survey and interview *to share your experiences working with educational leaders in a special purpose private school.* As a special education teacher or educational technician, you have significant experience and knowledge working with leaders in these specialized school settings. This study focuses primarily on your perceptions and experiences in your current role in collaboration with your school's educational leaders. By completing this survey and interview, you are providing a valuable contribution to better understand what makes leaders in these specialized settings effective with their roles and how they may be able to better support staff and students within their schools. A leader has also agreed to participate at your site and will provide similar information from their role and perspective.

Research Questions:
1) How do leaders and followers understand and describe the behaviors, characteristics, and values of those in leadership roles in special purpose private schools?

2) What characteristics are perceived as effective when leading others during situations of long-term constant crisis based on perceptions of leaders and non-leaders within the same school?

Study's Purpose: The purpose of this qualitative study is to identify perceptions and experiences of leaders and followers within a special purpose private school during crisis events to better understand demonstrated behaviors, values, and characteristics of those identified leaders.

Procedures: Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. The study includes a survey and follow-up interview. The study will run from February 2018 through July 2018, with results/findings published by July 2018. Upon your request, I can send you a copy of your individual completed survey and interview notes, as well as a copy of the completed dissertation. I do not foresee this study presenting any risks or hardship on you, other than the time you will invest in completing the survey and interview which should be no more than two and a half hours.

Confidentiality: Your identity will be protected throughout the study and thereafter. Only I, the researcher, will have access to your information. Follow-up verbal/signed and written reports and discussions will identify you by the pseudonym that you select or that I provide to you if you choose not to identify your own. Your name will not be shared with anyone else. Your agency has given permission for their information to be identified within the research however;

individual responses will not be connected to specific schools or agencies. Your confidentiality will be protected in compliance with the University of New England's research with human participants' policies and procedures.

Compensation: No monetary or non-monetary compensation will be provided for your input or time.

Questions: If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and your participation, you may contact the researcher, via e-mail at rmathieusher@une.edu or via by at 207-858-3209. You also may contact Dr. Marylin Newell at the University of New England at mnewell@une.edu or by phone at 207-345-3100.

If you choose to participate, please review, sign, and return the attached consent form no later than (date).

Thank you for your willingness and time to participate and provide information for this research study.

Sincerely,

Reva Mathieu-Sher, Doctoral Student
University of New England's Transformative Leadership Program

Appendix C

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND
CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

Project Title: Through Their Eyes: A Phenomenological Analysis of Leadership in Special Purpose Private Schools

Principal Investigator:
Reva Mathieu-Sher, Doctoral Student
University of New England
(207) 858 3209
rmathieusher@une.edu

Introduction:
- Please read this form, you may also request that the form is read to you. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information about this research study, and if you choose to participate, document your decision.

- You are encouraged to ask any questions that you may have about this study, now, during, or after the project is complete. You can take as much time as you need to decide whether or not you want to participate. Your participation is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?
- The purpose of this study is to better understand leadership behaviors, characteristics and values in special purpose private schools through your perceptions while working in these settings.

Who will be in this study?
- Participants in this study will be leaders and followers currently working in special purpose private schools.

- Leaders and followers will be selected from two agencies (i.e. Sweetser and Spurwink) and four schools.

- A total of four leaders and eight followers will be included from each of the four school sites identified.

- Leaders will be selected based on their position within the school through an email (i.e. identified educational or assistant/associate educational director). Followers will be recruited through an email and will be selected at random if more than two participants are interested per site. Followers are required to have

been employed in their role for a minimum of six months to participate. Up to two back-up participant followers will be selected in the event that the primarily identified follower cannot or chooses not to continue at any point during the study if available.

- Participants must be at least 18 years of age to participate.

What will I be asked to do?

- Participants will be asked to complete a brief survey upon providing consent to participate in the study. The consent form will be emailed to you. After receiving the consent form back and signed a survey will be emailed to you. The survey will include information asking about roles held in the school, numbers of years in the position, and basic perceptions specific to effective leadership characteristics in special purpose private schools. This survey should take no more than 45 minutes to complete.

- After completion of the survey, participants will be asked to complete an interview with the researcher. The interviewer will use the results of the survey to focus the interview. You will receive an email to schedule the interview after the survey is returned to the researcher. This interview will last no more than 60 minutes and will be recorded. Questions will focus on leadership perceptions in special purpose private schools and may include follow-up questions from the initial survey provided.

  o The researcher will conduct each interview.

  o The surveys will be completed on a word document and results will be tabulated manually.

  o The interviews will be recorded and professionally transcribed.

- Participants will be asked to review their transcript for accuracy.

- The total expected duration of participation in this research study is two and a half hours including transcript review.

- No reimbursement will be provided for participation on this research study.

What are the possible risks of taking part in this study?

- There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?
- While there are no direct benefits to you, as an employee in special purpose private school, the results of this research *may* inform current and future leaders in effective characteristics, values, and behaviors in similar settings.

What will it cost me?
- There are no costs to you as a participant in this study.

How will my privacy be protected and how will my data be kept confidenal?
- The organizations and schools participating in this research will be identified in the study. For example, the research will identify the agencies being included (Sweetser and Spurwink) as well as the individual schools included. However, individual responses will be de-identified and will not be connected to individual agencies or schools.

- Interviews will be transcribed by a professional transcription service. After transcription, interview recordings will be destroyed within one year of the studies completion.

- All records of this research will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the home of the researcher or on an encrypted, password protected computer.

- A copy of the signed consent forms will be kept in a locked file by the researcher up to three years after the project is complete and then destroyed.

- All individually identifiable data will be destroyed one year after the study is complete.

- Participants may request copies of the study's findings.

- Interviews will occur in the researchers home office with no other participants.

- Participants will receive a pseudonym and any results will be reported and analyzed under that pseudonym.

- Results of the project will be shared. Examples may include presentation of results at state or national conferences, submission or publication in a journal article, and/or report to a third party agency.

- Possible follow-up studies may be conducted based on the results.

What are my rights as a research participant?
- Your participation is voluntary. Your decision to participate will have no impact on your current or future relations with the University of New England or your employment through Sweetser or Spurwink.

- You may skip or refuse to answer any question for any reason during the survey or interview.

- If you choose not to participate there is no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive. You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason. If you choose to withdraw from the research there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.

What other options do I have?
- You may choose not to participate.

- You may withdraw from the study at any time.

Whom may I contact with questions?
- The principal researcher conducting this study is Reva L. Mathieu-Sher, Doctoral Student. For questions or more information concerning this research you may contact her at (207) 858 3209 or rmathieusher@une.edu.

- The faculty advisor for this study is Marylin Newell, Ph.D. She may be contacted at (207) 345 3100 or mnewell@une.edu.

- If you choose to participate in this research study and believe you may have suffered a research related injury, please contact Marylin Newell, Ph.D. She may be contacted at (207) 345 3100 or mnewell@une.edu.

- If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call Olgun Guvench, M.D. Ph.D., Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board at (207) 221-4171 or irb@une.edu.

Will I receive a copy of this consent form?
- You will be given a copy of this consent form.

_____

<u>Participant's Statement</u>

I understand the above description of this research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I agree to take part in the research and do so voluntarily.

_____   _____
Participant's signature or   Date
Legally authorized representative

_____
Printed name

<u>Researcher's Statement</u>

The participant named above had sufficient time to consider the information, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.

_____   _____
Researcher's signature   Date

_____
Printed name

Appendix D
Survey

Perceptions of Leaders in Special Purpose Private Schools

Name _____

1) What is your current role in the school? (Please circle or highlight one)

      a. Educational Technician

      b. Special Education Teacher

      c. Assistant/Associate Education Director

      d. Education Director

      e. Other (please specify)_____

2) What other roles within this school or educational setting have you held? (Please circle or highlight all that apply)

      a. Educational Technician

      b. Special Education Teacher

      c. Assistant/Associate Education Director

      d. Education Director

      e. Other (please specify)_____

3) What is your current level of education? (Please circle one)

      a. High School Diploma

      b. Bachelor's Degree

      c. Masters Degree

      d. Doctoral

      e. Other (please specify)_____

4) How many years have you been serving as a director, teacher, or educational technician? (Please circle all that apply and list years for each role)

    a. High School Diploma (Number of years_____)

    b. Bachelor's Degree (Number of years_____)

    c. Masters Degree (Number of years_____)

    d. Doctoral (Number of years_____)

    e. Other (please specify)_____ (Number of years_____)

5) What is your gender? Please circle one

    a. Male

    b. Female

6) What is your age? Please circle one

    a. 18-23

    b. 24-28

    c. 29-33

    d. 34-38

    e. 39-43

    f. 44-48

    g. 49-53

    h. 54-58

    i. 59-64

    j. 65-69

7) In the area of **relationships**, please circle or highlight the <u>top two</u> values/attributes you believe to be the most important for the educational leader in your setting or for you as the leader:

    a. Compassionate

    b. Pleasant

    c. Collegial

    d. Willing to listen

    e. Approachable

    f. Polite

    g. Cooperative

    h. Helpful

    i. Providing companionship

8) In the area of **operational style**, please circle or highlight the <u>top two</u> values/attributes you believe to be the most important for the educational leader in your setting or for you as the leader:

    a. Competent

    b. Knowledgeable

    c. Effective

    d. Efficient

    e. Dependable

    f. Accountable

    g. Decisive

    h. Reliable

    i. Having high expectations for self

    j. Having high expectations for others

    k. Possessing wisdom

9) In the area of **personal qualities**, please circle or highlight the <u>top two</u> values/attributes you believe to be the most important for the educational leader in your setting or for you as the leader:

      a. Ethical

      b. Open

      c. Honest

      d. Sincere

      e. Courageous

      f. Possessing integrity

10) Please briefly describe the top five most challenging crisis incidents that you have been involved in while working at the school. Please do not include names, locations, or identifying information. For example, you may say something like "I was working with one student and one staff. The student eloped from the program for four hours. The police were called and the student was found at a convenience store five miles away."

Incident One:

Incident Two:

Incident Three:

Incident Four:

Incident Five:

Appendix E
Interview Protocol

Start recorder at beginning of interview. Remind participant that interview will be recorded before starting as previously outlined in informed consent.

1) **Introduction:**

Researcher will introduce self to participant and thank him/her for participating

Researcher will then provide reason for the study, duration of time to complete the study, and overall topics that will be discussed during the semi-structured interview.

Researcher will also ask the participant to identify a pseudonym or select from the pre-made list.

Researcher will confirm that participant agrees to being recorded and consents to voluntary participation and has submitted a signed consent form.

The focus of this study is to understand the experiences of leaders and followers within special purpose private schools specifically around effective leadership during crisis scenarios that occur in this school environment. This interview will take no longer than one hour. As you know, I will be recording the study. You can ask questions at any time during the interview and you may choose not to answer a question that I have asked. Before starting, I will ask that you choose a pseudonym for reference throughout the study. If you are not sure, I have a pre-made list of names you can choose from.

Do you have any questions?

Thank you, we will begin with the interview questions now.

3a. Semi-Structured Questions

As you answer these questions, think about your current educational leader within your school, yourself as the leader, or other leaders that you know within the same position as you.

1) What traits or characteristics do you feel a person in an educational leadership position in a special purpose private school should possess?

Probes: How do these characteristics help you do your job as a ___? What in particular makes these traits or characteristics helpful? How do you determine or decide that they are helpful?

2) What behaviors do you feel a person who is successful in an educational leadership position within this setting must demonstrate?

Probes: How do these behaviors help you do your job as a ____?, What in particular makes these behaviors helpful? How do you determine or decide that they are helpful? When do you see these behaviors occurring? Do they happen all the time, some of the time, rarely? Why do you think that occur at the rate they do?

3) In your survey you selected the following values/attributes (remind them what they selected in their survey) as important for an educational leader to have. Please explain why these are important and effective within this school setting working with this population.

Probe: Can you give an example? Is there anything additional that you would like to add?

Follower: As an Ed Tech/Teacher what makes these traits or characteristics helpful? How do you determine or decide that this is helpful?

Leader: As a leader, how do these help you do your job? What in particular makes these traits or characteristics helpful? How do you determine or decide that they are helpful?

[Provide list of categories to see visually given longer listed items]

Probes: Provide examples, could be positive or negative

4) When the school or a student is experiencing or responding to a crisis, do you think the qualities of that leader change, why or why not?

    Probes: What does the crisis look like? Do all crises feel the same? How does the educational leader support you as a staff member during and after a crisis?

5) Follower: When you are working with a student in crisis, what does the educational leader do to support you? What do you feel like they should be doing?
    Leader: If you are the leader, what do you do to support the staff when they are working with a student in crisis?

    Probes: What might they do that does not support you? What do you as a leader feel you should do that you might not be doing?

6) Follower: What tools or supports does your educational leader provide you that are helpful in your work with students experiencing crisis?

Leader: What tools or supports do you as the leader provide to teachers or ed techs that may be helpful for students experiencing crisis?

7) Follower: What could your educational leader do that would make you feel supported in the work that you do?

Leader: As a leader, what do you do or what could you do more of to help teachers and ed techs feel supported in the work they do?

8) Do you see special purpose private schools as complex?

Prompts? What makes them complex?

3b. Scenarios:

Follower:
Think back to a situation or scenario where an educational leader demonstrated helpful or supportive interactions when working with you supporting student in crisis.

Probes: What did they do that was helpful? Why was this helpful?

Think back to a situation or scenario where an educational leader responded to a crisis scenario with a student that was not helpful or supportive.

Probes: What did they do that was not helpful? Why was this not helpful?

Leader:
Think back to a situation or scenario where you responded to a student in crisis in a beneficial/productive way.

Probes: What about your response or support was helpful?

Think back to a situation or scenario where you responded to a student in crisis as a leader in a way that was not helpful or beneficial.

Probes: What about your response or support was not helpful?

4. Conclusion:

Researcher will thank participant for his/her time

Researcher will tell participant that she will contact participant within 14 days to review interview transcript.

Researcher will ask if participant has any additional questions. Participant will be thanked for his/her time and be reminded that he/she can follow up via email or phone if he/she has questions at a later time.

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today and assist me in learning more about your perspectives and insights. I want to remind you that within 14 days this interview will transcribed and will be available for your review. At that time, I will ask you to make any corrections needed or provide any additional information you might like included to ensure the transcription is an accurate account of your experiences based on the interview. Do you have any additional questions about the next steps in the process?

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