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The Rebel Leader: A Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Analysis of Rebel Superintendents in Suburban Public Schools

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

THE REBEL LEADER: A SEQUENTIAL EXPLANATORY
MIXED METHODS ANALYSIS OF REBEL SUPERINTENDENTS
IN SUBURBAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

PROGRAM IN ADMINISTRATION AND SUPERVISION

BY

CHRISTOPHER LEIGH FINCH

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
MAY 2013
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am sure it is no surprise that the topic of this dissertation is about rebels because this dissertation itself marks the final act of an argument I began with my mother as a rebellious teenager exactly 20 years ago. In Spring 1993, my mother shared the news that we would not have the finances necessary for me to go to college. It was not that she or anyone else in my family did not want me to go, but it seemed that the reality of the situation was that I would not be going or, at best, I would be attending community college in the fall.

Always having had a flair for the dramatic, I recall telling my mother I was going to go to college. In fact, I was going to go to college that fall and keep going until I became Dr. Finch! It is difficult to put into words the spectacular theatrics that only a teenager could provide, but the gauntlet had been thrown down. I did go to college that fall. And now, here it is, Spring 2013, and after completing a bachelor’s degree with a double major and two master’s degrees, I am making good on my promise to become Dr. Finch. I can only hope the theatrics surrounding this life accomplishment are as spectacular at age 37 as they were at age 17.

I wish to formally express my deep appreciation to my dissertation director, Dr. Marla Israel. To me, the art of chairing a person's dissertation is about the balance between supporting the student's vision while teaching him or her, as Nelson Mandela
said, that “a vision without action is just a dream; an action without a vision just passes
time; a vision with an action changes the world.” I wish to thank Dr. Israel for her tireless
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sister, relatives, and friends have been there to encourage and to support me all along the
way.

To my wife, Kathryn, I thank you for believing in me and giving me the chance to
chase this dream. To my son, Andrew, I thank you for being such a compassionate,
understanding, and conscientious kid. You have the strongest moral compass of anyone I
have ever known. You use that strength to show what a great leader you are each and
every day. Finally, to my daughter, Hope, the fire in your belly and the glint of mischief
in your eye inspires me to try and stay one-step ahead of you in life. May you always use
that fiery spirit to fight for what you know is right.
DEDICATION

To Andrew & Hope, my little rebels in the making.

Go out there and change the world . . . it’s your turn now.
EPIGRAPH

It is easier to say what loyalty is not than what it is. It is not conformity. It is not passive acquiescence to the status quo. . . . It is the realization that America was born of revolt, flourished on dissent, became great through experimentation.

Henry Steele Commager (1948)
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ABSTRACT

The term rebel is virtually nonexistent in academic literature within the field of educational leadership and maintains a generally negative connotation. This research is intended to cast the term in a new light and allow for conceptualization of the word as a positive descriptor for educational leaders. This study explored the impact and efficacy of rebel superintendents within suburban K-12 public school districts. Following a sequential explanatory mixed method design, participant selection was conducted using the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI) as a quantitative participant selection tool. Nine superintendents were identified using the KAI and interviewed. Three superintendents were identified as high innovators; three were identified as mild to moderate adaptors; and, three superintendents were identified as mild innovators. The mild innovators group served as a control group for comparison. No participants were identified as high adaptors in this study.

Superintendents who scored as high innovators readily met the criteria of an educational rebel. These rebels inherently resisted the status quo across roles and settings and preferred using the ethic of critique to challenge the limits of the current paradigm to effect change in the system. High innovators did not use the ethic of care as a preferred lens for decision making and instead were found to use coping behaviors to fit their cognitive style into the current system. Highly innovative superintendents were imbued...
with a strong sense of motivation and low self-doubt that allowed them to access energy for coping with the current system for longer periods of time. Highly innovative superintendents reported feeling effective at instituting change in the system, but evidence indicated the type of change implemented required system-wide shifts that were met with resistance by the system. Mild innovators and mild to moderate adaptors demonstrated some rebel characteristics but not consistently or pervasively across settings.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

From as early as the 12th century, society has labeled members of the population that run against the grain as rebels. The Latin term *rebillis* is composed of *re*, meaning again, and *billis*, meaning to wage war (“Rebel,” n.d.). Throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, a class system existed; all members of developed society were ruled by status and expected to think and act accordingly within their position in society (Johnston, 2011). Individuals in power were entitled to think freely, while the underprivileged were expected to think as part of the mainstream, as defined by the powerful, but certain individuals seemed unable to avoid pressing against the confines of the system. Sometimes these forthright and outspoken individuals were punished for their thinking; the more timid ones demonstrated passive resistance.

For example, Giordano Bruno, who promoted the Copernican view of the universe, was persecuted by the Church and interrogated in solitary confinement for eight years before being burned at the stake for not supporting the mainstream views of the Catholic Church during the 14th century (Lerner & Gosselin, 1973). Unlike his contemporaries, Bruno seemed unable to recant his thinking or to even disguise it to avoid persecution, as did Galileo, who altered his convictions and beliefs when
questioned by the Church. Despite imprisonment, interrogation, and a sentence of death, Bruno could not conform to the social views of the time.

As societies evolved, new systems of order were implemented due to factors such as social mobility, industrialization, economic growth, access to knowledge, and cultural transformations (Gottlieb, 1993; Savage, 2007; van Leeuwen & Maas, 2005). With this evolution, the nature of the rebel became fragmented into various categories of behavior. Religion characterized its first “rebel as reformer” during the 16th-century Protestant Reformation, and the colonization of America was the result of individuals’ intolerance of the perceived indulgences of the papal hierarchy (Peters, 2005). Martin Luther and John Calvin could no longer tolerate or accept the corrupt practices of the Church, despite their devout belief in religion. Politics developed “rebels as renegades” as the lower class asserted pressure on those in power and pressed against dictatorial views. The American Revolution was based on the Colonies’ belief that its members should have a voice like those in power.

One lesser known tale of this newfound sense of entitlement was that of the Jack Tars, who served as sailors aboard the merchant ships. As author Hamilton (2002) wrote, “To society’s ‘better sort,’ the Jack Tars represented the lowest form of life” (p. 45). Poorly paid and highly uneducated, these men revolted against the practice of impressment or the forced entry into the British navy without notice. According to Hamilton (2002), the power of the Jack Tars was so impressive that “the revolutionary elite—John Adams, John Hancock and the like—worried lest the Jack Tars . . . turn their anger on them” (p. 28).
At the turn of the 20th century, the field of psychology was set replete with rebels who challenged the status quo, as hallmarked by the infamous rebel Sigmund Freud. An authoritarian personality, Freud, as described by Karier (1963, p. 605), “was the true rebel, revolting against authority in order to become the authority.” Other psychologists such Lewis Terman, G. Stanley Hall, Carl Jung, and David Wechsler brought with them an era of progressivism that lead to IQ testing, the recognition of “adolescence” and new ways of understanding the self. These novel approaches led to the adoption of controversial practices such as selection processes based upon IQ scores for military assignments, educational placement, and employment that eventually led, in 1971, the U.S. Supreme Court to ban the use of IQ tests in employment (Murdoch, 2007).

Countless examples of rebel contributions exist throughout history and in modern times. The desire to resist the status quo and pursue change impels members of society to act contrarily, even when the implications of that behavior may have far-reaching consequences. Whether the field is religion, psychology, or social justice, one can find tales of individuals who could not accept established social norms and, by virtue of their own being, pressed forward to reshape society. It is natural, then, that one would expect to find the field of educational leadership littered with rebels. Ironically, the term rebel is virtually never used in the field. However, upon closer examination, one can find the “spirit” of being a rebel camouflaged in more palatable terms such as innovator, courageous leader, change agent, or risk-taker.
The Rebel

An easily identified rebel in the arena of public education reform is John Dewey. Unlike Freud’s visceral need to be the sole authority, Dewey encouraged divergent thinking amongst his peers even when such ideas strayed away from his own (Karier, 1963). Dewey’s contribution to education was the idea that practices of the past are irrelevant for the future because human nature is in constant flux. This concept has been embraced by modern educators, but when it was first proposed, it was in direct opposition to traditionalist values that sought to restrict thinking and impose an established code of morality through education (Hutchison, 2008). In the 21st century, Dewey’s beliefs continue to rebel against the pendulum swing of educational change and suffer harsh criticism. Hutchison (2008), in his article for RenewAmerica, a grassroots organization centered on preserving the constitutional ideals, remarked that Dewey “was a madman who sat at the tiller of the educational ship. In spite of generations of failure in the application of his methods, he is still held in high esteem by the educational establishment” (para. 81).

The impact of Dewey, as a rebel, influenced the greater perspective surrounding public education and those who felt passionate about it. An outspoken and fiery personality, William Heard Kilpatrick was a successor to John Dewey’s progressivism and challenged the belief that to be educated, one must master a set of knowledge through diligent recitations, repetitions, and rote memorizations (Beyer, 1997). Kilpatrick (as cited in Beyer, 1997), when questioned about his opinions of education, shared that he “was trusting the child, getting him in on what was happening” (p. 3). A true rebel,
Kilpatrick strove to break down the hierarchy between student and teacher, impressing the idea that the relationship between child and teacher was reciprocal in nature and not one of master to apprentice. The progressive views of such liberal educators went against social norms and earned harsh criticism for being too soft and allowing children to be lazy. In one of his final statements, Dewey said that Kilpatrick’s works “form a notable and virtually unique contribution to the development of a school society that is an organic component of a living, growing democracy” (Tenenbaum, 1951, p. x).

Continuing the lineage of rebels connected to Dewey is Vivian Paley. Paley, a kindergarten teacher at the University of Chicago laboratory school, the same institution Dewey designed to test his educational theories, grew up in Chicago in a White middle-class neighborhood. In her 1974 article published in *The School Review*, Paley shared that she had been brought up a liberal who supported racial integration during the 1950s and 1960s. She explained, “I learned well the liberal lesson of my generation. That is, you show respect by completely ignoring black people as black people. Color blindness was the essence of the creed” (Paley, 1974, p. 455). Having taught for 10 years before having an African American child in her classroom, Paley challenged the notion that color or race were meant to be unspoken topics in public school. She reflected that by not talking about a child’s race or color when White individuals surround the child, the child’s race or color becomes cause for anxiety or guilt (Paley, 1974). Paley addressed race and color in her classroom despite its social taboo. She found that children, despite the generally held belief of the time that discussing differences was inappropriate or isolating, identified themselves as different and naturally wanted to discuss differences as a source
of a child’s strength, not as a weakness. Dewey’s strength as a rebel was his ability to foster independent thinking in others. He said,

It is only by trying that such things can be found out. To refuse to try, to stick blindly to tradition because the search for truth involves experimentation in the region of the unknown is to refuse the only step which can introduce rational conviction into education. (Dewey, 1900, p. 104)

Just like Dewey, Paley’s belief in her convictions about race exemplifies the characteristics of a rebel leader.

Even as modern public education systems adopted and implemented progressivist principles, rebels persisted and effected widespread change. Consider, for example, Milo Cutter, who sought to change the face of public education by opening the first charter school in the United States in 1992, after Minnesota passed legislation allowing charter schools (Hill, 1999). Despite opposition from fellow educators, school leaders, teacher unions, and politicians, Cutter shaped a new era in public education by bridging the traditional public school and private school images into the first privately run, public school in America. As of December 2011, more than 5,600 publicly chartered schools operate throughout the United States and enroll an estimated 2 million students (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2011).

It is naïve to assume that these examples represent a singular or common representation of a rebel. A linguistic deconstruction of the term rebel includes no singular definition that captures the spirit of being a rebel. The term rebel illuminates a set of socially constructed characteristics that have prevailed since the 12th century
throughout many veins of our society, including education. As former president of the African country of Burkina Faso, Thomas Sankara, said,

You cannot carry out fundamental changes without a certain amount of madness. In any case it comes from non-conformity, the courage to turn your back on the old formulas, the courage to invent the future. It took madmen of yesterday for us to be able to act with extreme clarity today. I want to be one of those madmen.

(Sankara, 2012, para. 64)

Rebels Defined

Lois Kelly, an international marketing strategist and CEO of the consulting firm Foghound, conducted a national survey in 2009 and developed a list of rebel traits (see Figure 1). In addition to being creative and curious risk-takers, Kelly (2009) found that rebels are motivated most when they feel they are making a difference and often exude a sincere desire to want to make their organization more successful. She pointed out that rebels are easily frustrated when change does not work out as anticipated or does not move at a quick enough pace. In terms of value added to an organization by rebels, Kelly’s data showed that the greatest values identified were (a) calling out problems other were afraid to; (b) being willing to challenge ineffective sacred-cow practices; (c) being open to being the first to attempt new approaches; (d) being able to readily see new ways to solve problems; and (e) being able to bring outside ideas into the organization easily.

A synthesis of the historical, modern, and socially developed constructs of a rebel reveals a set of similar characteristics. These attributes include (a) an inherent resistance to the status quo; (b) a deep conviction for the cause beyond just personal motivation or
belief; and (c) have the skills, knowledge, relationships and authority to create potential change within the system (Birenbaum & Sagarin, 1976; Hamilton, 2002; Kelly, 2009; Moscovici, 1976; “Rebel,” n.d.; Sibley, 1970). Having rebel characteristics (see Figure 1) is only one part of the formula; rebels also require the right environment to activate these characteristics.

![Image: Profile of a Rebel](image)

**Figure 1.** Profile of a Rebel. Adapted from *Rebels at Work: Motivated to Make a Difference*, by L. Kelly, 2009, p. 8. Copyright 2009 by L. Kelly. Reprinted with permission.

One important distinction to make early on is that a rebel is different from an outsider. As indicated on Wikipedia, a socially constructed web encyclopedia, “A rebel is distinguished from an outsider. An outsider is one who is excluded from a group whereas a rebel goes against it. Also, a rebel’s potential to overthrow the leadership is recognized and substantial, unless the rebellion is crushed, whereas an outsider has been marginalized and is considered to be a degenerate (“Rebellion”, 2011, para. 3). While Wikipedia is not considered a scholarly source of information, it provides good insight into what a socially constructed definition of a rebel looks like or at least offers a better
understanding of how people distinguish the difference between a rebel and a marginalized member of society.

**Igniting the Rebel Spirit: When and Why People Rebel**

Moscovici (1976), in his seminal book, *Social Influence and Social Change*, described the contradictory forces experienced by members of a group to both conform and maintain individuality (Jetten & Hornsey, 2011). Moscovici believed that, at the time, social scientists valued conformity to the group and saw challenges to authority or resistance to group pressure as deviant behavior. However, Packer (2008) shared that researchers such as Commager and Lapham suggested that dissent and, to some extent, deviance are “a mark of loyalty to a group, that dissenters act to improve their groups and as such have the interests of their group at heart” (p. 50).

Researchers studying social conformity, dissent, and deviance describe the choice of nonconformity as an active resistance to the norms of the group (Commager, 1948; Lapham, 2005; Packer, 2008). An individual’s choice to not conform to the group often stems from a real or perceived gap between the socially constructed values of the group and those held by the individual. Packer pointed out that this gap does not necessarily mean the individual’s values are in opposition to those in the group; rather, the individual’s cognitive thinking surrounding the values is at odds with the thinking of the group. In other words, a group leader can be committed to a cause valued by a group while resisting the movement proposed by the group. This thinking fits squarely within the definition of a rebel (Birenbaum & Sagarin, 1976; Hamilton, 2002; Kelly, 2009; Moscovici, 1976; “Rebel,” n.d.; Sibley, 1970). Understanding that rebels, especially rebel
leaders, do not always represent opposing views or views contrary to the establishment is essential to the argument presented in this study. More often, the source of nonconformity is represented by a cognitive gap between the leader and the group.

**Rationale for the Research**

While rebels can exist at all levels in society or an organization, some of the greatest influences come from those in formal leadership roles. In public education, the highest level of formal leadership is represented by the superintendent of schools. Hired by a board of education composed of elected citizens, the superintendent is the chief executive officer of the academic organization.

In the late 1970s through the early 1990s, school research focused primarily on classroom practices and teacher effectiveness without much consideration for leadership in the school system. Robert Havelock’s (1973) book, *The Change Agent’s Guide to Innovation in Education*, documented his focus of instilling a simple six-step process for promoting change. By building relationships, diagnosing the problem, acquiring relevant resources, choosing a solution, gaining acceptance, and stabilizing the innovation, Havelock believed educational organizations could find self-renewal and evolve (see Figure 2). According to Havelock, the primary change agents were leaders outside of the system, such as state-level decision makers. In fact, Havelock (1973) listed superintendents and other administrators as “part-time” change agents (p. ix).
• Education the way it is now
• Relationship building
• Diagnosis
• Acquisition
• Choosing
• Acceptance
• Self-renewal
• Education the way we would like it to be

Figure 2. Havelock’s Six-Step Change Process for Improving Education.

In the 21st century, leadership experts such as Fullan (2001), Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), Schmoker (2006), and DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008) purported change processes that are not too dissimilar from Havelock’s model. Even so, these researchers underscored the importance and impact of placing the educational leader in the driver’s seat of change. As Schmoker indicated in his book, Results Now, a sense of urgency is being placed on the education system to revolutionize immediately. Schmoker (2006) wrote,

If the current school system wishes to survive against the increasing encroachments on its autonomy, perhaps its very existence, then there is only one worthy course of action: for teachers and school leaders at the state or province, district and school levels to immediately and relentlessly begin to share, examine, and engage in dialogue about these realities on every occasion—until our actions and commitments begin to erase the awful inertia of past decades. For millions of
children we can change the world. Let’s start this school year.” (Schmoker, 2006, p. 164)

Still, little evidence exists to suggest what cognitive or personal characteristics make an effective superintendent or, at least for the purposes of this study, one who is able to overcome the status quo. It becomes essential to determine a method for identifying current rebels from within the public school superintendent ranks who will be capable of sustaining what Fullan (2001) called the “energy-enthusiasm-hopefulness constellation” (p. 7). Gallén (1997) proposed the existence of a connection between a leader’s cognitive style and his or her strategic decisions. This connection, if identified, could help paint a picture of educational leaders who are rebels.

**Adaption-Innovation Theory (KAI)**

While Havelock was creating his model for school improvement, Dr. Michael Kirton (2006), a British cognitive psychologist, was developing his adaption-innovation theory. Kirton’s theory was built around the idea that all people were creative and solved problems. These two functions were part of the human experience but he noted that individual people preferred to be creative and solve problems in different ways. Furthermore, Kirton noticed that individuals seemed to have a preferred method or style for solving problems and making decisions that remained constant despite different environments, life experiences, and natural abilities. He developed his adaption-innovation theory and produced the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI) Kirton, 2006) to measure an individual’s preferred style of decision making and problem solving.
As his theory developed over time, Kirton (2006) recognized that creativity, problem solving, and decision making were all part of an individual’s cognitive functioning. Although these three elements are often discussed as independent of one another, Kirton believed the brain actually links these three elements as a single set of processes he called *cognitive style* (see Figure 3). Cognitive style is one element of a person’s cognitive function schema that has an impact on a person’s observable behaviors. Research on cognitive style suggests that this element is also linked as one piece of what constitutes an individual’s personality and is generally fixed at a young age and unaffected by growth, development, or the environment (Ausburn & Ausburn, 1978; Dew, 2009; de Frias & Schaie, 2001; Kirton, 1976, 2006; Kozhevnikov, 2007; Witkin, Moore, Goodenough, & Cox, 1977). In other words, the cognitive style with which a person is born stays with him or her for life. The KAI instrument isolates this fixed piece of one’s personality (cognitive style) and separates it from other aspects of one’s cognition, such as levels of natural abilities and life experiences (Kirton, 2006). In Kirton’s (2006) research and follow-up studies using the KAI, the measurement of an individual’s cognitive style remained consistent over time and was unaffected by life experiences such as age, education, or career changes.
According to Kirton (2006), a person’s cognitive style falls on a continuum ranging from adaption to innovation. An individual’s score on the continuum is determined as adaptive or innovative in relation to other scores, meaning that the distance between two scores will always place one score as either more adaptive or more innovative than the other (see Figure 4).

**Adaptors and Innovators**

Individuals who lean more toward the adaptive side of the continuum tend to seek out structure from within the system, generally prefer solutions that offer more ordered steps, and generate solutions that appear logically related to the problem. In contrast, individuals who lean more toward the innovative side of the continuum look to replace systems of structure with new systems of structure generally from outside of the current...
system, prefer solutions that are less pragmatic, and are willing to consider solutions that may not be logically related to the problem (Kirton, 2006). Although where an individual falls on this continuum generally remains fixed throughout his or her life, other factors such as intelligence, experience, and the environment influence the quality or level of one’s response to a problem. Additionally, when a situation requires an individual to stray from his or her preferred cognitive style, the individual displays what Kirton (2006) referred to as a coping behavior. *Coping behavior* is said to occur when an individual consciously works outside of his or her preferred style. Kirton (1985) explained, “[Coping behavior] allows people to play successfully a role to which they are not naturally suited. It is stressful for people to be forced to behave very differently from their preferred style, consistently, and over long periods” (p. 4). Coping behavior is taxing for an individual to display over long periods of time and individuals will resort to preferred ways of thinking. The relevant psychological point here is that while an
individual’s cognitive style remains constant, a number of other forces influence his or her observed behavior and can potentially skew the visible evidence of cognitive style.

In looking at rebel leaders in education, particularly superintendents, it becomes relevant to understand how these leaders choose to look at problems and approach solutions. In other words, their cognitive style becomes an indicator that can be measured and used to predict their potential attributes. Thus, the KAI can become a tool to identify superintendents who might demonstrate the characteristics of a rebel: (a) an inherent resistance to the status quo; (b) a deep conviction for the cause beyond just personal motivation or belief; and (c) have the skills, knowledge, relationships, and authority to create potential change within the system (Birenbaum & Sagarin, 1976; Hamilton, 2002; Kelly, 2009; Moscovici, 1976; “Rebel,” n.d.; Sibley, 1970).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of rebels in education by examining the professional behaviors of school superintendents who exhibit, in one way or another, (a) an inherent resistance to the status quo; (b) a demonstrated deep conviction for the cause beyond just personal motivation or belief; and (c) have the skills, knowledge, relationships, and authority to create potential change within the system (Birenbaum and Sagarin, 1976; Hamilton, 2002; Kelly, 2009; Moscovici, 1976; “Rebel,” n.d.; Sibley, 1970). Nine superintendents participated in this study. Three superintendents were identified as high innovators, three as mild to moderate adaptors, and three superintendents were identified as superintendents who scored closer to the general population mean and served as a control group. The professional lives of these potential
educational rebels is characterized as a rebellious journey toward effecting change within the public school system and highlights both the successes and challenges faced by each person during their growth as a leader. These potential rebels use their unique cognitive style in different ways and through different ethical lenses. This research examined the ethical lenses these adaptors and innovators prefer and how they use these lenses to effect change within their organizations.

Additionally, this research begins to posit an educational definition of the term rebel and bring this label into the rhetoric of educational leadership as a positive expression. By identifying behaviors, actions, and values demonstrating an inherent resistance to the status quo, this study will make transparent how these potential educational rebels use leadership to effect change within an organization.

**Research Questions**

This study augments the scholarship of educational leadership through the examination of the following questions:

1. To what degree does a relationship exist between scoring as highly adaptive or highly innovative on the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI) and the presence of rebel characteristics in superintendents?

2. What behaviors and actions are present in superintendents identified as highly adaptive or highly innovative that demonstrate a resistance to the status quo?

3. How do highly adaptive and highly innovative superintendents use coping behavior to modify their actions and behaviors when rebel characteristics may be perceived as adversarial in a given situation?
4. Which ethical lenses do highly adaptive and highly innovative superintendents prefer to use in decision making and problem solving?

5. To what extent are highly adaptive or highly innovative educational rebels effective at promoting change and what can be learned from their successes and failures?

6. How do the profiles of highly adaptive superintendents, highly innovative superintendents, and superintendents identified as part of the control group compare and contrast to one another?

Methodology

A sequential explanatory mixed methods design was used in this study. The target population for this study was currently employed K-12 public education superintendents from publically funded K-12 school districts in the collar counties surrounding the Chicago metro area: Lake, McHenry, DuPage, Kane, Will, and the southern and western portions of suburban Cook counties.

Nine superintendents were identified for participation in this study using the KAI. Three superintendents were identified as high innovators according to KAI scores above 124, three were identified as mild to moderate adaptors, based on KAI scores below 85, and three superintendents were identified as mild innovators with KAI scores in the normative range of 85-105. The mild innovators group served as a control group for comparison. None of the participants in this study were identified as high adaptors.

Subsequent to the quantitative data collection and analysis, a semistructured interview was conducted individually with each superintendent from within the three
groups (high innovators, mild to moderate adaptors, and the mild innovators as the control group). Interview data, along with related publically available, qualitative documents such as job description, print publications (e.g., news articles, newsletters), media publications (e.g., websites, audio/visual presentations), and district or school improvement plans were coded and analyzed for themes using a phenomenological approach.

**Conceptual Framework**

One of the more common social colloquialisms to arise from the 20th century relative to rebels is the phrase “a rebel without a cause.” Used in academic literature, by historical figures, and even as a movie title, the phrase suggests a rogue individual who shows no commitment to values or beliefs. This portrayal of rebels is inconsistent with the historical record. On the contrary, educational rebels, such as Dewey, Kilpatrick, and Paley, seemed to be imbued with strong belief systems and values situated within an attitude that change can happen for the betterment of others.

If rebels are imbued with strong beliefs or value systems, it is likely their decisions, expressions, and demeanor can be observed through one or more ethical lenses. In educational administration, the ethical lenses employed by superintendents are of particular interest because their use in decision making have an impact on the entire organization. Foster (as cited in Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005) remarked, “Each administrative decision carries with it a restructuring of human life: that is why administration at its heart is the resolution of moral dilemmas” (p. 3). Much as Schmoker (2006) stressed the immediate need for change, Foster described the intensity of change
by likening it to a restructuring of human life. For purposes of this research, four ethical lenses were explored briefly: deontology, utilitarianism, care, and critique.

The deontological lens establishes “procedures for making decisions that respect the equal sovereignty of the people” (Strike, as cited in Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005, p. 11). In general, this lens is presented in terms of rule, right, or law that is universally applied to all people in all situations. At its core, deontology is driven by one’s sense of duty to comply with what is logically correct, even if it disagrees with one’s emotional, intellectual, or circumstantial understandings of the situation. Having the will to do what is right, balanced with the intention to do good, has an impact on the categorical imperative of deontology, which is to treat others as having intrinsic value in themselves and not merely as a means to achieve one’s end (Bordum, 2005).

Unlike deontology, which considers the rightness of the rule or policy, utilitarianism considers the rightness of action over the rightness of rule. It seeks to provide the greatest amount of good to the greatest number of people. Michael Dion (2012) wrote, “Utility implies the trend to produce benefits, advantages, pleasures or happiness (rather than pain or unhappiness), for the majority of people who are affected by a given decision” (p. 11). Surrounding this ethical lens is the obligatory “greater good” concept that suggests, as John Stuart Mill (1863) suggested in his original book, one need not be personally satisfied with one’s life to be able to contribute to the “total sum happiness” of a society (p. 24).

The ethical lens of critique, according to Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005), finds tension within the ethic of those in power and challenges the status quo by raising critical
questions focused on the realization that ethical systems can be modified or corrupted over time and must be constantly questioned. Critique theorists postulate that ethical systems are not without flaw and marginalize some portion of a society. Often this marginalization takes the form of privilege or lack thereof because the minority ethic is not in power at the time. This lens looks at those within the population whose voices are unheard.

“Human beings are born,” according to Nel Noddings (2010), “from and into relation; it is our original condition “ (p. 390). The ethic of care establishes a fundamental connection between two or more parties—one as the caregiver and the other the one cared for. This relation to one another is the primary impetus for decision making because the decision maker cares more about the “who” in the relationship than the “what” or “how.” This lens considers how those who are touched by an outcome are cared for.

The ethical lenses a superintendent uses to make decisions and solve problems are another component of a person’s cognitive function and related to his or her cognitive style that can be measured through the KAI. This relationship between cognitive style and the ethical lenses is worth mentioning. Kirton (2006) described that an individual’s cognitive function is divided into three distinct parts: cognitive affect, cognitive resource, and cognitive effect. The cognitive affect is composed of one’s values, needs, attitude, and beliefs. This part is where ethical lenses are at play. As an external stimulus is processed by one’s cognitive function, it first is filtered through the individual’s ethical lens. The cognitive affect measures the stimulus against the value system in place before moving into a process called cognitive resource. Here, the brain applies schema in the
form of skills, talents, knowledge, or experience to the stimulus and prepares to respond with a behavior. Before the behavior is executed, one’s cognitive effect is applied. Here the individual’s preferred style (adaption or innovation) is considered, along with his or her natural potential (intelligence or other natural ability), and applied to the issue before the executed behavior is displayed (Kirton, 2006).

The three components (ethical framework, schema, and style) work in conjunction to determine the displayed behavior. Often, the displayed behavior matches the individual’s ethical lens and preferred style but, at other times, the appropriate behavior requires the individual to stray from one or more of these cognitive function components and display what Kirton (2006) called a coping behavior, which is taxing for an individual to display over long periods. Knowing how the three cognitive functions are linked supports the notion that a superintendent’s behavior and actions can be broken down and isolated into either an ethical framework and/or a preferred style of problem solving and decision making. Triangulating a superintendent’s propensity for being or becoming a rebel can be done through identifying his or her preferred ethical framework, schema for the problem, and preferred cognitive style.

**Study Limitations and Assumptions**

This study has limited generalizability for large-scale settings due to the small sample size within a confined geographical range. All participants were selected from within the collar counties of Chicago, Illinois, namely Lake, McHenry, DuPage, Will, Kane, and the southern and western portions of suburban Cook counties. School districts serviced by the Northern Cook Intermediate Service Center, including one special
education district, as well as three districts located in Lake County, were eliminated from the study due to potential risk to participants and bias from the researcher. While a wide range of school district types are present within the collar counties of Chicago, much of the area is suburban in nature and may not represent the greatest diversity in educational settings. As part of the research design, the demographics for each district are described without identifying the name of district. This information gives the reader a contextual understanding of the participant’s district characteristics. Also as part of the research design, it was intentionally decided to not collect external performance data from the superintendent's colleagues, superiors, or subordinates. This intentional omission was done to protect the participant from undue risk. Data were limited to self-report data or artifacts that were collected during the research process.

It was assumed that individuals receiving a KAI score at one extreme or the other of the continuum is the sole determinant for identifying a potential rebel. In theory, any score on the KAI could predict rebel behaviors if the participant’s score is more than 20 points apart from another person or a group. However, because this study was limited to only collecting the KAI score of superintendents, choosing individuals with more extreme scores increases the likelihood that the superintendent’s cognitive style is discrepant from his or her work environment and potential mean KAI score.

The researcher is, by nature, rebellious in his own right as a school leader and acknowledges some bias as to what constitutes a rebellious educational leader. To limit this bias, the characteristics for determining a rebel were taken from or supported by
research and not generated solely by the researcher. Additional bias-limiting safeguards are presented in Chapter 3.

**Significance of the Study**

Given the term rebel is virtually nonexistent in the literature on educational leadership and that, in other fields, it maintains a negative connotation, this study is significant because it brings the term into the forefront of educational leadership and conceptualizes a new etymology for the word as a positive descriptor for leadership. By providing clarity in defining behaviors and actions that distinguish a rebel from the archetype of a change agent, an innovator, or a progressive leader, an ethnographic typography can be established that can be used for future scholarship on this topic.

This study introduces research in the realm of social psychology, specifically around the understanding of cognitive style, by examining a possible relationship between the KAI and individuals who may be educational rebels. It is this researcher’s hope to expand and add to the knowledge base of school leadership and offer new opportunities for further study.

**Summary**

Throughout history, there have been members of the population who demonstrated (a) an inherent resistance to the status quo; (b) a deep conviction for the cause beyond just personal motivation or belief; and (c) had the skills, knowledge, relationships, and authority to create potential change within the system (Birenbaum & Sagarin, 1976; Hamilton, 2002; Kelly, 2009; Moscovici, 1976; “Rebel,” n.d.; Sibley, 1970). These individuals can be classified as rebels and are found in every industry,
including education. No known research has been conducted relating a superintendent’s ethical framework, schema for his or her professional role, and his or her preferred style of decision making and problem solving to isolate those superintendents who fit a definition of rebel.

This research is intended to expand the scholarship of educational leadership by establishing a profile for an educational rebel through the use of a mixed methods approach. More specifically, this study examines the cognitive style, behaviors, and ethical lenses of suburban public school superintendents and brings to the forefront a new etymology for the term rebel as a positive descriptor for educational leaders.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the literature surrounding the topics addressed in this study: educational leadership; the role of the superintendent; the role of the superintendent in Illinois; the KAI theory; the concept of a rebel; and the ethical lenses of deontology, utilitarianism, care, and critique. The purpose of this chapter is to provide context within which to answer the following research questions:

1. To what degree does a relationship exist between scoring as highly adaptive or highly innovative on the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI) and the presence of rebel characteristics in superintendents?
2. What behaviors and actions are present in superintendents identified as highly adaptive or highly innovative that demonstrate a resistance to the status quo?
3. How do highly adaptive and highly innovative superintendents use coping behavior to modify their actions and behaviors when rebel characteristics may be perceived as adversarial in a given situation?
4. Which ethical lenses do highly adaptive and highly innovative superintendents prefer to use in decision making and problem solving?
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6. How do the profiles of highly adaptive superintendents, highly innovative superintendents, and superintendents identified as part of the control group compare and contrast to one another?

**Review of Leadership Research**

In the early 1900s, leadership research focused on the identification of the leader. Effective leaders were defined by their traits (Yukl, 2010). Stogdill and Shartle (1948) analyzed the research from 1904 through 1948, synthesizing hundreds of studies, and concluded that relevant leadership traits included initiative, persistence, self-confidence, drive for responsibility, insight, integrity, sociability, and influence. Northouse’s (2009) list included similar traits and characteristics that were deemed central for leaders to possess: intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability. Leaders with these traits created, managed, and led organizations across a variety of industries.

As the Great Depression approached and a push for industrialization expanded, research in leadership changed its focus from identifying the leader toward understanding how leaders could make organizations more efficient. Grounded deeply in industrial management theory, improved productivity required the efficiency of workers within the organizational machinery. Leaders were expected to focus their energy on making the machine run smoothly and maximize the efficiency of the system to increase productivity.
It was the Hawthorne studies done in the late 1930s and 1940s (Roethlisberger, 1941) that discovered the importance of the social environment on a worker’s sense of satisfaction. From this research, the human relations approach to leadership developed. This approach to leadership sought to explain how effective leaders designed and influenced the work environment to increase worker satisfaction. Definitions of leadership expanded beyond just personal traits towards a focus on “the influence process between the leader’s power and the subordinate’s degree of acceptance and willingness to follow” (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2011, p. 115).

During the 1950s and 1960s, leadership research shifted from leaders as a product of nature toward a belief that good leaders could be developed (Stogdill, 1974; Stogdill & Shartle, 1948). Leadership became defined as “interpersonal influence, exercised in situations and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals” (Tannenbaum, Weschler & Massarik, 1961, p. 24). Emergent leadership models emphasized that effective leadership varied with the substance of the situation (Stogdill, 1974; Tannenbaum et al., 1961). Thus, effective leadership remained focused on effective management of the organization but moved toward embracing the complex nature of leadership.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the leadership literature fractured as research continued on several different themes from previous decades. These various strands of leadership research helped expand the definition of leadership to include a wider range of factors, allowing focus on the leader to shift to focus on the experience of those serving under the leader. For example, McGregor (1971) highlighted leadership variables related to the
attitudes, needs, and other personal characteristics of subordinates. Employee motivation was related to the leader’s style, the characteristics of his or her employees, and the work setting itself (Maidment, 1984). The 1974 research of House and Dessler described that the relationship between leaders and followers helped to explain how leaders motivate subordinates to accomplish designated goals. A greater understanding of the complexity of leadership, particularly in terms of the mutual influence on relationships between leaders and followers, highlighted more accurately the nature of leadership in organizations. That is, effective leaders promoted the expansion of leadership to a wider range of people and positions within the organizational system. Greenleaf (1977) reflected this idea, stating that leadership is “available to everyone, throughout an organization, who has competence, values, and desire for it” (p. 96).

More recently, during the 1990s and into the first decade of the 2000s, leadership research focused on leadership as leading change. Influenced by the accelerating evolution of technology and the increasing speed at which information was available, organizations needed to adapt to a global economy that was increasingly dynamic (Porter, 1986). These shifts in the external environment required dramatic shifts in leadership.

Several new theories were developed in response to a new culture in which organizations existed. Transformational leadership (Burns, 1978) became the theoretical focus of much leadership research. Bryman (1996) referred to it as the “New Leadership” paradigm (p. 17). Bass (1990) described the transformational leader in this way: “The transformational leader asks followers to transcend their own self-interest for the good of the group or organization, to consider their long-term needs to develop and to become
more aware of what is really important” (p. 53). Servant leadership theory, as espoused by Sergiovanni (1992), focused on the idea that great leaders serve their followers and meet their followers’ needs. This approach advocated that the first desire of the leader should be to serve and exemplified a moral principle that generates deserving authority of a leader in such a way that followers willingly choose to follow. Adaptive leadership, developed by Ronald Heifitz (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009), suggested that the work of a leader falls into two distinct categories: technical problems and adaptive work. When an organization needs to adapt, the leader supports the organization through the evolution by recognizing which aspects of the organization must remain, what aspects must be let go, and what new pieces are required to make a successful shift (Heifetz et al., 2009).

Adaptive work is different than technical problems that can be solved through policy, process, or simple changes within the current structure. Heifetz et al. (2009) posited that the most common error among leaders is the treatment of adaptive work as a technical problem. Bolman and Deal (2008) offered the benefit of looking at leadership through multiple lenses. Their work provided the concept of reframing as a way for leaders to use multiple frames or lenses to decode organizational complexity. In their work, Bolman and Deal suggested looking at organization through four frames: structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. Each frame situates the issue, allowing the leader to see multiple perspectives before making a decision. Lastly, Morgan (1998) expanded the notion of organizational identity in his seminal work, *Images of Organization*, by offering several metaphors for understanding the complex nature of
organizations. Morgan gave the leader the opportunity to see organizations as bureaucratic machines, complex, frenetic brain-like structures, or as psychological prisons. Each image provided the leader with a metaphor to describe the complex function of an organization. All of these theories focus on supporting the leader in leading change. The shift in leadership toward leading change, rather than simply managing organizations, required leadership research to better understand how to best change organizational vision, culture, and structures to create a more adaptive organization.

Through the literature, the understanding of leadership has evolved from identifying and developing leaders, to explaining the complexity of leadership contexts, to leading change in response to dynamic environmental factors. While this evolving understanding of leadership has been generated across a variety of organizational contexts, the field of business management has contributed the majority of research on leadership. One organizational context that has recently emerged as its own leadership field is that of educational leadership, which studies leadership specifically within educational organizations.

**Leadership in Educational Organizations**

The understanding of leadership in the context of educational leadership has generally been influenced by and mirrored the general base of evolving leadership literature. While schools experienced environmental stability longer than many other industries, they began experiencing the effects of the increasingly dynamic environment in the early 1990s. School reform movements reflected the need to better understand the
effective implementation of leadership for schools in a dynamic and changing external environment (Rallis & Goldring, 2000). This dynamically shifting environment was exemplified by the quest to move toward providing fair access to academic opportunities and greater accountability for student achievement and outcomes.

Without question, leadership has taken center stage in the arena of educational reform in the 21st century. President Obama’s *A Blueprint for Reform* (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) prioritizes the need for “great teachers and leaders in every school” (p. 4). New initiatives to improve leadership preparation programs in colleges and university as well as new accountability measures were being developed as a method of ensuring leader quality. The role of the superintendent has become one of leadership, but not just instructional leadership. The modern superintendent, like corporate leaders, must go beyond effective management and mere charismatic leadership (Collins, 2001, 2005). Today’s superintendent must use visionary leadership to, as Fullan (2001) explained, “[solve] problems that do not have easy answers” (p. 2).

At the same time, the world surrounding schools is rapidly changing. During the 20th century, educators were preparing students for a world that was viewed as secure and predictable (Tucker, 2007). In the 21st century, students must be prepared for the world in a context that is radically different from the schools of even the last decade (Snyder et al., 2000). Perhaps one of the consistent features of schools, as Marzano et al. (2005) suggested, is that there is always an effort to improve or change the system through new programs or practices. Most of these changes do not have the momentum or the leadership stamina required to become ingrained in the culture of education. Cuban
(as cited in Marzano et al., 2005) noted in his investigation of sound educational innovations that nearly all them no longer existed within six to 10 years. DuFour et al. (2008) remarked that past efforts at school reform have not considered fully the complexity of the task, lacked perseverance, and showed an immature understanding of the change process. To be successful, leaders must engage in behaviors that are consistent with the scale of the change to be implemented and have the savvy to know which leadership traits to emphasize and how to use those traits to support change throughout the system (Marzano et al., 2005). Failure happens when the leadership behaviors do not match the magnitude of the problem (Kotter & Cohen, 2002).

Marzano et al. (2005) explored how educational leadership and change work. They described that incremental change or change that has a logical next step is considered first-order change, while change that involves a reshaping of culture and understanding requires second-order change (Marzano et al., 2005). Marzano et al.’s theory emphasizes incremental change as fine-tuning a system through a series of small improvements without a major disruption to the system as a whole. In contrast, second-order change or deep change requires a fundamental alteration of the system entirely (Marzano et al., 2005). According to Verra (2009), “the common human response is to address virtually all problems as though they were first-order challenges” (p. 39). Heifetz (1994) offered,

For many problems, however, no adequate response has yet been developed.

Examples abound: poverty at home and abroad, industrial competitiveness, failing schools, drug abuse, the national debt, racial prejudice, ethnic strife, AIDS,
environmental pollution. No organizational response can be called into play that will clearly resolve these kinds of problems. (Heifetz, 1994, p. 72)

The need for educational leadership is evident, but the leader must understand how change happens and be prepared to manage change. Much of Marzano et al.’s (2005) early research focused on the role of the principal as the lead change agent, but Feist (2003) noted that the role of district administrators in supporting second-order change has increased. This involvement is in direct contrast to what former Secretary of Education William Bennett called the education “blob,” where those “in the educational system who work outside of the classroom, soaking up resources and resisting reform without contributing to student achievement” operate (Bennett, as cited in Marzano & Waters, 2009, p. 1). His reference to district office staff, school boards, and the superintendency is supported by some school reform literature that highlights the limitations of district personnel to effect change or, in some cases, views district staff, including the superintendent, as a hindrance to supporting reform (Feist, 2003).

While trying to define leadership, Northouse (2004) cautioned that, “Leadership . . . provides a picture of a process that is far more sophisticated and complex than the often simplistic view presented in some of the popular books on leadership” (p. 1). Northouse (2004) continued by defining leadership more specifically as, “a ‘process’ whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 3). Similiarly, Leithwood et al. (2004) wrote, “At the core of most definitions of leadership are two functions generally considered indispensible to its meaning: setting directions and exercising influence” (p. 1). As the focus on leadership
continues to grow and develop as a major concept in educational organizations and systems (Bennett & Anderson, 2003), it is essential to look to arguably the most influential role in the organization: the superintendent.

The Role of Superintendent

The role of the public school superintendent has changed throughout history. To develop a foundational understanding of this role, it is worth examining how this position has evolved or transitioned. During the “era of the common school movement,” circa 1830 (Kowalski, 1999, p. 2), the first superintendency was established in the state of New York (Butts & Cremin, as cited in Kowalski, 1999). According to Kowalski (1999, 2005a, 2005b), the duties of the superintendent included developing the common school system, reporting the management of public monies, and reporting school-related information to the state legislature. By the late 1800s, 24 states, including Illinois, had passed legislation establishing a public school system that incorporated a board of education and a superintendent role to oversee the education system (Kowalski, 1999, 2005a, 2005b). As American public school systems were established in the 1900s, the role of superintendent gradually took shape. Historian Callahan (1964a, 1964b, 1966) stated that the superintendency transitioned through four distinct phases during the early establishment of this role: “superintendent as teacher of teachers, as manager, as statesman, or as applied social scientist” (Callahan, 1966, p. 101).

Early superintendents were seen as master teachers and functioned more like modern-day principals, overseeing instruction and curriculum implementation (Callahan, 1964a; Kowalski, 1999, 2005a, 2005b; Spring, 1994). As districts grew in size, the
responsibilities of the position increased and the role of the superintendent transitioned into a management position. This phase of the superintendency lasted nearly 30 years due to the rise of leadership education in colleges and universities, the desire of superintendents to separate themselves from teachers, and the quest to begin standardizing educational practices (Callahan, 1964b; Cubberley, 1924; Kowalski, 1999, 2005a, 2005b). As the Industrial Revolution introduced organizational theory regarding efficiency, human resource management and systemization penetrated the public school system, the superintendent was seen more as an opportunist who embraced these new industrial management techniques to leverage new power within his role (Thomas & Moran, 1992). However, Kowalski (1999, 2005a, 2005b) suggested that others such as Bullough (1974) and Tyack (1972) saw these men as cunning, intelligent leaders simply reacting to the social dilemmas they were facing.

During the Great Depression, the espoused industrial theories of organizational management lost favor and the role of superintendent elevated from the image of a manager to that of a statesman (Callahan, 1964b). This image lasted until shortly after World War II before transitioning into what Callahan (1964b) termed the superintendent as social scientist. Prior to the war, an emphasis on social and behavioral sciences resulted from the desire of the military to find individuals who could be identified through intelligence measures to serve as soldiers. After the war, higher education institutions continued this focus on the social and behavioral sciences and aspired to develop superintendents with “a greater sensitivity to large social problems through an interdisciplinary approach involving most of the social sciences” (Kellogg Foundation,
1961, p. 13). The school system was seen, then, as a microcosm of society. This notion of a superintendent initially caused concern but later gave way to the image that “superintendents were considered educational experts, “philosopher-educators,” and “managers of virtue”” (Berg & Barnett, 1998, p. 4). Illustrating this perception, Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, and Sybouts (1996) remarked in their book, *The School Superintendency: New Responsibilities, New Leadership*,

At the end of the century, a complex web of contexts, relationships and processes continually challenge the “superman” notion of the superintendency. These men, and a relatively small percentage of women, are the “target of criticism and at the center of controversy, forced to become the defender of policy and the implementor of state and federal mandates, and the orchestrator of diverse interests seeking to influence the schools. (Norton et al., 1996, p. 21).

Callahan’s (1964a, 1964b) descriptions of the superintendent do not speak of the more modern views of this role. Filling this gap, Shoulders (2005) developed six stages of the superintendency. While Shoulders’s descriptions of the early superintendent do not exactly line up with Callahan’s, themes are similar. It is the last two descriptions from Shoulders that move the position into the more current understanding of the superintendency as it is today. Both of these descriptions focus on the image of the superintendent as a politician. During the 1970s and 1980s, this focus meant the superintendent was seen more as a manager of accountability throughout the system and also managed pressures from special interest groups (Shoulders, 2005). After the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (U.S. Department of Education, 1983), this image of
accountability flourished. Superintendents were seen more as policy makers with a focus on forcing standardization and accountability into the system. By the late 1990s, this approach garnered no change to the public education system and again the role changed toward a stronger emphasis on instructional leadership.

By the beginning of the 21st century, increasing dissatisfaction of the general public with failed attempts at school reform placed a spotlight on school leaders, namely the school superintendent, to become more accountable for student learning and achievement (Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). This historic shift toward directly connecting the role of the superintendent to student outcomes challenged decades of transitions that had insulated and distanced the role of superintendent further and further away from the classroom (Callahan, 1964a, 1964b; Kowalski, 1999). Superintendents in the 21st century are expected to possess a variety of leadership skills and the ability to effect student learning as one paramount quality (Elmore, 2000; Grogan, 2003; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Hess, 2003; Knapp et al., 2003; Kowalski, 2003a; Murphy, 2005).

The role of the superintendent continues to evolve and adapt to the needs of the educational system. While researchers categorize the transition of the role in a variety of ways, one certainty can be gleaned: the role of the superintendent has had many different functions throughout history. Each of these transitions seems directly responsive to social changes within the general population or, at least, reflect the social changes espoused by those in positions of power within the general population (Callahan, 1964a, 1964b; Elmore, 2000; Grogan, 2003; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Hess, 2003; Knapp et al., 2003; Kowalski, 2003a; Murphy, 2005; Shoulders, 2005; Spring, 2004).
The Role of Superintendent in Illinois

Illinois, like many states, began the pursuit of public education during its establishment as a state in 1818. An initial attempt to begin public schools was passed in 1825, but then later repealed due to the provision of taxation of all citizens for the benefit of the public school system that was viewed, at the time, as unacceptable (Cook, 1912). Several other attempts were made to adopt legislation establishing a solid public school system and, in 1845, an amendment was added to institute a state superintendent who was an ex officio officer of the state government (Cook, 1912). The secretary of state was assigned this role, but the amendment also established a school commissioner in every county who would serve as the ex officio superintendent for the common schools in his county (Cook, 1912).

Initially, the role of the superintendent was aligned to what was seen historically throughout the other states. The superintendent was largely in charge of teaching and implementation of curriculum. In Illinois, little oversight or accountability was built into the role of the superintendent and, thus, the success of implementing public schools throughout the state was impeded. From Cook’s (1912) historical account, the county superintendents were given authority to hire teachers and determine the rate of pay for teaching in each county. In 1854, the role of superintendent of public instruction was separated from the secretary of state position and given to Ninian W. Edwards (Cook, 1912). Superintendent Edwards immediately began to shape the leadership role of superintendents in Illinois by recommending a number of provisions that would fundamentally redefined the system.
As Illinois’ potential first rebel educator, Superintendent Edwards recommended changes such as transferring the authority of establishing schools, school facilities, and the hiring of school staff from the county superintendent to the township board of public education (Cook, 1912). Additionally, Superintendent Edwards suggested the establishment of a county school convention and teachers’ institute composed of school board members from the various townships in the county to elect “some person of literary and scientific acquirements and of skill in the art of teaching, who should be a resident and legal voter of the county, as school commissioner and superintendent of schools for the county” (Cook, 1912, p. 54). Edwards boldly removed the language from the law that stated public education was for the White students of Illinois (Cook, 1912), but the majority of these recommendations were not enacted in the 1855 law that eventually established public schools in Illinois.

While Superintendent Edwards recommended a township-based school system governed by a township board and a township superintendent, the legislature enacted a district-based school system that resulted in Illinois having more than 12,000 different school districts throughout the state by 1940. In the following decades, the system of county superintendents gave way to regional superintendents, as Illinois voted to reduce the number of districts in the state from more than 12,000 in 1940 to 2000 in 1945 (Statistics Illinois, n.d.). Eventually, cities such as Rockford, Chicago, and Springfield grew and the overall system of education shifted; individual district education boards hired their own district superintendent to oversee district operations. Illinois remains “a local control state,” according to Ben Schwarm, associate executive director of the
Illinois Association of School Boards in a *Chicago Tribune* article about Illinois schools (Secter, 2010). Schwarm expounded, “We elect school board members from the community and therefore want to raise money locally” (Secter, 2010, para. 10). Jim Nowlan (2009), in an article posted by the Illinois Association of School Boards, echoed this sentiment, saying, “The politics of public education in Illinois is primarily about control of the schoolhouse. ‘Local control’ has been the mantra of state and local officials since the state was founded” (Nowlan, 2009, para. 2).

**Kirton Adaption-Innovation Theory**

Drucker (1993) indicated that every organization has to build into its very structure the management of change. The nature of the superintendency is to solve problems and institute change within the system. Finklestein and Hambrick (1996) found three explanations leaders used for making choices that led to change: (a) the environment, (b) the organization, and (c) the individual’s managerial characteristics. Research on leadership, particularly in education, has revealed a strong focus on the environmental factors as well and the organizational structures that influence change (Elmore, 2000; Fullan, 2001; Grogan, 2003; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Hess, 2003; Knapp et al., 2003; Kowalski, 2003a; Marzano et al., 2005; Murphy, 2005). However, when it comes to personal characteristics of a leader’s style, the research is skewed towards observable, demographic leadership traits and standards rather than investigating the cognitive processes of leaders (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Priem, Dyon, & Dess, 1999). Priem et al. (1999) found that inherent limitations existed in studies that did not
link or acknowledge how leaders use their cognitive make-up to influence organizational outcomes.

Leaders’ cognitive process is the explicit interest in this study and several tools have been developed to help isolate aspects of cognitive thinking. Examples include the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the KAI, and the cognitive style index. Development of studies using these measures is problematic, according to Allinson and Hayes (1996), because the use of a tool can be time-consuming and burdensome to the researcher on a large-scale basis. Of these three tools, for example, the MBTI is probably the most popular and widely known among the general population. Although the MBTI is popular, the respondent must complete 126 to 166 items, making it difficult to administer in some research situations. For this study, the KAI was the cognitive style tool chosen for reasons of validity, reliability, and ease of use (Foxall & Hackett, 1992; Goldsmith & Matherly, 1987b; Keller & Holland, 1978; Riley, 1993; Taylor, 1989). The KAI is a 33-question tool that takes less than 15 minutes to complete and can be completed individually or in groups without requiring a proctor’s presence. The KAI is based on the Adaption-Innovation theory developed by Dr. Michael Kirton (1976) and designed to isolate an individual’s cognitive style and place it on a continuum from adaptive to innovative.

Cognitive style represents an individual’s manner of cognitive functioning in terms of acquiring and processing information (Ausburn & Ausburn, 1978). Witkin et al. (1977) considered cognitive style as a representation of the differences in thinking, solving problems, learning, and relating to others. This area of research evolved from the
field of psychology in the 1950s when tremendous efforts were put into the identification of personality styles or types. The first experiments revealing the existence of individual differences in simple cognitive processes such as perception or categorization were completed in the 1940s and 1950s (Klein, 1951; Klein & Schlesinger, 1951; Witkin, 1950; Witkin & Asch, 1948). Hanfmann (1941) noted that some individuals seemed to use perception when grouping blocks, while other used conception. Witkin and Asch (1948) found that a fundamental polarity existed between the approaches used in cognitive tasks among individuals. Klein (1951) introduced the concept of cognitive style into the psychology literature as part of his study of personality. Klein (1951), like Witkin and Asch (1948) and others, found that the polarity that existed between individuals functioned like a continuum consisting of two successful ways to cognitively process a problem.

Research in cognitive style has focused on developing a separation between an individual’s preferred style and his or her cognitive level (Hayes & Allinson, 1994; Kirton, 1976, 2006; Riding & Rayner, 1998). Cognitive level is best described as one’s level of ability to complete a cognitive function. Examples of cognitive level include an individual’s intelligence, training, and natural talent. According to Kirton (2006), cognitive style determines how one approaches developing a solution to a problem, while cognitive level determines the quality of that solution. In other words, two individuals with similar style preferences may not develop comparable solutions due to a discrepancy within cognitive levels, such as one person having an IQ of 150 and the other person an IQ of 85.
In 1961, Dr. Michael Kirton, a British cognitive psychologist, began looking at decision processes within organizations. Kirton (1961) isolated three distinct elements that were present across organizations: (a) some ideas were immediately accepted and implemented, while others stalled for long durations of time; (b) an innate resistance to change within the organization impeded the adoption of a new idea; and (c) ideas stemming from upper management roles that were disconnected from the general organization were the least effective, even when the idea proved to be the most relevant solution to the problem. Others such as Burns and Stalker (1961), Simon (1947), Follett (1924), and Gulick (1937) had already established that management decision processes could explicitly influence organizational structures. Kirton’s interest was in understanding how the individual influenced these processes as opposed to influencing the corporate environment.

The primary application of Kirton’s (1961) initial theory was in the field of engineering, where Kirton was brought into organizations to help leaders understand why some teams of engineers were able to successfully solve problems and others were not. Kirton theorized that successful teams consisted of individuals who had similar cognitive styles and, more importantly, had styles that closely matched the nature of the problem. The less successful teams had members who had dissonant cognitive styles that did not fit the problem (Kirton, 2006). This distinction is an essential point for understanding how individuals at different ends of the KAI continuum can both be seen as rebels. Kirton (2006) used the term Problem A to represent the nature of the problem to be solved and Problem B to describe the added challenge of managing the diversity of thought.
represented in the team that has been brought in to solve the problem. According to Kirton’s (2006) theory, if the team in charge of solving Problem A has a preferred decision-making style that is not well aligned to the problem or represents a wide variance in preferred style compared to the nature of the problem, the team will spend more time managing team-based cognitive diversity (Problem B) rather than expending energy on the problem itself. In other words, if a school leader trying to effect change in his or her district has a preferred method of problem solving that is contrary to the kind of solution presently being proposed, he or she is likely to resist, or rebel, against the status quo.

Kirton’s (1976) adaption-innovation theory (1976) espouses that an individual’s preference for cognitive structure can be located on a continuum in relation to others. Kirton (1985) developed a normally distributed continuum ranging from adaptors to innovators. As he explained, “The more adaptive modify the paradigm as an outcome of their creativity. The more innovative modify or break the paradigm to facilitate their creativity. Which is best is what is needed (Kirton, 2006, p. 229). Because one’s cognitive style can be located on a continuum, a relationship exists between one person’s score and another person’s score. This relationship establishes who in that relationship is more innovative or adaptive than the other. It is easy to assume that innovators exist in isolation at one end of the continuum while adaptors exists only at the other end, but that is not the case. Kirton established a categorical continuum that displays a normal distribution of the population, ranging from adaptive to innovative (see Figure 4).
The adaption-innovation continuum ranges from a score of 32 to 160 but has an observable range of 45 to 145 and a mean of 95. Adaptors, generally, are considered individuals scoring below the mean and are characterized as mildly adaptive with a score range of 80-95, moderately adaptive with a score range of 65-79, and highly adaptive with a score below 64. Alternatively, innovators are considered individuals scoring above the mean and are characterized as mildly innovative with a score range of 96-110, moderately innovative with a score range of 111-124, and highly innovative with a score above 124. Individuals who lean more toward the adaptive side of the continuum tend to seek out structure from within the system, generally prefer solutions that offer more ordered steps, and generate solutions that appear logically related to the problem. Individuals who lean more toward the innovative side of the continuum look to replace systems of structure with new systems of structure, generally from outside of the current system, prefer solutions that are less pragmatic, and are willing to consider solutions that may not be logically related to the problem (Kirton, 2006). Where an individual falls on this continuum generally remains fixed throughout his or her life, but while one maintains a fixed cognitive style or preferred mode of problem solving, other factors such as intelligence, experience, and the environment influence the quality or level of one's response to a problem.

For example, two artists might fall within a more adaptive cognitive style. Both seek out structure to support their problem-solving process and prefer to look for solutions from within the current paradigm as opposed to a more innovative style that
seeks solutions from outside the current paradigm. One of the artists has been an artist for more than 30 years while the other began his career within the last year. Although both artists approach problem solving, creativity and decision making from a similar fixed style, the artists’ individual experiences, natural talent, and personal values influence the quality of their response to the problem and may offer the veteran artist the advantage of having a higher quality response to the problem than his less experienced counterpart despite being statistically similar in cognitive style.

When a situation requires an individual to stray from his or her preferred cognitive style, the individual displays what Kirton (2006) called a coping behavior. *Coping behavior* occurs when an individual consciously works outside of his or her preferred style. Kirton wrote, “[Coping behavior] allows people to play successfully a role to which they are not naturally suited. It is stressful for people to be forced to behave very differently from their preferred style, consistently, and over long periods” (Kirton, 1985, p. 4). Referring to the scenario involving the two artists who prefer to problem solve using a similar cognitive style, the levels are different based upon their personal experiences. The younger artist perceives the major art exhibit as an opportunity but is faced with the problem of having to create a series of pieces outside of his expertise in a short amount of time. The pressure of the environment may force the young artist to use coping behavior to allow him to work outside of his normal cognitive style temporarily, giving him the power to think more outside of the box than he might be accustomed to doing. The relevant psychological point here is that while an individual’s cognitive style
remains constant, a number of other forces influence the observed behavior and can potentially skew the visible evidence of his or her cognitive style.

The KAI uses a three-factor structure to determine an individual’s cognitive function. Kirton’s development of this inventory drew from the work of Carl Rogers (1959), Max Weber (1946/1958), and Robert Merton (1957). The first factor, called *sufficiency of originality*, captures the individual’s method of developing new ideas and his or her view on how those ideas are proliferated. Based on the creativity work by Rogers, Kirton (1984) dedicated 13 items on the inventory to assessing an individual’s preferences for generating ideas and his or her level of satisfaction or sufficiency with those ideas. Adaption-Innovation theory purports that innovators tend not to limit themselves in the number of ideas regardless of how relevant those idea are to the problem, whereas adaptors tend to generate ideas that more closely relate to the perceived nature of the problem and become satisfied more quickly with generating fewer ideas.

In the second factor, *efficiency*, seven test items are used to identify an individual’s preference for precision, reliability, and efficiency (Kirton, 1984). Grounded in Weber’s (1946/1958) work on bureaucratic structures, this factor sees innovation as disruptive and often the opposite of efficient. Innovators are willing to break the paradigm and consider solutions that may not immediately relate to the nature of the perceived problem. This process consumes time and exists in the hypothetical or theoretical realm, thus inviting the perception of being inefficient.

The final factor, called *rule/group conformity*, measures the degree to which one accepts or rejects elements of structures within a group or an environment. Twelve items
on the KAI inventory are dedicated to sampling an individual’s preference. Innovators, in this factor, tend to resist, overlook, or ignore pressure to conform to group views, while adaptors lean toward abiding by the system or the group. Merton (1957) observed that bureaucratic structures forced individuals to be methodical and disciplined with a high degree of conformity to the group or organization. In this view, adaptors tend to more easily conform to the rules or group norms than do innovators, who show less regard for the need for conformity (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Behavioral Descriptions of Adaptors and Innovators*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adaptors</th>
<th>Innovators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characterized by precision, reliability, efficiency, methodicalness,</td>
<td>Seen as undisciplined, thinking tangentially, approaching tasks from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prudence, discipline, and conformity.</td>
<td>unsuspected angles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned with resolving problems rather than finding them.</td>
<td>Could be said to discover problems and discover awareness of solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeks solutions to problems in tried and understood ways.</td>
<td>Queries problems’ concomitant assumptions; manipulates problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduces problems by improvement and greater efficiency, with maximum of</td>
<td>Is catalyst to settled groups, irreverent of their consensual views; seen as abrasive, creating dissonance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>continuity and stability.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seen as sound, conforming, safe, and dependable.</td>
<td>Seen as unsound, impractical; often shocks his opposite.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptors</td>
<td>Innovators</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liable to make goals of means.</td>
<td>In pursuit of goals treats accepted means with little regard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seems impervious to boredom, seems able to maintain high accuracy in long spells of detailed work.</td>
<td>Capable of detailed routine (system maintenance) work for only short bursts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is an authority within given structures</td>
<td>Tends to take control in unstructured situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges rules rarely, cautiously, when assured of strong support.</td>
<td>Often challenges rules, has little respect for past custom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tends to high self-doubt. Reacts to criticism by closer outward conformity.</td>
<td>Appears to have low self-doubt when generating ideas, not needing consensus to maintain certitude in face of opposition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerable to social pressure and authority; compliant.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is essential to the functioning of the institution all the time, but occasionally needs to be &quot;dug out&quot; of his systems.</td>
<td>In the institution is ideal in unscheduled crises, or better still to help avoid them, if he can be controlled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When collaborating with innovators</td>
<td>When collaborating with adaptors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplies stability, order, and continuity to the partnership.</td>
<td>Supplies the task orientations, the break with the past accepted theory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive to people, maintains group cohesion and cooperation.</td>
<td>Insensitive to people, often threatens group cohesion and cooperation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adaptors | Innovators
--- | ---
Provides a safe base for the innovator's riskier operations. | Provides the dynamics to bring about periodic radical change, without which institutions tend to ossify.


In the adaption-innovation theory, Kirton (2006) explained that the distance between two scores achieved on the KAI represents a level of cognitive dissonance. Gaps wider than 10 points between two scores are perceived as “felt” differences between two individuals, while gaps wider than 20 points create a level of disparity between the two parties such that problem solving is difficult without support. Cognitive dissonance can also exist when a single person and his or her environment represents a discrepancy in cognitive structure. For example, a highly adaptive leader in a generally innovative environment will show signs of cognitive dissonance. Therefore, a rebel may be defined, for purposes of this study, as either an innovator or an adaptor, as long as cognitive dissonance exists between the rebel and his or her environment.

**Rebels**

Described as revolutionaries, renegades, martyrs, mavericks, radicals, and even extremists, rebels are found throughout cultures in arenas such as politics, business, religion, and the arts. Most of these terms evoke a negative connotation, a possibly unsettling description of someone with anarchist potential—a troublemaker. Kelly (2009) found that most of her respondents did not like the word rebel because it connoted a
person who causes trouble. Perhaps this dislike is for good reason because most people can recall stories of individuals who embody such a description, and world events associated with those individuals have instilled a fear of rebels within society. Even within an organization, Kelly found something she called the 90/30 conundrum; 90% of people responding to the survey identified rebels as innovative sources of change, but only 30% of those people felt very satisfied that rebels within the organization provided innovative change. Kelly determined that many of the same behaviors identified as positive attributes within the individual were the same attributes that made organizations feel uncomfortable (see Figure 5).

![Rebel behaviors that make companies feel uncomfortable](image)

*Figure 5. Rebel Motivation and Behavior. Adapted from *Rebels at Work: Motivated to Make a Difference*, by L. Kelly, 2009, p. 8. Copyright 2009 by L. Kelly. Reprinted with permission.*
Other words that describe rebels connote a more positive image; examples include leader, pioneer, innovator, change agent, progressive, and entrepreneur. Such words are found throughout most of the top educational leadership books available and are touted by some of the biggest names in the field. Regardless of the terminology used, the commonality at the heart of this rhetoric is the rebel’s intrinsic resistance to the status quo and a desire to invoke intentional change for the perceived betterment of all.

The primary literature on the topic of rebels is drawn from the fields of social psychology and sociology. Researchers in both of these fields have extensively studied the role of dissent and nonconformity within groups. Dominic Packer (2008), assistant professor of psychology at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, has studied dissent and nonconformity in groups since the early 2000’s and developed a model called the normative conflict model. The normative conflict model, according to Packer, segregates nonconformity due to dissent from nonconformity due to disengagement. Packer’s theory is that members of a group who are strongly vested in the success of that group challenge group norms when the norms are perceived to be harmful to the group. Conversely, weak members of a group tend to disengage from the group and become passive supporters of the group’s norms.

According to Hornsey and Jetten (2004), individualism is a core value within Western culture. The idea that individuals have the autonomy to explore their individuality and express themselves is fundamental (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Spindler & Spindler, as cited in Hornsey & Jetten, 2004). In social media in the United States, heroic characters are often portrayed as individuals who value
standing out as a courageous act of virtue (Hornsey & Jetten, 2004). Hornsey and Jetten (2004) suggested that by looking at the ways in which Western cultures promote themselves, it would be easy to see that mavericks, nonconformists, and rebels triumph as an expression of the individual over the group. The literature on this topic suggests quite the opposite emphasis and promotes the virtue of conformity as preferred social norm.

Social influence and conformity were of particular interest in the late 1960s and 1970s, after Solomon Asch (as cited in Allen & Levine, 1968) conducted his famous conformity experiments. Asch placed an individual in a room with several other “perceived” volunteers and administered a series of simple recognition tests. All of the individuals in the room, except the single participant, were aware of the experiment. Initially, the planted participants answered the prompts authentically, followed by the individual being assessed. After a series of prompts, the planted participants consistently gave the incorrect answer. Asch discovered that when presented with social pressure, nearly 75% of the individuals tested conformed to the wrong response even when they knew it was wrong. Asch did not study those individuals who did not conform, but an analysis of the results of the Asch experiments revealed that when one member of the group did not conform to the others, conformity among the group was all but eliminated completely (Allen & Levine, 1968). Packer (2008) remarked that, “Similar effects were observed in Milgram’s (1974) obedience experiments, and a long tradition of research on minority influence demonstrates that subgroups expressing deviant opinions exert an indirect but potentially powerful effect on attitudes of others” (p. 51).
Hornsey and Jetten (2004) suggested that at the core of this issue are two basic human motivations: the need to belong to a group and the need to be an individual. Social identity theory supports this notion by purporting that humans, in part, define themselves by the groups to which they belong, along with the shared experiences and values that groups provide (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Maslow (1968) concurred, noting that humans have a fundamental need to belong that is only superseded by a primitive drive for survival. Yet, while humans join groups, even at the expense of their personal values, a similarly strong drive also exists to actualize the self through individual experience (Wallach & Wallach, 1983). Hornsey and Jetten (2004) highlighted eight different strategies people use to balance their need for group belongingness and individual identity (see Table 2).

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Detail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Identifying with a numerically distinct group</td>
<td>An individual will join a small group so that the number of members within the group does not overtake their individualism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Subgroup identification</td>
<td>An individual will join a large group, but identify with a subsidy of that group to attain a greater sense of individualism.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Detail</td>
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<tr>
<td>3: Identifying with a group that defines itself against the mainstream</td>
<td>An individual will join a group whose cause appears against the mainstream thus providing a feeling of individual accomplishment in promoting a movement of viewpoint.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Perceptually enhancing the distinctiveness of one’s group</td>
<td>An individual will join a group that may not be perceived as nonconformist or against the mainstream but portray the group in such a way that replicates the feeling in Strategy 3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Differentiation through roles</td>
<td>An individual joins a group and takes on a role within the groups that gives them a level if individual distinctiveness within the organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: Identifying with a group that normatively prescribes individualism</td>
<td>An individual joins a group with a normative value focused on expressing one’s individualism as a function of the group’s purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7: Tailoring self-perception; seeing oneself as loyal but not conformist</td>
<td>An individual joins a group with which they conform to the group norms, but may portray themselves as an outspoken or dissenting member of the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Detail</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8: Seeing oneself as more normative that other group members</td>
<td>An individual joins a group with which they conform to the group norms, but portray themselves as more dedicated or as valuing those norms stronger than other group members.</td>
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</table>


Individuals balance their need for group identity and individualism in various ways. In many of the examples identified in Table 2, individualism is expressed as nonconformity, so it is logical to see the impact of nonconformity or dissent as negative or contrary to the success of the group. Packer (2008), in his normative conflict model, suggested that strongly identified group members value the positive image of their group and work to act in the best interest of the group. Louis, Taylor, and Neil (2004) found that strongly identified group members engaged in cost-benefit analyses to predict how various actions would affect the group independently of person-cost. Packer’s (2008) thought was that strongly identified group members held a desire to best serve the interests of the group, which motivated them to “stop behaving like prototypic exemplars of their groups and, instead, deviate from group norms if the perceive a good reason for doing so” (p. 52).

Tajfel (1978) wrote, “The crucial problem for social psychology . . . is that of relations between Man and social change . . . [for] change is the most fundamental
characteristic of the social environment, and, as such, is the most basic problem presented by this environment to the human organism” (p. 39). Often, rebel groups are defined as passive participants forced to react in an oppressive social arena. A more accurate reflection of rebels, according to Monin and Connor (as cited in Jetten & Hornsey, 2011), are individuals who are fully aware of the normative demands of an authority figure, group, society, or culture. These individuals often flagrantly defy the social norms and can be severely disliked by the order. Monin and Connor cited examples in which rebel behavior was viewed as liberating and heroic. In these cases, it was not the behavior of the rebel that was the determinant for likability; it was the level of defensiveness or threat perceived by the group.

This research establishes the foundation for understanding how and why rebels can exist in organizations as positive influences. Superintendents are strongly identified members of an organization and characterized as having a duty to education. Following the normative conflict model (Packer, 2008), these men and women value the organization and are proud of their positive role within it. Some of these individuals will dissent from the group, but in ways that are designed as supportive of the cause—not in opposition to it. Even when a rebel leader is perceived negatively, it is generally not due to the behavior of the rebel, but the perceived threat or defensiveness of the organization that casts a negative light for the rebel behavior onto the individual. Social psychology has long valued conformity as a positive trait in social groups, but this long-standing viewpoint is changing and a broader understanding of the value of nonconformity as a positive trait is developing throughout the field.
Packer’s (2008) portrait of a rebel superintendent paints a different picture than the socially understood idea that rebels are rogue individuals without commitment, values, or beliefs. Rebel superintendents, according to the normative conflict theory, have strong value systems and a deep commitment to their organizations. It is likely the decisions, expressions, and demeanor of these superintendents can be observed through one or more ethical lenses. In educational administration, the ethical lenses used by superintendents are of particular interest because their use in decision making has an impact on the entire organization. As Foster (as cited in Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005) noted, “Each administrative decision carries with it a restructuring of human life: that is why administration at its heart is the resolution of moral dilemmas.” (p. 3).

**Ethical Lenses: Deontology, Utilitarianism, Care, and Critique**

By the very nature of their roles, superintendents are expected to act justly, rightly, and promote good—to be ethical (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2001; Evers, 1992). As Gross and Shapiro (2004) shared, “Knowing which ethics a person favors when making a decision tells the individual something about his or herself and how to deal with the problems” (p. 59). Enomoto and Kramer (2007) added that leaders often have to pair ethical frameworks with practical circumstances and make value judgments (Begley, 1999). The impact of these decisions, according to Foster (1986), “carries with it a restructuring of human life: [which] is why administration at its heart is the resolution of moral dilemmas” (p. 33).

In defining ethics, Dewey (1902) wrote, “ethics is the science that deals with conduct insofar as this is considered as right or wrong, good or bad” (p. 4). Staratt (2004)
added that ethics is “the study of the underlying beliefs, assumptions, principles, and values that support a moral way of life” (p. 5). The field of ethics has grown throughout history and new theories are developed as societies change and the nature of ethical thinking shifts. Within the field of education, Starratt (1994) proposed the ethical frameworks of justice (comprising both deontology and utilitarianism), critique, and care. The three frameworks, for the purposes of this study, are presented as four lenses: deontology, utilitarianism, care, and critique.

**Justice: Deontology**

*Deontology* refers to a decision or action viewed as inherently ethical or not based on “an imperative sense of duty” (Lefkowitz, 2003, p. 40) and establishes an ethical, categorical “ought” (Schwickert, 2005, p. 178). Aronson (2001) described deontology as the theory or study of moral obligation. According to Lefkowitz (2003),

Deontology focuses on the specific actions or behaviors of the decision-maker. Most of the moral rules or principles that constitute a deontological position are phrased in the negative as a proscription. In other words, deontological morality generally has to do with defining what is permissible or impermissible—not what is required. (Lefkowitz, 2003, p. 41)

Proponents of deontological ethics, such as Hobbes and Kant, considered moral value to be independent of the outcome because the consequences are uncertain. Algaers and Burnette-Lemon (2006) supported this viewpoint by suggesting that deontology takes into consideration universal moral principles such as duty, intention, and respect, independent of the consequences that may result from action. Machan (1997) wrote, “The
moral goodness of a deed derives from its being intended by the agent to be nothing except a morally good deed” (p. 37). The benefit of this perspective is that, “[a]lthough other parties to an issue might not agree with a decision, if they can understand and appreciate the morality of a decision and why it was made, then the decision can be deemed ethical” (Bowen, 2002, p. 272).

In summary, the emphasis for deontology was on the decision maker’s duty to do what was intrinsically right without regard for the consequences. This aspect of justice was contested and a new vein of justice emerged that shifted the focus away from the individual’s sense of duty toward a broader consideration of the greater good.

**Justice: Utilitarianism**

Unlike Hobbes and Kant, philosophers such as Aristotle, Rousseau, and Marx believed that society was the central figure, as compared to the deontological view, which perceived the individual was the central figure. Thompson (1997) explained that utilitarianism, sometimes referred to as teleological ethics, was about using the society as the ends to a mean. In other words, the just decision was the one that would produce the greatest benefit for the greatest number of people and offered a practical principle that leaders could easily apply to ethical questions. Jeremy Bentham (1923/1970) shaped this ethical lens into utilitarianism by adding the concept of maximization, stating that the goal of an ethical decision should be to maximize the most good for the largest number of people. Strike, Haller, and Soltis (1998) supported that view by noting, “whenever we are faced with a choice, the best and most just decision is the one that results in the most good or the greatest benefit for the most people” (p. 16).
Utilitarianism held that

[the aggregation of the consequentialist principle that deciding whether an act is right or wrong is based upon whether or not the consequences of the act are good or bad and the hedonist principle that only pleasure is inherently good and only pain is inherently bad. (Aronson, 2001, p. 249)

According to Bentham (1923/1970), “An action might conform to the principle of utility when the tendency it has to augment the happiness of the community is greater than any it has to diminish it” (p. 12). From this perspective, utilitarianism, on the whole, focused on producing as many good consequences as possible. Lefkowitz (2003) criticized utilitarianism because “[i]t emphasizes the greatest good for all concerned while ignoring potentially relevant distinctions among people” (p. 71). Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) discussed these relevant distinctions among people as tensions that exists among individuals without power or prejudice—or those who are unheard.

Ethic of Critique

The ethic of critique informs one’s decisions by highlighting the tensions inherent in ethical dilemmas (Shapiro & Gross, 2008; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). Critique impresses upon the individual to rethink concepts such as social justice, democracy, power, privilege, and culture (Shapiro & Gross, 2008). Critical theory suggests that displacement of power and injustice are woven into the societal structures around us. The rules are made by those with power and are inherently biased by this imbalanced power and privilege. Scholars point to the ethic of critique as the ethical framework to highlight the problems and tensions inherent in the ethic of justice (Shapiro & Gross, 2008;
Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). It can be argued that the ethic of critique can be used to resolve the tensions between the ethic of justice, laws, rights, and the concept of utilitarianism itself (Shapiro & Gross, 2008; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005).

The ethic of critique draws upon the philosophical foundations of critical theory, which analyzes inequities of class, race, and gender. In the realm of education, critical theorists often study how societal social structures create inequalities that are echoed in public schools. Aronowitz and Giroux (1991) asked educational leaders to look at classrooms as political structures and analyze tensions and disparity between social classes, genders, and races (Shapiro & Gross, 2008; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005).

Shapiro and Gross (2008) said,

This ethic than asks educators to examine and grapple with those possibilities that could enable all children—whatever their social class, race, or gender—to have opportunities to grow, learn, and achieve. Such a process should lead to the development of options related to important concepts such as oppression, power, privilege, authority, language, voice and empowerment. (Shapiro & Gross, 2008, p. 25)

The ethic of critique reveals a fundamental need to rethink and redevelop foundational concepts such as democracy and social justice, but also to “refine and reframe other concepts such as privilege, power, culture, language, and even justice itself” (Shapiro & Gross, 2008, p. 38). Purpel (1988) argued that educators have a responsibility for helping students become liberated from those structures that oppress them, particularly those of “ignorance and illiteracy” (p. 124). As Shapiro and Gross (2008)
stated, “[C]ritical theorists are often concerned with hearing the voices of those who are silenced, particularly students” (p. 24) because critical theorists believe in the moral imperative of ensuring equity by more closely analyzing disparity between social classes, races, and genders (Shapiro & Gross, 2008; Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2005).

**Ethic of Care**

Growing out of feminist scholarship, the ethic of care places caring as the central element for ethical decisions (Beck & Murphy, 1994; Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984; Shapiro & Gross, 2008, Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001). Noddings (2002) remarked that the mission of a school is to care for children and that education is central to creating and maintaining a caring society. Unlike the ethic of justice, which promotes the rule of law and the greater good, and the ethic of critique, which emphasizes critical analysis and voices unheard, the ethic of care places caring as the foundation for ethical decision making (Beck & Murphy, 1994; Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984; Shapiro & Gross, 2008; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). In turn, emphasis is placed on using care and concern as the primary voice when solving ethical dilemmas.

Noddings (2002) defined education as “a constellation of encounters, both planned and unplanned, that promote growth through the acquisition of knowledge, skills, understanding, and appreciation” (p. 283). She expanded the definition by remarking that education is central to the cultivation of caring in society. The primary mission of schools, continuing Noddings’s logic, is to care for children. Therefore, as school leaders, a paradigm shift is required in educational leadership that moves away from the autocratic ethic of justice toward a more caring one. Administrators, within an ethic of care, would
look beyond goals toward values to guide development of organization strategies while embracing the idea that each person deserves the opportunity to live and learn in a supportive, nurturing environment (Beck & Murphy, 1994).

Beck and Murphy (1994) asserted that administrators need to focus on creating relationships and connections as well as developing inclusive practices for including everyone in decision making. They remarked that leadership preparation programs need to be prepared in ways different from previous preparation programs, which emphasized a more bureaucratic, top-down approach taken from the military and business models of leadership (Shapiro & Gross, 2008; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). As Shapiro and Gross (2008) stated,

One could extrapolate from what [Beck and Murphy have] written that educational administrators need to distribute the leadership not simply handing over tasks, but by making certain that everyone is involved in the process of education and feels as if they are heard and of worth. (Shapiro & Gross, 2008, p. 28).

**Summary**

The importance of leadership has been infused into the modern concept of school reform. The role of the superintendent has evolved and adapted to the needs of society and, in turn, has redefined itself over the course of decades. Throughout these transitions a focus on the right traits for successful leadership were articulated throughout the literature with little regard to the personal and cognitive composition of the individuals who were becoming school leaders. As the United States became industrialized, the
desire to better understand personalities and the cognitive composition of a human gave way to several forms of assessment designed to identify traits or types within people. One of these areas was in the isolation of cognitive style as one indicator of an individual’s leadership style. Kirton (1976) developed the Adaption-Innovation theory to capture his lifelong work on understanding cognitive style as a function of leadership, creativity, and decision making. Meanwhile, social psychologists were studying the propensity of certain individuals to resist conformity within groups. All of these areas contribute to a collective understanding explaining how a rebel superintendent can be defined, identified, and grounded in theoretical research.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of rebels in education by examining the professional behaviors of school superintendents that demonstrate, in one way or another, (a) an inherent resistance to the status quo; (b) a demonstrated deep conviction for the cause that sees beyond personal motivation or gain; and (c) the knowledge, skills, relationships, and authority to create potential change within the system (Birenbaum & Sagarin, 1976; Hamilton, 2002; Kelly, 2009; Moscovici, 1976; “Rebel,” n.d.; Sibley, 1970). Through this study, individual superintendents were studied to determine if they meet the standard of being called rebel and whether or not they use rebellious qualities as part of their leadership to effect change within the organization.

Research Questions

This study augments the scholarship of educational leadership through examination of the following questions:

1. To what degree does a relationship exist between scoring as highly adaptive or highly innovative on the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI) and the presence of rebel characteristics in superintendents?
2. What behaviors and actions are present in superintendents identified as highly adaptive or highly innovative that demonstrate a resistance to the status quo?

3. How do highly adaptive and highly innovative superintendents use coping behavior to modify their actions and behaviors when rebel characteristics may be perceived as adversarial in a given situation?

4. Which ethical lenses do highly adaptive and highly innovative superintendents prefer to use in decision making and problem solving?

5. To what extent are highly adaptive or highly innovative educational rebels effective at promoting change and what can be learned from their successes and failures?

6. How do the profiles of highly adaptive superintendents, highly innovative superintendents, and superintendents identified as part of the control group compare and contrast to one another?

**Mixed Methods**

This study used a mixed methods (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) approach, which is a methodology for collecting, analyzing, and “mixing” both quantitative and qualitative data during the research process within a single study, to understand a research problem more completely (Creswell, 2007). The underlying principle for mixing is that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods are adequate by themselves to capture the details and complexity of the condition being studied. When used in combination, quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other and allow for more complete analysis (Green, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).
While designing a mixed methods study, three issues need consideration: priority, implementation, and integration (Creswell, Plano Clark, Guttman, & Hanson, 2003). Priority refers to which method, either quantitative or qualitative, is given more emphasis in the study. Implementation refers to whether the quantitative and qualitative data collection and analyses come in sequence or in chronological stages, one following another, or in parallel or concurrently. Integration refers to the phase in the research process where the mixing or connecting of quantitative and qualitative data occurs.

This study used one popular mixed methods design in educational research: sequential explanatory mixed methods design, consisting of two distinct phases (Creswell, 2002, 2003; Creswell et al., 2003). More specifically, this study used a variant of explanatory design called the participant selection model (Creswell, 2007). According to Creswell (2007), the participant selection model (see Figure 6) is used when a researcher needs quantitative information to identify and purposefully select participants for a follow-up, in-depth, qualitative study.

Overall the two-phase structure of the explanatory design method is considered a strength of the design because it is clear and easy to implement. This design also allows for the findings to be reported using a two-phase format that divides the quantitative and qualitative phases for the reader. This approach generally requires more time for implementing the two phases. For the participant selection model in particular, the researcher also needs to specify criteria for the selection of participants for the qualitative phase of the research (Creswell, 2007).
In the first phase, quantitative, numeric data were collected first, using a standardized psychometric assessment called the KAI developed by British psychologist, Dr. Michael Kirton (1977). The goal of the quantitative phase was to stratify respondents,
based on score, into one of six categories: highly adaptive, moderately adaptive, mildly adaptive, mildly innovative, moderately innovative, and highly innovative. Potential participants for the second phase were chosen from individuals with a qualifying score above 124, below a score of 85, and within the range of 85-105. Individuals with scores below 64 were specifically desired for the study, but not found in the participating population. Individuals within these three score ranges constituted the potential pool of candidates for Phase II. Within each of the three score ranges, the researcher sought to select participants who equally represented both genders, diversity within age and years of experience, and who identified at least a minor level of dissatisfaction in one or more of the following three prompts: (a) the current state of education in the United States, (b) the current state of education in Illinois, and (c) the progress of their district.

In the second phase, a qualitative multiple case study design using a phenomenological approach was used to collect text data through individual semistructured interviews and documents to help explain why certain external and internal factors may be significant predictors of rebel personality traits. The rationale for this approach was that these quantitative data and results provided a general picture of the research problem and identified which participants to select for an in-depth qualitative follow-up, while these qualitative data and analyses refined and explained those statistical results by exploring participants’ views in more depth.

The priority in this design was given to the qualitative method because the qualitative research represented the major aspect of data collection and analyses in the study, focusing on in-depth explanations of quantitative results. A smaller quantitative
component was placed first in the sequence and was used to reveal the participants’
cognitive style in being identified as a potential rebel. The quantitative and qualitative
methods were integrated at the beginning of the qualitative phase while selecting the
participants for analysis and developing the interview questions based on the results of
the statistical tests. The results of the two phases are integrated during the interpretation
of results portion of this study.

Phase I: Quantitative Data Collection

Quantitative Measure

The quantitative portion of this study focuses on quantifying a superintendent’s
preferred method of problem solving and use of creativity through the measurement of
his or her cognitive style. The KAI is a psychometric assessment designed to quantify an
individual’s cognitive style on a continuum ranging from adaptive to innovative.
Adaption-Innovation theory, developed by British psychologist Michael Kirton (2006),
purports that all individuals are creative and solve problems using a preferred style or
method that fits somewhere in the adaption-innovation continuum. Adaptors tend to work
from within a system, using the resources given to improve a problem or develop a
solution that fits into the current paradigm. Innovators, on the other hand, prefer to look
outside the current paradigm, often suggesting the replacement of systems and develop
solutions that change the way a system operates to address a problem. Preferred style is
typically observable in an individual’s behavior, but behavior is influenced by outside
factors that can mask cognitive style. The KAI remains reliable and valid even when an
individual’s observable behavior is outside of his or her preferred cognitive style.
The KAI is a standardized psychometric measure and must be administered by a certificated user. The inventory consists of 33 prompts or images. The participant indicates how easy or difficult he or she finds presenting this image consistently over long periods of time. The measure is untimed but, typically, administration takes 10-15 minutes per participant. Scoring on the KAI is conducted on a continuum; scores are normally distributed within the general population. Adaptors are considered individuals scoring below the mean and are characterized as mildly adaptive with a score range of 80-95, moderately adaptive with a score range of 65-79, or highly adaptive with a score below of 64. Innovators are considered individuals scoring above the mean and are characterized as mildly innovative with a score range of 96 to 110, moderately innovative with a score range of 111 to 124, or highly innovative with a score above of 124.

The 33 items on the instrument include 32 scored items and one control item; responses are made on a Likert 5-point scale. Minimum score on the instrument is 32, maximum score is 160, and the mean score is 96 (see Figure 4). Individuals who score relatively lower are considered adaptors while those with higher scores are considered innovators. The relational component of the instrument indicates that, given any two different scores, one will either be more innovative or more adaptive than the other, regardless of where the scores fall on the continuum. The instrument has an observable score range of 45 to 145 with a standard deviation of approximately 18 (Kirton, 2006). The original instrument was scrutinized for test-retest reliability, achieving an internal reliability coefficient of .88. In a replication study conducted a year later, the reliability coefficient remained at .88. Validation studies conducted by Bagozzi and Foxall (1995),
Murdock, Isaksen, and Lauer (1993), Clapp (1993), and Foxall and Hackett (1992) have continually reported solid construct validity supporting Kirton’s three-factor model.

**Target Population and Quantitative Sampling Strategy**

The target population for this study was currently employed K-12 public education superintendents from publically funded K-12 school districts in the collar counties surrounding the Chicago metro area: Lake, McHenry, DuPage, Kane, Will, and the southern and western portions of suburban Cook counties. Suburban Cook County school districts considered for this study were those serviced by the South Cook Intermediate Service Center and the West Cook Intermediate Service Center.

For the first part of the quantitative phase, the convenience sample was selected from a pool of all public school district superintendents located in Lake (n = 44), McHenry (n = 18), DuPage (n = 42), Kane (n = 9), Will (n = 29), and the southern and western portions of suburban Cook (n = 105) counties for a total of 247 public school districts. Three superintendents held dual superintendencies, leaving the number of superintendents eligible for participation in the study at 244 (Illinois State Board of Education, n.d.). School districts serviced by the North Cook Intermediate Service Center, including one special education district, as well as three districts located in Lake County, were eliminated from the study due to potential confidentiality risk to participants and bias from the researcher.

**Quantitative Data Collection Procedure**

To initiate the quantitative phase of this research, a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request (see Appendix A) was filed with the Illinois State Board of Education
requesting a list of all current public school superintendents within the Lake, McHenry, Kane, Will, DuPage, and the southern and western portions of suburban Cook counties. The FOIA request specifically requested the first and last names of the school district superintendent, the school district name and number, the school district address, the school district county, phone numbers for the district, and e-mail addresses for the superintendent.

Permission to use the KAI (see Appendix B) and certification to administer the KAI (see Appendix C) were obtained and copies of these permissions were included in the cover letter (see Appendix D) that was mailed to the superintendent of the 247 public school districts that outlined the purpose and rationale for the study. A consent to participate in research letter (see Appendix E) inviting them to participate in Phase I of this research study was also included. The consent to participate letter identified the title of the study, the name of the researcher, the purpose of the study, and outlined any potential benefits or risks to the participant for participating in this phase of the study. In addition, the letter discussed compensation, confidentiality, the voluntary nature of the study, and provided contact information for the researcher, the researcher’s faculty advisor, and the compliance manager for Loyola University of Chicago. Also enclosed in this initial mailing was a KAI cover letter incorporating a brief demographic input form (see Appendix F), a copy of the KAI (see Appendix G), and a self-addressed stamped return envelope.

Individuals choosing to participate with informed consent were instructed to sign the consent to participate letter, complete the demographic input form, respond to the
KAI, and mail all three pieces in the provided self-addressed stamped envelope to a post office box secured by the researcher for the exclusive purpose of this study. Potential participants were instructed to decline participation in the study by returning the materials to the researcher or through nonparticipation. At the conclusion of the study the researcher mailed each participant a feedback booklet containing the participant’s score, information regarding the KAI, and a description of how to interpret results (see Appendix H).

To help solicit a higher response rate for the study, a three-phase follow-up sequence was used (Dillman, 2000). Those individuals who did not respond by the set date of 10 days after the initial letter distribution were sent a reminder letter (see Appendix I) with an additional copy of the original materials; after 15 days, a second reminder postcard (see Appendix J) was mailed; and after 2 additional weeks, a third reminder (see Appendix K) was mailed, reiterating the importance of the participant’s input for the study with a final copy of the original materials enclosed.

The researcher, a certificated KAI user (see Appendix C), scored returned inventories and shared them with the participants. A feedback teleconference was offered if participants wished to review their scores and relevant theory. Participants who fell outside of the identified criteria for continued participation were thanked for their participation and released from the study. Select individuals who scored below a raw score of 85, above a raw score of 124, and within a score range of 85-105 were considered for an opportunity to continue into Phase II of the study and, if selected,
provided additional information regarding the study as well as the potential benefits and risk to the participant.

**Quantitative Data Analysis**

Data collected from returned KAI's as well as the demographic data collected in the demographic input form were entered into and processed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences software (SPSS) program. Data were summarized using descriptive statistics (Kline, 1998; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Descriptive statistics for the KAI responses were summarized in the results portion of the text and reported in tabular or graphic form; including a bar graph showing participants’ scores along the adaption-innovation continuum. Based on these results, respondents were ranked according to total KAI score. Superintendents who scored below a total score of 85 constituted the pool of adaptive candidates for Phase II. Superintendents who scored above a total score of 124 constituted the pool of innovative candidates for Phase II. Superintendents who scored between 85 and 105 constituted the pool of control group candidates. The use of extreme scores on the measure to select potential study candidates was chosen because individuals with more extreme scores have a higher likelihood for the existence of a cognitive gap (+/- 20 points) between themselves and their environment. Therefore, these individuals have a greater propensity for demonstrating more pronounced rebel behaviors. Theoretically, any individual with a KAI score that is more than 20 points different from another score (or set of scores) is discrepant enough to invoke the potential for rebel characteristics to be present regardless of where he or she falls on the continuum.
The goal of the quantitative phase was to stratify respondents, based on score, into one of six categories: highly adaptive, moderately adaptive, mildly adaptive, mildly innovative, moderately innovative, and highly innovative. Potential participants for the second phase were chosen from individuals with a qualifying score above 124, below a score of 85, and within the range of 85-105. Individuals within these three score ranges constituted the potential pool of candidates for Phase II. Within each of the three score ranges, the researcher selected participants, whenever possible, who represented both genders, diversity within age and years of experience, and who identified at least a minor level of dissatisfaction in one or more of the following three prompts: (a) the current state of education in the United States, (b) the current state of education in Illinois, and (c) the progress of their district. Using these criteria allowed the researcher to present multiple perspectives of individuals to “represent the complexity of our world” (Creswell, 2002, p. 194).

Nine superintendents were chosen for Phase II of this study. Three participants represented high innovator individuals, three represented mild to moderate adaptors, and three fell within the mild innovators range and served as a control group. None of the participants in this study were identified as highly adaptive.

Phase II: Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative Measures

Interview. Following the quantitative data collection phase of this sequential explanatory mixed methods design study, the subsequent phase addressed the qualitative data collection and analysis of a collective case design using a phenomenological
approach. A collective case study design is used for the purpose of “illuminating a particular issue” (Creswell, 2002) in greater depth by exploring similarities and differences within and between multiple cases (Yin, 2003), while the phenomenological approach seeks to collect insights and perceptions of lived experiences from the participant. The measure used for collecting these “shared experiences” (Merriam, 2009) involved an inductive, semistructured interview protocol. With the participants’ permission, interviews were audio-recorded.

A semistructured interview format is a flexible design in which the researcher develops an interview guide to frame topics or themes to be explored during the interview. The interviewer has the flexibility to group topics and questions in various ways and can ask questions in different ways for different participants to allow the research the greatest opportunity to maximize the data collected (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). During the interview, the researcher tries to build rapport with the respondent and develop a conversation style dialogue while exploring complex issues. This model allows the respondent the greatest opportunity to share his or her perceived experiences. Several authorities on qualitative research methods have cited various strengths and limitations to semistructured interviews, highlights of which are offered in Table 3.

Participants chosen for Phase II were mailed an interview cover letter (see Appendix L). The letter outlined the title of the study, the name of the researcher, the purpose of the study as well as any potential benefits or risks to the participant for participating in this phase of the study. In addition, the letter discussed compensation, confidentiality, the voluntary nature of the study and provides the contact information
Table 3

*Strengths and Limitations of Semistructured Interviews*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Positive rapport between interviewer and</td>
<td>Requires a skilled interviewer to avoid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>respondent</td>
<td>being directive or judgmental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability of the respondent to influence the</td>
<td>Analysis of findings must be completed by</td>
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<tr>
<td>topic allowing unexpected issues or</td>
<td>the interviewer</td>
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<tr>
<td>topics to emerge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guides the interview, but does not limit the</td>
<td>Time-consuming</td>
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<tr>
<td>researcher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provides a more natural, conversation style</td>
<td>Researcher cannot know if the respondent</td>
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<tr>
<td>flow to the interview</td>
<td>is fully telling the truth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Researcher can probe to gain additional</td>
<td>Research may require some level of</td>
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<tr>
<td>information or greater understanding of</td>
<td>schema about the local context to capture</td>
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<td>the respondent perspective and</td>
<td>the meaning of the responses</td>
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<td>experiences</td>
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An interview protocol (see Appendix N) was followed. Participants were asked a series of opening questions surrounding demographic topics as an initial opportunity to build rapport between the researcher and the respondent. Following these questions, the researcher asked questions that relate specifically to leadership traits, followed by questions relating to ethical frameworks used by the respondent, and lastly about views on rebels.

Participants were asked the following questions:

**Demographic Questions:**

1. How long have you been a superintendent?
2. How long have you been the superintendent in this district?
3. Describe your route to the superintendency.
4. How do you see your career evolving in the future?

**Leadership Questions:**

5. Share your views on the state of public education currently and how your role, as superintendent, contributes to the status of public education.
6. How do you make decisions? What do you use to determine or support that your decision is ethical in nature?
7. Describe an ethical dilemma you faced and how you worked through it.
8. How would you describe your leadership style?
9. Do you feel that your style is unique or has unique qualities compared to those expected within the role of a superintendent?

10. How would you define a rebel? Do you see yourself fitting that description? Why or why not?

11. Describe an instance where you acted as “the rebel” of which you just described.

12. Do you feel your rebel characteristics are displayed more publicly or privately in your role as superintendent?

13. How do you adapt or modify your rebel behavior to fit into situations in which these characteristics may be seen as adversarial? Do you find adapting your behavior in these situations easy or difficult?

14. Describe a situation where you adapted your rebel behavior.

15. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your leadership style, your role as superintendent, or your thoughts surrounding rebels?

Field notes. In addition to the digital audio recordings of the interview, the researcher collected anecdotal field notes during the interview. These notes added to the body of data collected during the interview by capturing observations unable to be documented solely through audio recording. These notes were typewritten immediately after the interview and shared with the respondent for clarification, revision, or elaboration. Interview transcripts and field notes were used during data analysis.

Documents. Document collection was also included as an element of this research study and included in the data analysis. Anticipated documents for potential use
included: formal job description, district vision/mission statements, strategic planning documents, newsletters, and public statements. Requested documents were retrieved from publicly available sites such as the district website or media outlets.

**Field journal.** The researcher recognized his personal investment in this topic and was, at the time the study took place, a public school administrator with beliefs and attitudes about public education and school leaders. Merriam (1998) urged researchers to recognize themselves as the primary instrument for gathering data and interpreting results. Caution was given to realize that data were interpreted through the researcher’s own system of values, beliefs, and perspectives (Merriam, 1998). As a method of controlling bias, the researcher maintained a field journal that contained personal thoughts, reflections, and feelings regarding the interview process, participants’ responses, behaviors of the participant, and responses and behaviors of the researcher. The field journal was shared with the dissertation director at regular intervals during the study.

**Target Population and Qualitative Sampling Strategy**

For the purpose of the second, qualitative phase of the study, the purposeful sample, which implies intentionally selecting individuals to learn and understand the central phenomenon, was used (McMillan & Schumacher, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The idea was to purposefully select participants who would best answer the research questions and who were “information-rich” (Patton, 1990, p. 169). Due to the sequential design of this mixed method study, participants selected for the qualitative phase of the study were determined based on the results of the initial quantitative phase. To be considered for the initial pool, participants had to exceed cut scores of below a raw
score of 85, above a raw score of 124, or fit into a score range of 85-105, as determined on the KAI. Within each of the three score ranges, the researcher selected participants, whenever possible, who represented both genders, diversity within age and years of experience, and who identified at least a minor level of dissatisfaction in one or more of the following three prompts: (a) the current state of education in the United States, (b) the current state of education in Illinois, and (c) the progress of their district.

Nine suburban K-12 public school superintendents from Lake, McHenry, Kane, DuPage, Will, and the southern and western portions of suburban Cook counties were part of this study. Three superintendents were identified as high innovators with KAI scores above 124, three were identified as mild to moderate adaptors with KAI scores below 85, and three represented mild innovators and served as a control group of superintendents scoring in the normative range of 85-105. Based on these results, maximal variation sampling, in which a researcher samples cases or individuals differing on some characteristic, was used. This method allowed the researcher to present multiple perspectives of individuals to “represent the complexity of our world” (Creswell, 2002, p. 194). Within these three categories, participant selection was based on the statistically significant differences surrounding demographic features of him or her, the personal being (such as gender, age, or experience), and upon demographic features (such as district size, type, or location) of the district in which they were employed. If a participant declined participation in this second phase of the study, the researcher looked for an alternate candidate within the appropriate category with a KAI score most similar to the original participant.
Qualitative Data Collection Procedure

To be considered for this phase of the research, participants had to exceed cut scores of below a raw score of 85, above a raw score of 124, or fit into a score range of 85-105, as determined on the KAI. Nine suburban K-12 public school superintendents from Lake, McHenry, Kane, DuPage, Will, and the southern and western portions of suburban Cook counties were part of this study. Three superintendents were identified as high innovators with KAI score above 124, three were identified as mild to moderate adaptors with KAI scores below 85, and three represented mild innovators and served as a control group of superintendents scoring in the normative range of 85-105.

Upon receipt of the signed cooperation letter, the participants were contacted to establish a face-to-face interview lasting approximately one hour. Interviews were semistructured in nature and followed a developed interview guide that was provided in advance to the participants. Data collection occurred in a mutually agreed location at a mutually convenient time. Confirmation of time and location with the participant occurred by both phone conversation and e-mail correspondence.

Prior to the interview commencing, the researcher provided and reviewed by reading aloud to the participant the interview consent letter (see Appendix N). The form detailed the purpose of the research, the scope of the superintendent’s participation, the right of the participant to terminate participation in the study at any time, and a review of any perceived risks or benefits to participating in this research study. The researcher reminded the participant that the interview would be recorded, transcribed, and provided to the participant for review. The researcher also reviewed that the superintendent had a
right to withdraw from the interview at any time or refuse to answer any part of any question at any time. The superintendent was asked to sign the interview consent letter and provided a copy of the signed letter before initiating the interview.

During the interview, the researcher asked questions and allowed the respondent to respond as he or she saw fit. Because this process was a semistructured interview, the researcher was able to follow up with additional questions on that topic or generate an original question not listed in the interview guide. The researcher was sensitive to the superintendent’s time and limited the interview to approximately an hour without additional consent from the superintendent to extend the time.

Interview data were transcribed and respondents were given the opportunity to review and, if needed, correct contents of the interview after it had been transcribed. This process of member checking is basically what the term implies—an opportunity for participants to check (approve) the interpretation of the data provided during the course of the interview and as transcribed by the researcher or his designee (Doyle, 2007; Merriam, 1998). It is a “way of finding out whether the data analysis is congruent with the participants’ experiences” (Curtin & Fossey, 2007, p. 92).

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

Analysis of the qualitative data sources involved coding and analysis for themes with the help of the Dedoose qualitative research coding software package. The steps in qualitative analysis were as follows:

1. preliminary exploration of the data by reading through the transcriptions and documents and making anecdotal notations,
Data analysis began by creating a detailed description of each case. The researcher situated each case within the appropriate context so that the description was related to the specific activities and situations involved in the specific case (Creswell & Maitta, 2002). The researcher then provided a detailed narration of the case with elaboration of major events, incidents, or chronology. In multiple case study design, the researcher also performs analysis across the cases as well as within each individual case (Stake, 1995). This analysis may be holistic, covering all aspects of the cases, or focus on specific aspects, as chosen by the researcher. In this study, the data collected from participants was primarily analyzed for general themes in the areas of leadership style, ethical lenses, and rebel characteristics. Finally, the researcher combined the results from the qualitative phase with results reported in the quantitative phase to develop an interpretation of the cases and report outcomes in the analysis portion of this study.

Credibility in qualitative research is judged differently than in quantitative methods. Qualitative design uses a process of verification rather than traditional validity and reliability measures. The researcher states central assumptions, biases, and personal values as a method of controlling the amount of interpretative bias that is interwoven into the research design. Additionally, the design uses four major forms of validation that were also used in the context of this study: (a) triangulation, or converging various
sources of information (see Figure 7); (b) member checking, or receiving validation or feedback from the participant regarding the accuracy of the identified category or themes; (c) detailed and rich descriptions of the findings; and (d) external audit, or accessing someone outside of the study to review the study and provide feedback (Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Miller, 2002).

Figure 7. Triangulation Model.

Study Design Limitations and Advantages

Mixed methods as a methodology has been discussed throughout the literature on research (Creswell, 2002; Creswell, Goodchild, & Turner, 1996; Greene & Caracelli, 1997; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) cited several strengths and weaknesses of the design (see Table 4).
### Table 4

*Strengths and Weaknesses of Mixed Method Design*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Words, pictures, and narrative can be used to add meaning to numbers.</td>
<td>Can be difficult for a single researcher to carry out both qualitative and quantitative research, especially if two or more approaches are expected to be used concurrently; it may require a research team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers can be used to add precision to words, pictures, and narrative.</td>
<td>Researcher has to learn about multiple methods and approaches and understand how to mix them appropriately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can provide quantitative and qualitative research strengths</td>
<td>Methodological purists contend that one should always work within either a qualitative or a quantitative paradigm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher can generate and test a grounded theory.</td>
<td>More expensive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can answer a broader and more complete range of research questions because the researcher is not confined to a single method or approach.</td>
<td>More time consuming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths</td>
<td>Weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A researcher can use the strengths of an additional method to overcome the weaknesses in another method by using both in a research study.</td>
<td>Some of the details of mixed research remain to be worked out fully by research methodologists (e.g., problems of paradigm mixing, how to qualitatively analyze quantitative data, how to interpret conflicting results).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can provide stronger evidence for a conclusion through convergence and corroboration of findings.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can add insights and understanding that might be missed when only a single method is used.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be used to increase the generalizability of the results.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative and quantitative research used together produce more complete knowledge necessary to inform theory and practice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Creswell (2003) suggested that sequential explanatory mixed method designs are (a) useful for exploring quantitative results in more detail within a qualitative framework, (b) logically structured enough for a single researcher to manage moving from one stage to another within the study, and (c) especially useful for utilizing quantitative data to speak to a larger population while maintaining the integrity of a case study design. Limitations to the design also exist and have been discussed by authorities in mixed methods design. Among these limitations are the following: (a) using quantitative data in the initial phase may show no significant differences amongst respondents, and (b) mixed method design often requires a lengthy amount of time to collect and analyze multiple data sets and require additional resources.

**Ethical Considerations**

Throughout the design and implementation of this study, ethical issues were addressed. In compliance with the Institutional Review Board (IRB), permission for conducting this research was sought from IRB. A request for review for this study was filed through the Compliance Approval Portal (CAP) v1.4 located on the Loyola University Chicago website and submitted to the Lakeside IRB for review. Information about the primary investigator, the project title, type, source of funding, type of review requested, and subject number and type were all included in the submission to IRB. The application also contained a description of the project, the significance of research, and methodology as well procedures to be used with participants.

Informed consent forms were created that outline the rights of the participant, acknowledge the obligations of the researcher, and state the respondents’ agreement to
participate in the study. Due to the two-phase design of the study, some participants received a second informed consent form outlining the second phase of the research as well the related elements.

Data collected during research were confidential but were not anonymous to the researcher. Protection of the identity of the participants was ensured through numerical coding and kept confidential by the researcher. Documents and items collected were also assigned numerical codes. During the interview phase, participants names were removed in the descriptions and reporting of results. All data collected during this study were maintained in a locked file cabinet by the researcher and will be destroyed one year after the publication this study. As part of the informed consent process, participants were made aware that summary data would be publically available upon publication of this research, but will in no way be traceable to the individual respondents.

The researcher’s involvement in the study changed between Phase I and Phase II. In the initial quantitative stage, the researcher administered the standardized psychometric assessment according to the strict protocols required as a certificated administrator of the measure. During the second phase, the researcher assumed a more participatory role due to the “sustained and extensive experience with participants” (Creswell, 2003, p. 184).

The researcher is a doctoral candidate at Loyola University Chicago for the degree of doctor of education within the Administration and Supervision division of the School of Education. At the time of the study, he was a public school administrator and had himself been labeled a rebel in his own regard. Additionally, because the researcher
was in the field of public education as a public school administrator in suburban Cook County, a resident of Lake County, and had been employed in public education for 15 years, it was possible that he might have known some of the participants in the study through personal and/or professional circles. All of these experiences introduced the possibility for bias and the subjective interpretation of the behavioral phenomenon being studied despite study elements designed to reduce bias (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2000).

**Bias Limitation**

To limit the bias interjected into this research and protect the reliability and validity of this research, a number of safeguards were incorporated into the study design. First, care was given to fully inform participants of the risks and benefits of participation in this research. Participants were asked to consent to participation at each new step of the process and offered the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any point. Second, participants in this research were provided access to results, documents, and information shared that related to their specific contribution to this study. Participants were afforded multiple opportunities to revise, elaborate, or remove all or part of their contributions to this study. Third, the researcher used multiple sources of data including quantitative scores, audio recordings, field notes, documents, and transcripts to substantiate the claims made in this study. Additionally, the researcher worked closely with his dissertation director to help monitor potential bias. The researcher also used feedback from the dissertation committee to monitor for potential bias. Lastly, the researcher maintained a field journal to capture questions, personal reflections, contradictions, opinions, anecdotal
thoughts and feelings, and additional information. This field journal was shared with the dissertation director on a regular basis.

Summary

This chapter outlined the methodological design used to answer the primary research questions. This study is intended to augment the scholarship of educational leadership through the examination of the following questions:

1. To what degree does scoring as adaptive or innovative on the Kirton Adaptation-Innovation Inventory (KAI) predict the presence of rebel characteristics in superintendents?
2. What behaviors and actions are present in superintendents identified as adaptive or innovative that demonstrate a resistance to the status quo?
3. How do highly adaptive and highly innovative superintendents use coping behavior to modify their actions and behaviors when rebel characteristics may be perceived as adversarial in a given situation?
4. Which ethical lenses do highly adaptive and highly innovative superintendents prefer to use in decision making and problem solving?
5. To what extent are highly adaptive or highly innovative educational rebels effective at promoting change and what can be learned from their successes and failures?
6. How do the profiles of highly adaptive superintendents, highly innovative superintendents, and superintendents identified as part of the control group compare and contrast to one another?
Using a sequential explanatory mixed methods design, this chapter delineated how the researcher used a quantitative measure to select participants for further study using qualitative measures. Included in this chapter was a description of mixed methods research design, data collection procedures for both quantitative and qualitative phases of this study, target populations and sampling strategies, benefits and limitations to the study design, and bias limitations.
CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of rebels in education by examining the professional behaviors of school superintendents who demonstrate, in one way or another, (a) an inherent resistance to the status quo; (b) a deep conviction for the cause that sees beyond personal motivation or gain; and (c) the knowledge, skills, relationships, and authority to create potential change within the system (Birenbaum & Sagarin, 1976; Hamilton, 2002; Kelly, 2009; Moscovici, 1976; “Rebel,” n.d.; Sibley, 1970). Through this study, individual superintendents were examined to see if they, indeed, meet the standard of being called rebel and whether or not they use their rebellious qualities as part of their leadership to effect change within the organization.

Research Questions

This study augments the scholarship of educational leadership through examination of the following questions:

1. To what degree does a relationship exist between scoring as highly adaptive or highly innovative on the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI) and the presence of rebel characteristics in superintendents?
2. What behaviors and actions are present in superintendents identified as highly adaptive or highly innovative that demonstrate a resistance to the status quo?

3. How do highly adaptive and highly innovative superintendents use coping behavior to modify their actions and behaviors when rebel characteristics may be perceived as adversarial in a given situation?

4. Which ethical lenses do highly adaptive and highly innovative superintendents prefer to use in decision making and problem solving?

5. To what extent are highly adaptive or highly innovative educational rebels effective at promoting change and what can be learned from their successes and failures?

6. How do the profiles of highly adaptive superintendents, highly innovative superintendents, and superintendents identified as part of the control group compare and contrast to one another?

**Mixed Methods Study Design Overview**

This research used a sequential explanatory mixed-method design (Creswell, 2007). The sequence of the study is depicted in Figure 8. In the first phase, the quantitative, numeric data were collected using a standardized psychometric assessment called the KAI (1977). The goal of the quantitative phase was to stratify respondents, based on score, into one of six categories: highly adaptive, moderately adaptive, mildly adaptive, mildly innovative, moderately innovative, and highly innovative. Potential
participants for the second phase were chosen from individuals with a qualifying score above 124, below a score of 85, and within the range of 85-105.

In the second phase, a qualitative multiple case study involving a phenomenological approach was used to collect text data through individual semistructured interviews and documents to help explain why certain external and internal factors may be significant predictors of rebel personality traits. The rationale for this approach was that the quantitative data and results provided a general picture of the research problem and identified which participants to select for an in-depth qualitative follow-up, while the qualitative data and its analysis refined and explained those statistical results by exploring participants’ views in more depth.

Phase I: Quantitative Data Collection

Target Population and Quantitative Sampling Plan

The target population for this study included all public school superintendents serving schools K-12 in the collar counties surrounding the Chicago metropolitan area: Lake, McHenry, DuPage, Kane, Will, and the southern and western portions of suburban Cook counties. Suburban Cook County school districts included in this study were those serviced by the South Cook and West Cook Intermediate Service Centers. In total, 247 public school districts were included in the study representing 244 public school superintendents. Three superintendents served in dual superintendent roles serving two different districts.
Response Rate

Responses were received from 123 of the 244 public school superintendents, resulting in a 50.4% response rate for the quantitative portion of the study. Responses were received from all six counties and represented five different district types, including K-8, PreK-8, K-12, PreK-12, and 9-12 districts (see Table 5 and Table 6).
Table 5

*Response Rate by County*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Responses (#)</th>
<th>Districts (#)</th>
<th>Response Rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lake</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DuPage</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>51.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kane</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McHenry</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Cook</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(south &amp; west)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N =)</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>49.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Gender, Age, and Experience**

The respondents were predominantly men, representing 65.0% of the respondents, while women represented 35.0% of the responses (see Table 7). The age span ranged from 37 years to 75 years. The mean age of responding superintendents was 52 years of age. Breaking down the age of respondents into decades revealed that eight superintendents were 30-39 years of age, 38 were 40-49 years of age, 55 were 50-59 years of age, 19 were 60-69 years of age, and one superintendent was 70-79 years of age (see Table 8).
Table 6

Response Rate by District Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Type (Grades Served)</th>
<th>Responses (#)</th>
<th>Districts (#)</th>
<th>Response Rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K-8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PreK-8</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>49.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PreK-12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N =)</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>49.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7

Gender Representation of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>% Valid</th>
<th>% Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N =)</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8

Age Range and Mean of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>37.00</td>
<td>75.00</td>
<td>51.6942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N =)</td>
<td>121</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In terms of experience, the respondents ranged from less than one year as a superintendent to 35 years of experience as a superintendent. The average experience for a responding superintendent was seven years of experience in the role of superintendent. The largest number of respondents ($n = 16$) was in their first year as a superintendent and more than 52% of the respondents had been a superintendent for five years or less (see Table 9 and Figure 9).

Table 9

*Range and Mean, Years as Superintendent*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$N$</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years as Supt.</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>6.4587</td>
<td>5.44234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid $N$</td>
<td>121</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were also asked how many superintendencies they had held in their career. Responses ranged from one to six superintendencies with the mean being 1.4 superintendencies. The majority (74.8%) of responding superintendents were in their first superintendency and few responding superintendents had held more than two positions (see Table 10 and Figure 10).
Figure 9. Frequency and Years as Superintendent.

Table 10

Range and Mean, Number of Superintendent Positions Held

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positions</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># supt. positions held</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>1.4050</td>
<td>.88108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>121</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 10. Number of Superintendencies Held.

Degree of Satisfaction with Education at District, State, and National Levels

As part of the initial demographic collection, respondents were prompted to identify, using a 6-point Likert-type scale (1= highly dissatisfied and 6 = highly satisfied), their current level of satisfaction with the state of public education at both state and national levels. Additionally, respondents were asked to rate their current level of satisfaction with the progress of their current district.

Respondents largely were mildly satisfied with the current state of public education on the national level, but 41.3% of respondents identified some level of dissatisfaction with public education on a national front. This finding was contrary to their opinion regarding the current state of public education in Illinois. The respondents
largely were mildly dissatisfied with education in Illinois, with the majority (63.6%) expressing some level of dissatisfaction with the current state of the education system in Illinois. Only 10 respondents were either moderately satisfied or highly satisfied with the education system in Illinois. With regard to the progress within their own districts, 48.8% of responding superintendents indicated they were moderately satisfied, while only 7.4% of respondents expressed some level of dissatisfaction with the educational progress within their district (see Figure 11, Figure 12, and Figure 13).

Figure 11. Level of Satisfaction with Public Education in United States.
Figure 12. Level of Satisfaction with Public Education in Illinois.

Figure 13. Level of Satisfaction with Public Education in Superintendent’s Own District.
Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI)

All of the respondents were administered the KAI, a psychometric assessment designed to quantify an individual’s cognitive style on a continuum ranging from adaptive to innovative. Adaption-Innovation theory, developed by British psychologist Michael Kirton (2006), purports that all individuals are creative and solve problems using a preferred style or method that fits somewhere in the adaption-innovation continuum. Adaptors tend to work from within a system, using the resources given to improve a problem or develop a solution that fits into the current paradigm. Innovators prefer to look outside the current paradigm, often suggesting the replacement of systems and developing solutions that change the way a system operates to address a problem. The KAI quantifies an individual’s cognitive style.

The KAI is a standardized psychometric measure scored by a certificated user. The inventory consists of 33 prompts or images. The participant indicates how easy or difficult he or she finds presenting this image consistently over long periods of time. The measure is untimed but administration typically requires 10-15 minutes per participant. The KAI uses a continuum with scores normally distributed within the general population. The adaption-innovation continuum ranges from a score of 32 to 160 but has an observable range of 45 to 145 and a mean of 95. Adaptors are considered individuals scoring below the mean and are characterized as mildly adaptive with a score range of 80-95, moderately adaptive with a score range of 65-79, and highly adaptive with a score below of 64. Innovators are considered individuals scoring above the mean and are characterized as mildly innovative with a score range of 96 to 110, moderately innovative
with a score range of 111 to 124, highly innovative with a score above of 124 (see Figure 14).


The range of scores for the respondents was from a low score of 70 to a high score of 153. The mean score for the population was 101, skewing the population to the mildly innovative side of the continuum (see Table 11). Adaptors \( (n = 46) \) accounted for 37.4% of respondents, while innovators \( (n = 77) \) accounted for 62.6% of respondents.

Among male respondents, the mean was 100; female respondents had a slightly higher innovative mean score of 104 (see Figure 15). Mean scores across age, experience, and district types were not significantly discrepant from one another (see Table 12). KAI scores by district are presented in Table 13.
Table 11

Range and Mean of Overall KAI Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KAI overall score</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>70.00</td>
<td>153.00</td>
<td>101.3333</td>
<td>15.21845</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Valid N (listwise) 123

Figure 15. KAI Inventory Continuum Categories by Score Range.
Table 12

**KAI Overall Score by Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>100.1500</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>16.34834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>103.5349</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>12.74353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>101.3333</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>15.21845</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13

**KAI Overall Score by District Type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District type</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K-8</td>
<td>107.6000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16.50051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PK-8</td>
<td>99.0658</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>14.13774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>115.5000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.60660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PK-12</td>
<td>105.7857</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15.48289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>102.2381</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17.47256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>101.3333</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>15.21845</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The KAI uses a three-factor structure to determine an individual’s cognitive style.

The first factor, called sufficiency of originality, captures the individual’s method of developing new ideas and his or her view on how those ideas are proliferated. Based on the creativity work by Rogers (1959), Kirton (1977) dedicated 13 items on the inventory to assessing an individual’s preferences for generating ideas and level of satisfaction or sufficiency with his or her ideas. Adaption-Innovation theory purports that innovators tend to not limit themselves in the number of ideas regardless of how relevant those ideas
are to the problem, whereas adaptors tend to generate ideas that more closely relate to the perceived nature of the problem and become satisfied more quickly with generating fewer ideas.

To address the second factor, efficiency, seven test items seek to identify an individual’s preference for precision, reliability, and efficiency. Grounded in Weber’s (1946/1958) work on bureaucratic structures, this factor sees innovation as disruptive and often the opposite of efficient. Innovators are willing to break the paradigm and consider solutions that may not immediately relate to the nature of the perceived problem. This process often consumes time and exists in the hypothetical or theoretical realm, explaining its perception as inefficient.

The final factor, called rule/group conformity, measures the degree to which one accepts or rejects elements of structures within a group or an environment. Twelve items on the inventory are dedicated to sampling an individual’s preference. Innovators, as measured by this factor, tend to resist, overlook, or ignore pressure to conform to group views, while adaptors lean towards abiding by the system or the group. Merton (1957) observed that bureaucratic structures forced individuals to be methodical and disciplined, with a high degree of conformity to the group or organization. In this view, adaptors tend to more easily conform to the rules or group norms than do innovators, who show less regard for the need for conformity.

An individual KAI score has an established expected set of subscores that are used to measure variance against each of the three factors. Individuals with scores higher than the expected score skew towards being more innovative from the expected score,
while a score lower than the expected score suggests that the individual is more adaptive than anticipated in that area. For example, an individual with a moderately adaptive score of 75 is expected to have a sufficiency of originality subscore of 32. If the sufficiency of originality score is 38, or +6 the expected score, that individual leans more toward the innovative style. This variance must be situated within the overall KAI score. An individual score of 75 is already moderately adaptive, so the individual would be expected to generate fewer ideas overall, and those ideas would be more sound and directly relate to the problem. Skewing the sufficiency of originality score toward the innovative side would mean that the individual, compared to other people who score a 75, may generate more ideas or ideas less directly related to the problem than other individuals who score a 75.

Among the respondents, an overall trend across the continuum was present for both sufficiency of originality and rule/group conformity factors. Overall, the responding superintendents skewed toward the innovative side in sufficiency of originality by approximately +6 points. The moderately adaptive group skewed the highest with an approximate +10 point lean toward the innovative side, while the highly innovative group did not skew at all. All respondents skewed more adaptive on the rule/group conformity factor by approximately -4 points on average. Adaptors skewed the most toward the adaptive side of the scale. On the third factor, efficiency, the population skewed toward the adaptive side by approximately -3 points (see Table 14).

These data suggest that those individuals attracted to the role of superintendent as a group value the ability to proliferate ideas that offer new ways of seeing a problem or
might open up new possibilities for a solution. The degree to which the ideas fit within the current paradigm is still affected by their overall KAI score. Highly innovative superintendents still generate more ideas that may be less directly related to the current paradigm than do moderately adaptive superintendents. In addition, those individuals who choose to be superintendents value, as a group, a greater cohesion and desire for consensus within an organization. Moderately adaptive superintendents who already value group cohesion skewed even more adaptive in this area, suggesting they may be viewed as anchormen of the system, holding laws as both critical to progress as well as to well-being. But they can also be seen as too wedded to group cohesion and present custom and too tender on group feelings to be able to effect radical change. (Kirton, 1999, p. 50)

Table 14

**KAI Subfactor Variance from Expected Score**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KAI Continuum Category*</th>
<th>Sufficiency of Originality Variance from Expected Score**</th>
<th>Efficiency Variance from Expected Score**</th>
<th>Rule/Group Conformity Variance from Expected Score**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moderately adaptive</td>
<td>Mean 10.5000</td>
<td>-3.8333</td>
<td>-6.6667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(65-79)</td>
<td>N 6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 7.00714</td>
<td>3.06050</td>
<td>4.45720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mildly adaptive</td>
<td>Mean 9.5250</td>
<td>-4.1000</td>
<td>-5.4250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(80-95)</td>
<td>N 40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAI Continuum Category*</td>
<td>Sufficiency of Originality</td>
<td>Efficiency Variance from Expected Score**</td>
<td>Rule/Group Conformity Variance from Expected Score**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>5.43015</td>
<td>3.39532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mildly innovative</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>5.7917</td>
<td>-2.6667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(96-110)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>5.22660</td>
<td>3.95363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately innovative</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>3.8421</td>
<td>-1.1579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(111-124)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>4.94709</td>
<td>3.84799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly innovative</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>1.1250</td>
<td>-.2500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(125-139)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>3.22656</td>
<td>1.03510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very highly innovative</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>.0000</td>
<td>1.5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(140-160)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>1.41421</td>
<td>2.12132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>6.5366</td>
<td>-2.7317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>5.81870</td>
<td>3.75930</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Note. * No respondents scored in the highly adaptive or very highly adaptive categories.

** Positive variance represents an innovative skew while negative variance represents an adaptive skew.
Correlative Data in Relation to KAI Score

The KAI measures an individual’s cognitive style, which remains consistent across variables such as age, experience, and environmental factors. A Pearson’s correlation test was run on the variables of age, gender, district type, years as a superintendent, number of superintendent positions held, and KAI overall score to determine if any of the demographic factors influence a person’s KAI score (see Table 15). While correlations between age, years as a superintendent, and number of superintendent positions held did exist, no correlation between any of the demographic factors and an individual’s KAI score were present. These data support that the KAI is not influenced by demographic factors present for individuals and measures a variable that is independent of one’s age, gender, experiences level, or environment.

Table 15

Demographic Correlations to KAI Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>District Type</th>
<th>Yrs. as Supt.</th>
<th># Supt. Positions Held</th>
<th>KAI Overall Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.157</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>.470**</td>
<td>.202*</td>
<td>.166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>.451</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>.068</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>.157</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>-.133</td>
<td>-.099</td>
<td>.106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>.885</td>
<td>.146</td>
<td>.280</td>
<td>.241</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Pearson’s correlation test was also run to determine whether a correlation
between an individual’s KAI score and his or her perceptions of education at the district,
state, and national levels existed (see Table 16). These data show only weak correlation
between a KAI score and an individual’s perception of satisfaction with the educational
progress in his or her own district. No other correlation between satisfaction and KAI
score exists.
### Satisfaction Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>KAI Overall Score</th>
<th>Level of Satisfaction with Current Education in</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KAI overall score</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>-.055</td>
<td>.188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.742*</td>
<td>.291**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>current U.S. education</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.704</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>-.055</td>
<td>.742**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>current IL education</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.551</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td>.075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>.188*</td>
<td>.291**</td>
<td>.162</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>current district education</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed). **Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

### Summary of Quantitative Findings

A total of 244 public school superintendents were invited to complete the KAI. Responses were received from 50.4% percent ($N = 123$) and represented a varied group of superintendents from various counties, district types, genders, ages, and experience levels. The range of scores for the respondents was from a low score of 70 to a high score.
of 153. The mean score for the population was 101, skewing the median score toward the mildly innovative side of the continuum. Adaptors \((n = 46)\) accounted for 37.4% of respondents, while innovators \((n = 77)\) accounted for 62.6% of respondents. Statistical tests were conducted to rule out the influence of demographic factors on an individual’s KAI score. Respondents were ranked by KAI score and stratified as moderately adaptive, mildly adaptive, mildly innovative, moderately innovative, highly innovative, and very highly innovative. None of the respondents met the criteria for highly adaptive or very highly adaptive.

Findings showed that individuals attracted to the role of superintendent tended to value the ability to proliferate ideas that offered new ways of seeing a problem or opened new possibilities for a solution, as well as developed some level of group cohesion within the organization. These data supported that an individual’s KAI score is not influenced by demographic factors such as age, gender, or experience level, nor is there a significant relationship between the KAI score and an individual’s perception of the public education system.

**Phase II: Qualitative Data Presentation**

Given that no quantitative correlation was established between an individual’s KAI score and his or her perceptions and views on education, nine superintendents were sampled using maximal variance sampling for an in-person interview. These superintendents were specifically chosen to represent various segments of the KAI continuum as well as various genders, district types, experience levels, geographic locations, and satisfaction levels of district, state, and national education progress.
However, the individual’s KAI score was the primary factor in selection. Three of the nine superintendents chosen received scores above 124, representing innovative superintendents, three of whom received scores below 85, representing adaptive superintendents, and three of whom received scores between 85 and 105, representing a control group of superintendents who reflect the normative population on the KAI measure. Each of the nine superintendents participated in a semistructured interview for approximately one hour and discussed his or her views and perspectives about leadership, education, decision making, ethics, and the concept of rebel superintendents.

The qualitative data for research questions 1, 2, 3, and 5 are presented using vignettes from each of the nine superintendents. The vignettes are organized by KAI category, representing the superintendents who were part of the control, adaptor, and innovator groups, followed by a brief summary of themes found within the responses of each group. To aid presentation of the qualitative data, a brief profile of each superintendent is offered in the following section.

**Superintendent Profiles**

Superintendents C1-C3 represent the control group with KAI scores between 85 and 105. Superintendents A1-A3 represent adaptive superintendents with a KAI score below 85, and superintendents I1-I3 represent innovative superintendents with KAI scores above 124. An overview of each superintendent’s data profile is presented in Table 17. A brief narrative description of each superintendent is also included below.

**Superintendent C1 (control group).** Superintendent C1 is a mildly innovative female superintendent in her mid-40s holding her first superintendency. She holds a
doctorate degree. She oversees a large Grade 9-12 high school system. She is African American. Her KAI score is 98 and is representative of the normative population. She shows an innovative skew of +10 in sufficiency of originality, reflecting a stronger ability to generate ideas outside of the current paradigm from other individuals scoring a 98. She also tends to skew adaptively by -4 in Rule/Group Conformity. This suggests that she values consensus and group cohesiveness more than do other like peers. Additionally, she presents with a more adaptive efficiency score of -6, suggesting she may have more self-imposed structure and focus more on precision and reliability. She is mildly satisfied with the national education front, as well as with the progress of her own district, but is mildly dissatisfied with the state of education in Illinois.

**Superintendent C2 (control group).** Superintendent C2 is a mildly innovative male superintendent in his mid-60s with more than 23 years of experience as a superintendent. He oversees a Grade K-8 school system, having been hired from outside of the district from another state system. He began his career as a science teacher and shared he came to Illinois based upon the benefit structures offered. He holds a doctorate degree. His KAI score is 101 and shows an innovative skew of +12 in sufficiency of originality, reflecting a stronger ability to generate ideas outside of the current paradigm from other mildly innovative individuals. He also tends to skew adaptively by -8 in rule/group conformity, suggesting that he values consensus and group cohesiveness even more than other mildly innovative peers. He identified that he is moderately satisfied with education nationally, mildly satisfied with education at the state level, and highly satisfied with the current progress of his own district.
### Table 17

**Summary of Interview Participant Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gdr.</th>
<th>Dist. as Supt.</th>
<th>Yrs as Supt.</th>
<th>U.S. ID</th>
<th>IL Dist.</th>
<th>Overall Score</th>
<th>KAI Continuum Category</th>
<th>Sufficiency of Originality</th>
<th>Efficiency</th>
<th>Rule/Group Conformity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Mild.</td>
<td>Mild. sat.</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>Mild. innov.</td>
<td>+10</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sat.</td>
<td>dissat.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>K-8</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>Mod.</td>
<td>High. sat.</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>Mild. innov.</td>
<td>+12</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sat.</td>
<td>sat.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>PK-8</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>Mod.</td>
<td>High. sat.</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>Mod. innov.</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sat.</td>
<td>sat.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>PK-8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mod.</td>
<td>Mild. sat.</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Mod. adapt.</td>
<td>+8</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dissat.</td>
<td>dissat.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Dist. Type</td>
<td>Yrs as Supt.</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>IL</td>
<td>Dist.</td>
<td>Overall Score</td>
<td>Continuum Category</td>
<td>KAI</td>
<td>Var. from Expected Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------</td>
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<td>-------</td>
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<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>PK-8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mild.</td>
<td>High.</td>
<td>Mild. sat.</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>Mild. adapt.</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mod.</td>
<td>Mod.</td>
<td>Mod. sat.</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>Mild. adapt.</td>
<td>+8</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I1</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>PK-12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>High.</td>
<td>High.</td>
<td>Mild. sat.</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>High.</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I2</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mod.</td>
<td>Mod.</td>
<td>High.</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>High innov.</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Gdr.</td>
<td>Dist. Type</td>
<td>Yrs as Supt.</td>
<td>Satisfaction with Current Education in</td>
<td>KAI</td>
<td>Variance from Expected Score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sufficiency of Originality</td>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>Rule/Group Conformity</td>
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* C = control. A = adaptor. I = innovator.
**Superintendent C3 (control group).** Superintendent C3 is a mildly innovative male superintendent in his mid-40s with more than 11 years of experience as a superintendent. He oversees a Grade PK-8 school system and, like Superintendent C2, was hired from outside of the district. He attended the Harvard Graduate School of Education for his masters and became a superintendent within six months of accepting his first principalship. He holds a doctorate degree. His KAI score is 103 and shows an innovative skew of +5 in sufficiency of originality, reflecting a stronger ability to generate ideas outside of the current paradigm as compared to other mildly innovative individuals. He also tends to skew adaptively in both rule/group conformity and efficiency, which suggests that he values consensus, group cohesiveness, and thoroughness more than is expected of a mildly innovative individual. He identified that he is moderately satisfied with education nationally and at the state level, and is highly satisfied with the current progress of his own district.

**Superintendent A1 (adaptor).** Superintendent A1 is a moderately adaptive male superintendent in his mid-40s, holding his first superintendency. He oversees a Grade PK-8 school system and, like superintendents C2 and C3, was hired from outside the district. He holds an MBA and a doctorate degree. His background experiences come mostly from being a business manager. He was never a building principal and shared that curriculum and instruction are weaker areas for him. He intentionally sought out a superintendency in a district without a business manager so he could use his business skills in the role of superintendent. His KAI score is 75 and shows an innovative skew of
+8 in sufficiency of originality, reflecting a stronger ability to generate ideas outside of the current paradigm as compared to other individuals scoring a 75. He also tends to skew adaptively by -5 in rule/group conformity, suggesting that while he values consensus and group cohesiveness as a moderate adaptor, he has an even stronger desire for consensus and cohesiveness than do other adaptive peers. He identified that he is moderately dissatisfied with both the national and state educational status, and is mildly satisfied with the current performance of his own district.

**Superintendent A2 (adaptor).** Superintendent A2 is a mildly adaptive female superintendent in her early 50s with five years of experience. She oversees a Grade PK-8 school system and was hired from within the district. She has been with the district for more than 20 years and served in the role of special education director before moving into the role of assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction. The former superintendent recruited her to the superintendency. She was never a building principal and identified herself as a fiery Italian who moves at the speed of light. Her KAI score is 82 and shows no significant alteration from the expected scores in sufficiency of originality, efficiency, or rule/group conformity. Based on her score, she would tend toward the typical characteristics of an adaptive individual. She identified that she is mildly dissatisfied with education nationally, highly dissatisfied with the status of education in Illinois, and is mildly satisfied with the current performance of her own district.

**Superintendent A3 (adaptor).** Superintendent A3 is a mildly adaptive male superintendent in his mid-40s with five years of experience as a superintendent. He
oversees a Grade 9-12 high school in a one-school system and was hired from within the
district. He began as a teacher in the school/district and has served as a union officer,
dean, assistant principal, principal, and superintendent. He currently, due to financial
issues in the district, serves as both principal and superintendent. He comes from a family
of educators; his brother is an active superintendent. His KAI score is 83 and shows an
innovative skew of +8 in sufficiency of originality, reflecting a stronger ability to
generate ideas outside of the current paradigm than do other individuals scoring a 75. He
also tends to skew adaptively by -4 in rule/group conformity and -4 in efficiency,
suggesting that while he values consensus and group cohesiveness as a moderate adaptor,
he has an even stronger desire for consensus and group cohesiveness than do other
adaptive peers. He also would present as more efficient, thorough, and orderly, as
compared to others at his score point. He identified that he is moderately satisfied with
both the national and state educational status, as well as mildly satisfied with current
performance in his own district.

**Superintendent I1 (innovator).** Superintendent I1 is a highly innovative male
superintendent in his mid-50s in his first experience as a superintendent. He has moved
through the ranks of the district and was hired from within the system. He has served in
the roles of middle school principal, high school principal, dean, and superintendent
within the district. He oversees a large Grade PK-12 school system. He recently
completed his doctorate degree and is African American. His KAI score is 131 and shows
an adaptive skew of -3 in sufficiency of originality, reflecting a likelihood to generate
more ideas inside of the current paradigm. He also tends to skew more innovatively in
rule/group conformity and efficiency, which is atypical for the population in the study and suggests that he may be less concerned with consensus and group cohesiveness than expected. High innovators are already less likely to be worried about rule/group conformity, so this skew toward an even more innovative score suggests an even stronger potential disregard than other highly innovative peers. He identified that he is highly dissatisfied with education nationally and at the state level, and is only mildly satisfied with the current progress of his own district.

**Superintendent I2 (innovator).** Superintendent I2 is a highly innovative female superintendent in her early-50s with eight years of experience as a superintendent. She oversees a Grade 9-12 school system and was hired from outside the system. Her background includes being multilingual and she identified that she has always had a passion for inner-city education. She has been a world language teacher, middle school principal, assistant superintendent in multiple districts, and a superintendent. She holds a doctorate degree. Her KAI score is 136 and shows an innovative skew of +3 in sufficiency of originality, reflecting a even stronger ability to generate ideas outside of the current paradigm than do other highly innovative individuals. She also tends to skew adaptively by -3 in rule/group conformity, suggesting a higher value placed on group consensus within the organization. She identified that she is moderately dissatisfied with education nationally and at the state level, but is highly satisfied with the current progress of her own district.

**Superintendent I3 (innovator).** Superintendent I3 is a very highly innovative male superintendent in his early-50s with 20 years of experience as a superintendent. He
oversees a Grade PK-8 school system. He holds an MBA and a doctorate degree in education. He identified that he always wanted to be a superintendent and moved as quickly to that role as he could. In addition to the superintendency, he has published a book and actively speaks throughout the country. His KAI score is 153, which is an atypical score and found in less than 1% of the general population. He has an innovative skew of +3 in efficiency, reflecting an unusually strong ability to loosen structure, shed detail, and delegate. He identified that he is moderately satisfied with education nationally, mildly satisfied with education at the state level, and is highly satisfied with the current progress of his own district.

**Organization and Presentation of Interview Data**

A series of interview questions were designed to ask the nine identified superintendents about their experiences and views as a superintendent on topics such as leadership, decision making, ethics, rebels, and the state of education on the local, state, and national fronts. The responses were audio-recorded and transcribed before being coded and analyzed for themes. Excerpts of the coded transcripts were prepared to present data designed to answer research questions 1-5 proposed in this study. The excerpts from the control group are presented first, followed by those from the adaptors group, and lastly from the innovators group. Following the excerpts from each group, a summary of themes and interpretations is presented. For Research Question 4, data are presented under each of the ethical lenses of deontolog**, utilitarianism, care, and critique. A summary of themes is presented at the conclusion of Research Question 4. Specific interpretations and findings are presented in Chapter 5.
Research Question 1. Research Question 1 was, “To what degree does a relationship exist between scoring as highly adaptive or highly innovative on the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI) and the presence of rebel characteristics in superintendents?”

The interview protocol was designed to offer rebel superintendents the opportunity to present views and experiences that highlight the following rebel characteristics: (a) a resistance to the status quo, (b) a deep conviction to the cause, (c) willingness to challenge sacred traditions or practices, (d) demonstrated frustration when change is ineffective or takes too long to implement, (e) willingness to go around the rules, (f) unconventional approaches, (g) higher tolerance for confrontation, and (h) a sincere desire to make the organization successful despite the consequences of their actions.

Each of the nine superintendents was chosen based upon his or her KAI score along with secondary demographic factors such as experience level, district type, and gender. Three of these superintendents represent the control group, with KAI scores between 85 and 105. Three superintendents represent the adaptors group, with KAI scores below 85, and three represent the innovators group, with KAI scores above 124. The interview transcripts were read by the researcher multiple times to highlight key words or phrases that would represent, to some degree, one or more rebel characteristics. The data were sorted by control group, adaptors, and innovators, and are presented below along with a summary of the data presented in each of the three categories.
Control group vignettes. One of the major tenets of adaption-innovation theory is that all people solve problems, are creative, and make decisions as part of their cognitive functioning. The KAI places an individual on a continuum from adaptive to innovative that encompass the diversity present in cognitive styles. In comparison to another person, one is either more innovative or adaptive than the other, regardless of their placement along the continuum. Thus, an adaptive person with a score of 80 presents as significantly more innovative relative to an adaptive person with a score of 59, just as an innovative person with a score of 120 appears more adaptive relative to another innovative person with a score of 150.

Kirton (2006) described individuals with scores between two other scores as having the potential to bridge the cognitive gap between the other two. For example, a person with a score of 59 and another person with a score of 80 will have some noticeable difference in their cognitive style. This difference is known as cognitive gap—in this case, a 21-point difference. A third person with a score of 68 may be able to bridge the perspectives of the other two and help balance the cognitive gap between the other two people. Kirton (2006) discussed bridging as a social role, not as a score.

Although Kirton (2006) did not intend the concept of being a bridger to be applied to people who fall in the middle of the continuum, but rather to people who fall between the KAI scores of two other individuals, it serves as a good general image of what to expect from superintendents within the control group of this study. These superintendents all had scores above 84 and beneath 124, placing them closest to the statistical mean (KAI of 101) of the superintendents included in this study. If the role of a bridger is to
provide balance between two extremes, it seems reasonable to expect that the characteristics of superintendents in the control group would demonstrate balance between innovative and adaptive strategies seen in the other two groups. Statistically speaking, the members of the control group fall on the innovative end of the continuum but would be characterized as mildly innovative. All three members of this group skew as more innovative in the subcategory of sufficiency of originality and more adaptive in the subcategories of efficiency and rule/group conformity. From their profiles, it would be reasonable to expect that these superintendents would be seen with characteristics similar to innovators in terms of identifying problems in their systems and generating ideas that required a shift in the current paradigm. However, their profiles also suggest a more adaptive style in regard to a desire for shifts to be methodical, efficient, and support building cohesion within the organization. Following are three vignettes from superintendents within the control group. Themes are presented after the vignettes.

**Superintendent C1 (KAI 98).** Superintendent C1 said,

I would say [a rebel is] someone who doesn’t always get along with their union, uses the word “no” to board members in scenarios where it is appropriate. I would say someone who actively puts themselves out time and again at the forefront of whatever's going on. I think it becomes someone who is visible and visibly always saying, “This is what’s best, this is where we are,” because a lot of times, in these seats, you can just sit quietly

I think it’s the one who’s always out there, who’s always out there, who’s always talking about what’s happening, what’s best for kids, what do we do? Who
doesn’t have any problem with sending a letter to the secretary of education, which there’s a group of us, we just did, about some stuff that we just weren’t happy with or that we think it just doesn’t make sense.

I don’t think that there’s necessarily a look, but I do think that there is a way to carry yourself in terms. Because a rebel superintendent is not going to be the one with necessarily with all the charisma, sitting back, and everybody comes to them. That’s not a . . . a rebel will ruffle feathers.

I do ruffle a lot of feathers and I’m okay with that, because the way that I look at it is, when it’s all said and done, when I’m being held accountable, I’m being held accountable for the work that I did to make kids’ lives better. So all that other stuff that, that’s . . . and I look at it as those are your personal issues. They’ve got nothing to do with me.

Right now I am, at this very minute, working on a bill that has ruffled a lot of feathers, made a lot people mad. But in my district, we have a state-authorized charter school. The charter school group appeared before my board. The board said, “Financially, it doesn’t make sense. It just makes zero sense,” and so anyway, we went to court, we went through this whole process, the courts upheld it. The reality is it’s not about the [charter] school.

I’m very competitive so I’m always, like, “Bring it.” More schools look out. My issue is the funding and the way that the state withholds the general state aid, my full per-pupil allotment. You’re withholding people’s property taxes, who never voted to have another school in their . . . if they wanted another school, we
would have done a referendum and built a XXXX high school and the voters would have had a say in that.

I have issues with the state withholding money that, really, our voters never had the opportunity to (a) say yes or no, and (b) withholding that significant amount of money. I have a bill that, it’s actually at Speaker Madigan’s office right now, trying to change the law.

I think other communities are saying, “Oh, oh, we could be next,” and so I’ve been sort of this rebel out front and people think I’m against charters. I’m not, I’m just saying, “Fund it the way it’s supposed to be funded,” and so we’ll see. But it’s been a rebellious moment because people have said to me, even my local state rep said, “Just leave it alone.” I go, “Why would I just leave that alone? Why would I just sit back and just feel like, ‘Oh, well, yes, we’re just going to lose the money and we’ll have to cut another class period, we’ll have to cut more programs.’” That’s not fair to my kids. I have been, I guess, rebellious of sorts, and it won’t stop because I don’t know any other way to be.

*Superintendent C2 (KAI 101).* Superintendent C2 said,

I use humor a lot in what I’m doing. At times, when we would meet with the legislators in Michigan, I would always tease. I would also make a statement that I would prefer, in fact, if the legislators just stayed home and got paid because when they were in XXXX or XXXX, we saw all this shit happening and normally it was happening to me. I would tell them and tease them, but at the same time, be pretty direct.
I don’t know if I fit the rebel part. I would do things different, but I don’t necessarily view myself as the rebel part. We ended up extending a number of years, and not many people had done it, in teacher’s contracts. If you go for 11 years and that was standard in XXXX, zero to 10 on the salary schedule. If you go from zero to 15, and you had the same top and the same bottom, then you saved millions of dollars across time by moving people slower in that schedule.

They end up at the same spot when they get to retirement. It’s just a slower progression. When you implement it, one of the things you do is you can move people out of the step they’re in. If you’re on the fourth step and when we changed the salary schedule, in order to get the same money, you’re getting this year, you have to be on the sixth step. Then you can move that person to the sixth step. Nobody gets hurt right then. But the long haul is you’re able to save money.

I think I did a number of things like that that were different than other people were doing. I had very good relations with the union. We used to meet once a month and have a beer and talk about stuff and see where things are. Don’t think I was rebellious probably. Do think the job was so political that even though I had a real good relationship with my senator, who lived in the town I was in, so I’d stop at his house, we’d have coffee every other week. I gave him a hard time, but he would work with us . . . when I really needed him. But then at the same time, when he really needed me, I would reciprocate.

Probably not how I would define rebel. I’ve seen superintendents who seem like they almost want to disagree and make sure everybody’s cognizant of it
and push the limits that way. But part of it was almost just the disagreeing, was part of it. I typically am trying to figure out how I get enough of what I want to make it make sense and then don’t want to alienate. The rebel part to me, my definition, would probably include the greater likelihood of alienating somebody.

I think some people are confrontational because they are. I think some people will pick up a piece and then it’s a value statement and they’ll stay true to that value piece and fight for it, even if they’re not going to get it. I think I’m more of a pragmatist in many instances. If I’m not going to be able to get what I’m after, then I’m not going to alienate somebody over it. But I think some people do and it is part of their personality. I think some people are very honorable with it, very true. But for me, I think I have a greater likelihood of getting what I want doing it less confrontational.

*Superintendent C3 (KAI 103).* Superintendent C3 said,

> We have a responsibility to . . . be receptive to the trends that are being presented to us. Unfortunately, things like the PARCC [Partnership for Assessment of Readiness of College and Careers] assessments are being thrust out without every school district being ready to be prepared for the administration of this assessment and that’s a part of the frustration as a superintendent, that while this district in XXXX, we won’t have a problem because we’re going to plan and prepare for it.

> As far as national and state trending, it’s a field you have to navigate carefully. You don’t want to appear disrespectful to the demands that are being
put out by the big players in the national or state level. At the same time, you take . . . you sit back and you make the judgment as to which are the things that you’re seeing here are looked more to be fad versus looked more to be permanently here.

Sometimes, to be honest with you, I stoke the fire a little bit. I fired off a memo on school safety, saying, “This is the way it’s going to be,” knowing that wasn’t going to be the way it should be, but I wondered if it would elicit a response. I’d been trying to elicit a response but they haven’t been coming back to me to the degree of thought that I thought it should. I figured that the best way to do it would be to articulate it in memo. I said, “This is going to happen. Your goals and responsibilities are going to be these,” and I got a bunch of responses and I said, “Good.” I said, “Let me just tell you now, the end product of what we create together isn’t going to be everything that I want. It’s not going to be everything you want either. It’s not going to stay the same.”

Rebel superintendent . . . because my interpretation usually of rebel is not consistent with the interpretation of superintendent. We’re bound by policy at work, we answer to seven people but we also answer to our entire community full of learners. It’s hard to be a rebel in those cases but there are opportunities where you have to stand up for principle. You have to stand up for what you believe your organization needs. There have been periods in my history where I felt that you have to stand up for something that may be unpopular, but you have to stand up for it even if it is unpopular.
Summary of control group data. In excerpts from members of the control group, the superintendents seem to strive to balance compliance with pushing forth change. Superintendent C2 talked about poking fun at legislators to make his point without directly being confrontational. He mentioned that he would do what it is he needs to do to get the majority of what he wants and likens himself to a salesman who negotiates or haggles over the details of a deal to balance both parties getting what they want out of the deal. Superintendent C1, in contrast, was directly confrontational about changing the system, but in a way that made the system more fair for her existing paradigm.

Superintendent C3 presented an obligation to be “receptive to the trends being presented to us,” yet he refers to change as needing to fit into the “core values” of his organization and supported by “data.” In each of these cases, a weighing of needs of the organization exists and an attempt to find a balanced approach to implementing change is evident.

This sense of balance is not present in the upcoming excerpts of comments made by members of the innovators group. Instead, an urgency to push forward despite the consequences was observed. In the adaptors group, the opposite was observed; the adaptors worked to uphold their system and adjusted the change to fit into the current paradigm. It is not that all groups do not balance or juggle interests, but the approach to doing so is distinct among the three groups. For example, all of the superintendents in the control group described themselves as navigating or working through a situation instead of directly pressing against it or merely complying with it.

In regard to the presence of rebel characteristics in the control group of superintendents, it seems relevant to highlight that all three groups represent a deep
conviction to the cause of educating students. The presence of other rebel characteristics was not thematic in the vignettes of the control group. Instead, instances of rebellion seem to stem more from situational circumstance than from an intrinsic value or need to resist. For example, use of unconventional approaches is one characteristic of rebel leaders. In the vignettes of the control group, it could be argued that eliminating transportation or introducing legislation are unconventional approaches to solving a problem, but both are situational and in response to a perceived outside pressure. If these solutions had been proposed out of value versus circumstance, then perhaps they would fit better as aspects of rebel characteristics. Instead, these fit more with what Kirton (2006) defined as coping behavior. Coping behavior was specifically addressed in Research Question 3.

Adaptor group. If the innovator’s style is described as belonging to one who can approach problems from angles that are unexpected or outside of the current paradigm, then the adaptive perspective is to resolve problems from within the current paradigm in ways that are understood and result in organizational improvement, increased efficiency, and maximized continuity and stability (Kirton, 2006). More innovative peers see adaptors as safe and predictable members who are “wedded to the system” and limited in perspective (Kirton, 2006, pg. 55). Adaptors prefer to generate fewer ideas that are relevant to the problem at hand instead of generating numerous possible, but perhaps improbable, ideas. Adaptive leaders show confidence in implementing solutions and are viewed as the authority within the given structure. They challenge rules and systems
when those rules or systems do not work to improve the efficiency or precision of the organization.

Adaptors are able to create structures for change that are understood by the organization and can be viewed as logical in the process of improvement. Often, adaptive change is misperceived as being slow and arduous, but this is not always the case. Change can happen quickly in the adaptive style but only after the change has first been well reasoned within the current paradigm. Morgan (2006), in his book, *Images of Organization*, presented organizations through a series of images. One of those images is “organizations as organisms” (p. 33). In this image, Morgan described the process of evolution being a mixture of pressure exerted from both outside and within the system. The kind of evolution and the speed at which it occurs is dependent on the goals of the organization and the level of threat to its survival. The adaptor’s leadership style can be likened to this image. Adaptors regulate change, depending on the pressures from outside and within the organization, and adapt the kind of change and the speed of change to the need of the problem.

Three vignettes are offered from superintendents who scored below 85 on the KAI, placing them in the mildly adaptive range, with one individual being in the moderately adaptive range. A summary of themes is presented after the vignettes.

*Superintendent A1 (KAI 75).* Superintendent A1 said,

[Rebels are] [p]robably someone who takes a look at the state requirements and kind of maybe thumbs their nose at most of them and just does what they want. They don’t worry about complying with the state mandates, and
they don’t worry about what are the threats that might come from the state. I would classify that person as a rebel from that aspect. Perhaps someone, on a more local level, someone that comes in riding a horse, so to speak, and decides that they’re going to create a culture, or change the culture immediately, and my experience with those situations usually haven’t turned out well. Superintendents in those situations tend to move a lot.

I probably don’t [meet the definition of a rebel.] I’m probably a . . . how could I phrase this? Quiet rebel. I realize that where we get our funding is predominantly from the state and so, for us to ignore some of the state mandates is foolish, because they can withhold funds or make it difficult on us. I guess I reluctantly comply. I don’t agree with everything that we have to do, but realize that in order to get the funding and maintain programs, we have to fall through and jump through the hoops they require.

Possibly, I guess, an example may be when I was an assistant superintendent in XXXX, and it was choreographed, but during a board [meeting] . . . the board had kind of painted themselves into a corner with the village, with the city and the community, on what they were going to accomplish with some construction projects.

I came up with this scheme and presented it to the board, essentially, that I would come out at the board meeting and just say you’re going down the wrong path, I certainly would not do this without talking to my superintendent, but talking to him ahead of time. But essentially rebelled against the board.
So at a board meeting, essentially, at a point in the meeting when the board president shared comments, which is usually a quiet time, I sit up and go through this whole spiel about how we had . . . we can’t afford this and they should rebid or scale back, and if we choose Ultimatum 1 over Ultimatum 3, then we should go with this contractor instead. That was choreographed rebellion, I guess. It was certainly out of my comfort zone to get out and do that.

*Superintendent A2 (KAI 82).* Superintendent A2 said,

> I think we need to get more vocal. I think we’ve allowed ourselves to be victimized by the media. I know why. I understand that we all have some skeletons in the closet. We all have teachers who we all know are not really high-quality people that need to be in the classroom because the way this profession has been set up and because of the length of their career.

> For many, many years, nobody was asking any questions. I am thrilled that we are paying attention. I think the attention has been focused on the wrong things. I guess my strongest feeling about that is that I think that we’ve let politicians and some of these grass-roots groups get really verbal about something they know nothing about. Just because you went to school doesn’t mean you know anything about it. When’s the last time you’ve been inside one? I’ll talk to some of them and I’m like, “That’s not even what . . . you don’t even know what you’re talking about.”

> I think that we need to, as a group, be much more verbal. I think that we’re afraid because if you shine the light on us, people might then say, “Well, what
about this teacher that you knew was incompetent.” No one wants their dirty laundry aired. It’s a very difficult place to be. I think it’s important that we start to take this more seriously and not be afraid of the repercussions of the media and perception. Be able to say, “Yes, we know that maybe there are some teachers in the profession who shouldn’t be here anymore.” There’s also doctors that shouldn’t be practicing medicine. Let’s not be afraid to unveil that and then move on.

[Also,] I think the teacher evaluation piece, the theory is good, the practicality is not. I’m like, “Okay, how many people are we going to fire at the end of this?” None, no more. I say this to the teachers, “I’m not firing any more than I was going to fire before I had this evaluation form.” We did move five teachers out since I’ve been here. We counseled them out. We sat down with them and bare bones honest, [said,] “It’s time to go. Either you’re going to go on your own volition or it’s going to get ugly.”

We were compassionate in our . . . we kind of offered an incentive. To me, it was worth a little taxpayer money to help usher them out before it got too icky. I think that gave a message to teachers like, “She’s not really going to turn her head on some of these people who actually she knows need to go and all of us know.” Interestingly enough, the association did not buck it because they all knew those people needed to go, too.

I kind of look at the word rebel in this role as someone who has really strong convictions and knows where they draw the line in the sand. I had a really
good conversation with a neighboring superintendent when I got this job. He took me out to lunch and he said, “Listen, XXXX, they’re all going to hate you in a way so at least do what you know is right so you can sleep at night.” I often laugh and I’ll think that XXXX actually said that and he was right.

He’s like, “You’re never going to make a decision that everyone will hail and think is great, even if it’s good for them. Even if you hand them money. It’s not going to be enough for this one.” He said, “You have to make your decisions based on what’s right and sometimes you have to buck the system because you know.” He said, “Know where you’ll draw your line in the sand.” I’ve had to do that and I will say that I’m rebellious in the fact that I do have strong convictions about things and there’s just no persuading me to change.

Superintendent A3 (KAI 83). Superintendent A3 said,

I guess that I think about and I can picture some superintendent colleagues that they . . . rebel, maverick, mover-shaker, or . . . what’s the one term . . . this is a college professor who used this term, and I’m trying to think of it. It was not . . . it was sort of a derogatory term. It was kind of a person that’s hired to come in a clean house, basically, and all that. When I think of people like that, I don’t actually have a positive attitude or image or value placement on superintendents that fit into that category, but I don’t see myself in that category.

I thought about that when I read your thesis, or your interview questions, and I’m not sure if I quite fit there. You probably want different aspects, or course, but I don’t consider myself to be overly rebellious. Probably the most rebellious
thing I do is not shaving for a day or two, you know, you get a little rough here . . .
that’s probably as much of a rebel as I get.

That doesn’t mean I don’t take chances, because I . . . the description of that is someone who is taking significant risks, possibly, and really trying to fundamentally shake something up or shift a paradigm or reculture, significantly reculture a school or school environment. Those are . . . I don’t mean to say those aren’t good things and that I don’t have any of those characteristics, but I guess I just look at it, again, from a pragmatic or practical point of view, is that I know we can do better, and I’ll always believe that, and I try and instill an idea that . . . in every person I work with there . . . is that we’re never satisfied and we always have to be looking for opportunities to improve what we’re doing. We’re never done growing. Anybody that feels you are, well, we’ve got a problem.

I guess that’s my outlook. I don’t see what . . . I can think of some examples where we’ve taken some risks or done some things that maybe got some people upset and so forth . . . I’ve been accused of being so forthright that you sometimes cause more headaches than were even necessary by being so open about the different considerations that were made or ideas that were thought about and the rationale behind everything. Again, I make great effort to make sure that things are done in a very open, transparent, and inclusive manner in terms of leadership-type decisions.

I guess collegial and cooperative would describe, again, how I try and operate the school and guide the decisions of the school. I don’t feel there is any
kind of particular label that I fit under. There’s visionary leaders, or there’s transformational leaders, and this and that. I feel like I got a little bit of a lot of those different labels or categories or descriptors.

A lot of times, I’m sitting at superintendent meetings, and the conversation is about issues that are being viewed from, like, 10,000 feet . . . you know what I mean—in a more global view. I know that’s important at times, and I think where I am a little different from my superintendent colleagues is that, often times, my focus is more at 10 feet or 5 feet, ground level, where we’re standing, and I guess what causes that or what prompts me to be that way . . . maybe, again, being superintendent/principal. Maybe it’s being a one-school district and being so close to the teachers and the kids still, unlike some of my colleagues who are in some building somewhere else where they really never see kids unless they have to leave the grounds.

I guess I have an emphasis and a focus on, mechanically, we can have all these ideas and so forth . . . how are they going to be pulled off? How are you mechanically and logistically and strategically going to actually make things happen at ground level? I guess that’s one thing that maybe sets me a little bit apart. Visionary and so forth. We need those people. I value that kind of feedback, but I’m a little more about, “Let’s get it done. Let’s get this operating.”

Summary of adaptor group data. As Kirton (2006) explained in his adaptation-innovation theory, the quality of change is independent of being either adaptive or innovative. Either perspective can provide change that is effective or ineffective, but the
style in which that change is implemented is directly effected by an individual’s cognitive style. Like The adaptor superintendents shared a passion for improving their organizations and a desire to do what was right for kids, but the approach offered by the adaptors was noticeably different.

Characteristic of adaptors is the recognition that a system or structure exists currently and that opportunities exist to maximize the current paradigm. Superintendent A1 described himself as a “quiet rebel” who recognizes where his funding comes from to support his local initiatives. He acknowledged that a system exists currently that provides the structure for him to work within to improve his own organization. He shared that he “reluctantly compl[ies]” and doesn’t “agree with everything we have to do.” However, he suggests that superintendents who ignore the mandates within the system are “foolish.”

Superintendent A3 concurred with this view and described himself as “pragmatic” and focused on how he can improve his system “mechanically.” Superintendent A3 also affirmed that adaptors are “risk takers” but view change as less dramatic and more as “opportunities to improve what we’re doing. We’re never done growing. Anybody that feels you are, well, we’ve got a problem.” Superintendent A2 describes herself as rebellious while the other two superintendents in this category do not identify themselves in that regard. However, the approach used by superintendent A2 still fits within the characteristic approach of adaptors. She identified that the changes in the teacher evaluation system in Illinois are theoretically good, but not in practicality. Her perception is that this change in the system does not fit within the paradigm of her organization, stating,
Okay, how many people are we going to fire at the end of this?” None, no more. I say this to the teachers, “I’m not firing any more than I was going to fire before I had this evaluation form.”

A second theme evident in the adaptor group is a desire for greater group cohesion. Superintendent A2, while embracing change cautiously, discussed how she manages or regulates change based on the pressures from within or outside the organization in a way that helps people in the organization to understand the need for the change. All three superintendents discussed the desire to help the organization build an understanding for the need to adapt or evolve before the change occurs. This approach stands in contrast to the innovator group, whose members seek more to justify the change to the organization than build understanding. The adaptor brings the change into the system and alters the existing structure or policies to make the change work for him or her. In another portion of the interview comments, Superintendent A3 said,

I look at the things that we’re being forced to do and the things that we have to do to be compliant, and if it’s lemons, I’m making lemonade. If it’s something that has to be done simply to be compliant, I’m going to be looking for a way to utilize the energy that we’re doing for compliance purposes to improve what we’re doing for kids at the same time.

In comparison to characteristics of rebel leaders, as identified in this study, the adaptor superintendents also demonstrated deep conviction to the cause and a resistance to the status quo but in markedly different ways. These adaptors demonstrated frustration when change was ineffective or took too long to implement. However, again, the
perspective of adaptors in this regard is that the change being imposed from outside the organization is ineffective at improving the current paradigm and is draining resources such as time and energy from the organization. Another example of a rebel characteristic is a willingness to go around the rules. The innovators instituted change in spite of the current rules, while adaptors modified the rules to fit the structure within their system. Arguably, both could be seen as rebellious in nature. In both cases, there is resistance to the “mandate,” but the approach is quite different between innovators and adaptors.

There were, however, several characteristics not present in the adaptors group. Tolerance of confrontation and evidence of making change despite the consequences was not prevalent in responses from three adaptive superintendents as it was from the three innovative superintendents. Superintendent A2 seemed to be the exception to this generalization; she identified situations in which she presented herself in opposition to her board or constituents to the extent that she was prepared to be fired from her role. Even so, not enough evidence existed to show that these characteristics were present thematically among the mild to moderately adaptive superintendents in this study. The comparison between the adaptor superintendents being mildly to moderately adaptive versus the innovator superintendents being highly to very highly innovative is discussed in Chapter 5; it may be unfair to suggest that the extremity in the views among these two group are equal.

Innovator group vignettes. According to Kirton (2006), innovators are often seen as tangential thinkers who approach problems from angles that are unexpected or outside of the current paradigm. They often are the discoverers of problems within a system or
could be said to become aware of alternate solutions to issues that have not yet been identified as problems within an organization. Kirton described innovators as individuals who often take control in unstructured situations and become the agent of change in settled groups despite established norms. Innovative leaders can be viewed as abrasive or dissonant and often challenge rules with irreverence to past custom or tradition and show great confidence in their ability to generate ideas or solutions to problems without needing consensus or group cohesion. To the more adaptive, innovators appear as impractical and provide ideas that are unsound or not grounded in realm of real solutions. They appear less efficient and focus less on the mechanical nature of resolving problems and focus more on long-term gains. Kirton (2006) suggested that, “[i]nnovators are essential in times of radical change or crisis, but may have trouble applying themselves to managing change within ongoing organizational structures” (p. 55).

The following vignettes are excerpts from responses by three innovator superintendents with scores above 124 on the KAI. Two of the superintendents (superintendents I1 and I2) represent the highly innovative category, while Superintendent I3’s score places him in the very highly innovative range. A summary of of themes evident from the innovator superintendents follows the vignettes.

Superintendent I1 (KAI 131). Superintendent I1 said,

I am unequivocally not a believer in the American education system. I do not have much, if any, confidence in the manner in which we educate our children. I have taken that stance since 1995 when I left the district to become a little more aware of, through education and through exposure to particular individuals, . . .
just how systemic the issues are and how pervasive they are in our system. I’ve held to those beliefs and they have served me well in my career as I have moved up the food chain.

I think that locally, statewide, and nationally there needs to be significant systemic change in the way in which we conduct our business in order for us to truly impact the achievement gap. I use a historical perspective in justifying that belief, because we’ve spent literally trillions of dollars over decades of attempting to educate our children since the integration of our schools in ’54, I believe it was, and tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of programs designed specifically for assuring that we meet the needs of all of our kids. Yet in 2013, we are still in a place where we have a significant achievement gap that no amount of money or programs has impacted to the degree that we’ve been asked to impact [it]. Hence, we have to look elsewhere for the answer to eliminating or eradicating the achievement gap.

[In terms of decision making, what] do you do in the face of irrefutable evidence but yet you don’t have the consensus? Do you move or do you not? Are you courageous or are you not? Do you capitulate or do you stand firm? Well, I’m not going to capitulate for what serves the interest of kids, despite community resistance.

Let’s examine it and kick everything out that runs counter to what we say we believe about our children and our capacity to teach them. It’s easier said than done because when you talk about [it] in theory, everybody says, “Yeah,” but
when the rubber meets the road and you’ve got to do it . . . yes. People used to make a joke that, “You’re always the first one in the building and the last one to leave. You’re the hardest working principal in the district.”

I’m like, “Whoa, listen, I’m not benevolent, I’m not harder working than the rest of you. I just know that you guys can’t stand me. Therefore I’m going to be the first one here so that I know there’s not a rifle on my head and I want to be the last one out so I’m just looking to see if every car’s gone and it’s safe to leave my office” (laughs). They would laugh about that, but to some extent it was true because it was such a struggle. I really believe as a . . . if you’re going to be an effective leader, you can’t let anything go.

My first couple of years in that building, literally every day, I was calling in 10, 15 teachers about what they’re espousing, their rhetoric not matching their commitment. My first year there, I let go of 27 teachers who were nontenure that were bad for kids. I’ve never lived that down in this district. [T]hey ran our nonrenewal list from 2000 to 2010 . . . and of 21 schools, all the teachers that were released by our 21 principals in 10 years, 50% of them were mine.

I don’t know that being defined as a rebel necessarily means you’re going to have a positive impact. It just means that you’re going against the grain, whatever that is. You could be a rebel for the wrong reasons. The only reason I’m sitting in this chair is because of my mother, and I’ve said to anyone, “I’m here in spite of the system, not because of it.”
Every district I enrolled in attempted to marginalize me by exposing me to rigor that was beneath my capacity to learn. In every district, my mother was considered one of those angry, crazy Black women who would come in there and threaten to burn the place down with gasoline if you don’t put my kid in the Bluebird book instead of the Buzzard book, if you don’t put my kid in this math instead of that math. I remember studying history and it was a true/false question in social studies, Christopher Columbus discovered America. The answer is true. I went home and said, “Ma, but there were Indians on the continent.” I said, “Aren’t they people?” “Yeah, they’re people.” “Well, how can a person discover a continent that people are already on?” My mother would be like, “Listen, just answer true or I’m going to whoop your ass.” I’m like, “But it’s false.” False is right but false is wrong.”

*Superintendent I2 (KAI 136).* Superintendent I2 said,

[I] was promoted to the district office as a director of secondary education for the five middle schools [and] two high schools at XXXX. The superintendent and I hated each other. It wasn’t a secret. I hated him. He hated me. He hated my ideas. I hated his. It wasn’t . . . we were not in love, shall we say. I was in love with the buildings and having a great time and able to cut through red tape and make things happen in a positive way.

Actually, there was a strike there, too, back in the day. We had our teachers . . . while our teachers were on strike and picketing, I brought them sandwiches and Popsicles and pop, and got written up by my super (laughter). I’m
like, “Dude, at the end of the day, these are our people. Are you kidding me? Yes, there’s political battles that need to be fought, but at the end of the day, we all serve the same student. That’s insane. These are my colleagues. Yes, they get Popsicles, so whatever, write me up. I don’t care (laughter).” He did (laughter). Whatever. They still got their Popsicles. I don’t care.

People say the mama bear comes out in [me] the minute you threaten a kid, right, or something not right is not going to happen on her watch, and I feel that way. Yes, I’m very involved with local leaders, with state reps, and now with national reps, just because so much of our funding anymore, of course, is tied up at the state level.

Sadly, the reality of it is if there are people like me that come down to Springfield and go to Washington and articulate what the impact is of a particular bill that I care about, it matters and it changes. At any point in time, there are probably, realistically, 10 [bills out of thousands that we can make movement on]. God help you, you come between me or us and our 10, we’re going to bull you over till the right thing happens because we care, because it’s my kids in that classroom.

When I came [here] as a new person and we changed everything constantly, including personnel, a lot of people needed to be somewhere else and they are now, and I started with the administrative team and we lost a lot of people. Everybody who knows me knows that about us and it was very difficult.
I don’t have that personality type that if a boss tells me to do X and I believe X is wrong, I won’t do X, right. We’re going to work it through till X becomes Y or you clear my understanding up and this team was, like, they wanted me to tell them what to do and that’s not how we’re going to roll. That’s not how we roll today. Now if I wanted to tell them what to do, I couldn’t, God forbid, right. We’re going to construct that together. It was a huge shift and a huge ethical shift.

There were things that happened here that should not have happened that were wrong for kids. There were things that happened that people turned the other way around that ended when I came on board, I fired people. That was not a fun thing to do, but as we made tough decision after tough decision, my quality folks came to me, two of them, a male and a female, separately, in tears. Essentially what they were . . . they felt a sense of guilt, “Why didn’t we do what you’re doing?” I didn’t understand that either. We had those conversations and their response to me was, “XXXX, you don’t get it. We just weren’t able. It was a different time and place.” I had to just respect that and set that down. I don’t get that, but I don’t need to. That was a different time, right.

We had staff members that were engaging in just stuff they shouldn’t have been engaging in and/or degrading to kids, demeaning to kids, something as simple as look at all your failure rates. I had some teachers that had, like, a 62% failure, one with a 77% failure . . . are you kidding me? We let that go on? It
wasn’t questioned, right? No one pushed back at that? How is that not immoral and unethical? It is.

To bring about a different understanding around the same events, which it makes my blood boil because when I see things that I perceive as disrespectful to kids, it just makes my blood boil. My colleagues’ blood was boiling too, was on a low simmering point because they allowed, I guess, . . . circumstances had changed their definition of what’s right, but to see them struggle with guilt later was a cool thing for me because then you know that the good stuff’s down there, right?

I don’t think of [myself as] rebellious. That does not resonate with me, okay? What does resonate is I guess actively setting aside this care for your job safety or for doing the right thing politically or doing what you think your bosses want done, that to me would be the opposite of rebellious. If I’m going to define rebellious, I’m just going to define it like the shirt says, doing the right things for kids regardless of the impact. It’s one thing to say, “This is what we want,” and then when you start walking through it and experiencing it, at some point, they question you, right? That happened to me and that was very difficult.

My first year, as we made many different decisions and in my own board of education, I had to have what I called my come to Jesus with my board and I said, “You hired me to do this. I’m doing this. It’s not pretty. It’s not easy for me. If that’s what you want, that’s what you have. If you’ve changed your mind, then you should fire me. If you’re going to fire me, do it. If you’re not, I don’t want
any more job-threatening language. That is not going to happen here. I’m your
girl or I’m not your girl. If I’m not, then you should fire me. If I am, this job is
already hard enough without you double-thinking everything. You all decide.
That is disrespectful. I won't take it again.” I said that six months into the job
(laughter). It was hard. I needed to. My other colleagues were saying things like,
“Okay, all right, I’ll do that. I’m really sorry.” I’m sorry, too, when I do the wrong
thing, but I’m not sorry when I’m doing the right thing and you changed your
mind because it’s difficult. Uh-uh.

I have people that it takes a while for them to get used to me, to be sure.
Oh, I’ll say this. This is what I’m told, that before you get to know me, you can
find me very intimidating and I’m not different a year from today, but what you
understand a year from today is I am who I am and I’m here for you. I’ll walk on
hot coals for you. I am not going to not tell you that last night you used words that
were off-putting or you made foreign language sound like a derogatory event
instead of something that’s . . . we will talk about that and it will be straight out
and that’s uncomfortable for some people upfront.

That, to me, is the point of rebellion I guess, if you will. Again, it doesn’t
feel like rebellion to me. It feels like doing the right thing for the right reasons. At
some point as a superintendent, you have to define . . . there’s going to be that
time when you are defining who you are. You’re going to do it or you’re not. I
don’t want to get fired either. That would suck, but I don’t want to live not feeling
like I can do the right things for kids.
If you want to define rebellious, I’m not going to call it rebellious. I’m going to call it an individual who has enough vision and passion and self-confidence to do the right things for kids independent of the outcome, right? The opposite, I guess, to me of a rebellious superintendent would be someone who is super-concerned for keeping their job. You have to have an exit plan. You have to know that you’re bigger than this position and that this job needs you more than you need it, right? [You] can walk away tomorrow for the right reasons and [live] in that freedom, right, and that’s what I try to live myself. As opposed to, again, the rebellious, nonrebellious, I guess it feels like someone who’s bound versus free. Maybe freedom, a free and empowered superintendent is what I call rebellious today because there’s so few of them. That resonates with me versus my colleagues that are bound and limited.

Superintendent I3 (KAI 153). Superintendent I3 said,

Honestly, I don’t care…I’d say in terms of being involved legislatively, calling my representatives, senator, and all of this, and getting more funding, they’re not listening to me. I have no control over that. I really focus more on the local level. Nationally, I feel as a local school superintendent completely disconnected from anything nationally, completely disconnected. State, I just try to pretend they’re not there and we go about our business.

In a sense, in terms of the relationship to state level education policy, it’s not as disconnected but it’s more like they’re a hurdle just to get around. The only thing that I will say from the national perspective is from the standpoint of No
Child Left Behind. I love it. I love it. I think that was the best thing to happen to schools across the country. The best thing, because it revealed the fact that many schools, particularly wealthy schools, were able to hide the crime that they’ve been committing of failing to educate all children. I was thrilled when XXXX, XXXX, XXXX, where my kids went to school, were identified as failing schools.

My kids knew that at XXXX High School, the culture was different and the teachers acted differently between the freshman-sophomore campus as compared to the junior-senior campus because the Mexicans from XXXX dropped out and it was different.

Kids know about this. Kids know that these schools are failing to serve entire groups of children. That’s why when superintendents ask me or comment and say, “You know XXXX, you’re still trailing behind. We know that not everyone or 100% of kids aren’t going to meet or exceed standards.” Then I ask them, “Really? What are the names of the kids you’re willing to fail to serve? Because I want to know if my kids’ names show on the list.’ Typically, they’re not for two reasons. I’m White and middle class. They’re not going to be. The kids that they’re typically willing to fail to serve, to write off, are Blacks and Hispanics and lower incomes. No Child Left Behind has opened up that can of worms. From a national perspective, that, I embrace. Give me one mandate that you don’t have to do [anyways in education],” Hell’s bells. There’s nothing unreasonable. There’s nothing onerous. Superintendents love . . . first thing I tell
my students in grad school within their classes is, “Most of you work for idiots.”

Most of the superintendents and principals are idiots (except us).

[In terms of rebels,] here’s what you won’t find. You won’t find them at AASA. You won’t. I tell people that actually, if you’re going to be a superintendent, don’t go to AASA, IASA, even because all those are three-day drunks. It’s a bunch of guys, typically still, looking for free drinks and free dinners. You will not find an original idea in the entire conference center ever, ever.

What I think that looks like is so many superintendents follow . . . they toe the party line, “We don’t like the state mandates.” What the hell does that mean? “We don’t like . . . No Child Left Behind.” It’s easier going with the pack and there is a real pack mentality and it’s not a real high intellect. That’s how I define it, I guess.

I’m sure everyone sees themselves as the rebel not fitting into that hole. I see myself as a contrarian, that the way we’ve been doing things in schools has to change. For example, the middle school restructure. That, I think was a good example when we came in here doing things differently, because we started off interviewing every single employee. The 34-year veteran teacher who I think may have even been in the same classroom all of those years, down to the parapro who was there for two weeks . . . interviewed everyone, asked the same questions, identified the themes and patterns. From there, we really provided the staff, or the school with a new framework for the restructured school.
Would it have been easier to just tinker around the edges because that’s what most schools do. When they’re doing restructuring, they don’t restructure anything. They just tinker around the edges. I didn’t fire the principal but I did replace him, swapped him out, he was part of the problem. That’s where I said, we then interviewed every employee that wanted to return back. Ten people were reassigned. Would have been easier to just say, “Okay, we’re going to go and provide more professional development. You can go back. We’re going to give the staff more professional development,” all that bullshit. We didn't. We said, “No, you’re just not fitting. It’s not a fit here.”

We would get these speeches. They have everything from the board president and me having an affair to just being, got to get rid of me, got to get the board members to get rid of me, and there’s this group that supported those teachers that felt that they were wronged. It would have been easier to do that, but the reading results increased 12% each of those succeeding two years. It worked. It worked, it’s a refreshing new school now, and it was also an example of distributed leadership because we set the framework, then we told the teachers, “You've got to build this school up from the ground up.” Literally from the ground up, the paint on the walls, we really didn’t change the building physically and structurally, but from paint up. Everything’s different. Within these frameworks, you’ve got free reign. Go do it. It was an exciting challenge for a lot of them, biggest challenge of their careers, but they were exhausted because they were literally, it was like a new building, new school.
A friend of mine in Brazil told me after they bought out my contract and told me to leave, he said, "You know what, you don't play." It's kind of the give-and-take. I see the, “Here’s the line. This is what we need to do.” Now, there are lots of ways, because I consider myself highly collaborative, but when it comes to screwing kids, we’re just not going to do that. When it starts to become that the school, whether it’s this school district or another school district operates for the benefit of the adults more than the kids, that’s where we draw the line. That line’s really in concrete.

Politically then, there are probably far more politically adaptive ways that I could go about it. I just kind of crashed through it, just, “We’re going to go this way with it,” rather than taking five years and working all these alliances and trying to buddy up with folks and all that. When my contract was not extended in XXXX, one board member leaned back and he said, “Payback's a bitch, huh, XXXX?”

**Summary of innovator group data.** In reading the vignettes, several themes or perhaps affirmations of innovator characteristics exist. The strongest theme evident is the presence of low self-doubt in the innovator’s ability to see problems within the system. Each of the superintendents represented in this category saw flaws in their system as systemic issues requiring broad change. In all of these cases, the need for change stemmed from a challenge to the internal value system of the leader. Superintendent I1 talked about the disconnect between values “espoused” in the organization and actual behaviors, while Superintendent I2 repeatedly presented a sense of doing the “wrong
things for kids” within her system. Superintendent I3 focused on the issue of a system built around the needs of adults despite rhetoric that says the organization is about kids and learning.

A second theme present is the willingness to pursue change despite personal trepidation and without reverence to current traditions or practices. During both the formal interview process and in informal conversations, all three superintendents shared that their job security is always in doubt. Superintendent I2 described how she had to address with her board language in her review and contract that attempted to curtail her “freedom” to implement change as she saw fit. She directly challenged the board to either fully support her or “fire” her. Superintendent I3 described a similar situation by sharing that his contract has not yet been extended in the past two years despite his desire to have it extended. When asked about their views on why their job security was at risk, thematically the group reported that the desire for dramatic change exists but the tolerance for the process of dramatic change is, in some cases, difficult for the system to bear. Thus, when the discord of change becomes too strong, the system begins to separate from the leader.

Finally, despite such a strong desire for transformation within the system, a theme of commitment to people and the organization was also present in the innovator superintendents. In one sense, this theme seems counterintuitive to the innovators’ spirit of change without regard to the current traditions, but Packer (2008) found that even members of a group who demonstrate a sense of nonconformity see their dissent from the current group norms as “a mark of loyalty to a group, that dissenters act to improve their
groups and as such have the interests of their group at heart” (p. 50). All three of the innovator superintendents view themselves as collaborators and members of “teams” that work toward shared decision making. Superintendent I3 spoke about his belief in distributed leadership and the use of a diverse administrative team to work toward decisions through consensus. Superintendent I2 described her desire for a cohesive team approach and her own sense of respect toward her administrative team.

By nature of being an innovator, there is a desire to resist the status quo and a willingness to challenge the current tradition and practices of an organization. These individuals demonstrated a high tolerance for confrontation and deep conviction for their cause, but also a sincere commitment to the organization. Each of these superintendents demonstrated a sincere desire to make their organization successful despite the consequences of their own actions. In essence, these are the characteristics of a rebel leader. Kirton (2006) cautiously pointed out that the innovators style is often perceived as glamorous and exciting but does not always result in positive change that is sustained over time. Radical change can, at times, come from more deliberate, methodical approaches that begin from within the current paradigm and from adaptive leaders.

**Summation of evidence for Research Question 1.** Research Question 1 asked about the degree to which a relationship exists between scoring as highly adaptive or highly innovative on the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI) and the presence of rebel characteristics in superintendents. Data collected and analyzed from each of the nine superintendents demonstrated that some rebel characteristics were present across the control, adaptor, and innovator groups, but data presented from the highly innovative
superintendents demonstrated the strongest presence of rebel characteristics of the three groups. No participants in the study scored in the highly adaptive range, so no evidence was available to determine the degree to which a relationship exists between a highly adaptive KAI score and the presence of rebel characteristics. A summary on the presence of specific rebel characteristics across the innovator, adaptor, and control groups is presented in Figure 16.

**Figure 16.** Frequency of Rebel Characteristics Represented in Interview Data.
**Research Question 2.** Research Question 2 was, “What behaviors and actions are present in superintendents identified as highly adaptive or highly innovative that demonstrates a resistance to the status quo?”

Perhaps the most significant characteristic of a rebel leader is an intrinsic resistance to the status quo. Rebel leaders inherently struggle with conforming to the values and norms already present within a group. Researchers such as Packer (2008), Lapham (2005), and Commager (1948) have studied the phenomenon of social conformity, dissent and deviance and suggested that nonconformity is an active resistance to the norms of the group. An individual’s choice to not conform to the group often stems from a real or perceived gap between the socially constructed values of the group and those held by the individual. This gap does not always mean, as Packer pointed out, that the values of the individual are in opposition to those of the group or organization, rather that the individual’s cognitive thinking surrounding the values is at odds with that of the group. Therefore, a leader could be committed to a cause valued by the group, while resisting the movement or actions proposed by the group.

This question examined the ways in which innovators and adaptors demonstrate a resistance to the status quo as compared to the control group. Using a presentation of data similar to that used for Research Question 1, various vignettes from the control, adaptor, and innovator groups are offered with summaries of themes evident discussed after the presentation of the vignettes for each group.

**Control group vignettes.** Superintendents C1, C2, and C3 offered extensive comments in response to Research Question 2.
Superintendent C1. Superintendent C1 said,

I actually ended up spending seven years at XXXX and I was subsequently plucked out by a company to do their math consulting for international work. I left the public sector and, for six years, I was in the private side working in the Department of Defense and American community schools abroad, doing what I was essentially doing at XXXX with teachers, but training teachers on an international scale.

Then I spent those six years; three of them were all travel all the time, until I was burned out, but I learned a lot about education. I learned a lot about what we believe education is as a country. That what we hold near and dear to our system is not the end-all, be-all, it’s just how we do it. There’s a history as to how we got to be that way.

You go to other countries and the way their children learn, the way they process, how they do school, looks very different than it does in the United States. I learned a lot from that. When I finally came back into public education, I actually made a choice to go into Chicago public schools as an administrator, because I had never had any urban experience. While I was doing this for international work, I was also helping in the large domestic markets and the United States, so the New York, and Los Angeles, and Philadelphia, so I was in those large urban areas.

Really, those situations and circumstances are different. I felt like I had not been . . . I was talking about what you can do, I was even training people on it.
But the question kept coming back to, “Well, what if my kindergarten parents are in jail?” or “What if they’re this?” I thought, “You know what? I’m going to go into a public school in the city,” because I believe that you can do what I’m espousing. I believe you can do it and you just have to have people there who believe it and they can help and work around whatever the situation is.

I spent a couple of years in Chicago doing just that. I worked at XXXX, which is a pre-K to eight on the south side in the XXXX neighborhood, 100% low income, just all of the circumstances of an impoverished area in the city. The reality is those are just circumstances. The couple years I was there, we raised test scores by, like, 40%. It was amazing because we got in really good teachers who wanted to be there, who wanted to do what was best, and kids came to school hungry. We’ll feed you breakfast, lunch, dinner every day. We had a foundation that supported us and I absolutely loved it. It was really an incredible time.

When we started out with No Child Left Behind, it all sounded like a really good idea, let’s get some data. . . . When that all started, I understood the impetus of it, but what really happens with it is, it ties money to it. As a state, if you want to get money, you got to jump through these hoops. The state of Illinois at the time, like every other state, said, “Okay, well, let’s figure out how we’re going to jump through the hoops.” I remember being part of the . . . when the IGAP [Illinois Goal Assessment Program] existed and there were all the learning standards.
I was a reviewer for the standards, for the math standards, and I remember thinking to myself, “This is going to be an interesting scenario,” because what you’re asking kids to do is really way beneath what we’ve been asking them to do up until this point. Well, here’s what happens, you fast-forward a decade later, you’ve prepared an entire generation of young people to not be performing at the level that they need to be performing when they get to college. Then subsequently after college, and then graduate school, but you did it because the national perspective was, “You’ve got to get these numbers in order for us to continue to give you funding, so your state doesn’t get in trouble.”

I think you fast-forward it to now. So, now we’ve got all these situations where the state has recognized that they made a mistake. I was at a meeting where one of the deputy superintendents said, “We’ve done a disservice to our parents. We have given them this false sense of how great their kids are, and then they get to high school and they fall apart.” I think the recognition of that is been what is behind a lot of decisions in terms of the academic side of what’s happening in our state. The Common Core Standards . . . when those came out and, again, the good news, at least for my district, is because of the role I played with the national council of supervisors of math, we had the standards before they were even released and adopted. So, we got to try them out, we got to do some piloting with them.

The challenge, really, for us is you set that bar at the national level and all the states figure out how we’re going to make that happen. However, I still say
that there has to be reality of . . . we’ve created this generation. We’ve got to undo all of that. Plus, we still owe it to all those kids who came through that system, and so some of them are successful now in spite of. But we still have a lot of young people who are in their early 20s who really we didn’t do them justice.

Then there’s also . . . I’ve discovered sitting in this seat, it’s not just about ever the academics and kids being successful. It’s about politics and money, and it is unfortunate. I do think that every superintendent has to have a little bit of a rebel in them; otherwise, you wouldn’t you get in this job. I just don’t see how you could. For people who get in it and don’t have a little sense of rebel, a lot of times they will leave. That’s why the tenure . . . and it is particularly indicative of today. I think there was a time in education when you didn’t have to have that in you, and you could be a superintendent for 20 years and just not necessarily have that rebel spirit.

Now, I think that . . . first of all, you don’t see the longevity anymore in a superintendent seat, they turn over so quickly, and I think a large part of that is you’ve got more turnover and people want and they want and there’s just a lot of background noise to it. I do think that in today’s world and just what’s going on with education, with how it’s become so political . . . if you look at anybody who gets up, who’s running for office, one of the things they say, “I’m going to change them and make education better.” No clue, no thoughts, no anything, just “I’m going to make it better.”
We’ve become a political byline for everybody. It’s, like, I just think you have to have a little of that in you because you have to be the protector of the young people who are in your district. Just my style, in general, I think it surprises people because I don’t look the way . . . my appearance, I’m a Southerner and people expect you to be genteel and you’re a girl. So, they don’t expect those things. I think it throws people off at times that I’m very direct, I’m very . . . but as a woman sometimes we get bad names for that, and that’s okay, too. At the same time, I still have that sort of motherly softness that says it’s okay. It’s a blend.

I look forward to what your research shows, because I know you’re interviewing a lot of different kinds of people and we all have a different perspective, different background. I will say, again, it is by far one of the most rewarding . . . because you see, at least in our size district . . . you see the impact that you can have on a kid’s life and I wouldn’t trade that for anything.

Superintendent C2. Superintendent C2 said,

I took another job as an elementary principal in XXXX, XXXX, and XXXX, and worked for three more years as an elementary principal. Then we were having some revenue issues. The idea was I would stay a principal, if I didn’t pass the referendum. If I passed the referendum I’d move into the assistant superintendent’s position. While I was working on the referendum, I was also just interviewing, figuring if I didn’t get that job I had been a principal now 10 years. I
wanted to look at something different and found that I was fairly marketable toward being a superintendent.

I interviewed a number of spots. Then the referendum passed, but I got a job as a superintendent at a small district in XXXX, about 1,800 students. I took my first superintendency there, was there three years. Then moved and I probably shouldn't have. Everybody thinks you're supposed to take the next bigger job or I did because it was part of my value set. I ended up moving and taking another job and it was bigger and a little more prestigious, but came to the conclusion afterwards that I probably could have done more as an educator had I stayed where I was than making the move.

It took probably three years, maybe more, maybe four years to get myself in a position in that second district where I could really make change, where the first two years you fought the union. Went probably two and a half years without a contract. You establish that you're willing to take some heat, that you have some credibility with the board, with the community so that... but it takes you a while to do that, where [in] the district I was leading, I had already established all that and could have gone right into curriculum stuff and making changes educationally. But ended up and moved, it was a better district and it was fine. I spent 15 years there as a superintendent.

Michigan was doing many of the things Illinois is doing. They were a little farther ahead as far as focus on education. The issue is we're not very good at doing many of the things we know we should be doing. I think Michigan was
farther along in that. When I got [to Illinois], I felt numbers of them were still blaming the victims. There was still a sense that districts that had low-income students, high percentages of disadvantage students weren’t expected to do well. The fact that the students weren’t learning was not a school issue, it was a community issue. I think Michigan had moved further on that faster. [They were] of the opinion, again, that all students could learn at high levels. We were responsible.

I think that Illinois is coming there. I think that legislation that they did last year with the change in evaluations, I think some of that was very good. It leads very much in that direction. I think the idea of having the student performance being part of the evaluation system will really drive that even further and help solidify the idea that we’re supposed to be educating children and all children.

[But,] we lost 18% of our revenue. The state went in and they had a guaranteed us, hold harmless funding, $1.2 million, we had been getting $1.5 million from them. Now we get $300,000 less. We had to make that up and that’s why I cut transportation, but mostly [the state doesn’t] make the cuts and when they do, they peck off the small numbers of districts so they don’t get a lot of blowback from it. They don’t take Chicago or some of those. They’ll take some of the smaller districts.

In Michigan, one of the things that the superintendents came to is that if anybody was to be cut, they would all stand up and disagree on that and support
the idea that we shouldn’t do it. It made them much more successful as superintendents. In Illinois, as long as it’s not your ass being gored, nobody really worries. They say, “What assholes they are in Springfield.” But nobody, really, they just . . . “I've made it through another one.” There’s a difference that way in that they haven’t come to the idea that there is a lots of strength in numbers, that if they make people aware of some of the things that are going on.

For me, it’s not only the 18% cut, but then explaining to my constituents, because at the same time the governor was saying, “We're not cutting education again this year,” I’m saying to people, “They cut 18%.” One of us is lying and they don’t know. When you looked at the 18% cuts were so, again, difficult that I didn’t know if we were going to be able to bunch it together. We met with the community and we met with administrators and met with the board and came up with two strategies.

One would have been go to school, the students would have had . . . we were going to have a shorter day. It would be over at one o’clock. The other one was to cut transportation and increase class size. That’s the one we went with. Most districts in Illinois can’t cut transportation. The state has various designations of school districts and we were a unit district. Those can, consolidated districts can. It was very pretentious and very difficult.

I doubt we’ll ever put it back. One of the things, again, you’re looking at cuts now. One of the ones that they keep talking about is cutting a big portion of
the transportation funding. If I put it back, it would cost even more than it did before to put back.

With the cuts, one of the things I’ve done in a number of districts is you will go through, we’ve met, we’ve had parent groups in, but we’ve started with the administrators. We’d look at type of dollar values, transportation, how much money would I actually save if I cut it? It’s this much money. If I cut sports and do that, how much would I save? This much. If I cut this . . . you try to go through it, if I increase class size to here, how much money would I actually save? You try to list all the possible things that you could do and with each one of them, what is the potential revenue stream? Then how much money are you going to be short? How much do you need? Then have people work in groups and build for me systems that would generate revenue we need by implementing the cuts that we would need.

Sometimes it’s easier than others to do. Sometimes it’s more difficult, but we did it first with the administrators and then shared that with the board and had them tweak it. Then had parent meetings and invited them and had them both work in groups and do the same thing. The one we went with was the one the parents and they said when they did it, “I don’t like these cuts,” but at the same time they said, “If we’re going to do it, this is the better of the ways.” Then the state, what they’ll do is, like us, they’ll cut hold harmless list.

I couldn’t even get them to admit. When I called them, Chris Koch’s assistant, at some point, I said to him, “What the hell do I do when you cut 18%?”
He said, “You guys know what to do. You go back. You cut out sports. You cut out band. You cut all the stuff that the parents get pissed and then they’ll go ahead and vote to referendum and you get the money and you go ahead and go.”

They pretty much won’t come out and say, “These schools are going to be without money.” They do go out and, so they aren’t the bad guy, they’re saying, “We're not cutting funding for schools.” They make us go out and say, “We need more money.” Then the tax people come in and say, “It’s because you’re giving big salaries and big pensions and all of that kind of stuff and this is a district out of control.” Then you get beat up for it. They keep doing what they’re doing. But it went fine. We got through it.

Superintendent C3. Superintendent C3 said,

The school that I left asked me to return in the form of being their new principal because I received the administrative certification. In my first month, my board asked me if they were to combine the roles of superintendent and principal and would I be interested in doing that and one month on the job. I said, “I would do that.” I’m 29 years old, I became the superintendent-principal of the school that I’ve started my entire education career. Looking back, I can say that in many cases, my youth didn’t work against me in making these decisions. I needed . . . I probably needed more seasoning, but at the time, opportunity was opportunity and I took that opportunity.

After being a superintendent and principal for three years, I realized that it was taking its toll. I decided that it would be better for me and my new family to
get an elementary principalship a little bit closer to the suburbs where I’d grown up as a child. A vacancy opened and I was hired to be a principal in the XXXX school district. Within two years of being a principal there, the superintendent asked me to be in his central office as an assistant superintendent and in the business function industry. It was a rich learning experience for me.

At that point, I’d accumulated enough experience so I thought it would be time to return as a superintendent. Again, my initial goal in my career was to make a difference in the life of a child but that evolved in how many children I can affect by assuming a greater administrative role. The thrill of being . . . of leading a district led me to the superintendent’s chair. The opportunities that come with leadership was the attraction.

I ended up going to XXXX School in West Cook County, a single-school elementary district, about 500 students, and was superintendent there for the past eight years. It was a phenomenal learning experience where they asked me because of my financial expertise to help them get out of a hole. The first thing I had to do upon arriving at the district was arrange for the teachers’ contract to be frozen, cut the budget by 10%, and remove all extracurricular and finance programs out from the school. I did those things with the promise to the community that it would be . . . every effort I would make to try to bring these programs back.

Eventually, through some creative use of a debt service extension limitation, I was able to . . . extend some debt to create essentially a pot of money
that the district could utilize over the course of time to update and upgrade interior building needs that had been long overlooked, to refund the programs and return them to their glory. While I was at XXXX, those programs came back under the districts umbrella, they thrived, they . . . we added a preschool program while there were still issuing grants at the state level for such a program without it being questionable as to whether or not you get the money or not.

XXXX was in such a challenging financial condition that I couldn’t operate the program without the grant and so when the grant money was not being released in timely fashion due to the pension issues that they’re currently grappling with, I ended up having to refuse the grant money and cutting the program, which was not popular with our parents and I could appreciate that, because I’m a firm believer that the earlier we can work with children, the more likely they would be to succeed in life, and a preschool program made perfect sense for that district. I was just frustrated by the fact that we just didn’t have the funds to upfront the money to work that program through.

I made some real implementations at XXXX when it came to . . . some were tapped down which I don’t . . . I’m not a back header on those things but through input, I received the data from my principal. We started practices for the way special education services were being delivered that were common in the mid-1980s but were taking place in 2005 and that was unacceptable. We moved quickly to get training for our staff so that they could coplan, coteach, and deliver what I call an inclusionary service delivery model.
I want to create a sense of community within the school and that was one of the ways and that was simple to be accomplished, all of our kids, no matter if they came from other school districts as part of a cooperative program for cognitively disabled students. Eventually, I felt like, in many respects, I was doing more management. My tasks were budgetary, tax levies, paperwork, grant writing, grant expenditure reporting, follow-up on the printed work with my principal on implementing a professional development program for staff, hiring, terminating, if necessary, mediocre employees. The problem became was that it was . . . there wasn’t leadership opportunities. I wasn’t doing what I felt like really drove me into this role in the first place, which was the opportunity to really develop adults to help them realize their dreams.

When the opportunity of XXXX School District XX came up, I put in for this because this place has much . . . it’s not a huge school district by any means, it’s about 1,200 students, but larger than XXXX. It felt larger than at XXXXX. But the idea is that here I have the staff, I’ve done all the jobs in this office and ones [that have] shaped performing my career and so I can speak to it, and lead from it, and help listen and lead from that perspective, creating opportunities, in a district that doesn’t have financial issues, district that doesn’t have staffing issues, district that doesn’t have student achievement issues, and strange enough, it doesn’t have these things and also it doesn’t have modern technology for the most part, which is the really odd part of this.
At the same time, I come here and a lot [is] already done and that is the reward now is I’m working toward using UBD [Understanding by Design] to connect to the Common Core, to take the curriculum maps, to blend everything so that we’re making sure that students are hitting their targets early, I’m in a school district that has pioneered, data-driven instructional practices. What works in other school districts may not work in District XX. We’re constantly reviewing and trying new products and delivery services and research-based methods that we can then target our data and create dynamic learning experiences for children. In a way, I feel like I’ve kind of landed and I felt it was better here in District XX and it’s a, it’s a big reward to be able to finally lead.

*Summary of control group data.* By definition, resisting the status quo recognizes that a system exists that exerts pressure to conform to that which is viewed as socially acceptable. Existing within the status quo does not require conformity to only one notion of “acceptable” but does establish a range of “acceptable” in which one must fit to be considered part of the group (Packer, 2008, p. 52). As superintendents, the system exerts pressure on school leaders to operate successfully within the structure of limited resources. This constraint forces superintendents to make choices to keep his or her system active while imposing changes to the structure of the system. For example, in fiscally tight times, it is socially acceptable to reduce spending and to cut programming and services. Groups that choose to expand or increase spending are viewed negatively and criticized for pushing against what, socially, seems like common sense.
The superintendents within the control group did not resist the status quo; they existed within the structure of the system and made choices that altered their own systems to model what would be viewed as socially acceptable to constituents. Superintendent C2 highlighted the importance of developing buy-in or consensus with various groups to help establish the idea of eliminating transportation as a socially acceptable outcome to financial limitations. By offering his community various impact scenarios, he was able to paint a picture of how the effects of the declining economy within the public education system were forcing the organization to change or adapt. Superintendent C3 also illuminated this point when he eliminated a preschool program he believed was in the best interest of children because the grant funding was cut off. He, too, painted the picture to help the community to see the elimination of the program as socially acceptable and in line with the greater financial picture of the public school system. Superintendent C1 shared that despite knowing that the math standards were beneath what she knew kids needed to learn to be successful in college, the system forced her compliance to allow her access to funding necessary to sustain her own organization.

Without question, the control group superintendents did not like the decisions that had to be made and felt both angry and defeated by the system. However, they maintained an external locus of control view, realizing it was the state or federal system that was exerting pressure and forcing them to adapt in ways they felt were having a negative impact on their own systems. In other words, control group superintendents expressed that the pressure from the system was limiting the authority of each superintendent to keep him or her in check with what the system would tolerate.
Adaptor group vignettes. Superintendents A1, A2, and A3 offered extensive comments in response to Research Question 2.

Superintendent A1. Superintendent A1 said,

[I] wasn’t expecting some of the changes that came about legislatively with this. Some of the things I needed to take care of when I first came in the door, I wasn’t planning on when I said yes to the job a year earlier. I was hired in November and then started attending board meetings right after that. I thought that there would be a little bit more . . . had been a little more progress toward creating a principal’s evaluation tool.

I think we’re . . . and I suppose every generation feels the same way . . . that we’re in a bit of a crisis mode in education because of the funding issues, obviously, and just the constant attack that public education seems to be under for not maintaining . . . not hitting benchmarks that experts in the field feel that we should. The role of superintendent, I think that on a local . . . I’m not sure that you can get . . . have much of an influence on the federal level other than maybe working through your state superintendent and lobbying him or her with your views, and then they can take that to their higher level and talk a little bit, I guess, both with your congressman and develop that relationship early on. I’ve found superintendents have a little more influence with their state legislators and that’s really the ones we worry about the most, I guess. Creating more mandates for us or changing protocol. Developing those relationships early so that you’ll be able to pick up the phone and call them and they know who you are instead of just
some name on the other end of the line that may or may not mean anything to them.

Because I’m new to the district and learning the culture, a lot of the decisions I make have . . . I take input from my principals, my cabinet, which is, in this district I have no other central office staff. But I do have five building principals and we meet on a monthly basis and go over planning and we also talk about things that have been done in the past that they like to see change culturally, and so decisions are team-based. I guess I use my own moral compass from an ethical standpoint. I feel like I’m an ethical person. I was raised by the Golden Rule and raised to be honest and treat people fairly. So I guess I use my own . . . you know, that internal gauge, when your stomach kind of tells you if it doesn’t feel right, then it’s not right.

We’re making changes slowly. One of the issues I found when I came here is that we have five different schools, so three different elementary K-4s, and they’re all kind of doing their own thing, and I didn’t feel like in all of our buildings we were doing what was best for just the students’ . . . students’ sake. Some of the early leadership meetings were based on, “Let’s become consistent in our practices, the way we treat students, and even uniform policies.”

Superintendent A2. Superintendent A2 said,

I’m very reflective in my leadership. I have the ability to pick it up if things don’t feel right kind of feeling. Then I will probe and I’ll go to the associate with, “What’s this all about? I can sense something’s going on.” They’re
like, “Oh, yeah, people are upset about this.” I always analyze it from [the perspective of] what contribution did we as administrators make to that situation? What did we do? They didn’t just all make it up. If they’re all that angry, what did we do? How did we . . . ? Then try to come out and talk about it. I’m very honest with them and I think that helps. I will say, “We goofed up.”

A good example is we have early release Mondays and when we put them in, we said, “This is for teacher articulation time and for you as professionals to be able to work together.” Now we have filled them up with all kinds of administrative gobblygook and they were furious. I have a superintendent’s advisory group and they met with me and they’re like, “That’s not what you said. We’re giving up time with students and then this is all just like one big faculty meeting every Monday.”

We went and I looked at what happened and, as always, administrators have a million things to do, so they found time and they were just shoving things in there. We stepped back and I went to each building personally and met with the staff and said, “We may have let this train go out of control a little bit. I heard what you need and we’re going to meet your need and we’re going to do that.”

That is how I ruled and I’m very personal with them. Whenever it’s a big deal, I go to each of the buildings and they always say, “XXXX coming after school.” It’s not mandatory but I tell you I’m never in a room where they’re not all there. They all come because they know I have something to say.
We had a situation where we made dramatic staff reductions to help balance our budget in my first two years in my superintendency and they were painful, very painful. We cut 2.2 million dollars’ worth of positions and lost 23 teachers. In a district this small, that’s big. Then the board decided that they wanted to return the consumer science class to XXXX [Middle School]. I’m like, “What? We have 800 other jobs we need to get. I have one librarian for the whole district. But we’re going to have for all intents and purposes . . . somebody cooking . . . with a bunch of sixth, seventh, and eighth graders?” But they made it public. They brought the discussion to the board table and there were teachers and parents in the audience that were furious about it. I was, and I was struggling really to keep it together. I was like, “This is the dumbest thing that I’ve ever heard and I cannot support this.” I knew that I couldn’t but I had to really think through. I’m in a public forum as the leader of this organization and this could be my swan song.

I just said to them, “I’m sorry. I understand and respect your decision and I will do what I’m instructed to do but I want it on record that I do not support this position at all. I think that to return a consumer science class to the middle school when we have all these other positions that are direct instructional positions, reading specialists, LMC directors, technologists, is a mistake. That being said, the board has the right to move forward to this.” Well, they were furious because, of course, you really should never have that public. But I thought I needed to.
Now, I won over my association and was like, “Thank you.” But they all were like, “Oh, is she getting fired on this one?”

The principal from XXXX was, like, “All I kept thinking was this may be her last day.” I really was furious about it and the board and I had to process through. We came together and I said, “I’m sorry. I know that it’s my job but I couldn’t publically do this.” One of the board members says, “Were you willing to lose your job?” I said, “Yeah, I was. I actually was over this one.” I went home and said to my husband, “If I lose my job over this, I’m actually going to sleep at night because this is the dumbest thing I’ve ever heard. We’re going to look like a bunch of idiots when we do it.” We are doing it. I held it off for a year but I was able to get reading specialist in and back before. There are priorities above that that I think are more important than just willy-nilly putting this class together. Plus we had to remodel the classroom. There were expenses beyond just hiring a teacher.

I think I chose my words very carefully and it’s why I probably survived the situation. I don’t know if I hadn’t been there as long as I was that the board would have been as tolerant of my behavior. I knew that it was worth the risk and I knew that I was rebelling against my bosses in a public way. I think you come to a place where you know where your line is and you know what you believe in. If you start to make allowances and not behave that way to keep your job or to please other people, you should get out, you really should.
Superintendent A3. Superintendent A3 said,

I think our field, the field of education in the United States, is going through a tectonic shift. I think there’s some major, major things that are going on that are shifting almost every aspect, I think, of what we do. I am a glass-half-full kind of person, to be honest, so I don’t spend a lot of time and energy complaining or looking at and raising heck over, “Why are they doing this to us?”

I think that, and I hear that, and I appreciate that, and I understand that, but I look at the things that we’re being forced to do and the things that we have to do to be compliant, and if it’s lemons, I’m making lemonade. If it’s something that has to be done simply to be compliant, I’m going to be looking for a way to utilize the energy that we’re doing for compliance purposes to improve what we’re doing for kids at the same time.

I feel that my role as superintendent is to take these sometimes frightening and intimidating and forceful initiatives that are rammed down our throats, maybe . . . could be viewed that way . . . and I think it’s my job to take and present it in a way and facilitate the work within this building in a way that is not one of these, “Oh, one more thing we’re doing just to be in line with the new law or whatever else,” and make sure people can see and realize that there is a much greater positive potential by us going through this and then carry it out in a way that actually makes that happen.

Summary of adaptor group data. For adaptors, resistance to the status quo presents itself differently than it does for innovators. Whereas an innovators’ resistance to
the status quo was expressed through a desire to shift systems and try new paradigms, often through new roles and positions, the adaptor’s resistance to the status quo was focused more internally at the current structures in place within the organization. Kirton (2006) warned that it is easy to see the dramatic ebb and flow of the innovator as glamorous, exciting, and indicative of successful systemic change, but that widespread systemic change can be successfully or unsuccessfully implemented by individuals at either end of the adaption-innovation continuum. The KAI does not measure the level or capacity of an individual’s potential for success. Instead, KAI focuses on the approach used by innovators and adaptors to make decisions, solve problems, and be creative.

From the vignettes of the adaptive superintendents, it is evident that motivation to improve, change, and grow exists. Each superintendent articulated a desire to move forward with his or her organization to improve the structure, maximize efficiency, and build greater cohesion within the system. Superintendent A1 articulated this intention as follows:

One of the issues I came and found when I came here is that we have five different schools, so three different elementary K-4s, and they’re all kind of doing their own thing, and I didn’t feel like in all of our buildings we were doing what was best for just the students’ . . . students’ sake. Some of the early leadership meetings were based on, “Let’s become consistent in our practices.”

Superintendent A2 also reinforced the idea that her organization seeks to maximize efficiency and continually improve their practices:
A good example is we have early release Mondays and when we put them in, we said, “This is for teacher articulation time and for you as professionals to be able to work together.”, Now we have filled them up with all kinds of administrative gobblygook and they were furious. I have a superintendent’s advisory group and they met with me and they’re, like, “That’s not what you said. We’re giving up time with students and then this is all just like one big faculty meeting every Monday.”

We went and I looked at what happened and, as always, administrators have a million things to do, so they found time and they were just shoving things in there. We stepped back and I went to each building personally and met with the staff and said, “We may have let this train go out of control a little bit. I heard what you need and we’re going to meet your need and we’re going to do that.”

Incidentally, in comparison to innovators, adaptive superintendents had fewer transitions in their careers. In most cases, they either limited the scope of the experience to one environment or generally one function within different environments.

Superintendent A1 began as teacher, but spent most of his career in the role of business manager for school districts before becoming a superintendent. Superintendent A2 spent the majority of her career in the same district in the special education arena before moving briefly into curriculum and instruction and then into the superintendency.

Superintendent A3 works in a one-school district where he has been for almost his entire career. He has held several different roles in the school throughout his career, but all within the same building. This matter of perceived continuity may be more anecdotal in
terms of evidence, but it is interesting to paint the contrast to the innovators group, where movement seems to be more prevalent than with the adaptors group.

In contrast to innovators, the adaptive superintendents in this study did not articulate the same value or sense of urgency for change. The adaptors’ vignettes painted a picture of change viewed mostly in response to some inefficiency within the system versus a disconnect between the values, or understanding of values, of leader and the organization. There is much less talk about change in the adaptors’ comments than there is in the innovators’ comments. No value judgment can or should be made that suggests innovators embrace change more or better than adaptors. Instead, innovators take a different approach to change, one that is seemingly imbued with a need to change systems, while adaptors’ comments make change as part of a desire to maximize their current system. Both demonstrate a resistance to remaining stagnant, but differ significantly in approach.

**Innovator group vignettes.** Superintendents I1, I2, and I3 offered extensive comments in response to Research Question 2.

*Superintendent I1.* Superintendent I1 said,

I . . . was recruited back to the district as an assistant principal of XXXX High School. They had some significant issues surrounding school culture and discipline. I was able to impact that within my first year as an assistant principal. My plan was to be an assistant principal for several years and then get to a middle school principalship and then maybe a high school principalship and retire, but I was fortunate to be able to make some significant changes in the first year.
I was the assistant principal of XXXX High School and, as a result, for whatever reason, obtained a good reputation as an administrator. They gave me my own building the next year, which was a middle school, which, again, was probably the toughest middle school in the district and had some significant building issues as it applied to the culture and academics.

In that two-year timeframe, again, we were able to make some significant progress. After that two years, they asked that I take XXXX High School. . . . I was there for four years and we made some significant growth. After the conclusion of my fourth year at XXXX High School, they asked that I take XXXX High School, which was 3,600 kids. I was there for five years and they then asked that I consider the superintendency. So I’ve been in this position, this is my . . . I’m completing the second year of a third-year contract in the superintendency.

[In regards to decision making.] Again, in my justification, I use this picture as my analogy. These are two of my sons. I have four children. This is the day that [the younger son] actually learned how to ride the bike without supports. His brother is one year older than him. It got to a point where I thought this kid may have some type of physical impairment with his balance, because I’m chasing him up and down the street for weeks trying to get him to ride this bike. This one [pointing to older son], literally on the first day I took the training wheels off, he rode the bike. I thought, “It’s easy.”
This guy [younger son], the first day I have to train my son, second, third . . . weeks until he learned how to ride a bike. However, on this day if I were to ask you to come in and assess their bicycle riding skills, you would indicate that they both could ride the bike equally as well and there would be no. . . if I say, “Which one is a better bike rider?” You would say, “They could both equally ride the bike as well.” If I ask you, “Well, it only took me one day to teach him, it took me three weeks to teach him. Which one can ride the bike better?” It would have been of no consequence and still could both ride the bike equally as well.

If I’m assessing them in their bicycle riding skills and not the process I used to get them to the point where they could ride the bike, then they both are A students. Which, again, with our cumulative grading system where we average everything, it’s, like, who cares what grades they got along the process if, in the end, they’ve mastered the content? I don’t care if they got straight Fs. At the end of the day, if they’ve proven content mastery, why wouldn’t I give them a mastery for that? Why would we not? Except for the process, which nobody cares about anymore. Nobody cares about what our process is. . . . [It’s,] “Did your kids learn or not?” “No.” “Okay, well you are [a] failing district and we’ll reconstitute you.”

Whatever your process is, it’s broken because your kids aren’t learning. But people have really struggled with that paradigm shift, so I’ve used this analogy concerning the process doesn’t matter. Guess what? The fact that I had to do it over and over and over and over again, in my mind, I believed this kid could ride a bike. Because I believed he could ride a bike, my effort with him was
infinite. I was going to continue to try until he learned it. Now take that to
learning math. You teach, you get it, I don’t. The way we conduct business now, I
get an F, it sticks with me, you get an A, it sticks with you, and we move on. I just
get further and further and further behind from you.

My question becomes one of two things has to be true again. A, “I really
don’t care if the kid learns it or not. I taught it, I’ve been given excellent ratings
all my life, even though I’m not excellent,” but it’s just easy for administration to
do that because it avoids the work and the hassle and the consultations so let’s just
make them all excellent. If I’m an excellent instructor and I deliver it, and you get
an A and I get an F and I’m excellent, then it’s not me, it’s the kid. One of two
things has to true. Either A, your belief system about the kid is skewed, either you
don’t believe he can learn or you don’t care that he does learn, or B, the stuff
we’re teaching them isn’t really that important for him to know.

Now if somebody can give me another scenario, then I’m open to hear it.
But either A, the kid is not that important for whatever reason, or the content that
we’re teaching is not that important. If the content that we’re teaching is that
important, then why would our effort ever stop in assuring that kid learns it and
we care about the kid. If it’s that important for this boy to ride the bike and I
really believe he can ride a bike, then at what point do I stop trying to teach him
to ride the bike? Never.
Superintendent I2 said,

When I came back from Spain, I started teaching at XXXX Township High School, Spanish and French. I had a blast. Ran the exchange programs there. Went to many countries with many kids, also coached cheerleading. Gosh, I was really involved in the community. Started a girls’ basketball program for African American girls and just a million different kinds of things.

There, too, was involved with the union and enjoyed it. Was passionate about making sure the right things happened inside my classroom and outside of my classroom, and really just got a vision for a lot of things that weren’t right. Outside of the classroom, that needed to change and my buddies thought I was good at that and they’re, like, “XXXX, you know what . . . you should be the enemy.” I’m, like, “No . . . (laughter).”

[I] ended up being hired as a high school dean at XXXX High School, which eventually morphed into a new job of . . . they created a new position called associate principal for school improvement and curriculum instruction, which I did and loved, changed a million things there. Great system and made it better, better for kids.

I then was tapped and . . . signed on to be principal of XXXX Junior High, . . . and there was just a lot of things there. Great bones about the place, if you will, but a lot of things that were happening were just not good for kids. It needed to be different and, man, we changed stuff hand over fist. In fact (laughs), oh, no, I have it at home. I don’t have it here. Oh, man. Going to show you my
mouse pad that XXXX gave me and it’s Joan of Arc in Hell (laughter). She’s chained and there’s flames all around her (laughter) because that’s how we felt. We were like in Hell every day.

We had this thing at the end of the day. You know middle schools, right, right? You love them. You love the kids, the energy, and you love the good teachers, but the bad ones, really, no. At the end of each day, we would debrief at 5, between 5 and 6, and we had this imagery which was, “You know what, if this whole place was on fire, who would you save?” Every day we’d like would you, no, would you, no (laughter). Besides each other. Then, eventually, we got better staff or staff changed their minds and so we would save more and more and more, but upfront we were like, “Just lock it and let it burn (laughter). Yes, that was an awesome experience.

What was cool is making the right things happen for kids over time. Hard, and we were loved and hated, but so what? At the end of the day, we made the right things happen for kids and that was a cool thing.

Superintendent I3. Superintendent I3 said,

Then I went to XXXX in XXXX County. I was there for two and a half years. High point there was when I got there, the district had tried to pass a referendum two or three times, and were not successful. It was out of money. We went to the public, had the next referendum, but rather than just asking for money, I learned a lot about messaging and communications there. I pulled together a committee, mostly teachers, but community-based as well, about 100 people. We
met for, I think, five weeks, and identified, looked at research, our best practices of the curriculum, of development, with the finance or the budget, technology, everything, except for language stuff, all of it, the major issues. Then we identified what our vision of schooling for children should be.

Then we looked at it with a second cut. One was, “Here’s the vision, and we basically costed it out, and so here’s the price tag, and it’s going to cost taxpayers, property taxpayers 50% more than what they’re currently paying for school property taxes.” Then we also said, “Well, here’s our existing revenues that we know we can count on. Based on these priorities, this is what we can buy.” Basically, we had a huge wall, big bulletin board thing, we put a bull’s eye. The core was our highest priority, and then the concentric circles were the next highest priorities. When we ran out of money, we ran out of money. It was very lean vision, but it was based on priorities rather than trying to do a little of this and a little of everything and not doing anything very well.

We asked people, “Pick a choice. Pick a vision for school.” One was to thrive, which was very good one, or survive, which was the lean one. The community approved it with 60% majority in 2005. From there, I went to XXXX because the board then voted to not extend my contract. You’ll see a pattern emerging (laughter).

The reality is there are very few decisions that are ultimately, ultimately mine alone, particularly because of this model, but when those things, and they do come up periodically, I’ve got an amazing staff, district office staff. My assistant
superintendent is new this year. She comes from XXXX, Ph.D. in organizational theory, brings incredible insights into organizations as well as curriculum and professional development. My HR director is a former labor attorney, employment attorney with XXXX, one of the . . . just amazing expertise. Business manager used to work for the gaming board as an investigator. Bilingual director, grew up here, went to school here, knows the community inside out, and almost knows all the kids, 4,000 of them, special ed director, new last year, phenomenal, phenomenal, and just brings some innovation to that.

I’ve got some of the best expertise. The beauty is, there’s some real tension in our administrative meetings because it’s a really diverse group. People do not all see the world the same way. Age-wise, they’re very different. Culturally and their backgrounds, very different, and so I get good information and good insights and a lack of fear of being open about their opinions and beliefs. Ultimately, it’s going to be what’s best for the kids. The decision what’s going to be best for the kid, or the kids and . . . because I guess I have consciously chosen. I don’t care about making people happy. That just ain’t going to happen.

The other thing that I’ve been criticized for or I’ve been advised, is that I consider myself very open and share things that others won’t and they’d draw this line. For me, the line is kind of blurry because, you see, I love change, absolutely love change. That’s not universally held a value in schools because there’s a lot of people who, they wake up every day and try to figure out how they can hold onto yesterday.
The highlight for a couple of years ago was when we had the vice chairman of GE, because I had known him when I worked at GE. It took us nine months but when he was in Chicago meeting with employees, he met separately with us, and that’s when he . . . someone asked him, “How do you change things? How are you working at a place like GE?” He said every single day and thinks, “How can I make today better than yesterday?” but he understands that’s not how a lot of people feel. A lot of people, “I’m going to hang on to yesterday.” This whole concept of change, because that’s what we’ve got to do. We’ve got to bring change faster in schools. This timeline of three to five years to bring about change is just nonsense. It’s just craziness. The superintendents have turned over twice before the initiative has been fully implemented. That’s something I learned at GE in terms of compressing the timeframes.

I’m trying to get people to adapt, to change, to embrace change. My opening day speech to the staff this year offended a whole bunch of people. The evaluations were really interesting. Some loved it, and some really hated it because I talked about . . . my topic was our personal relationship with change. It was really from my personal standpoint. It wasn’t really about school, wasn’t about curriculum. It was about how we embrace change. I talked about two things. One that was noncontroversial was when I was approaching 50, when I was still 49, I said, “I’m going to start running marathons.” I’ve been running the Chicago marathon every year since then, and that’s why I run with the girls on the run, things like that.
Then I said, “Sometimes the change is painful. Sometimes it hurts.” I shared with them, all my 600 employees that three years ago, after 20 years of marriage, I had a conversation with my wife that I’m gay. I had come out to my board a year after I came out to my family and friends.

But then this past summer, because I also know that from a standpoint of change, it was a pretty dramatic change in my life. I was hoping that people would relate to the fact that there are times that it’s uncomfortable or worse, it’s painful. Others can be brought down in that process, but in the end, it’s a good thing. That’s just part of change. That’s a good thing.

Summary of innovator group data. A number of factors demonstrate a natural resistance of the status quo within this group of innovative superintendents. Perhaps the most obvious is simply the number of roles they have held within their organizations. Quantifiably speaking, the innovators had significantly more transitions between roles within their career history than did adaptors. Innovators more frequently sought out new roles with new expectations versus just new positions within the same specialty area or within the same organization. Superintendent I1’s experiences were interesting in that he was drawn to and offered positions within the same district where cultural issues existed and perceived change required. Superintendent I2 expresses her transitions through various districts, locations, and roles as a journey of opportunity to explore and learn new things, while Superintendent I3’s transitions between roles seem to center around system intolerance for his love of change.
Kirton’s (2006) theory of innovators supports the notion that innovators seek out novelty and are attracted to situations that offer the potential to bring about dynamic change. Innovators also tend to suffer fatigue more readily from structure within a system that they view as limiting and either need to adapt their role or change roles to eliminate those limitations. Superintendent I3, for example, has an MBA and a doctorate degree in education. He has worked both in education and the corporate environment, has written a book, does public speaking, teaches collegiate courses, worked overseas, runs marathons, and has even trained in improvisational theater. The diversity of roles and interests is indicative of a very highly innovative style in which the creation of novelty comes from a wealth of experiences and the opportunity to engage in developing a broader understanding of systems and how they operate.

Also worth noting is that innovators tend to view the need for change in any situation in which they are placed. The need for change is not always based on external evidence, but instead from a value “gap,” as Packer (2008, p. 59) described, in which the innovator perceives that the actions or movements proposed by the group are not in line with their cognitive thinking. Perhaps the strongest evidence for this need is highlighted in the number of times Superintendent I2 mentions phrases like “changed a millions things there.” In almost every role she described having during the interview, she embedded a phrase that suggested the need for many changes. Cognitively, it seems that as she enters a new role, a cognitive gap between her values and the values of the organization becomes evident to her and her natural resistance to the status quo is engaged and change begins. This is not to say that her values are in opposition to those of
the organization; it is her thinking around movement and actions that are at odds with the organization and her innovative cognitive style that suggests a shift in the paradigm.

From these data, innovative superintendents seem to thrive on the novelty of change and approach new situations as an opportunity for change. Situations that they perceive as limiting or opportunities that present less limitation may give innovators cause to change roles, both within an organization and in other fields. The examples provided demonstrate a consistent drive that appears to stem from a value system influenced, as Kirton (2006) suggested, by the individual’s fixed cognitive style. This value-driven approach, combined with a natural tendency to prefer a shift in paradigm as a function of an innovative cognitive style demonstrates an innate resistance to the status quo among innovative superintendents.

**Summation of evidence for Research Question 2.** The primary attribute of a rebel, as defined by this study, is an innate resistance to the status quo. High innovators in this study demonstrate an innate resistance to the status quo in two distinct ways. First, the highly innovative superintendents consistently viewed change as necessary across roles and positions. They did not demonstrate satisfaction with any system in which they were involved and suggested changes that changed the current paradigm of the system. Secondly, highly innovative superintendents sought out positions and roles that offered opportunities to provide systemic change. Highly innovative superintendents moved between roles more frequently than did superintendents within the adaptor or control groups.
None of the participants in this study scored within the highly adaptive range on the KAI, so evidence of behaviors and actions demonstrating a resistance to the status quo is not available. However, a superintendent within the adaptor group who scored as mild to moderately adaptive approached the response to the status quo differently than the innovator group. Adaptive superintendents did not rebel against the status quo, but reinforced their current structures to protect them from the change. This is not to say that adaptors ignore change or resist change, but approach change by examining the current structures in place and maximizing the effectiveness and efficiency of the system by examining and refining current practice before changing practice.

Superintendents in the control group represented the mild to moderately innovative and did not demonstrate any significant resistance to the status quo. All of the superintendents within the control group adapted and changed practices in response to the pressure exerted on the system. While this pressure was met with anger and frustration, compliance with the pressure was evidenced even when it went against what the superintendent believed was right for kids.

Research Question 3. Research Question 3 was, “How do highly adaptive and highly innovative superintendents use coping behavior to modify their actions and behaviors when rebel characteristics may be perceived as adversarial in a given situation?”

Kirton (2006) defined coping behavior as outside the natural preference of an individual’s cognitive style. His theory recognizes that not all problems can be solved through one style and that all people, at times, need to act in ways that are not preferred. When individuals act outside of their preferred style, they are using coping behavior. All
behavior costs effort, as Kirton articulated, but acting in a way that is outside of one’s preferred style is more expensive in terms of effort required.

Coping behavior is driven by motivation but becomes more and more costly as the duration during which the coping behavior is required increases (Kirton, 2006). An individual who needs to display coping behavior for a 30-minute meeting will likely find it easier to do than an individual who needs to use coping behavior for an entire day. Motivation is a key factor and is dependent on the level of reward or consequence present in the situation.

All of the superintendents included in this study struggled to identify what coping behavior was and how they used it. Most struggled to separate out changes in their behavior from presenting a concept in a different way to a different audience, but some were able to provide examples of their use of coping behavior. The following sections are summaries of interview data that describe how the superintendents viewed their use of coping behavior. Two entries are missing because one superintendent did not provide any comment on the subject and, in the other case, time ran out before the topic could be discussed. Both of these are instances are noted. A summary for all groups is provided after the vignettes.

**Control group.** Superintendents in the control group commented on coping behavior as follows.

_**Superintendent C1.**_ Superintendent C1 said,

At every one of my board meetings, I have to do that. It is their meeting and I have some particularly rambunctious board members. I do at those meetings
have to sort of curtail, when I want to respond or I want to say, “No, no, no. Let me tell you what’s really going on.” I have to sit quietly and let that go, and the reason is that, ultimately, the board hires the superintendent. Part of my role has been to make sure that the board sees that I support them in what they do.

Then that support is also making them look good to the community. There are times that I do find that I have to really sort of step out of the me that I know and love dearly, and be a different sort of a me to help provide support for people, sort of pushing them along without being, what could appear to be aggressive or confrontational, and just, “Hey, have you thought about it this way? Or have you thought about it this way?” That really has been sort of the biggest challenge there.

Superintendent C2. Superintendent C2 said,

We are salesmen. We’re selling education. Trying to get people to buy it and sell it as a product. You have to be where it can be most effective. There’s no right way to do the job. There are right ways to do it. Numbers of people do it very different. When you ask the style they use, many people do things different than I do are very successful with it. For me, I’m in sales. I have to be able to convince and explain and communicate.

Superintendent C3. Superintendent C3 made no comments made relating to this topic.

Adaptor group. Superintendents in the adaptor group commented on coping behavior as follows.

Superintendent A1. Superintendent A1 said,
Just knowing your audience and knowing that . . . you have to develop, obviously . . . or in my community, you have to develop a pretty good relationship with whomever you’re going to do bargain with before you can get to the table. Meetings ahead of time not related to bargaining. Just planning meetings or including the union representation in the meetings to insure, for example, the map testing that we’re doing here. Union representation we talked to, through professional development committee, what we were planning for the future. I think if you have a rapport, you establish that when you come into the room, you have a feeling of when the right time is to bring that up. To me, in my opinion, sincerity and honesty go a long way. If there truly is . . . boards shouldn’t say . . . have to have a hard face if they can afford the raise. If they can afford the raise, then they should say, “This is how much we can afford.” But if they truly can’t afford a raise and you’re just very honest and your numbers are all out on the table, I think it can be a very open and honest conversation with the other side. They’re not going to be happy, but I think if you have . . . if they believe you, if you have credibility with them, they’ll eventually take it in hand.

Superintendent A2. Superintendent A2 said,

I think one of the things that I learned right away, and XXXX really taught me this, I am a very high-energy person. He used to say, “You move at the speed of light.” Early on in my career, he said to me in a very difficult meeting, “You have great natural leadership skills and you think on your feet, but be careful of how quick you come to a decision. Sometimes it makes you look like you weren’t
very thoughtful. Although that’s a skill that you have and you haven’t made any wrong decisions, sometimes it’s worth it to go, ‘Let me think about that,’ even though you know what you’re going to do. Give it a little more time.” It was important for me to hear from him. A little hard to hear because I always pride myself on the fact that I do think on my feet and I’m quick to solve problems. He’s like, “Eh, don’t always solve all their problems. Some of them don’t need to be solved. You listen and go, ‘Um hmm, okay,’ and let them work through it.” I really did, under his leadership, get mentored in that area. I use that as a guide. There are very few decisions immediately anymore. I step back and I learned very quickly, you’ve got to find all the information because there are pieces to it that you’re like, “Well, I didn’t know that part.”

Superintendent A3. Superintendent A3 said,

That transition from principal to superintendent really, I think, put more distance than ever existed between the relationships I had with the people that knew me as a teacher or knew me as more of a colleague when I was a dean in the DC.

The other thing, I guess, that’s happened is people have retired. I’ve been here, and so there’s only probably a couple dozen employees that even remember me as a teacher. They don’t even know me in any other way, and so, while the turnovers happen, as the job rules have changed, and as now I’ve become more of a . . . at the direction of the board as opposed to its principal, where you’re kind of buffered even as principal sometimes . . . I had to reassess and not take so
personal some of the anxiety, the tension, the negativity that sometimes occurs with staff. A little more guarded. Yes. Absolutely. I came to realize that, unlike in a former life here, where I couldn’t do any wrong. Things just seemed to always be right, and if I dropped the ball on something, people were forgiving. People would say, “Oh, you know, it’s XXXX that we’re dealing with.” That’s not the case anymore. I have to be a little more cautious, a little more guarded, and a little more politically correct and aware of things that I just didn’t have to think and worry about quite so much as I was making my way through my career.

So yes, the answer to your question is . . . I certainly have to make sure I’m not saying something I don’t mean, I’m not importing any sort of tone into a message, whether it’s an e-mail or a statement in front of the staff or a newsletter that goes out to the public. There’s a lot of attention to make sure that it’s said right, it’s said well, and it’s not . . . creat[ing] some unwarranted, without misinterpretation. . . .

**Innovator group.** Superintendents in the innovator group commented on coping behavior as follows.

*Superintendent I1.* Question skipped due to time constraints.

*Superintendent I2.* Superintendent I2 said,

Of course, including today, I met with some representatives from a university today, but here’s the . . . I look at it as . . . you know, I speak a couple different languages and here’s the thing, the message doesn’t change, you might
use a different language when you’re in a different country, but it’s the same message, it’s the same passion, and I don’t change that.

If I have a message to communicate, which I frequently do, do I communicate it differently to different folks? Of course, but the passion, I think that’s pretty much the same. I don’t see that as changing. I don’t think people would represent that fact as changing, and those who know me well . . .

In fact, here’s a good example. With the recent elections in XXXX, we had XXXX step down, whom I adore, she’s a good friend of mine and there were . . . I forget how many people that went for those various seats, there were a lot and so I was part of numerous conversations around those. It’s kind of funny, there was a Chamber of Commerce political event and the various folks running for office were giving their spiel, right? An individual who is completely on the opposite spectrum of everything that I believe in was sort of referring to me for points during his stump speech, right? All my friends were snickering and then there was all that snickering away. I don’t need to disrespect that man, but you know what I mean, the fact that he wanted to align himself with me would be to our credit in a way and, if he is elected, I will be his best friend, right? Was I baudy? Indeed not. Could I have been? Surely. Was I? No.

_Superintendent I3._ Superintendent I3 said,

I think I used to try to adapt it to build the alliances beforehand, but what I found with boards, you cannot guess them, never guess, because they’ll tell you
one thing [and] a month later, they’ve completely forgotten and changed their minds because they live here. They’re in a community.

**Summary of data for all groups.** All of the superintendents struggled with identifying adaptations of their behavior, or coping behavior. In both the formal and informal conversations, it became evident that the political nature of the role of superintendent blurred the general awareness of the individual to the adaptation of his or her behavior. Most of the participants shared using situational leadership in different occasions but did not see that as a function of adapting their behavior, but instead a political requirement of the job. Superintendents C1 and C2 articulated the political nature of the superintendency. They viewed their role as being an advocate for kids, so they needed to have the skills necessary to communicate with a variety of constituencies to convey the message in a way that builds advocacy for schools, education, and children.

The adaptors groups also recognized the need to modify their presentation, depending on the audience. This modification was also viewed as topical and not necessarily as an adaptation of their behavior to overcome their natural presentation style. Superintendent A2 spoke about how she was quick to make decisions and has learned to overcome her need to be efficient and decide quickly. She shared that she continues to struggle with that feeling but has seen the benefits of coping through her natural tendency to decide too quickly. Superintendent A3 also shared how he has adapted his behavior in established relationships as he has moved from being a teaching professional to the superintendent of the district. He noted feeling more guarded, still transparent (a quality
noted in a previous excerpt), but more cautious about timing, wording, and context for sharing his views.

In general, innovators agreed with adaptors and the control group that the function of coping behavior is more political than a function of overcoming their natural cognitive style. Two of the innovators showed less concern for adapting behavior, even for political reasons. Superintendent I2 shared that her message remains the same with the same level of passion and different words, but does not change even between a colleague and a board member. Superintendent I3 shared that he used to value the political capital gained by adapting his behavior to build alliances, but has not found that value worth continuing.

*Summation of evidence for Research Question 3.* Research Question 3 asked how highly innovative and highly adaptive superintendents use coping behavior to modify actions and behaviors when rebel-like characteristics may be perceived as adversarial in a given situation. Overall, no relevant differences were noted among groups. Instead, a common theme emerged surrounding the political nature of the superintendent role. Data presented showed that regardless of an individual’s cognitive style, the role of superintendent requires an ability to adapt one’s behavior or presentation regularly to successfully manage the political aspects of the role. Individuals in the role of superintendent do use coping behavior to adapt their preferred style to what would be viewed as more acceptable in a specific environment, but the function of this behavior is viewed by these superintendents as a political requirement of the role rather than a need to adapt one’s own natural style. The difference in approach between adaptors and innovators in using coping behavior was negligible.
Research Question 4. Research Question 4 was, “Which ethical lenses do highly adaptive and highly innovative superintendents prefer to use in decision making and problem solving?”

As public figures, superintendents are expected to act justly, rightly, and promote good—to be ethical (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2001; Evers, 1992). Begley (1999), and later, Enomoto and Kramer (2007), understood that leaders combine the practical circumstances of day-to-day issues with ethical frameworks to make value judgments. The superintendents participating in the qualitative portion of this study were asked questions about decision making and ethical dilemmas they had faced. These data are represented as quotes from superintendents under each of the ethical lenses: deontology, utilitarianism, care, and critique. The analysis of these data provides a sense of which lenses individual superintendents use, as well as any theme that may be present, such as a dominance of a particular lens or set of lenses by each KAI group (adaptor, innovator, or control) or by circumstance (e.g., financial decisions, personnel decisions).

For the purposes of this study, the ethical frameworks of justice (comprising both deontology and utilitarianism), critique, and care were used (Starratt, 1994). A separate, clean set of interview transcripts were reviewed by the researcher and statements that reflected one of the four ethical lenses were coded. These data were extracted and are presented below, organized by ethical lens.

Ethic of justice: Deontology. Comments reflecting deontology were as follows.

Superintendent C1. Superintendent C1 said,
You know if you mess up; you’re a teacher in my district and you mess up, you know we’re going to do a thorough investigation and more than likely, you’ll end up being terminated. Take us to court, whatever, and it is consistent every time. *Superintendent C1.* Superintendent C1 continued,

Well, I would say in terms of the ethical piece, we always look at the data objectively. We look at if there is an investigation that has to be done. . . . I stay out of it. I allow people who are in my office, my other administrators, . . . whoever, whoever else can conduct the investigation to conduct it completely so that when it gets to my desk, when it gets to my seat, I haven’t been involved at all. I can look at it objectively and make my decision based on what the evidence says. What does the evidence say in terms of whatever the situation might be? I pride myself on always being that person.

*Superintendent C1.* Superintendent C1 continued,

We have a process, and the process doesn’t start in the superintendent’s office. As I would talk to each of my board members who inquired about hiring their relatives, I said just that, I said, “Well, you know what? He needs to apply and there’s a committee,” there’s whatever the process, I’d sort of lay out the process and, hopefully, he’ll bubble to the top. I do everything in my power to stay out of that, those decisions up front, because ultimately it comes to my desk to be a recommendation to the board. I like to know that we’ve had a process leading to my desk that’s consistent. That when we get to . . . this is how I appeal to my board members . . . that when we get to the end of that road, that there’s no
possible way somebody can come back and file a ULP or file something against us to say that we did not follow our process.

Superintendent C1. Superintendent C1 continued,
I do ruffle a lot of feathers and I’m okay with that because, the way that I look at it is when it’s all said and done, when I’m being held accountable, I’m being held accountable for the work that I did to make kids’ lives better. So all that other stuff, that’s that . . . and I look at it as those are your personal issues. They’ve got nothing to do with me.

Superintendent C3. Superintendent C3 said,
We’re bound by policy at work, we answer to seven people, but we also answer to our entire community full of learners.

Superintendent C3. Superintendent C3 continued,
There have been periods in my history where I felt that you have to stand up for something that may be unpopular, but you have to stand up for it even if it is unpopular.

Superintendent A1. Superintendent A1 said,
I was raised by the Golden Rule and raised to be honest and treat people fairly. So I guess I use my own . . . you know, that internal gauge, when your stomach kind of tells you if it doesn’t feel right, then it’s not right.

Superintendent A2. Superintendent A2 said,
I’ll say to a principal, “I understand you want to do that, but if you do that, do you understand the repercussions to everyone?” If I overlook that person taking a
personal day before vacation when that’s against policy, what if all 250 of them have . . . .” They all have a story. Everyone has a story.

Superintendent I2. Superintendent I2 said,

The decision making was sitting and always saying, “If that was my child. . . .” I use that as my yardstick. Would I put my child in that classroom? Would I let my child be exposed to that? If I can say, “Yes, I would,” then I’m, like, “Okay.” But the answer really is in my soul, no, then I have to do something about it.

Superintendent I2. Superintendent I2 continued,

It’s never going to be okay to do the wrong thing for the right reason for us.

Ethic of justice: Utilitarianism. Comments reflecting utilitarianism were as follows.

Superintendent C2. Superintendent C2 said,

I want to get a sense from my community before I present that. I talk to people about it and you explain it so they understand why you’re doing what you’re doing, and they may say, “I don’t like what you’re doing, but I don’t really see an alternative for it.” Normally, I run it up the flagpole and try to get a sense from people how far out of line I am or if I am. Then if I can’t explain it to people in such a way that they understand and it makes sense to them, then I have to change what I’m doing because then it’s not consistent with the community that I work for.
Superintendent C2. Superintendent C2 commented,
I think if what we’re doing makes sense to the average person, then you can go where you’re supposed to be going. If what you’re doing doesn’t make sense . . . I used to call it, like, for us, a deal, like, the Farmer Jack tests. If you’re standing in line at the grocery store and you say to somebody, “This is what I’m going to do,” and they say, “What the hell are you thinking?” then you get a sense that maybe you’re out of line.

Superintendent A3. Superintendent A3 said,
We talked about decision making and things like that. You’ve got to always consider what a decision, policy, or whatever the issue is, is the impact on kids and the impact on how kids are going to be dealt with and how they feel about their experience, and whether or not it’s going to improve the educational experience or somehow positively impact it one way or another.

Superintendent A3. Superintendent A3 said,
Not everything is going to be student-centered. I understand that. When we’re sitting there bargaining this contract, that’s . . . and we’re starting that up next week . . . kids will come into the conversation every once in a while, but it’s . . . let’s face it, it’s not generally about kids at the forefront, but we should continue trying to make it that way.

Superintendent A3. Superintendent A3 said,
Well, it was a whole different world because, as superintendent, you’re less educator and you’re more CEO. You’re more about keeping the horde happy.
Your life is incredibly influenced by the whim of seven people, and you’re trying to balance the board issues and dynamics with the staff and what’s going on at the building. You try and serve as a buffer from some of the antics and silly things that board members do or say sometimes, and you protect the staff from some of that kind of stuff.

*Superintendent A3.* Superintendent A3 said,

You can’t 100% say, “Well, I don’t care what you want or don’t want or what’s right or not right, it’s good for kids. You’re doing it.” That’s not going to work either. You’ve got to be reasonable and fair with the people that are working every day.

*Superintendent I3.* Superintendent I3 said,

We, last year, went through a revision of our mission, vision, and core values. Because being where we are, there’s some people who just behave, just badly, just appalling behavior, and some of them were our teachers. They’re just out and out plain assholes. That’s the most professional way to describe. I describe them in worse terms, but that’s the best that I could say about some of them. We tried to align behaviors with these core values and having to do with how we interact with each other, the relationships that we have with each other, how we speak to each other, how we make decisions, . . . having decisions based on those core values. Some of those core values reflect the whole child, the fitness, the creativity, the arts, so when we have these programs, they’re not extras because they’re directly tied with our values.
**Ethic of care.** Comments reflecting the ethic of care were as follows.

**Superintendent C1.** Superintendent C1 said,

I do everything I can in my power to be the best mother I can be. It’s interesting because I do think that a lot of what drives me to be [who I am] also is what I bring here, because I feel very motherly towards the kids in our district.

**Superintendent C3.** Superintendent C3 said,

I’m going to give you an example and this is something that I’m not necessarily proud of but it falls into the . . . you have an ethical question so you can kind of blend this in here . . . it’s . . . I had a teacher, a 25-year veteran teacher in my prior experience who was diagnosed with brain cancer. The hard part about this is that I have to live with the fact that I felt, like, at the one end, I did something that is, personally, one of my values, and that is I honor the people in my organization. You do what you think is best for those people who are making such a difference in the lives of kids. On the other end, I felt like I was, I disenfranchised 25 children who are sent to my school to get the best quality education and they didn’t get it.

**Superintendent A2.** Superintendent A2 said,

[I had] a brand-new teacher and he didn’t want to tell me he was getting married on the Friday before Christmas and the teachers all said, “You have to ask for the day off.” He was going to come and then leave a half hour early and bring his tuxedo to work. The teachers were just like, “You have to ask XXXX for the day off.” He’s like, “Oh, no, no. You can’t. When I worked in another district there
were no circumstances.” He sends me this note and I am laughing. I’m, like, “You weren’t really going to come to work?” I call him and I’m, like, “XXXX, you’re going to take the day off and you’re going to take Thursday, the day before.” He’s like, “Really?” I go, “Yeah, you take those to personal days.” He goes, “Well, I know the policy.” I go, “I get to override the policy when it makes sense and I don’t have a lot of people getting married on the Friday before Christmas so I’m pretty sure I’m okay with this.”

Superintendent A2. Superintendent A2 said,

You have to step back and think about what the right thing to do is as a person, and using humanity and compassion, but never forgetting that the kids are the Number 1 most important thing. I have an example of that, I had a teacher who was going through a terrible personal struggle with OCD and it got to the point where it was really becoming a problem and she was in and out of the bathroom all the time. She recoiled when the children got near her and I just really had to sit down with her and I’d worked with her for almost 20 years and say to her, “You know you need to take a leave of absence.” She’s like, “But I don’t want to.” I’m, like, “This is one of those I’m not going to give you a choice. You really need to get yourself healthy because you’re scaring children.”

Ethic of critique. Comments reflecting the ethic of critique were as follows.

Superintendent I1. Superintendent I1 said,

What we’ve done in our district is we’ve looked at these values that we espouse, that we say we believe, and we compare those to what we are actually doing.
Anywhere in which there’s a discrepancy in what we say we believe and what we’re doing, then we either need to modify our belief system, which people are unwilling to do, or change the way in which we conduct business, our process, and our policies, and our procedures. For example, we will always say things, buzz words, like, “All kids can learn.” We say that, but if we believe it, why do we retract it? Why, in this district, did we offer seventh-grade math at the ninth-grade level to particular sets of children if we believe that, at a minimum, they all can be exposed to ninth-grade math in ninth grade? We say that, so then why is this in the system? Well, okay, then guess what? Rather than work on your empathy as a superintendent, now that I have the authority, we will not offer math below the ninth-grade level at ninth grade. That will fix that. Now we just need to make sure that we prepare them for ninth-grade math.

_Superintendent II._ Superintendent II said,

Because I’ve asked, “How come our curriculum can’t be of equal rigor to XXXX’s?” Let’s compare our curriculum, K-12. Let’s look at their kindergarten curriculum at look at our kindergarten curriculum. Why can’t we expect that of our kids? What is it about our kids that would prevent them from doing what XXXX’s kids can? If they start talking about compliance issues, “Oh we got Black kids, or we got Brown kids, or we got poor kids, or we got single parents, we got a broken home, we got foster kids, or we got Section 8,” I’m, like, “Oh, well then.”
Superintendent I2. Superintendent I2 said,

I ended up my first year teaching in this just glorious place, was very different than anything I had expected or been prepared for, for that matter, and I loved every bit of it. It was so fun and had a real fire in the belly for what was wrong and unfair in education. You see it right there. You see these poor families and kids coming completely unprepared, but they’re just amazing kids and you really feel a sense of commitment to them.

Superintendent I2. Superintendent I2 said,

Actually, interestingly enough, that was 1985, and Chicago had a two-week strike. Even as a new teacher for whatever reason, I was elected to be the building union rep. I served in that capacity and during the strike was involved politically, even as a baby, right, but I also had a . . . one of my colleagues and I decided to teach our kids at a Boys’ Club. We would picket in the morning and then teach our kids in a Boys’ Club in the afternoon because it’s not fair to put the kids in the crosshairs, just isn’t, especially low-achieving kids over time. They just couldn’t take that gap. It would’ve been two weeks for winter break and then another two weeks of the strike. Golly, they would’ve never recovered, right? We did both things and I just had a passion for both equity for what happens as teachers because I care about that, but also don’t take it out on the backs of kids, just that’s not right, right?
Superintendent I2. Superintendent I2 said,

My framework in terms of decision making is, are we doing the right thing for kids? That is my line in the sand. That’s my sacrosanct piece, but ethics is key, right? I want men and women of character around me and at those decision-making points and around those tables pushing around the right thing to do.

Superintendent I3. Superintendent I3 said,

The only thing that I will say from the national perspective is from the standpoint of No Child Left Behind. I love it. I love it. I think that was the best thing to happen to schools across the country. The best thing, because it revealed the fact that many schools, particularly wealthy schools, were able to hide the crime that they’ve been committing of failing to educate all children. I was thrilled when XXXX, XXXX, and XXXX where my kids went to school, were identified as failing schools. My kids knew that at XXXX Township High School, the culture was different and the teachers acted differently between the freshman-sophomore campus as compared to the junior-senior campus because the Mexicans from XXXX dropped out and it was different.

   Kids know about this. Kids know that these schools are failing to serve entire groups of children. That’s why when superintendents ask me or comment and say, you know XXXX, you're still trailing behind. We know that not everyone or 100% of kids aren’t going to meet or exceed standards. Then I asked them, “Really? What are the names of the kids you’re willing to fail to serve? Because I want to know if my kids’ name shown on the list.” Typically, they’re
not for two reasons: I’m White and middle class. They’re not going to be. The kids that they’re typically willing to fail to serve to write off are Blacks and Hispanics and lower incomes. No Child Left Behind has opened up that can of worms.

**Summary of use of ethical framework data.** Rebels, as defined by this study, are imbued with strong belief systems and value systems situated within an attitude that believes change can happen for the betterment of others. Given this assumption, the decisions, expressions, and demeanor presented by an individual could be attributed to one or more ethical lenses. Superintendents are charged with an ethical obligation to educate students. Embedded within that obligation are myriad complicating factors that force the individual superintendent to view issues through multiple lenses before making decisions. Ethical frameworks are part of the same set of cognitive processes as cognitive style called cognitive function (Kirton, 2006). Like cognitive style, a person’s ethical framework filters stimuli from the external world and influences the responding behavior.

Comments made during the interviews were coded by ethical lens and tallied in by superintendent (see Table 18). Given the open structure of the interview, it is possible that only one or two comments were shared that could be attributed to an ethical lens and should not be construed as a full representation of any one superintendent’s ethical framework. The comments presented in Table 18 are intended to provide a glimpse into how ethical lenses are used by individual superintendents as well as by KAI category.
### Table 18

**Number of Comments Coded by Ethical Lens**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superintendent</th>
<th>Ethic of Justice: Deontology</th>
<th>Ethic of Justice: Utilitarianism</th>
<th>Ethic of Care</th>
<th>Ethic of Critique</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>A2</td>
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<td>I2</td>
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<tr>
<td>I3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* C = control. A = adaptor. I = innovator.

During the interview process, individual superintendents provided examples both directly and indirectly of decisions they had made that were attributed to one or more of the ethical lenses. Overall, all four lenses were used by various superintendents. Superintendents who provided more than one example tended to use more than a single lens, but several superintendents did provide multiple examples that were classified within a single lens.

Perhaps the most striking variances in the data set are the use of the ethic of critique and the lack of use of the ethic of care by innovators. Given Kirton’s (2006) description of innovators, these data seem consistent with the adaption-innovation theory.
The ethic of care, according to Shapiro and Gross (2008), indicates that “educational administrators need to distribute the leadership not simply handing over tasks, but by making certain that everyone is involved in the process of education and feels as if they are heard and of worth” (p. 28). To do so, there needs to be a strong sense of group cohesion and a value toward developing consensus. As part of Kirton’s adaption-innovation theory, innovators often threaten group cohesion and are irreverent of established traditions and practices. The ethic of care requires endless resource to provide that which the cared for need; for the innovative, this requirement may be viewed as a limiting structure. Innovators are not without empathy or caring, but from an ethical framework, these data suggest that the innovative prefer to use critique and challenge the status quo of the system by asking critical questions and looking for those marginalized by the current structure. Innovators, by design, tend to use critique to understand system limits and propose new systems to replace the current ones.

The remaining data show a balance between the use of deontology and utilitarianism among adaptors and the control group. These data representing deontology were distinctly marked between deontology as a sense of duty and deontology as the application of rules. Superintendent C1’s comments, for example, were purely in relation to the application of rules, while Superintendent C3 and Superintendent I2 made comments that relate more to a sense of duty or “ought.” In terms of situational decision making, often the use of deontology was applied in negative personnel issues, while utilitarianism came into play more frequently in comments surrounding financial limits or programming. The use of the ethic of care in this data set was predominately in relation
to personnel issues involving individuals with illness or other circumstances that were otherwise perceived as unfortunate.

The use of ethical lenses data was also examined for differences by age or gender. Female superintendents in this study used the ethic of care more frequently, but use was not consistent across all female superintendents, nor was the use exclusive to female superintendents; Superintendent C3, who is a man, also provided an example using the ethic of care. The ethic of critique was used among the innovative superintendents, all three of whom are over the age of 50. One superintendent in the adaptor group and one superintendent in the control group who are also over age 50 did not use the ethic of critique in any of their examples or commentary. No evidence was present to suggest that age or gender were primary factors in the choice of ethical lenses to use.

**Summation of evidence for Research Question 4.** Research question 4 examined the use of ethical lenses by highly innovative and highly adaptive superintendents in decision making and problem solving. None of the superintendents participating in this study scored in the highly adaptive range, so results for this group are inconclusive, but highly innovative superintendents in this study preferred to use the ethic of critique in decision making and problem solving and showed no evidence of using the ethic of care. Mild to moderately adaptive superintendents as well as the members of the control group did not use the ethic of critique and preferred to use deontology and utilitarianism in decision making and problem solving.
**Research Question 5.** Research Question 5 asked, “To what extents are highly adaptive or highly innovative educational rebels effective at promoting change and what can be learned from their successes and failures?”

The current literature on change leadership places the leader in the driver’s seat of change. Authors such as Marzano et al. (2005), DuFour et al. (2008), Schmoker (2006), and Fullan (2001) highlighted the importance of the educational leader in promoting and successfully effecting change within their organizations. Superintendents, as the highest formal leadership role in public school districts, are expected, now more than ever, to take an active role in the change process and are held accountable for the results of those changes. Leithwood et al. (2004) established that two functions are generally at the core of leadership: “setting direction and exercising influence” (p. 1).

Regardless of KAI score, all of the participating superintendents attributed their influence to some level of change within the organization. Following are vignettes from each superintendent giving voice to their views about change in their district and its level of success. An analysis of themes is presented after the vignettes from each group.

**Control group vignettes.** Superintendents in the control group offered these vignettes.

*Superintendent C1.* Superintendent C1 said,

I believe in making sure that people feel valued. I also believe very strongly in teams. I have a cabinet team, we meet every Tuesday. There are very few decisions that come out of the superintendent’s office that are superintendent-
only [decisions]. Even if we don’t agree, we will sit at the table and duke it out until we have consensus.

There are times, though, that I do have to say, “You know what? This is it, this is what we have to do and these are the reasons why.” But we still have that discussion around the table. I’m very decisive, while some people like to mull and think. I like to go through, “What’s the situation, what are the facts, this is what it says, okay, then let’s go.” I’d rather be decisive, make a decision, and live with the consequences of that decision than to drag something out. I just don’t like that, ever, at all. I like to always get to the point, which is why I meet with my cabinet team every week because we have things that come up every day and we have to be on point and I don’t like things to linger.

I think I’m relatively collaborative, but at the same time, when it comes down to it, I’m the decision maker. Well, I would say in terms of the ethical piece, we always look at the data objectively. We look at if there is an investigation that has to be done. One of the things that I do is I am . . . the buck stops with me. So, if we’ve got an investigation or something going on, I stay out of it. I allow people who are in my office, my other administrators, . . . whoever, whoever else can conduct the investigation to conduct it completely so that when it gets to my desk, when it gets to my seat, I haven’t been involved at all. I can look at it objectively and make my decision based on what the evidence says. What does the evidence say in terms of whatever the situation might be? I pride myself on always being that person. I tell the truth and even if you don’t like it, it is what it
is and we’ve got to move on. I’ve never had an issue with it. Even sometimes you ask about moral . . . the moral judgment about a situation. But I think if you always have . . . make sure you have clean, clear-cut evidence.

Now the thing that I don’t like is if I get something back and it’s not clear. They didn’t ask enough of the right questions. Then I will say, “Did you ask this, did you do this?” Now I’ll send you back again, but as long as you have what it is that you need to have to make the decision, that you’ve got those facts. Whatever it needs to be, then I think you can’t go wrong as long as you stay consistent with things. That’s the other part for me, it’s just the consistency.

You know if you mess up; you’re a teacher in my district and you mess up, you know we’re going to do a thorough investigation and, more than likely, you’ll end up being terminated. Take us to court, whatever, and it is consistent every time.

*Superintendent C2.* Superintendent C2 said,

Cutting transportation could have been one I felt. When you looked at the 18% cuts were so, again, difficult that I didn’t know if we were going to be able to even put it together. We came up with and met with the community and we met with administrators and met with the board and came up with two strategies.

One would have been go to school, the students would have had . . . we were going to have a shorter day. It would be over at one o’clock. The other one was cut transportation and increase class size. That’s the one we went with. It was very difficult to not have. Most districts in Illinois can’t cut transportation.
There’s a unit district is what we were. The state has various designations of school districts and we were a unit district. Those can, consolidated districts can.

It was very pretentious and very difficult. I’ve still got one student who lives with his grandmother. She said then, “If you’re not going to provide transportation, I’ll pull him from school because it’s cheaper than paying to get him to school.” She doesn’t home-school him. He was a first grader and he’s been out of school for a year and a half and he stays at home.

It was very difficult for … pretty much, and I’m going to say four out of five nights a week, at the end of the day, I’m at the elementary and I’m directing traffic. We went and modeled the Catholic school system where they have to pick up in the long rows. We set that in place and then I go every day and direct traffic, which has made it better, more accepted by the community. What people have said is, “It’s very inconvenient, it’s a pain in the ass.” But the school has done as good as they could do with implementing it, so it’s not been bad. I have some parents who have a van and they’ll pick up, say, eight kids. They run their own bus system that they’ve thought up for doing.

I have probably, and I’m going to say, two or three that pick up a number of kids, theirs, and then two or three others. . . . But a lot of grandparents are there and the grandparents are picking up kids, that’s very regular. Yes, they’ve found this system to make it work. I doubt we’ll ever put it back. One of the things, again, you’re looking at cuts now. One of the ones that they keep talking about is
cutting a big portion of the transportation funding. If I put it back, it would cost even more than it did before to put back, given their funding, it’s less.

It’s a very small school district. It probably is 5 square miles. It’s not good, but it’s worked pretty well and there’s been . . . there's something happens that’s bad in many instances, most things that are bad do have some good parts to them and most things that are good have some bad parts to them. I have a lot of parents in the spring and fall that walk their kids to school. I have a lot of walkers that are . . . I have more of my parents walking. I have more of my kids walking. I have my kids walking and talking with their parents. I have the kids being picked up with their parents and walking and talking. It’s worked out. It’s been not bad.

Superintendent C3. Superintendent C3 said,

In XXXX, an example I will give you is budget cutting. We had a situation where I was told to analyze things, so we’re going to move towards a balanced budget and so you’re no longer going to be deficit budgeting. I indicated that unless you really cut to the core, you’re going to have a hard time doing it but through attrition and through staff changes and through nonconsolidating positions from retirements, you could be in that position within the next couple of years.

That wasn’t satisfactory to the board of education . . . they want something a little bit more immediate. At that point, one of the considerations was going from a full-day to a half-day program of kindergarten. Again, this is years after I’ve already cut the preschool program. Before it was easy, the state is not giving
us money, and we just don’t have the money, blah, blah, blah, blah . . . that was a good curtain to stand behind to deliver the message because then the curtain could absorb the blow and I was staying behind it so I got nothing. It’s the state of Illinois, that evil entity, that doesn’t want to release money to us because they don’t have any.

In this case, this was about quality programming for children and did I think that we could do it in a half day versus a full day. My data indicated that while a full-day program is nice, there were enough elements in the full-day program in which they weren’t doing academic-related things that it could be done in a half-day basis.

You can’t have that conversation without talking about salaries and benefits to staff. I mean that’s the biggest line item. If you’re going to make it happen quick, like I’ve been asked, they said, “What are you going to do about it? What suggestions are you going to make?”

The suggestion I received from my board was cut the band director, cut the music programming and I said, “No. We can do it another way without taking away something that research will show that those who participate in it, benefit from that academically, whether you want to believe it or, not it’s your problem but I’ve got the research and that’s what it says.”

I would rather take a look at another program say, “Perhaps we can do this better, a little bit through the kindergarten and, while I’m an early childhood advocate, if you’re looking . . . if your urgency to balance the budget is higher
than your urgency to wait for those retirements to occur, and knowing that you could change programs and services after those retirements to reflect those savings, then you need to examine this.” I had to take that to the public and I purposely shielded the board of education by making those my decisions. These are my decisions. I’m deciding this and I got criticized, nothing new.

You’re going to get critiques . . . if you’re taking something away, you’re going to get criticized. I was going to get criticized and I accepted it. I had multiple forums at the urgings of my board. I finally decided that I had had my meetings. I sent out my information. I had announced in public sessions of board meetings what I was going to do and I then I put it up for a vote, item by item, this strategy, this strategy, this strategy.

When it came to the half-day kindergarten, the board voted against my recommendation. At the same time, I was relieved because I didn’t want to cut it, but I also knew that they wouldn’t cut it but they needed me to be the one to go out there in the community, say the things, take the lumps, and then I can explain, “Well, look, over time, you will get there,” and that was the ending messages, that there’s a plan and the plan is in place.

There’s just times where, yes, you got to stand up and take a publicly bad position, you have to deliver that message, you have to listen, you have to let the public stand up and tell you you suck. I’m okay with that. They have an opinion and it’s valid but you’re making a decision based, and some of it is based on politics, some of these based on making sure you have your support at the board
level as superintendent, but some of these also, and primarily, so what’s best for your organization when it comes down to it and that’s why, in that case, while the board wanted to cut a band teacher, and it would’ve been easy to do, I said no because that’s not what I’m about and that’s not what I’m going to do. I’ll find another way. And here we are.

Summary of control group data. The themes of compromise, data collection, limited funding sources and data manipulation were prevalent in the vignettes of the control group superintendents. Superintendent C1 discussed the necessity of having a clear and objective process that collects data and allows her to make a decision in a clear and decisive way. Superintendent C3 shared how he was able to use data manipulation and compromise to not reduce the band program despite the desire of the board of education to do so. Superintendent C2 also shared how using compromise and data effectively convinced his community to eliminate transportation.

All of the changes proposed by the control group superintendents were implemented successfully in the short run but came with a cost to programming in some shape or form over the long term. This utilitarian approach of compromise using data was successful in educating constituents about the need for the change as well as the impact. The suggested changes did not shift the paradigm, only modified it to accommodate the change. Both superintendents C2 and C3 expressed that they did not want to have to institute the proposed changes, but were forced to do so by a sense of obligation and wanted to make the changes felt by the least number of people or programs for the good of all.
Adaptor group vignettes. Superintendents in the adaptor group offered these vignettes.

Superintendent A1. Superintendent A1 said,

Probably more systemic change. Slow. I prefer slow change as opposed to the knee-jerk reaction when you can, I think, you need to determine whether it's . . . I like to go back to Heifetz Type 1-, Type 2-, Type 3-type change, and then something like . . . something simple, like changing the hours that the central office is open, you might . . . and that's something you can do without much thought or changing forms here and there. But I think it's important . . . for me anyway, it's important to kind of take your time on some of those Type 3 changes, systemic changes. We’re going through that now with . . . nothing really had been done here curriculum-wise with Common Core, so we’re taking some baby steps, and early on, with my administrative team, decided that this year we’re going to do all of our institute days, we’re going to have some Common Core component. We hired a consultant and she’s helping us get through that process. We talked, if we have to do this two, three years, we’re going to keep hitting this until people feel comfortable, we’re not going to just dump it on them.

Then we pulled a lot of stuff off the table as well that . . . there wasn’t a lot the teachers had to worry about or deal with, other than focusing on Common Core. The Common Core . . . actually, with the introduction of the new principal’s evaluation, we realized we weren’t collecting enough data for the assessment in the growth piece. We’re also implementing map testing this year. We’ve taken a
very methodical approach to that. We are going to be up and running in February with our first test. We started discussions back in August and maybe a little bit faster. It’s probably moving a little bit faster than I would like. I think if I had my druthers, I would rather be starting this next fall, but because I’m trying to get a couple of measures in on my principals.

That kind of falls back to that ethical issue again. Some of the state requirements that we need to meet sometimes go against best practices . . . what you know are best practices.

Superintendent A2. Superintendent A2 said,

I think there’ve been major shifts. One of them has been our financial perspective. Forever, XXXX has been broke. We are a residential tax community so we don’t have a lot of commercial tax base and we’re tax-capped. We’ve always struggled and all of the years I’ve been here, we’ve been on a financial warning or watch list.

When I got into the position and really started to understand the finances, I just couldn’t understand why we would operate that way. The board, I have four board members, one just passed away, so I had five, that had been on for over 25 years. These people, this is the way they operated. Being broke was almost a badge of honor. “We are broke and we’re still going.” I’m, like, “You’re on the financial watch list. At some point, the state’s going to come in and take you over. Do you understand that?” There was not a real sense of urgency to fix it or even a perspective that it could be fixed.
The funny kind of twist of fate because, when they hired me, their biggest concern was that I really wouldn’t have a good grasp of the finances. That has really become my most proud accomplishment here, is that we are on the financial recognition list for the last two years. I came in and I thought, “We have to change our belief system here.” The business manager and I had been colleagues. He was assistant superintendent for finance and I was associate superintendent for curriculum and he was a very bright man. A great guy, but I right away, realized when I got him here, he wasn’t the right person for the job. I made a very difficult decision to release him. It was a personal friend. It was really hard to do, but I knew it was right for the district.

We went out and we did these financial forums just letting people know. We just equated it to what they could understand. We’re living on cash payday loans. You know those little payday loan things that you know are the worst thing in the world. We’re living on them. Once you get into that situation, it’s almost impossible to turn it around and that became my goal. We did not issue tax anticipations warrants last year. We won’t this year either and the board, it was a major shift. They are, like, “I can’t believe we’re where we are. How did we get here?” Well, two years of difficult decision making and going out to the teachers.

You know what was interesting, the teachers supported my belief. They were embarrassed that the district was poor. [The teachers] gave me a year-and-a-half pay freeze to help rectify this and to save jobs. I publically have said it a million times, those people gave us a million dollars’ worth of salary that helped
turn this ship around and I am forever grateful to the teachers because I think 90% agreed to take a year–and-a-half pay freeze. You know there’s people out there who are, like, “I don’t care, I didn’t make this problem. It’s not mine to fix.” They were just fabulous throughout the whole thing.

We were very raw. We showed them everything and we’re, like, “You guys, here’s the problem. If we continue on this path, at some point, the state will come in and render me completely powerless and when they start to do this stuff they’re going to do, they don’t care about you. They weren’t going to care about you and your situation. I do and if you work with me, we’re going to get out of this together.”

When we had $12,580 in our ed fund at the end of our third year of my superintendency, one of the teachers came in and we were laughing. I went to the May institute and I said, “We’ve got $12,580, woo hoo!” and they all started laughing and clapping. I go, “We have one nostril out of the water.” So that became our joke. “Are both of our nostrils out of the water yet?” The teachers really took it as really their own badge of pride that we now are financially solvent.

The board, it was a major shift, because where they had operated before, “Do whatever you need to do, we don’t care,” they now started to realize we have to be proactive. It would be changes, like, “No, we’re going to paint the buildings on a regular schedule and we’re going to sealcoat parking lots. We’re not going to wait until it’s falling apart because we aren’t doing any preventative maintenance
because we’re saving money because we’re spending so much more money in the end.” I had to really work with them because they kind of just thought . . . their response was, “They’re not going to close us down. They’re not going to literally . . . who cares if we’re poor as long as the kids get what they need?” I’m, like, “Because I don’t think we’re making sound financial decisions.” It’s really shifted and now I really feel it such a healthier environment.

In the process, I did release the business manager. We subsequently had really good conversations and he was like, “When you thought you were putting the final nail in my coffin,” because he was going through some personal problems, he said, “You actually started to lift me up. Once I got out of the job and realized I really was in over my head.” He’s now back teaching and loving it. That was not his thing.

The previous business manager was this great, very organized woman so I called her up and I said, “XXXX, I need your help. Come back and be my business manager and get my office together while I hire a new person.” It just turned the district around and it’s been a real positive piece and we’re very proud of ourselves. I didn’t do it, we did it. That’s the piece. We did it. I said to the teachers, “I didn’t do this because I didn’t write a check for a million dollars, you guys did.”

Superintendent A3. Superintendent A3 said,

Sure. Well, that kind of question has so many situational factors that might impact my decision-making process in a different way. There are certain types of
decisions that are black and white. I mean, it’s either . . . within the law or not in the law. You have school code and some either case law or school code law that tells you you can or can’t do something.

In making a decision, depending on the level of complexity and how many people are involved or going to be impacted by the decision, it’s going to dictate a lot as to what I’m going to go through, put myself through, to reaching that decision. If it’s a clear black and white . . . and most aren’t, but a lot are sometimes . . . either you can do it or you can’t, but if you take those out of the picture and just look at other things in terms of significant strategic decision making, moving forward on Policy A or Policy B or somewhere between them, I’m going to look for feedback from people that I trust. I’m going to look for feedback from people that are going to be impacted by whatever decision is being made and, again, using the teacher evaluation as an example, in this case again, I see it as my job to facilitate good decision making among a group of people to reach a consensus that will have a positive outcome.

It’s going to be my job to steer and facilitate and provide people that are going to be making this group decision with all the information they need and the resources at their disposal to make an educated, sound decision, so . . . not sure I'm addressing your question exactly or not . . . to me, there’s decisions that I’m going to make in a half a second, and there's decision I’m going to say I need to think a little bit about, and then talk to colleagues.
Summary of adaptor group data. Adaptors, according to Kirton (2006), prefer to find change from within the current paradigm. Problems are reduced through improving efficiency and continuity within the organization in sound and understood ways. Kirton (2006) remarked, “Adaptors are essential to managing current systems, but in times of unexpected change from unexpected directions encounter difficulty regrouping established roles” (p. 55).

Each of the superintendents in this category seemed to approach change with a method that worked from within the system. Superintendent A2 discussed her transformation of the finances of the district using the resources within the system such as the willingness of the teachers to freeze pay increases. Superintendent A1 talked about change being slow and focused on one target that is reinforced until the organization feels comfortable with the change. Superintendent A3, again, referenced working policy changes through the human aspects of the organization and balancing the pacing of change to suit the environment. The pace of change favored by the superintendents was not consistent. Superintendent A1 and A3 seemed to value slower rates change, while Superintendent A2 preferred to move things along faster, with greater urgency. This preference seems to fit with their KAI profiles; superintendents A1 and A3 were more adaptive than expected in the area of rule/group conformity, suggesting a greater desire to have group buy-in and cohesion, necessitating change to happen more slowly and systematically.

Innovator group vignettes. Superintendents in the innovator group offered these vignettes.
Superintendent II. Superintendent II said,

Things like that we’ve looked at, we’re attempting to change in this district. The notion of grading is significant. Los Angeles attempted to, last year or the year before, put a system in place that required 90% of your grade to be based on what we expect you to know and 10% of your grade to be based on what we expect you to do or what I call compliance issues. I had thought about that 10 years ago from the literature and the research that I had read.

As a building principal, when I looked at my grade distribution every six weeks, I would look at the percentage of kids that were failing. I used anything below a C as failing. I found the discrepancy in our grading system, as result of . . . to the degree we allowed compliance to enter into your final grade.

I think, as leaders, we shirk our responsibility of doing what’s right until we at some point get the consensus to make a decision that will minimize the negative impact on ourselves. I, for whatever reason, could care less. When I went to the school I said, “Here’s what we’re going to change, all these things.” They’re, like, “Our system is going to look unlike anything that . . .” “It will be unrecognizable,” is what they said. “The way in which we educate our kids will be unrecognizable.”

What it drills down to is either one of two things has to be true. Either we really don’t make a difference in the outcomes of kids even though we espouse we do, or there really are factors beyond our capacity of control that prohibit us from meeting the needs of all kids of which, let’s just decide the haves and the
have-nots when we walk through the door, which is kind of what we’ve been doing, and call it a day. If we’re going to do that, then stop saying that we make a difference, because we really don’t. If we really [want to] make a difference and we’re not making a difference, then let’s change the way in which we conduct business.

Either we got this wrong or there’s particular subsets of kids that are never going to learn, based on data that exists since 1954. Which is it, we have flawed kids or we have a flawed system? Somebody tell me we’ve got flawed kids, so I can show you the door. “Well, our system’s flawed.” Okay, well then we need to change it. Hence, these system-wide changes.

What I did was I reduced compliance to 10%: homework, attendance, participation, responsibility, all of that were literally in our grade books with 10%, 15%, 30%. [Even] your most progressive teachers, many of them had even less than 50% of the grade, which speaks to our beliefs about we really don’t expect them to know anything. Just play school nice, and you’ll get by.

There is this one kid named Jimmy D. His father is a police officer and his mother is a realtor. He was a straight A student his freshman year. He literally aced every assessment. He was in honors, all of his grades reflected Ds and Fs because his teachers had yet to make that paradigm shift. His parents came in after the first six weeks said, “Jim, we’ve got a problem.”

I call [the kid] in and he’s … I give him this, “You got to do your work, you got to . . .” I’m giving the party line about compliance, even though I had said
that’s not going to be the lion’s share of our grade. He’s, like, “Okay, okay, okay,” but in his head, he’s saying, “Are you a hypocrite? Because I heard what you said, and I am mastering your content without doing the work and you’re flunking me for it.”

So I sent an e-mail out to all of his teachers basically asking, “Hey, what’s the deal with this kid?” So here’s what I get: “Hello, to date, Jim has a 73.87, which is a D, in German II, which is an honor scores. As it stands now . . .” I started circling this stuff. “If he would turn in his missing work—compliance—for late credit compliance, he could earn an 87.55, which is a B.” Without any assessment of what he knows, because you can’t use homework as a true assessment of what you know, just do what I tell you and you go from a D to a B without any measuring of whether you actually know German. That was a problem to me.

Okay, so I called her in and I said, “What is the purpose of the work you’re giving this boy to do?” She said, in a straight face, “To master the content.” I said, “If the purpose of the work is to master the content and he masters the content without the work and you are penalizing him for not doing the work that by definition is to master the content that he masters, the definition of why you giving him the work is not to master the content. You need to re-explain to me the purpose of the work you give him to do. Because if it’s the master of the content, I don’t know why there’s not an A on his report card.” “Well, he needs to be responsible and he needs to participate.”
The danger in that thought process is that what you’re really saying is that, as a teacher, if you don’t meet my value standards, whatever they are, if you don’t look at life in the lens which I look at life through, I have the power to fail you no matter what you know. So I said, “Change his grade to an A.” Each one of these teachers I went through this exercise with and each one of his teachers I had very similar responses. This was articulated in a way that made it very easy for people to see how this is a significant flaw in our system, but they were very, very upset with me as a result.

Those are just, long story short, just some of the things we’re doing that have reaped dividends. In two years, for the first time we’ve got over 80% of our kids to be proficient on . . . as a district in the PSAE and ISAT combined. In two years, we’ve increased the percentage of our kids who are exposed to our AP courses, the percentage of our minority kids who are exposed to our AP courses, by 30%. We are only one of two districts in the state that have done that, while at the same time not decreasing the number of kids who can get a 3 or better on the exam. In fact, we just got a national award from the College Board for that, which I posted all over—everywhere.

In two years, we’ve increased the number of Illinois state scholars we’ve had by 30%, simply by exposure to the rigor. Because we’re nowhere near, from a process standpoint and from a belief system standpoint, where we need to be in terms of how we engage our children and how we change what we do, we’re on the road to making these significant changes.
Superintendent I2. Superintendent I2 said,

Then I became superintendent (laughter) so that was kind of fun. I was already here as a community member and a resident when I became superintendent, but here’s what I knew and here’s why I was recruited for this job is that, and I don’t mean to be unkind in saying this, that most of what was happening needed to be better and needs to be different. Even in my interviews with the board, that was perfectly apparent and I was up for that, right? I love being a part of making the right things happen for kids. There’s just a lot of interesting dynamics that happened during my board interview where I was perfectly clear, “Don’t hire me unless you’re interested in these things. No harm, no foul, but if you do, understand, this is where we’re headed,” and that’s what we eventually did in so many areas.

Gosh, it’s been a wild ride. Hardest work I’ve ever done, especially the first four years, maybe five, I’m in my eighth year and oh, my gosh, it doesn’t matter what area you look in, we’re thrilled. Those of us who’ve been here long term, whether it’s board folk or admin, even teachers, you could look back and cry at and we do, actually, at the beauty and the changes that have taken place, but it was hard work, hard, hard, work. Wouldn’t change a thing.

One of the things I delight in doing is mentoring and working with new principals and new staff and all of that, and I’ve had the great good pleasure of seeing many colleagues go from teachers to even superintendents in various places and it turns me on. I love that, but many of us have been shoulder-to-
shoulder back in the day when didn’t matter where you looked, a wrong thing was happening that needed to change and it has. It’s been a cool thing.

Superintendent I3. Superintendent I3 said,

As of last year, we were the highest achieving . . . or two years ago, we were the highest achieving school district in the state at our poverty level or higher, which was 89%. Some are ahead of us, but for the first time, we’ve exceeded the state average on all state testing and it is record high achievement for the district ever. We have a board that wants everybody to be happy. We fired a 34-year veteran teacher union president last year. We’ve got two people that are up for termination this year, so we needed the right response. When you do things like that, it really pisses people off. The thing that really pissed people off to begin with was the restructuring of XXXX Middle School which, when I got here was in restructuring planning.

We ended up going through a process that involved a ton of people, but in the end, 10 people, 10 teachers who wanted to go back to that school under the new framework were reassigned. No one lost a job, no one lost any salary, benefits, nothing. All they were told was, the next fall, you’ve got to show up at this address, different school, and that ticked people off. Every month, the board meetings would be packed with people, “How terrible this is, how horrible this is.” The hell with the kids. Who cared about them? It was all about the adults, and that’s something that I still fight to this day here is that this school district is going to be about the kids and not the adults. I’ve got vocal, loud assholes who don’t
believe that. Who think it is about the adults and about them. I’ve got one of them on my board and his wife is the union president of the parapro union.

I look at those superintendents who have been in a district for a long time, for years and years and years, and the building was named after them. Look at the results. Look at the scores. Oftentimes, they just know how to get along. There is . . . I won’t name her name, but there’s a superintendent, well respected among superintendents, highly regarded, but look[ing] at some of the test scores, I don’t see why these kids even go to that school, why they even show up. Because they might as well just stay home and watch TV all day because based on the results from that school, it’s a waste of time. It’s a waste of kids’ time. They’re wasting kids’ time to even show up. What’s the point? Why would they . . . just stay home. It’s hard to imagine that they would do worse by just staying at home and you’ve got that superintendent who’s highly regarded, highly respected, and everyone just bows down.

Even though there are proxies for what happens on the inside, results, people don’t focus on those. It’s this reluctance to focus on results. We just want everyone to be happy and the hell with the kids and the hell with results. The unions don’t like results. Teachers don’t like results. Principals and administrators don’t like to focus on results.

Right, here’s the term I hate the most and I’d become immediately suspect when I hear, “We’re PLC. We’re a professional learning community,” because you look at those . . . I hear about this in the high school district. I hear about
them being PLCs, so I looked at the results. We sent smart kids over and in four years, they come out dumb. Four years later, they come out dumb. I see so many places that use those, PLC and other jargon, to justify because it’s all the process. If the process doesn’t get you the results, screw the process.

*Summary of innovator group data.* Innovators, according to Kirton (2006), see change as a paradigm shift. Kirton (2006) viewed innovators as “essential in times of radical change or crisis, but may have trouble applying themselves to managing change within ongoing organizational structures” (p. 55). Innovators provide the dynamic necessary to radically change structures and view their ideas as sound and without the need for consensus, even in the face of possible dissent. This dynamic is useful when systems are paralyzed or become overly rigid, but comes at a cost to the culture of the system.

In these excerpts, the overarching themes for innovators in regard to change were a preference for change to be widespread, sweeping, and global, and a sense of urgency for change to take place immediately. All three superintendents proposed dramatic alterations to their systems without regard to current traditions, practices, or through any visible measure of developing consensus. Driven by a sense of urgency, the leader implemented change and then supported the change through the system—not necessarily supporting the system through the change. As Kirton (2006) suggested, these innovators maintain a positive view of the change because each cites the positive results seen from the change in improving the educational environment for students. In addition, all three seem to accept the negative impact of the change on adults without much regard, as
though stress and negativity are to be expected. Results are seen as one measure for decision making, along with ethical values without regard to intended or unintended consequences.

Additionally, a theme of “different is better” was observed. In the view of the innovative superintendent, seeing the shift within the system was viewed as change toward the better. This distinction contrasts with the more adaptive theme of “better is better.” The difference here is that the innovative superintendent perceives that problems within the organization are better solved through a replacement of structure than an improvement of the current structure. Superintendent I3 highlighted the restructuring of one school in his district as a positive way of improving the educational environment, as opposed to merely offering additional professional development. Superintendent I1 also approached the topic of grading in a similar fashion by instituting new grading guidelines to cause change. Even Superintendent I2 spoke about her conversation with the board centering around their comfort level with her definition of different being better, saying, “Here’s what I knew and here’s why I was recruited for this job . . . most of what was happening needed to be better and needs to be different,” whereas, a more adaptive superintendent may have worked with staff to improve the system or took staff through a discussion about grading practices prior to or in conjunction with instituting new policies. Neither approach is wrong or right—merely different.

**Summation of evidence for Research Question 5.** Research Question 5 examined how highly adaptive and highly innovative superintendents promoted change and the effectiveness of their approach to change. None of the participants in this study scored
within the highly adaptive range, so no generalization can be made about superintendents in this range. Highly innovative superintendents approached change holistically and with a sense of urgency. Mild to moderately adaptive superintendents preferred change to be methodical and targeted toward specific processes within the current system. Superintendents in the control group approached change as a negotiation between the current system and the desired change, often only achieve results for the short term. Each group perceived their approach to change as effective. Innovators imposed change into the system and then supported the change through the system, while adaptors built consensus around change and supported the system through the change. Supporting change through a system places the value upon the change, whereas supporting a system through change places the value upon the system. This difference in approach was fundamental in defining innovative and adaptive approaches to change.

**Summary**

The purpose of this sequential explanatory mixed methods study was to explore the role of rebels in education by examining the professional behaviors of school superintendents that demonstrate, in one way or another, (a) an inherent resistance to the status quo; (b) a deep conviction for the cause that sees beyond personal motivation or gain; and (c) have the knowledge, skills, relationships, and authority to create potential change within the system (Birenbaum & Sagarin, 1976; Hamilton, 2002; Kelly, 2009; Moscovici, 1976; Rebel, n.d.; Sibley, 1970). Through this study, individual superintendents were examined to determine if they met the standard of being called
rebel and whether or not they used their rebellious qualities as part of their leadership to effect change within the organization.

**Research Questions**

This study augments the scholarship of educational leadership by examining the following questions:

1. To what degree does a relationship exist between scoring as highly adaptive or highly innovative on the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI) and the presence of rebel characteristics in superintendents?
2. What behaviors and actions are present in superintendents identified as highly adaptive or highly innovative that demonstrate a resistance to the status quo?
3. How do highly adaptive and highly innovative superintendents use coping behavior to modify their actions and behaviors when rebel characteristics may be perceived as adversarial in a given situation?
4. Which ethical lenses do highly adaptive and highly innovative superintendents prefer to use in decision making and problem solving?
5. To what extent are highly adaptive or highly innovative educational rebels effective at promoting change and what can be learned from their successes and failures?
6. How do the profiles of highly adaptive superintendents, highly innovative superintendents, and superintendents identified as part of the control group compare and contrast to one another?
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the research methods, a summary of research findings, links between findings and related literature, limitations of the current study, and provides recommendations for future research on this topic. The purpose of this chapter is to present findings, interpret data collected during the study, and analyze data in terms of the research questions posed.

Summary of Rationale and Research Methods

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of rebels in education by examining the professional behaviors of school superintendents that demonstrate, in one way or another, (a) an inherent resistance to the status quo; (b) a deep conviction to the cause that sees beyond personal motivation or gain; and (c) have the knowledge, skills, relationships and authority to create potential change within the system (Birenbaum & Sagarin, 1976; Hamilton, 2002; Kelly, 2009; Moscovici, 1976; “Rebel,” n.d.; Sibley, 1970). Through this study, nine superintendents were examined to determine whether they met the standard of being called a rebel and whether or not they used their rebellious qualities as part of their leadership to effect change within the organization.
**Research Questions**

This study augmented the scholarship of educational leadership through the examination of the following questions:

1. To what degree does a relationship exist between scoring as highly adaptive or highly innovative on the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI) and the presence of rebel characteristics in superintendents?
2. What behaviors and actions are present in superintendents identified as highly adaptive or highly innovative that demonstrate a resistance to the status quo?
3. How do highly adaptive and highly innovative superintendents use coping behavior to modify their actions and behaviors when rebel characteristics may be perceived as adversarial in a given situation?
4. Which ethical lenses do highly adaptive and highly innovative superintendents prefer to use in decision making and problem solving?
5. To what extent are highly adaptive or highly innovative educational rebels effective at promoting change and what can be learned from their successes and failures?
6. How do the profiles of highly adaptive superintendents, highly innovative superintendents, and superintendents identified as part of the control group compare and contrast to one another?

This study used a sequential explanatory mixed methods design, which combined a quantitative screening tool called the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI) to identify potential candidates for a second, qualitative, phase involving in-depth
interviews. Nine suburban K-12 public school superintendents participated in this study. Three superintendents were identified as high innovators with KAI scores above 124, three were identified as mild to moderate adaptors with KAI scores below 85, and three were identified as mild innovators and served as a control group of superintendents scoring in the normative range of 85-105. None of the respondents in this study achieved a score in the highly adaptive range (KAI score below 65).

The research questions posed in this study were answered using the qualitative data collected during an one-hour, semistructured interview with each of the nine superintendents. The KAI profiles were used as supplementary information in interpreting the data collected during the interviews. The findings for each research question are embedded in the profiles of each KAI category: mild innovators (control group), mild to moderate adaptors, high innovators, and high adaptors.

**Conclusions**

**Mild Innovators (Control Group)**

**Rebel characteristics.** Mildly innovative superintendents presented 10 of the 15 rebel characteristic traits measured in this study. Particularly, mildly innovative superintendents displayed the following rebel characteristics:

- deep conviction to the cause;
- skills, relationships, and authority to create change;
- seeing new ways to solve problems; and
- influencing organizational views.

Mildly innovative superintendents were lacking significant rebel traits, such as
• using unconventional approaches;
• raising ideas that group members are unsure about;
• willingness to go around the rules;
• starting projects without approval; and
• inherent resistance to the status quo.

Rebel characteristics in the mildly innovative superintendents were inconsistent and less pervasive overall. An inherent resistance to the status quo was not observed in this group. Instances of rebel behavior were generally linked to specific circumstances or external factors that exerted pressure on the superintendent to act as a rebel. In all of the instances shared during the interview process, the mildly innovative superintendents complied or acquiesced to the external pressure. This group balanced approaches to change and viewed change as an opportunity to negotiate to balance the needs of both sides. At times, these superintendents displayed frustration or anger with the change process, but always accepted the change in exchange for something they wanted. Kirton’s (2006) theory suggests that these episodes of rebel behavior are more of a manifestation of coping behavior than a presentation of an individual’s inherent cognitive style.

The social psychology literature on dissenting members of a group does not support the more utilitarian views of the mild innovators as one of a rebel. Butera, Darnon, and Mugny (as cited in Hornsey & Jetten, 2004) pointed out that, for some members of a group, conflict presented as structured or cognitively regulated may allow even conforming members of a group the opportunity to dissent without fear of negative repercussions. This balanced approach to conflict fits with the approach of mildly
innovative superintendents: when a conflict that is structured or in which the risks are predictable is presented, the mild innovator may have motive to use his or her coping skills to present as a rebel leader within that setting.

**Coping behavior.** The mildly innovative superintendents viewed coping behavior as a necessary skill to balance the political nature of the role of superintendent. Each of the mildly innovative superintendents included in this study articulated times in which he or she presented himself or herself in a way that was not preferred in order to communicate a message to the intended audience. The superintendents saw this altered presentation of themselves as a function of the role instead of a necessary strategy for overcoming the limits of their preferred cognitive style. In essence, coping was a function of the political nature of the role versus, as Kirton (2006) defined it, a response to the “narrowness of the range of style needed to manage the usual array of diverse problems” (p. 254). This perception was evident across all three groups of superintendents, to some degree.

**Ethical lenses.** The mildly innovative superintendents used both deontology and utilitarianism as common frameworks for decision making. Data relating to deontology was divided between deontology as a sense of duty and deontology as the application of rule. Among the mildly innovative superintendents, deontology was used mostly in personnel decisions; the use of utilitarianism played more frequently in decisions involving program or budget reductions.

**Effecting change.** The mildly innovative superintendents approached change through group consensus. By weighing various options, seeking input from both inside
and outside the organization, and balancing the cost of change with the cost to the organization, the mildly innovative superintendents used a utilitarian approach to change. The change process did not result in a shift of paradigm, rather the mildly innovative superintendents modified the current paradigm to accommodate the change.

Adaptive leadership, developed by Heifetz et al. (2009), suggested that when an organization needs to adapt, the leader supports the organization through the evolution by recognizing which aspects of the organization must remain, what aspects must be let go, and what new pieces are required to make a successful shift. Adaptive work is different than technical problems that can be solved through policy, process, or simple changes within the current structure. Heifetz et al. noted that the most common error among leaders is the treatment of adaptive work as a technical problem. The moderately innovative superintendents evidenced this approach in the treatment of problems.

**Mild to Moderate Adaptors**

**Rebel characteristics.** Mildly to moderately adaptive superintendents presented nine of the 15 rebel characteristic traits measured in this study. Particularly, mildly to moderately adaptive superintendents displayed the following characteristics:

- deep conviction to the cause;
- skills, relationships, and authority to create change;
- seeing new ways to solve problems;
- inherent resistance to the status quo; and
- challenging ineffective sacred practices.

Mildly innovative superintendents were lacking significant rebel traits, such as
• using unconventional approaches;
• questioning the decision of superiors;
• willingness to go around the rules; and
• starting projects without approval.

Rebel characteristics in the mildly to moderately adaptive superintendents were inconsistent and less pervasive, like those of the mildly innovative group. Unlike the mildly innovative superintendents who sought to balance compliance with change, an inherent resistance to the status quo was observed in this group, but to a significantly lesser degree and in markedly different ways from high innovators. Adaptors valued continuous, systematic improvement focused on maximizing the current structure by improving precision and efficiency within the organization (Kirton, 2006). Like the mildly innovative superintendents, instances of rebel behavior were generally linked to specific circumstances or external factors that exerted pressure on the superintendent to act as a rebel. However, adaptive superintendents presented as protective of the structure of their organization and resisted socially acceptable changes that did not help to maximize the current function of their system. Change, from the adaptive perspective, was a response to some identified inefficiency within the current structure.

In some regard, it seems counterintuitive to think of individuals protecting the status quo as rebels. Resisting the status quo can mean staying still when the status quo is to move. The literature supporting this notion is vague; the more common definition of rebel is one who pushes for movement in a group wishing to hold still, but the principles are very much the same. Deviance can present in both ways. Morton (as cited in Hornsey
& Jetten, 2011) claimed that group identity is not always centered around conforming to norms. Morton cited Hornsey and Jetten (2004), who suggested that cultures can “prescribe diversity and difference rather than conformity” (Hornsey & Jetten, 2011, p. 98). Nevertheless, the literature link to an adaptive style of rebel is weak and underexplored.

**Coping behavior.** The mildly to moderately adaptive superintendents viewed coping behavior in much the same way as the mildly innovative. Each of the mildly to moderately adaptive superintendents altered, stylistically, the way in which messages were delivered to various audiences. One typically adaptive strength is the ability to maximize efficiency by either maximizing the skills needed to make the coping situation easier or by delegating to other, better situated members those parts of the situation that require the individual to cope (Kirton, 2006; McCrae, 1984; Steed, 1998). Kirton (2006) also noted that adaptors often feel more stress from playing the role of an innovator than the reverse.

**Ethical lenses.** The mildly to moderately adaptive superintendents used both deontology and utilitarianism as common frameworks for decision making in ways similar to their mildly innovative counterparts, but adaptive superintendents weighed slightly more heavily on utilitarianism as a primary lens. Two of the three adaptive superintendents did not use the ethic of care.

**Effecting change.** The mildly to moderately adaptive superintendents actively sought to change their organizations like the highly innovative, but focused on methodically increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the current structure. External
pressure from outside the organization met resistance unless the change was first reasoned to fit within the current structure. Adaptive superintendents instituted change that made sense to the organization and used methods that supported the organization through the change instead of the more innovative method of supporting the change through the organization.

Gareth Morgan’s (1998) image of organizations as machine offers many parallels to the approach used by mildly to moderately adaptive superintendents. Morgan’s image suggests that organizations function best when clear goals and objectives are evident and organized rationally, efficiently, and clearly (Kirton, 2006). The purpose of the machine is to increase efficiency and effectiveness by streamlining process. Mild to moderate adaptors organize systems in a similar way, focusing on the mechanics of the operation. However, as Morgan pointed out, the limitation to this image is that the organization needs to be highly connected to the broader market to remain viable (Kirton, 2006). Adaptive superintendents in this study appeared to be highly connected to the broader education environment, allowing them to anticipate when change would have an impact on the production process of their system. Remaining current with the larger changes in public education system allows the mildly to moderately adaptive superintendent time to reason changes needed to remain viable and institute these change methodically.

**High Innovators**

**Rebel characteristics.** Data collected in this study supported the nexus between scoring highly innovative on the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory and the presence of rebel characteristics. Highly innovative superintendents presented significantly in all
15 of the rebel characteristics pervasively and consistently throughout the interview process, including

- calling out problems;
- challenging ineffective sacred practices;
- being first to attempt new practices;
- seeing new ways to solve problems;
- bringing outside ideas into the organization;
- inherent resistance to the status quo;
- deep conviction to the cause;
- skills, relationships, and authority to create change;
- willingness to go around the rules;
- questioning the decisions of superiors;
- starting projects without approval;
- asking critical questions;
- raising ideas that group members are unsure about;
- using unconventional approaches; and
- influencing organizational views.

Kirton’s (2006) research on cognitive style supports that high innovators naturally resist current structures and view the existing paradigm as limiting. Packer, as cited in Hornsey and Jetten (2011), added to this understanding by highlighting that members of a group who dissent often present with high self-efficacy and low-self doubt (Kirton, 2006). The highly innovative superintendents presented themselves, both intentionally and
unintentionally, as a force of change with their resistance to the status quo stemming from a challenge to a strong conviction or ethical value (Packer, as cited in Hornsey & Jetten, 2011).

Highly innovative superintendents also demonstrated a resistance to the status quo through an innate attraction to opportunities that offer the potential to inject system-wide change. High innovators switched roles frequently to those that offered new learning and challenges. Unlike their more mild and moderate counterparts, high innovators were likely to move into new and unexplored roles when presented. Most of the high innovators had a diverse range of experiences in a variety of roles, some in and some out of education. Hornsey and Jetten (2011) attributed movement between groups by dissenting members as either a pressure exerted by the in-group to remove the outlier or a pressure exerted from the outlier to escape the in-group’s rigidity. The implication of this attribution is that highly innovative superintendents show a greater propensity for leaving roles and groups to pursue new opportunities for change.

**Coping behavior.** The cognitive style of highly innovative superintendents was recognized, at times, to be viewed as adversarial and create tension within the group. However, most did not feel the need to dramatically adapt their natural behavior to be successful in the role of superintendent. Coping behavior was used to convey messages in different ways to different audiences, but mostly to external audiences. Highly innovative superintendents did not use coping behavior nearly as often for internal purposes as they did for interactions with outside constituents. Kirton (2006) suggested that coping behavior offers an individual the opportunity to extend the range of his or her cognitive
style temporarily at an added cost. The decision to invest this added cognitive energy is
driven by motive. When the perceived cost of coping is too great, individuals will
separate from the group in some way. Highly innovative superintendents, who already
demonstrate a strong belief in the success of their organization, are driven by strong
convictions and have low self-doubt about their abilities to successfully implement
change.

These factors seem to provide the motivation necessary for highly innovative
superintendents to cope in systems significantly different from their preferred style. One
unexpected observation in the findings of this study is that highly innovative
superintendents represented only 8.1% of the respondents ($n = 10$). Given the nature of
school change, it would seem that highly innovative superintendents would be desirable,
but the research of Hayward and Everett (as cited in Kirton, 2006) found that highly
innovative individuals often left when the pursuit of change ended or when the cost of
coping within the current structure became too high. It is likely, then, that the reason so
few highly innovative superintendents exist within the current public school system is
due to the perceived cost of coping to maintain the role. Those highly innovative
superintendents who do exist in the system sustain the cost of coping behavior through
either a strong sense of motive or regular rewards of the change process.

**Ethical lenses.** Unlike the other two groups, highly innovative superintendents
preferred to use the ethic of critique when making decision. They also did not use the
ethic of care as a lens for decision making. Nemeth and Goncalo (as cited in Hornsey &
Jetten, 2011) found that dissenting members of groups often “stimulate the detection of
solutions that otherwise would have gone undetected” (p. 22). Questioning the limitations of the current structure is also inherent in composition of highly innovative individuals (Kirton, 2006). The ethic of critique naturally fits the cognitive style of high innovators by allowing them to highlight the tensions inherent in ethical dilemmas (Shapiro & Gross, 2008; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). The ethic of care, on the other hand, works against the innovative style because it requires an ongoing personal investment in the system to sustain the level of resource required to care for the system. Critique impresses upon the individual to rethink concepts such as social justice, democracy, power, privilege, and culture (Shapiro & Gross, 2008), whereas care asks the leader to nurture and support those within the system to feel they are heard and have worth (Beck & Murphy, 1994). Critical theory suggests that displacement of power and injustice are woven into the societal structures around us. Highly innovative superintendents included in this study viewed ethical decision making through the ethic of critique as an opportunity to rebalance the sense of justice within the system.

**Effecting change.** Highly innovative superintendents indicated that change was successfully implemented throughout the system. Impetus for making change was injected by the superintendent through exposing the limits of the current system and suggesting an alternate system. Team decision making was evident, but used to mostly answer the critical questions asked by the superintendent. Highly innovative superintendents also support change through their system, as opposed to supporting their system through change. Urgency was evident in the highly innovative superintendent’s desire for system-wide change.
High Adaptors

None of the participants in this study scored in the highly adaptive range. To be considered a high adaptor, one must receive a KAI score of 65 or below. The lowest score for participants in this study was 70, so no data were collected to conclusively answer the research questions relative to this group. Evidence from comparing mild innovators to high innovators indicated that the presence of rebel characteristics increases as one moves higher on the continuum. This research has already established that mild to moderate innovators do exhibit some rebel characteristics, but to a markedly lesser degree than that exhibited by high innovators. It stands to reason that as individuals move lower on the continuum and become more discrepant from the group’s established status quo, the presence of rebel characteristic would likely become more evident. Nemeth and Goncalo (as cited in Hornsey & Jetten, 2011) studied individuals who fit into the minority perspective of a group and found that consistency of message over time was one of the strongest factors in influencing the majority. High adaptors, those who score below 65 on the KAI, represent less than 5% of the general population, setting them up to most likely represent a minority view within an organization. The research of social psychologists would suggest that a greater likelihood exists for high adaptors to be divergent thinkers from the group and, thus, challenge the status quo in different ways from high innovators.

Kirton (2006) found that certain professions attracted individuals with particular cognitive styles. In his research, he found that bank managers, for example, had a solidly adaptive mean on the KAI whereas, marketing executives held mean scores in the
moderately innovative part of the continuum. The findings of this study suggest that the profession of superintendent of schools has a mean at the mildly innovative part of the adaption-innovation continuum. High adaptors would be exceptionally rare to find in the role of superintendent. In designing this research, no other studies had been completed with public school superintendents that involved the use of the KAI measure. A recommendation for future research is to replicate this study on a larger scale with the hope of finding a group of highly adaptive superintendents to examine for rebel characteristics.

**Summation of Conclusions**

Only the highly innovative superintendents in this study readily met the criteria of an educational rebel. These rebels inherently resisted the status quo across roles and settings and used a preference for the ethic of critique to challenge the limits of the current paradigm to effect change in the system. Highly innovative superintendents needed to use significant coping behaviors to fit into the system but were imbued with a strong sense of motivation and low self-doubt that allowed them to access energy for coping with the current system for longer periods of time, but highly innovative rebel superintendents did leave organizations or change positions when the opportunity for injecting change into the system either ended or greater opportunity presented itself. The literature surrounding the Kirton Adaption-Innovation theory as well as social psychology studies in the area of group dissent, difference, and deviance supported the minority nature that highly innovative superintendents play in an organization. Successful
change to the system comes from the rebels’ ability to consistently present the need for change as well as the intentional way in which change is supported through the system.

Mildly innovative superintendents as well as the mildly to moderately adaptive superintendents did not meet the full criteria for being an educational rebel but used temporary instances of rebellion to support the needs of the organization. These groups relied more on deontological or utilitarian lenses to support decision making. Finally, data to determine if highly adaptive superintendents met the criteria of an educational rebel were inconclusive and further research is suggested.

**Limitations**

This research study is subject to a number of limitations imposed by the research design and time constraints. From a quantitative perspective, the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory is a self-report measure and is subject to bias. The instrument provides certificated practitioners with methods to recognize improbable scoring profiles, but it is possible that an individual score is biased or inaccurate if not completed in earnest. Additionally, the KAI requires a certificated practitioner to administer and score the KAI. The practitioner must purchase each KAI used with a client. The population was limited by the financial constraints of the researcher, but no participant who returned a KAI was denied participation in the quantitative phase of this study.

This study did not exhaust the possibilities of correlative factors on an individual’s KAI. Factors such as ethnicity, education, and marital status, for example, were not included as part of the study. This study was limited to age, gender, years of experience, and district type. Additionally, no participants in this study scored within the
highly adaptive range on the KAI, a shortcoming that limited the comparison between highly innovative superintendents and highly adaptive superintendents.

The qualitative data collected in this study were also self-reported and claims of performance improvements were verified only if the information was publically available on the Internet. Quality of leadership claims were not verified by any sources other than the superintendent himself or herself unless a resource for this information was publically available.

Bias may be present in this study because the researcher’s score on the KAI falls into the highly innovative category. His own cognitive style may have influenced how data were interpreted throughout the process. Throughout the study, the researcher maintained a field journal to capture thoughts, opinions, and observations of his own thinking and compared the themes within the journal to the findings in this study as a way of limiting bias.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the conclusions of this study, the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory can be a useful tool in identifying educational leaders who bring a style of change that closely matches the needs of a district. Further investigation of this tool with school leaders would contribute to the body of literature in human resources. The KAI is used in many corporate environments for developing leadership and establishing high-functioning work teams. Potential exists for the KAI to be used in schools to develop teacher teams or administrative leaders.
The scope of this study did not yield any superintendent participants who scored within the highly adaptive category of the KAI continuum. Initial data findings suggest that highly adaptive superintendents may, in fact, display rebel characteristics like high innovators, but in very different ways. This study could be replicated on a different scale or in a different location to seek out highly adaptive superintendents and used to augment the findings within this study. The majority of the participants in this study were early into their careers as superintendents, with more than 60% of the respondents having less than five years of experience as a superintendent. This factor may or may not have influenced the outcomes of this study and warrants additional research. Finally, replication of this study comparing KAI profiles and the presence of rebel characteristics among school leaders in public, private and charter school settings would add depth to this initial study of public school superintendents.

**Research Implications**

Examining the literature on school change makes the case for rebel superintendents. The themes surrounding schools today suggest that a fundamental redesign of the public school system is needed immediately (Schmoker, 2006). If the literature is correct and public schools do require a dramatic shift in the way they function, this problem is best tackled by rebel superintendents who are innately equipped to provide the style of change best aligned with this type of problem. The focus of this research was to establish that, indeed, rebels exist within the ranks of public school superintendents. Additionally, a common set of characteristics define rebel
superintendents and the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory can be used to identify individuals who are more likely to present rebel characteristics.

One of the evident facts presented in this research is that rebel superintendents represent a small minority of the population. The current structure of the public education system does not attract the kind of leaders needed to implement the dramatic shift in the current paradigm that is called for in the literature. In many cases, highly innovative leaders either change positions too frequently to sustain change initiatives or leave the public education system to pursue other careers such as collegiate teaching or consulting roles. Two of the three highly innovative superintendents included in this study saw no value or limited value in being involved in education beyond their local district level instead of influencing the change in the system from both state and national fronts. They viewed themselves as successful at instituting change at the local level, but presented as feeling disenfranchised by the greater system of public education.

Analysis of the data collected in this research demonstrates that the role of superintendent attracts individuals who lean toward the more innovative side of the continuum, suggesting that the ability to proliferate ideas and new ways of seeing problems is valued within the profession. However, a disconnect exists between the social desire for dramatic change and the social tolerance of the process of dramatic change. This paradox currently limits highly innovative individuals from assuming the role of superintendent because the cost required to cope with this environment is too great to attract highly innovative leaders to the position of superintendent. Rebels, as defined in
the social psychology literature as well as this study, are necessary for groups to grow and thrive (Hornsey & Jetten, 2011).

One major implication of this research is in the area of human resources. All organizations benefit from innovators and adaptors, insiders and outsiders, the majority and the minority, but at times the problem requires a particular style or approach to move an organization forward. Hiring practices tend to look for ideal candidates who fit the mold of socially acceptable or socially constructed leadership profiles. While nothing is inherently wrong with identifying ideal leadership traits, little time is spent on actually defining the problem first and then articulating the kind of leader necessary to solve the problem. This research offers a different perspective on the hiring practices of school districts and suggests that matching a leader’s cognitive style to the needs of the district provides the greatest opportunity for sustained change. Both innovative and adaptive leaders can provide change in effective ways when matched with problems that are aligned with their cognitive style. Bringing in the leadership needed to solve the kinds of problems present in a school system is the benefit of using the KAI to help identify school leaders.

Using the KAI as a tool to determine the cognitive style of potential superintendents provides a new layer of insight into matching the leader with the goals of the organization. Leaders who know their KAI score and, more importantly, understand the implications of their cognitive style on their leadership style or approach also gain insight into their own leadership style as well as have the opportunity to make better decisions about potential employment opportunities. Obviously, many factors outside of
cognitive style influence the quality of a leader and must be considered. However, aligning the cognitive style of the leader to the identified needs of the district provides a change approach more likely to result in successful and sustainable change.

This research also offers implications to educational leadership preparation programs. By collecting cognitive style information from applicants, leadership preparation programs can ensure they are training individuals with a wide variety of leadership styles that will be required to help solve the complex problems that exist nationally in public education. This research has shown that the current system attracts individuals who fit into the current paradigm and proliferate the status quo. Using the KAI as part of a leadership preparation program encourages the development of diversity, makes the program more robust, and offers a wider influence on the public education system. One could liken this paradigm shift to the way minority recruitment occurs currently for individuals of color. The minority perspectives being recruited are those represented by divergent thinkers. In particular, the KAI would provide an additional dynamic layer in the recruitment of individuals to Type 75 programs. Currently, the KAI is used at Penn State to expand the diversity within the engineering department for the purpose of preparing next-generation engineers capable of solving complex problems not yet identified. The field of educational leadership, too, would benefit from expanding the diversity of next-generation school leaders capable of solving the complex problems that exist in public education.
Summary

This research study explored the potential for rebel superintendents to exist within suburban K-12 public school systems. Using a sequential explanatory mixed-method design, nine superintendents were examined for the presence of rebel characteristics through administration of the KAI and in-depth qualitative interviews. Findings concluded that the profession of superintendent of schools attracted individuals who fell in the mildly adaptive to mildly innovative range on the KAI (score between 85 and 105). However, those superintendents identified as educational rebels were those scoring as high innovators with KAI scores above 124.

The researcher hopes that these data will be used to add a new thread to the conversation surrounding effective leadership within schools. By introducing the KAI to the educational leadership literature on superintendents, the researcher believes that leadership preparation programs as well as local school districts can directly benefit from understanding the link between cognitive style and leadership style. Furthermore, the researcher hopes that these data provide new insights into rebel leadership as one means of affecting change within the public education system.
APPENDIX A

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUEST
CHRISTOPHER L. FINCH
618 SOUTH FOURTH AVENUE
LIBERTYVILLE, IL 60048

Freedom of Information Office
Illinois State Board of Education
100 North First Street
Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001
ATTN: FOIA Request

Dear FOIA Public Liaison:

This is a request under the Freedom of Information Act.

I request that a copy of the following documents (or documents containing the following information) be provided to me:

A listing of names and contact information for individuals holding the title of Superintendent of Schools within public school districts located in Lake, McHenry, Suburban Cook, DuPage, Will and Kane counties. Contact information should include first and last name, public school district, county, mailing address, phone number and email address.

In order to help to determine my status to assess fees, you should know that I am (select one):

☑ Affiliated with an educational or noncommercial scientific institution, and this request is made for a scholarly purpose through Loyola University of Chicago.

Please notify me if the fees will exceed $25.00.

Additional comments:

This information request may also be emailed to: cfinch@luc.edu

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Mr. Christopher L. Finch
APPENDIX B

PERMISSION TO USE KIRTON ADAPTATION-INNOVATION INVENTORY
April 16, 2012

Christopher L. Finch
618 South Fourth Ave
Libertyville, Illinois 60048

RE: Permission to use the Kerhon Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI)

Dear Christopher:

I have confirmed that you completed the appropriate certification required to administer the Kerhon Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI) on January 8th, 2011. Your license is valid until January 8th, 2015 when you will be required to take an advanced certification course to maintain your licensure. As a certificated user, you are approved to use the KAI for personal, business, or research purposes, provided any use of the KAI complies within the guidelines for appropriate use.

I wish you the best as you utilize this valuable tool in your dissertation research and sincerely hope you will consider sharing your findings with the KAI community.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Kathryn W. Jablowski, Ph.D., FASME
Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering, Engineering Design, and STS Penn State Great Valley
School of Graduate Professional Studies
30 E. Swedesford Road, Malvern, PA 19355
Phone: 610-648-3372
Fax: 610-648-3377
APPENDIX C

ADMISSION TO REGISTER OF CERTIFICATED KAI USERS
Occupational Research Centre

Register of
Certificated KAI Users

This is to certify that

Christopher L. Finch

has undertaken the required training on the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Theory and Inventory and has been admitted to the Register of Certificated Users.

Signed ........................................
M. J. Kirton BSc

Certificated at Penn State University, USA on 8th January 2011

Valid until 8th January 2015

Occupational Research Centre, "Converseys", Cardigan Street, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 8HZ, UK
APPENDIX D

COVER LETTER
Dear Superintendent:

I am writing to ask for your participation in a research study surrounding the leadership traits of superintendents. Enclosed is a consent letter outlining the study and instructions on how you can participate. I hope you will decide to participate. Your participation in this phase of the study should take no more than 20-30 minutes of your time and involves simply reading the consent letter, signing the consent letter, completing the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory and placing all of the materials in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope. Some participants may also be invited to participate in an interview during a second phase of this research study.

As a public school administrator, I understand the demands of your position. I hope you will find the time to participate in this study. Please know that I have designed this study to minimize the impact on your valuable time. Your participation will provide invaluable information and expand the research literature on leadership, education and the superintendency.

This is a research study being conducted by Christopher L. Finch, a Doctoral student at Loyola University of Chicago under the supervision of Dr. Marla Israel, a faculty member in the School of Education. You were selected as a possible participant in this research because you currently hold the position of Superintendent of Schools within Lake, McHenry, Southern or Western portions of Suburban Cook, Kane, Will or DuPage counties. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Christopher L. Finch, at christopher.finch@rocketmail.com or my faculty advisor, Dr. Marla Israel, at misrael@luc.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Christopher L. Finch

Enclosures:
- CONSENT LETTER FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH
- KAI COVER LETTER
- KIRTON ADAPTION-INNOVATION INVENTORY
- SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE
APPENDIX E

CONSENT LETTER FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH
**Project Title:** The Rebel Leader: A Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Analysis of Rebel Superintendents in Suburban Public Schools.

**Researcher:** Christopher L. Finch

**Faculty Sponsor:** Dr. Marla Israel

**Introduction:**
You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Christopher L. Finch, a doctoral student at Loyola University of Chicago under the supervision of Dr. Marla Israel, a faculty member in the School of Education. This study is being conducted as part of the researcher’s dissertation.

You were selected as a possible participant in this research because you currently hold the position of superintendent of schools in Lake, McHenry, southern or western portions of suburban Cook, Kane, Will, or DuPage counties.

Please read this form and ask questions before you agree to be in the study.

**Background Information:**
The study itself is conducted in two phases. The purpose of this portion of the study is to identify rebel characteristics within superintendents through the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI).

**Procedures:**
If you decide to participate, you are asked to complete the enclosed KAI inventory protocol. The inventory will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete and should be mailed back to the research in the self-addressed stamped envelope along with a signed copy of this consent form. You will not receive the inventory back. An official KAI feedback booklet will be sent to you with your score. You will have the opportunity to discuss your score if you choose to do so. Some participants may also be invited to participate in an interview during a second phase of this research study.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the study:**
This portion of the study has minimal risks to you as the participant. Your KAI protocol will be kept confidential, but not anonymous to the researcher. Your identity, as a research participant, will not be used.

You may directly benefit from this study by completing the KAI. The KAI is a psychometric assessment that identifies a person’s preferred cognitive style and places an individual on a continuum called the adaption-innovation continuum. Indirectly, your participation also adds to the body of research in education, leadership and the superintendency. It is hoped the information cited in this study will benefit current and future leaders and researchers.
Compensation:
You will not receive direct compensation for your participation. However, if you participate, you will receive the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory at no cost to you. You will also receive a KAI feedback booklet with your score at no cost.

Confidentiality:
Any information obtained in connection with this research study that can be identified with you will be disclosed only with your permission; your results will be kept confidential. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified or identifiable and only group data will be presented.

Research results will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s home and only the researcher and my advisor will have access to the records while working on this project. Upon completion of the dissertation the researcher will destroy all original reports and identifying information that can be linked back to you.

Voluntary nature of the study:
Participation in this research study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with Loyola University of Chicago. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time without affecting these relationships or penalty.

Contacts and questions:
If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Christopher L. Finch, at christopher.finch@rocketmail.com or my faculty advisor, Dr. Marla Israel, at misrael@luc.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

Statement of Consent:
You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read this information and your questions have been answered. Even after signing this form, please know that you may withdraw from the study at any time. You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

I consent to participate in the study.

______________________________  ________________________
Signature of Participant        Date

______________________________  ________________________
Signature of Researcher         Date
APPENDIX F

KIRTON ADAPTATION-INNOVATION INVENTORY COVER LETTER
Dear Participant:

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research study. Enclosed is a copy of the KAI protocol. The protocol should take no more than 10-15 minutes to complete. You will be given a prompt and asked to mark how easy or how hard it is for you to present yourself consistently over a long period of time as that prompt. For example, some people are naturally early risers and others are not. Everyone can get up early to be at an early morning meeting, but some would find doing that as a routine to be very hard versus someone else who may find presenting themselves in that way very easy. The important piece to know is that all of us can be early risers, but some of us find it easier or harder to present ourselves as an early riser consistently over a long period of time.

You should find that you have a variety of responses to the prompts. Some of the images should be easy for you to present while others should be hard; but there is no right or wrong answer. Keep in mind you are responding to these prompts as an individual person and not as how you think others would want you to be or how you think your role, as a superintendent, should respond. Do not dwell on a prompt or over think a response, as there is no right or wrong answer.

In addition, please complete the demographic information sheet enclosed. The demographic information below will used for descriptive statistic purposes and to help identify potential candidates for a follow-up interview. Your name will never be used or disclosed during this study. Your confidentiality will be protected.

If you agree to participate please complete and return both this form and the KAI protocol in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelop. You will receive a feedback booklet with your score and a summary of the research findings at the conclusion of the study.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Christopher L. Finch, at christopher.finch@rocketmail.com or my faculty advisor, Dr. Marla Israel, at misrael@luc.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

**Demographic Information:**

Name: _____________________________________

Age: ______________ Gender: ______________

Number of years as a superintendent? ______________

Number of years as a superintendent in this district? ______________

Number of superintendencies you have held? ______________

Highest educational degree earned? Master’s Doctorate
If you hold multiple degrees or other type of degree, list below:

Rate your current level of satisfaction with: (1 = highly dissatisfied, 6 = highly satisfied)

The current state of education in the United States
1  2  3  4  5  6

The current state of education in Illinois
1  2  3  4  5  6

The current progress of your district
1  2  3  4  5  6

Signature of participant: ___________________________________________

By signing this sheet you understand that the demographic information provided will be in this research study. Your name will not be used in this study, nor will identifying characteristics be used. Your confidentiality will be maintained.
APPENDIX G

KIRTON ADAPTATION-INNOVATION INVENTORY
The material on this page is copyrighted and not able to be published.
APPENDIX H

KIRTON ADAPTATION-INNOVATION INVENTORY FEEDBACK BOOKLET
The material on this page is copyrighted and not able to be published.
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The material on this page is copyrighted and not able to be published.
The material on this page is copyrighted and not able to be published.
Dear Superintendent:

Recently, an invitation to participate in a research study being conducted by Christopher L. Finch, a Doctoral student at Loyola University of Chicago under the supervision of Dr. Marla Israel, a faculty member in the School of Education was mailed to you. You were selected as a possible participant in this research because you currently hold the position of Superintendent of Schools within Lake, McHenry, southern or western portions of suburban Cook, Kane, Will or DuPage counties.

As a courtesy to you, I have enclosed a copy of the original invitation that outlines the study and how you can participate in this important research. While I understand the demands of your position, I hope you will find the time to participate in this study. Please know that I have designed this study to minimize the impact on your valuable time. Your participation will provide invaluable information and expand the research literature on leadership, education and the superintendency.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Christopher L. Finch, at christopher.finch@rocketmail.com or my faculty advisor, Dr. Marla Israel, at misrael@luc.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Christopher L. Finch

Enclosures:
- CONSENT LETTER FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH
- KAI COVER LETTER
- KIRTON ADAPTION-INNOVATION INVENTORY
- SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE
APPENDIX J

SECOND REMINDER
Date

Dear Superintendent:

About two weeks ago, I sent you an invitation to participate in a research study surrounding leadership characteristics of superintendents. If you have already perused the invitation and returned it, please accept my thanks.

If you have not gotten to it yet, please take some time to consider participating in this valuable research study. Your participation is important because your views will be added to those of other superintendents like yourself to better understand leadership traits of superintendents. If for some reason you did not receive an invitation to participate, please contact me and I will send one out right away.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Christopher L. Finch, at christopher.finch@rocketmail.com or my faculty advisor, Dr. Marla Israel, at misrael@luc.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Sincerely,

Christopher L. Finch
APPENDIX K

THIRD REMINDER
Dear Superintendent:

This is your last chance to join your colleagues in a research study surrounding the leadership traits of superintendents. An invitation to join was mailed last month outlining the study and how you can participate. I hope you will decide to participate. Your participation in this phase of the study should take no more than 20-30 minutes of your time and involves simply reading the consent letter, signing the consent letter, completing the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory and placing all of the materials in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope.

As a courtesy to you, I have enclosed a copy of the original invitation that outlines the study and how you can participate in this important research. While I understand the demands of your position, I hope you will find the time to participate in this study. Please know that I have designed this study to minimize the impact on your valuable time. Your participation will provide invaluable information and expand the research literature on leadership, education and the superintendency.

This is a research study being conducted by Christopher L. Finch, a Doctoral student at Loyola University of Chicago under the supervision of Dr. Marla Israel, a faculty member in the School of Education. You were selected as a possible participant in this research because you currently hold the position of Superintendent of Schools within Lake, McHenry, southern or western portions of suburban Cook, Kane, Will or DuPage counties. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Christopher L. Finch, at christopher.finch@rocketmail.com or my faculty advisor, Dr. Marla Israel, at misrael@luc.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Christopher L. Finch

Enclosures:

- CONSENT LETTER FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH
- KAI COVER LETTER
- KIRTON ADAPTION-INNOVATION INVENTORY
- SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE
Dear Participant:

Thank you for your participation in the first phase of this research study. Based upon your responses, I am inviting you to continue your participation in this research study by completing an in person interview scheduled at your convenience.

The interview should take no longer than one hour and will be scheduled during a time and in a location convenient to you. The focus of the interview will be on your experiences and views as a superintendent and leader. Prior to the interview, you will be given the interview questions so you can feel informed about the interview content prior to meeting with the researcher. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. Interview transcriptions will be given to you for you to review and edit prior to being used for publication.

If you agree to participate please complete and return the enclosed Letter of Cooperation in the provided self-addressed stamped envelop. Upon receipt of this form, the researcher will contact you by email or phone to arrange a convenient interview time and location.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Christopher L. Finch, at christopher.finch@rocketmail.com or my faculty advisor, Dr. Marla Israel, at misrael@luc.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.
APPENDIX M

INTERVIEW COOPERATION LETTER
**Project Title:** The Rebel Leader: A Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Analysis of Rebel Superintendents in Suburban Public Schools.

**Researcher:** Christopher L. Finch

**Faculty Sponsor:** Dr. Marla Israel

**Introduction:**
You are invited to continue your participation in the research study being conducted by Christopher L. Finch, a Doctoral student at Loyola University of Chicago under the supervision of Dr. Marla Israel, a faculty member in the School of Education. This research is being conducted for the researcher’s dissertation.

You were selected as a possible participant in this next phase of research because you currently hold the position of Superintendent of Schools within Lake, McHenry, southern or western portions of suburban Cook, Kane, Will or DuPage counties and achieved a score that fell within the study range for this research.

Please read this form and ask questions before you agree to be in the study.

**Background Information:**
This study is conducted in two phases. The purpose of this second phase of the study is to explore the decision-making processes and leadership characteristics of superintendents demonstrating high levels of adaption or innovation as identified on the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI).

**Procedures:**
If you decide to participate, you are asked to sign and return this “Letter of Cooperation.” Sign the form and return it to the researcher in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope. Signing and returning this letter of cooperation will indicate your agreement to participate in this second phase of the research study.

Upon receipt of your letter of cooperation, you will be asked to participate in an hour-long interview about your experiences and views as a superintendent. Prior to the interview, you will be given the interview questions. The researcher will contact you to arrange a mutually convenient time and location to conduct the interview. Prior to commencing the interview, you will be read a “Consent to Participate in Research” letter and asked to sign. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. The audio recording will be sent to a professional transcribing service for transcription. The transcription service provider will sign a confidentiality agreement. A copy of the interview transcription will sent to you and you will be given the opportunity to suggest...
revisions, if necessary. Once you have reviewed the transcription, all identifiers will be removed before using the transcription in the research study.

**Risks and Benefits of being in the study:**
This portion of the study has some risk to you as the participant. The intent of the interview is to have an open dialogue about the superintendency, leadership qualities you have and decision making-processes you use in your role. Your identity, as a research participant, will not be used. Since the researcher cannot fully know what information shared during the interview is known publically or privately there is a risk that the researcher may publish text or data that could unintentionally link the participant to the data or text published. The researcher will minimize this risk to the participant by allowing him or her the opportunity to review the interview transcript and suggest revisions.

There are no anticipated direct benefits to the participant for participation in the interview. Indirectly, your participation adds to the body of research in education, leadership and the superintendency. It is hoped the information cited in this study will benefit current and future leaders and researchers.

**Compensation:**
You will not receive direct compensation for your participation.

**Confidentiality:**
Any information obtained in connection with this research study that can be identified with you will be disclosed only with your permission; your results will be kept confidential. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified or identifiable. Each respondent will be assigned a unique identification number. All data will be analyzed-coded using the identification number. Individual names or the names of school districts will not be mentioned in the final writing. Audio files of the interview will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s home and only the researcher and my advisor will have access to the recordings while working on this project. Upon completion of the dissertation the researcher will destroy all audio files and identifying information that can be linked back to you.

**Voluntary nature of the study:**
Participation in this research study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with Loyola University of Chicago. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time without affecting these relationships or penalty.

**Contacts and questions:**
If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Christopher L. Finch, at christopher.finch@rocketmail.com or my faculty advisor, Dr. Marla Israel, at
misrael@luc.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689. You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

**Statement of Cooperation:**
I, the Superintendent, agree to cooperate in the research to be conducted by Christopher L. Finch in conjunction with Loyola University of Chicago’s School of Education. His doctoral project entitled “The Rebel Leader: A Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Analysis of Rebel Superintendents in Suburban Public Schools,” along with the outlined research protocols are understood.

__________________________________________
Signature of Participant Date

__________________________________________
Signature of Researcher Date
APPENDIX N

INTERVIEW LETTER OF CONSENT
Project Title: The Rebel Leader: A Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Analysis of Rebel Superintendents in Suburban Public Schools.

Researcher: Christopher L. Finch

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Marla Israel

Introduction:
You are invited to continue your participation in the research study being conducted by Christopher L. Finch, a Doctoral student at Loyola University of Chicago under the supervision of Dr. Marla Israel, a faculty member in the School of Education. This research is being conducted for the researcher’s dissertation.

You were selected as a possible participant in this next phase of research because you currently hold the position of Superintendent of Schools within Lake, McHenry, southern or western portions of suburban Cook, Kane, Will or DuPage counties and had a KAI score that fell within the study range for this research.

Please read this form and ask questions before you agree to be in the study.

Background Information:
This study is conducted in two phases. The purpose of this second phase of the study is to explore the decision-making processes and leadership characteristics of superintendents demonstrating high levels of adaption or innovation as identified on the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI).

Procedures:
If you decide to participate you will participate in an hour-long interview about your experiences and views as a superintendent. Prior to the interview, you were given the interview questions. The researcher will contact you to arrange a mutually convenient time and location to conduct the interview. Prior to commencing the interview, you will be read a “Consent to Participate in Research” letter and asked to sign. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. The audio recording will be sent to a professional transcribing service for transcription. The transcription service provider will sign a confidentiality agreement. A copy of the interview transcription will sent to you and you will be given the opportunity to suggest revisions, if necessary. Once you have reviewed the transcription, all identifiers will be removed before using the transcription in the research study.

Risks and Benefits of being in the study:
This portion of the study has some risk to you as the participant. The intent of the interview is to have an open dialogue about the superintendency, leadership qualities you have and decision making-processes you use in your role. Your identity, as a research participant, will not be used. The researcher cannot fully know what information shared during the interview is known.
publically or privately and will there minimize the risk to the participant by allowing him or her the opportunity to review the interview transcript and suggest revisions.

There are no anticipated direct benefits to the participant for participation in the interview. Indirectly, your participation adds to the body of research in education, leadership and the superintendency. It is hoped the information cited in this study will benefit current and future leaders and researchers.

**Compensation:**
You will not receive direct compensation for your participation.

**Confidentiality:**
Any information obtained in connection with this research study that can be identified with you will be disclosed only with your permission; your results will be kept confidential. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified or identifiable. Each respondent will be assigned a unique identification number. All data will be analyzed coded using the identification number. Individual names or the names of school districts will not be mentioned in the final writing.

Audio files of the interview will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s home and only the researcher and my advisor will have access to the recordings while working on this project. Upon completion of the dissertation the researcher will destroy all audio files and identifying information that can be linked back to you.

**Voluntary nature of the study:**
Participation in this research study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with Loyola University of Chicago. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time without affecting these relationships or penalty.

**Contacts and questions:**
If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Christopher L. Finch, at christopher.finch@rocketmail.com or my faculty advisor, Dr. Marla Israel, at misrael@luc.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**
You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read this information and your questions have been answered. Even after signing this form, please know that you may withdraw from the study at any time. You will be given a signed copy of this form for your records.
I consent to participate in the study.

___________________________________________________
Signature of Participant     Date

___________________________________________________
Signature of Researcher     Date
APPENDIX O

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Demographic Questions:

1. How long have you been a superintendent?
2. How long have you been the superintendent in this district?
3. Describe your route to the superintendency?
4. How do you see your career evolving in the future?

Leadership Questions:

5. Share your views on the state of public education currently and how your role, as superintendent, contributes to the status of public education.
6. How do you make decisions? What do you use to determine or support that your decision is ethical in nature?
7. Describe an ethical dilemma you faced and how you worked through it.
8. How would you describe your leadership style?
9. Do you feel that your style is unique or has unique qualities compared to those expected within the role of a superintendent?
10. How would you define a rebel? Do you see yourself fitting that description? Why or why not?
11. Describe an instance where you acted as “the rebel” of which you just described.
12. Do you feel your rebel characteristics are displayed more publically or privately in your role as superintendent?
13. How do you adapt or modify your rebel behavior to fit into situations in which these characteristics may be seen as adversarial? Do you find adapting your behavior in these situations easy or difficult?
14. Describe a situation where you adapted your rebel behavior.
15. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your leadership style, your role as superintendent or your thoughts surrounding rebels?
APPENDIX P

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT
I, ________________________, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes and documentation received from Christopher L. Finch related to his doctoral study titled “The Rebel Leader: A Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Analysis of Rebel Superintendents in Suburban Public Schools.”

Furthermore, I agree:

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

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


VITA

Christopher Leigh Finch is the son of Frank and Peggy Finch. He was born in Rockford, Illinois, on June 20, 1975. He currently resides in Libertyville, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago, with his wife and two children.

Christopher attended public school in Rockford, Illinois, from Kindergarten through first grade before moving to Dixon, Illinois, where he attended second grade. Christopher’s family returned to Rockford, Illinois, where he attended Rockford Public Schools from third grade through graduation from Auburn High School in 1993. Christopher graduated from Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, in May 1997 with a bachelor of arts degree in music education. In 2002, he earned a master of music degree in music education from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, and a subsequent master of arts degree in educational leadership and organizational change from Roosevelt University in Schaumburg, Illinois, in 2005. He received a Type 75 school administrative certificate after the completion of his program at Roosevelt University in 2005.

Christopher has worked in the public education system for the past 16 years. He began his educational career as a middle school vocal music teacher and theater teacher until assuming his first elementary school principalship in 2005. He currently is an elementary school principal and has served in that role for the past eight years.
DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

The Dissertation submitted by Christopher Leigh Finch has been read and approved by the following committee:

Marla Israel, Ed.D., Director
Associate Professor, School of Education
Loyola University Chicago

Harry Rossi, Ph.D.,
Adjunct Professor, School of Education
Loyola University Chicago

Meng-Jia Wu, Ph.D.,
Associate Professor, School of Education
Loyola University Chicago