A STUDY OF CONNECTIVE LEADERSHIP IN FIVE MIDWESTERN SCHOOL DISTRICTS

by

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Extending the work of Lipman-Blumen (1996) in the field of leadership, this study focused on the operationalization of connective leadership in school superintendents. The question pursued in this study concentrated on how school superintendents operationalize the achieving styles of Lipman-Blumen's (1996) connective leadership model.

This qualitative, phenomenological research centered on educational leadership in a Midwestern state. The central research question, "How are the three main achieving styles of Connective Leadership (direct, instrumental, and relational) operationalized in school superintendents?" guided my study. Data were collected from five semi-structured interviews of school superintendents in a Midwestern state. These school leaders were specifically selected through an identification process with School Administrators of Iowa. Data analysis was conducted through the process of using predetermined themes, searching for additional themes through coding; triangulation; member checking and data interpretation.

This study found that connective leadership and the operationalization of the achieving styles exists in these five participants. The participants utilized each achieving style as they maneuvered through their leadership responsibilities on a daily basis. Participants accessed the achieving styles differently and some felt more comfortable in specific achieving styles than others. The participants felt that the direct achieving styles were the most difficult to access but did acknowledge their relevancy in their work as educational leaders. From local issues with teachers or community members to working with local and state leaders, the achieving styles were important for each district leader.

It is the conclusion of this study that in order to achieve all of the different areas of educational leadership, adopting a leadership model and being reflective in one's leadership is essential. Quality leadership in the field of education requires a multi-leveled leadership approach that involves all stakeholders from multiple leadership styles.

Dedication

To my wife, Veronica, who has been an incredible sideliner for me throughout this process and throughout my career. You have been so patient and willing to carry the weight of everything else in our world as I completed this life goal. I could not have completed this process without you.

To my children- Lincoln, Harrison, and Blythe- for being such amazing children. Your patience with me throughout my studies has helped me so much. I hope you enjoy learning all of your life, just as I have!

To my family- thank you for being so supportive as I have strived to achieve this goal. Thank you for instilling in me the willingness to work hard to finish the job.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

When a community group comes to the office of the superintendent, wanting to know how they can help make their school better, it is best to listen and reach down inside yourself, harness the compassion and wherewithal and help find answers to the issues of the community. Even if the proposed concerns or issues are not shared between the community and the superintendent, it is important to find some common ground from which to move forward. What should not occur is for the leader to dismiss the issues or the community group as being fanatical in their thinking. Furthermore, the superintendent has the obligation to listen and try to think differently about the proposed issue and find resources to help solve the issue- not try to sabotage the group.

In my experience, community members who bring issues to school leaders do so because they care deeply about the future of the school and the community. While it may seem that they are simply angry or searching for areas to complain about, what they really want is a better organization- or at least to understand how the organization works in relation to their issue. They are looking for help from the one person who has the most authority and ultimate responsibility to lead. Connective leaders recognize their responsibility, take it seriously, and access multiple achieving styles to move the organization forward and solve problems.

Over the course of the past two years in my doctoral studies at Drake University I have been immersed in quality educational experiences from professors who challenged my thinking about leadership. During the spring semester of 2011 I was introduced to *The Art of Possibility* by Ben and Rosamund Zander in my Doctoral 345 Advanced Leadership course. In the summer of 2011, I used *The Art of Possibility* in my Doctoral 396 Advanced Qualitative Research course

to identify how the possibilities of leadership as described by Zander and Zander could be operationalized in a community leadership position. Through this experience of continued research on leadership styles and models, I was introduced to Jean Lipman-Blumen's model of connective leadership.

As a school building leader, with aspirations of leading larger groups of people and eventually consulting with businesses about leadership and systems, I have a profound desire to learn more about how Lipman-Blumen's model of connective leadership including direct, relational, and instrumental achieving styles can impact organizations. As an introduction, direct leadership can be described as the willingness to individually master a task, while relational leadership pertains to working in collaboration, and instrumental leadership relates to finding the strengths of others to achieve an organizational goal.

I was very interested in learning how superintendents interacted with others and realized success in their professional endeavors in relationship to the achieving styles of connective leadership. As I continued to practice as a building principal and witness first-hand how leadership can inflame or resolve issues of personnel, policy, and practice, I found it fascinating and wondered how other district leaders led their organizations.

The education system is unique in that each district's board members can have a huge effect on the school system without really being trained to be effective board members (Williams & Tabernik, 2011). It is the responsibility of the superintendent to educate board members about how schools operate and guide them in decision making processes. This is just one example of how a superintendent may need to be connective. Leaders have to lead for the long term while managing both the pressures of succeeding in the short term with the uncertainty of the future (Lipman-Blumen, 1996). in his or her leadership abilities. Furthermore, when a community feels

confident in district leadership, the community is more likely to have a sense of pride in the school and a willingness to trust. When initiatives and leadership occur with synergy, the organization is healthy and runs smoothly. I was interested in learning how district level leaders achieved a collaborative relationship that was respectful, and trusting.

I wanted to know how successful superintendents operationalized the three achieving styles of connective leadership. This research will contribute to the body of knowledge on effective school leadership along with Lipman-Blumen's work on connective leadership and the achieving styles in organizations.

Issues of Leadership Style

There are a wide variety of diverse leadership issues in the public education setting. Many of these issues require a delicate balance of leadership styles to create positive outcomes for students (Fullan, 2001; Komives, Lucas, and McMahon, 2007; Lipman-Blumen, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1984). While state and federal mandates demand schools close the achievement gap, state and federal departments are continuously comparing American students to European and Asian students through assessments such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and the Programme for International Student Assessment. Other researchers are consistently tugging in the opposite direction; imploring schools to "deepen what it [The United States] does best" (Richardson, 2009, p. 15). Yong Zhao (2009), a native of China who is an international speaker and author focusing on effects of globalization and technology in education, expressed his concern surrounding the American push for standardizing and narrowing of the term success, "Thus, expanding the definition of success should be one of the first changes we make in our efforts to ensure a bright future for our children" (p. 183).

Zhao (2009) continues advising educators and school leaders:

American education needs to be more American, instead of more like education in other countries. The traditional strengths of American education- respect for individual talent, and differences, a broad curriculum oriented to educating the whole child, and a decentralized system that embraces diversity- should be further expanded, not abandoned (p. 182).

In creating an understanding about the nature of quality leadership, it depends on to whom the question is being addressed, and who wants to know.

Kohn (1999) outlined warnings for leaders which are completely contrary to many other popular authors of the education reform movement.   In his book geared toward rethinking the "Tougher Standards" movement Kohn (1999) contended that the movement is misguided in five separate respects: the cost of overemphasizing achievement, getting teaching and learning wrong, getting evaluation wrong, getting school reform wrong, and getting improvement wrong. He calls into question every aspect of recent and current reform efforts along with the efforts of the leaders behind these reforms.

Fullan (2011) continued the argument for the need for total system reform in the context of using the appropriate measurable results for students, or as he describes it, "the right drivers" (p. 3). Fullan argued that "The key to system-wide success is to situate the energy of educators and students as the central driving force" (p. 3). He stated that the United States is currently failing at system wide reform because it is focused on the wrong elements for success, or the wrong drivers. Fullan's wrong drivers include accountability, individual teacher and leadership quality, technology, and fragmented strategies; his right drivers include capacity building, group work, pedagogy, and systemic strategies.

Stegall and Linton (2012) addressed the leadership question from a different perspective-the building and district level. According to the authors, an important piece of the leadership puzzle is to create conditions at the school level where teachers and school leaders can work together to solve a variety of problems. Stegall and Linton viewed the current practice of teacher and leadership relationships as a "problems up, solutions down approach [which] can further magnify the view of top-down leadership" (p. 62). Creating capacity for leadership, in their perspective, "builds buy-in, a sense of transparency, and collective efficacy" (Stegall & Linton, 2012, p. 63). The authors suggested that such capacity for a more localized leadership role will create a "problems down, solutions up approach [which] empowers teachers and school stakeholders to make decisions and address possible solutions to problems instead of waiting on the leader to tell what needs to be done" (Stegall & Linton, 2012, p. 63).

In a report to the Wallace Foundation, Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom and Anderson (2010), explained keys to positive district effects on schools and students as they related to the need to build principals' sense of efficacy for school improvement. Louis et al., (2010) explained their findings on district approaches to improving teaching and learning and investigated leadership and student achievement to describe the characteristics which yield productive consequences for students. In their findings, Louis et al., (2010) discussed the value of shared leadership responsibilities and openness to ensure that all stakeholders are welcome to help solve issues.

Wagner (2008) authored a book *The Global Achievement Gap* as a "call to action" (pg. xvii) which explained the global achievement gap from his interactions with corporate leaders. Wagner outlined several key factors pertaining to why even the best schools in America are not teaching the survival skills our children need. Wagner (2008) used seven specific survival skills

Americans must be taught today. In this list of important skills, leadership in a 21st century environment came to the front. Leadership in the context of "collaboration across networks and leading by influence" (Wagner, 2008, p. 22) means that leaders must "figure out where the work can best be done from both a talent and cost perspective" (p. 24). Wagner posited that "command-and-control hierarchical leadership is increasingly a relic of the past" (p. 25). This perspective adds yet another dimension to the difficulty of leadership at the school district level.

Instead of commanding as a leader, a new perspective of leading is the concept of "leading by influence." Wagner's (2008) perspective through the conversations he had with business leaders is that students in the 21st century lack understanding of how leadership occurs in the world. Therefore, he suggests that even students in high school should be taught how to become effective leaders in the 21st century:

> It's about how citizens make change today in their local communities-by trying to influence diverse groups and then creating alliances of groups who work together toward a common goal. Aren't these the leadership skills we'd want every young person to master in order to be more effective citizens in our democracy? (Wagner, 2008, p. 28)

Leaders with the ability to connect diverse individuals within an interdependent group to move an organization forward are needed in the 21st century (Lipman-Blumen, 1996).

In order to harness the ability to motivate and lead diverse, interdependent groups, Lipman-Blumen (1996) suggested a model of three leadership achieving styles: direct (competitive and intrinsically motivated leaders), relational (entrusting and persuading leaders), and instrumental (contributory and collaborative leaders). The use of Lipman-Blumen's achieving styles have been consistently studied to measure different groups of leaders and their specific leadership attributes over the span of multiple decades (Awad, 1981; Bailey, 1996; Bird-

Westerfield, Cheng, Edwards, Harrington, & Houle, 1988; Fobbs, 1988; Harrington, 1995; Hernandez, 2004; Lange, 1993; Mueller, 1989; Offerman & Beil, 1988; Robinson, 2005; Salgado , 1989; Wangler, 2009; White, 1984; Williams, 1989). These studies have expanded the overall understanding of how Lipman-Blumen's achieving styles play a part in the relationships and leadership abilities of individuals, but few have focused specifically on how the different achieving styles are operationalized from the school district level of leadership.

Multiple studies have included research on the leadership styles of superintendents (Brown, 2010; Fairbanks-Schultz, 2010; Forner, 2010; Groholski, 2009; Redish, 2010).   In a dissertation, Brown (2010) conducted research using Collins' characteristics of level five leaders from Collins' (2001) book *Good-to-Great*. The purpose of this study was to interview school superintendents and board members in six different districts to understand how the level five leadership attributes were demonstrated (Brown, 2010). Forner (2010) examined the practices of effective rural superintendents who led their districts to improvement in academics based upon the six correlates of Waters and Marzano (2006).

Research is fairly dense relating to leadership styles of superintendents and district leaders. However, the area of focus of qualitative research on the operationalization of Lipman-Blumen's model of connective leadership and school district leaders is minimal. Because Lipman-Blumen's book was originally written for a non-academic audience, this study serves as a vessel to further examine how the three main areas of the model (direct, instrumental, and relational leadership styles) are operationalized in the work of school district leaders in the Midwest.

Statement of the Problem

Superintendents need a model of leadership which reflects the complexity of the job. Leadership in the 21st century is very different from earlier centuries. Rapid change, sophistication, and complexity permeate the educational scene in America (Fullan, 2001; Lipman-Blumen, 1996). Leadership in a culture of change is about unlocking the mysteries of living organizations (Fullan, 2001). As the complexions of schools continue to change to include school choice, open-enrollment, on-line course, and other federal mandates, leadership must also change. As Bennis (1999) stated, "The problems we face are too complex to be solved by any one person or any one discipline" (p. 316). Real leadership is uncomfortable, but anguish is preventable (Murphy, 2011). Education leadership is no different. Without effective and sustainable leadership, all organizations eventually flounder (Lipman-Blumen, 1998). Leaders have to lead for the long term while managing the pressures of succeeding in the short term and the uncertainty of the future (Lipman-Blumen, 1996). So it is in the world of public education.

Statement of the Purpose

School district leaders have a daunting task in front of them. Those leaders who possess the requisite skills of direct, instrumental, and relational leadership styles may have an advantage in moving their organizations forward. The purpose of this study was to explore how and when the leadership styles (direct, instrumental, and relational) of connective leadership were operationalized in education leadership in five school districts in a Midwest state. While the book *Connective Leadership: Managing in a Changing World* was written mainly for the purpose of business and political leaders (Lipman-Blumen, 1996), it is important to establish the relevance of the achieving styles of connective leadership in relation to the field of education, particularly education leadership at the school district level. Lipman-Blumen contended that

these skills can be learned; in which case, learning about leaders who possess these skills will be very valuable to those who wish to emulate these achieving styles.

Research Questions

The following research question guided my study: How are the three main achieving styles of Connective Leadership (direct, instrumental, and relational) operationalized in school superintendents?

More specifically, I was interested in learning more about the following sub-questions:

What does it mean to be a relational school district leader?

What does it mean to be an instrumental school district leader?

What does it mean to be a direct school district leader?

How do school leaders move from one leadership style to another (relational, direct, instrumental) in their leadership roles?

When is it appropriate for district leaders to move from one achieving style to another?

Significance of the Study

Education leadership is continuously in the spotlight at the local, state, federal and global level. This has been the case for the past five decades and the message has been nearly the same, "The superintendent in a growing number of communities not only must have a modicum of technical proficiency but, even more importantly, must manifest the ability to handle dynamic and often controversial social, economic, and political issues" (Usdan, 1968, p. 15). Usdan (2005) continued by stating that priorities of leadership capabilities should be stressed with great emphasis on political brokering, conflict management among other skills to focus on the leadership reality. What is yet to be understood is how school district leaders conduct themselves in relation to Jean Lipman-Blumen's framework of connective leadership. Lipman-

Blumen's achieving styles are transcended into the modern culture of fast-paced relationships and decision making. As Lipman-Blumen (1996) described, "In place of 'great leaders' of previous eras, we are now witnessing a search for new leaders who can deal with the highly charged tensions of diversity and interdependence" (p. 12).

Understanding how those characteristics or achieving styles are operationalized may provide aspiring district leaders with a blue print for success in the future. More attention may need to be paid to a system like Lipman-Blumen's achieving styles and its relationship with district leadership because of the changes in the education landscape. Certainly, district leaders should pay more attention to their own leadership styles and be cognizant of the outcomes due to their leadership practices.

This study was written for all administrators and leaders in the field of education; state, district, and building level administrators, teacher leaders, students wishing to obtain their administrative certification, and their instructors can benefit from this study. As the field of education continues to change and the call for accountability and alternate programming continues to increase, the field will demand a new and dynamic leader who can maneuver through the both diverse and interdependent system (Lipman-Blumen, 1996). Through this research, aspiring superintendents have a framework from which to enhance their leadership skills. This research provides aspiring leaders with a better understanding of what quality leadership can be at the district level. Further, this research prompts potential leaders who are uncertain of their desire to lead to make a decision either to lead or to allow someone else to lead.

For practicing leaders, this research portrays what Lipman-Blumen defined connective leadership to be, "those with an eye for finding and ethically exploiting the connections among

diverse, often contentious groups" (1998, pg.3). This study acts as a gauge for the reflective leader. Those leaders who feel they are connective or effective may have a different lens through which to view their effectiveness or connectiveness which, in turn, may encourage leaders to (re)evaluate their skills or tactics.

For district board members, who have the responsibility of working directly with the superintendent, this information helps set appropriate expectations for the important board-superintendent relationship. Board members who read this research will see connective leaders reaching out to the constituents of the districts, connecting key leaders in the community and "entrusting them to share burdens and enhance the leader's vision" (Lipman-Blumen, 1998, pg.5).This information is also useful to organizations responsible for facilitating school districts with information, legal counsel, and policy information.

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of the conceptual framework was to provide a model on which to base my study; "it sets the stage for presentation of the specific research question that drives the investigation" (McGaghie, Bordage & Shea, 2001, pg. 923).

In understanding how connective leadership was operationalized in the leadership roles of school district superintendents, it was important to first understand Lipman-Blumen's (1996) model of connective leadership. The point of theoretical perspective was to provide specific focus to research; it infused theory into the study. In this study Lipman-Blumen's model of connective leadership was used as a guide to understand direct, relational and instrumental leadership qualities. The theory of connective leadership is described in Chapter 2.

Theoretical Framework

Qualitative research is a process for exploring and understanding the meaning an individual or a group gives to a set of circumstances or a human problem (Creswell, 2009). I appreciate the notion that my personal reality is not the same as another person's notion of their reality, or their perception of my reality. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) explained that "meaning is of essential concern to the qualitative approach. People who use this approach are interested in how different people make sense of their lives" (p. 7). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) offered five general features of qualitative research: a) natural setting is a direct source and a key element, b) collection of data is in the form of words or pictures, c) researchers are concerned with how things occur, d) construction of a perspective is different than knowing what to expect, e) there is a special interest in the participants' thoughts. Through qualitative research, I want to understand how leaders perceive their own leadership styles.

Constructivism claims "meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting" (Crotty 1998, p. 43). This epistemological foundation is appropriate because the meanings of connective leadership and its achieving styles are constructed between the participants and the researcher. An interpretivist theoretical approach is appropriate to the research as I am searching for culturally created interpretations of the social world of others (Crotty, 1998).

In addition, Lipman-Blumen's (1996) theory of connective leadership can be connected to Martin Buber's (1923) work on human relations called *I and Thou*. Buber explained how an individual has the ability to relate to the outside world (Ozmon & Craver, 2008). In a proper relationship, mutuality and empathy exist (Ozmon & Craver, 2008). Buber's existentialism branches into the field of education where he describes a relationship of "I-it" between teachers

and students. I believe this relationship is extended into the field of education leadership describing the connection between superintendents and stakeholders. Stakeholders include but are not be limited to students, parents, teachers, non-certified staff members, alumni and other community members.

Summary of Research Approach and Design

Phenomenological research "describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (Creswell, 2007, p.57). In this case the concept being studied is the achieving styles within connective leadership. Creswell (2007) described the basic purpose of phenomenology as reducing the experiences of an individual to a "description of the universal essence" (p. 58).

Data were collected through the use of "purposeful sampling strategy" (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). Specific administrators were selected because they could specifically inform an understanding of what it means to operationalize the achieving styles of connective leadership. Each individual was interviewed in a semi-formal setting and each participant was asked to journal their thoughts after the interview to ensure clarity on the subject of how they perceived themselves to operationalize the achieving styles within the connective leadership model.

Definition of Terms

Connective leadership – Connective leadership is a model of leadership which brings together diverse groups of people that exist in an interdependent environment (Lipman-Blumen, 2012). **Achieving styles** – Achieving styles are the nine behavioral strategies leaders employ to achieve their goals.

 Relational leadership – Relational leadership relates to people who prefer to be part of a team or a group to achieve their goals.

Instrumental leadership – Instrumental leadership reflects those behaviors which will diminish friction in the workplace. Individuals who use themselves as instruments for accomplishing their goals prefer instrumental styles (Lipman-Blumen, 2012).

Direct leadership – People who prefer the direct leadership style confront their own tasks individually and directly.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

The focus of my research was centered on how superintendents in a Midwestern state operationalized the three main achieving styles of Lipman-Blumen's connective leadership model. These three styles--direct, relational, and instrumental (Lipman-Blumen, 1996) can be consciously and systematically accessed for the purpose of solving problems and interacting with people in an organization. As Lipman-Blumen (1996) explained, "The model allows leaders to assess not only their own leadership styles and those of others but also the leadership behaviors most needed in any particular situation and the leadership styles most valued in each organization" (pp.113-114).

Included in the dissertation are five chapters: introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, and summary. Chapter 2 explains in further detail the leadership studies and research surrounding Lipman-Blumen's model of connective leadership and how the model relates to the school leadership. Chapter 3 explains the design of the research and the methods used to gather and analyze the data in an appropriate manner. In Chapter 4 the themes that came from the data will be outlined. Lastly, Chapter 5 discusses and summarizes the results of the study and provides recommendations for further research in the area of connective leadership and schools.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to understand the value of positive leadership skills, it was important to explore the literature surrounding quality leadership characteristics as well as literature that described leadership which was ineffective. A quality literature review is an evaluation of previous research while explaining the relationship to the research question (Shuttleworth, 2009). "A good literature review expands upon the reasons behind selecting a particular research question" (Shuttleworth, 2009, p. 1). Creswell (2007) explained the value of the literature review in terms of providing rationale for the problem and position of the study being conducted. Conducting a literature review serves as an opportunity to explore the research and find gaps for which my research can fill. Butin (2010) stated, "The literature review serves as an inspiration (and caution) for your own research" (p. 64). A thorough literature review must be systematic. The process of the literature review should start by researching a broad topic and then specifically narrowing references and pertinent research articles which more pointedly are relevant to the dissertation project.

Effective Leadership

James Burns, who is generally considered the founder of modern leadership theory (Marzano, Walters & McNulty, 2005) reframed the way we define leadership. Burns (1978) defined the ideal transformational leader which spurred many perspectives and models for leadership still used today. These changes included Deming's (1986) framework of total quality management, Greenleaf's (1970, 1977) work on servant leadership, followed by Blanchard and Hersey's work in the mid-1980s through 2001 revolving around situational leadership. This work led to the most popular theme in educational leadership over the past two decades- instructional leadership (Marzano, et al. 2005).

Transformational leadership occurs when people raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality (Burns, 1978). It should also be explained that "the transforming leader looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower" (Burns, 1978, p.4). Ultimately, transformational leadership results in stronger group relationships that are mutually stimulating that elevate followers into leaders and elevates leaders into what Burns (1978) described as "moral agents" (p. 4).

One purpose of Deming's work is to reestablish an approach to long-term success through customer satisfaction and quality. Deming (1986) created 14 points to implement total quality management included ceasing dependence on inspection to achieve quality, instituting training on the job, breaking down barriers between staff areas, and instituting a vigorous program of education and self-improvement for everyone. Waldman (1993) reorganized Deming's work into five actions of an effective leader: change agency, teamwork, continuous improvement, trust building, and eradication of short-term goals.

Servant Leadership can be defined as a leadership style where "the servant leader is positioned at the center of the organization [and] is in contact with all aspects of the organization" (Marzano, et al., 2005, p. 17). Greenleaf (1977) stated that "if one is servant, either leader or follower, one is always searching, listening, expecting that a better wheel for these times is in the making" (p. 23). This means that effective leaders are those leaders who inherently wish to help others. Marzano, et al.,(2005) outlined the important skills of servant leadership to include: "understanding the personal needs of those within the organization, healing wounds caused by conflict within the organization, being a steward of the resources of the organization, developing the skills of those within the organization, and being an effective listener" (p.17).

The situational leadership model was based on the idea that leaders should employ multiple leadership styles based on the maturity levels of the group of followers and the details of the task (Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 2001). This model suggested that the degree of willingness to perform a task by the follower will dictate the type of relationship the leader pursues with the follower. In other words, when followers are unable and unwilling to perform a task, less concern is given to the personal relationship between the leader and the follower and more task-oriented direction is given to the follower by the leader. This model continues until followers are willing and able to perform the task, whereby the leader no longer needs to focus solely on the task but can also focus on the relationship with the follower – a low task-high relationship focus or delegating style (Blanchard, et al., 2001).

The connective leadership model allows for many different theories to work at the same time. Indeed, Lipman-Blumen's model is situational, and allows for quality in the organization, provided the leaders access all of their behaviors to achieve their goals. "By using the model of connective leadership, as well as the various instruments for applying the model to themselves, their constituents, and organizations, aspiring leaders can increase their effectiveness…" (Lipman-Blumen, 1996, p. 138).

Martin Buber's (1923) work relating to relationships between "I-You" and "I-it" (p. 52) stated, "The world as experience belongs to the basic word I-it. The basic word I-You establishes the world of relation" (p. 56). Connective leadership moves beyond the experience of leadership and becomes the relationship and reciprocity of leadership of all people in the organization. Much of Lipman-Blumen's (1996) theory of connective leadership can be connected to Martin Buber's (1923) work on human relations called *I and Thou*. In Buber's work, he explained how an individual has the ability to relate to the outside world (Ozmon &

Craver, 2008). In a proper relationship, mutuality and empathy exist (Ozmon & Craver, 2008).

Buber's existentialism branches into the field of education where he describes a relationship of

"I-it" between teachers and students. I believe this relationship is extended in the field of

education to include the connection between superintendents and stakeholders. Stakeholders

include but are not be limited to students, parents, teachers, non-certified staff members,

community members, alumni and the like.

Blanchard and Hersey's (1977) theory of situational leadership was also closely aligned

with Lipman-Blumen's model of connective leadership. In situational leadership, leaders must

use different leadership styles depending on the situation; ranging from telling or directing to

selling, participating and delegating (Blanchard & Hersey, 1977). Further, this theory was

characterized in terms of the amount of support the leader gives to his/her team members. So,

the leader in an organization moves from one style to another depending upon the need of the

team and the situation with the goal being to match the leadership style with the level of need

(Gordon, 2009).

<div align="center">**Toxic Leadership**</div>

"Bad leadership is a phenomenon so ubiquitous it's a wonder that our shelves are not

heavy with books on the subject" (Kellerman, 2004, p. xv). There are a specific set of attributes

leaders possess which make their organizations ineffective or unsustainable. All leaders are

subject to some level of toxicity (Lipman-Blumen, 2005). Even the greatest leaders of our time,

to include Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Mother Teresa have displayed "human

frailties" (Lipman-Blumen, 2005, p. 6). Some researchers and practitioners, to include Lipman-

Blumen, focus on the allowance of such toxic behaviors by the followers in an organization or

community, but my purpose was to define toxic leadership so that it was readily identifiable in

my research of connective leaders. So what are these specific human traits that hold the best leaders (and all leaders for that matter) back from achieving personal or organizational greatness?

Colonel Denise Williams (2005) outlined 18 different types of toxic leaders in an examination of toxic leadership in the United States Army. In the article, Williams (2005) defined toxic leaders as "leaders who take part in destructive behaviors and show signs of dysfunctional personal characteristics" (p. 1). Williams recognized the varying degrees of toxicity and posits that some toxicity may be intentional while other toxic actions may be unintentional.

> At first glance, toxic leadership connotes an evil bullying person, but the reality is that toxic leadership can [be] present in much milder types of in a multitude of types between these extremes. Recall that the penultimate of toxic leadership is the harm done to the organization and the followers. The nature and degree of harm that results helps to characterize the toxic leader type (p.6).

Williams described toxic leaders as those who may be absentee, paranoid, codependent, compulsive, controller, bully, and corrupt among many others. Each instance of toxicity is clearly defined and explained in that "it is the extent to which these characteristics [of toxic leadership] are applied that represents a problem" (Williams, 2005, p.14).

Heppell (2011) defined toxic leaders as "those individuals whose leadership generates a serious and enduring negative, even poisonous, effect upon the individuals, families, organizations communities and societies exposed to their methods" (p.243). Lipman-Blumen (2005) defined destructive behaviors of toxic leaders to include:

- Leaving their followers worse off than they found them, demeaning, seducing, marginalizing, intimidating, demoralizing, disenfranchising, incapacitating…many of their own people, including members of their entourage, as well as their official opponents.

- Consciously feeding their followers illusions that enhance the leader's power and impair the followers' capacity to act independently

- Playing to the basest fears and needs of the followers

- Stifling constructive criticism and teaching supporters to comply with rather than question, the leader's judgment and actions

- Misleading followers through deliberate untruths and misdiagnoses of issues and problems

- Subverting those structures and processes of the system intended to generate truth, justice and excellence, and engaging in unethical, illegal, and criminal acts

- Failing to nurture other leaders, including their own successors, or otherwise improperly clinging to power

- Maliciously setting constituents against one another

- Treating their own followers well, but persuading them to hate and/or destroy others

- Identifying scapegoats and inciting others to castigate them

- Ignoring or promoting incompetence, cronyism, and corruption

Lipman-Blumen, 2005, p.19-20

Lipman-Blumen (2005) continued to address the dysfunctional personal qualities or characteristics that feed toxic leadership. These qualities included cynicism, greed, moral blind spots, stupidity, narcissism, paranoia and grandiosity (Lipman-Blumen, 2005). At their worst,

toxic leaders have a negative impact not only in political and business arenas but also in the education arena. Kohn (2002) asked a simple question of education leaders, "Are we teaching our teachers the techniques they'll need to become part of a toxic status quo, as opposed to helping them understand the limits of the traditional assumptions…" (p. 2).

Toxic leadership has the potential to engulf those who work in any field or endeavor. Eventually, instead of becoming liberated from toxic leaders, followers succumb to their practices "or the situation is poisoned by the insensitivity of indifference people feel…employees infer that their feelings don't matter, that they are not in control of their work lives, that their contributions don't or won't make a difference" (Frost, 2004, p. 111).

Toxic leadership by good bosses may be unintentional (Goldman, 2009 Lipman-Blumen, 2005). Furthermore, toxic leadership is very complex and represents a phenomenon where the same individual may be viewed as positive by some and harmful by others (Lipman-Blumen, 2006). Leadership, in context, can be toxic or heroic. In some situations, leaders make intentionally toxic decisions while still in other scenarios the same leader may act in a more constructive fashion (Heppell, 2011, Lipman-Blumen, 2005). Lipman-Blumen (2005) stated that depending upon one's relationship to a toxic leader, "my toxic leader may be your hero and vice versa" (p. 2). Defining toxic leadership and recognizing toxic leaders is a fluid process because of the level of toxicity in different leaders. Even the most connective leaders have some degree of toxicity in their leadership practice.

Connective Leadership

Connective leadership is a model from which leaders can work to bring together diverse, even conflicting groups who work together in an interdependent environment (Lipman-Blumen, 2012). This research based model describes leadership behaviors that are savvy, provocative,

honorable and pragmatic. It is designed to surpass "traditional approaches to leadership [which]

cannot address the complexities created by increasing diversity and interdependence" (Lipman-

Blumen, 1996, p. xvi). Connective leadership is a model which provides a framework for

leaders to use multiple ethical actions to traverse through organizational systems while

maintaining authenticity and accountability (Lipman-Blumen, 1996).

The model, which graphically can be described as a nine-pointed star with a core and

protective layer of the core in the center of the star, (Appendix D) "was derived from the iterative

interaction of theory and empirical research" (Lipman-Blumen, 1996, p. 112).

At the core of the model is the very essence of connective leadership. It is the point to

which all of the nine achieving styles come together. The protective layer of the core in the

model is sectioned into three equal pieces, "master's own tasks," "contributes to others' tasks,"

and "maximizes interactions" (Lipman-Blumen, 1996, p. 112). Each of these three equal pieces

are then connected to three points of the star as the nine points of the star are divided equally and

represent specific achieving styles leaders use when interacting with others (Lipman-Blumen,

1996).

In the model, starting outward and moving toward the core, direct leadership is the

definition of three achieving styles, intrinsic, competitive, and power (Lipman-Blumen, 1996).

This is a delicate balance as the achieving styles of intrinsic, competitive, and power based

people are described as "primarily about exquisitely mastering tasks, their own performance,

competitive preeminence, and control" (Lipman-Blumen, 1996, p.120).

The next three achieving styles, vicarious, contributory, and collaborative define

relational leadership in the model (Lipman-Blumen, 1996). Moving from direct leadership to

relational leadership, all humans are asked to interact and identify with others as a part of

"societal interdependence" (Lipman-Blumen, 1996, p. 119). Relational leadership is about "identifying with people and meeting one's achievement needs through close or even distant relationships" (Lipman-Blumen, 1996, p. 166).

Instrumental leadership is defined by three more achieving styles, "entrusting", "social", and "personal" (Lipman-Blumen, 1996). Lipman-Blumen identifies instrumental leadership as being "ethically rooted in action that harmonizes the contradictory forces of diversity and interdependence represented by the direct and relational sets" (p. 119). In this instance, people who access their instrumental style "treat everything-themselves, their relationship, situations and resources-as instruments for achieving their goals" (Lipman-Blumen, 1996, p. 123). Personal, social and entrusting achieving styles are used in this portion of the model to move the goals of the individual or organization forward.

Direct Leadership

Lipman-Blumen (1996) described the direct leadership styles as being "as American as Apple Computer" (p. 141). Direct leadership relates to goal making and the unmerciful tenacity it takes to meet goals. Not only do direct leaders wish to meet every goal, they wish to achieve the goal on their own terms (Lipman-Blumen, 1996). Meeting challenges and being a winner (in terms of mastery of the task and a positive final outcome) is represented in the direct leadership styles of such CEOs as Phil Knight at Nike whose message was very clear; "every employee helps customers to be winners, helps to create an organization in which everyone knows what they are aiming for and what the company represents" (as cited in Tichy, 1999, p. 258).

Direct leadership comes in the form of assuming power, being competitive and being intrinsically motivated. Marzano et al., (2005) identified 21 "categories of behavior" (p. 41) with significant correlations of student achievement. Within these 21 behaviors lie direct behaviors

such as optimizer, discipline, monitoring and evaluation, involvement in curriculum, instruction and assessment and knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. These specific behaviors are attributable to the direct achievement style in that they all take a "hands on" approach to leadership. A district leader must be deeply involved in the above direct leadership styles to be an effective leader.

From the perspective of Marzano, et al. (2005) the first step in effective school leadership was to build a strong leadership team. Sergiovanni (2004) discussed the idea that a community of leaders will create a community of hope. Furthermore, "winning leaders seem naturally to generate positive emotional energy in others" (Tichy, 1999, p. 257). These leaders must share in the responsibilities of the collective in order to be effective. The leadership group, as a cohesive unit, produces higher results and accomplishes more of the common goals of the community or organization at large. In order to create such groups, direct leadership characteristics are essential. Effective direct leaders take control when there is a need to do so (Lipman-Blumen, 1996). In so doing, using the work of Marzano et al. (2005), a direct leader will take control to create the leadership team and then relinquish responsibilities to the team so they may use any achievement style they see fit.

Direct leaders, are those who may think like Oscar Wilde, who said, "I like to do all the talking myself. It saves time, and prevents arguments" (as cited in Kouzes and Posner, 2007, p. 9). "Personal-best projects…are all distinguished by relentless effort, steadfastness, competence, and attention to detail" (Kouzes and Posner, 2007, p. 16). These attributes are extremely important to develop as a leader in any arena and the education field is no different. High achieving school systems hold themselves accountable and provide intensive, on-going professional development while promptly addressing low performance with clear strategies

(Thompson, 2003). However, "leaders overly devoted to self-reliance also may forego needed help even when the task exceeds the capabilities of a single, albeit outstanding, individual" (Lipman-Blumen, 1996, p. 150). Furthermore, leaders cannot command commitment or even excellence; they can only inspire it (Kouzes and Posner, 2007). Collins (2001) recognized the value of personal will power and sheer desire to produce quality results and meshed these direct features of leadership with personal humility, honesty, and being surrounded with the right people to do the job.

Clearly, any effective leader cannot survive only through the direct leadership achieving style. Komives, Lucas and McMahon (2007) stated that one of the myths of leadership includes the idea that leadership can only be achieved through status or power. Direct leadership, with all of its positive virtues, does indeed lend itself to the notion that power must equal leadership. This is, however, an incomplete thought in that Lipman-Blumen (1996) developed two other achieving styles in connective leadership so that leaders have the opportunity to employ multiple achieving styles in their leadership practice.

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Relational Leadership

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Relational leaders employ strategies needed to link themselves to the goals and visions of others (Lipman-Blumen, 1996). "Relational individuals derive a strong sense of achievement, pride, and pleasure from their enthusiastic participation in the success of others with whom they identify, even when no personal relationship exists between them" (Lipman-Blumen, 1996, p. 121). Zander and Zander (2000) described this relationship as creating a spark between the leader and other members of the group. This "spark of possibility" (Zander and Zander, 2000, p.126) creates "the passionate energy to connect, express and communicate" (p.139) effectively.

Relational leadership aligns with Martin Buber's (1923) literature relating to relationships between "I-You" and "I-it" (p. 52). Buber believed, "The world as experience belongs to the basic word I-it. The basic word I-You establishes the world of relation" (p. 56). As Kmoives, et al., 2007 suggested, "leadership has to do with relationships, the role of which cannot be overstated" (p. 74). And Wheatley (1992) stated, "Leadership is always dependent on the context, but the context is established by the relationships we value" (p.144). Komives et al., (2007) also described this connection between the leader and the follower as one of "andness" (p. 63).

> Another way to realize the importance of connections is to consider the concept of 'andness.' Andness occurs when you make a connection with something or someone-you are literally 'anding' with it or them. Unless you 'and' with something or someone, no exchange occurs, nothing is produced, no new energy is created.

Lipman-Blumen (1996) described relational leadership as accessing "vicarious, contributory and collaborative leadership styles" (p. 164). Leaders who access their collaborative leadership behavior look for synergy among the group. For relational leaders, leadership can be defined as "a relational and ethical process of people together attempting to accomplish positive change" (Komives, et al., 2007, p. 74). Leaders who access their contributory style "accept as their own the goals defined by others" (Lipman-Blumen, 1996, p. 177). Kotter and Heskett, (1992) explained that organizations with strong culture based on a foundation of shared values outperforms organizations whose culture is not built on strong shared values. Lastly, leaders who access the vicarious achieving style "nurture the relationship between themselves and their admired achiever" (Lipman-Blumen, 1996, p. 185). In other

words, vicarious leaders may not fully participate in every endeavor of the collective group, but they still support those involved in the endeavor.

In the 21 responsibilities for school leaders as described by Marzano, et al. (2005) 14 of the responsibilities can be considered as relational leadership. Responsibilities such as outreach, describe the necessity for leaders to engage in advocacy for the school to all stake holders (Marzano, et al., 2005). According to Marzano, et al. (2005), "leaders must also ensure that faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and make the discussion of these a regular aspect of the culture" (p. 42). Lipman-Blumen's (1996) model recounts relational leaders, in part, as vicarious leaders who are willing to mentor and keep those who follow at the front of the organization, ready to lead when the time is right. In fact, Lipman-Blumen suggested that mentoring (as a vicarious, relational act) is a two-way process where the mentor and the protégé contribute to each other to increase a sense of responsibility and ultimately, achievement.

Relational leadership (or collaboration) provides an important tool for resolving conflicts (Komives, et al., 2007, Kouzes and Posner, 2007, Lipman-Blumen, 1996). Moreover, "leaders foster collaboration and build trust" (Kouzes and Posner, 2007, p. 20). Leadership is a reciprocal process between leaders and their constituents (Kouzes and Posner, 2007). In a contributory sense, Lipman-Blumen (1998) explained that businesses can learn from academe in that leaders in education engage faculty in the ownership of their institutions through shared goal setting and governance. Continuing, the best leaders look beyond the stresses to seek other leaders and the best contributory leaders recognize the value of enlisting in the values of the collective group (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, Lipman-Blumen, 1996, Zander & Zander, 2000).

Just as direct leaders can be viewed as bullish and too independent, relational leadership can be viewed as "second-best" (p. 190) and only chosen as a leadership style by those who are too weak to lead independently.

Instrumental Leadership

Instrumental leaders have a bevy of strengths useful to an organization. These leaders are interested in building coalitions and connections to achieve success as an organization. Lipman-Blumen (1996) explained that "the instrumental styles are important strategies for knitting groups of leaders with distinct missions and diverse constituents into mutual enhancing coalitions" (p. 194). Instrumental achievers rely on three specific achieving styles to get results, "entrusting, social networking, and personal persuasion" (Lipman-Blumen, 1996, p. 192). In describing the value of connecting with others Goldman (2009) wrote:

> Superior leaders, coaches, and consultants conduct far-reaching searches for information and often benefit from professional and innovative partnerships with experts in such as: organizational behavior; strategy; projects management; leadership; industrial and organizational psychology; management consulting; executive coaching; psychotherapy; and counseling psychology (p. xxi).

Marzano et al., (2005) explained responsibilities such as "culture, communication, input, relationships, situational awareness and visibility" (pp. 42-43) as key components to student academic achievement which directly relate to connective leadership- specifically instrumental leadership. Zander and Zander (2000) posed an important question for instrumental leaders to consider: "A monumental question for leaders in any organization to consider is: How much greatness are we willing to grant people" (p. 72)? Instrumental leaders are willing to encourage others to design and carry out the goals of the collective group (Lipman-Blumen, 1996).

"Situational awareness addresses leaders' awareness of the details and the under-currents regarding the functioning of the school and their use of this information" (Marzano et al., (2005). This skillset is particularly important in leading a healthy organization. Situational awareness as it is described by Marzano, et al. is comparable to the personal style as explained by Lipman-Blumen, in which a leader is in tune to the underpinnings of the group to achieve success (1996). Furthermore, understanding the value of the nuances of relationships within the group and among the group, particularly those in opposition, can be extremely useful in the success of the organization as a whole (Lipman-Blumen, 1996). Being in tune with the organization and knowing the substructures of the environment along with acknowledgment of those substructures will in turn help build trust, one of Pfeffer's (1999) three keys to high performance: building trust, encouraging change, and measuring what matters.

Visibility, as described by Marzano et al., (2005) adds interaction with stakeholders to the list of important aspects of leadership. It is described as having frequent interactions with students, and being highly visible to students, teachers and parents as well as systematically visiting classrooms (Marzano et al., 2005). Being visible also means being present in a situation or aware and in tune with the organization. Zander and Zander (2000) described visibility in a different light- a perspective of being a contribution within relationships and within an organization. These notions of contribution and visibility align with Lipman-Blumen's model of instrumental achieving styles, particularly when instrumental achievers are described as "process people, specialists in social systems" (Lipman-Blumen, 1996, p. 194).

A relationship, according to Marzano et al., (2005) meant the school leader "demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff" (p. 43). In this sense, Relationships means "being informed about significant personal issues within the lives of staff

members," and "acknowledging significant events in the lives of staff members" (Marzano et al., 2005 p. 59) among other areas. Lipman-Blumen (1996) described instrumental leaders as people who are skilled in the social style because they have a "complex understanding of human interactions, all those encounters through which events unfold…with systems savvy, they tune into every nuance, interpreting and influencing those elusive processes that move things along in organizations" (p. 209). Komives, et al. (2007) reiterated the importance of knowing how followers or groups of followers may approach matters from multiple perspectives while valuing involvement and respecting differences. Nelson, (2009) shared another version of the value of relationships in the work environment in his description of an energized workplace which consists of high levels of communication and developed sense of ownership. He described that "by sharing information, control, and glory, you'll create an environment that allows employees to do their best work" (Nelson, 2009, p. 274).

While there is a very well documented and rich description of quality leadership characteristics for leaders in all sizes and sectors of business and public leadership, there are no current studies meshing the essence of the connective leadership model as it pertains to school superintendents. Connections can be made between Marzano, et al. (2005), and other leadership theorists and practitioners; there is still a need to establish a direct relationship between how superintendents practice their leadership responsibilities and the model of connective leadership.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore and to better understand how effective superintendents in a Midwestern state operationalized Lipman-Blumen's model of connective leadership, particularly the achieving styles of direct, instrumental, and relational leadership. Interviews and journal articles from the superintendents along with member checking helped to ensure goodness and trustworthiness of my research (Merriam, 2002, Miles & Huberman, 1994). For a detailed list of the final questions I used in my interviews, view Appendix A.

"Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). Qualitative research is an effective way for researchers to make sense of the world in the context of those being studied. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) explained, "The qualitative research approach demands that the world be examined with the assumption that nothing is trivial, that everything has the potential of being a clue that might unlock a more comprehensive understanding of what is being studied" (p. 5). The definition of qualitative research has continuously changed from "social construction, to interpretivist and on to social justice" (Creswell, 2007 p. 36) over the course of time. Nevertheless, through the multiple forms of qualitative research design, there are common characteristics of qualitative research.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stated there were five features of qualitative research. Each feature may not be represented in an equal fashion in a qualitative research study, but nevertheless the following features are components of worthy research of a qualitative nature. First, qualitative research is naturalistic, meaning that there is an "actual setting" (p.4) where the "researcher is the key instrument" (p. 4). Secondly, qualitative research includes descriptive

data. Bogdan and Biklen stated that the data may include "interview transcripts, field notes, photographs, videotapes, personal documents, memos, and other official records" (p. 5). Qualitative research places a significant degree of concern on process versus solely placing importance on products (Bodgan & Biklen, 2007). The process of collecting data and meaning making is an essential part of research. A fourth feature of qualitative research is that it is inductive in nature therefore, "abstractions are built as the particulars that have been gathered are grouped together" (Bogdan & Biklen, p. 6) versus a top down approach to prove or disprove a hypothesis. Lastly, Bogdan and Biklen explained that qualitative researchers seek to find meaning by recognizing how "people make sense of their lives" (p.7).

The goal of qualitative research is to gather a greater understanding of human behavior and the human experience (Bogdan &Biklen, 2007). Epistemological assumptions in qualitative research involve questioning the relationship between the researcher and that being researched with the goal of the researcher becoming an "insider" in the field being studied (Creswell, 2007). Methodological assumptions in qualitative research include understanding the process of research with the goal of using inductive logic to study the details of the area of research while continuously reframing reality based upon the context of the experience in the field (Creswell, 2007). The goal of my study was to learn more about how practicing district leaders operationalize the achieving styles in Lipman-Blumen's connective leadership model.

Phenomenological Research Design

Phenomenological research includes describing lived experiences of several individuals (Van Maanen, 1990). Creswell (2007) defined phenomenological research as "reduc[ing] individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence" (p. 58). Patton (2002) defined the foundational question of phenomenology as "What is the meaning,

structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person or group of people?" (p. 204). Essentially, phenomenological research is used to describe the essence of a lived phenomenon. In the case of my study, I researched the essence of connective leadership.

Researchers in a phenomenological study "are trying to grasp what they are studying by bracketing an idea the informants take for granted as true" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 25). It will be important for me to set aside my biases of what I believe to be true about connective leadership and the achieving styles to "take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination" (Creswell, 2007 pp. 59-60). Spinelli (2005) offered an explanation of a phenomenology's stance on the problem of reality and the need for bracketing:

> What phenomenologists propose, then is that our experience of reality is always made up of an interaction between the raw matter of the world, whatever that may be, and what might be broadly called 'our mental faculties'. We never perceive only raw matter; just as, similarly, we never perceive pure or 'raw' mental phenomena. We always experience the interpreted reality that emerges from the *interaction* or *inter-relatedness* between the two. (p.12)

To the best of my ability, my personal interpretations of how superintendents operationalized the achieving styles did not bias the participants' responses.

Moustakas (1994) outlined the requirements of an "organized, disciplined and systematic study" (p. 103) to include constructing a set of criteria to locate appropriate co-researchers, developing an agreement that includes informed consent, confidentiality, and delineating responsibilities of the research and those participating in the study, and developing a set of questions to guide the interview process. Creswell (2007) further explained Moustakas' (1994) process to explain the two broad questions in phenomenological research: What have you

experienced in terms of the phenomenon? What situations have influenced of affected your

experiences of the phenomenon? In the case of my study, these questions pertained to how the

participants have experienced the phenomenon of connective leadership, and what situations

constituted the use of different leadership styles based within the connective leadership model.

Participants

In a phenomenological study, all of the participants must have experienced the

phenomenon being studied and be able to express their lived experiences (Creswell, 2007). For

the purpose of this study, in-depth interviews were conducted with five superintendents in a

Midwest state. Each participant was a willing to participate in the three interviews (Seidman,

2006) and they were asked to write journal entries upon completion of the second interview to

ensure clarity and completeness in their responses.

Purposive sampling was appropriate in this research study because the specific

individuals in the study can "inform an understanding of the research problem and central

phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). Creswell (2009) stated "the idea behind

qualitative research is to purposefully select participants of sites…that will best help the

researcher understand the problem and the research question" (p.178). McMillan and

Schumacher (2000) described purposive sampling as intentionally choosing information-rich

cases for in-depth study. The typology of sampling strategies by Miles and Huberman (1994)

was appropriate to consult in determining the participants to be researched. Criterion sampling

was appropriate because each participant met specific established criteria.

Criteria for participation in my study included tenure of a minimum of three years of

experience in the superintendency in districts geographically positioned within the central

section of the Midwestern state. Three years tenure in the central office was appropriate to

ensure superintendents had an understanding of their stated responsibilities. Criteria also included superintendents who demonstrated a willingness to improve student achievement through initiatives which enhanced teaching practices and student learning. I was also interested in interviewing participants who had established relationships to build a positive culture with stakeholders within their districts, and those who had taken on a community initiative which would necessitate input from community constituents.

I utilized a third party, School Administrators of Iowa (SAI), as an informant to guide me to the appropriate participants. This variation of the snowballing technique provided me with key organizational leaders who were deemed by a qualified informant to be connective leaders (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). SAI is a professional organization created in 1987 which represents more than 2,000 educational administrators. The organization provides guidance and leadership development for school leaders, publishes reports with legal assistance and current administrative practices, and advocates legislatively for school administrators.

I initially contacted Amy Swanson, Program Director at SAI, through a phone conversation in September of 2012. I explained the topic of my dissertation, shared with her the appropriate definitions needed to briefly describe connective leadership and asked for assistance in creating a pool of candidates for my research.

Once the participants of the study were identified, initial interview phone calls were made to each school leader to request his or her participation in my study. I introduced myself; explained my affiliation with Drake University, SAI's referral, and the purpose of my study. My initial conversation served the purpose to determine the interest level of my participants, assign pseudonyms, explain the Interview Consent Form (Appendix C) and schedule a time to meet for the second interview.

To ensure the appropriate procedures were in place, I submitted my proposal which detailed all of the aspects of my research study to the Institutional Review Board at Drake University, "All research proposals involving human subjects must be submitted to the Institutional Review Board in order to protect and assure the rights of research subjects" (http://www.drake.edu/academics/irb/index.php). Participants were provided with a document outlining the purpose of the study, a definition of terms, their rights as participants, and confirmation that their information would remain anonymous throughout and after the completion of the study.

Interview Protocol

The interview process is a "purposeful conversation" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 103) between people guided by one person in order to get information from another person or group of people. Qualitatively, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) described the interview process as being used in two different ways: a single strategy for data collection, or in conjunction with other forms of data gathering. Creswell (2007) described multiple forms of the interview process to include unstructured open-ended interviews with note-taking, interviews with observations, semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and multiple types of interviews utilized together.

For the purpose of my study, I conducted a semi-structured interview with each participant, audio and videotaped the interviews, and transcribed the interviews (Creswell, 2007). This process was utilized as the predominant source of data collection, which is typical when interviewing strangers in a phenomenological study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Because I was interested in learning how superintendents operationalized a specific model of leadership, it was important to maintain structure in the interview and keep the

interview on point. It was the responsibility of the interviewer to "encourage the subject to talk in the area of interest and then probe more deeply, picking up on the topics and issues the respondent initiates" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 104).

I managed the data by keeping two digital recordings of each interview along with transcriptions provided by a capable transcriptionist. After the transcriptions were obtained, I read through the transcriptions carefully in their entirety (Agar, 1980).   During the reading of the transcriptions I wrote notes and memos of commonalities and key concepts. These notes consisted of how each of the participants experienced the phenomenon of connective leadership from each of the achieving styles. All participants were given pseudonyms (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) and data were confidentially secured in a locked home-office file cabinet and on a password protected computer. Furthermore, I provided a Promise of Confidentiality (Appendix B) to each participant (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

To build trustworthiness I took specific steps after the data had been collected. Trustworthiness relates to validity, reliability, and generalizability in a qualitative study (Merriam, 2002). In order to be clear in my interpretation of the interviews, after the interviews had been transcribed from the second and main information gathering interview, I returned my data with my tentative interpretations back to my participants as a third interview session, to determine plausibility (Creswell, 2007 Merriam, 2002). After the second interview, I also asked the participants to journal any further thoughts regarding how they operationalized the achieving styles of connective leadership. The journals provided each participant the opportunity to add other ideas after the interview and provide clarity. Each participant was provided a small notebook with a self-addressed, stamped envelope to return. The journals were optional for each participant.

This style of peer review (or member checking) helped to ensure that my participants were clear in their description of how they operationalized the different achieving styles of the connective leadership model. Creswell (2007) described member checking to involve "taking data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account" (p. 208). Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that member checking is "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). Moustakas (1994) described the value of member checking as creating a synthesis of the description of the experience and then providing the synthesis of the experience to the participants to check for accuracy.

Audio and video recording ensured accuracy in data collection. Each interview was recorded with two devices to be certain that a word-for-word account was available. During each interview, field notes were taken. Field notes, as defined by Bogdan and Biklen (2007) are a "written account of what the research hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in a data collection session" (p. 272). Van Maanen (1988) described field notes as reconstructions of events, observations, and conversations that take place after the fact in an inexact nature to textualize the experience. Field notes were taken immediately after the interview came to an end, and they included important phrases, body language, reactions and the general feel of the environment and interview process.

The necessary human subject training was completed, and written approval to conduct the research was received from the Drake University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Informed consent was obtained from each subject and is available in Appendix C prior to the collection of data.

Instrumentation

The research question and sub-questions are what guide a researcher in his or her work. Organized and quality research must have a central or grand tour question (Creswell, 2007; Spradley, 1979; Yin, 2010) followed by sub-questions which are more focused (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995).   Corbin and Strauss (2008) defined the research question as "set[ting] the perimeters of the project and suggests the methods to be used for data gathering and analysis" (p. 19). Framing a question in a manner that provides for "flexibility and freedom to explore a topic" (Corbin & Straus, 2008, p. 25) is essential in qualitative studies.   The process of creating one overarching question, in the broadest sense, took a considerable amount of time. It was important to create a question which examined the meaning of my topic of study, in a phenomenological sense (Creswell, 2007). My grand tour, or central, question was "How are the three main achieving styles of Connective Leadership operationalized by school superintendents?" and was followed by a series of subquestions.

The purpose of subquestions (more specifically, issue-oriented subquestions) is to take the phenomenon in the central research question and break it down into smaller topics for further examination (Creswell, 2007). However, topical subquestions cover the needs for information. Creswell (2007) viewed topical subquestions as "questions that advance the procedural steps in the process of research" (p. 109). These topical subquestions, or procedural subquestions, can mirror the intended procedural approaches to inquiry (Creswell, 2007). The purpose of my issue-oriented subquestions (see Appendix A) was to create a deeper, clearer picture of how the phenomenon of operationalizing the connective leadership model occurred. This was done by separating my questions into the three main areas of connective leadership and then framing questions around each of those leadership styles.

It was important for me to practice the interview questions beforehand to be assured that the information I was looking for surfaced during the interview. This opportunity to pilot test (Creswell, 2007; Kvale, 1996; Mertens, 2010; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 1991) gave me the chance to sharpen my interviewing skills and techniques to be certain that I was gathering data properly during the interviews. Pilot testing gave me the opportunity to clarify my questions and be certain that I practiced listening, and asking real questions, those questions to which I did not already know or anticipate the response (Seidman, 2006). For my study, I conducted a practice interview with a school superintendent with whom I have an established relationship. This provided me with the opportunity to comfortably practice my questions, and our rapport made it comfortable for my practice participant to provide accurate, truthful feedback. The participant was not part of the final research study.

Data Analysis

The purpose of data analysis in this research was to capture the meanings of those I interviewed. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stated that, "Data analysis involves working with the data, organizing them breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them, and searching for patterns" (p. 159). Creswell (2007) provided an intricate data analysis spiral which provides for a process from which researchers can manage, reflect upon, interpret, and represent the data in a coherent and meaningful way. Using Creswell's model allowed me to move back and forth through the data collection, analysis and report writing process, which Creswell described as being simultaneous, with a procedural framework.

From reading and making notes, broad categories emerged from the data. Creating themes from the data took place from preexisting themes from Lipman-Blumen's model of connective leadership (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Significant statements were retrieved from the

transcriptions in order to horizontilize the data based upon the themes of the achieving styles from Lipman-Blumen's model. Using predetermined categories can be limiting in the analysis of the participants' views (Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). It was necessary to pay particular attention to what each participant said or didn't say (Martin, 1990) in the interview transcription, and through the analysis of my field notes to look for additional categories which could be developed into themes. Participant accounts of each of the achieving styles were analyzed carefully and commonalities of operationalization were cross-referenced from each of the participants. Creswell (2007) described this as textural description which can include verbatim examples.

Structural descriptions were also considered. Creswell defined structural descriptions as a description of how the experience happened, and includes the setting and context. This was of particular importance in my research because the phenomenon of connective leadership may occur in multiple settings and in multiple contexts for school superintendents. Structural descriptions included with whom superintendents interact relative to the achieving style operationalized.

Finally, I described the essence of the phenomenon experienced, relative to the participants' operationalizing Lipman-Blumen's achieving styles of connective leadership. This description included what the participants experienced and how they experienced the phenomenon.

Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to learn how superintendents operationalized the achieving styles as defined by Jean Lipman-Blumen's connective leadership model (1996). District leaders need a model of leadership that is equal to the demands and complexity of the position. As our school cultures become more complex and the demands continue to increase, leadership too, must change. The information in this chapter represents my findings of how superintendents lead their school districts through a variety of initiatives and problems. The following data are a product of multiple conversations with school leaders in a face-to-face interview format, revolving around my main research question: "How are the three main achieving styles of Connective Leadership (direct, instrumental, and relational) operationalized with school superintendents?" The responses have been carefully coded and analyzed to provide the reader with a clear picture of how each of the achieving styles (Lipman-Blumen, 1996) is operationalized.

Five semi-structured interviews were conducted in a location of each district leader's choosing. Journal reflection was offered to each superintendent for the purpose of understanding how they operationalize each of the achieving styles. Member-checking was conducted to ensure that each participant was clearly understood in their interview responses.

Description of Participants

Although there were very striking similarities, each superintendent in the study possessed different skillsets and attributes relating to connective leadership. Before discussing the themes and outlining the experiences of the participants, it is first important to understand more about the participants and their work. Three of the five participants were located in school districts in the central portion of the Midwestern state. Two of the five participants were located in the

eastern portion of the Midwestern state. I interviewed four males and one female. Two of the school district leaders serve over 7,000 students in their district, two more participants serve school districts with over 4,000 students and one district leader serves 2,000 students.

There was a wide range of experiences among the participants. One superintendent had 22 years of experience in central office administration (10 years as a superintendent and 12 years as an assistant superintendent). The second most tenured participant had 19 years of central office experience with 10 years of associate superintendency and 9 more years in the superintendent position. One participant had 10 years of experience as a superintendent, and another participant had 8 years of experience as a superintendent or assistant superintendent (3 years as a superintendent and 5 years as an assistant superintendent). Another superintendent had 5 years of experience in the central office (3 years as assistant superintendent and 2 years as superintendent). All five participants had achieved a terminal degree in education. Further descriptions of the undertakings or major initiatives of each superintendent will be explained as the themes of practice are discussed.

Participant Interview Process

The participant interview process was an easier experience than I had expected. Prompt responses were the norm from every participant from initial contact. Dr. Dan Smith, Executive Director with School Administrators of Iowa, was also an excellent contact person and acted as a gatekeeper in providing specific names of superintendents based on our conversations about my study. I assumed my initial contact with the superintendents would be difficult because of their lack of interest in my study, or because they were simply too busy in leading their school districts. This was not the case at all. If my initial call was not answered, they returned my call on the same day, and in some cases, well into the evening hours. In one instance, a

superintendent was out of state and returned my e-mail and scheduled a time for an interview while out of the office.

During my phone conversations and in my e-mail strand, I wanted to be very clear and concise with the purpose of my communication. In each instance I explained my affiliation with Drake University, my connection with School Administrators of Iowa, and the purpose of my study. I was very purposeful in accessing the instrumental achieving styles of 'social instrumental' and 'personal instrumental' to explain my network, establish my own credibility and, if necessary, negotiate a time and place for an interview. I found myself listening very intently to each participant, while thinking in terms of the achieving styles. I was searching for any indicators of how I should prepare for the interviews or if there was an additional need to assure my participants that they could trust me with their stories and perspectives on leadership.

After a brief description of my study, my participants immediately recognized the importance of seeing the questions ahead of time to be adequately prepared. Most of the interviews were set a week or more in advance. One interview, however, per the insistence on the part of the superintendent, occurred the day after the initial phone call. Incidentally, this particular participant was extremely prepared for the interview and had made his own notes in the documents I provided via e-mail. Each participant was provided Appendices A through D. As to be expected, time was an issue for some superintendents. Because I did all of my own transcribing, I spaced the interviews out over the course of two months to provide adequate time for me to transcribe immediately after the interviews.

Each participant was very confident and comfortable in the interview process. I met with each superintendent in his or her own office or in a meeting room in the office. I found myself sitting across a table from three of my participants while in the other two instances the

participant and I had no real barrier between us. The interviews began with me thanking them, setting up my recording devices, going over the documents of anonymity and explaining the study further. I explained the importance of pseudonyms and confidentiality as a means to protect them in their stories. Each participant was given a pseudonym: Richard, Mark, Carol, Wayne and Oscar. Every superintendent asked me about my future plans, where I saw myself in the future and what I wanted to achieve in my study. I found it interesting they were curious about my goals and future plans, and I immediately attributed this curiosity to their relational leadership achieving style as we both recognized their contribution to my work. Knowing ahead of time that each superintendent had achieved his or her doctoral degree, I was prepared to hear about the experiences in the doctoral process. This only occurred one time and only after I explained to a participant that I had read part of his dissertation for my research.

At the conclusion of the interviews, I thanked the participants for giving so much time and energy to my study. Each superintendent was as gracious as the next at the end of the interview. I explained that I would be contacting them again with the completed documentation of the interview, and that if they had further information they wished to share that they could journal about it and send that to my home address. None of the participants chose to journal about how they operationalize their achieving styles.

Connective Leadership in Superintendents

The findings of my interviews with five school superintendents brought out eight themes that support and exemplify the importance of each area of connective leadership and how the connective leadership model is operationalized in the work of a school district leader. Through exploration of the eight themes, the reader will gain a better understanding about the

participants' district experiences relative to Lipman-Blumen's (1996) framework for the phenomenon of connective leadership. The eight themes that evolved were,

- Operationalized Relational Leadership

- Practicing Collaboration

- Practicing Vicariousness

- Operationalized Instrumental Leadership

- Operationalized Direct Leadership

- Reluctance to Utilize the Direct Achieving Styles

- Direct Leadership is Difficult

- Holding Close to the Vision

The value of the themes will provide a clear picture of what it means to be a connective leader-an effective school leader.

Operationalized Relational Leadership

Relational school leadership was a very comfortable discussion point during each interview. Every participant seemed at ease in talking about the importance of collaborating, contributing to the tasks of others, and mentoring or working vicariously through other people in the organization. All five participants expressed the importance of meeting with various school groups on a regular basis in order to accomplish tasks together, as an organization. Participant Wayne explained, "I think the culture of our district is more of the relational set because we have this collaborative problem solving…work environment that permeates everything we do". This theme was very clear from Participant Mark as he discussed the importance of his "cultivation of relationships":

We are the biggest tax eater in town as the public school district and they need to trust us. They need to know that we are one of them and that we understand their thoughts about things, so my relationships, my cultivation of relationships with my staff, our teachers, our students, our parents, our business community- I try not to leave any of those stones unturned.

It should be noted that there seemed to be a notion of being self-aware enough to know when to access the relational set, even when one doesn't want to. The major issue here, of course, is the understanding of when to work in a relational set. It may be easier to respond to a particular situation with the understanding or idea that being a direct leader will get the job done in the fastest manner possible. However, in the long run, being direct first may not produce lasting results as a leader. Participant Richard understood that fact through his explanation of how he sees his role as a leader.

The leader I followed was 180 degrees different than me, I'm not saying better or worse…some people at first viewed that as a weakness, in fact they even had a teacher ask me when I was going to do something because they were used to this other model. Sometimes people just want you to use 'the hammer' all of the time. So I feel like with people, if we work with them as human being to human being, we can accomplish much more. It will take longer but it will be much longer lasting.

Participant Oscar recognized that it was important to work in a relational set with the teachers' association of his district in order to accomplish a goal. He did not necessarily want to work in that set, but he felt that it was necessary in order to accomplish the goal.

I tell you, working with unions tests that at times. There are times that I definitely want to be direct, because there are times when I had things I wanted to put into place…and

there just wasn't much movement on that. So, stepping back and making the association a part of the solution was really important.

Practicing Collaboration

Participant Carol discussed the importance of collaboration with major budget cuts coming from the state. Her understanding of how critical it is to collaborate and work together as a collective in a difficult time allowed her district and the employees of the district the ability to continue moving forward in difficult financial circumstances.

> So what happened was that we couldn't do this unless everybody did something and so papers kind of became the theme because everybody touches paper along with utilities and all of that. And by collaborating and coming up with a solution and we set out and said, 'we'll have to cut this much in practice this year and next year we'll talk about personnel.' Everybody. Everybody! We double what we needed to conserve on the first year so what that meant was that we didn't have to deal with personnel the second year. That's the beauty of collaborating and bringing people together.

Lipman-Blumen (1996) described a collaborator as a leader who enjoys the synergy of the group and as those who believe their great accomplishments are stimulated by interaction of the group. This was evident in the participants' discussion of major initiatives that took place in their districts. Richard continued his discussion of the importance of his culture changing initiative, adopting Deming's System of Profound Knowledge in his district by explaining the leadership styles he needed to access in order to keep the process moving forward:

> You have to spend a great deal of time on learning and shared understanding, which you do through a collaborative effort…so working collaboratively as a team and seeing them as colleagues is important. That's where ultimately the deployment comes into play.

Wayne explained his process of collaboration with multiple groups which is very purposeful and specific. As he explained the multiple groups he worked with, it was very clear that collaboration was a key component to his everyday work. Lipman-Blumen (1996) explained that resolution through the collaborative process, "brings additional longer-term gains" (p. 169). Wayne explained how he saw the long term benefits of a positive culture while discussing all of the internal groups with whom he collaborates:

> I tell people we negotiate all year long, because we meet once a month in the morning at 6:15 a.m. to really try to solve issues in the district. Most of the things aren't really negotiable, but we look at them as just trying to make sure the work environment is as positive as it can be and we can address issues before they become problems. So this isn't rocket science…but our central office administrators meet in a cabinet format twice a month…and we do the same thing for our full administrative team…and we have a once a month office meeting with all the office staff.

These practices are backed up by Lipman-Blumen's research and speak to the practice of leadership in finding commonalities which "in turn increase the collaborators' reservoir of good will which they can draw upon to settle other areas of disagreement" (p. 169).

Practicing Vicariousness

Vicarious leadership was of particular importance to the respondents as they discussed the health of their organization and how they felt they mentored their employees. Each participant discussed, at some point during the interview, their profound desire for the organization to be successful. Through these sentiments each leader was demonstrating his or her vicarious leadership style. Wayne described his willingness to access his vicarious achieving style by allowing others to 'win':

I like to think of our teachers as leaders…they need to be able to pull from those different

styles at any given point and time. I am a pretty competitive person, I love to win. But, I

would like to think that I've been doing this long enough now that I'm reflective enough

to know that 'me winning' isn't what it needs to be about all the time, I can win by others

winning.

Richard, Carol, and Mark in particular, were very interested in discussing vicarious

leadership and how they purposefully were vicarious in terms of mentorship and accomplishing

group goals. Richard explained the importance of creating a collective intelligence and then

living through the group in order to see long-term gains. In describing the collective intelligence

Richard continued his discussion of the value of vicarious leadership by explaining his role in his

district's number one goal- student learning:

I have to, in every situation; work with people and work vicariously in that way through

folks to help that get accomplished. Senge defines new roles leadership as to design or

redesign the system, two, to be a teacher of the system, and three is to always be the

person holding the vision out in front of people. So, in that way, you have to work

through others if you want to get accomplished what you want to accomplish. Really

what gets done is done vicariously through others.

This idea of vicarious leadership from Richard's perspective means that he understands and

identifies with the goals and expectations of the collective group. All leaders have a

responsibility to help establish the goals of the group, but those leaders who recognize the value

of vicarious leadership can understand that they may not be directly participating in the

accomplishment of the goals, yet they take pride in the accomplishment of the goal all the same.

Lipman-Blumen (1996) described the parents of Olympic athletes and loyal alumni as perfect

examples of vicarious leaders because they "experience the deep-in-bones satisfaction that comes from the success of the people and institutions they love" (p. 185).

Mark explained the true pleasure he takes in having the opportunity to mentor other staff members or future school or district leaders. He explained that he felt a sense of responsibility and giving back to the profession. He also stated that his role is to mentor others to be successful because their jobs are vital and quite frankly, he did not want to be in those positions. He explained, "I don't want to be the high school principal, and I don't want to be the activities director, but I recognize that things will come up where they need my support, and I trust them and they trust me."

Carol shared a similar story in her explanation of the culture she tries to create in her district. Her explanation of how her school board moves about from one building to the next to understand the initiatives of the building and understand the needs of the building, she shared the differences she has made through her work to change the tone of those meetings. She was exemplifying vicarious leadership in her story:

> When I started it was about the principals running the show and they [the meetings] were
> bitch sessions. Now it is about how proud they are in what they do. Now the principal
> sets it up and we heard from eight teachers this morning, not the principal. But you know
> whose leadership is doing the influencing and things like that. That is very much a trait
> here.

In her explanation, it was obvious that she took great pride in the fact that so many other people were vicarious themselves, which lead me to the notion that had not occurred to me until that moment: leaders can be vicarious about others being vicarious. This phenomenon in itself can self-sustaining and be a major boost to the school culture.

Operationalized Instrumental Leadership

Operationalized instrumental leadership was an area that all five superintendents stressed as a key part of his or her daily work. Lipman-Blumen (1996) described instrumental leadership as being least used of the achieving styles due to their perceived manipulative nature. However, in my interviews, each superintendent stressed the importance of being politically savvy and as Wayne explained, "knowing where the power is located…both real and perceived." Lipman-Blumen posited, "Instrumental achievers focus more on the connections rather than the chasms between people" (p. 194). Richard explained the value of instrumental leadership in terms of Covey's (1989) work relating to highly effective people, "Basically, what we're trying to do is to increase our circle of influence."

As a superintendent, it is extremely important to have a political sense of the community and school district. It is necessary to understand who has the social resources and where the controls are in the district outside of the school. In order to do so, the superintendents in my study discussed multiple opportunities they took advantage of to keep their fingers on the pulse of the community. Carol explained her reliance on multiple groups in her community,

> So when I came, I got attached to everything "Bushwood" (the name of the town has
> been changed to protect the participant's identity), and it was really strange. I got named
> on the Chamber of Commerce, so all my connections went that way. I'm on United
> Way…and we have "John" (a pseudonym), his Rotary is in "Briarwood" (a pseudonym).
> So every one of our folks at the administrative table has a different network and that's
> really valuable. We have been able to infiltrate Department of Education committees,
> statewide committees and we have a lot of gathering of information in doing that.

Carol continued by explaining her networks that gave her "power to influence and persuade" particularly in her efforts with the United Way,

> In 2010 the regional United Way invited me to be their educational champion- a big campaign. So I was the educational champion for two years and it was wonderful. We go to highlight our kids, and all of the things that have put me in the category of being able to at least have a voice.

Wayne explained his use of the instrumental leadership styles in a different way. His explained how he didn't use the instrumental leadership as soon as he should have during a district initiative that included changing the district's report card process,

> Two years ago, at the middle school our staff came to us and said they believed they needed to change the way they reported progress to parents. They talked about standards based reporting and they worked that out. We didn't perceive the pushback from the parents in that regard. So from the instrumental piece, it took on a life of its own before we had a chance to respond to it and get it reigned back in. It was on television for two weeks and we had hundreds of parents showing up at board meetings and that was one I didn't see coming.

Lipman-Blumen (1996) shared her understanding of forming coalitions to move beyond smaller networks because instrumental leaders also have the ability to reach out to the opposition to disarm those who make be viewed as opponents in an initiative. In this instance, Wayne explained that he would have started this initiative differently to include differing opinions if he had the opportunity to do it again. Oscar had a similar occurrence when he wanted to increase the amount of time teachers spent in professional development during the school year. In this instance, he did not use the instrumental achieving styles as quickly as he would have liked to,

So how do we get more time? I would like to be very directive with our calendar, but I also have a community of 20,000 people, and they may not see our time as being as valuable as we do. I painted a very descriptive picture to our community advisory board and the idea got lit up. Lit up! That's going to put me in the social aspect [achieving style] of leading and trying to understand where the community is coming from.

Instrumental leaders, as Lipman-Blumen explained, particularly those who access the social achieving style, understand the political connectedness between the organization and relationships with people. She stated that, "social achievers understand that keeping in touch builds interpersonal capital, which can be drawn upon as circumstances demand" (p. 210). This notion of the importance of interpersonal capital was of significant to the superintendents in my study. Wayne shared another example of his relationships with the city council:

So this breakfast I had this morning with the city councilman, we were talking about a school site, and in the city's long range plan they show a street going through the middle of it and connecting to another eventual neighborhood. I personally don't see that happening. So part of my reason this morning for sitting down with that influential councilman was… just to know and feel him out on where they might be and he said he agreed [about the road not going there] and told me who I needed to talk to with the city.

Mark shared multiple instances where he felt it was best to use his instrumental abilities to achieve a goal, particularly at the state level. In these instances, Mark focused on his ability to network and make connections with people who could act as gatekeepers to move his agenda, a shared agenda, forward. Mark went so far as to say that a state award he received was due to his instrumental leadership style, "I think I was selected superintendent of the year because of my statewide networking for advocacy at the state capital. I didn't win this award because of any

other reason than I've built a network." Mark went on to explain his processes for building networks,

> What I did was build a network of superintendents all across this state that had similar infrastructure challenges that we do and asked them to build five to ten people in their own community; a board member, a business leader…teachers and we build an advocacy group of 300 people from all across this state and all I had to do was write one quick little message and send it out with talking points and say our legislators need to hear from us.

Lipman-Blumen (1996) explained that instrumental achievers see networks as the "fastest route to reaching anyone's objective" (213). Mark also explained the value of those networks,

> The day they passed the statewide penny, a local legislator stood up on the floor of the Senate and she read a letter and at the end she said, 'That's the letter I received two years ago from Superintendent Mark.' That was a proud day for me. The political savvy piece for me, I believe that is the reason I was given this award, and I believe it is what other superintendents look to me for and I take it as a responsibility for others.

Networking is about making specific contacts. Instrumental leaders understand the value of making contacts and continuing to make contacts to achieve a specific goal. They work through other people. Richard explained his perspective in the matter, "My role…is to create relationships and social networks…because that's what will come back to help you." Furthermore, as Lipman-Blumen explained, "Social leaders are very selective in matching the person to the task" (p. 214). This was certainly the case for Mark as he explained how he was going to try to make connections with a leader who does not always support educational initiatives,

So we've made an appointment next week to have coffee with a friend and the Speaker of

the House. I just don't have good access to the Speaker of the House, but my friend used

to be his clerk. My full motive out of that is that I will get to know him and the next time

I see him in the capitol, hopefully we'll speak to each other and I can say, 'Hey, I'm

Mark and we met with [the friend] and blah blah blah.' At some point in February or

March I am going to invite him to spend about two hours with the metro superintendents

and then we can talk to him and advocate for our kids.

It should also be noted that, in particular, Mark and Carol found it important to state that

they do not want to seem as if they are simply using people to get what they want. Instrumental

leaders must be careful in their actions so as not to be perceived as deceitful or sneaky. It is

important to always come forward with the best intentions in the process. Mark explained, "The

instrumental piece…I am very purposeful. We are purposeful in what we do, but we are

certainly not sneaky." Carol also shared her specific feelings toward being purposeful without

making someone feel like they are only being used for a specific purpose,

So when you do any of these [the instrumental achieving styles] you have to be careful

that you are not using people, I mean that you are genuine- you have that aspect of your

integrity. You have to think strategically about how your behavior will effect tomorrow

and the future.

Operationalized Direct Leadership

Operationalized direct leadership is a necessary part of leadership in the school system.

Being responsible and understanding the role of the district leader means, as Oscar puts it, "the

accountability falls on my shoulders…failure rests on my shoulders." It is this genuine sense of

ultimate responsibility and accountability that causes some leaders to move into the direct

leadership achieving styles of power, competitiveness, and intrinsic motivation. These achieving styles may not seem to be the most appealing, but they can have a positive effect if utilized properly. Oscar goes on to explain,

> I was very direct about three years ago. I have always been passionate about reading. I told our Title I Director that Title I would only be in kindergarten, first grade and second grade and nowhere else, and it's reading only and only in K-2, and I did that because I was just so darn certain that that was the right direction to go. I didn't ask for opinions from the Title I Director, or any teachers or principals. I can't say that was a winning formula for popularity at the time, but people are starting to see the ability gaps are starting to lessen.

Oscar also explained how he has moved to the direct leadership style in making personnel decisions in his district. He recognized right away that in doing so, it may not have been beneficial in terms of relational leadership, but he also recognized his need to move forward for the organization in making his decision:

> I have been very direct with principals before. When a principal and I didn't see eye to eye on an instructor I have flat out told the principal, 'come back next week and walk me through their tier three plan that you just put them on. We're going to disagree on this, and I am pulling my positional ace card, and I don't like to do that but I'm going pull it and then we're going to move on from there.'

Wayne explained his decision for utilizing Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) with a sense of ultimate responsibility, "if we are going to best serve kids, then we need that structure in place." It is this sense of doing what is best for students that helps district leaders make the decision to move forward with direct leadership. When superintendents made direct

decisions, they were certain that those decisions would have a positive impact on the district. Furthermore, it was obvious that the intrinsic motivation to meet the challenges of the organization came to the front. Carol described her willingness to be direct when there were times that leadership had to be executed to perfection. She explained, "When you talk about the definition of power that is one of the things that I do very well, which is organizing logistically, getting things going…" She also explained her need to lead in a direct way first before moving to a different leadership style when working with new staff members:

> Early on whenever there are new administrators, I tell them I will work collaboratively with them to a certain degree. When it comes to safety- that's it, I get the final say. I will take input, but if you hear me speak in a very loud voice, very firmly, hop to. That means business.

Carol explained her direct nature in a story she shared with me about a man with a rifle running through their school campus. She explained the processes of how she delegated responsibilities to each administrator with the understanding that she was in control of the situation and she was going to remain "in charge". Lipman-Blumen (1996) suggested that direct leaders "are very concerned with the doing or mastery of a task and with the task itself" (p. 141).

Lastly, multiple participants explained the competitive nature of their position and how they did indeed enjoy the competition in their position on a personal level. It is understandable that direct leaders find comfort in not necessarily being better than everyone else, but being their own personal best, or in this case making certain that their organization is the best it can be. Multiple participants referenced past coaching experience and being competitive by nature. Mark explained that he understood the difference between creating a culture that celebrates one student over another, but rather using the competitive desire to create a "collective win." Mark

did state that he is not averse to using a small portion of competition in his leadership style with his administrative team:

> We're filling out the civil rights compliance data for the district. I have the building principals doing some of that piece. One of the buildings is completely done already, so last week I put out a bulletin and congratulated the middle school for being done already. 'One building's done!' So whether that was competitive direct or not…I'm not going to give that principal an award, I just said I think the middle school's done.

Oscar also explained that the competitive achieving style of direct leadership also resonated with him. His feeling of pride for his district and his desire for his school to be a place that is the best was very clear. He responded, "I want our families to have a tremendous advantage…I do want our schools to be the best. I don't like losing the open enrollment battle." Wayne also stated, with a slight smile, that he enjoys competition but he keeps his desire to win in check.

Reluctance to go to Direct Leadership

Each participant spoke of a negative connotation with the direct leadership characteristics of intrinsic, competitive, and power. The participants did not want to be portrayed or did not want to be known as a leader who was domineering or "the boss." Nearly all five felt guilty for being competitive or direct at times. I find this to be fascinating because each superintendent, at some point in their careers, had to be a very direct in order to reach his or her current level of leadership. It does not have to be a negative set of attributes or achieving styles any more than any other achieving style if there is a proper balance. Clearly, anyone who is only concerned about outperforming others and is never concerned about collaborating with others will have certain deficiencies as a leader. The opposite of this scenario, of course, would also be true.

Mark explained his feelings very clearly with regard to the direct set of achieving styles, "I looked at the direct piece and I used the word 'immature' when I was thinking about it. I don't mean that in a negative- maybe I should say not mature." Mark went on to talk about how he has changed away from direct leadership,

> …maybe 20 years ago when I was a younger leader and I didn't have the depth of knowledge about what I am going to call higher order leadership. I took pride in small battles versus the big picture of things. I think it is a novice approach. I think when you don't know what you don't know, that's maybe where you gravitate to. When you don't know how to work in the six other arenas [of connective leadership], I'm not sure you can go there if you are not ready. I don't know how [direct leadership] develops other leadership within the district.

I probed further with Mark, who was grateful for the back and forth conversation, regarding a community initiative. He told me he "needed to be the face of the project." I explained to him that his control of the project, which included community organization involvement, business partners, parents, teachers, and students could be viewed as him accessing his direct leadership styles, and he agreed. He explained, "I recognized the need for that and I knew that if this was going to get done, I had to lead this …it's not my preferred style but for this project it kind of was."

Carol reiterated Mark's words almost exactly in her discussion about the use of direct leadership and its value to her, "I can do them, but it's not my preferred style. People would argue that I am too competitive." Richard also explained his perspective of accessing, or trying not to access his direct leadership skills:

Fundamentally what it means is that if someone's winning, someone's losing, and we're

not trying to create a system of where there are winners and losers. I'm always battling

that. I could win. I could win right now because I'm the superintendent, but in the long

term, I've lost. I try to de-operationalize them [the direct achieving styles] I try to create

an environment where those aren't factors…because they aren't healthy.

Again, I explored the topic with Richard, who is in the process of adopting Deming's System of

Profound Knowledge, and asked him how that model was initiated in the district. It was

determined that his work was much more direct in implementing Deming's model, "The piece

that is going to have the biggest leverage on the district was not a consensus decision. It's going

to create and altruistic district, but it wasn't up for discussion- absolutely not and people know."

Wayne took a different approach to the conversation about accessing the direct leadership

achieving styles. He readily admitted that his district's initiative to adopt the Professional

Learning Communities model was a directive from the superintendent, "We made the decision

that we were going to implement PLCs and that collaborative professional planning

environments were going to be important for this district to keep moving forward. That was a

'thou shalt'." When I defined the direct approach as Lipman-Blumen described it, he smiled.

He admitted to enjoying the competitive fix he got from his leadership position, but then

expanded upon his leadership style by quickly explaining the value of being reflective as a leader

as if to keep him in check with his leadership styles:

I think a good superintendent needs to be very reflective and aware of the different

circumstances of their job and needs to be aware of how they react to the situation, so

being a reflective leader and understanding that you need to be able to pull from all of

these [the achieving styles], because if you are just one of these, I don't know that you could be truly successful.

Direct Leadership is Difficult

Reluctance to move to direct leadership, or to sometimes admit that direct leadership is effective has to do with the idea that direct leadership leaves people feeling as if the leader does not care about the people inside the organization. In fact my participants viewed difficult conversations as a display of direct leadership and not instrumental or relational leadership. Wayne explained the difficulty of direct leadership by stating, "You care about people, so sometimes when you're direct it can be viewed as 'oh, you're a heartless bastard.'" Wayne continued by stating that it is difficult to have a direct and difficult conversation with people who are "working hard and it's just not working out for them." He also shared a story about hiring a building principal,

> I had an assistant principal one year that wanted to be the principal and we didn't just appoint him principal and we went through the interview process and someone from outside the district, we decided was the better fit. I sat across the table from him and told him he wasn't getting this job. That conversation wasn't pleasant or comfortable, but the real satisfying thing was that just one year later that person [the assistant principal] came to me and said, 'I remember this, this and this [about why he or she wasn't the right person] and you were right.'

Mark explained his experiences in direct leadership as being difficult as well, "I think what makes it hard is that if you really care about the organization and that if you believe the organization is the star…I don't think it develops the organization or other people." He did admit that there are times when "the boss just needs to be the boss." However, he explained in his

processes of leadership through difficult times, the importance of accessing other leadership

achieving styles, even if it means making a direct decision that has negative consequences for

some- in this case, dissolving the early retirement plan in his district.

> I recognized that there would be plenty of blame for everybody, but I've got five elected
>
> volunteers sitting on the board and I did not want them to take the blame for all of this, so
>
> I told them I knew how hard it would be but my recommendation would be that we phase
>
> this [the early retirement plan] out over a two year period.

Power can be a burden when it comes to making difficult decisions. There are simply going to be

times when the superintendent needs to make those decisions and live with the outcomes of those

decisions and the relationships that deteriorate because of those decisions. Mark continued to

explain the results of his decision to phase out the early retirement plan by sharing how he was

confronted by an employee who stated that he had ruined her husband's birthday with his

decision because her husband could no longer retire on his own terms,

> Well, if you are going to beat me up over that, I will take that, but I think your husband
>
> got well served here. It was not pleasant for me, I hope you can tell that I suffered as
>
> much as anybody [financially] and I am sorry but that's what we did.

Power based decisions, more so than any other achieving style, resulted in a negative effect to

many of the participants.

Richard saw the difficulty of direct leadership as being something totally different. His

explanation was that direct leadership dealt with decisions to call off school due to inclement

weather. His difficulty in being direct was more to the point of needing to "have a sense of ego,

when you do make the decision and you have a unilateral decision, you have to be confident to

that's the right thing to do." Richard shared his difficulty in utilizing the achieving styles of direct leadership,

> So really the biggest rub is that it doesn't fit with me philosophically. I don't think it is
>
> what is best for the people in general. What makes it difficult is that it, first of all, that's
>
> not my style. So, it's not difficult to not use it. I try to create an environment where those
>
> aren't factors.

Carol explained the difficulty of direct leadership in terms of her board's expectations. She shared her issues with multiple building projects where she allowed others to contribute to the tasks. In doing so, there were complications with getting the jobs done.

> So for me, the board keeps getting after me that I need to delegate more and then there is
>
> a screw up and then they say I need to take it over. For example, I am in charge of the
>
> pool, because there were screw ups on the stadium and baseball/softball complexes.

Carol continued in her explanation of the difficulty of accessing the direct leadership styles by shifting out of direct leadership into more of a relational approach. She said, "You pick the right people and then you don't have to control it all."

Holding Close to the Vision

An effective district leader must have a keen understanding of how each initiative fits into the larger district vision. Superintendents hold key leadership positions in ensuring that the vision of the district is clear and in line with the stated beliefs of the organization. In discussing the achievement styles with my participants, holding out the vision became a common theme, and it came about through various achieving styles. The superintendents were quick to hold the vision out as a key determinant for any initiative. Richard explained his role as a direct leader to hold the vision in the light:

Now it's my job as a leader of this district to make sure that I hold that out in front of us

all the time and everything is measured against that, right? Do we want to do thus and

such? Will it help us to do that [fulfill the vision]? Then if the answer is 'yes' then yes. If

the answer is 'probably', then we don't do it. When you have a deeper yes inside, then it

allows you to say no to things and that is what the vision does.

Richard again talked about the importance of staying focused on the goals and purpose of the

district as "helping people understand our clear path which gets back to the leader as a steward of

the vision." His direct nature could be heard in the way he described how important he feels his

role is in being a steward of the vision:

Schools tend to think they are autonomous within a school district, so there is a challenge

right there to send the message that the work that we do is the work of the district. I will

have principals say, 'Well when do I get to do the thing that I want to do?' Well if it

contributes back to the goals and the direction of the district, you can have all the time

and if it doesn't then you don't get to, I mean you just don't.

Wayne explained the vision as seeing the big picture within a framework, "you have to

set the mechanisms up to be able to identify what that big vision is for people to be able to take

that into the buildings and into the community to be able to operationalize it." Wayne's

relational and instrumental achieving styles were evident in his response as he was very focused

on collaboration and entrusting others with the vision.

Oscar shared the importance of holding close to the vision in his responses by sharing his

relational leadership styles, "…building the necessary relationships that move people not just

because of a position or a title, but because they have belief in the vision." His relational

leadership focused around a common understanding of the vision and then empowering others to work within the vision's framework to be successful:

> And so as far as a relational piece, and a collaborative piece, kind of painting a vision of where we want to be and what it may look like and then trusting experts to fill in those wide spots. So when we are talking about how does all the work we've done in formative assessment connect to the vision? It's clear in my head, but it may not be in everyone's so to be very purposeful in connecting everything we do.

Summary

Through the exploration of Lipman-Blumen's (1996) model of connective leadership, in the examination of the eight themes from this research, it is clear that each piece of the model and the achieving styles connected to the model have a place in the work of quality superintendents. Superintendents may not plan out their specific leadership styles prior to taking action to achieve a goal, but upon reflection, it was obvious when they used each leadership style. Their reasoning for accessing each style was also very clear. A quality leader should access each achieving style in his or her work, depending upon the issue at hand. Superintendents felt that relational and instrumental leadership had the best long term effect on the organization in terms of continuing to move forward to achieve long-term goals. Superintendents utilized the direct leadership style, but reluctantly admitted to doing so, or only saw limited success in doing so. However, in matters of absolute importance to the superintendents, they were completely prepared to use the direct set of achieving styles to accomplish their goal. Each achieving style is important and valuable in the activities of a superintendent. Whatever the achieving style, to the participants in this study, holding close to the vision and clearly articulating the vision is very important.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS

In Chapter 5 I will provide a summary of my study, redefine the purpose of my study, and review my findings. I will draw conclusions from the findings based on my research questions and share the implications for further research.

Summary of the Study

The duties and responsibilities of a school district leader are immense. Considering the responsibilities of being an academic leader, an advocate for change, and a community leader, it is not surprising how delicate the balance can be for superintendents to meet the needs of so many different stakeholders. As district leaders, superintendents must interact with the public, maintain compliance, develop goals and visions for the future of the district, maintain financial and personnel stability and be willing to rapidly adapt to change as it is necessary.

The purpose my study was to determine how effective superintendents operationalize the achieving styles of Jean Lipman-Blumen's (1996) model of connective leadership. The achieving styles consist of three over-arching sections of direct, instrumental and relational leadership. These sections are better defined by three separate achieving styles which can be found in Appendix D. Superintendents need a model of leadership which reflects the complexity of the job. Lipman-Blumen (1996) explained that leaders have to lead for the long term while managing the pressures of succeeding in the short term and the uncertainty of the future.

To conduct my research, I interviewed five superintendents with varying degrees of experience in a Midwestern state. The participants served districts ranging from 2,000 students to over 7,000 students. The participants also shared a wide variety of initiatives and issues they were faced with over the course of their careers. Each interview was conducted in a face-to-face format and the option to journal about leadership practices after the interview was also offered.

Discussion

The purpose of my study was to understand how superintendents lead their districts in a positive way through the framework of Lipman-Blumen's (1996) model of connective leadership. Therefore, it was important to frame the interview questions in a way that captured the essence of superintendents' perceptions of their leadership styles using the language and terminology of the framework. By reviewing the framework in Appendix D, it is clear how eight themes came to the front in my study.

The first two themes discussed relational leadership, which was clearly important for each participant. They understood the value of building relationships in order to achieve a goal and recognized the importance of sustaining relationships to continue moving the organization forward according to their vision and goals. By contributing to the work of others, the participants' relational leadership style afforded them the opportunity to achieve lasting results. Komives, et al. (2007) described leadership as "a relational and ethical process of people together attempting to accomplish positive change" (p. 74). Using their relational leadership styles the participants utilized the strengths of the group to create a more cohesive organization of what Burns (1978) describes as mutuality between leaders and followers.

Without a sense of collaboration and working mutually with multiple stakeholders, the job of the superintendent cannot be fully realized. The participants in my study practice collaboration in many different ways. Some meet with multiple teams on a weekly or monthly basis while others utilized their collaborative achieving styles to solve immediate issues. Although the participants did not discuss shared attribution of success, they recognized the importance of giving the group a voice and opportunity to share ideas to solve problems. Senge stated, "The essence of leadership-what we do with 98 percent of our time- is communication"

(1999, p. 59). Burns (1978) explained that leadership is inseparable from the needs and goals of the follower. Thus, it is of utmost importance to lead in a collaborative frame of mind to achieve the goals of the group.

The third theme explained the operationalization of the instrumental achieving styles of Lipman-Blumen's (1996) model. The participants understood and accessed the political or social networking aspect of their leadership positions. Marzano et al. (2005) described these skills as situational awareness, which means the leader is aware of the details and undercurrents of the organization. Further, the authors continue to describe these skillsets as the leader's ability to accurately predict what could go wrong from day to day, while being aware of relationships among the staff, and being aware of issues in the school that have not surfaced but could create discord (Marzano et al., 2005). This was evidenced in my research by the close attention each superintendent paid to community groups and by their keen understanding of the location of influence and power at different levels of the education landscape, whether it is at the local Lion's Club or the state legislative level.

The next three themes related to Lipman-Blumen's (1996) direct achieving styles. Direct leadership was the most difficult for all of the participants to access. Every superintendent felt that direct leadership had its merits but in the end wasn't the healthiest example of leadership. It was an area of leadership they did not want to access unless it was absolutely necessary, but it was also an area that each leader had the most reluctance to admit they actually use. In many instances, the participants discussed direct leadership as being one-to-one discussions of job performance or having difficult conversations where the consequences of the conversation would be perceived as negative. Roberts states, "Leaders must attach value to high standards of performance and have no tolerance for the uncommitted" (1987, p. 62). Collins (2001)

describes the importance of confronting the brutal facts of the organization while maintaining faith in the organization by describing the Stockdale Paradox. The notion of confronting the brutal truth and addressing the issues of the organization parallels with Lipman-Blumen's (1996) notion of direct leadership.

The final theme in my research came about through multiple iterations of the data. The participants in my study discussed at length the importance of the organization holding close to the shared vision. Marzano et al., (2005) discussed the importance of focus in student academic achievement. The authors described 'focus' as the leader establishing clear goals and keeping those goals at the forefront of the school's attention. The participants in the study held close to the vision of their organization because the vision provides a point of stability and a way point for initiatives in the district. Collins (2001) discusses the concept of being of a hedgehog or a fox in terms of maintaining focus and vision, "foxes pursue many ends at the same time and see the world in all its complexities…hedgehogs…simplify a complex world into a single organizing idea…that unifies and guides everything" (p. 91).

Conclusions

Superintendent leadership must be purposeful and reflective. Being aware of a model that encompasses multiple leadership styles will help superintendents gain a better understanding of the right decisions to make in terms of leadership style. Because there are so many different stakeholders in the education system, it is important for district leaders to have a wide variety of leadership styles at their disposal. This research demonstrates the importance of not only being cognizant of different achieving styles, but moreover, having the wherewithal to access them when the time is appropriate. Moreover, I have learned that it is vital for people at any

leadership level to be reflective of their actions and relate those actions to the actual outcomes of the organization.

Each achieving style has its own value when the situation warrants. My research has solidified the value of situational leadership theory, but also gives clear examples of how often leaders must shift their leadership style to achieve their goals. If a leader tries to be instrumental in his or her leadership style, it is important that the end goal matches these specific achieving styles. If direct leadership is used appropriately, it is not a negative set of achieving styles. Being competitive and wanting to ensure the job gets done right is not something to be sorry for. Being in charge and planning the details of a meeting are important and have a place in leadership, just as listening to constituents or networking with other leaders. Lipman-Blumen (1996, p. 135) provides six aspects for consideration in assessing situations in terms of achieving styles:

- The nature of the task

- The importance of the task

- The nature and location of key resources

- The condition of the internal environment

- The state of the external environment

- The leader's position and longevity within the organization

These aspects should indeed be considered prior to making decisions, or at the least be reflected upon for future decision-making purposes.

Part of what makes each of the participants successful in completing their initiatives is that they have considered these aspects throughout the process. In listening to each

superintendent discuss how they were going to resolve an issue or make their districts more efficient, they accessed these aspects and understood the value of being aware of the internal and external conditions of their environments. It was very apparent that if each superintendent was going to be successful it was going to be important to understand the key resources necessary to achieve their goals. And, if they failed to recognize those resources, they recognized their importance very quickly and adjusted their plans accordingly. That is a key component to leadership that each of the superintendents demonstrated in my study- the knowledge that forcing an initiative without consulting followers will not necessarily lead to long lasting success.

It is also important to remember that the same leadership style can be viewed both positively and negatively, depending upon the perspective of the follower. A quality leader may be viewed as a bully or as a toxic leader just as a strict disciplinarian basketball coach like former Indiana coach Bobby Knight may be viewed as a great leader by some and as a destructive leader by others. The important factor to remember with Lipman-Blumen's model is to blend all three over-arching styles of leadership.   If a leader is simply relational, the organization will not be as productive as a leader who blends direct, relational and instrumental leadership styles together.

Implications and Recommendations

Leadership from the superintendent's office is difficult work. There are many different angles from which to operate. Superintendents work with the highest number of stakeholders in the district and at every turn in the leadership process there are many considerations to be made. Superintendents must be instructional, financial, and community leaders. Leading in the same style from one area to the next simply will not work. Moreover, superintendents must continue to build their leadership skills in order for the school district to be as productive as it should be.

This study was intended to gain a greater understanding, through a practical lens, of the leadership styles and actions of superintendents. My intentions were to understand the essence of connective leadership from the perspective of school district leaders. The participants shared multiple perspectives of connective leadership from local to the legislative levels. Participants shared their experiences, as best they could, using the terminology from Lipman-Blumen's model.

Throughout the interviews with the five superintendents it was clear that each superintendent was aware of his or her leadership style and the implications of the leadership style on followers. Their stories and experiences came from multiple perspectives and with multiple years of experience. Using their stories and experiences, I have developed three recommendations for those who are interested in exploring leadership at the district level.

My first recommendation as a result of this study is that leaders must be reflective of their motives and actions. It is important to continue to question one's motives and leadership styles, but only to improve effectiveness, and not to the point that it renders one ineffective. Reflection of leadership style- honest reflection- can be very rewarding for future endeavors. Simply thinking about one's actions is not really enough. It is important to have bearings from which to guide one's reflection. Holding close to the organizational vision, and accessing a framework for leadership can pay large dividends for accurately reflecting upon one's actions.

My second recommendation is that leaders should adopt or even establish an all-encompassing leadership model from which to work. Whether they have multiple years of experience or not, leaders must continue to study leadership theories and models. This is not to say that leaders should consult a model before making every decision on a daily basis, but rather, superintendents should establish a working knowledge of leadership theories and work within

those frameworks on a consistent basis. Staying current in leadership theory and practice while building a group of practicing professionals from which to gather further ideas and practical examples in leadership will help in establishing or adopting a leadership model from which to operate.

My third recommendation is that leaders at the state level, district school board members, building level leaders, teacher leaders (at all levels of education preschool through graduate school and administration preparation programs), and students should adopt the findings of this research into their practice. Leadership can be a complicated endeavor. Awareness of the different achieving styles and application of the achieving styles will provide a common understanding of the ways in which people interact with each other. Application of the findings of this study will greatly enhance the efficiency of the organization and provide a credible framework for the aforementioned groups of people to operate.

Further research should be conducted to include accessing Lipman-Blumen's achieving styles inventory and applying the inventory from a qualitative perspective to determine the strengths of school district leaders. These data could then be used in congruence with practical experiences for the purposes of self-improvement.

Because the participant sample for this study included five superintendents, all of which served districts with under 10,000 students but more than 2,000 students, further research should be conducted to determine the essence of connective leadership in smaller and larger school districts. The cultural context of each organization can create a complexity that should be studied. This research would provide additional data about how superintendents access achieving styles and may answer questions regarding the amount of time spent in each achieving style based upon the size and culture of the district.

Summary

The work and experiences of the five participants in my study helped solidify my understanding of leadership and stretched my thinking in terms of the possibilities of leading an organization. The work of the superintendent will continue to be greatly scrutinized and from an outside perspective can be greatly misunderstood. Being a connective leader and accessing the nine achieving styles can be very difficult, but it is worth doing. And, if a superintendent can be consistent in his or her actions, the mysteries and misperceptions of the superintendency can be minimized.

Understanding the implications of operationalizing each achieving style will assist any leader in becoming more effective. Intentionally becoming a connective leader can have a major effect on the education system as it allows people to access leadership strategies to bring a diverse group of people together for the benefit of the organization. Problems will always need solutions and solutions do not always come easy. Connective leaders will not only have an advantage in solving problems, and it could even be said that because connective leaders are who they are, there will be fewer problems to solve.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions Guide

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you. I also want to thank you for taking time to participate in my research study on the phenomenon of operationalizing the connective leadership model in your leadership position as a school district superintendent. The questions below will serve as a road map for our conversation. Hopefully, these questions will help you frame your leadership practices as they pertain to the connective leadership model. Because the verbiage used in this model may be different than you are used to, please refer to the list of definitions of terms and brief explanation of the connective leadership model enclosed.

Introductory Questions

1. Please tell me about yourself and how long you have been an educator.

2. How long have you been a superintendent?

3. Please tell me how long you have been in your current position?

4. Please provide a description of the district you currently work for? (Total number of students, staff, administrative team, other information.)

5. Can you tell me why you wanted to become a superintendent?

6. What are some of the major undertakings you have been involved with in your current position?

Questions relating to Connective Leadership

1. In your own words, what does it mean to be a relational school district leader?

    How are relational leadership characteristics of vicariousness, contributory and collaboration operationalized in your position?

    Can you provide an instance of when you felt you needed to be specifically relational in your leadership style to achieve your goal?

    How do you contribute to the tasks of others?

    How do you contribute to the tasks of others without taking over?

How do you relate with those who may be seen as adversarial in the context of your position?

How do you bring about change in your organization through relating with others?

What makes it difficult to be relational in your leadership role?

2. In your own words, what does it mean to be an instrumental school district leader?

How are the instrumental leadership characteristics of entrusting, socialization and personalization operationalized?

How do you maximize your interactions with others?

How do you inspire others to do good work?

How are you instrumental in bringing about change in your organization?

What makes it difficult to be instrumental in your leadership role?

3. In your own words, what does it mean to be a direct school district leader?

How are the direct characteristics of competitiveness, intrinsic motivation and power operationalized?

How do you master your own tasks in your leadership role?

How are you direct in bringing about change in your organization?

What makes it difficult to be direct in your leadership role?

4. How do you move from one leadership style to another (relational, direct, instrumental) in your leadership role?

Do you lead from one achieving style more than another?

If so, which one and why?

How do you know when it is necessary to change leadership styles in order to achieve a goal? Is it necessary?

Appendix B

Promise of Confidentiality

This form is intended to protect the confidentiality of what participants say during the course of this study, *Connective Leadership in Midwestern School District*. Please read the following statement and sign your name, indicating that you agree to comply.

I promise that I will not communicate or talk about information discussed during the course of this interview with anyone outside of the interview and my dissertation chair.

Name_____

Signature_____

Facilitator Signature_____

*Bogdan, R.C., & Biklen, S.K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

Dear [Participant Name]:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview and in any subsequent journal response as part of my research work through the Drake Doctoral Program. The purpose of this study is to examine the phenomenon of how connective leadership and the achieving styles of direct, instrumental and relational leadership are operationalized in the work of school superintendents.

You have been selected for this study for the specific information you can provide as a superintendent for your school district. As a participant in this interview and journal response, you will be asked a series of questions to connective leadership and your leadership work as a superintendent. The procedures for this interview process are:

Step 1: Introduction and Informed Consent Document/Promise of Confidentiality Review

The researcher will meet with the participant to introduce him/her to the study, and provide an explanation of connective leadership and the achieving styles. The researcher will provide the participant with interview questions and allow time to answer questions from the participant.

Step 2: Formal Participant Interview

The researcher will interview the participant using the previously provided interview questions. The interview will be recorded using a digital-recording device.

Step 3: Journal Reflection and Response

Upon completion of the interview, the researcher will provide a notebook and self-addressed, stamped envelope to the participant with the option of the participant to use the journal to further reflect and provide clarity to the participant's responses to the questions regarding connective leadership. Participants will be asked to return their responses within one week of the interview date.

The information gained from the three-step interview process will be used to report the findings of the study. If you should need to contact me at any point during the research study, please contact me at (515) 402-1106 or by e-mail at brandon.eighmy@drake.edu.

In addition, information and documentation regarding this research study has been filed with the Drake University Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have any concerns about the conduct of this study, please contact the Drake University Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (515) 271-3472 or by e-mail at irb@drake.edu.

The following are the terms of participating in the interview and journal response:

- The information obtained during this study will be used to report the findings of my study which will be done through an extensive analysis of the data. Study data will be kept in a locked file cabinet at the researcher's house and on a password protected computer throughout the study and will not be accessible by anyone except for the research himself.

- For purposes of this study and the possibility of future publication, the names and identities of all study participants will remain confidential with pseudonyms being used at all times.

- Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you should choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty and any data collected from your interview will not be included in the study and will be returned to the participant upon request.

- Should you choose to participate, you will not be compensated in any manner during the duration of the study.

If you agree to participate in this interview and in any journal responses according to the above terms, please circle the appropriate response and sign and date.

<div align="center">Consent to Participate</div>

I give my consent to participate in an interview and journal response for this study.

I do not give my consent to participate in an interview and journal response for this study.

_____   _____
<div align="center">Signature of Participant   Date</div>

_____   _____
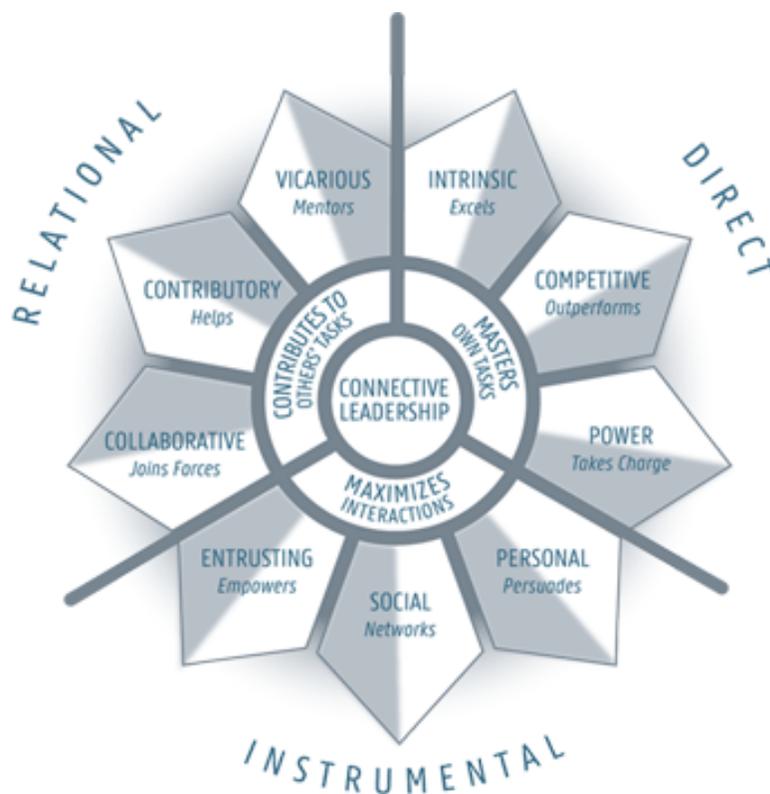<div align="center">Signature of Researcher   Date</div>

Appendix D

Connective Leadership Model & Definitions

Connective Leadership Model

Connective Leadership offers an important perspective for bringing together diverse, even conflicting groups that exist in an interdependent environment. Achieving Styles are the nine underlying behavioral strategies that individuals characteristically call upon to achieve their goals.

The Connective Leadership/Achieving Styles Model includes three sets of Achieving Styles: Direct, Instrumental, and Relational. Each set comprises three individual styles, resulting in a nine-fold repertoire.

Direct Set – People who prefer the direct set of behavioral styles tend to confront their own tasks individually and directly (hence the "direct" label). The three styles within the direct set emphasize deriving intrinsic satisfaction from mastering the task, outdoing others through competitive action and using power to take charge and coordinate everyone and everything.

Relational Set – People who prefer to work on group tasks or to help others attain their goals draw on behaviors described in the relational set. The three relational styles emphasize taking

vicarious satisfaction from facilitating and observing the accomplishments of others, as mentors do; taking a secondary or contributory role to help others accomplish their tasks; and working in a collaborative or team mode on a group task.

Instrumental Set – The political savvy embedded in the instrumental styles helps to diminish the sparks created by the friction among people and groups with different agendas. The instrumental styles emphasize using one's personal strengths to attract supporters, creating and working through social networks and alliances, and entrusting various aspects of one's vision to others. Individuals who use themselves and others as instruments for accomplishing organizational goals prefer the instrumental styles.

No individual style is intrinsically better than any other. Rather, the purpose of the Connective Leadership/Achieving Styles Model is to identify leadership strategies based on achieving styles and to call attention to the wide range of behaviors available to all leaders. Those leaders who employ the broadest and most flexible leadership repertoire are most likely to meet the complex challenges of the Connective Era.

INTRINSIC DIRECT
People who prefer this style are very self-motivated. They do not wait for others to help them. They look within themselves both for motivation and for standards of excellence. Even when others assure them that the job they have done is good enough, they are often dissatisfied, particularly if they do not feel they have given it their best shot. They enjoy the sense of autonomy that comes from not having to rely on others. Being in control of themselves and how they do the task gives them a sense of intellectual and creative freedom. They look within themselves for the resources to perform any given task. Tasks that represent a real challenge interest them regardless of whether or not they will receive any external reward. Doing a task well is reward enough for them. They know what needs to be done, and they usually can articulate that vision for others.

COMPETITIVE DIRECT
People who prefer this style get tremendous satisfaction from performing a task better than anybody else. Being "number one" is what counts for them. Competition motivates them to do their best. It turns them on. Oftentimes, if a situation does not involve a competitive element, they lose interest. To avoid this, they frequently try to turn non-competitive situations into contests. If they do not come in first, they are disappointed, but not discouraged. They go back again and again, until they finally succeed.

POWER DIRECT
People who prefer this style like to be in charge of everything: the agenda, the task, events, people, and resources. Leadership positions attract them and give zest and meaning to their activities. They have much less interest in situations that require them to be a follower, since they usually feel that they can do better than the current leader. They are very good at coordinating and organizing people and events. They know how to commandeer resources and use them to take control and get things done. Most of the time, they understand and act upon the need for delegating tasks to others. When they delegate, however, they tend to keep control of the end

result. Since they do not relinquish responsibility for the task, they tend to monitor the delegated activity rather closely.

PERSONAL INSTRUMENTAL

People who prefer this style tend to rely on themselves, using their personality, intelligence, wit, humor, charm, personal appearance, family background, and previous achievements as instruments for further success. They enjoy public speaking and usually can convince others to help in their task. They have a flair for dramatic gestures and symbolism, selecting just the right symbol to convey the core meaning and importance of their task. Their knack for taking counter-intuitive, or unexpected, action takes both their supporters and opponents by surprise and captivates their imaginations. They have a highly-developed sense of timing. They know how to use ritual and costume to communicate their message. They are very persuasive and use well-honed negotiating skills to resolve conflicts.

SOCIAL INSTRUMENTAL

People who prefer this style tend to accomplish things by involving other people whose special skills or experiences are relevant to the task at hand. They like to do things through other people, and they always recognize the connections between people and tasks. They keep good mental notes about the specific talents, knowledge, and contacts of all their associates and easily link them to appropriate tasks. They have strong political and networking skills, which they call upon comfortably. They keep in touch with a large network of people, who feel remembered, liked, and ready to help them. They gladly put associates who need assistance in touch with just the right helper. They are more likely to pick up the telephone and call someone for information than to go to the library or database to dig it out on their own. Their network is their database.

ENTRUSTING INSTRUMENTAL

People who prefer this style tend to know how to make other people feel that they are counting on them. Their confidence in others makes them feel they can do the task, even if they have no specifically relevant experience. They entrust their goals and tasks to others and believe that those others can accomplish the task as well as, or even better than, they can on their own. When they entrust a task to an associate, they generally expect that person to come through with minimal supervision. Their entrusting style usually has the effect of empowering those on whom they rely, although, at the outset, the people they select may quietly wish for more explicit directions and advice. Nonetheless, people who prefer this style are very good at bringing out the best in others. In most cases, they simply expect everyone around them to help with their tasks. They engage in leadership through expectation. They are less concerned than the social achiever/leader about selecting just the right person for a specific task, because they simply believe that people will reach within themselves to live up to their high expectations.

COLLABORATIVE RELATIONAL

People who prefer this style enjoy accomplishing a task by doing it with others, from a single collaborator to a team. Faced with a task, their first response is to call on one or several others to participate in the project. They feel an added surge of enthusiasm and creativity when they do things with others. Working in isolation rarely turns them on, and they usually try to avoid it. People who prefer this style enjoy the camaraderie of working with others and feel devoted to the group and its goals. They are willing to do their portion of the work, but they also expect to

receive their fair share of the prize. If the team does not succeed, they accept their proper measure of responsibility.

CONTRIBUTORY RELATIONAL
People who prefer this style like to work behind the scenes to help others accomplish their tasks. They take satisfaction from doing their part well so that the other person or group is successful. They know that their contribution has made a difference to the other party's success, and this gives them a satisfying sense of accomplishment. They see themselves as a partner in the other person's task, but they also understand that the major accomplishment belongs to the other person. They are pleased to participate in important undertakings and often volunteer to help others whose goals they respect.

VICARIOUS RELATIONAL
People who prefer this style derive a real sense of accomplishment from the success of others with whom they identify. They know how to be a good mentor, offering encouragement and guidance to others. They are happy to support other individuals and groups with reassurance, direction, and praise, but they do not get into the act themselves. They feel very comfortable as a spectator or supporter of someone who is the main achiever, rather than as a direct participant in the task. Their sense of pride in the success of others is sufficient reward; they do not need to take credit for their accomplishments.

Retrieved from: http://www.achievingstyles.com/asi/connective_leadership.asp