BECOMING A NEW SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS:

EXAMINING THE *TYRO* TRANSITION

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AUTHORIZATION TO SUBMIT

DISSERTATION

This dissertation of Rupak Manoj Gandhi, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

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of Schools: Examining the Tyro Transition," has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as

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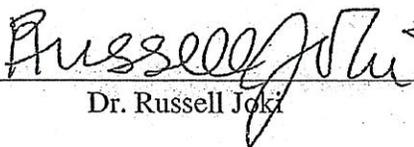
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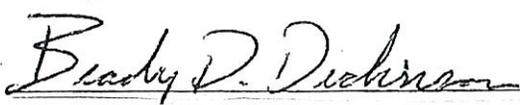
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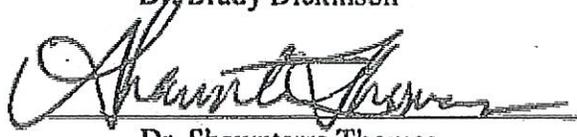
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I am extremely grateful to be here today, writing a note of thanks on my dissertation. This time has been a period of growth and learning for me, not only in research, but on a personal level as well. I would like to reflect on the people who have supported and helped me so much throughout this period.

I would first like to thank my colleagues from Houston ISD and Harrison School District Two for their wonderful support and guidance. You supported me greatly, were always willing to help me, and have helped me grow to be a champion of education for all the students I serve.

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Thank you very much, everyone!

DEDICATION

This dissertation dedicated to my family. There are no words to express how blessed I am to have had the support of my wife Britney and son Jagger to make one of my life-long dreams come true. Their encouragement and push for tenacity ring in my ears and my need to always do better for them, has led me to be a better person for them.

I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my friend and mentor, Sidney "Chip" Zullinger, who I miss dearly. Thank you for believing in me, pushing me, and teaching me to always do more for the students I serve with a big smile and open heart. I hope I made you proud.

ABSTRACT

The role of a school Superintendent is constantly changing and now encompasses more roles and responsibilities than it did before. The average tenure of superintendents in American K-12 public school systems is around 3 years, with the number being even lower for superintendents serving in large urban school districts. While states continue to revamp superintendent preparation programs, many of the skills and traits needed to successfully address the transition to a superintendency still remain unaddressed. Therefore, this study evaluated the lived experiences of five superintendents transitioning to their first superintendency. They documented challenges and successes during their first semester through interviews and reflective journals to research the challenges and success of transitioning to a first superintendency. Additionally, this study identified traits that were used, developed, or acquired by first semester superintendents to overcome specific challenges presented during the *tyro* transition.

This qualitative study combined an autoethnography and narrative inquiry research design to demonstrate the experiences of first-time school superintendents during their first semester in the position. This study built upon my personal experiences as a school district superintendent. My lived experiences were recorded weekly in a journal as one of the primary sources of data for this study. Additionally, a narrative inquiry research design was used to capture data from four other first-semester superintendents. Four other superintendents, also in their first semester in the role, were asked to capture their experiences via a weekly journal that was shared with researcher. At the end of their first month and first semester, the researcher conducted virtual interviews with each Superintendent to capture additional data. The data was then coded into emerging themes for research. Member-checking was utilized to ensure accuracy

and validity of the presented information. To adhere to the ethics of social science research, fictitious names and pseudonyms for all respondents and institutions to ensure anonymity were used.

The findings revealed that lived experience challenges of superintendents during their *tyro* transition include board-superintendent relations, change management, and personnel issues. Successes during the *tyro* transition identified by participants in the study include building relationships with cabinet members, implementing systems throughout the organization, and developing trust amongst staff. The participants also identified the following traits necessary to be utilized or developed to overcome the challenges of the *tyro* transition: oral/written communication, general problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills, honesty/integrity, and decision making. This study provides research to support superintendents during their first semester, improve superintendent training and preparation programs, and key leadership traits that can be used in superintendent selection processes.

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Chapter I

Introduction

"Doing autoethnography involves a back-and-forth movement between experiencing and examining a vulnerable self and observing and revealing the broader context of that experience."

(Ellis, 2007, p. 14)

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce qualitative inquiry using shared lived experiences to investigate the challenges, and traits necessary for success in overcoming those challenges, an educator faces when transitioning to a first school. In this chapter, the reader is provided with (a) an introduction to the research topic and purpose of the study, (b) a statement of the problem, (c) an overview of the research questions, (d) a description of terms, (e) a description of the study, and (f) and overview of the research methods used for data collection, analysis, interpretation, and description.

The research topic – What inspired me to tell my story. Before joining Teach for America, I never thought I would be an educator. I always wanted to be a lawyer. But when I started in 2007, it only took six months as a special education resource teacher at an elementary school in Northeast Houston, Texas to realize my true passion: a relentless interest in closing the achievement gap of public school students. My passion comes from a desire to work toward a unified goal, make a difference, and understand the impact of equity in education. My experiences and the support of leaders after Teach for America revealed the impact I could have as a system-level leader in public education. The desire to become a superintendent was seeded, though I always knew the journey would be arduous.

During my time as a teacher, I obtained my master's in education in special education from Grand Canyon University. Upon completion of my master's degree, I had the chance to meet with several school and district leaders through a district leadership cohort established for teachers and rising administrators with graduate degrees, and I served for three years as an elementary special education resource teacher. It was then that a colleague took on the principalship of a high school in Southwest Houston, and she asked me to join her team as an assistant principal. Since I had my master's degree, I was able to accept the position and get my principal certification through a concurrent program during my first year as an assistant principal. During this time, I became closely acquainted with our school superintendent and many of our district area superintendents. They began speaking to me about pursuing a career in school leadership and, eventually, district leadership. At the time, I entertained the thought but felt my end goal was to be a school principal. I assumed they were having the same recruiting conversation about district leadership with everyone.

Two years later, I was asked to serve as an elementary school principal in Southwest Houston. I had the opportunity to open this elementary school, serving grades 2-5, as the first principal. Prior to this campus opening, this school served over 1,500 students in grades PK-5. Due to overcrowding in the building and the district being required to rent commercial property across the street for kindergarten classes, a district bond referendum in 2012 proposed opening a new building and splitting the campus into two: an early childhood center serving grades PK-1 and an elementary school serving grades 2-5. This Title 1 elementary school served approximately 750 students, of whom 91% were eligible for free or reduced lunch and 72% were enrolled in either bilingual or English Language Learner programs. The area superintendent, who was my direct supervisor for that role, became my mentor.

Under his leadership, I continued to grow as a school leader, and my appreciation for the work we did grew daily. I never thought I would leave my elementary principal position because, at the time, I felt I had reached my goal. Our time together, however, would not be long. During my first year as an elementary principal, my mentor left to become a school superintendent in Colorado. He continued to stay in touch and provide guidance as needed, and he encouraged me to follow his path to becoming a school superintendent. I was appreciative of his guidance but didn't think that was a goal for me. While my district was searching for a replacement supervisor, I began working with our Chief Schools Officer who had served as a school superintendent in several districts across the nation in North Carolina, Colorado, South Carolina, Virginia, and Wyoming. In his new role as Chief, he oversaw the area superintendents, including my previous supervisor/mentor.

One day, he called me into the office for what I assumed was a routine conversation. I expected we would discuss campus expectations or implementation of school programs. I was wrong. We had a conversation that I will never forget.

Using pseudonyms, the conversation went like this:

Chief John: Your previous supervisor, *Jack*, and I have been talking about you and your role as a principal at Eagle Elementary. What do you desire to do after this position?

Me: I'm sorry? My goal has always been to be an elementary principal and I love my role. I have never thought of pursuing anything further.

Chief John: Do you think you have the skill-set to support a larger group of students and improve the lives for more students if you had the chance?

Me: Sure, my passion is and always will be to serve as many students as I can—that's why I stayed in education after my TFA commitment.

Chief John: Then I think it's selfish for you not to plan a progression in your future. I want you think about the impact you can make if you were in my job, or even a superintendent. Begin planning your path now and map out what you need to do to obtain a secondary principal position, my position here at the central office, and ultimately, a position of a superintendent. If your goal is to support many students, you need to pursue opportunities that will take you there.

Me: Thank you for the advice, I'll keep that in my mind.

We began to wrap up the meeting and, as I was getting ready to leave, he gave me one last piece of advice:

Chief John: Don't be shy. Nobody questions your loyalty—start saying your goals out loud and express where you want to be so you hold yourself accountable to get there and we can support you. Next time I ask you what your next plan is, I want you to tell me, "To have your job, sir."

As I drove back to my campus, I couldn't stop reflecting on our conversation—especially because, to me, it came out of nowhere. I kept thinking back to what he said and began buying into what *Chief John* and I discussed—Should I try to do more? Should I strive to be a school superintendent? What all does a superintendent do? Do I want to deal with the politics? Though I kept reflecting on this conversation from time to time, my work as an elementary principal kept drawing me back in and I never took any action. A few months later, I got married to the love of my life. *Chief John* was invited to the wedding but was unable to make it. He sent me a text message the night before, expressing that he was sorry he couldn't come, congratulating me, and telling me not to focus on work during my time off. His text stated, "Enjoy your honeymoon, focus on your new wife—nothing else, and I will see you when you are back." That was the last time I had any communication with *Chief John*.

The day after my wedding, I was notified *Chief John* passed away from a heart attack. Though difficult, my wife and I kept with our honeymoon plans and I missed the services celebrating his life. After coming back and going back to work, I kept remembering the conversation *Chief John* and I had a few months earlier and couldn't get it out of my mind. It was then that I became resolute to not "be selfish," to dedicate my life to serve as my students as I could, and to be honest and transparent about my pathway and ambition to get there.

Though I was able to express my goals and I had the passion for the role, I quickly realized that I didn't know everything the position of a superintendent entails. That summer, I was given the opportunity to take on the role of a high school principal in our same district. When the chief academic officer introduced me to the district superintendent for the final round of the high school principal interview, his words were, "Dr. *Bob*, you know Rupak Gandhi as the principal of Eagle Elementary School—he wants to be a superintendent someday."

Dr. Bob quickly responded, "Well, being the principal of Tiger High School will help get you there."

I thought the statement was encouraging—but still didn't know what it meant other than having the experience of a secondary principal would be a good thing on my resume. Tiger High School served nearly 3,000 students in grades 9-12. It was located on the northeast side of Houston and was the high school that Blue Elementary (where I had taught) fed into. Therefore, I had the unique privilege of being the high school principal of students I had taught four to eight years earlier and handing out high school diplomas to my former students. When I was assigned to be the principal, this high school had failed to meet state academic standards the prior two years, nine of the previous thirteen years, and had already gone through a state reconstitution several years earlier. If Tiger High School continued to fail meeting state standards, it was at risk

of being closed by the state.

With a dedicated team of tenacious individuals willing to work relentlessly towards improving student outcomes, we met state standards and earned academic distinctions after my first year at Tiger High School and each year since. During my role as a high school principal, I participated in school superintendent trainings and preparation programs. Two years after taking the job as high school principal, my mentor and former supervisor *Jack*, asked me to join him in his district out of state in the role of Assistant Superintendent, where I continued to participate in similar training opportunities and programs. Since the day I started working with *Jack* in Colorado, he mentored me and talked to me about how to prepare to become a superintendent. *Jack'*s mentorship, the conversation with *Chief John*, and the support of others, such as our former school superintendent, had now fully created in me a passion to serve, one day, as a superintendent of schools. I wanted to serve as many students as I could.

During the spring of my second year as an assistant superintendent in Colorado, I attended the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) national conference in Nashville, Tennessee. At the conference, I had the opportunity to meet with several superintendent search firms, and both my mentors *Jack* and *Dr. Bob* were gracious enough to introduce me to several companies conducting superintendent searches. I met with several companies and talked about various districts for which I could apply.

A few weeks later, I applied to a school district that was similar in size to my district in Colorado Springs (11,500 students and about 23 schools), that shared my beliefs and values on education, and that I felt would be a good fit for my skillset. After going through several rounds of screening interviews and a full day of final interviews with the Board of Education and various stakeholder groups, I was offered the position of superintendent.

As excited as I was to be given the role, to be living up to the expectations of *Chief John* and other leaders who supported me in my journey, I could not stop asking myself, "What now? I have the passion and am dedicated to serving all students, but what will that entail? What do I need to know now? What can I expect to be challenges and opportunities for growth?" I quickly realized that all the individuals supporting me and the preparation programs and trainings I attended had helped instill the in me the desire to do more, as well as revealed potential systemic issues challenging education. It also uncovered the content and skillsets of various aspects of the superintendency. But nobody told me what it will be like that first semester. I had no idea about the traits I needed to overcome challenges I would face. The role of a superintendent is drastically different than all other roles in a school district. There is only one superintendent for each district, so the transition is very different than other leadership roles. It is imperative to know how to make that transition successful.

Purpose of the Study – What I hope to accomplish. This study may provide insight into transitioning into the role of a superintendent through the use of autoethnography and narrative inquiries of four other first semester superintendents in the Midwestern and Western regions of the United States. The study will reveal the lived experiences of superintendents during their "*tyro*" transition. *Tyro* is an appropriate word for the transition, with its Latin roots meaning "new recruit" or "novice" (*Tyro*, n.d.).

In this study, the *tyros* will reflect on their successes, challenges, traits needed, and potential training opportunities for others who will become first-time superintendents. This study may benefit future school superintendents, training programs, executive coaches, and mentors by identifying common themes and experiences of first semester school superintendents across the nation. The study may identify commonalities in leadership traits needed by first semester

superintendents to overcome challenges during the *tyro* transition. Most importantly, this study may indirectly benefit students in school districts who are led by first time superintendents in that school boards and superintendents may avoid pit falls and challenges that could hinder student learning and, conversely, develop leadership traits revealed by the study for a *tyro* superintendent. In conducting this study, I may contribute to existing theory of trait leadership and research as my autoethnography and the personal narratives of the four participants respond to the research questions. Therefore, this study may be a catalyst for additional research exploring the transition to the role of school superintendents.

Statement of Problem

The role of a school superintendent is constantly changing and now encompasses more roles and responsibilities than before (Niño, 2018). "Normative role expectations for local school district superintendents have evolved over the past 150 years, incrementally becoming more extensive, complex, and demanding" (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005, p.1). The average tenure of superintendents is about 3.18 years, with the number being even lower for superintendents serving in large urban school districts (Urban School Superintendents: Characteristics, Tenure, and Salary Seventh Survey and Report, 2010). Quick turnover of district leadership has an impact on student achievement; instability of superintendent leadership is one reason for low student achievement found in numerous school districts (Whittle, 2005). While states continue to revamp superintendent preparation programs, many of the skills and traits needed to successfully address the transition to a superintendency still remain unaddressed (Andrews & Grogan, 2002; Cooper, Fusarelli, Jackson, & Poster, 2002).

Therefore, this study will evaluate the lived experiences of myself and four other *tyros* transitioning to their first superintendency who volunteered to participate in the study with no

incentive. We will document challenges and successes during our first semester through journals of lived experiences. Specifically, the theory of trait leadership will be used to analyze the shared experiences and identify commonalities in leader traits used to overcome challenges of superintendents in the *tyro* transition.

Research Questions

Creswell (2014) states the value of recognizing the intent of a study directed toward addressing critical social research questions calls for "the identification of factors that influence an outcome" (p.13). The leadership of a school district impacts not only student achievement, but community outcomes as well (Waters & Marzano, 2007). Therefore, the research questions for this study are:

1. What are the lived experience challenges and successes of transitioning to a first superintendency?

2. What leadership traits are used by superintendents to overcome the challenges of the *tyro* superintendent?

 Description of Terms

The following terms are specifically associated with the role of school superintendents and district leadership in K-12 educational settings or are specific to this study. The terms and definitions identified contribute to consistency in use of terms and alignment of understanding (Creswell, 2014).

Achievement motivation. Achievement motivation is the drive to meet desired results in an organization (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002).

Agreeableness. Agreeableness is the tendency to be trusting, caring, and compliant (Judge et al., 2002).

Authority. In qualitative research, authority is shown through claims made by the researcher to write about the social process or phenomenon being studied (Given, 2008).

Autoethnography. Autoethnography combines cultural analysis and interpretation with narrative, allowing researchers to understand themselves and others from the same cultural background (Chang, 2016).

Axiology. Axiology is "a branch of philosophy concerned with the role of values and ethics within the research process" (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016, p. 711).

Charisma. Charisma is the ability to influence others to follow by clearly communicating a vision for the future, thereby increasing organizational commitment and self-efficacy in followers (Hoffman, Woehr, Maldagen-Youngjohn, & Lyons, 2011).

Conscientiousness. Conscientiousness is a trait based on achievement and dependability (Judge et al., 2002).

Constructivist paradigm. Constructivist paradigm is a belief that knowledge is objectively originated in subjective thought, and, as such, contains bias (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Extraversion. Extraversion represents the tendency to be sociable, assertive, active, and to experience positive effects (Judge et al., 2002).

Honesty/Integrity. Honesty and integrity are traits that demonstrate the relationship between work and deed through an individual's truthfulness (Locke, 1991).

Interpersonal skills. Interpersonal skills are a broad range of skills which help comprehend and communicate human behavior and group dynamics (Locke, 1991).

Leader effectiveness. Leader effectiveness refers to the amount of influence a leader has on individual or group performance, followers' satisfaction, and overall effectiveness (Derue,

Nahrgang, Wellman, & Humphrey, 2011).

Narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is research based on the notion that life is education. The term was first used in educational research for educators to reflect on their own practices, and it shares many commonalities with the emphasis of social in ethnographies and the use of stories in phenomenology (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007).

Neuroticism. Neuroticism is the tendency to exhibit poor emotional adjustment and experience negative effects such as anxiety, insecurity, and hostility (Judge et al., 2002).

Openness. Openness is the disposition to be imaginative, nonconforming, unconventional, and autonomous (Judge et al., 2002).

Reflexivity. Reflexivity in research is an approach to understanding which involves the use of self to be open to the world-views of others with the notion that researchers are as much part of the study as research participants (Gilgun, 2008).

School board. A board in charge of local public schools with the primary function of overseeing the school superintendent (Dawson & Quinn, 2004).

School board policy. School board policies are principles and guidelines meant to guide administrative decisions that have been adopted by the school board in support of organizational goals (Pender, 2018).

Self-narrative. Self-narrative is a study that uses or analyzes narrative to represent the character or lifestyle of specific subgroups in society (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998).

Semester. A half-year term in a school or college, typically lasting fifteen to eighteen weeks (Semester, n.d.). The researcher will use the term "first semester" throughout the study, referencing a superintendent's first contract date to the start of the winter holiday break for their

school district.

Superintendent.

The superintendent is the top executive ("CEO") in the school district. The

superintendent implements the school board's vision by making day-to-day decisions

about educational programs, spending, staff, and facilities. The superintendent

hires, supervises, and manages the central staff and principals. (Martens, 2018, p.1)

Trait. Traits are the key factors that increase the capacity of leaders to be effective

(Northouse, 2018).

Trait leadership. The belief that effective leaders have certain traits in common that

contribute to their success (Northouse, 2018).

Trait leadership model. A model developed to comprehend leadership traits and their

impact on leader effectiveness based on prior research of leader effectiveness and overall impact

(Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Fleishman, & Reiter-Palmon, 1993; Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding,

Jacobs, & Fleishman, 2000). Based on this model and data from their meta-analysis on trait

leadership, a list of leadership traits was developed which the researcher used in this study

(Zaccaro, Kemp, & Bader, 2004).

***Tryo* transition.** A term created by the researcher to identify a novice superintendent in

the time span ranging from their first day of their contract until the end of their first semester.

Significance of Study

School districts across the United States are challenged with short superintendent tenures.

The impact of a high turnover rate for school superintendents is not only economically costly,

but is also a detriment to all stakeholders in the district. This impact is magnified on students

(Byrd, Drews, & Johnson, 2006; Czaja & Harman, 1997).

Limited empirical research is available regarding the lived experiences and perceptions of *tyro* superintendents during their first semester that can provide guidance to those aspiring for the same roles. Current superintendent training programs focus on overall competencies and are aligned to state certification standards (Young & Mawhinney, 2012), but the demands of the role are extensive (Andrews & Grogan, 2002; Cooper et al., 2002). While some programs are changing to meet the needs of the position, they are not necessarily aligned to what superintendents need to be prepared (Sanzo & Scribner, 2015; Smrekar & McGraner, 2009).

Because of the limited empirical research available regarding the experiences and perceptions of *tyro* superintendents, this study may provide insights necessary for decision makers, practitioners, and policy makers to assess the preparation of superintendents who serve in their first semester. Organizations that understand the need to grow and develop superintendents beyond just pedagogy in order to successfully navigate the ever-changing roles and responsibilities of k-12 education may be interested in the outcomes of this study (Harris, Lowery, Hopson, & Marshall, 2004).

Theoretical Framework

The theory of "trait leadership" focuses on finding a group of attributes common amongst effective leaders. Leader effectiveness refers to the degree of impact a leader has on group or individual performance, members' satisfaction, and overall effectiveness (Derue et al., 2011). Research has shown that leaders who find success are different from others and have specific personality traits that positively impact their leadership (Lord, Day, Zaccaro, Avolio, & Eagly, 2017).

Understanding the importance of these core personality traits that predict leader effectiveness can help organizations with their leader selection, training, and development

practices (Derue et al., 2011; Eden & Leviatan, 1975; Northouse, 2018). Based on trait leadership theory, organizations and businesses should select leaders and provide professional development based on their respective leadership traits that emerge (Dugan, 2017).

Zaccaro et al. (2004) developed a model to understand leader traits and their influence on leader effectiveness based on prior research of leader traits and effectiveness (Mumford et al., 1993; Mumford et al., 2000). In the model, distal attributes influence proximal personal characteristics. The model is based on the beliefs that leadership emerges from the combined impact of several traits as opposed to arising from individual traits, and it also suggests that leader traits vary in their influence on leadership. Based on this model and data from their meta-analysis on trait leadership, a list of leadership traits was developed which will be used in this study (Ackerman & Humphreys, 1990; Barrick, Mitchell, & Stewart, 2003; Chen, Gully, Whiteman, & Kilcullen, 2000; Derue et al., 2011; Hoffman et al., 2011; Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009; Kanfer, 1990, 1992; Schneider, Hough, & Dunnette, 1996; Mumford et al., 2000; Zaccaro, 2007).

This study will utilize trait leadership theory and the trait leadership model to identify traits that emerge from new superintendents and how they utilize those traits to address challenges during the first semester as school superintendents.

Overview of Research Methods

This study will utilize a qualitative approach which incorporates narrative inquiry with autoethnography (Trahar, 2009) to seek understanding of background, experiences, interactions, and ideas of four *tyro* superintendents during their transition year. The researcher will interview the participants and collect reflective journals as data sources for the study.

Utilizing the theoretical framework of trait leadership, combined with an interpretivist

and constructivist paradigm (Ponterotto, 2005), provided an analytical lens to produce findings informing a self-descriptive narrative telling the story of *tyro* superintendents during their transition year. The interpretivist and constructivist paradigm in research are focused on understanding "the world of human experience" (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p.36). The paradigm enables the researcher to rely upon the participants' views of the situation being studied and recognizes the impact on the research of their own background and experiences (Creswell, 2014).

Self-narrative, a qualitative approach, will be used to engage readers by allowing the reader to feel as if they were experiencing the stories being shared by the co-participants (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). Another advantage of the self-narrative is that it gives a voice to individuals, highlighting their experiences, sentiments, and reactions to challenging situations as well as the traits they exemplified to address those challenges (Creswell, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2005).

Chapter II

Review of Literature

"In planning, as well as in assessing, ethnographic research, we must consider its relevance as

well as its validity."

(Hammersley, 1992, p. 85)

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the literature on superintendent roles and preparation. A discussion of trait leadership theory and competency-based trainings highlights multiple psychological and sociological perspectives on preparing superintendents for challenges they will face during their *tyro* transition and following years.

This chapter reviews the relevant literature and multiple perspectives and theoretical approaches to a) the role of a superintendent, b) superintendent training programs, c) the *tyro* transition, and d) the theoretical framework for trait leadership (Zaccaro et al., 2004). The review also includes psychological and sociological perspectives guiding research and practice of school superintendents and superintendent training programs. In this chapter, I provide the reader with evidence from the literature demonstrating that the roles and responsibilities of school superintendents are continuously evolving while the average tenure of k-12 superintendents in American public school continues to decrease (Cooper et al., 2002). The review indicates that analyzing the *tyro* transition for school superintendents does matter and presents both challenges and opportunities of first semester superintendents that could guide training practices for aspiring school superintendents.

The review will explain the complexity of the role of a school district superintendent, including how superintendents must be prepared to address increasingly complex issues despite

inadequate training. The review revealed that superintendent preparation and *tyro* transition is particularly complex, given the fact that school superintendents represent diverse school districts and communities.

Role of Superintendent

The role of superintendent was created by school systems in the first half the nineteenth century because school systems faced challenges such as the development and creation of larger city school districts, the merging of rural school districts, the expansion of curriculum across states, increased accountability, and compulsory attendance laws. The first district superintendents were appointed in Buffalo, New York, and Louisville, Kentucky (Grieder, Pierce, & Jordan, 1969; Kowalski, 2013). The role quickly caught on, and by the twentieth century almost all school districts employed the position of superintendent (Kowalski, 2005; Lowery & Harris, 2002).

Callahan (1966) and Kowalski (2005) identified five primary roles of school superintendents that have been essential from the development of the role to what it is today: teacher-scholar, manager, democratic leader, applied social scientist, and communicator. These roles are interchangeable, they overlap, and they were not meant to be practiced in isolation. The roles provide the framework for understanding the depth and breadth of the position and the skills and understanding needed for effective implementation of practice (Hall, Rutherford, Huling-Austin & Hall, 1987; Houston, 2001; Kowalski, 2005; Kirst, 1984).

The role of a school superintendent in a public-school system is increasingly complex, is described as a main point for any dissension with the schools, and is responsible for leading schools that are devoted to the students they serve (Lowery & Harris, 2002). The role of a school superintendent has been described as one of the most challenging, yet satisfying, positions in

American society (Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996). One of the challenges of the role

is that the human element largely determines the effectiveness and success of a school system.

The superintendent's leadership affects all school personnel's performance, which is an

enormous responsibility for the superintendent as both an individual and as a leader (Norton et

al., 1996). Specifically, the superintendent must be prepared to address current and future

challenges, governance policy, legal considerations, fiscal management, educational facilities,

curriculum and instruction, collaboration with employee groups, and relationships with the

school district and parents (Norton et al., 1996). The superintendent role is expansive and

important.

In addition to the superintendent affecting personnel performance, the position affects

student achievement. Specifically, recent analysis of the effects of district-level leadership on

student achievement, summarized in the 2006 McREL report "School District Leadership That

Works," demonstrated that the correlation between student achievement and district leadership

was .24 with a 95% confidence interval (Waters & Marzano, 2007). An average school district is

one where the superintendent scores in the 50th percentile for leadership abilities and where the

average student achievement is also in the 50th percentile (Waters & Marzano, 2007). If one

assumes that the superintendent improves leadership abilities by just one standard deviation, the

prediction then follows that the overall academic achievement of the district would increase by

9.5 percentile points, increasing district achievement to the 60th percentile (Waters & Marzano,

2007).

One example shows a bell curve representing two superintendents and their districts'

student achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2007). In this example, one district is achieving at the

50th percentile and the other at the 60th percentile. Waters and Marzano (2007) assert that this

difference is due to the superintendent of the higher achieving district effectively implementing

the responsibilities of the position; they assert that, in this way, the superintendent has a strong

impact on his or her district's student achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2007). Waters and

Marzano (2007) identified five district-level leadership responsibilities with a statistically

significant (p. 05) correlation with average student academic achievement, including:

- The goal-setting process;

- Non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction;

- Board alignment with and support of district goals;

- Monitoring of progress on goals for achievement and instruction; and

- The use of resources to support the goals for achievement and instruction.

Waters and Marzano (2007) also found information on the effect of longevity on student

achievement. Through their two studies, they found that a longer tenure of the superintendent has

a positive impact on the average academic achievement of students in the district. This supports

the idea that the longer a superintendent can continue in his or her district and see projects

through that he or she has initiated, the bigger impact it can have on student achievement

(Waters & Marzano, 2007).

Superintendents are like the CEOs of their organizations (Whittle, 2005). Washington,

D.C. has had nine superintendents in 20 years for an average of 2.2 years; Kansas City, Missouri

has had 14 superintendents in the same time period, at an average of 1.4 years. During the same

time frame, General Electric had had just two CEOs; Dell, Microsoft, and Federal Express has

each had just one CEO. An argument is made that a large component of these corporations'

success is the stability of the CEO at their helm (Whittle, 2005). In the educational realm, one

factor of low student achievement in school districts is superintendent instability. Whittle (2005)

claims that if a superintendent's tenure could match that of successful CEOs, student achievement in districts would be stronger.

The superintendent role is wide and deep; this district leader impacts students and their academic achievement, as well school personnel (Norton et al., 1996; Waters & Marzano, 2007; Whittle, 2005). While there is not an identified number of American superintendents, there are over 14,000 U.S. school districts (Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson, 2011). Due to the high number of superintendents and the major impact of the position, there are a variety of superintendent training programs offered at the university level; the content of these programs varies from school to school, however, which is a reality that has implications for district school leaders (Andrews & Grogan, 2002).

Superintendent Training Programs

Most superintendent training programs are done through university education programs; to become accredited, universities must demonstrate that their courses incorporate the implementation and application of program standards that are categorized into more detailed sub-skills (Ellis, 2016). These university programs become accredited through the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC). The ELCC has developed leadership standards that the programs must implement for these "advanced programs at the master, specialist, or doctoral level that prepare assistant superintendents, superintendents, curriculum directors, and supervisors and/or other programs that prepare educational leaders for a school district environment" (Young & Mawhinney, 2012, p.42).

There are challenges and deficits in many superintendent training programs (Andrews & Grogan, 2002; Cooper et al., 2002). One challenge is that higher education programs do not provide enough preparation for aspiring school and district leaders (Andrews & Grogan, 2002).

The authors explain that preparation programs should be focused on problems of practice and taught with school and district leader practitioners; additionally, programs should reflect "collaborative instructional leadership that works through transformational processes" (Andrews & Grogan, 2002, p. 25).

Another study identified five problems with superintendent preparation: 1) timing and synchronization with preparation and taking on the position; 2) theory-based academic degrees do not necessarily mesh with experiences and practices; 3) superintendents need more than a two-year program to prepare and instead need ongoing training and professional development throughout their tenure; 4) superintendents need and want national networks to continue their learning and connections; and 5) there is a need for an updated knowledge bank to keep them up to date on best practices, techniques, and information on district leadership (Cooper et al., 2002). The study questions the role of the university in meeting these needs with superintendent preparation programs.

On the contrary, research has shown that participants in superintendent programs give strong ratings for their overall perceptions of programs. Specifically, graduates of superintendent training programs have, in the past, rated their experiences as "well" or "very well" for preparing them for superintendent and central office roles (Kowalski et al., 2011). Interestingly, 78.5% of participants from an American Association of School Administrators (AASA) survey agreed that their experiences were "good" or "excellent" (Kowalski et al., 2011). There was also an increase in participants' surveyed satisfaction of their professors within superintendent preparation programs (15 percentage point increase from 2000 to 2010) (Kowalski et al., 2011). There is a juxtaposition of research, therefore, between perceived university preparation and participation preparation (Bowers, 2017).

These university preparation programs have evolved throughout the years (Bowers, 2017). Some have shifted their focuses to problems of practices and issues that most affect students (Sanzo & Scribner, 2015; Smrekar & McGraner, 2009). The purpose of these programs is to make the training relevant and applicable to participants' actual practice in school districts and to focus on problems of practice like superintendents do in their roles (Bowers, 2017).

Some states are choosing to require less of superintendents and their training; specifically, in an effort to hire nontraditional district leaders, some states no longer require a state superintendent license (Ellis, 2016). By 2011, nine states no longer required superintendent licensures, 22 states had developed waivers for licensures, and 18 states had developed alternate licensure programs (Kowalski, 2013).

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) recently announced the creation of a new superintendent transition program (AASA, 2018). The program is designed to help transitioning superintendents become successful in their new roles. Current and recently retired superintendents will provide hands-on support for creating district leadership teams, creating entry plans, and identifying skills and knowledge needed to be successful (AASA, 2018).

Ultimately, there is a need for more research on superintendent preparation programs. There has been more research conducted on principal preparation programs than superintendent preparation programs (Andrews & Grogan, 2002). Additional research will help guide states, districts, training programs, and new superintendents in determining the best practices and lessons for these district leaders.

Tyro **Transition**

Transitioning to a superintendent position is unlike anything else; even high-level educators who have served in demanding central office positions for years find one challenge after another during their first semester as superintendent (Bittman, Jefferson-Barnes, Shallow, & Giaquinto, 2011). How superintendents begin their career in this position can determine their success or failure (Peterkin, Jewell-Sherman, Kelley, & Boozer, 2011).

Successful first-year superintendents stress the importance of public relations, board meetings and board relationships, bond elections, supervisory staff, budget and fiscal issues, and school property. They also explain how to manage each of these components with the increased politically charged environment of the superintendent position (Roberts et al., 2012).

Transitions, in general, can be challenging. William Bridges (2001) described how to effectively transition, instead of change. He explains that change happens *to* people, while transition is internal; it occurs slowly through people's minds as they go through change. The Transition Model has three main stages:

1. Ending, Losing, and Letting Go. In this stage, people experience a variety of emotions, such as fear, denial, and sadness, when facing a change. In this stage, it is important to understand people's emotions and allow them the time to accept the change. A transitioning superintendent should communicate about a positive future and be transparent about the changes.

2. The Neutral Zone. This stage is like a link between the old and the new, and leaders should understand what people are experiencing, whether it be resentment, low morale, or anxiety about their changing roles. A leader should meet early and often

with his or her team and communicate feedback on progress. He or she should also focus on quick wins to encourage the team.

3. The New Beginning. In this stage, people are beginning to feel more energy, openness to new ideas and learning, and a renewed commitment. Leaders should encourage their team while connecting their personal goals to the team's goals. They should celebrate the wins and stay focused on their big goals and direction. (Bridges, 2001).

Before starting the position, it has been proposed that a newly-identified superintendent should do seven things:

- Identify key stakeholders

- Craft an initial message

- Manage office set up

- Manage personal/family set up

- Conduct pre-start meetings and phone calls

- Develop an information-gathering and learning plan

- Plan the first 100 days

(Stellar, 2011)

Entry plans are an essential component of a strong start to the superintendent position (Hanover Research, 2015; Jentz & Murphy, 2005; Peterkin et al., 2011; Stellar, 2011). The entry plan should be based on information-gathering meetings with key stakeholders. Effective entry plans include these similar outcomes: identify an imperative "must do" by the end of the first month, identify key milestones, identify and communicate early wins, determine staff changes (if applicable), and identify steps to refocus practices (Stellar, 2011). Transition teams, who are

identified in superintendent entry plans and help develop the plan, can help a new superintendent make the shift without issue; these teams should include credible internal stakeholders and external experts who can help inform the new leader about the district's strengths and weaknesses (Hanover Research, 2015). Finally, entry plans must be data driven (Peterkin et al., 2011).

Specific types of learning, such as learning about the new environment, learning about themselves, and learning about the organization, can help new leaders implement their entry plans (Jentz & Murphy, 2005). By taking on these learning commitments while starting out in the position, superintendents can follow these suggested steps of entry planning: 1) design the plan, 2) seek feedback, 3) communicate the plan, 4) schedule meetings and site visits, and 5) conduct sense-making meetings. When crafting an initial message to be shared during superintendent entry plans, it is recommended that new leaders should do the following when facing confusion but needing to lead at the same time: embrace the confusion, assert the need to make sense, structure interaction, listen reflectively to learn, and openly process the efforts to make sense (Jentz & Murphy, 2005). This allows superintendents to clearly articulate the purpose of their entry plan and provides structure to implement it in a way that allows them to learn and grow with their new organization.

The successful development and implementation of superintendent entry plans was outlined by four superintendents who gave their reflections following their first year as a school superintendent. One superintendent explained that his transition started with 75 meetings with parents, students, staff, and administration (Bittman et al., 2011). He explained that these meetings started the foundations of relationships, which were essential to him throughout the

year. The meetings also gave him important information regarding stakeholders' perceptions and perceived areas of improvement.

Another superintendent explained the number of challenges she immediately faced when she took on her new role overseeing a district with 13 schools. These included the state's district achievement rating, financial strains, and legal challenges (Bittman et al., 2011). A third superintendent detailed the challenges of a shifting board of education in his first semester; the district had a new focus and direction, and the stress and changes were not aligned to the superintendent's goals. At the end of his first year, he retired (Bittman et al., 2011). The final superintendent in the study focused on the power of relationships in her success; she recounted that families seemed comfortable approaching her, which allowed her to listen and respond to their concerns (Bittman et al., 2011). All four superintendents capitalized the importance of a smooth transition to the role of school superintendent.

Theoretical Framework—Trait Leadership

Trait leadership is a united grouping of characteristics that demonstrates a variety of individual differences and results in consistent, strong leadership across a continuum of situations and organizations (Zaccaro et al., 2004). The origins of Trait Leadership Theory date back to the 19th century when Galton (1869) asserted that leadership is unique to specific individuals whose decisions can have a radical effect on history. He also stated that personal attributes defined effective leadership and are inherited (Galton, 1869). Research has varied over the years, leaning away from trait-based leadership in the 1950s and then coming back to it in the 1980s (Zacarro, 2007). Trait-based leadership ascertains that these traits are not just genetically inherited, but that they are complex patterns of behaviors and characteristics that result in effective leadership across many situations (Zaccaro et al., 2004).

Though there is a variety of research on the specific character traits that lead to successful leadership, trait-leadership theory states that there should be a combination of character traits that can be successfully implemented in a variety of situations that result in effective leadership. Superintendents, like individuals in all leadership positions, are unique and have unique character traits. If they can determine how to best apply these traits with knowledge and learning, then they can be successful leaders of multiple situations and, in this case, school districts.

The specific traits that lead to successful leadership are varied (Day & Sammons, 2016; Sutcliffe, 2013). When some of the top school leaders (or headmasters) in the United Kingdom weighed in on the best qualities of school leaders, they agreed on these qualities: vision, courage, passion, emotional intelligence, judgment, resilience, persuasion, and curiosity (Sutcliffe, 2013).

The Education Development Trust conducted a large study on effective school leadership with several partners including the Department of Education at Oxford University, the Centre for Equity in Education at the University of Manchester, the University of Glasgow, the University of Nottingham, and the Hong Kong Institute of Education (Day, 2017). Their extensive study identified the key dimensions of school leadership. They found that the key dimensions are:

- Defining the vision, values and direction

- Improving conditions for teaching and learning

- Redesigning the organization: aligning roles and responsibilities

- Enhancing teaching and learning

- Redesigning and enriching the curriculum

- Enhancing teacher quality (including succession planning)

- Building relationships inside the school community

- Building relationships outside the school community

- Placing an emphasis on common values

(Day & Sammons, 2017).

Zaccaro et al. (2004) developed a model to understand leader traits and their influence on leader effectiveness based on prior research of leader traits and effectiveness. The model is based on two key notions about leader traits: that leadership emerges from the combined influence of multiple traits as opposed to emerging from the independent assessment of traits, and that leader traits differ in their proximal influence on leadership (Mumford et al., 1993; Mumford et al., 2000). Zaccaro (2001) argued that effective leadership is derived from an integrated set of cognitive abilities, social capabilities, and dispositional tendencies in which each set of traits is interconnected to the other and can influence each other. Figure 1 (Zaccaro, Kemp, & Bader, 2004) shows the relationship between a variety of skills, attributes, and knowledge that contribute to effective leadership.

Figure 1
A Model of Leader Attributes and Leader Performance
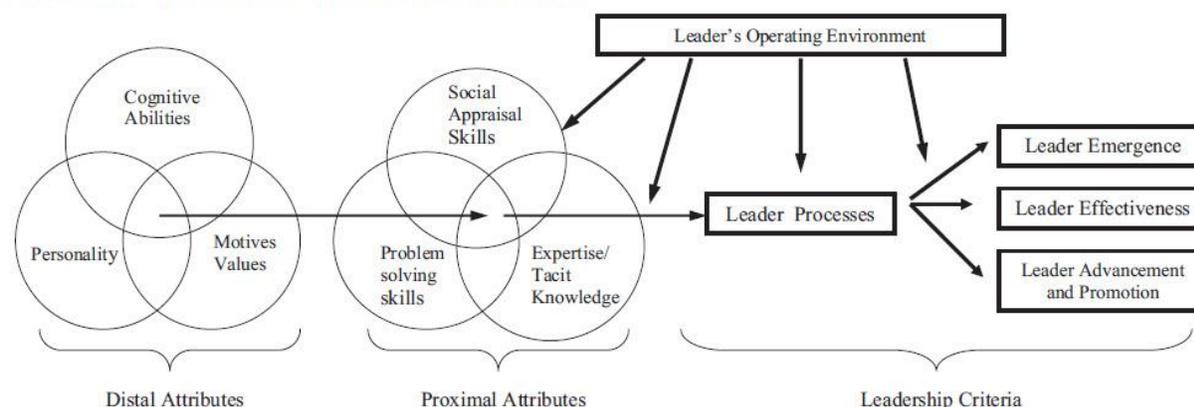
Note. From "Leader Traits and Attributes," by S. J. Zaccaro, C. Kemp, & P. Bader, 2004, in J. Antonakis, A. T. Cianciolo, and R. J. Sternberg (Eds.), *The Nature of Leadership* (p. 122), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Copyright 2004 by Sage Publications. Reprinted with permission.

In the Zaccaro et al. (2004) model, distal attributes, such as motives and values, serve as antecedents to proximal personal characteristics, such as social skills and problem-solving skills. Based on this model and data from their meta-analysis on trait leadership, the list of leadership traits shown in Table 1 was developed (Ackerman & Humphreys, 1990; Barrick et al., 2003;

Chen et al., 2000; Derue et al., 2011; Hoffman et al., 2011; Judge et al., 2009; Kanfer, 1990,

1992; Schneider et al., 1996; Mumford et al., 2000; Zaccaro, 2007). Though this list was meant

to be inclusive, Zaccaro contends that leader traits are always being investigated and this list is

not exhaustive (Zaccaro, 2007).

Table 1

List of Traits

Trait	Attributes
Extraversion	Distal
Agreeableness	Distal
Conscientiousness	Distal
Openness	Distal
Neuroticism	Distal
Honesty/Integrity	Distal
Charisma	Distal
Intelligence	Distal
Creativity	Distal
Achievement Motivation	Distal
Need for Power	Distal
Oral//Written Communication	Proximal
Interpersonal Skills	Proximal
General Problem Solving	Proximal
Decision Making	Proximal
Technical Knowledge	Proximal
Management Skills	Proximal

Conclusion

Superintendents have many roles and have a major impact on all students in their school districts (Norton et al., 1996; Waters & Marzano, 2007). They affect both student achievement and the performance of their school district personnel (Waters & Marzano, 2007; Norton et al., 1996). Superintendent positions are challenging and have become increasingly complex (Lowery & Harris, 2002; Norton et al., 1996). Superintendent training programs are based on leadership standards but have had challenges accurately aligning the learning to the practical components of the superintendent position (Andrews & Grogan, 2002; Cooper et al., 2002). While universities are working to strengthen their programs, some districts are choosing to hire nontraditional superintendents and some states are doing away with licensure (Ellis, 2016).

An effective transition to the *tyro* superintendent position is essential to a successful superintendent tenure (Peterkin et al., 2011). The Transition Model highlights the three steps an effective leader should take to transition successfully to a new position. Entry plans were identified as a key component to transitioning to a new superintendent position (Hanover Research, 2015; Jentz & Murphy, 2005; Peterkin et al., 2011; Stellar, 2011). Common items in the entry plan included communication to staff, parents, and students, identification and relationship-building with key stakeholders, analysis of data, and creation of initial goals with timelines. Four superintendent perspectives were included to give a variety of suggestions for new superintendents.

This study is framed by the Leadership Trait Theory, which asserts that a combination of personal character traits and leadership differences can be effectively applied in multiple leadership roles and organizations (Zaccaro et al., 2004). Research offers a variety of specific character traits that result in effective leadership, but the theory posits that there is not

necessarily a specific list that leaders must follow. Rather, they must utilize their effective

leadership traits in a consistent manner to effectively lead their organizations.

Chapter III

Design and Methodology

"...when writing autoethnographically, we are forced to hold a critical mirror to our lives, and sometimes looking in that mirror by candlelight is more flattering than looking into the mirror in broad daylight."

(Megford, 2006, p.857)

Introduction

This chapter will describe the rationale, qualitative research design, and analytical autoethnographic methodology used for this study to explore the background, professional experiences, and external forces that shaped superintendents' *tyro* transitions. The role of the researcher, the selection of co-participants, and the procedures for data collection and analysis will all be described in detail. The semi-structured interviews and reflexive journals that used in this study were more than just methods to collect data. These processes will demonstrate the complexity of qualitative research in numerous ways. As a researcher practitioner, I had the responsibility for being fully transparent by disclosing biases or judgments and by not bringing a personal agenda into the research process. Every effort was made to be mindful of the power imbalances between myself and participants. The participants in this study were eager to share their experiences and tell their stories. Participants have asked me to share my story with them after the study is complete. Several participants and I plan on submitting a presentation proposal to a national Superintendent's conference to share our lived experiences. I believe the interactions caused by shared experiences will resonate in a way which will reveal the complexity of our similarities and differences.

This chapter consists of the following sections: a) introduction, b) philosophical assumptions, c) purpose of the research, d) research questions, e) research design and rationale, pilot study, individual protocol development, f) selection of research setting, recruitment of participants, g) data collection, researcher bias, and trustworthiness of the data, data analysis, and e) summary.

A review of the literature presented in the previous chapter provided a critical summary of select research studies, relevant literature, and theories examining the role of the superintendent and transitioning to a first superintendency (Andrews & Grogan, 2002; Cooper et al., 2002). The literature provided evidence of numerous influences impacting the role of the superintendent, the evolving demands of the role, and superintendent preparation programs.

As an autoethnographic researcher, I must be attentive to the somewhat fluid standards of this qualitative design. Criticisms of autoethnography include a portrayal of self-indulgence and narcissism in which a strong emphasis on self is valued as a research method (Méndez, 2013). Given the concerns about autoethnography, I will use this chapter to establish design standards and protocols which attempt to bring a true accounting of my *tyro* journey as a new superintendent.

This study also involved four other *tyro* superintendents who agreed to participate in my research. Their stories were framed by both weekly reflective journal entries and two semi-structured interviews. The *tyro* superintendents were interviewed after their first month and first semester as school superintendents. Additionally, the superintendents captured their challenges, successes, and other experiences as a *tyro* superintendent through weekly journal entries shared with the researcher. The participants were not given any length requirements for their journal entries and could focus on any subject of their choice in their reflections.

Philosophical Assumptions

Creswell (2014) cautioned researchers to study their own world views and theoretical perspectives to see how they might impact a research problem or design. The challenge often facing researchers, Creswell (2014) argued, was twofold: acknowledge personal beliefs and assumptions, and actively incorporate them into the study. In this manner, a researcher adds to the credibility and trustworthiness of the study by not only disclosing bias, judgments, and assumptions, but also through the strategies used to mitigate any undue influence throughout the research process. Denzin (2013) and Lincoln and Guba (2013) further emphasized this point by stating researchers bring certain perspectives and beliefs that guide their actions throughout the entire inquiry process, and that they can sometimes overlook or fail to acknowledge how shaping research problems and the central questions guide study. Creswell (2014) described epistemology as a philosophical assumption regarding the question of how knowledge is acquired, arguing that individuals acquire knowledge from the meanings of their experiences and interactions with others. Denzin (2013) and Lincoln (2013) stated epistemology was the manner of studying a phenomenon as it appears in our experience both from a first-person point of view and from those of other research participants. Within qualitative research, the epistemology assumption is the notion that the researcher interacts with participants to observe, explore, analyze, and derive meaning that leads to a greater insight and understanding of the phenomenon under study. I was drawn to the topic of *tyro* transition because of my own experiences aspiring to be a successful superintendent and questions I had when beginning the role.

One of my research goals was to conduct a study which valued human experience and individuals' views of reality. Narrative inquiry was appealing because of its emphasis on human experiences, interactions, beliefs, and ideas in the form of personal accounts and stories. I wanted

to not only explore these experiences, interactions, and influences shared by participants, but I wanted to further bring meaning by describing how these have been challenging, important, and transformative in a way that offered insight to the roles of superintendents. I was very interested in knowing how my experiences in all roles prior to the superintendency might somehow be connected to others. In addition, I wanted to look at others' experiences and compare them to my own knowledge gained through the *tyro* transition to see how this might shape the understanding of the role and the traits needed to be successful. More importantly, I wanted to see how the knowledge gained from this study might help inform the direction of future trainings for aspiring superintendents.

My philosophical views regarding ontology in this research design embraced the idea that multiple realities exist. In this research study, I adhered to an ontological position which valued a participant's view of reality. I collected data from multiple participants and sources which included interviews and the researcher's and participants' reflexive journals to produce multiple themes composed of the actual words and phrases reflecting different participants' views of reality.

Axiology. Axiology is the philosophical assumption concerned with the role of values and the nature of ethical behavior in research. In further describing the nature of ethical behavior in research, Creswell (2014) claimed all ethical tensions are part of everyday life and the practice of research. All researchers have a duty and responsibility to disclose biases and assumptions which might influence the credibility and reliability of a study or risk the unethical treatment of others. Reflexivity was embedded into this research design as an ethical and accountable process to achieve a critical self-awareness of the dual role as researcher and participant, as well as how actions and behaviors might influence others and impact the findings from this study.

Reflexivity. Creswell (2014) described reflexivity as an explicit form of self-consciousness regarding the values, positions, social, or political views of the researcher, and how these could potentially influence the research design or any phase of the inquiry process. Bishop and Shepherd (2011) claimed reflexivity in some forms of qualitative research can be confusing, particularly in studies such as narrative inquiry where the researcher seeks to maximize his/her role compared to other types of studies where a researcher looks for ways of minimizing his/her role, or relationship, with participants. To mitigate any temptation of maximizing my dual role as observer-participant or becoming self-absorbed with only my personal experiences in the research, I adhered to several steps recommended by Anderson (2006) for conducting autoethnography, including: serving as a complete member in the social world being studied, engaging in reflexivity to analyze data on self, being visibly active and present in the text, including others in similar situations in data collection, and remaining committed to theoretical analysis.

Through my position as a first-time superintendent in a K-12 public school district, I served as a complete member in the social world being studied. This did not come without challenges. As Marilyn Strathern (1987) discussed in her overview of autoethnography, complete member researchers must manage multiple identities. Unlike other participants in the research setting, my complete membership status meant I was constantly balancing the functions of observing, documenting, recording, reflecting, and analyzing with daily reflexivity. In an overview of the use of reflexivity in qualitative research, Charlotte Davies (2012) highlighted the deeper level of awareness self-conscious introspection provided researchers seeking a better understanding of the reciprocal influence between themselves, the setting, and the participants. Atkinson, Coffey, and Delmont (2003) provided a similar analysis of reflexivity by stating:

Autoethnographers as authors frame their accounts with personal reflexive views of the

self. Their ethnographic data are situated within their personal experience and sense

making. They themselves form part of the representational processes in which they are

engaging and are part of the story they are telling. (p. 62)

Analytical autoethnography posits researchers must be visibly and actively in the text, but

not in isolation; they should include other participants in the research. Incorporating a purposeful

sample of current superintendents during their *tyro* transition was a way I ensured that I included

others in similar situations during data collection. Chang (2008) and Anderson (2006) claimed

that autoethnographic researchers should be committed to theoretical analysis. Trait-leadership

theory provided the theoretical framework and analytical lens demonstrating my commitment to

theoretical analysis throughout the research process.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study was to examine, utilizing a narrative inquiry research design

and autoethnography, the experiences of four superintendents, three men and one woman, as well

as my own experiences, during our *tyro* transition as representatives of a diverse group of K-12

public school districts superintendents. All participants were appointed to the *tyro* role of

superintendent during the 2017-2018 school year and began their *tyro* transition on July 1, 2018.

Several qualitative researchers have combined autoethnographic methods with narrative

inquiry to guide empirical study (Eisenbach, 2016), yet a review of the literature did not identify

previous autoethnographic narrative inquiries focused on the topic of a superintendent's *tyro*

transition. The rationale for combining narrative inquiry with autoethnography methods was

based on my desire to study the lived experience and interactions of participants within a natural

setting of the *tyro* superintendency, framed within the context of trait leadership. Ellis et al.

(2011) captured the essence of narrative inquiry and autoethnography by stating, "As humans, our lives are shaped by the stories woven through our experiences; we make sense of our world and our lives through our stories" (p. 4). The application of narrative inquiry and autoethnography provided a method well suited for presenting – as a story – the study of experience, in what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described as a process of looking "inward and outward, backward and forward, into the past, present, and future of experience" (p. 50).

Autoethnography provided a way for me to include my own lived experiences into the data collection, analysis, and descriptive narrative. Creswell (2014) stated, "Data collected in a narrative study should be analyzed for the stories they have to tell, according to a chronology of unfolding events, turning points, and epiphanies" (p. 189).

Research Questions

This narrative inquiry and autoethnographic study fused together my personal stories and experiences of the transition to a superintendency with those of other participants, forming a rich data base for analysis and interpretation. The following research questions, crafted within the frame of trait leadership, guided the study:

1. What are the lived experience challenges and successes of transitioning to a first superintendency?

2. What leadership traits are used by superintendents to overcome the challenges of the *tyro* superintendent?

Research Design and Rationale

The research design for this study was composed of narrative inquiry and autoethnography and was based upon the works of several prominent qualitative researchers such as Creswell (2014), Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Chang (2008), and Ellis (2004). The

narrative inquiry design process recommended by Creswell (2014) was combined with the six steps described by Chang (2008) for conducting autoethnography.

Narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry was chosen as a qualitative approach to inquiry for this study because it is well suited for exploring and seeking understanding of people's lives and the meaning individuals or groups affix to a human problem or social issue (Creswell, 2014). Creswell defined narrative inquiry as a literary form of qualitative research which is well suited for studies where participants willingly tell their stories and share their experiences in detail. Stories reported in narrative inquiry provided a microanalytical view and insight into personal experiences and interactions in a natural setting. Marshall and Rossman (2011) emphasized qualitative research was an "interactive process," a methodology which values a participant's view of reality. Autoethnography is a considered a form of autobiographical narrative inquiry that seeks to examine the personal experience of the researcher and participants within a larger cultural or social context.

Autoethnography. Similar to other types of qualitative research, autoethnography is a qualitative form of inquiry promoting analytical, objective, subjective, and theoretical approaches to research while adhering to the traditional processes and standards of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Anderson, 2006; Chang, 2008; Jensen, 2013). I was intrigued by autoethnography as a method for analyzing personal experiences through a cultural lens, facilitating a researcher's ability to set a scene, tell a story, and connect experience to theory in a broader context. In this research study, autoethnography provided a process for what Taber (2010) described as "pushing methodological boundaries in order to address research questions that cannot be explored by traditional methods" (p.6).

My personal experiences allowed me to do this research during my own *tyro* transition, uniquely positioning me for this autoethnography. Coles (1989) states that the "more palpable the connection between the story and the reader's story, the better the chance that something will happen" (p. 120). By serving as a superintendent committed to improving the *tyro* transition for those in the future, this research allows me to leverage my own experiences to create a greater connection with the reader that can lead to a call for action in improving research on the role of superintendents, trait leadership, *tyro* transitions, and preparation. The mean age of K-12 school superintendents is between 54 and 55 years of age, limiting the time individuals who have served in that role can influence others prior to retiring from the field (AASA, 2008). Additionally, in 2000, 5.1% of superintendents were members of an ethnic minority, of which 37.5% identified as African American and 14.3% identified as Hispanic (Gates, Ringel, Santibanez, Chung, & Ross, 2003). As a superintendent experiencing my own *tyro* transition at the age of 33 who is also a part of an ethnic minority, my study will contribute to research aiming to better the experiences for future superintendents and increase the contribution to research by adding more diverse perspectives that have traditionally been less prominent.

Designing and conducting research that combined narrative inquiry with autoethnography was a labor intensive and complex task. In addition to drawing upon the works of prominent qualitative researchers, I also reached out to many others through email and phone calls, such as Sanchez (2016), who was generous in approving my requests to use or modify instruments and protocols he developed and used in his study (Appendix I).

Research Setting

In addition to my own experiences in my district, I requested and received approval from four superintendents to participate in the study and from their employing district to serve as

research sites for this study (Appendix A). For the purposes of this study, I assigned the following fictional names to each district.

Table 2

Case Study Participants

Fictional District Name	Location of District (Region)	District Enrollment
District 1 Fall SD	Mid-West	3,450
District 2 Winter SD	West	6,061
District 3 Spring SD	Mid-West	7,348
District 4 Summer SD	West	7,000

Selection of Research Participants

In qualitative research studies there are no set guidelines for determining the sample size of a participation population (Patton, 2005). In narrative inquiry, Creswell (2014) recommended a single individual who is the subject of the research serve as the sole participant in the study. In autoethnography, the researcher serves as the primary subject of inquiry and source of data, but often not in isolation; other participants may be included in the study.

To ensure multiple perspectives were included in the research study, I initially sought participants who were beginning their first superintendency at the same time as myself. I intentionally selected participants who self-identified as first-time school superintendents. I was able to identify participants that were about to begin their first superintendency through professional contacts and references. I sent both an email and letter of invitation to participate in the study to five individuals who were appointed to their first superintendency during the 2017-

2018 school year with a start date of July 1, 2018. I received responses back from four

individuals agreeing to participate in the study (Appendix B). I provided each person who agreed

to participate in the study with a participant consent form (Appendix C). During the process of

scheduling individual interviews with each participant, I answered questions about the consent

form and asked each person to sign the document and return it to me prior to the individual

interview. In an effort to reduce perceived risks by participants in this research, participants were

assured of the confidentiality of the data (See Appendix D) and the right to not participate in the

research or to withdraw from the project at any time. All participants were assigned a

pseudonym.

Instrumentation

       Instrument and protocol development. The primary means for collecting data were a

demographic questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and reflexive journals. Literature on the

traits needed during a superintendent's *tyro* transition and trait-based leadership informed the

development of the demographic questionnaire and interview guide. The demographic

questionnaire and interview questions used in this study were created, with permission, by

modifying instruments from Sanchez (2016). The format of the semi-structured interview

facilitated the ability to create a structured yet relaxed setting for obtaining the narrative

responses of participants' backgrounds, experiences, and transition to the role of a

superintendent. The demographic questionnaire helped obtain biographical, educational, and

work experience data from participants in an effort to achieve accuracy and trustworthiness of

information.

       Pilot test. Creswell (2013) recommended researchers consider the use of a pilot test to

refine data collection plans, develop and refine research questions, frame questions, detect

observer bias, and collect background information. The semi-structured interview questions (Appendix G) were piloted with one first-year superintendent. The pilot test was conducted in July 2018 with the intended purpose to validate the amount of anticipated time required to conduct the individual interview and focus group, in addition to verifying clarity in understanding the research questions (Creswell, 2013). The pilot test was conducted virtually, using the same method used for data collection. The pilot test was audio recorded to test that part of the research protocol, and then the audio file from the pilot test was transcribed. At the conclusion of the pilot test, the demographic questionnaire and entire interview guide was reviewed with the pilot test participant, and minor adjustments were made to the wording of several interview questions based on feedback. The overall results of the pilot test indicated the interview protocols and instruments were well designed and easily understood by the participant. The online platform used for the individual interview was more than adequate, affording both privacy and freedom from distractions. The new demographic questionnaire and adjusted instrument for the semi-structured interview resulted in data representing the life narrative and lived experiences, interactions, beliefs, and ideas of the participants. In preparation for data collection, a participant contact summary sheet was constructed to facilitate submission of items, track interactions, and record notes about any questions requiring clarification during the interviews.

Data Collection

Approval from the Institutional Review Board was granted from Northwest Nazarene University (Appendix I). Data collection was composed of a demographic survey, semi structured interviews, a researcher journal, and review of participant journals. In qualitative research, data is collected from multiple sources to establish a more holistic and comprehensive

understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2013). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) claimed semi-structured interviews provided a method well suited for conducting in-depth narrative inquiry of participants. Once each of the participants in the study had completed and returned the signed consent forms, they were provided with a copy of the demographic questionnaire (Appendix J). Each participant was instructed to complete the demographic questionnaire and return it to me before the semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interviews were given using a phenomenological approach in order to create meaning from prior work experiences and beliefs shared by participants. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) claimed the phenomenological approach is well suited for researchers seeking to understand how individuals make sense of their experiences and perceive their circumstances within the context of their own lives through their own terminology. For the purposes of this study, questions were constructed to obtain data on participants' experiences, work history, and pressures impacting their role as a school superintendent. Guided questions were used, in combination with open-ended questions and prompts, encouraging participants to describe their experiences and share their stories freely on the topic under investigation.

The first set of questions was composed of open-guided and open-ended questions designed to obtain descriptive data on experiences and to focus on a participant's background. Phenomenological questions should be reflective and exploratory in nature (Smith et al., 2009). The second set of questions was designed to be reflective in nature and explore participants' experiences and interactions within the systems of the school district (Appendix D). The questions asked after the first month were as follows:

Table 3

First Month Interview Questions

Descriptive Questions	Reflective Questions
1. Tell me why you chose a path to a superintendency?	6. What experiences in the role so far have had the biggest impact on you?
2. Please describe your work experience prior to the role of a school superintendent.	7. What can you tell me about your first month on the job that is different from what we discussed so far?
3. Tell me about your perceived level of preparation for the role of a superintendent?	8. Which support factors have been the most helpful to you so far?
4. Describe the support and encouragement you received from others in making your decision to pursue this role (personal and/or professional).	9. Have you felt prepared for everything you encountered in the first month?
5. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your journey to this role?	10. What excites and concerns you the most about your first semester?
	11. What do you hope or foresee as your greatest challenges during your *tyro (novice superintendent)* transition?
	12. What do you hope or foresee as your greatest successes during your *tyro (novice superintendent)* transition?
	13. This will be my final question. What else would you like to tell me that I did not ask today?

The questions asked during the semi-structured interview after the first semester are

below. The first set of questions asked participants to provide information on their districts.

Table 4

First Semester Interview Questions

Descriptive Questions	Reflective Questions
1. What have you learned about your district that has surprised you the most?	5. What experiences have you had in the role of a superintendent which have had the biggest impact on you?
2. What have you learned about your district that you are most proud of?	6. Which support factors have been the most helpful to you during your time as school superintendent?
3. What do you wish you knew about your district coming in as superintendent that you know now?	7. What are the biggest challenges and successes you faced in your *tyro (novice superintendent)* transition?
4. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your district?	8. How have you addressed the biggest challenges you faced during your first semester as a superintendent?
	9. Please answer yes or no to let me know if any of the following traits, based on the trait leadership model, have been important for you to develop or utilize during your first semester as a school superintendent to be more effective?
	Traits: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Openness, Neuroticism, Honesty/Integrity, Charisma, Intelligence, Creativity, Achievement Motivation, Need for Power, Oral/Written Communication, Interpersonal Skills, General Problem-Solving Skills, Decision Making, Technical Knowledge, Management.
	10. Were any of these traits more important than the other? Why or why not? Rank the top five.
	11. Can you share any stories or examples where one or more of these traits were utilized?
	12. Would you share a story with me about a challenging time or situation for you during your first semester as a superintendent that you weren't prepared for?

13. Looking ahead, what experience from your first semester has best prepared you for this role moving forward?

14. This will be my final question. What else would you like to tell me that I did not ask today?

At the beginning of each of the semi-structured interviews, each participant completed a consent form and selected a pseudonym for the purposes of protecting their identities. Each participant was assured that all collected information would be protected and treated in a confidential manner. Each interview was conducted and recorded virtually using the GoToMeeting platform and lasted approximately a half hour to an hour. The recordings were later transcribed, labeled, and cataloged for analysis.

Reflexive journals. The use of journaling in qualitative research is a method well suited for gaining insight on a topic which might not be obtained solely through semi-structured interviews (Krueger & Casey, 2014). Journaling in research can enhance data quality and serves to assist researchers in making the leap from raw data to abstractions explaining phenomena in the context in which it is examined (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008). This method of data collection was instrumental in confirming emerging themes from initial data analysis of the semi-structured interviews. All the research participants in the sample population were asked to journal their experiences as a superintendent during their first semester on a weekly basis. The participants were given no parameters for the length of their journal entry, but were given basic guidance for a topic each week which allowed them to contribute to this research. Research on reflective journaling demonstrates that conditions necessary for reflection include perceived trustworthiness of the journal reader, clear expectations, and feedback (Kerka, 1996). Participants were given the option to type or hand-write their journal entries and were provided a

cloud-based secure server each week for submission. The participants could go back and edit their entries and/or submit late entries if they were unable to do a weekly submission.

Analytical Methods

There are several analytical approaches researchers use to analyze data collected within a narrative inquiry and autoethnographic study. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) claimed that narrative analysis begins with an understanding of the term "narrative." In narrative research, participants share their experiences in a manner that positions events and characters in time and space in order to make meaning of the lived experiences within the context of the phenomena under investigation. Narrative analysis in this study involved reading and re-reading participants' interview transcripts and reflexive journals, organizing data into chronological order, and searching the text for characters and plot. Similar to other methods of qualitative analysis, narrative analysis required reading interview transcripts, making notes in the margins, sorting the data into categories, and discovering patterns and emerging themes. For the purposes of this study, I combined narrative analysis with Creswell's (2013) steps for analyzing and interpreting participant's data by organizing the data, transcribing the data, exploring, and coding the data.

Creswell (2014) emphasized the process of coding as an essential part of analysis. All interview and journal data were incorporated into the coding process. All data analysis was conducted manually using a coding scheme incorporating both inductive and deductive orientations, InVivo coding (participants own words or phrases), and predetermined categories to help organize the data while searching for patterns of similarity, differences, frequency, causation, and correspondence. A table was used to organize text data into the following fields: interview data, secondary data, field notes, and reflective information. Transcripts from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed to produce words, labels, or direct phrases to categorize the

text and organize the data into codes and topical groupings or clusters. A constant comparative analysis was performed by reading through each interview transcript for a comparison of themes to produce a composite description communicating the essence of participants' experiences. At the completion of constant comparative analysis, thematic units were created. The themes were presented to participants virtually for discussion, triangulating data, and member checking.

The coding process was performed separately from, but in tandem with, a person not attached to this study. This was done in order to mitigate the chance of bias or undue influence in the analysis process. In order to ensure consistency of how text data was segmented, labeled, and classified, the researcher and the coder both adhered to the following process: initially read and then re-read the interview transcripts, made notes in the margins as necessary, divided text data into segments, used participants exact words and phrases (InVivo coding), and collapsed codes into themes. The coding of qualitative data, as Creswell (2014) claimed, is a judgment call impacted by the philosophical assumptions of the researcher and theoretical framework guiding inquiry. Creswell further argued that for these reasons, other researchers might analyze identical text data using identical processes and methods and achieve different results, or interpretations of the data. The results of the co-coding process used in this study revealed agreement between myself and the individual conducting analysis with slight variations among the frequency of codes identified and the InVivo (participants' exact words and phrases) codes used to segment data. While the use of another person (external to this study) in the coding process was helpful in the data analysis process, given this type of qualitative study, the use of a co-coder cannot mitigate researcher bias alone. Further in this chapter, a more detailed discussion regarding researcher assumptions and biases is discussed in an effort to communicate transparency and the care taken in conducting research in an ethical and responsible manner.

In narrative inquiry and autoethnography, text is analyzed within a social, cultural, and historical (or chronological context). Chang (2008) stated that autoethnographers are expected to, "review, fracture, categorize, rearrange, probe, select, deselect, and sometimes simply gaze as the data in order comprehend how ideas, behaviors, and experiences interrelate and what they mean to in relation to others" (p.127). Analysis of autoethnographic data was conducted by reviewing my autobiographical timeline, personal memos, self-observations, artifacts from my life, self-reflections, and reflective journal and coding the text while looking for trait leadership themes to transform the data into meaningful explanations of my *tryo* transition as a superintendent. I organized my autoethnographic timeline, personal memos, observations, and journal into chronological order by year and month. This approach was based on the research of Huberman and Miles (1994) who recommended arranging events and experiences in by chronological time periods, sorting them into several categories.

The entire internal data set (researcher data) was reviewed in a search for recurring topics, themes, and patterns. Chang (2008) described the search for topics in analysis of autoethnographic data as the process of "identifying specific subjects pertaining to people, places, ideas, or activities" (p.87). McCurdy, Spradley, and Shandy (2005) argued that looking for themes in analysis of autoethnographic data was an important step in the research process. McCurdy et al. (2005) offered a definition of a cultural theme as a, "position or postulate, declared or implied, and usually controlling behavior or stimulating activity, which is tactically approved or openly promoted in society" (p.78). In the analysis of my autoethnographic data, an effort was made to identify similarities and differences between my background, pre-superintendent experiences, and trainings and those of the other participants in this study. This

approach was consistent with the recommendations made by Chang (2008) to analyze autoethnographic data by considering relationship between self and others.

The analysis of inclusion and omission of data was an important step in the data analysis process. Data analysis frequently focuses on what is included in a data set. The absence of data in a data set can also shed light on the research process and provide valuable insight. Data omission can occur for multiple reasons, such as the fact that some elements did not occur in a participant's life, and could also be the result of unintentional or intentional exclusion in the recording of an event or experience. Omission of data can reveal a researcher's dislike of, unfamiliarity with, dissociation from, or ignorance of a specific phenomenon in life (Chang, 2008). During the data analysis process, the researcher attempted to identify intentional and unintentional inclusions and omissions. A primary goal in the data analysis was to remain committed to theoretical analysis. The analysis was framed using Trait Leadership based on the Trait Leadership model (Zaccaro et al., 2004) as an analytical lens in efforts to explore my own leader traits within the context of my *tyro* transition as a school superintendent.

Data analysis and interpretation were critical to autoethnography because they facilitated the transformation of fragments of autoethnographic data into meaningful descriptions of findings. Additionally, data analysis was differentiated from interpretation because the "data interpretation focused on finding cultural meanings beyond the data or making sense of the data" (Chang, 2008, p.127). I engaged in a combination of analytical-interpretative, constructive-interpretative styles of autoethnographic writing by interweaving stories from the `past and connecting them to the present using a descriptive narrative to communicate the meaning of lived experience, interactions, understanding of self, and relationship to others within a shared group. This narrative will be presented in Chapter 4.

Researcher Assumptions and Bias

Serving in a dual role as a researcher and participant, I was not an impartial observer in this study. I brought several assumptions and biases into the inquiry process. Therefore, it was critical that I disclosed as much information as possible about my assumptions, personal values, and preferences while assessing in what ways these could impact participants or influence research outcomes. Lincoln and Guba (2013) argued an awareness and acknowledgment of the researcher's personal values and assumptions greatly added to the reliability and trustworthiness of the data. At the time of this study, the researcher, a *tyro* superintendent, was employed as the Superintendent of Fargo Public Schools and was a doctoral student at Northwest Nazarene University. My wife was also a student at the university at the time of this study.

Exploring the background and experiences of participants within their natural environment facilitated my ability to achieve a greater understanding of the formal and informal academic and social systems of the university. Creswell (2014) claimed qualitative researchers face numerous complex issues throughout the research process and provided several recommendations to follow, including: protect the anonymity of the participants, treat the participants with dignity and respect, avoid any deception about the nature of the study by clearly articulating the purpose, obtain written permission from the participants, present the facts when reporting the research findings, and consider seriously whether or not to share personal information. During the semi-structured interviews, my primary role was to guide participants by following an interview guide and protocol designed to elicit a response describing experiences, stories, and beliefs. I fully acknowledged that, though there have been similarities between my lived experiences and those of the participants, the situational and personal circumstances of the researcher and participants were different.

Trustworthiness of the Data

The researcher ensured the trustworthiness and reliability of the data in this study by incorporating triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. Creswell (2012) describes triangulation as the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, multiple forms of data (interviews and field notes), or other methods of data collection used in identifying themes and descriptions. The researcher used the technique of member checking with participants in this study to determine the accuracy of themes, findings, and interpretations. Member checking was also facilitated using a digital letter sent to each participant in efforts to ensure that data from the semi-structured interviews was accurately depicted (Appendix K). For the purposes of this study, triangulation was achieved through the use of multiple sources of data from multiple participants, such as through individual interviews, reflective journals, and a demographic questionnaire. Additionally, the researcher's use of field notes and a reflective journal were critical in capturing the accuracy of the data collected.

Bracketing

Bracketing is achieved by understanding the researcher's narrative in relationship to the research topic (Gearing, 2004). I provided my own narrative representation followed by the narratives of select participants. Participants' stories were chosen for their unique experiences which represent the themes shared across the larger sample of this study. Following each of the individual narratives, I offer my reflections and reflexive insights through an interactive and supportive voice. I chose to make my experiences, opinions, thoughts, and feelings visible and an acknowledged part of the research process by keeping weekly reflective journals during my *tyro* transition and using them in writing up the research. This allowed me to create transparency in the research process and explore the impact of critical self-reflection on research design. The

supportive voice integrates my observations into the narrative to create a respectful distance from the participants' voices and to be clear on whose story is whose. The interactive voice is intended to communicate the dialogue between the researcher and the participants for the reader.

Ethical Considerations

Weis and Fine (2000) highlighted the importance of ethical research by emphasizing the degree of care which must be taken to identify and mitigate any potential issues (actual or perceived) where power between the researchers and the participant can be abused. The researcher took a deliberate and methodical approach to ensure that all participants understood the purpose and procedures of the study, the potential benefits, and that their privacy was respected at all times. The importance of voluntary participation was emphasized throughout this study by ensuring each participant understood participation in this study was voluntary and by obtaining individual consent from each party. Safeguards were established for every phase of this study to ensure the protection of participants from any potential of physical or mental harm.

Limitations

Ellis (2007) considers that the main criterion to bear in mind is that "…autoethnography itself is an ethical practice" (p. 26). Writing autoethnographically entails being ethical and honest about the events described as well as the content of words expressed by all the people involved in these events.

There were several limitations to this study. The accuracy of responses may have been limited by the participant's own recollection or belief of events. Additionally, thought they were provided definitions each of the traits from the Zaccaro et al. (2004) Trait Leadership model, participants reflected on their usage of the traits based on their own interpretations of what those traits mean.

Delimitations

The research design, sample size, and management of data in autoethnography and qualitative study all presented delimitations in achieving the overall objective to explore experiences and factors impacting school superintendent's *tyro* transition. The administration and collection of qualitative data from open-ended questions, interviews, and journals provided an abundance of opportunities, yet was difficult to manage.

The scope of this research was delimited to a sample population of superintendents during their *tyro* transition. The outcomes of this study reflect the experiences of superintendents during their first semester within a host of district and city settings in a specific school district environment. The research findings are not necessarily representative of the larger superintendent population in current US School districts.

Chapter IV

Results

"Autoethnographers as authors frame their accounts with personal reflexive views of the

self. Their ethnographic data are situated within their personal experience and sense

making. They themselves form part of the representational processes in which they are

engaging and are part of the story they are telling (Atkinson et al., 2003, p. 62)."

Introduction

This chapter reports the research findings and results from this qualitative

autoethnographic exploration of the *tyro* transition to the role of a school Superintendent. This

chapter is divided into five parts: participant's demographic data, participant profiles, researcher

self-narrative, research findings in accordance with research questions aligned with emerging

themes, and summary. The data collection and analysis were guided by narrative inquiry and

autoethnographic methodology, while the Zaccaro et al. (2004) model of Trait Leadership

provided a framework for exploring participants' leadership traits that were used or developed

during their *tyro* transition. Individual interviews and reflective journal entries from the sources

were the main source of the study's primary data. By exploring the participants' lived

experiences during their first semesters serving as superintendents, several themes emerged

regarding leadership traits used by these districts leaders to overcome the challenge of the *tyro*

transition.

Several themes emerged across the sample population during analysis of the data

collected from semi-structured interviews and the reflexive journals. These themes related to

challenges of the *tyro* transitions and included board-superintendent relations, change

management, and personnel issues. Successes of the *tyro* transition included building

relationships with cabinet members, implementing systems throughout the organization, and developing trust amongst staff members. Leadership traits from the Zaccaro et al. (2004) Trait Leadership Model frequently used or developed by superintendents to overcome the challenges of the *tyro* superintendent included oral and written communication, general problem solving, interpersonal skills, honesty/integrity, and decision making. Leadership traits from the Zaccaro et al. (2004) Trait Leadership Model used least by superintendents to overcome the challenges of the *tyro* superintendent include neuroticism and need for power.

The results collected from primary data in this study demonstrated the significance of the superintendent's relationship with the Board of Education. Across all participants, various dynamics with school boards were listed as new learning experiences for the superintendents. Participants also expressed successes of building relationships with their cabinet team and the need for superintendents to utilize or develop the traits of effective oral and written communication and general problem solving during their *tyro* transition.

Autoethnographies written through narrative inquiry may provide variance in the degree to which the author includes themselves in the research. The findings in this study provide a personalized chronicle that fuses together identities, experiences, backgrounds, stories, and situations into an illustration of an educational leadership journey of the researcher and a sample population of superintendents during their *tyro* transitions. Another key characteristic of narrative inquiry and autoethnography is setting aside one's personal experiences to avoid assumptions, presumptions, or bias that may soil the research process. To accomplish this, the autoethnographer must understand his or her own story and narrative related to the focus and questions of the research study. Within the results of the study, I presented my own experiences and narrative first, followed by the experiences and narrative of the participants. The stories

presented in this study from the participants were selected for their specific experiences that model the themes shared across the greater sample of the research. I offer my own reflections and experiences following each of the participants' narratives; my reflections are presented in a voice that infuses my observations into the narrative to create a separation between the participants' experiences and my own.

To accurately represent the participants' voices, experiences, and memories, I use direct quotes and actual phrases from the journal entries and interviews. These direct quotes show the distinction between the participants and the researcher in both content and voice. The descriptive narrative of the results sought to provide meaning of a superintendent's *tyro* transition by describing the journey of their first semester as viewed from participants' lived experiences. The Zaccaro et al. (2004) Trait Leadership Model provided a framework to understand leader traits and their influence on leader effectiveness based on prior research of leader traits and effectiveness. As determined by the Zaccaro et al. (2004) model, distal and proximal traits used to determine leader effectiveness include the following: achievement motivation, agreeableness, challenges, charisma, conscientiousness, creativity, decision making, extraversion, general problem solving, honesty, integrity, intelligence, interpersonal skills, management skills, need for power, neuroticism, oral and written communication, and technical knowledge. The lived experiences of superintendents during their *tyro* transition demonstrated a need to develop or utilize each of these traits, however some were developed or utilized far more frequently than others.

There are several reasons why an important component of the narrative research was in the understanding of how the participants came into their roles as superintendents. First, the past professional and personal experiences of the superintendent participants gave insight into the

beliefs, reactions, attitudes, and expectations they first displayed and then continue to form when beginning the transition into the *tyro* superintendent position. Next, diving deeper into the professional experiences of the participants helped reveal the reasons participants chose to pursue and ultimately accept the role of a school superintendent, as well as presented an understanding of how significant their *tyro* transition was to their desired outcome of long-term success. Finally, their professional history and the characteristics of the school district they lead plays an important role in any superintendent's transition.

Findings in Accordance with Research Questions and Emerging Themes

The study results are presented using several methods to best describe the emergent themes, including a descriptive self-narrative, an integrative self-reflection and theoretical analysis of the participants' experiences, and a discussion of my own experiences as they related to the research questions. I identified patterns and common themes across all participants (including the researcher) in the study using a variety of qualitative data analysis and interpretation strategies (Chang, 2008; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Hatch, 2002). Member checking and cross reference were used for each of the emerging themes. The final report of study findings was comprised of my own personal narrative that aligned with the stories of the other participants in the form of vignettes. This format was utilized to address emerging themes and research questions, as displayed in Table 5.

Table 5

Research Questions and Emerging Themes

Research Questions	Emerging Themes

1. What are the lived experience challenges and successes of transitioning to a first superintendency?	Challenges:
	    Board-Superintendent Relations
	    Change Management
	    Personnel Issues
	
	Successes:
	    Building Relationships with Cabinet Members
	    Implementing Systems Throughout the Organization
	    Developing Trust Amongst Staff Members

2. What leadership traits are used by superintendents to overcome the challenges of the *tyro* superintendent?	Oral and Written Communication General Problem Solving Interpersonal Skills Honesty/Integrity Decision Making

Narrative inquiry requires a purposeful gathering of lived experiences, stories, and experiences shared by others followed by the identification of commonalities between them. This narrative inquiry fused together my own experience of the *tyro* transition with others who experienced the same process during the 2018-2019 school year. I created this group's narrative by piecing together the variety of experiences (both similar and different) in order to communicate the leadership journey of a very diverse group of superintendents during their *tyro* transition. The discussion findings begin with my own personal narrative, which explains my own background to the *tyro* transition and includes the challenges and successes I experienced during my first semester as a school district superintendent. This narrative includes my own

reflections and demonstrates my views of reality about the experiences that impacted my

transition to the role of superintendent. Following my personal narrative, I present the personal

histories and reflections of the study's participants. The participants selected in this study

represent superintendents during their *tyro* transition at districts of various sizes location

throughout varying regions of the United States. They were each chosen for their commonality in

starting a *tyro* transition and for their unique experiences. In order to provide the reader with a

greater understanding of participant backgrounds and the school districts they work for, a profile

of each individual in the research is offered.

Profile of Participants in the Research

  Steven. Steven is a superintendent in the Midwest region of the United States and

graduated from college with his academic major focused on elementary education. Steven's

educational and career goals were to pursue a superintendency, and it has always been a career

goal of his to lead from the highest level of macro leadership in a school district. Steven is 57

years old and identifies as a Caucasian male. Steven's native language is English, and he has had

a wide variety of experiences in education. Not only has Steven served as a classroom teacher for

grades 5 and 6, but he has also served as an interpreter tutor in deaf education. His administrative

experiences include serving as an elementary principal and the principal of a K-6 school that

transitioned to a middle school. Steven's professional history also includes experience outside

the United States as the Director of School Leadership for the country's government schools.

  Based on his composite total of 35 years of experience in K-12 education as a teacher,

principal, and director, Steven stated that after a month into his *tyro* transition, he felt that his

educational leadership experiences had well prepared him for the role. Steven leads the Spring

School District (pseudonym) in the Midwest region of the United States. The Spring School

District has over 7,000 students and consists of eleven elementary schools (K-5), three middle schools (6-8), one K-8 school, two high schools and one alternative high school.

    Jack. Jack is a superintendent in the Western region of the United States and graduated from college with his academic major focused on chemistry. He later received a master's in education. Jack is 55 years old and identifies as a Caucasian male. Jack's native language is English, and he has had a wide variety of experiences in education. Jack never had the aspiration to be a superintendent, but says the opportunity presented himself throughout his career path. He says that after starting a career in education, he developed a desire to do more and provide solutions to challenges at a higher level in each role he held, which caused him to move into administration and, ultimately, the superintendency. Jack started his career as a teacher and has served in the role of teacher, teacher on special assignment, assistant principal, principal, executive director of secondary education, and assistant superintendent.

    Based on his experiences as an assistant superintendent in a district of similar size, Jack felt that he was better prepared for the role of a superintendent because of unique challenges he encountered in his prior role, including experience with budgets and subsequent personnel decisions that had to be made. Jack is also grateful that when he served as an assistant superintendent, the superintendent of his district worked closely with him and gave him a lot of responsibility to prepare him for the role. Jack serves the Winter School District (pseudonym), which is in the Western region of the United States. The Winter School District has over 6,000 students and consists of seven elementary schools (K-5), one middle school (6-8), one high school, and one charter school.

    Cecilia. Cecilia is a superintendent in the Midwest region of the United States and graduated from college with her academic major focused on physical education. She later

received a master's in health education. Cecilia is 47 years old and identifies as an African American female. Cecilia's native language is English, and she has had a wide variety of experiences, including a career outside of education before becoming a teacher. Cecilia says that once opportunities began to present themselves as she moved into administrative roles in education, she began to aspire to become a superintendent due to her desire to impact change. She stated that knowing there were few African American women in the role of a school superintendent furthered her ambition. Cecilia started her educational career as a middle school health and physical education teacher, then moved into the roles of assistant principal, principal, consultant, and school leadership officer for secondary schools. Cecilia's professional experience allowed her to work in multiple districts in various states prior to starting her role as a school superintendent.

Based on her experiences as a school leadership officer, Cecilia felt that she was more prepared for the role of a superintendent when she received the job than she had been when she first began exploring the opportunity a couple of years earlier. She felt that the increased level of preparation is a result of her former supervisor providing giving her increased responsibilities in recent years. Cecilia serves the Fall School District (pseudonym), which is in the Midwest region of the United States. The Fall School District has over 3,000 students and consists of three high schools.

Ronald. Ronald is a superintendent in the Western region of the United States and graduated from college with his academic major focused on education administration. He later received a doctorate in education. Ronald is 53 years old and identifies as a Hispanic male. Ronald's native language is Spanish and he has had a wide variety of experiences in education. Ronald stated that he never aspired to be a superintendent, but said the opportunity presented

itself through leaders that pushed him to move up in his career. Ronald stated that he always wanted to be a classroom teacher, but a visionary principal that supported him encouraged him to do more. He said that this leader introduced him to other principals that mentored him and provided him an opportunity to move into education. Ronald started his career as a teacher and has served in the role of teacher, assistant principal, principal, and school support officer in a variety of districts in the United States. His experience spans school districts of varying sizes.

Based on his experiences, Ronald felt he was prepared for the role of a superintendent. Ronald serves the Summer School District (pseudonym), which is in the Western region of the United States. The Summer School District has over 7,000 students and consists of eight elementary schools (K-5), four middle schools (6-8), five high schools, and four charter schools.

The Researcher's Journey of The *Tyro* Transition

Utilizing self-narratives in an autoethnographic study helps the reader's comprehension of the researcher's personal experiences and perspective in relation to the other participants within the study (Chang, 2008). The method of autoethnography as a research tool has been explained as ethnographic in how it is created, cultural in how is interpreted, and autobiographical in context (Chang, 2008). My own personal narrative is ethnographic in nature; I report on my values, beliefs, experiences, situations, and firsthand accounts from my own history and present position within multiple contexts and settings in order to report on the background, pressures, and interactions that impacted my *tyro* transition. My personal narrative is drawn from the interpretation and analysis of data of my field notes, reflections, and autoethnographic data. Interpretation strategies and data analysis consisted of identifying recurring patterns, determining relationships between self and others, comparing my experience with the others in the study, and framing analysis by integrating Zacarro's (2007) trait-based

leadership theory into the research design and methodology. I present my personal narrative by connecting my own lived experience with the larger topic of the *tyro* transition to the role of a school superintendent.

Throughout my K-12 educational career, I never aspired to work in the field of education, much less become a school superintendent. Due to the nature of my dad's job, my family and I moved around a lot during my childhood. Although I spent most of my childhood in the cities of Los Angeles (where I was born) and Sugar Land, Texas (a suburb of Houston where I graduated high school), I never had the same continuity of schools that many of my peers did. Between kindergarten and ninth grade, I attended eight different schools in two different American states and three different countries (United States, India, and Saudi Arabia). Although I stayed in the same high school for all four years, that was the longest continuous time I ever spent in one school during my K-12 career.

In high school, I felt a sense of belonging and self-identity as a member of the school's speech and debate team. Being part of the team for four years allowed me to develop my passion for government, sociology, and equity. Due to this passion, I pursued an undergraduate degree in Political Science at Texas A&M University with the intentions of attending law school after my undergraduate program. During my senior year of undergraduate program, I decided to join Teach for America before going to law school. Teach for America is a two-year program that commits college graduates to teach in inner-city schools for two years.

Before joining Teach for America in 2007, I never thought I would be an educator. I always thought Teach for America was part of my journey before taking the next step of attending law school, but after only six months as a special education teacher in an elementary school in northeast Houston, Texas, I realized my true passion was to dedicate my career to

closing the achievement gap between students in public schools. During this time, I also reflected on my past experiences as a K-12 student and began to understand the importance of quality schools across all neighborhoods. I realized the detrimental impacts that varying levels of school performance can have on mobile families, and it created a desire for me to work toward ensuring all students have access to a high-quality education, regardless of the neighborhood in which they live. My experiences and the support of leaders after Teach for America revealed the impact I could have as a system-level leader in public education. The desire to become a superintendent was seeded, though I always knew the journey would be arduous.

During my time as a teacher, I obtained my master's in special education from Grand Canyon University. Upon completion of my master's degree, I had the chance to meet with several school and district leaders through a district leadership cohort established for teachers and rising administrators with graduate degrees. During that time, I served for three years as an elementary special education resource teacher. After three years in the classroom, a colleague took on the principalship of a high school in Southwest Houston, and she asked me to join her team as an assistant principal. During this time, I became closely acquainted with our school superintendent and many of our district area superintendents. They began speaking to me about pursuing a career in school leadership and, eventually, district leadership.

Two years later, I was asked to serve as an elementary school principal in Southwest Houston. I had the opportunity to open this elementary school, serving grades 2-5, as the first principal. A couple of years later, I was given the opportunity to take on the role of a high school principal in our same district. Tiger High School served nearly 3,000 students in grades 9-12. It is located on the northeast side of Houston and is the high school into which Blue Elementary (where I taught) feeds. Therefore, I had the unique privilege of being the high school principal of

students I had taught four to eight years previously and handing out high school diplomas to my former students.

During my role as a high school principal, I participated in school superintendent trainings and preparation programs. Two years after taking the job as high school principal, my mentor and former supervisor, Jack, asked me to join him in his district out of state in the role of assistant superintendent, where I continued to participate in similar training opportunities and programs. Since the day I started working with Jack in Colorado, he mentored me and talked to me about how to prepare to become a superintendent. Jack's mentorship, and the support of others such as our former school superintendent, had now fully created in me a passion to serve, one day, as a superintendent of schools. I wanted to serve as many students as I could.

During the spring of my second year as an assistant superintendent in Colorado, I attended the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) National Conference in Nashville, Tennessee. At the conference, I had the opportunity to meet with several superintendent search firms and both my mentors, Jack and Dr. Bob, were gracious enough to introduce me to several companies conducting superintendent searches. I met with several companies and talked about various districts for which I could apply.

A few weeks later, I applied to a school district that was similar in size to my district in Colorado Springs (11,500 students and about 23 schools), that shared my beliefs and values on education, and that I felt would be a good fit for my skillset. After going through several rounds of screening interviews and a full day of final interviews with the Board of Education and various stakeholder groups, I was offered the position of Superintendent. On July 2nd, 2018, I officially begin my *tyro* transition to the role of Superintendent for Fargo Public Schools.

Fargo Public Schools serves approximately 11,300 students in the city of Fargo, ND.

Fargo Public Schools is currently the second largest school district in the state and is growing at a rate of approximately 100 students per year. The district has sixteen elementary schools, three middle schools, three comprehensive high schools, and one alternative high school. The district is the fourth largest employer in the Fargo-Moorhead community and employs approximately 3,364 staff members. A breakdown of student ethnicity in the district is as follows: 72% Caucasian, 12% African American, 5% Hispanic, 4% Asian, 4% 2 or more categories, and 3% Native American. There are over 65 languages spoken in Fargo Public Schools, and the most prominent spoken languages other than English include Nepali (22%), Somali (13%), Arabic (11%), Spanish (10%), and Creoles/Pidgin (12%). Fargo Public Schools currently operates on a budget of approximately $170 million with revenues generated from property tax, state aid, federal aid, and other local sources.

Although I felt prepared for the role of a school superintendent, I always knew that there would be a learning curve during and after my *tyro* transition. I was familiar with the organization based on the research I did during my interview process, understood the structure and workings of the organization, but did not know specifics about the role that were unique to Fargo Public Schools. However, I also knew and was grateful for the level of support and encouragement I received during my *tyro* transition from various people. My family was always my greatest support, as were former and current colleagues. I knew that I always had individuals I could call on and learn from during my *tyro* transition, and that helped increase my level of confidence for the role. One of the support factors for me during my *tyro* transition was working with neighboring superintendents who were also new to their role. We were able to quickly build a relationship of trust and collaboration so we could become support systems for one another. Knowing that I was not the only first-time superintendent in the area and that I had resources

nearby to help problem-solve when necessary was one of the greatest areas of comfort during my *tyro* transition.

During my first month on my job, some of my first priorities were establishing relationships with all patrons, but most specifically with the Board of Education. After being hired in March, Fargo Public Schools had an election for five of the nine Board Members in June that led to two new board members who were not part of the board that hired me. Therefore, one of my immediate challenges during my *tyro* transition was to establish relationships, build trust, and develop systems to effectively communicate and work in alignment with our Board of Education. Although one of the new board members to the board had served as a board member several years earlier, there had been change from the board with whom she had previously worked. The other elected member was brand new. I made it a priority to meet with each board member during my first month to learn more about them, their vision for the school district, and identify their preferred method of communication with me. This allowed me to learn more about their individual passions, vision for the district, and create systems to communicate in a way that is best for them.

Aligned to the themes that emerged from the participants, one the greatest successes for me during my *tyro* transition was building relationships with cabinet members and staff throughout the organization. My cabinet and I focused on establishing a relationship of collaboration, group decision making, and critical accountability towards each other. During and after my *tyro* transition, I continued to know that I could count on our cabinet team to always work in the best interest of the students and district. The open dialogue and trust I built with my cabinet team and staff has allowed me to navigate the challenges of board-superintendent relations, change management, and personnel issues with greater insight and sensitivity. My

cabinet has not only been instrumental in helping me understand the pace of change necessary for the organization and helping identify priority areas of focus, but they have also been able to provide historical context to decisions, practices, and polices. By focusing on culture and building trust with staff members during my *tyro* transition, we were able to align our actions and work collectively towards the mission of our organization. This allowed for better collaboration as we planned for the future of our district and we worked together to make necessary changes that would continue improving outcomes for the students in our district.

Traits from the Zaccaro et al. (2004) Trait Leadership Model I developed and utilized most frequently during my *tyro* transition paralleled to those identified by the participants in the study. Those traits were oral/written communication, general problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills, honesty/integrity, and decision-making. Though all traits from the Zaccaro et al. (2004) Trait Leadership Model were utilized, the five previously listed traits were either used most frequently or were used in tandem with other traits as well. To overcome the challenges of the *tyro* transition to the role of a school superintendent, these traits were not used in isolation, but used together for various situations that arose. Each of these traits was important and necessary, and are traits I believe to be essential for a successful *tyro* transition to the role of a school superintendent.

In the remainder of this chapter, I present the narrative of other participants' lived experiences during their *tyro* transition through the alignment of their stories with the research questions as well as emerging themes from the research. Their voice and view of reality was honored by using their exact words, phrases, and quotes from their journal entries or interviews about their *tyro* transition. Following the voice of the participants, I provide researcher reflection on each of the themes presented.

Research Questions and Themes

Research Question #1: What are the lived experience challenges and successes of transitioning to a first superintendency?

Themes for challenges: Board-Superintendent relations, change management, personnel issues

Board-Superintendent relations. Board-Superintendent relations emerged as a common theme across all participants in the study. The research literature provided evidence that there is a need for traditional superintendent training programs to grow and develop superintendents beyond just pedagogy (Harris et al., 2004). From the narratives of the participants in this study, developing each superintendent's ability to better manage and be prepared for various board-superintendent relations is vital. Research Question #1 of this study focused on the lived experience challenges and successes of the superintendent's *tyro* transition. The data captured through reflective journals, interviews one month into the *tyro* transition, and an interview at the end of superintendent's *tyro* transition demonstrated, when discussing challenges during their *tyro* transitions, all participants referenced dynamics with the board of education.

Direct Quotes from Participants

Steven

[A challenge has been] trying to balance a conversation between board members who serve on our Child Nutrition Program "Lunch Account" ad hoc committee and our Director of Child Nutrition. A few board members want to ensure a "hot meal" each and every day for students, regardless of their lunch account balance. There has been much push and pull with this conversation as the committee did decide recently that when a child's account reaches a negative $50 balance, a soy butter sandwich with the side

orders would be given to the child. Many think this is reasonable; some members do not. This will come before the board for final approval on Sept. 10. Stay tuned….

Jack

Two board members wanted to meet with me this week. They brought forth an issue that has put me in a weird spot. They are asking me to intervene, but the whole board will not agree, and now I am in a weird spot. I told them I will get information and meet again with them. At that point I will need to try to get them back in their lane. If they want to meet with the whole board and discuss our policy or change it, I can do that, but to micromanage our leadership of the district is not right. I will have to be careful with this, but I also can't let them walk over me on this.

Cecilia

1) During our board meeting, one of the board members publicly called out the discrepancy in testing results between the high schools; another board member questioned why one school was offering a specific PD topic and the other school was not. My challenge was holding a face that did not reveal my true emotions. I did not want nor do I want the schools to feel pitted against each other in this manner.

2) My challenges, however, are finding monies in the budget to refocus staff energies on teaching and learning. Because the board approves all expenditures above $1,000, I have to convince them of the need to bring in a consultant to assist in this work. I also have a cabinet member who was promised a job by the outgoing superintendent; the problem is that this promise does not align with the board's desire.

Ronald

Well between that time there's a lot of unrest with some of my what I call central office

people, really my seeing-eye folks. They may push back hard and they got board

members involved, so I was called in for a special meeting with my board to explore

"concerns." So they brought us some concerns and not one was brought to my attention

by any board member until this meeting. I later realized it was two board members that

were stirring this up and trying to make a case that I was ruining the district culture

because what they were saying is that I was a bully and that I harassed and I retaliated

against staff. They said that I was just a flat-out mean guy but when I asked, there was no

evidence provided. So, I said to them, "Okay, well, I don't believe those are true. I would

like to know who reported this, how it came about, and with what context." They couldn't

give it to me so they wrote me up, but it wasn't really a write up because they couldn't

give me specifics and when I asked about it, they just said, "You know." I told them,

"Harassment and those are against the law. There's a process that we have to follow, and

those things need to be reported to HR so we can get follow up from EEOC or some type

of investigation because this is not acceptable. The claim as it is never happened the way

it is being said." But because they felt that the people who reported it didn't want their

names to be made known because they felt that I would retaliate and fire them, they

ended up doing it this way. I'm like okay, what do I do? It's obvious these two board

members are relying on information from people but have not asked me about what they

heard.

Researcher reflection and reflexivity. In efforts to better understand my own

challenges as it relates to board-superintendent relations, it was valuable for me to view the

relationship from the perspective of other participants in this study. Although I had watched many board meetings prior to and during the interview process and felt that I had a strong understanding of board member dynamics, I quickly learned that there would be challenges for me in this area as well. One month prior to me beginning my *tyro* transition, we had elections for five of our nine board members. Two new board members were elected, and, therefore, they were not part of the board that had hired me. The shared experiences of the participants in the study resonated with me because navigating the different dynamics of working with a board of education was a new experience for me during the *tyro* transition that was limited in my prior experiences. I can understand why this theme is prevalent as a challenge for all superintendents during their *tyro* transition because navigating the board-superintendent relationship is unique to the role of a superintendent and one that no other position in K-12 systems experiences.

Change management. Another prevalent theme from the participants demonstrating challenges during their *tyro* transition was change management. Research justifies change management as an important aspect of effective leadership, and resistance to change is commonly observed during transitions of leadership. Therefore, it is necessary for superintendents to be explicit and clear about the type of culture they aim to build and to effectively communicate behaviors that will best support their vision for the school district (Hassan, 2018). Participants reported on encountering situations where they dealt with change management during their *tyro* transition from various levels of the organization, including the board of education, cabinet members, principals, teachers, and even themselves.

Steven

The largest challenge I've faced the past three weeks is completely stepping out of my previous position (Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment & Professional

Development). There is a desire on behalf of instructional coaches and our assessment

coordinator to continue to work with me, keep me in the loop, etc. as we get through the

first PD days since I was part of the planning process. Their new supervisor doesn't

necessarily understand all the nuance and details that go into such planning.

Additionally, I chaired our Staff Evaluation Committee and Tri-Chaired our Innovations

Committee and I am finding it difficult to remain involved with other obligations within

the district. So, scheduling has [also] been a challenge!

Jack

1) Another challenge I am working with is figuring out who will do what work. Coming

    into a new district, I am working with how I need things to go and balancing that with the

    history in the district around that work. Then deciding if I need a change, how badly I

    need that change, and whether that is a mountain I need to die on. Too much change

    makes the organization feel chaotic, so figuring out how to manage that is my current

    challenge.

2) The challenges I am having is when to do the work, and what is my new work. I am used

    to being a doer, the person who executes. However, my job has changed, and a lot of my

    time now is in connecting with others. But this doesn't leave a lot of time to do anything.

    I am definitely delegating more work, but learning what should be delegated and what I

    still need to do is definitely one of my challenges right now.

Cecilia

With one week of school under our belt and instructional expectations established for this

school year, an assistant principal was greeted with pushback. Specifically, the teacher

feels as though writing instructional objectives on the board or anywhere visible for her

students was additional work. Although the teacher has not reached out to me yet, I know that this is an indication, unfortunately, of things to come.

Ronald

Another big impact [on me] right now that I'm having is um, uh shifting hats like, you know, as a principal you could switch off, it was a defined area. Here as a superintendent, we have an impact and I always have to be on, um, and um, I'm learning that always means always. For example, having two cell phones, uh, when I was a principal and even when I was at my last position, I could actually turn off the phone and really be turned off, like don't call me. I could tell people, I'm having dinner right or don't call me or I'm going to go to a movie. Yeah, you must have it on so, um that that's uh 24/7 lifestyle which is um, hitting me so that's having an impact but so far, it's not bad. It's just different. I'm a people person so I don't have issues with just talking to anybody on the street, it's just different. I know for some of my colleagues that they have to do certain things that you have to when you become a superintendent, so that's I guess that's just part of it. [It is also a change] when I hear people say things that aren't positive about education. Normally, I defend it, and I can't always do that as superintendent. So, a couple of times I had to bite my lip and not say anything when I heard someone say something that wasn't positive because I can't as the superintendent. I don't want to say I pick fights, but I don't want to have any fights that I don't necessarily need, so you have to pick and choose.

Researcher reflection and reflexivity. Aligned to the sentiments of other participants of the study, I recognized change management to be a challenge I experienced during my *tyro* transition. Though I was aware that change in leadership will bring organizational change, it is

still a challenge I experienced. As a superintendent during his or her *tyro* transition, a leader must balance the changes he or she is eager to implement in the new role with the time it will take to get all staff bought in. The nature of interview processes asks superintendents to reflect on a future vision of the district, but also recognizes that change can take time. Additionally, as expressed by the participants in the study, the role of a superintendent is very different than other roles in the organization. I, too, felt that I was spending less time being a "doer" after beginning my *tyro* transition and had to combat internal desires to take on every responsibility that I would have when I was in the role of an assistant superintendent. This also caused me to change and reflect on how I measure my own success and to think about how I can change my practices of wanting to fulfill all tasks to that of empowering and supporting others to do so.

   Personnel issues. The literature demonstrated several challenges and deficits in superintendent training programs due to the evolving nature of the role of school superintendents. Often, these deficits result from a training program's inability to plan for many of the unique circumstances that need to be addressed in the role of a superintendent, such as personnel issues (Cooper et al., 2002; Andrews & Grogan, 2002). The nature of personnel issues makes each circumstance unique and requires school superintendents to make decisions that are based more on judgement and less on policy. Participants identified various personnel issues as challenges during their *tyro* transition to the role of a school superintendent. The challenges of personnel issues included isolated incidents, systemic practices, and changes in approach from prior leaders in the organization.

   Steven

1) My biggest challenge--and it will remain that way--until I make some decisions has been working with my secretary who is on her fourth superintendent in 12 years. She is a

controller. While I believe she is trying to be helpful, she has a demeanor that is condescending not only to me but to everyone in central office. I am feeling pressure, both internally and externally, to find a new place for her. Time will tell.

2) Several weeks ago, I met with a retired teacher who has done some commercial landscaping for the school district for the past two decades. Without permission, he took it upon himself to do some additional work that he was advised not to do by our Director of Buildings and Grounds. Through our conversation over coffee, I thought we had the situation resolved as he knew he wasn't supposed to do the work. Via federal mail, I received a letter from him and an invoice for the work ($180) and I was surprised that his recollection of our conversation was much different than mine. He had pursued getting this invoice paid through the B & G Director, the Business Manager—both of whom said "no"—and now was taking one final swing at me. I'll be calling him today.

Jack

1) This week I had to fill my open principal spot. It was a tough decision, as I was going to move a principal, and that was going to send two buildings into chaos. But I went in person over to the building in question and laid out the decision. They seemed to respect the reasons why. Still it wasn't how I wanted to start the year.

2) The first of which [challenge of the week] was that I needed to hold two of my cabinet members to discuss face to face some problems they were having. One had overruled the decision of the other, but he didn't communicate face to face. We had already set out norms for how we would communicate, and this violated those. So, I brought them together and we hashed it out. This had been a problem in the past with people not communicating well.

Cecilia

1) Wow! Most challenging week thus far. I had a teacher who passed away on Sunday; I issued a letter of reprimand to a Cabinet member; I suspended an employee with pay. On top of that I am noticing an increase in misalignment with values communicated by the board and their actual actions.

2) I thought last week would have topped challenges for the month of October, but this week was emotionally, mentally and physically draining. I lost a student this week and on top of that, some parents of one of our school's football players are upset that the football coach has not been reinstated. My decision to place the person on admin leave was not a popular decision with some parents, players, and assistant coaches, but I am confident it was and is the right decision. Additionally, I have one board member who is feeding the parent group information, which is making my job a little more challenging.

Ronald

There are two board members that have expressed concern because my central office staff from professional learning has expressed to them that they are nervous because I am moving too fast. After reflecting on that and talking to different people, I know why. They are nervous because I am asking questions; the core piece of my questions is around student achievement and graduation rates, which right now is at 71%. I am also asking questions around what they do to support schools in their roles and what they do to support our strategic plan. What I found is that our professional learning folks are kind of used to running the district, like in initiatives. The previous superintendent was never a principal - great politician, but never had a grip on leading and pushing people around student achievement, so that is making people very nervous.

Researcher reflection and reflexivity. Personnel issues were some of the earliest challenges I encountered during my *tyro* transition to the role of superintendent. In our state, each new superintendent can work with a mentor through a program designed by the North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders. When seeking advice on personnel issues during the first month of my *tyro* transition, my assigned mentor stated, "Well if it wasn't for personnel issues, we wouldn't have jobs because everyone would do what they are supposed to do." Personnel issues I encountered during my *tyro* transition were challenging because there wasn't always a clear-cut resolution or solution identified in policy. Therefore, I often had to make calls based on what I believed to be the mission of our organization and our strategic plan, but those beliefs could be challenged by others. Additionally, as the superintendent, it is important to remain consistent with all staff. Therefore, when making personnel decisions that are unique to each situation, it is also important to identify how we can use some parameters to guide our decision that will remain consistent if similar but not exact situations were to occur in the future.

Themes for successes: Building relationships with cabinet members, implementing systems throughout the organization, developing trust amongst staff members. While the participants and researchers certainly faced many challenges as they began the *tyro* transition to superintendency, they also experienced successes. Through the research, several themes emerged within the participants' successes, including building relationships with cabinet members, implementing systems throughout the organization, and developing trust amongst staff members. The researcher also found these themes to be successes during the *tyro* transition to the superintendent position.

Building relationships with cabinet members. Within educational K-12 structures, cabinet members are the leaders that directly surround the superintendent and oversee specific

areas of the district. Most often, they report directly to the superintendent and can be the closest

staff members to the superintendent. Building relationships with cabinet members was one of

the successes that the participants and researcher experienced during the *tyro* transition. One of

the best ways one can lead is to connect with those around him or her (Schaefer, 2015). Leaders

should identify how relationships can be built, maintained, and strengthened (Schaefer, 2015).

Participants demonstrated success in building, maintaining, and strengthening relationships with

cabinet members to better connect with employees that directly impacted their *tryo* transition.

Steven

[A success for me this week was when] I held our first cabinet meeting where I was the

superintendent and not one of four people in the room. My hiring moved me ahead of the

assistant superintendent who was the person I formerly reported to for 10 years and now I

am his boss. This has been awkward but not uncomfortable. Through effective

communication, honesty and integrity, we have found a good working relationship.

Jack

The big success this week has been my first cabinet off-site. One of the big challenges in

this district is the culture and specifically the trust and teamwork of the cabinet. So, my

first meeting was really establishing our teamwork and allowing team members to be

vulnerable with each other to build trust. We spent most of the day building trust, and

our team work. We ended with getting really specific about the responsibilities of each

team member. It felt like it went really well.

Cecilia

[A success this week was] Having a cabinet retreat with an outside facilitator.

Ronald

One of the successes I have been having is building relationships. I have assistant

superintendents who were passed over for this job, so it creates an interesting dynamic. I

have been fortunate enough to have direct conversations with one of those assistant

superintendents and by building a mutual trust, respect and understanding with one

another, we are able to work together to move this district forward.

Researcher reflection and reflexivity. Aligned to the sentiments expressed from

participants, I too feel that building meaningful relationships with my cabinet team has been one

of the greatest successes during my *tyro* transition to the role of a school superintendent. In my

school district, there are six members that make up the composition of the superintendent's

cabinet: superintendent (myself), associate superintendent of elementary education, associate

superintendent of secondary education, human resources director, business manager, and the

executive assistant to the superintendent & secretary to the board of education who also oversees

the communications department. During my *tyro* transition, we did replace one person on the

team, but we were still able to work through the dynamics of changing personnel through

effective communication and trust. As described by some participants in the study, our cabinet

team also conducted an off-site retreat to talk through team dynamics, lay out expectations for

collaboration, and build trust. However, I think this work is ongoing and something that must be

revisited often. I feel that all the successes I had during my *tyro* transition are rooted from the

success of having a high functioning cabinet team. I would not have experienced the successes

that I did had I not built a relationship with each cabinet member – and had I not continued to

strengthen those relationships.

Implementing systems throughout the organization. Another theme that developed from the researcher was the success of implementing systems throughout the organization. Leaders should identify where the organization is heading and the expected outcomes (Heathfield, 2019). Leaders (including superintendents) should determine a vision for change and next steps within the organization (Heathfield, 2019), which includes creating and overseeing systems throughout the association. Implementing systems can be defined as the ability to identify expected outcomes, establish a vision for change within the organization, and the creation and fulfillment of actionable next steps that lead to the change. All of the leaders in this study found this to be a strength in their *tyro* transition.

Steven

I've had a number of goals meetings this week with Executive Directors (Technology, CTE, Special Ed, etc.) and all were productive, informative and, most importantly, within alignment of the system we are building. Leaders are catching on that it's no longer decision-making by "gut" but, rather, through a systems approach. This has been cause for introspective celebration!

I met with our newly formed Teacher Advisory Council, a group of 22 teachers who have never worked with me (as in committee work) before. Through a Google doc, they develop the agenda, and I must say I was more than pleased with our first meeting. We discussed 10 items of interest, areas of concern, etc. From this meeting, short and long-term goals have been established so the committee can see progress.

Jack

1) I held my all-admin in-service this week and things went well. It was my moment to set up expectations. I wanted to lay out what my "why" was, and then lay out what I think

the work is. I was able to do this. One win for me. We then did two days of learning about conferencing, which was also good. I was able to show them I am an active learner and I expect them to close their laptops and learn. Another win for me. I didn't get much administrative done, but a good week in general.

2) This week I am continuing to build a process to identify a vision for readiness for our students and outline a process to develop a strategic plan. I think I have it basically lined up. Now I just need to find the money.

Cecilia

[Successes I had this week include the following]:

- Started the groundwork for implementing systemic professional development

- Beginning the work for a curriculum audit

…

- I conducted two listening sessions, which equated hearing from 100+ staff members.

- Created and disseminated a survey to begin planning district systemic professional development.

…

- I met with one of our community partners to strengthen the services they currently provide to some of our students.

- We are almost complete with finalizing our systemic professional development offerings and catalog.

Ronald

Other success I am having is launching a, really, a framework to bridge the achievement gap, even though don't want to call it that, so we call it the opportunity gap. It's like a

PLC system for bridging the achievement gap. I tinkered a model I used in my previous district and all the schools that followed it had significant growth.

Researcher reflection and reflexivity. From my experience during my own *tyro* transition, implementing systems throughout the organization is likely to be a success for superintendents when they start their career because the interview process and nature of starting in a new position gives the new superintendents the confidence to do so. As a candidate applying to become a school superintendent, I researched the school district for which I was applying and identified areas where implementing systems from my previous district could complement the needs of the new district. Therefore, when I took on the position, I had the confidence to successfully put systems in place throughout the organization because 1) I knew how to successfully implement the system based on prior experiences and 2) it was expressed during my interview that I would have support for these systems. Participants expressed similar sentiments when describing systems successfully implemented during their *tyro* transition, which were based on systems they had implemented in their prior roles.

Developing trust among staff members. One of the most important actions that leaders must accomplish to be successful is to establish trust among staff members (Gilstrap & Collins, 2012; Kouzes & Posner, 1987). Trust among staff members can lead to employee job satisfaction (Gilstrap & Collins, 2012). When trust is established in an organization, employees feel more confident to make changes and take risks, which can keep initiatives, and even the organization, alive (Kouzes & Posner, 1987). Establishing trust among staff members was a theme of success that emerged from the participants and the researcher.

Steven

1) I have had several transition meetings with outgoing and present school board members, meetings that are highlighting compelling "themes" that will be large and ongoing initiatives to move forward. I have actually been undergoing a 90-day entrance plan which was easier to do as an internal candidate. During this process, I have had 58 face to face meetings with individual administrators, board members, community members, and I have met with several retired teachers' groups. While most of this has been done in the month of May/June, I am still finishing up those transition meetings this week (July 2-6).

2) [Another success so far has been that now] there's a sense of optimism. There's a sense of joy for people and they are using the phrase pep in their step. That's not me observing. This this is what people are saying. This is how they feel coming to work, um and that it's pretty noticeable when the superintendent is making rounds every morning. When I'm here right away, um, I'll make a point to walk, you know, the entire building just to say good morning to people whether it's the buildings and grounds folks on the backside of the building or the people up front. They know that I know all of them by name when that has not been the case in the past. So, um, you know, what we know about the workplace is people come to work when they feel appreciated. I mean that. Um, you know kind of the number one factor that they feel valued appreciated and acknowledged and so we're going to spend a lot of time doing that. Pay is certainly creeping up there as a motivator, but it's still not number one.

Jack

1) This week was a week of equity training for the district. For me it was the first opportunity for many staff to see me and get to know me. It started with the facilitator asking if I wanted to open the session. I said absolutely. I totally wanted to get people used to seeing me lead. I had thought this might happen, and I fumbled a little when I did it, but happy to be seen early as a learner. I picked moments to ask and answer questions in the main group to show that the superintendent is an active learner. Things turned out well. Stephanie Fryberg and the University of Washington have a really interesting viewpoint on equity, and it made for a very thoughtful week for me.

2) I have continued to build success in meeting with people and forging relationships. It has been interesting to see how many connections I seem to have in this district through others I have known in my career. It is almost every day that someone comes up to introduce themselves and say they worked with someone I worked, or they are the child of someone I worked with. It just goes to remind me that how I manage relationships is critical, and to be very careful with my words, because everyone is connected to everyone.

3) This week was a good week. I had my All-Staff Welcome back and I was really nervous going into it. Many of the staff members had never met me, so I needed to explain who I was, let them know my "Why," and what my goals were for the year. It was a daunting task. I ended up being really authentic, and vulnerable with them. I knocked it out of the park. I have heard from many of my employees expressing how different it feels and how excited for the future they are.   On Wednesday night I did a run-through, and it wasn't really good. The material I had written was good, I just wasn't presenting it well. I didn't sleep well, but I woke up the next day ready to go. I spent the first half hour

greeting everyone who came in and got some really positive mojo going. When it came time to present, it just really flowed. I am still in the honeymoon right now, and I know it will get tougher, but this was a good week.

Cecilia

1) My second and third weeks of my first superintendency continue to be fast paced. My entry plan requires me to meet with many individuals, part of cabinet, the board of education and others. This is necessary as it provides a great deal of insight into the inner workings of our school district, potential gaps and informs future next steps or at least talking points.

2) My team and I have been planning our district's convocation. Our school district has not held a convocation in ten years. I wanted and needed to hear various perspectives from cabinet as it related to the day's agenda. They were reluctant to speak as one member shared that their voice or opinions were not always welcomed. They now know I value and want to hear from them.

Because convocation was going to be my one and only chance to make a positive first impression in front of the entire district, I worked on a presentation that required me to use data, motivational themes and an effective communication style to get the job done. I am also rolling out a new observation tool-this requires a little technological knowledge.

Ronald

The other big success for me this week was an office retreat where I brought in everyone from the office that supports our schools. We spent the entire day and focused on Marzano and Water's book on impacting student achievement. We jigsawed the book and had a great day at the workshop that day. Everyone had a chance to provide input on

some of the core pieces we are trying to implement, such as RTI. The feedback I received

was "thanks for asking and including us, we felt that our feedback was valued, and we

understand your vision for the future." I was also told by some members such as our

director of transportation "thanks for including me, this is the first time I have had the

opportunity to provide feedback on the district."

Researcher reflection and reflexivity. Participants demonstrated that building trust

among staff members is ongoing and occurs in a variety of ways. During my *tyro* transition to

the role of school superintendent, I learned that to build trust the superintendent must first

establish relationships. Staff members want to see the superintendent as a strong leader, however,

a leader can be strong while also being vulnerable and transparent. Staff members are more

likely to trust to someone that is relatable, they feel they can converse with, and someone they

respect. This requires the superintendent to be visible, follow-through on their actions, to be

proactive in lowering the perceived status of their position, and be authentic with all staff. I

continue to work on building relationships and forming trust with staff, even after my *tyro*

transition.

Research Question #2: What leadership traits are used by superintendents to overcome

the challenges of the *tyro* superintendent?

Themes: Oral and written communication, general problem solving, interpersonal

skills, honesty/integrity, decision making, other traits. All the traits identified in the Zaccaro

et al. (2004) trait leadership model were utilized or developed by at least one participant during

their *tyro* transition to the role of school superintendent. However, the traits of oral and written

communication, general problem solving, interpersonal skills, honesty/integrity, and decision

making were developed or utilized most often and referenced by all superintendents during their

tyro transition. Table 6 depicts the amount of references in participant journal entries or interviews for each trait identified in the Zaccaro et al. (2004) Trait Leadership Model. The total number references reflect the combination of how many times participants expressed having to develop or utilize the identified trait during their *tyro* transition.

Table 6

Leadership Trait References

Trait	References
Extraversion	31
Agreeableness	32
Conscientiousness	39
Openness	46
Neuroticism	2
Honesty/Integrity	53
Charisma	42
Intelligence	46
Creativity	40
Achievement Motivation	32
Need for Power	2
Oral//Written Communication	63
Interpersonal Skills	54
General Problem Solving	58
Decision Making	52
Technical Knowledge	37
Management Skills	40

From the data, it is evident that there is significant disparity between two traits that were only referenced two times (neuroticism and need for power) and the others which ranged from

being referenced 31-63 times. From my perspective as both the researcher and participant, factors that play into the lack of self-reporting for both traits from the trait leadership model include the negative connotation of those traits and the traditional disassociation between those traits and descriptions of successful leaders. The participants in this study were provided a definition of neuroticism which described a tendency to exhibit poor emotional adjustment and experience negative effects such as anxiety, insecurity, and hostility (Judge et al., 2002). The definition in itself denotes a behavior I wouldn't be proud of and unlikely to reflect on as a trait I used often during my *tyro* transition.

Additionally, the data from this study showed that the top five traits developed or used by superintendents during their *tyro* transition differs from existing literature on the Big Five personality traits. The Big Five personality traits, which were part of the meta-analysis of traits used to develop the Zaccaro et al. (2014) Trait Leadership Model include extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness, and neuroticism (Stricker, Buecker, Schneider, & Preckel, 2019). Thought these traits except neuroticism were referenced often by superintendents, none of the Big Five personality traits were in the list of top five traits used or developed by superintendents to overcome challenges during their *tyro* transition.

Oral and written communication. Oral and written communication emerged as a theme as one of the five leadership traits used by the participants and researcher to overcome the challenges of the *tyro* superintendent. Communication skills are extremely important for leaders to possess; they must speak as precisely and clearly as possible (Olenski, 2016). Every component of communication by leader (whether written or oral) creates an impression and paints a picture about the leader and how that person leads (Miller, 2012).

Steven

1) Met with a teacher (who has served on committees with me in my former position) who is concerned about overall leadership at her campus. Simply stated, a first-year principal (this past school year) is in way over her head and has undermined the MTSS structure and process that has eroded student performance. My dilemma? The associate superintendent does not have the instructional and leadership skill set to recognize when a piece of the system is falling apart. I'll need to intervene and provide very specific direction for him in short order. Traits used: Oral Communication, Management, Decision-Making, Problem-solving, Creativity.

2) [A challenge for me this week was that I] had my first and inaugural Anti-Bullying Committee meeting with 22 middle and high school students. The conversation was "heavy" and students, for the most part, do not believe incidents at the campus level are handled in a way that precludes the perpetrator from repeating bullying behaviors. Traits Used: Interpersonal Skills, Communication, Problem-Solving, Intelligence and Openness.

Jack

This week was a short one for me. I actually only worked two days. The first day was a day of meetings, meetings with the two mayors, and then some admin. Not really anything gained of note, but we did set up schedules for us to communicate, and that is a win. There is a lot of growth happening, and we need to be closely communicating with the cities, around building. The second day were the first meetings of a New Superintendent Cadre put on by [our state organization]. Over 30 new superintendents in

the Cadre, and some excellent superintendents leading the cadre. It felt good to see I am

not alone, and I have resources to connect with.

…

I think the biggest challenges I am facing right now, is to get some of the initial planning

surrounding strategic planning, and how I will be tracking my direct reports. I have some

thoughts on this, but I need to shut my door, and just hammer out the planning.

Administrivia can consume my whole day if I let it. Right now, I am letting it.

Traits I used this week:

Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Openness, Honesty/Integrity, Charisma,

Intelligence, Creativity, Oral/Written Communication, Interpersonal Skills, General

Problem-Solving Skills, Decision Making, Technical Knowledge, Management.

Cecilia

1) Traits: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Openness, Neuroticism,

Honesty/Integrity, Charisma, **Intelligence, Creativity**, Achievement Motivation, Need

for Power, **Oral/Written Communication**, **Interpersonal Skills**, **General Problem-**

Solving Skills, Decision Making, Technical Knowledge, Management.

All the bolded attributes above were utilized to some degree during my first week. As

stated above, Cabinet members came to me with a host of issues. I made no attempt to

solve them all because I do not want them to become reliant on me to be the only

problem solver. I was honest by letting folks know that these problems did not just

surface. So, I asked, "What did you all do last week (prior to me beginning my official

first day)?" The interpersonal skills came into play in all meetings---Cabinet, BoE

members, community members, etc. I've written several communiques thus far, so this

will be paramount in moving forward in interacting with individuals who may not be in my immediate area and as we begin contract negotiations.

2) Building positive relationships and being visible for staff and students are top items for me these first few months. Therefore, charisma and interpersonal skills rise to the top of all the traits listed above. I also closed out the week with a letter to staff, so this requires effective communication skills. We do not have a Communication's Director or an IT Director (FMLA). I find myself having to be managing the work of others. I do not like this as I prefer folks to take more initiative. I am making an adjustment to this next week and putting an interim over the IT department.

Ronald

I would have to say the oral and written communication is a skill that is frequently used and was needed. This is what I found with some of the ideas and concepts that I was presenting with my principles and with my cabinet. [A challenge for me was] I assumed that they knew what it was that I was I was communicating with them and I was doing it effectively. So here at the here's an example when I during my listen and learn tour, I had maybe three to five meetings with principals anywhere from an hour and a half to two hours each time and my goal was to gauge really what I could about their school and about their leadership style and their level understanding of the programs and changes and how they how they moved the academic needle on their campus. So, one of the questions I asked all the all the principles was this tell me about instructional rounds and have you used them in the past. All of them told me that they were familiar with instructional rounds. They've done them, and you know a couple schools really dug into them.

So, when I launched my 12-point plan for my turnaround schools that I made, I was [under the assumption] that they have already had already experienced instructional rounds when in reality only two of the eight schools have actually done them and only one actually did them from beginning to end using the Harvard model. So, it's my fault. I don't know if what they're telling me is what I wanted to hear or in fact that they really thought they did instructional rounds.

So, when I actually put it in my plan that they were going to have them, they freaked out and said I shouldn't have put that in. I should have put a summary of my meetings with him. Just kind of what we went over so they would we would have had a better communication. I own that because I should have, but you know when you meet new people you get excited and they tell you things and you want to believe them. So, I have since changed my communication systems, even with my board every Sunday. I put together what I call Superintendent Sunday notes and in that I provide a summary of my week including who I met with and any other things that are going on in their district and that keeps them informed. Now that I've finished my six months here, I'm going to do something similar with school principals, let them know what we're doing because a lot of them may not even know though we have our administrative meetings twice a month. Some people just aren't listening so I gotta work on that.

Researcher reflection and reflexivity. During my *tyro* transition to the role of school superintendent, I frequently used the trait of oral/written communication. This trait was used frequently throughout my *tyro* transition with different patrons of the school district. Oral communication was regularly utilized to develop relationships, manage personnel, and present at multiple events during my first semester as a school superintendent. Written communication

skills were needed to effectively communicate with board members in a weekly written update, communicate with parents and staff in letters written to provide information about the district, and reports developed by the superintendent to communicate district information. I also agree with the participant anecdotes illustrating that no one trait is ever used in isolation for specific challenges during the *tyro* transition. As illustrated by Zaccaro et al. (2004), traits often work with each other and build off each other to address the challenges presented during the *tyro* transition for school superintendents.

    General problem solving. Another theme that emerged as a success for the participants and the researcher was the skill of general problem solving. This is an important skill for leaders to possess as problems will arise often. Leaders must attempt to lessen the occurrence of problems, meaning they must have courage to address the problems quickly (Llopis, 2013). Leaders should be strong enough to address these issues head on in order to continue the goals and strategies of the organization (Llopis, 2013).

    Steven

    On Friday evening and during our Summer Performing Arts performance, there was a "student to student" written threat (this included cast members) that was disclosed at about 10:00 pm. I was at my niece's wedding in another city. Given the circumstances, we pulled together our district "threat assessment team" on Saturday at 12:00 noon and worked through the entire process. A number of people were involved which included several sequential steps. The good news is all parents were cooperative and the perpetrator in this case has a history of mental health issues, of which, her parent acknowledges. This student was hospitalized as a result of her mental state. I communicated individually will all school board members as social media was already

ahead of me on this situation. Of the nine city school board members who received an individual text from me, 7 responded with a "thank you."   Traits used: conscientiousness, interpersonal skills, problem-solving skills, decision-making, technical management.

Jack

So today the principal that I just hired from within the organization called to tell me she is going to have to rescind her acceptance. Some family issues are causing this. I told her that I won't be able to move on this right now anyway, so let's think about it this weekend, and we will talk on Monday. This is a huge bummer, I liked her, and she would have been good for the school. I am hoping she takes the weekend to think about it. I did have to read the Serenity Prayer to remember that this isn't something I can control, and I need to focus on the next steps, because that I can control.

Traits I used this week: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Openness, Neuroticism, Honesty/Integrity, Charisma, Intelligence, Creativity, Achievement Motivation, Oral/Written Communication, Interpersonal Skills, General Problem-Solving Skills, Decision Making, Technical Knowledge, Management.

Cecilia

As a teacher, campus administrator, and even central office employee, I have experienced the loss of a student. However, I never knew what it would feel like to lose a student as a school superintendent. This feeling changed late last week. Consequently, the past two weeks were emotionally and mentally exhaustive. I lost a student due to a drowning at one of our school pools.

Communication-The main skill used this week was relying on oral and written communication skills. I sent out communication to media and families.

Management-Due to the overwhelming media requests, I delegated the communications piece to my HR director.

Management & Problem-Solving-Because there were zero policies and guidance procedures around pool use, I made the unilateral decision to close all campus pools until further notice. My team, along with the swim instructors and athletic directors, will meet after Thanksgiving break to develop swimming pool guidelines.

Ronald

Another thing that we had going on this week is that I had my goal-setting meetings with the leaders I am over, my superintendents. I found that a couple of them had never been evaluated, well that's not true, they did do goal-setting but never with what I call follow-through goals. People set goals, but they were never given feedback throughout the year. It's pretty basic, but that is a process I am familiar with. Here, their leaders had never given the employees feedback on their goals on their ongoing work. The did receive feedback if things were not going well or if they had to respond to a crisis, no the proactive approach. So, I am working with them on setting goals and I was a little bit surprised because we need them to reflect on what we really need. I wanted them to write their goals, because it is a collaborative process. I wanted them to write their goals, that were connected to my goals, which were connected to our strategic goals—that has never been done before. After I received them, it was surprising that with all of them actually, I had to go back and help them re-write their goals to align them, even though I have provided the format and expectations of what I wanted. However, I am now happy with

the feedback they have given me, and I have given them, because I now see alignment

between their goals, my goals, and the district strategic plan. We are trying to move to an

alignment system that is sealed, and I am just wondering if I am moving too fast.

Researcher reflection and reflexivity. General problem-solving skills was a trait I used

frequently during my *tyro* transition and one I continue to use often as a superintendent. The

biggest challenge for me during my *tyro* transition was balancing being the one solving problems

with the motivation to empower staff to do so. During my *tyro* transition, I took a team approach

and tried to collaborate with my cabinet to solve issues that we encountered, but I was also aware

that, at times, there were issues for the superintendent to solve, as that role was accountable for

the resolution to the problem. Therefore, we worked to establish a practice where we would

collaborate together and explore multiple solutions, but I also stepped in as necessary.

Interpersonal skills. Interpersonal skills are essential for an effective leader to possess,

and this emerged as a trait that was a success in the research. Leaders must work to perfect

interpersonal, interdependent relationships in order to improve processes and systems (Covey,

2013). Leaders should listen to their employees and constituents in order to improve

interpersonal skills, then should aim to understand others, and then aim to be understood

themselves (Covey, 2013). When working with people (and the participants and researcher work

with thousands), interpersonal skills are vital.

Steven

I would say interpersonal skills [is one of the top five traits used to overcome challenges

during my *tyro transition]*. We probably talked about this earlier, but how we kicked off

our school year has been very sterile, you know over the last 10 years. This year, we just

really mixed it up with, you know, with a new superintendent providing some leadership

and some direction having everybody in one room hearing the same message. Having a demonstration where all the arrows are pointing in the same direction introducing or reintroducing high reliability schools and that framework and our all going to work within that container and we're going to stop doing some things, so it doesn't feel like we're adding more plates or more onto the plate was important. Okay, so I think you know even though it's not one of the one of the traits, you know humanizing the position of superintendent was really important for me on that opening day with people and so you know that led to some fun. I think you probably saw a little bit on Twitter or social media with my pseudo band playing Hotel California. That that was all about teamwork and collaboration to show this can all be done, you know harmoniously. Does it mean we all walk on down the hallway on the yellow tiles and turn left on the red? No, but what it does mean is we can work together toward a common goal, a common vision. We all might just get there in a different way. So, I think you know that interpersonal piece of me probably was more on display than any other time in my career in this district, and I think it surprised some people frankly. So, I'll just leave it at that.

Jack

This week I spent most of the week in San Diego at the AVID Conference. Good conference, and we had a large team here, probably 50 people in all. The conference was good, I had some sessions about what is needed by district leadership for the program to succeed. I think the bigger issue for me was interacting with my new staff and the limits of that. I made a point of being present and a learner in the sessions. Socializing was good, but at night when others were going out to have beers and fun, I did not go. I felt like having the superintendent there would, one, lower the fun, and two, I feel like if it

was out in the community that I was drinking with staff, that somehow that wouldn't be okay. Maybe it is just me finding my way on this, but I did not go out. I stayed in and worked and hung out. I wonder how other superintendents deal with this.

Cecilia

What I think I've relied on the most is the interpersonal skills. I've heard over and over again that they have not had a superintendent who has been as visible and accessible as I've been, so I take that as a compliment and I'm trying to continue to do that. So, folks feel very comfortable talking to me when they see me in the halls and classrooms and just if they want to reach out via email, so that's been great. I've got some issues going on in cabinet with a couple of my direct reports. Oh, I've been a little bit more of a manager with a couple of departments that I care to have done. So technology is not my strong suit, so I haven't put myself in that role. It's not been very comfortable for me. But I've had to do a little more managing that I anticipated.

Ronald

I would have to say my interpersonal skills [was important trait during my *tyro* transition] because, how long was I principal for? 16 or 17 years. I was a principal and I worked mostly in turnaround situations. So, my DNA makeup was let's get her done. Let's do this for the kids. We don't have time, every minute counts. Let's work as a team. Test scores matter. When I work in a large school district, the district system was built that way. In fact, for its administrators, if you didn't get results or had a poor attitude, you were out of here. We have people here, where the culture is you're never out unless you do something, you know, that's unethical, immoral or illegal. Usually it's something illegal and so my interpersonal skills were kind of rough for some people I would say. I would

say, okay. Well, what are you going to do about it? Just don't tell me that this is an issue. What are you going to do about it? And that scared people so, I had to learn not to get mad at people when they would tell me what I would consider nonsense, especially when they would tell me that kids can't learn because of single parents or they live in a trailer park or you know, parents aren't so wealthy. I challenge that because I had a belief system and that is not aligned to my belief system. But I had to change my approach from where it was before: if someone would say that, I would flat-out call them out because if I'm not saying anything, I am in a way, supporting their belief system. However, that changed. What am I going to do when someone says kids can't learn and I'm the boss or I'm their direct supervisor? I still have to challenge that because I can't change who I am, but I can change how I communicate with them in a way that is friendlier. Now my approach now is like, okay, well tell me more about that. I just ask more probing questions and have a straight face.

Researcher reflection and reflexivity. Developing and utilizing the traits of effective interpersonal skills was crucial during my *tyro* transition to the role of the school superintendent. During my first 90 days, I participated in over 75 meetings with internal and external stakeholders of our organization. During these meetings, I established partnerships, shared a vision for the future of our district, and built relationships that can foster collaboration and growth for our district. Without the continuous development for my interpersonal skills, I would lack the ability to make a good impression, represent the district well, exude confidence, and earn the trust and respect of stakeholders in our organization.

Honesty/Integrity. Honesty and integrity were traits that also emerged as successes from the participants' and researcher's *tyro* transition to the superintendent position. In order to gain

trust and respect from employees and constituents, leaders must value integrity and display

honesty (Coker, 2015). These virtues are important for all people, but they are especially

important for leaders (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). Integrity and honesty create the foundation of

trust between followers and leader (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991).

Steven

I facilitated a meeting between district leadership, business office personnel and our REA

director since there appears to be hostility on both sides of the table (particularly between

the business office staff and the REA director). The first half of the meeting went well

with a resolution for people to TALK TO EACH OTHER rather than hiding behind terse

emails.

The second half of the meeting was a conversation between our CTE executive director

and the REA director. I facilitated, and the REA director did not handle the conversation

well at all. In fact, she walked out of the meeting (her pattern of behavior is erratic at

best). We "think" there was some general understanding of our collective next steps.

Time will tell.

Traits used: Technical skills, honesty/integrity, interpersonal skills, general problem,

conscientiousness solving

Jack

This week was a busy one. On Wednesday I sat down with our team to come a tentative

agreement on our licensed contract. It was 13 hours of negotiation, and what was weird,

is I really felt like it wasn't about contract language. It was about building trust. [My

previous district] last year fell apart because the community and our staff lost trust in us.

There wasn't anything that the superintendent did that was inherently bad, but we lost

trust nonetheless. Once trust was lost, everything was harder. Everything cost more, because in a school district, time is money, and when things take longer, they cost more. So, I had several sidebar conversations during the negotiations that were really all about trust. Things went well, and hopefully we are on better footing.

Cecilia

1) [A trait) I used this week was Honesty. I am always honest and shared with one board member in a face to face meeting how I felt her behavior was bordering micromanagement.

2) Honesty-I shared with one board member my concern that her actions are not supportive in nature.

Ronald

Second thing I talked to them [the union] about is the reorganization I had to do; I lost half my cabinet to either a retirement or promotion and so I had to reboot, and that included hiring people based on what they came in with their skillset. That included restructuring everything. So, I shared that with them. They had a lot of questions about that. They wanted to know why I made those changes and if I was going to hire any more people. My board told me when I was hired, even during my transition, that if I wanted to hire more people, they would support it because our strategic plan called for a lot of things. I told them that I think we can do it without hiring any additional staff. In fact, there are two admin positions I am not going to fill. Because of this, what happened last week, we had our frameworks come out and six out of our seventeen schools landed as needing improvement and the district now has improvement status. All of a sudden, I had to shift gears. Now I have to put on my turnaround hat and have to change everything to

get these schools out. I was just about done with my superintendent goals, we were

working through them and now I have to shift everything. I have a plan that we ironed

out with board. I also had our first board retreat plans, but now because of this, I need to

redo the agenda. The board wants to know, what happened, why it happened, and how

did it happen? So now I need to communicate honestly of why we are changing things

and why I am concerned about the status.

Researcher reflection and reflexivity. Honesty/Integrity were essential traits during my

tyro transition. As a new superintendent who was also new to the state, my learning curve was

significant. When asked about areas of the district for which I was not as well-versed or past

practices to which I could not speak, it was important for me to be honest. Starting my *tyro*

transition by portraying a false image that I had all the answers and did not need to learn as I

started my role would not only have been dishonest but would have jeopardized my integrity as

well. An area where honesty/integrity was challenged for me during my *tyro* transition was when

addressing deficit areas for staff members. As I started my role as a superintendent, it was

important for me to build relationships and trust with staff members while holding them to be

accountable to the high standards of our organizations. This required me to rely on my integrity,

have honest conversations, and addressed concerns directly, without shying away from them in

hopes of preserving a relationship or starting on the wrong foot.

Decision making. Decision making was the final top leadership trait that materialized as

a theme in the research of new superintendents. Making good decisions in tough situations is not

an easy task because these decisions require uncertainty, change, stress, and sometimes the

disappointment or disapproving reactions of others (Kase, 2010). Effective decision making

occurs when leaders react quickly and move forward with the available information rather than taking too much time to gather more information (Kase, 2010).

Steven

I met with a teacher, principal and HR director relating to a unique leave she would be requesting. Her father is one of very few candidates for a lung transplant at a major university hospital which would require her and one other person to be with him for nine months effective sometime in October. While not a "challenge" per se, we don't have a provision, other than her limited sick leave and FMLA to grant her the days. All other days would be without pay and she would then have to Cobra her health insurance.

Jack

This week has been a pretty quiet week. I am trying to get some planning done around a community engagement process and some introductory strategic planning. I have nailed down a company to help facilitate the work. Now I just need to get everything calendared and start putting together the agendas.

Cecilia

I issued another letter of concern to the same cabinet member, which required solid written communication skills. As typical in my role, I am working through problem solving and decision-making opportunities without being the sole decision maker. I am empowering my team to come up with solutions prior to (proactive) and during problem occurrences.

This week, some of parents of the employee I suspended are upset with this decision, so I must exhibit effective interpersonal skills and communication when speaking with

parents. I cannot tell the reason for the decision nor the outcome. This is going to be a difficult time if the decision does not work in favor of the employee.

Ronald

I would have to say the first one [trait you need] is the decision-making. I pick it because when you're new to a school district, that is one thing but when you're new to a state, that's another layer and I didn't know anybody. I did not know one person when I moved to this school district and I had to rely on making decisions on information that I knew from my team and it took them a little time to warm up to tell me what tell me what I needed to know when I got here. But probably the most important thing that I had to figure out was who to ask on certain decision-making points. I made some decisions limited information and the results were not good. I had to backtrack on some decisions that were made, and I was kind of upset. I had to ask some of my assistant superintendents and my cabinet, "If you knew there were some issues, why didn't you tell me when you knew we were going to make this decision. How come you didn't tell?" They responded, "Well, you didn't ask," and it's like well, how am I supposed to ask if I don't know? So that's just something I still need to work on that one and how to hide it. You need to know, what are the pitfalls when you make a decision, where the potholes are. I figured out the sacred cows, but still need to be the primary decision maker.

Researcher reflection and reflexivity. During my *tyro* transition, I learned that decision-making, coupled with decision ownership is one of the most paramount traits needed for the role of a school superintendent. There are many times in this role, such as when to delay or cancel school due to forecasted weather, where decisions need to be made based on the limited information you have at the time, though that information can be subject to change. As a leader,

it is also important to communicate why decisions are made, make decisions in a timely manner, and own accountability for the decisions made. During my *tyro* transition, I was asked to make many decisions that were rooted from conversations prior to my tenure. During that time, I had to rely on the information I was being told and my own judgment to make those decisions. I learned quickly that individuals value communication of the thought behind the decision, timeliness of the decision, and accountability for the decisions I made as much as their perception of the right decision.

Summary

In this chapter, the *tyro* transition of five school superintendents were organized to reflect the participant's own voices. Each participant provided a unique perspective and served as school district superintendents in a U.S. K-12 public education systems. Each district varied in location, size, enrollment demographics, and other composition markers. This chapter shed light on the challenges and successes of the *tyro* transition to the role of school superintendent to help an area identified to have limited research but a greater need. The data collected from this study through individual interviews, reflective journals, and researcher reflections and reflexivity revealed the lived experiences of transition to the role of school superintendent. Each narrative, including my own as the researcher, provided detailed personal accounts of the *tyro* transition, and identified traits from the Zaccaro et al. (2004) Trait Leadership Model that were developed or utilized to overcome challenges discovered during that time. Though each participant's narrative was independent of the other, their collective responses provided insight into the lived experiences of superintendents during *tyro* transition and an understanding of patterns and themes specific to the role of a school superintendent that is used in this study.

The participants in this study identified that through their lived experiences, challenges of the *tyro* transition to the role of a school superintendent included board-superintendent relationships, change management, and personnel issues. Though these challenges can be connected, the data collected from the reflected them to be independent themes that emerged as challenges from the participants. Successes experienced during the *tyro* transition to the role of a school superintendent include building relationships with cabinet members, implementing systems throughout the organization, and building trust amongst staff members. Traits from the Zaccaro et al. (2004) Trait Leadership Model that were utilized or developed to overcome the challenges of the *tyro* transition to school superintendency include oral/written communication, general problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills, honesty/integrity, and decision making.

Chapter V

Discussion

"A researcher uses tenets of autobiography and ethnography to do and write autoethnography.

Thus, as a method, autoethnography is both process and product (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 273)."

Chapter IV outlined themes from this research study utilizing descriptive autoethnography and narrative inquiry to tell the story of the *tyro* transition to the role of school superintendent. In this chapter, the interpretations and concepts resulting from the research will be explored in relation to the established theoretical framework: Zaccaro et al. (2004) Trait Leadership Model. This chapter will include a summary of the research results, recommendations for future research, implications for professional practice, and final thoughts.

The impact of successful school superintendents reaches students, staff, community members, and many stakeholders in the community. Effective district leadership can impact school culture, teacher retention, school climate, district climate, and school improvement (McFarlane, 2010). However, superintendent training programs continue to be inadequate, literature on the *tyro* transition to the role of a school superintendent is limited, and the average superintendent tenure continues to be below the average tenure of other positions (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005; Cooper et al., 2002). To better prepare school superintendents to be successful and to improve the average tenure of school superintendents, preparation programs, mentors, school boards, and aspiring superintendents should be equipped to address the lived experience challenges and successes during the *tyro* transition. Additionally, the study of traits needed to overcome the challenges of the *tyro* transition can lead to more conscious efforts for targeted areas of focus to better prepare district leaders.

Although there is an increased number of reputable universities that offer Ed.D. and Ph.D. programs for aspiring superintendents, researchers continue to question the preparedness of superintendents. Specifically, researchers have outlined that university programs specific to superintendent preparation do not evolve over time and are unable to successfully merge the theoretical curriculum with needed practical insights accounting for the lived experiences of school superintendents (Hess, 2003). Moreover, though university programs attempt to focus on competencies needed for the role of superintendent, training targeted to help superintendents during their *tyro* transition is limited. Change in leadership at school districts provides challenges to both the new superintendent and to the employees in the school district. Often, this change can lead to management derailment. It is, therefore, necessary for organizations to support the transition in leadership in a school district to avoid negative consequences with long term effects (Avolio & Hannah, 2008; Lombardo & McCauley, 1988; Watkins 2009).

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the lived experiences of superintendents transitioning to their first superintendency. Participants documented challenges and successes during their first semester through journals of their lived experiences. Additionally, this study analyzed traits demonstrated by superintendents during their *tyro* transition to overcome challenges of a first semester superintendent based on the Zaccaro et al. (2004) Trait Leadership Model. The guiding research questions in this study were

1.   What are the challenges and successes of transitioning to a first superitendency shared through lived experiences?

2.   What traits are demonstrated by superintendents in their *tyro* transition to overcome challenges of a first semester superintendent?

Summary of Results

      This study explored the lived experience of five participants who were superintendents during their *tyro* transition, including the researcher. The research design for this study was composed of narrative inquiry and autoethnography and was based upon the works of several prominent qualitative researchers such as Creswell (2014), Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Chang (2008), and Ellis (2004). The narrative inquiry design process recommended by Creswell (2014) was combined with the six steps described by Chang (2008) for conducting autoethnography. In addition to my own experiences in my district, I requested and received approval from four superintendents to participate in the study and from their employing districts to serve as research sites for this study. To ensure multiple perspectives were included in the research study, I initially sought participants who were beginning their first superintendency at the same time as myself. I intentionally selected participants who self-identified as first-time school superintendents. I was able to identify participants that were about to begin their first superintendency through professional contacts and references. I sent both an email and letter of invitation to participate in the study to five individuals who were appointed to their first superintendency during the 2017-2018 school year with a start date of July 1, 2018. I received responses back from four individuals agreeing to participate in the study

      The primary means for collecting data were a demographic questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and reflexive journals. Literature on the traits needed during a superintendent's *tyro* transition and trait-based leadership informed the development of the demographic questionnaire and interview guide. The demographic questionnaire and interview questions used in this study were created, with permission, by modifying instruments from Sanchez (2016). The format of semi-structured interviews facilitated the ability to create a

structured, yet relaxed, setting for obtaining the narrative responses of participants' backgrounds, experiences, and transition to the role of a superintendent. The demographic questionnaire helped obtain biographical, educational, and work experience data from participants in efforts to achieve accuracy and trustworthiness of information.

The participants in this study identified that through their lived experiences, challenges of the *tyro* transition to the role of a school superintendent included board-superintendent relationships, change management, and personnel issues. The data collected from participants reflected each of these topics to be independent themes that emerged as challenges from the participants. Successes experienced during the *tyro* transition to the role of a school superintendent include building relationships with cabinet members, implementing systems throughout the organization, and building trust amongst staff members. Traits from the Zaccaro et al. (2004) Trait Leadership Model that were utilized or developed to overcome the challenges of the *tyro* transition to school superintendency included oral/written communication, general problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills, honesty/integrity, and decision making.

Challenge: Board-Superintendent relations. All participants expressed that board-superintendent relations were a challenge during their *tyro* transition. The research literature provides evidence that there is a need for traditional superintendent training programs to grow and develop superintendents beyond just pedagogy to include training on the relationship aspects of the role (Harris et al., 2004). The narratives of the participants in this study exemplified that developing each superintendent's ability to better manage and be prepared for various board-superintendent relations is essential during the *tyro* transition.

Challenge: Change management. Participants demonstrated that another challenge experienced during their *tyro* transition included change management as it relates to both the

superintendent and staff members in the district the superintendent leads. Literature has identified change management to be a key component of effective leadership. Additionally, research has shown that resistance to change is commonly observed during transitions of leadership, making it necessary for superintendents to be explicit and provide clarity about the type of culture they aim to build and effectively communicate behaviors that will best support their vision for the school district (Hassan, 2018). The lived experiences of the participants demonstrated dealing with change management from all levels of the organization including the board of education, cabinet members, principals, teachers, and even themselves.

Challenge: Personnel issues. The last theme that emerged as challenge of the lived experiences of the superintendents during their *tyro* transition was personnel issues. Prior researcher on superintendent preparation programs identified deficits in the ability to adequately train superintendents because of the inability of programs to keep pace with the evolving role of school superintendents. The nature of personnel issues makes each circumstance unique and requires school superintendents to make decisions that are based more on judgement and less on policy (Andrews & Grogan, 2002; Cooper et al., 2002). Participants identified various personnel issues as challenges during their *tyro* transition to the role of a school superintendent. The challenges of personnel issues included isolated incidents, systemic practices, and changes in approach from prior leaders in the organization.

Success: Building relationships with cabinet members. Cabinet members oversee specific areas of the district and often report directly to the superintendent. During my own *tyro* transition, I quickly learned that cabinet members can be the closest staff members to the superintendent and can have a major impact on the success of superintendents during their *tyro* transition. It is important for new leaders to connect with those around them and identify how

relationships can be built, maintained, and strengthened (Schaefer, 2015). Building relationships

with cabinet members was one of the successes that both the participants and researcher

experienced during the *tyro* transition. Participants demonstrated success in building,

maintaining, and strengthening relationships with cabinet members to better connect with

employees that directly impacted their *tyro* transition.

Success: Implementing systems throughout the organization. Another theme for

successes during the *tyro* transition of school superintendents was implementing systems

throughout the organization. Research has identified that one of the primary roles of leaders is to

identify where the organization is heading and what the expected outcomes are for an

organization. This process occurs by determining a vision for change and implementing

systemic, actionable next steps for implementation (Heathfield, 2019). All participants in this

study demonstrated success in the implementation of systems throughout the organization

aligned vision for the future of their district.

Success: Developing trust amongst staff members. An important component of

effective leadership is establishing trust, which can impact organizational culture, organizational

effectiveness, and employee satisfaction (Gilstrap & Collins, 2012; Kouzes & Posner, 1987).

Trust among staff members can lead to employee job satisfaction (Gilstrap & Collins, 2012). All

participants in this study demonstrated through their own reflections that establishing trust

among staff members was a success during their *tyro* transition.

Leadership trait: Oral and written communication. Oral and written communication

was one of the top five leadership traits participants in this study demonstrated using to

overcome the challenges of the *tyro* superintendent. The participants' lived experiences added to

existing research which demonstrates that communication skills are of high importance to for

effective leadership and can directly impact an individual's ability to lead (Olenski, 2016; Miller, 2012).

Leadership trait: General problem solving. Another leadership trait identified by participants as necessary during the *tyro* transition was general problem solving. Superintendents must attempt to decrease the occurrence of problems and possess the courage to address the problems quickly (Llopis, 2013). Participants in this study reflected on a myriad of situations during their *tyro* transition in which it was essential to be strong enough to address these issues head on and continue working towards the goals of the organization. The range of general problems addressed by superintendents during their *tyro* transition spread across all layers of the organization and involved a variety of stakeholders.

Leadership trait: Interpersonal skills. Participants in this study identified that interpersonal skills are essential for superintendents during their *tyro* transition and demonstrated the need to utilize interpersonal skills with various patrons of their district to overcome challenges during their first semester as a school superintendent. Research demonstrates that leaders must work to perfect interpersonal, interdependent relationships in order to improve processes and systems, and it is important for superintendents to listen to both employees and constituents as a means to grow their interpersonal skills (Covey, 2013).

Leadership trait: Honesty/Integrity. Honesty and integrity were traits that also emerged as successes from the participants' and researcher's *tyro* transitions to the superintendent position. To gain trust and respect from employees and constituents, leaders must value integrity and display honesty (Coker, 2015). These virtues are important for all people, but they are especially important for leaders (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). Integrity and honesty

create the foundation of trust between followers and leader and can have lasting impacts on the future of an organization, even after the leader's *tyro* transition (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991).

Leadership trait: Decision making. Decision making was the final top leadership trait that materialized as a theme from the lived experiences of participants in this study. The participant's experiences aligned to research demonstrating that during their *tyro* transitions, making good decisions in tough situations was challenging because decisions led to stress, uncertainty, change, and sometimes the disappointment or disapproving reactions of others (Kase, 2010). Therefore, participants utilized and developed the trait of decision making to address a variety of challenges during their *tyro* transition.

Summary

The results of this study provide several considerations. First, the role of a school superintendent is complex, constantly evolving, and impacted by a multitude of factors. A superintendent's *tyro* transition can be unique for each district, however, the lived experiences of participants in this study demonstrated that commonalities exist in the challenges, successes, and leadership traits necessary to overcome the obstacles presented during a superintendent's *tyro* transition. These commonalities include challenges in board-superintendent relations, change management, and addressing personnel issues. Successes experienced during the *tyro* transition included building relationships with cabinet members, implementing systems throughout the organization, and developing trust amongst staff.

Additionally, this study affirmed the Zaccaro et al. (2004) theory of Trait Leadership which focuses on finding a group of attributes common amongst effective leaders. Since leader effectiveness refers to the degree of impact a leader has on group or individual performance, members' satisfaction, and overall effectiveness, research has shown that leaders who find

success are different from others and have specific personality traits that positively impact their leadership (Derue et al., 2011; Lord et al., 2017). Based on the results of this study from the data collected of participant's lived experiences, the traits that positively impact leadership during the *tyro* transition include oral/written communication, general problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills, honesty/integrity, and decision making.

Recommendations for Future Study

This study provided a basis for follow up studies to further research the *tyro* transition to the role of a school superintendent. The intent of each of the following recommended studies below is to provide support to aspiring superintendents, boards of education, superintendent training programs, superintendent mentors, and school districts, as well as to provide avenues for further study on effective strategies to help superintendents be better prepared for their *tyro* transition. Based on my experiences conducting this study and the knowledge I gained from the research process, I can provide the following recommendations for future studies on the *tyro* transition to a superintendency:

1. Conduct a comparative analysis of superintendents who remain in their position three years after their tyro transition to those who do not in order to determine if there is a difference in the way the superintendents addressed the challenge of board-superintendent relations, change management, and personnel issues. The research outcomes may provide insight into successful practices to address the challenges of the *tyro* transition to the role of a school superintendent, which may provide guidance on how to better prepare superintendents during their first semester. Additionally, the research can also be expanded to a study the full first year of a Superintendent for comparative analysis with this study.

2. Conduct an explanatory study to identify specific actions and practices utilized by

superintendents that result in successes during their *tyro* transition. An identification of these

actions and practices can then be taught and replicated by other superintendents to increase

successes experienced during the *tyro* transition for districts across the nation.

3. Conduct a comparative analysis to see if the lived experiences and use of Zaccaro's

Trait Leadership model for *tyro* superintendents differ based on factors such as the

superintendent's ethnicity, gender, prior experience, and/or other factors. The research outcomes

may provide insight into unique roles based on individualized contexts as leaders acclimate to

their new communities and help identify whether certain prior experiences translate to future

preparation for the *tyro* transition better than others.

4. Conduct an exploratory study to identify specific actions and practices utilized by

superintendents to develop and utilize the leadership traits identified in the Zaccaro et al. (2004)

Trait Leadership Model. Understanding how to develop and utilize leadership traits that result in

increased effectiveness can improve training and development programs for school

superintendents. This exploratory study can also revisit the distal attributes identified in the

Zaccaro et al. (2004) Trait Leadership model for potential changes based on the results from this

study. Specifically, the analysis can explore whether some traits are undervalued or over-

represented.

Implications for Professional Practice

Prior research and literature illustrates that superintendent preparation and training

programs continue to be inadequate and have failed to evolve with the changing roles of school

superintendents. Additionally, research has demonstrated that targeted literature on the *tyro*

transition to a role of a school superintendent is minimal, though the successes or failures during

the *tyro* transition can have a lasting impact on leadership effectiveness throughout a

superintendent's tenure. The results of this study provided insight into the lived experiences challenges and successes of school superintendents during their *tyro* transition. The challenges expressed by participants during their *tyro* transition included board-superintendent relations, change management, and personnel issues. The successes of the *tyro* transition expressed by participants in this study included building relationships with cabinet members, implementing systems throughout the organization, and building trust amongst staff. The data collected from this study can be utilized by superintendent training programs, aspiring superintendents, and boards of education to better support individuals during their *tyro* transition. This increased support and targeted areas of professional development may result in increased leadership effectiveness, more positive organizational results, and an increased average in superintendent tenure.

Additionally, the participants identified the most utilized or developed leadership traits from the Zaccaro et al. (2004) Trait Leadership model to address the challenges of transitioning to the role of a school superintendent. The model is based on the beliefs that leadership emerges from the combined impact of several traits as opposed to arising from individual traits, and it also suggests that leader traits vary in their influence on leadership. These traits include oral/written communication, general problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills, honesty/integrity, and decision making. Understanding the importance of these leadership traits that predict leader effectiveness can help organizations with their leader selection, training, and development practices (Derue et al., 2011; Eden & Leviatan, 1975; Northouse, 2018). Based on trait leadership theory, organizations and businesses should select leaders and provide professional development based on these respective leadership traits that emerge (Dugan, 2017).

Final Thoughts

Prior to this research study, literature and research exploring the lived experiences of school superintendents during their *tyro* transition was minimal. Furthermore, the inability of superintendent preparation programs to evolve with the changing role of school superintendents and the lack of focus on leadership traits essential to successfully address the challenges presented during a superintendent's *tyro* transition led to inadequate preparation and short superintendent tenures.

Research on Trait Leadership Theory dates to the 19th century when Galton (1869) asserted that leadership is unique to specific individuals whose decisions can have a radical effect on history. He also stated that personal attributes defined effective leadership and are inherited (Galton, 1869). Research has varied over the years, leaning away from trait-based leadership in the 1950s and then coming back to it in the 1980s (Zacarro, 2007). Trait-based leadership ascertains that these traits are not just genetically inherited, but that they are complex patterns of behaviors and characteristics that result in effective leadership across many situations (Zaccaro et al., 2004).

Though there is a variety of research on the specific character traits that lead to successful leadership, trait-leadership theory states that there should be a combination of character traits that can be successfully implemented in a variety of situations that result in effective leadership. Superintendents, like individuals in all leadership positions, are unique and have unique character traits. If they can determine how to best apply the traits identified as essential by the participants in this study, then they can be successful leaders of school districts that make lasting positive impacts on the lives of children.

The goal for me in this study was to accurately depict the lived experiences of superintendent's during their *tyro* transition using their own voice. To do so, it was important for me to value each participant experience as an educational opportunity to provide insight and understanding for those that might be in the same position in the future. As a researcher, participant, and practitioner, this study provided me an avenue to grow and develop during my own *tyro* transition that will continue to help me identify more successes during my tenure as a school superintendent. I am grateful for all the participants in this study who will continue to encounter challenges as educational leaders, but who have the commitment and resolve to keep working to improve the lives of students in the school districts they serve.

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Appendix A

Participant Invite Letter and Email

Date _____
Dear _____,

My name is Rupak Gandhi. I am a doctoral student at Northwest Nazarene University pursuing my Doctorate of Philosophy in Educational Leadership.
I am conducting research on "Superintendent's *tyro* transition" (their first semester). The purpose of the study is to capture the lived experiences of first-year school superintendents in k-12 US Public School Districts in order to gain a deeper understanding of what traits impact their ability to overcome first-year challenges and what traits are needed to be successful.
I will be interviewing participants and asking them to journal their experiences weekly. The interviews are expected to last approximately 30 minutes. They will take place virtually and will be recorded. All the contents of the recording will be kept confidential, and the real names of the superintendents will not be used.
You have received this invitation to become an interview participant because you fit the criteria of a first-year school Superintendents who begin their role on July 1st, 2018.

If you are willing to participate in the interview, please contact me by June 15th, 2018 at
RupakGandhi@gmail.com or (281) 451-3297.
By participating and sharing your ideas, you would be making a valuable contribution to the study. You would also be helping me to achieve my goal of assisting aspiring school superintendents in the US.
Thank you so much for your time.
With warm regards,
Rupak Gandhi

Participant Response
I accept the offer to be interviewed. I look forward to sharing my thoughts with you. Thank you!
_____   _____   _____
Signature   Telephone #   Email Address

Email Invitation to Participate in an Important Research Study

My name is Rupak Gandhi, and I am a doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership at Northwest Nazarene University. This is an invitation to participate in an educational research study I am conducting this semester.

I am interested in capturing the capture the lived experiences of first-year school superintendents in k-12 US Public School Districts in order to gain a deeper understanding of what traits impact the ability to overcome first-year superintendent challenges and are needed for the role.

I am seeking participants who are:

-first-time (*tyro*) superintendents beginning in their new role starting July 1, 2018
-work in a U.S. school district
-work in a public education school district

Why Participate?
• Your views are unique and worthy of being told!
• Sharing your views about your *tyro* transition will help educate others about how to be prepared for their first superintendency.
• Your story could help generate change in training and preparations for school superintendents to make experiences more relevant and pertinent to the duties of the role.

What will happen in the study?
If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in virtual individual interviews at the end of your first month and first semester and asked to weekly journal your experiences as a school superintendent. Your journal entry topics and length are up to you.

If you are interested in participating in this study please reply "Yes" to this email by June 15th, 2018 and I will contact you.

Thank you!

Rupak Gandhi
Doctoral Candidate, Northwest Nazarene University
Email: RupakGandhi@gmail.com
Phone: (281) 451-3297

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

The Researcher
My name is Rupak Gandhi and I am a doctoral student at Northwest Nazarene University (NNU), Nampa, Idaho. I am conducting a qualitative methods research study on the traits demonstrated by school superintendents during their *tyro* transition.

The Research Purpose
The role of a school superintendent is constantly changing and now encompasses more roles and responsibilities than before (Abraham, 2018). The average tenure of superintendents is about 3.18 years, with the number being even lower for superintendents serving in large urban school districts (Council of Great City Schools, 2010). While states continue to revamp superintendent preparation programs, many of the skills and traits needed to successfully address the transition to a superintendency still remain unaddressed.
Therefore, this study will evaluate the lived experiences of four superintendents transitioning to their first superintendency. They will document challenges and successes during their first semester through journals of their lived experiences. Additionally, this study will analyze traits demonstrating by superintendents during their *tyro* transition to overcome challenges of a first semester superintendent.

Research Questions
The crucial research question for this research study embraces the following:
1.   What are the lived experience challenges and successes of transitioning to a first superintendency?
2.   What leadership traits are used by superintendents to overcome the challenges of the *tyro* superintendent?

The Methods to Meet the Purpose
The methods that will be used to meet this purpose include:
• Interviews
• Surveys
• Journals

Participant's Understanding
• I understand this study will be submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the researcher's degree of Doctor of Philosophy at NNU.
• I understand that my participation is voluntary.
• I understand that I will not be identified by name in this study.
• I understand that the interview session will be recorded
• I understand that all records will be kept confidential, in the secure possession of the researcher.
• I understand that all data collected will be limited to the use of this study.
• I understand that I may withdraw from the study, at any time, without consequences. In the event I withdraw from the study, all information I provided will be destroyed and omitted

from the final paper.

By signing this consent form, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above information. I give my consent to participate in this study:

_____

Signature of Study Participant **Date**

I give my consent for the interview and discussion to be recorded in this study:

_____

Signature of Study Participant **Date**

I give my consent for direct quotes to be used in this study:

_____

Signature of Study Participant **Date**

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent **Date**

_____

THE NORTHWEST NAZARENE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD HAS REVIEWED THIS PROJECT FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH.

Appendix C

Confidentiality Agreement

Title of Research Project: BECOMING A NEW SCHOOL SUPERINTEDNENT: EXAMINING THE *TYRO* TRANSITION
Local Principal Investigator:

As an assistant to the research team I understand that I may have access to confidential information about study sites and participants. By signing this statement, I am indicating my understanding of my responsibilities to maintain confidentiality and agree to the following:

- I understand that names and any other identifying information about study sites and participants are completely confidential.
- I agree not to divulge, publish, or otherwise make known to unauthorized persons or to the public any information obtained in the course of this research project that could identify the persons who participated in the study.
- I understand that all information about study sites or participants obtained or accessed by me in the course of my work is confidential. I agree not to divulge or otherwise make known to unauthorized persons any of this information, unless specifically authorized to do so by approved protocol or by the local principal investigator acting in response to applicable law or court order, or public health or clinical need.
- I understand that I am not to read information about study sites or participants, or any other confidential documents, nor ask questions of study participants for my own personal information but only to the extent and for the purpose of performing my assigned duties on this research project.
- I agree to notify the local principal investigator immediately should I become aware of an actual breach of confidentiality or a situation which could potentially result in a breach, whether this be on my part or on the part of another person.

_____ _____ _____

Signature   **Date**   **Printed name**

_____ _____ _____

Signature of local principal investigator   **Date**   **Printed name**

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

Greetings and Introduction

• Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study, I appreciate your time.

• *Review the purpose of the study:* I am interested in learning more about the experiences of school superintendents during their *tyro* transition.

• *Review of procedures:* I will ask you several open-ended questions related to your experiences here and ask you to answer as fully as you can. I will digitally record the interview and make my own notes. If you wish to state something that you do not want recorded, simply tell me and I will turn off the recorder for that segment of our discussion. I will later transcribe the interview and send you a copy for you to review for accuracy. All personally identifiable information will be safeguarded and altered to protect your identity and privacy. To protect your privacy and your personal identity, for the purposes of this study-I would like you to choose a pseudonym. Please take a moment to do this now.

• Do you have any questions before we begin? May I clarify anything for you?
• Review with student Informed Consent document and obtain signatures; study participant is invited to select pseudonym.

Individual Interview Questions (At the end of the first month)

Thank you again for your participation in this study. The first set of questions I am going to ask have to do with your background.

1. Tell me why you chose a path to a superintendency?
2. Please describe your work experience prior to the role of a school superintendent.
3. Tell me about your perceived level of preparation for the role of a superintendent?
4. Describe the support and encouragement you received from others in making your decision to pursue this role (personal and/or professional).
5. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your journey to this role?
6. What experiences in the role so far have had the biggest impact on you?

Thank you. The next set of questions are about your first month in the role of a superintendent.

7. What can you tell me about your first month on the job that is different from what we discussed so far?
8. Which support factors have been the most helpful to you so far?
9. Have you felt prepared for everything you encountered in the first month?
10. What excites and concerns you the most about your first semester?
11. What do you hope or foresee as your greatest challenges during your *tyro (novice superintendent)* transition?
12. What do you hope or foresee as your greatest successes during your *tyro (novice superintendent)* transition?
13. This will be my final question. What else would you like to tell me that I did not ask today?

Thank you again for your participation in this study. This concludes our time together today.

Individual Interview Questions (At the end of semester 1)

Thank you again for your participation in this study. The first set of questions I am going to ask have to do with your district.

1. What have you learned about your district that has surprised you the most?
2. What have you learned about your district that you are most proud of?
3. What do you wish you knew about your district coming in as superintendent that you know now?
4. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your district?

Thank you. The next set of questions are about your role as a superintendent.

5. What experiences have you had in the role of a superintendent which have had the biggest impact on you?
6. Which support factors have been the most helpful to you during your time as school superintendent?
7. What are the biggest challenges and successes you faced in your *tyro (novice superintendent)* transition?
8. How have you addressed the biggest challenges you faced during your first semester as a superintendent?
9. Please answer yes or no to let me know if any of the following traits, based on the trait leadership model, have been important for you to develop or utilize during your first semester as a school superintendent to be more effective?
    Traits: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Openness, Neuroticism, Honesty/Integrity, Charisma, Intelligence, Creativity, Achievement Motivation, Need for Power, Oral/Written Communication, Interpersonal Skills, General Problem-Solving Skills, Decision Making, Technical Knowledge, Management.
10. Were any of these traits more important than the other? Why or why not? Rank the top five.
11. Can you share any stories or examples where one or more of these traits were utilized?
12. Would you share a story with me about a challenging time or situation for you during your first semester as a superintendent that you weren't prepared for?
13. Looking ahead, what experience from your first semester has best prepared you for this role moving forward?
14. This will be my final question. What else would you like to tell me that I did not ask today?

Thank you again for your participation in this study. This concludes our time together today.

Appendix E

Demographic Questionnaire

Background
Participant's Name:_____
Participant's Code/Alias/Pseudonym: _____
Age (in years) : _____ Date of Birth (optional): Month ___ Day___ Year_____
Place of Birth (optional): _____
Native Language (check one): English (1) ____ Spanish (2)____ Other (3):____
Gender: _____
Ethnicity: _____

EMPLOYMENT
Are you employed? YES (1) NO (2)
If employed, which best describes your employment situation? (Check one)
Full time (40 hours or more per week): ____ (1)
Part Time (25 hours–39 hours per week): ____ (2)
Part Time (Less than 25 hours per week): ____(3)
Position Title: _____

EDUCATION/COLLEGE EXPERIENCES
Prior College Experience(s) Circle those that apply to your situation.
Did you earn college credits prior to enrolling in college? YES/NO
Did you attend a previous institution of higher education before enrolling in this institution?
How many credit hours (not classes) are you undertaking in the current semester/term?
What years did you attend the university?
Did you graduate with a college degree?
If yes-What degree were you awarded upon graduation?
If no-Are you still attending college? Reasons for departure?
What are your educational/career goal(s)?
What was your academic major?

Appendix F

Reflective Journal Protocol

Title of Research Project: BECOMING A NEW SCHOOL SUPERINTEDNENT: EXAMINING THE *TYRO* TRANSITION

Dates: As a research participant in this study, please provide a weekly journal entry encompassing reflections on your *tyro* transition to the role of a school superintendent. Please complete an entry once a week beginning **Monday, July 2nd, 2018** and ending **Monday, December 24th, 2018**.

Topic: Please focus the content of your journal on any or all the following topics:

- What challenges have you faced this week as a superintendent?

- What successes have you experienced this week as a superintendent?

- Have you had to develop or utilize any of the leadership traits below to address specific situations this week as a school superintendent? Please reflect on that situation.
  - Traits: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Openness, Neuroticism, Honesty/Integrity, Charisma, Intelligence, Creativity, Achievement Motivation, Need for Power, Oral/Written Communication, Interpersonal Skills, General Problem-Solving Skills, Decision Making, Technical Knowledge, Management.

Journal Format: You have the option to submit a written journal format using the GoogleDrive folder provided or you may chose to provide a video and/or audio journal entry using your custom link on FlipGrid provided to you by the researcher.

Length: There are no requirements for the length of your weekly journal entry.

Appendix G

Participant Member Checking

Hello,

I hope that this email finds you well. Thank you for your participation in the study entitled
BECOMING A NEW SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT: EXAMINING THE *TYRO*
TRANSITION.

I wanted to let you know some of the themes that resulted from the interviews and journals in
this particular study (see below). Please let me know if these accurately depicted our
conversation. If you have any suggestions, modifications, or questions, please let me know by
Monday, February 11th, 2019.

The purpose of the study is to capture the lived experiences of first-year school superintendents
in K-12 US Public School Districts in order to gain a deeper understanding of what traits impact
the ability to overcome first-semester superintendent challenges and are needed for the role.
The guiding research questions in this study were

1.   What are the challenges and successes of transitioning to a first superitendency shared
through lived experiences?
2.   What traits are demonstrated by superintendents in their *tyro* transition to overcome
challenges of a first semester superintendent?

There were many themes that emerged from the interviews that you participated in and the
journal entries you provided.
After reading, re-reading and coding the transcripts, the results identified are in the following
table.

Research Questions	Emerging Themes
	Challenges:
1. What are the lived experience challenges and successes of transitioning to a first superintendency?	Board-Superintendent Relations
	Change Management
	Personnel Issues
	Successes:
	Building Relationships with Cabinet Members

		Implementing Systems Throughout the Organization
		Developing Trust Amongst Staff Members
2.	What leadership traits are used by superintendents to overcome the challenges of the *tyro* superintendent?	Oral and Written Communication
		General Problem Solving
		Interpersonal Skills
		Honesty/Integrity
		Decision Making

If these ideas do not reflect your experience or you would like to comment further, please respond to this email or contact me at the number below. Thanks again for participating in my dissertation study. It would not have been possible without you.

Rupak Gandhi
Doctoral Student
Northwest Nazarene University
RupakGandhi@gmail.com
(281) 451-3297

Appendix H

IRB Approval

Accepted by **Northwest Nazarene University**.   5/14/2018

Email:

Dear Rupak,

The IRB has reviewed your protocol: 5022018 - Becoming a New School Superintendent: Examining the Tyro Transition. You received 'Full Approval'. Congratulations, you may begin your research. If you have any questions, let me know.

Northwest Nazarene University
Rick Boyes
IRB Member
623 S University Blvd
Nampa, ID 83686

Appendix I

Sanchez Protocol Approval

Permission To Use Interview Protocol   Inbox ×

Rupak Gandhi <rupakgandhi@gmail.com>   Tue, Apr 24, 2018, 8:26 AM
to robertsanchez

Good Morning Dr. Sanchez,

My name is Rupak Gandhi and I am currently a Ph.D student at Northwest Nazarene University. I am requesting permission to utilize your interview protocol from your dissertation titled, " TOWARD A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF HISPANIC UNDERGRADUATE RETENTION AT A PRIVATE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY USING NARRATIVE INQUIRY AND AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC METHODS." I am also conducting an autoethnography and narrative inquiry for my dissertation entitled, "Becoming a School Superintendent: Examining the Tyro Transition."

I will gladly provide you with a copy of my dissertation once approved. Thank you for your support and consideration.

Rupak Gandhi
RGandhi@nnu.edu
(281) 451-3297

Robert Sanchez <robertsanchez@nnu.edu>   Wed, May 30, 2018, 10:15 AM
to me

Yes, I approve. Best wishes to you in your research!