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Superintendent's Perception of Their Use of Authentic Leadership Skills  
by

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Governors State University

Capstone

Submission in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Doctorate of Education

Interdisciplinary Leadership in Superintendency

Governors State University

University Park, IL

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE,  
HAVE APPROVED THIS CAPSTONE  
THE SUPERINTENDENT'S USE OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP SKILLS  
IN BUILDING TRUST  
BY  
MELISSA MENDOZA-THOMPSON  
  
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### Dedication & Acknowledgements

On a personal level, this work is dedicated to my loving and patient husband, Dr. Brian A. Thompson, who supported me throughout the entire process. He encouraged me to apply to the program and was a constant support. When things were challenging, he constantly reminded me of the benefits of the program and a doctorate. Without him, this work would not have been completed. I am also extremely grateful to my partner in crime (soon to be Dr.) Constance Grimm-Grason, who has provided both academic and emotional support over the years. We started this together, and we have ended this together. Thank you for your many hours of conversation and encouragement.

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### Abstract

School superintendents are challenged with many complexities of the position. They must balance the needs of their School Board, who act as their direct supervisors and sometimes have agendas of their own. They must balance the needs of their administrative team, and often serve as a buffer between these administrators, their staff, the community, parents, and the Union. They must balance the many different needs of the community, and often serve as the “face” of the school district. Most importantly, these many needs often are in direct and indirect competition with the students, the very reason that schools exist. Of course, within all of this, school superintendents must maintain their own personal ethics and convictions, staying true to who they are as both people and leaders. How do they balance all of this, while maintaining their authenticity? The purpose of this study was to explore and answer the research question:

What is superintendents’ perception of their use of the components of authentic leadership?

This study uses an interview based, qualitative methodology to better understand how superintendents apply the various components of authentic leadership to their daily work. In doing so, they described a variety of situations and challenges, how they reacted or responded, and how these responses impacted trust with a variety of stakeholders. Data was analyzed to determine connections and correlations, evaluating actions, thoughts, and situations in terms of the thirteen components of authentic leadership. It was determined that components are applied in unique and complex ways, dependent upon the individual superintendent and the situation that they are addressing.

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## Chapter One

### **Introduction**

The moral deterioration of executives has been discussed within the business and management literature since it was first introduced by Barnard in 1938 (Novicevic et al., 2006). In a way, Barnard is the “grandfather” of authentic leadership, first applying the concepts of personal and organizational responsibility to corporate leadership. He discussed the ethical responsibility that executives must adhere to, and the challenges inherent to doing so. In recent years, several scandals within the business sector have sparked a cry for a new type of leader, one who displays honesty, integrity, and a sense of ethical responsibility. Because of this, there has been significant focus in the last 20 years on the development of Authentic Leadership within the business sector.

Unfortunately, the field of education has not been immune to similar ethical scandals. Like business executives, school leaders, both superintendents and principals, are sometimes guilty of similar ethical and illegal phenomena. The news is littered with school leaders who have been involved in financial scandals, sexual improprieties, and other offensive actions. It is unfortunate that the public starting to lose faith in the education system. Superintendents specifically are challenged to balance the politics of the organization, the needs and wants of the Board, families, communities, students, and staff, with their personal needs and preferences. Because of this, it is just as essential that superintendents practice authenticity in their leadership.

School superintendents need to be able quickly and effectively develop trusting relationships with stakeholders. On some occasions, this may be because the superintendent is new to the district. In this situation, he or she must be able to evaluate the needs of the students, the priorities of the board and community, and overall direction of the district. Developing

relationships with the principals is vital to achieving this goal. On other occasions, an existing superintendent may be presented with a team consisting of several new principals. In this situation, the superintendent needs to be able to assess the principals' priorities, thought processes, and decision-making skills. Regardless of whether a superintendent is new to his team of principals, or the principals are new to the superintendent, trusting relationships must be quickly developed so that the superintendent can begin to move the district forward in meeting the needs of the students and their families.

Fullan (2014) summarizes the role of principals perfectly when he says, "They are expected to run a smooth school; manage health, safety, and the building; innovate without upsetting anyone; connect with students and teachers; be responsive to parents and the community; answer to their districts; and above all, deliver results" (p. 6). Excellent principals build bridges between parents, students, teachers, and the district. They exhibit a wide variety of different leadership competencies and skills. They must be able to clearly and effectively communicate in a way that builds trust and relationships. They are transformational leaders, authentic leaders, distributive leaders, situational leaders, charismatic leaders, and ethical leaders, to name a few. Regardless of how you define the specific leadership style, they all share similar foundational characteristics that build trust and relationships between and among constituents. These relationships improve the performance of the teachers and the organization as a whole.

Likewise, it is the Superintendent who is responsible for selecting, monitoring, evaluating, and maintaining the highest quality of principals for the district. The superintendent must be committed to the continuous development and correct placement of principals. In order to ensure that the district maintains quality principals who can continue to move forward the

district's goals and priorities, it is essential that the superintendent have honest and open relationships that are built on trust. Principals must feel comfortable accessing the superintendent. They must be able to ask for resources, seek clarification, elicit feedback, and participate in on-going improvement. None of this can happen if the principal does not trust his or her superintendent. The principal's trust in the superintendent is particularly important because of the superintendent's dual roles. The superintendent serves as both the direct supervisor of the principal and the image of the organization. Dirks & Ferrin (2002) indicate that both types of trust are essential to a person's job satisfaction, organizational commitment behavior, and overall job performance. By developing trust with principals, superintendents are able to create better, more dedicated, and happier principals.

Superintendents must be able to balance the many competing needs of the Board, the community, and the school. How can superintendents quickly and effectively create trusting relationships with their principals, while balancing the many competing focuses? The foundation for trust lies in the leader's authenticity. Authentic leadership lays a solid foundation where superintendents and principals can create trusting relationships, which contribute to higher quality work production. The outcome of this is hypothesized to be improvement in the district's ability to move forward its goals and objectives, creating improved outcomes in all targeted areas. Research that explores authentic leadership in the field of education has begun to emerge within the last five years. However, the majority of research has been quantitative and much of it has focused on how the principal uses authentic leadership to impact teachers and the school culture. The goal of this research is to examine how superintendents use authentic leadership to approach trust development.

## **Background**

### **Importance of Superintendents in Moving District Agendas Forward**

School boards have both explicit and implicit plans for the district. The Superintendent must make sense of these plans, and develop a plan of action that will take the school board's intentions, and develop them into realistic and relevant action items that will improve the schools and students. According to Marzano & Waters (2009), there is a relationship between district-level leadership and student achievement. Superintendents play a key role in supporting principals' leadership practices by ensuring that staff has the necessary resources, both collaboratively and logistically. They protect resources in schools that have high needs. Superintendents should ensure collaborative goal setting between principals that focuses on achievement and instruction. It is particularly important that superintendents maintain high standards for all students, especially those from culturally diverse backgrounds. Superintendents must monitor the principal's and school's goals with fidelity. Superintendents are also responsible for ensuring that the Board is in support of the district's goals and willing to provide the necessary resources. This includes developing policies and procedures that match best practices for staff and students. Culturally proficient district leaders ensure that policies and procedures are respectful of different cultural norms and hold all people to high standards. They are also responsible for ensuring that the Collective Bargaining Agreements are supportive of the district's mission and vision.

Superintendents act as bridges between the School Board, the district, and the community, by engaging members of the community so that they are invested in the school district. From Louis, et al. (2010), it is recommended that superintendents take an active role in educating families and community members on how to be involved in education. This is particularly

applicable for families from diverse backgrounds. It helps establish an understanding of shared governance, which leads to improved sense of ownership among staff, parents, and community members, which improves learning. They form authentic relationships with families and community members, and model caring and respectful communication. Superintendents should also engage principals in dialogues on how to best support parent and community involvement in the schools. The authenticity that superintendents model in their interactions between multiple stakeholders can be applied by the principal into his or her relationship with stakeholders. Therefore, the benefits of authenticity will compound at each level of the organization, initiating with the superintendent. This will improve the quality of the organization by increasing Organizational Citizenship Behaviors, relationships, and communication.

### **Importance of Trust in Principal-Superintendent Relationships**

The principal is considered a key factor in the success of a school; therefore, it is essential that superintendents work together with their principals to ensure that the needs of the students and staff are being met. Principals and superintendents are unable to achieve this goal if trust is not present in their relationships. Mayer (1995) defined trust as a willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of another party. Bauer & Green's (1996) research has shown that trust is an essential component when developing new relationships between leaders and followers. This was confirmed and expanded upon by Ballinger et al. (2009) who determined that trust with a new leader develops based on both previous relationships with supervisors and new interactions with the supervisor. This can also be applied within the context of school administration. Without trust, principals are not able to express concerns, problem solve, or respond effectively to the needs of students and staff. This is particularly important because past research has indicated that there is stronger impact on the value of trust between the direct supervisor and

trust in the leader of the organization, but in this situation, the superintendent acts as both (Costigan et al., 2011). As the highest-ranking official of any school district, the superintendent often serves as the public face and the key decision-maker. Although the school board is the official decision-making authority, it is the superintendent who determines the key actions of the district. The school board creates the agenda, but it is the superintendent who determines the next steps in moving that agenda forward.

### **Importance of School Principals in Moving District Agendas Forward**

Although the district superintendent is responsible for creating the action steps necessary in moving district agendas forward, it is typically the principals who are responsible for introducing and implementing those plans with teachers. Principals must be able to communicate the vision of the district to those who have the most direct impact on student achievement, the teachers. Leithwood, et al. (2008) studied the impact of principals on student achievement, indicating that the quality of school leaderships is often underestimated. Its impact on student learning is second only to classroom instruction. Marzano (2005) identified 25 “principal responsibilities” which include but are not limited to: affirmation; change agent; communication; culture; flexibility; focus; ideals/beliefs; input; intellectual stimulation; knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; monitoring/evaluating; relationships; resources; situational awareness and visibility. Most of these responsibilities require the development of trust or directly develop trust. Unfortunately, these different responsibilities are often in conflict. For example, leading change may temporarily negatively impact the culture. Monitoring and evaluating regulations may cause inflexibility. Principals are constantly balancing the varied and competing needs of the school environment.

School principals are responsible for every facet of the school environment, including hiring and retaining excellent staff, while dismissing those who may be mediocre or unimpactful. They are responsible for the overall culture of the building, the curriculum and how it is addressed, leading and monitoring district initiatives, ensuring a staff and orderly environment, maintaining the mission and vision of the district, etc. Principals provide instructional guidance, in the form of instructional leadership, which may include observing teachers, providing feedback, ensuring quality lesson planning, ensuring that teachers understand instructional and curricular expectations, modeling lessons, supporting effective instruction (Nettles & Herrington, 2007). They ensure that the school is a competitive entity via standardized testing. Principals motivate and inspire staff and students, in the form of Transformational leadership or charismatic leadership. In doing so, they empower teachers to take direct roles and responsibilities in the school improvement process (Marks & Printy, 2003; Leithwood, et al., 2008), which includes responsibility for both School Improvement Plans and participation in District Strategic Planning. This may utilize shared or distributed leadership as well as change leadership. Ethical leadership characteristics are applied when principals have to make decisions about how to best manage the budget and ensure that the school has the resources that it needs for both daily and long-term sustenance. In general, the role of the principal is both complicated and indirect.

At the classroom level, there is substantial evidence that student learning varies based on class size, student grouping practices, instructional practices, and monitoring of student progress. Though the principal may not directly impact many of these decisions, he or she is primarily responsible for those that do, teachers. Principals are responsible for establishing the very conditions that most impact student learning, which includes monitoring the creation of lesson plans and implementing of the curricular scope and sequence. With teachers, they ensure



alignment of goals, programs, policies, and professional development. Through teacher hiring and evaluation, principals ensure that high quality teachers are providing high quality instruction. Principals often serve as a bridge between the school and the community. They reflect and represent the district, facilitating communication between teachers and families, and ensuring a positive working climate.

In a study conducted by Williams (2007), specific social-emotional capabilities were discovered to differentiate outstanding principals from average principals. Principals with high self-confidence are able to stand up for what they believe in, making unpopular decisions if necessary and serving as a buffer between the building and central office, as well as other outside influences. They have the confidence to act individually and exhibit an achievement orientation, acting as change agents, by protecting teachers and instructional time, and serving as a buffer from outside influences and issues. Outstanding principals take initiative, and are willing to act and create opportunities to improve the school. Organizational awareness and an understanding of the politics of the district separate average principals from outstanding principals. They exhibit situational awareness, and knowledge of their teachers and ability predict how they would react. Given excellent leadership skills, they are able to give direction, stimulate enthusiasm, and articulate the mission and vision. They exhibit teamwork and collaboration skills, communicating, and bringing people together for a common goal.

All of these responsibilities and capabilities are typically reflected in the evaluation framework that superintendents use to evaluate principals. It is essential that principals serve their schools, teachers, and students, while at the same time balancing the larger picture of the district. In order to do this successfully, principals must act as a buffer, a conduit, a bridge, and an advocate. As they navigate this complexity, school principals must be able to trust their

superintendents as they push limits and act as change agents. They must be able to have honest and open conversations about themselves, both strengths and weaknesses, so that superintendents can support principals' development. Principals must feel safe in expressing the concerns of the staff and potential challenges and issues as change is implemented. If principals are not able to engage in these conversations with superintendents, it is likely that the district's agenda will remain idle.

### **Background Summary**

Trust is essential to all relationships, but particularly important between leaders and followers because it improves followers' Organizational Citizenship Behaviors, which improves outcomes. In the school system, trust between principals and superintendents are essentials. Being "in the trenches" with teachers, principals often have the clearest perspective about issues and changes that needs to occur. As change agents, principals must trust the superintendent in order to engage in risk taking behaviors to improve the school or district. To facilitate change, they are going to need to have open and honest conversations about the school and the need for the system to improve. This is likely to mean that they need to reveal challenges and barriers in their school. Principals need trust in the integrity of the superintendent and their ability to make sound decisions about the school district and leadership. Authentic leadership skills lay a foundation to the development of trust in followers.

### **Statement of Research Problem**

Previous research has been completed connecting the components of authentic leadership to relationship building, including trust development between leaders and followers (Valsenia et al., 2012; Hassan & Ahmed, 2011). Much of this research is focused on the business sector, and is quantitative in nature. Gardner, et al., (2011) analyzed the various studies on authentic

leadership, determining that only 9 of the 25 empirical studies were qualitatively based. The remainder were quantitative studies. There has been minimal research that investigates how district superintendents specifically use the various components within the educational sector, nearly none of it being qualitative in form. In fact, a search through EBSCO indicated only three articles with keywords including Authentic Leadership and Superintendent. Removing the requirement of including “Superintendent” yields nearly 300 results. Using an interview-based approach, this researcher would like to explore how authentic superintendents apply these four components to build trust between themselves and their principals. The primary research question asks:

What is superintendents’ perception of their use of the components of authentic leadership?

This research seeks to better understand how district leaders, specifically superintendents, use the various components of authenticity to develop trust with their principals, while balancing the political complexities of their position. In doing so, it will encourage superintendents to apply similar strategies to their own relationships with principals. These strategies could also be applied to developing trusting relationships with other stakeholders, including the School Board, community members, and parents. It can help School Boards better outline preferred leadership qualities in potential superintendent candidates when hiring. Another benefit would be to encourage superintendents to serve as role models to principals and other stakeholders, which will facilitate the spread of authenticity and trust throughout the organization, improving the overall culture and further improving outcomes.

## Chapter Two

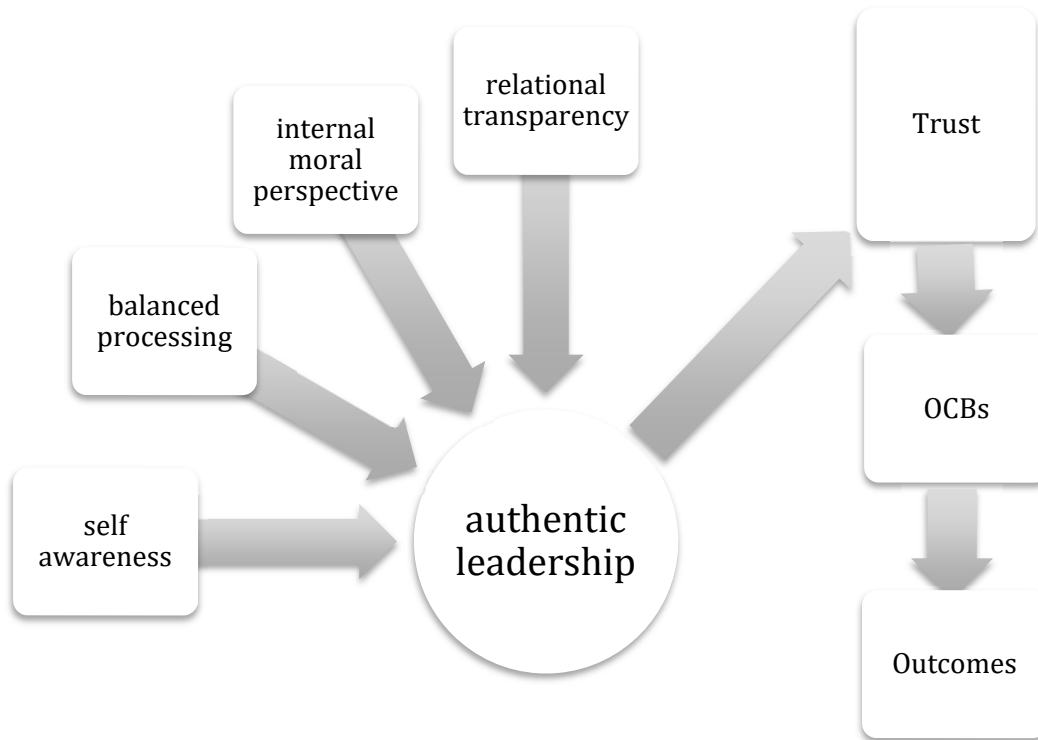
### **Introduction**

This chapter serves as the foundation that structures the research. It begins with an overview of the theoretical framework and then reviews previous research literature to further address what research has already been conducted and where potential opportunities may lie. In this literature review, it defines authenticity and then applies these concepts to the context of authentic leadership. It then outlines the various components of authentic leadership, and how these components apply to the school setting, particularly within the context of the role of the school principal and his or her relationship with the superintendent. The literature discusses the complexity and variety of meanings involved in the application of definitions of trust. It then explores the value of trust, both in between people, and then specifically within the context of leader and follower or supervisor and employee. The review of literature serves to explore the connection between trust and authentic leadership. Finally, the review of literature outlines how authentic leadership positively impacts the organization as a whole.

### **Theoretical Framework**

As indicated in Figure 1 below, the four tenets of authentic leadership, self-awareness, balanced processing, internal moral perspective, and relational transparency, provide the foundation for authentic leadership. This foundation improves a leader's ability to develop trust with his or her followers. The increase in trust will result in follower's increased OCBs, resulting in stronger outcomes for an organization or school district. This can be applied between multiple stakeholders, including superintendents and principals, as well as principals and staff. This will result in the ability for the district to move agendas forward, meeting district goals and objectives, improving outcomes.

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework



The four major components of authentic leadership: self-awareness, balanced processing, internal moral perspective, and relational transparency (Duncan et al. 2017; Walumba et al, 2008; Kernis, 2003) work both independently and together to serve as the foundation of authentic leadership. Authentic leadership creates trust in leadership (Avolio, et al., 2004; Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Hassan & Ahmed, 2011; Kerns, 2003). Followers who trust their leaders are more likely to exhibit positive Organizational Commitment Behaviors (OCBs) (Avolio et al., 2004; Ilies et al., 2005; Cosner, 2009; Dirks & Ferrin, 2001; Duncan et al., 2017; Valsenia et al., 2012; Zhu, May, & Avolio, 2004). Examples of these OCBs include: increased commitment to the organization, reduced intent to quit, increased job performance, increased job

satisfaction, increased goal commitment, increased belief in information, increased work engagement, increased productivity, improved allocation of organizational resources, etc.

When applied to the school environment, superintendents who apply the major components of authentic leadership in their relationships with their principals will improve trust between themselves and the principals. When this occurs, principals will exhibit higher levels of OCBs. These improved OCBs will reduce turnover rates of principals, encourage open communication, improve commitment to the district and the students, improve job performance, increase job satisfaction, increase principal's commitment to the district's and school's goals, increase the principal's belief in information, etc. Although not the focus of this specific research, the impact of authentic leadership on OCBs and outcomes is a viable opportunity for future research.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Authenticity Generalized**

The concept of authenticity is not new in leadership studies. Authenticity has been broadly defined as "being true to one's self." Authenticity has studied within the context of philosophy and psychology (Novicevic et al., 2006). From the context of philosophy, it has been defined as both a moral virtue and an ethical choice. Within the context of psychology, authenticity has been referred to as both a trait and an identity. It has been studied from an emotional perspective. Authenticity has been applied to cognitive awareness, behavioral and action based awareness, and social aspects. Within the context of leadership, leader authenticity has been defined as a leader's resolve to take responsibility for personal freedom and organizational and communal obligations so that leaders could make choices that would help them construct their selves as moral individuals (Novicevic et al., 2006). This interpretation and

application are important because they introduce the essential component of morality into the definition of leaderships, which is then applied to the greater definition of authentic leadership.

### **Authenticity in Leadership**

Authenticity, in its simplest form, is defined as being consistent with one's true self. When applied to the study of leadership, authentic leaders are described by Avolio & Gardner (2004) as those who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others' values/moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character. Superintendents are often challenged to balance the competing needs of the Board, the community, the parents, the staff, and the administration, yet they must also remain true to themselves. Authentic leaders are well equipped to meet the many challenges of the superintendency.

There are four widely accepted tenants of authentic leadership: self-awareness, balanced processing, internal moral perspective, and relational transparency (Duncan et al. 2017; Walumba et al, 2008; Kernis, 2003). Self-awareness is defined as a dynamic process and the degree to which the leader reflects and demonstrates an understanding of how he or she derives and makes sense of the world and is aware of his or her strengths, limitations, and how others see him/her and how he or she impacts others. Balanced processing is the degree to which the leaders shows that he/she objectively analyzes the relevant data and solicits others' views that challenge his or her deeply held beliefs before making a decision. Internal moral perspective refers to the degree to which the leader sets a high standard for moral and ethical conduct and lets them consistently guide his or her decisions and actions versus external pressure such as a group, organizational, and societal pressures. Relational transparency is the degree to which the

leader presents his/her true self to others, openly shares information, and expresses his/her true thoughts and feelings, reinforcing a level of openness that allows other to be comfortable and forthcoming with their ideas, challenges, and opinions (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). These four components are inter-related and inter-dependent, with one strengthening the other (Gardner et al., 200; Kemis, 2003). However, astute leaders apply different components or a combination of components to different situations.

Authenticity is important to leadership because it has been determined to be a key factor in the development of trust between leaders and followers, regardless of leadership style. Leaders who are deemed to be more authentic by their followers develop stronger relationships that improve the Organizational Citizenship Behaviors of the followers, which result in improved results for the organization as a whole. These contentions can also be applied to school districts. When superintendents exhibit authenticity, they develop trust, which improves relationships. These improved relationships increase the quality of the employees' OCBs, which improve both those who work directly under the superintendent, i.e., principals, but also the district as a whole.

### **Authenticity and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors**

Many of the components of authentic leadership, including improved trust, communication, and higher quality relationships, have been shown to increase employees' Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCBs). OCBs are related to benefits such as productivity, efficiency, cost reduction, satisfaction, and decreasing employee turnover. Several investigations have shown that authentic leadership is directly correlated to employee's satisfaction with supervisor, organizational commitment, extra effort and OCB in general (Clapp-Smith, Vbgelgesang, & Avey, 2009; Moriano, Molero, & Lévy-Mangin, 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2008; Walumbwa, Luthans, Avey, & Oke, 2009; Walumbwa, Wang, Wang, Schaubroeck, & Avolio, 2010). The



research of Valcena et al. (2012) has shown that two components of authentic leadership, moral perspective and relational transparency present significant relationships to OCB. They have also indicated that authentic leadership is a better predictor of employees' OCB's when the behaviors are impersonal and directed to the organization than when directed toward people. This is relevant to the field of education and school and district leadership in particular. It is essential the School Boards select a superintendent who displays authentic leadership skills to ensure that the organizational needs are addressed.

### **Overview of Authentic Leadership**

There have been several different definitions of authentic leadership. Avolio and Gardner (2005) developed the most widely accepted definition. They defined authentic leaders as those who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others' values/ moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character. Another leading researcher in authentic leadership, Walumbwa et al. (2008), defined it as a pattern of behavior that promotes and is inspired both by positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate to foster more self-awareness, internalized moral, balanced information processing, and transparency in relations between leader and employee. Central to authentic leadership is a high moral character, with the foundation being an understanding that ethics lies at the heart of leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Avolio & Gardner (2005) differentiate authentic leadership theory from other leadership theories because it is more generic, and represents a root construct in that it forms the basis for what would constitute other forms of positive leadership. Authentic leadership incorporates many other forms of leadership, but other forms of leadership may incorporate concepts not prevalent in

authentic leadership. According to many researchers, authentic leadership is the foundation for all other positive leadership theories, including transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, and servant leadership.

### **Components of Authentic Leadership**

Authentic leadership has four different widely agreed upon components. These components are: self-awareness, balanced processing, moral perspective, and relational transparency. A precursor to all of these components is a self-knowledge, or the ability to know one's self, one's desires, one's emotions, one's goals, and one's biases (Peus et al., 2011). In order to be self-aware, one must know his or her true self. In order to exhibit balanced processing, for example, one must also know his or her personal position in order to challenge that position. In order to present an authentic self to others, one must know his or her strengths and weaknesses.

Another precursor to authentic leadership was determined by Peus et al. (2011) as self-consistency, or a consistency between values, beliefs, and actions. Those who exhibit self-consistency are able to connect their values, beliefs and actions. They make decisions in accordance with their belief systems, and they act on these decisions. Self-consistency is essential to authentic leadership because it ensures that leaders will act in accordance to belief systems, which increases their ability to engage in all four components of authentic leadership.

Self-awareness expands beyond just knowing ones' self. It includes an awareness of values, identity, emotions, objectives, and goals, as well as the consequences and reactions of actions on employees. It also involves an awareness of ones' own emotions (Valsania, et al., 2012). Gardner (2005) identifies four elements of self-awareness that are relevant to authentic leadership: values, cognition of identity, emotions, and motives or goals. Self-awareness is

defined as a dynamic process of understanding, where leaders develop an understanding of how they make sense of the world (Duncan et al., 2017). People who are self-aware are always questioning themselves and evaluating their personal strengths and weaknesses. These personal, internal challenges are considered the foundation or the starting point for authentic leadership. Ilies et al. (2005) determined that self-awareness indicates positive self-esteem and improved emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence has been linked to effective leadership, in that emotionally intelligent leaders are able to better develop collective goals and objectives, instill in others knowledge and appreciation of work activities, generate excitement, confidence, and trust, and encourages decision-making flexibility and adaptability (Ilies et al., 2005). It encourages healthy relationships and fosters positive emotions in a person. This all has a positive impact on followers and organizations.

Leaders who exhibit self-awareness impact followers because they not only know and understand themselves, their morals, their strengths and weaknesses, and their opinions, but they challenge them internally and externally. They encourage conversation with followers to better understand themselves and engage in open conversation that may be both influential and detrimental. Leaders who exhibit self-awareness not only understand their beliefs, but also are not afraid to act on these beliefs. Sosik & Cameron (2010) posit that those who are self-aware in their leadership are also likely to develop an ascetic self-construal, or the ability to bring out the best in self and others and a character ethic that is shaped and controlled by the power of an inner call to moral excellence reflected in character strengths. In doing so, these leaders identify with their followers by openly discussing their vulnerabilities and those of the followers, and constantly emphasizing the growth of followers (Avolio et al., 2004). When leaders know and

willingly display personal weaknesses, trust is developed with followers, which encourages followers to engage in similar self-examinations.

Balanced processing is described as the degree to which the leader shows that (s)he objectively analyzes the relevant data and solicits others' views that challenge his or her deeply held beliefs before making a decision (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Balanced processing means that leaders do not exaggerate, distort, or ignore information when making decisions. It implies that they make decisions with integrity and see the larger picture of their decision. Authentic leaders who exhibit balanced processing want followers to question and criticize because they want to make the best decision for the organization. By including followers in decisions and encouraging those followers to question, analyze, and contradict their opinions, they create trust between leader and follower. Followers know why and how decisions were made, and are active participants in the process. This improves people's trust and commitment to the leader, the group, and the organization (Valsania et al., 2012).

Internalized moral perspective refers to the degree to which the leader sets a high standard for moral and ethical conduct, and lets them consistently guide his or her decisions and actions versus external pressures such as group, organizational, and societal pressures (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008). This component is considered the heart of leadership, and is what differentiates authentic leadership as a construct as well as leadership style. Leaders who make decisions and act from a moral perspective produce ethical and transparent behaviors which are aimed at serving the group or organization's best interests. These leaders serve as a role model to followers, which encourages high levels of moral and

ethical decision-making. This allows followers to internalize the leader's beliefs and values, thus serving as a source of inspiration.

Internalized moral perspective builds trust with followers because it allows authentic leaders to realize that their behavior sends a strong message to followers affecting what they attend to, what they think, how they construct their own roles, and ultimately how they decide to behave (Avolio et al., 2004). Authentic leaders are astutely aware of the impact that their decisions have on followers and organizations, and feel a strong sense of responsibility to both their followers and their organization.

Relational transparency is the degree to which the leader presents his/her true self (as opposed to a false and distorted self) to others, openly shares information, and expresses his/her true thoughts and feelings, reinforcing a level of openness with others that allows others to be comfortable and forthcoming with their ideas, challenges, and opinions (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008). A key component of relational transparency is the maintenance of relationships based on sincerity and honesty (Valsania et al., 2012). This develops intimacy and trust with followers, as authentic leaders are exposing and communicating both positive and negative aspects of a situation.

### **Definitions of Trust**

There has been significant research that works to define the idea of trust, in a variety of forms, using a variety of definitions. Trust can be defined in terms of an emotion, as a state, as a process, and as a construct. Researchers have identified how trust develops between individuals, between followers and leaders, and between followers/employees and organizations. There has been significant research on how trust is applied to the study of leadership, as trust is known to be a strong reason why constituents follow leaders. Trust is a common theme among leadership

theorists. For example, a high Leader-Member Exchange relationship is characterized by mutual trust, loyalty, and behaviors that extend beyond the bounds of the employment contract (Brower, Schoorman, & Tan, 2000). Gillespie & Mann (2004) have outlined how transformational leadership theorists have recognized the role of trust in encouraging followers' motivation to move beyond expectations, an important component of Transformational leadership (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Conger and Kanungo, 1987; House, 1977; Podsakoff et al., 1990; Sashkin, 1988; Shamir et al., 1994; Yukl, 1989). Dirks and Ferrin's (2002) meta-analysis on trust in leadership further acknowledged the importance of trust development in transformational leadership. Transformational leaders engage in actions that gain the trust of their followers and that in turn result in desirable outcomes (e.g., Podsakoff et al., 1990) and that they build trust by demonstrating individualized concern and respect for followers (Jung & Avolio, 2000). Likewise, several theorists have determined that trust is also an important component in Authentic leadership (Ahamed, 2011; Hinojosa, McCauley, Randolph-Seng, & Gardner, 2011; Valsania, Leon, Alonso, & Cantisano, 2012; Wang & Hsieh, 2013). By definition, trustworthiness is determined to be an intrinsic feature of authentic leadership. Authentic leaders are described as trustworthy, and trustworthy leaders are seen as authentic (Hassan & Ahmed, 2011).

Trust has been defined in a variety of different ways, depending on the construct and the purpose. Trust is both a noun, as in something that one has, as well as a verb, as in something that one does. To some, trust is trait or characteristic. A person can be trusting or trustworthy. Trust can also be described as an emergent state, which is dynamic. This can be reflected in a person's attitude. It can be broken or developed, based on specific interactions. Trust can also

be defined as a process, to be developed through behaviors, attitudes, and relationships that are bolstered or weakened (Burke et al., 2007).

Common themes within many of these definitions of trust include the concepts of vulnerability, risk, belief in others, reliance on others, interdependence, expectation, and dependency. There are many different types of trust. One type of trust is cognitive trust and another is affective trust (Burke, Sims, Lazzara, & Salas, 2007). Cognitive trust relies on rapid, cognitive cues or first impressions to determine trust (McKnight et al, 1998; Bowlby, 1982; Erikson, 1968; Brewer, 1981; Lewis & Weiger, 1985; Meyerson, Weick, & Kramer, 1996). This might be described as a “gut feeling.” Affective trust reflects a special relationship that demonstrates concern about one’s welfare. This trust is developed over time.

Trust occurs at all levels of relationships, between individuals, between followers and leaders, and between followers and organizations. It develops differently, depending on perceptions and experiences of both parties involved. Trust can be unbalanced, meaning that one party may or may not trust the other. Trust is a dynamic and fluid perception shared between and among individuals. For the purposes of this study, trust will be defined in terms of trust between leader and follower, or leadership trust. According to Hassan & Ahmed (2011), leadership trust is a leader-member relationship based on mutual respect, cooperation, commitment, reliability, and equity. It includes a vulnerability of the follower to the leader, and a confidence that the followers’ rights and interests will not be abused.

### **Importance of Trust**

There has been significant research that connects trust between followers and leaders/managers to the overall benefit of the organization. Several studies have found that trusting relationships between employee and supervisor positively impacts job satisfaction,

organizational commitment, intention to stay, and work-engagement (Hassan & Ahmed, 2011). Dirks & Ferrin (2001) indicated that trust in organizations has a positive impact on overall attitudes, increased levels of cooperation, improved overall performance of workplace teams. Trust between employee and leader/ manager also directly impacts the level of support and interactions of the two people. Dirks and Ferrin (2002) state that, to the extent that individuals trust their managers, they are likely to be able to devote all their resources (e.g., attention, effort) to role performance, norm conformance, rule compliance, and/or managers' requests, because of their confidence that they will receive appropriate rewards and not be undeservedly penalized for doing so. Employees need to be able to trust their managers, which can directly be attributed to the managers' leadership skills and style.

According to a comprehensive literature review performed by Dirks and Ferrin (2002), several studies have confirmed that employees' ability to have trust in their management positively impact compliance and acceptance of goals and decisions. It impacts their perceptions about the climate, the beliefs and mission of the organization, and the accuracy of information shared, to name just a few. Trust also reduces distributive behaviors, reduces conflict on teams and reduces conflict between partners. Kirkpatrick and Locke specify that leaders need to exhibit honesty and integrity in order to be successful. Honesty and integrity form the foundation of a trusting relationship between leader and followers. George (2010) agrees. He states, "If you don't exercise complete integrity in your intentions, no one can trust you. If they can't trust you, why would they follow you?"

In order to develop trust, leaders need to create relationships with members of the organization. Poole elaborates, "Employees demonstrate attention to the quality of leaders' accounts for decisions, the quality of treatment they receive from organizational leaders, and



their long-term relationship with leaders and with the organization. Employees are more likely to accept unfavorable outcomes if they perceive that procedures are fair, decisions are adequately justified, they are treated with respect, and their identities are validated.” This is confirmed in several other studies, particularly as it relates to authentic leadership (Hassan & Ahmed, 2011; Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005; Valsania et al., 2012; Wang & Hsieh, 2013).

### **Importance of Trust in Relationships between Principals & Superintendents**

Years of research in the fields of psychology and sociology have established that trust is an essential component between leaders and followers. It would only make sense that trust between a principal and his or her superintendent is equally important. Trust can be established in a variety of ways. Dirks & Ferrin (2002) conducted a meta-analysis connecting the significance of trust in leadership in which they established several studies that outlined how trust is connected to moral character. Principals need to know that the superintendent is acting in the best interest of the organization, the staff, and the leadership team. They have to trust that the superintendent is using sound ethics and morals when making decisions.

Some researchers have established that trust is directly connected to transparency (Norman, Avolio, Luthans, 2010). When superintendents engage in honest and open communication, principals are more likely to develop trust. This will encourage the opposite to occur, in that principals will be able to also engage in open communication with the superintendent. This is essential, as principals need to be able to express concerns and opportunities for the school to grow without fear that it will negatively impact him or her. They need to be able to admit mistakes to their superintendent, so that the issue can be rectified or resolved.

Several other characteristics are known to increase trust. These characteristics include the leader's reputation and followers' history with the leader. The more opportunity a leader has to interact with a follower, the more likely it is that the follower will trust that leader. If the follower is aware of a skillset or a positive reputation, the more likely he or she is to follow them. It is similar with principals and superintendents, which encourages superintendents to be visible and available to principals.

Burke, Sims, Lazzara, & Salas (2007) conducted a review of literature which summarized the importance and value of trust in leadership. They determined several important outcomes when followers trust leaders. Trust in leadership will encourage open communication and facilitate extra-role behaviors. When principals trust their superintendents, they are more likely to engage in additional extra behaviors that will support the district. Trust in leadership will facilitate learning. This occurs when principals are willing and open to sharing information with superintendents. Information sharing is a risky behavior. Trust in leadership will facilitate both performance quality and quantity. Principals will work better and harder when they trust their superintendent. This is because they will increase their OCBs. Trust in leadership will decrease turnover. Principals will be less likely to seek positions elsewhere when they trust the superintendents that they work for. This is because trust correlates with higher levels of justice, which reduces turnover. Trust will increase followership. When principals trust their superintendents, they are more willing to continue to follow them. They are also more willing to support the superintendents' decisions.

### **Authentic Leadership's Impact on Organizational Citizenship Behaviors**

Significant research has been conducted that connects the impact of Authentic Leadership behaviors on both followers personally and on Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB).

Valsania et al. (2012) define OCBs as individual behaviors that are voluntary, and are not directly or explicitly defined by the formal reward system. There are a wide variety of OCBs, but the commonality is that they improve the organization as a whole. The most widely accepted OCB categories according to Podsakoff et al (2000) are helping behaviors, sportsperson's attitude, organizational loyalty, obedience, civic virtue, self-development, and individual initiative. These behaviors, according to several researchers increase productivity, free resources, allow the organization to attract quality employees, coordinate activities, increase the performance stability of the organization, and allow the organization to be more adaptable. Several studies have indicated a strong correlation between authentic leadership behaviors and OCBs (Clapp-Smith, 2009; Peus et al., 2012; Walumbwa et al., 2008), documenting the positive impact of OCBs.

### **Summary**

Research over the past twenty years has sought to create consistent definitions of authentic leadership and trust. Recent research has applied those definitions to the study of leadership. This research indicated that trust in leadership is essential to improving follower's willingness to commit the organization. This commitment or OCB directly improves the outcomes of the organization. However, there has been minimal research that evaluates the impact of authentic leadership within the context of the field of education. There is also minimal research that explores how leaders functionally apply authentic leadership to trust building, and how this impacts organizational outcomes. This research seeks to explore the functional application of the four components of authentic leadership by school superintendents to improve trust with school principals, thus building capacity to increase OCB's in their principals. The direct impact of trust on OCBs, and how those behaviors impact districts is better suited for later research.

### **Chapter 3 Methodology**

#### **Overview**

The purpose of the capstone was to investigate how individual superintendents developed authenticity and how they applied authenticity in their daily interactions, particularly with principals to develop trust. Researchers have studied authentic leadership as it applies to historical figures, business practices, and leadership in general. There is minimal research about how school leaders, specifically superintendents, apply the components of authentic leadership to their daily practices or how authentic leadership skills were developed in individual superintendents. The following research question stated:

What is superintendents' perception of their use of the components of authentic leadership?

#### **Research Design**

There are several different types of narrative research forms, including autobiographies, biographies, life writing, personal narratives, narrative interviews, oral histories, ethno-histories & ethno-biographies, life stories, ethno-psychologies, etc. These narrative research studies are important in the field of education because they allow individuals to express and learn from chronological events in person's experience. Narrative research also allows the research and participants to become part of the research itself, embracing subjectivity (Prados Megias, et al., 2016). Narrative research methodologies serve as a bridge to connect experience with other scientific literature and research. It focuses on the human component, the individual experience. The Life Stories approach is a specific type of narrative analysis in which researchers use a variety of techniques that allow them to describe the lives and stories of individuals' experiences.

This researcher utilized narrative analysis, specifically a Life Stories approach to interview 9 school superintendents. Narrative analysis is a form of qualitative research that uses story as its object of investigation (Riessman, 1993). Biographical studies are a form of narrative analysis where the researcher writes and records the experiences of another person's life (Creswell, 2007). Life stories approach, a form of Biographical study, is a specific form of narrative analysis. Creswell (2015) elaborates that this form of research allows the researcher to study a single person or small group of people, gather data through the collection of stories, report individual experiences, and discuss the meaning of those experiences.

### **Life Stories Approach**

One specific form of narrative research emerging in the study of leadership is that of Life Stories. Shamir, et al. (2005) argues that the leader's biography is an important source of information from which followers and potential followers learn about leader's traits and behaviors, that the life story provides the leader with a self concept from which he or she can lead, and that the biography is an important leadership behavior. Leadership is particularly conducive to life stories research because it expands beyond a skillset, as leadership abilities are also created by a person's history. The life stories approach embraces the person's past, present, and future in that it allows the leader to explore and communicate specific situations that have created the skills, and helps him or her reflect on how those skills impact followers. The telling of the stories is in itself a leader behavior, as leaders often use symbolic representation to connect to followers and the mission (Shamir et al., 2005). These stories also help the leader to self-identify with his or her personal leadership journey, which fosters the leader's identity.

Life stories research is exceptionally relevant to the study of authentic leadership because it can help researchers understand how and why authenticity was developed and how authentic

leadership skills can be applied to followers. Because the research subject is intimately involved in narrative research, including life stories approaches, the subject's ability to reflect on his or her leadership skills, an essential component of authenticity, is further developed. Shamir, et al. (2005) states, "...leaders' biographies are an important missing link in leadership research because biographies produce leaders, and leaders, being at least partially aware of that, produce biographies, and both processes are important to the development of a leadership relationship." This is especially applicable to authentic leadership, because authentic leaders are highly aware of the impact of their experiences on their development as humans and leaders.

Authentic leaders exhibit internalized moral perspective in that they ensure that their actions are matching their values and intentions. Utilizing a life stories approach allows researchers to better understand how authentic leaders apply this skill in leadership practices. Life stories' functional approach helps researchers understand impact of a superintendent's actions on the development of trust with his or her principals. It also encourages the leader to reflect on why this component is important and how it impacts followers. This will encourage growth in that leader, which will benefit his or her practice and the organization.

Authentic leaders exhibit unbiased processing in their ability to examine data, evaluate different perspectives, and seek input from a variety of sources before making decisions. This reduces bias and increases followers' trust in the leader's decisions. This application of shared decision-making also increases followers' buy-in of potential decisions. Life stories helps researchers understand the specific strategies that authentic leaders use when making a decision, and how they involve their followers. In terms of education, it assists researchers in understanding how superintendents decide whom to involve in what decision, how superintendents approach making shared decisions, and learn from superintendents' mistakes.

Likewise, it helps superintendents approach shared decision-making practices in a more practical and efficient manner, which helps improve the superintendent's practice. It helps both the researcher and the superintendent better understand how to balance data, bias, and interpersonal relationships in the process of leading schools.

Authentic leaders exhibit relational transparency, or a high level of disclosure regarding information and the extent to which he or she shares personal thoughts and feelings. The life stories approach helps researchers to understand how leaders decide whom they will share their personal thoughts and stories with and to what extent. It can help researchers understand the consequences of information sharing. It can help the leader to reflect more on their decision to share information with certain people, and whether this had positive or negative effects. Within the school system, it can help researchers understand how superintendents balance confidentiality and information sharing, and how this impacts relationship and trust development.

Life stories approach can help researchers understand how authentic leadership components develop over time in a leader. It can help identify a pattern of triggers, or an event or combination of events that builds a person's self-awareness that leads to self-regulation (Covelli & Mason, 2017). Covelli & Mason (2017) state that a common unifying theme among authentic leaders is that leadership practices are shaped by their life experiences, particularly critical events. Life stories approach can help researchers to determine consistent themes that support the development of authentic leaders in the school setting. Megias, et al. (2016) argues that combining narrative and life accounts into the curricular process of teacher training, analysis, reflection, and learning combine to constitute a process which expands the way the educational system and institutions are interpreted. Clearly, this can be applied to the process of

developing and improving superintendents as well. By engaging superintendents in reflective practices, it can also help the superintendent to better understand the journey that he or she has taken so far, which can also help them understand patterns of behavior that may impact their relationships with followers. This will allow superintendents to reflect on how they might increase their authenticity.

This process included most of the narrative research characteristics described by Creswell (2015). The researcher sought to understand and represent experiences through the stories individuals live and tell, by focusing primarily on these experiences rather than literature. In doing so, the researcher explored the meaning of the individual's experiences through stories, and analyzed these stories by identifying common themes or categories of information. The researcher attempted to analyze the story chronologically in hopes of analyzing the individuals' past, present, and future. This process was collaborative in nature, ensuring accuracy and depth, persuasiveness, and realism of the account. A missing component was collecting field texts. This research study was limited to individual superintendent's historical narratives, or life stories.

### **Research Population**

The research population was identified using random purposeful sampling technique. The sample was randomized in the fact that all superintendents from six different ROEs had the opportunity to participate in the study. It was purposeful in that there were several specific criteria that the superintendents needed to meet. Purposeful sampling techniques are common within the context of qualitative research in that qualitative researchers want to select candidates that are knowledgeable about the phenomenon to be studied, in this case authentic leadership.



Therefore, authentic leadership skills were identified as criteria for participation. The Authentic Leadership Questionnaire was utilized for this task.

To gain maximum variation in the research, several other criteria were used. Palinkas et al., (2016) argues that variation in research sampling is important because it shows shared patterns that cut across cases. In this research, the variations in sampling were across geography and experience. The nine superintendents were geographically located within the state of Illinois, and included superintendents in various stages of their careers. The target population included superintendents serving a variety of districts, including rural, urban, and suburban. Specific superintendents were randomly selected using contact lists generated by Regional Offices of Education in three different types of locations: rural, suburban, and urban areas. All superintendents within the targeted ROE's were emailed a link that offered the opportunity to participate in the study.

At least one superintendent was selected because he or she was new to their district or position (in the last year), at least one was selected because he or she was established in his or her position and district (at least two years), and at least one superintendent was selected because he or she had recently retired or is scheduled to retire in the next year. This allowed the researcher to identify common themes despite the superintendents' experiences and tenure. It also allowed the researcher to identify whether superintendents at different stages of their careers are able to apply the components of authentic leadership differently to develop trust with principals.

Additionally, superintendents were selected for participation based on the geographical location of their districts. Three of the superintendents served districts located in urban areas, as identified by the superintendent. Three of the superintendents served districts located in rural

areas, as identified by the superintendent. Three of the superintendents served districts located in suburban areas, as identified by the superintendent. All superintendents scored high on the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire, which was completed via email link. Additionally, superintendents were required to provide informed consent for participation prior to completion of the online survey.

### **Data Collection Process**

Superintendents throughout Illinois were contacted via the Regional Office of Education, and emailed information about the study, including information about authentic leadership skills and the Life Stories interview approach. Because only two different Regional Offices of Education agreed to forward the information about the research, the researcher contacted superintendents directly via email using list-serves published on ROE websites. In total, 212 superintendents were contacted directly from eight different counties.

Informed consent was obtained electronically initially, and then in writing upon interview. Interested superintendents completed a quick online survey based on the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ). This sixteen-question survey helped assess the leaders' authentic leadership skills. Superintendents who are interested and demonstrated authentic leadership capabilities based on the ALQ were invited to participate in the interview process.

Creswell's (2015) steps to conducting narrative data were utilized. The phenomenon to be explored (use of authentic leadership capabilities) was identified. The people were purposefully selected from a random pool, and stories were collected from the person, which were retold by the researcher to ensure accuracy. Stories were analyzed for themes and then the researcher collaborated with participants to ensure that themes were accurately represented. The stories were rewritten and then validated for accuracy.

Interviews were conducted individually, in person or via phone, and in a location convenient and comfortable to the respondent. One to one interviews are considered most effective when individuals are not hesitant to speak and share ideas (Creswell, 2006). The interview questions included several open-ended questions designed to elicit conversation between the researcher and the interviewee. Questions followed Creswell's (2006) recommendations of approximately five in number, with narrowing of the central question and the sub-questions of the study. The format included questions such as, "Describe a time when..." and "Can you provide an example of how..." (see Appendix A).

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher aimed to better understand the data from the perspective of functional application of the targeted skill-set, specifically the utilization of authentic leadership components to build trust. Given written consent from the participant, the interview was recorded and then transcribed. Once transcribed, the researcher transformed the information into a raw data format by breaking the four domains down into components. The account was then reorganized into themes and key elements. It was predicted that the key elements would align to the four components of authentic leadership: Self-awareness, Relational transparency, Balanced-processing, and Internalized Moral Perspective. These themes and key elements were compared across participants to determine commonalities and differences, with the goal of developing a theory about the underlying structures of how superintendents apply the components of authentic leadership to trust development. The researcher used an inductive approach to analyze the quantitative data. This approach was described by Thomas (2006) as a simple, straightforward approach for deriving findings in the context of focused evaluation questions. The purpose of this approach (Thomas, 2006) was:

1. to condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief, summary format;
2. to establish clear links between research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data and to ensure that these links are transparent and defensible;
3. to develop a model or theory about the underlying structure of experiences or processes that are evident in the text data.

It was an assumption that the responses will be deconstructed in a way that allows the researcher to evaluate how the four components of authentic leadership impact but the building of trust and the impact of trust on OCBs.

### **Validity**

The researcher ensured validity by including the participants in each step of the process. This ensured that the account was accurate and filled in any missing details. Editing to ensure validity occurred throughout the process.

### **Ethical Issues**

It was possible that participants might intentionally or unintentionally recount the story or situation incorrectly. They may have intentionally misrepresented the situation or story in an effort to distort the researcher's perceptions of the participant or his or her own perceptions. The participant may have unintentionally recounted the story inaccurately or have exhibited a biased perception of a situation that is inaccurate. Participants may have chosen to or not be able to tell the "real story" because of legal or ethical barriers. They might have emotionally disconnected from the true version of the story out of embarrassment or fear.

It was recognized that stories might have revealed mistakes or misjudgments. Given this, it was essential that confidentiality be maintained. Great care was taken to ensure that information collected was not easily identifiable to a specific individual or district, to ensure

confidentiality and prevent putting a career or position at risk. Neither names of superintendents, nor district demographics or specific information or locations were revealed in the description or events.

## Chapter 4

### Results

#### Introduction to the Study

The purpose of this study was to better understand how superintendents use the components of authentic leadership to develop trust, specifically with their principals by asking the research question:

What is superintendents' perception of their use of the components of authentic leadership?

The study consisted of a survey and an interview. The initial survey was used solely to gain access to potential candidates demographic information and as an overview of their authentic leadership skillset. Once interest and availability was determined, candidates were contacted for a formal interview. Questions were developed so that superintendents were able to describe certain situations that they have encountered, with follow up questions seeking to better understand how that superintendent might have felt, what they may have learned, or the impact of the outcome. All interview questions were open-ended in nature.

Information was then coded and compared in a variety of ways. Each domain of authentic leadership, Self-awareness, Balanced Processing, Internalized Moral Perspective, and Relational Transparency, were broken down into fourteen different components. These components directly corresponded to the definition or description of the domains. This analysis resulted in quantification of data that directly connected the qualitative nature of the study, allowing behaviors, thoughts, and emotions to become quantifiable. The impact of the components within each of the four domains of authentic leadership was then compared between individual superintendents, between locations of the district (urban, suburban, or rural), and

between tenure or longevity of superintendents. Additionally, the use of each domain and component were evaluated within the different questions, and their application was analyzed.

### Sample Population of Superintendents

Interest inventories were distributed to 212 potential candidates in eight different Illinois counties via email over a three-week period, and responses were collected using the Survey Monkey website. Eight candidates formally responded to the Survey Monkey inventory, and an additional five responded informally by email expressing interest in the study. Nine candidates were selected randomly from within their respective categories, with three being selected from the Urban category, three from the Suburban category, and three from the Rural category. Superintendents self identified district type. Random selection occurred by selecting every other potential candidate from the list of potential candidates by district category. An overview of the selected candidates is reflected in Table 1 Demographics of Selected Candidates below.

Table 1

#### *Demographics of Selected Superintendents*

| Designation | Demographics     |              |                     |
|-------------|------------------|--------------|---------------------|
|             | Type of District | Male/ Female | Years of Experience |
| U1          | Urban            | Female       | 1                   |
| U2          | Urban            | Female       | 1                   |
| U3          | Urban            | Female       | 15                  |
| S1          | Suburban         | Male         | 30                  |
| S2          | Suburban         | Male         | 1                   |
| S3          | Suburban         | Male         | 1                   |

|    |       |        |   |
|----|-------|--------|---|
| R1 | Rural | Male   | 3 |
| R2 | Rural | Female | 7 |
| R3 | Rural | Male   | 6 |

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Candidates offered a wide range of experience as a Superintendent, ranging from one year to upwards of thirty years. Of the nine candidates interviewed, three candidates were in their first year serving as a Superintendent, four would be considered having moderate experience as a Superintendent (2-9 years), and two would be considered seasoned, with more than 10 years working as a Superintendent. Of those two seasoned candidates, one had fifteen years experience and the other had more than thirty years experience. Both were retired, but have remained active in the field by acting as Interim Superintendents or working in similar positions. The average years of experience was 7.2 years. Four of the candidates interviewed were female, and five were male. Two of the candidates interviewed were African American and the remaining seven were Caucasian. All candidates came into leadership by the way of teaching, with the exception of one who served as a school psychologist prior to superintendency.

### **Overview of Interviews**

Interviews were conducted individually via phone or in person. Three interviews were conducted in person, and the remaining six were conducted over the phone. On average, interviews took approximately thirty minutes to complete, with a range of fifteen minutes up to one hour. The majority of interviews took forty-five minutes. All candidates consented to the interview being recorded. Six questions were included in the interviews (see Appendix A).



After the interview, the recorded data was transcribed using the Otter application, then double-checked for accuracy by the researcher. Transcriptions were sent to each candidate to ensure accuracy of information and that the information reflected the spirit of the interview. Candidates confirmed or offered suggestions to improve the accuracy of the information. If necessary, revisions were resubmitted to candidates for confirmation.

**Interview Coding of Authentic Leadership Domains & Components**

Once information was determined to be accurate, the interview transcripts were broken down according to specific instances or examples provided by the superintendent. These situations were then coded by Domain and Components, which allowed the researcher to sort by type and then evaluate the quality of information by individual candidate, district location, question, and domain/component as listed in Table 2 Application of Domains & Components.

Table 2

*Application of Domains & Components*

| Domain                   | Component   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Self Awareness (SA)      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Values- knowing what one values are</li> <li>2. Cognition of Identity- knowing who one is and how they became that</li> <li>3. Emotions- understanding ones own emotions and how they impact action</li> <li>4. Motives/ Goals- knowing ones' motivation and goals and how they impact their decisions</li> </ol> |
| Balanced Processing (BP) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Seeks input from others</li> <li>2. Analyzes data</li> <li>3. Explains to followers rationales</li> </ol>   |

Internalized Moral  
Perspective (IM)

1. Has high ethical/ moral standards
2. Uses standards as guidance
3. Works in best interest of organization
4. Understands impact of decision on organization

Relational  
Transparency (RT)

1. Openly shares information
2. Admits mistakes/ shares negative side of situation
3. Presents true self

The interviews were then analyzed so that each concept, action, activity, or thought was evaluated and then identified into one or multiple components. Often times, it was noted that several domains and components could be applied. It was also noted that on occasion, some components overlapped. For example, IM2 actually addresses both IM1 and IM2, as the candidate must have high standards in order to be able to use the standards as guidance. Therefore, IM1 was assumed, and not separately coded. In this situation it was only coded if it stood alone, as in the moral was identified, but the superintendent did not apply it or utilize it.

### **Presentation of Data**

#### **Superintendents' Application of the Domains & Components**

##### Urban 1

Urban superintendent 1 (U1) was an African-American female superintendent who was in her first year of service in a large, high school district located relatively close to a major city in Illinois. She was a recent transplant from out of state, and had replaced a long-established superintendent who retired. Prior to her superintendency, she had served in a district level position, as a principal, and as a teacher. When asked to describe her journey into education and

into leadership, she credited the encouragement of others, using a combination of Self Awareness and Balanced Processing.

Self Awareness, particularly in knowing one's values and knowing one's motivations, was also evident in her understanding of her strengths, as she stated in the interview,

So, I'd say one strength I have is really building a team. I've been fortunate thus far of building a team alongside me, so whether or not I'm able to hire my own folks or have inherited folks that are already in place.

In her understanding of her strengths, she also utilized Balanced Processing 1, getting feedback and 2, analysis of data, to determine her strengths. She stated that people would simply tell her how much they enjoyed being on her teams, but she also evaluated her effectiveness developing teams (BP2) because people have never resigned from a position based on her leadership.

In determining her weaknesses, U1 relied mainly on Relational Transparency, specifically feedback from others, to realize that she needed to develop a better understanding of how Unions in Illinois work. She stated that people would often approach her to clarify or explain the structure of the unions, and more specifically the history of the district's unions. Similar to understanding her strengths, this superintendent used Balanced Processing 2, analyzing data, to evaluate her body's physical reaction to the stress. She could feel "the pressure." In better understanding her weaknesses, she explained that she is able to make decisions and work in the best interest of the students and staff, an indication of her Internal Moral Perspective, component 3, applying ethics to work in the best interest of the organization.

When U1 was asked about situations where she was able to build trust with principals, she initially discussed several books and authors that she had read that helped her to develop trust, incorporating Balanced Processing component 2, analyzing information and also Self

Awareness 2, understanding how one became who they are. She credits the ability to be vulnerable, component three of Relational Transparency, as well as her ability to ask questions of her staff, Relational Transparency component 1, as key factors to building trust. She believed that because she was able to be vulnerable to them, they could in turn show their vulnerability to her. She said,

In my previous role, I supervised 21 principals and multiple other departments. So building principal capacity was really ensuring that they could be vulnerable with me because I was not going to be able to support and coach them if they were not aware and willing to share what some of, what your weaknesses were, and other the other piece is entrusting them, empowering them to make decisions and I just was a thought partner, as opposed to some of the top down decision making.

This philosophy, especially the concept that she wanted to be a “thought partner” was an indication of her values and ethics as a leader, revealing Internalized Moral Perspective component 1, knowing ethics and values. On the flip-side of this, she was unable to provide examples where trust was challenging to develop, most likely related to a lack of experience in the role.

This superintendent provided many examples of how she included principals in major decisions, including hiring colleagues and building budgets. All examples focused on the use of Balanced Processing 1, seeking of input. Balanced Processing was applied in many situations provided by U1. For example, she described a situation where she stood alone in a decision regarding a staff member whom she had recommended serious disciplinary action, but the Board disagreed. She sought their opinions, but was disappointed to realize that there were political relationships that were possibly impacting the outcome. In the end, she used it as an opportunity

to understand the political connections of the Board and staff, showing her understanding of component 2 of Balanced Processing, as well as her ability to express the negative side of the situation, Relational Transparency component 2.

Urban 1 also described the negative side of being a female in a male dominated field as she described her experience negotiating with a school board. She described it as follows,

I went in with an attorney to negotiate my contract. And typically you go back and forth. Well I went in and all I asked for was health care for my children and they rescinded the offer. They took the offer off the table. And I was shocked. Anyway they offered to a white man. But I share that story because you just have to be careful and so unfortunate as women being able to negotiate tempering your disposition because some people might feel you're too aggressive. It's just unfortunate some of the things that we battle.

In this situation, U1 expressed several components of Self Awareness, in her ability to know her goals and motivations in taking care of her children, as well as the impact of her emotions on the situation and future situation. In addition, she used Relational Transparency component 2 to describe the negative side of negotiating contracts, especially as a female superintendent. In the end, she expressed how happy and fortunate she felt to work with her current district and Board in that they were extremely generous and supportive of her.

Overall, U1 utilized the components of Balanced Processing component 1, seeking input and Relational Transparency component 2, sharing the negative sides of situations, the most frequently. Although she addressed her morals and values often, U1 applied components within the Internalized Moral Perspective domain the least (9%). She used the components from Self Awareness the most frequently at 37%.

Urban 2

Urban superintendent 2 (U2) was also a female, African-American superintendent in her first year of service in a major city in Illinois. She is currently responsible for 31 different schools and their principals. She has worked for several years in district office, as a principal, as an assistant principal, and as a middle school teacher prior to this position. In total, she has been in the field of education for 22 years. Similarly to U1, U2 was encouraged into leadership by others,

My story really stemmed from a couple people who really kind of saw things in me and really pushed me forward and pushed me to continue to keep at what they thought I was doing best, and that was pretty much you know, working with students.

In her journey into education, she exhibited an understanding of Self Awareness component 2, knowing where she came from, but also Balanced Processing 1, seeking input, and Self Awareness 1, knowing values, in that she believed that working with children is the core of who she is as an educator. Her drive to support teachers, to develop students, and to create relationships came out frequently throughout the interview. She very much relied on the core belief of being a supportive leader (Internalized Moral Perspective) in all of her decisions. For example, she said,

I think I can walk into any role and, and people say, make a connection. I think those are the things that carry me a long way. And so and I value that and that's a part of just who I am. And what I've always well, I guess what I've always stood for, and believe that you never, you never depart from it, you always try to assume that you know you are, is something that you didn't do, right, you go back and you fix it because of nothing. Now, that's those are the things that last the longest is how you how you treat people, or how you make somebody feel. So even as a leader, or even as a teacher, I believe in that.

In this quote, U2 was identifying her ability to make connections with others as strength. However, this worked well beyond that, as it also applied Self Awareness component 2, in knowing who she is, Internalized Moral Perspective component 1, 2, and 3 as she knows her values and applies them to work in the best interest of students and teachers, Balanced Processing component 1 and 2, in that she accepts feedback and analyzes that feedback to better understand her strengths and weaknesses.

This ability to develop relationships is a key strategy that U2 uses to develop trust with the principals that she works with. During her interview, she described a situation where she had to quickly develop trust with a new principal, and she believes that her ability to expose herself as a leader, to be vulnerable, allowed her to create the trust needed. She believes that trust is a key factor that encourages the follower to be open to the coaching relationship. She uses both Balanced Processing component 1, seeking input and Relational Transparency components 1,2, and 3, to provide that balanced communication, combined with Internalized Moral Perspective component 1, 2, and 3 to apply her ethics and morals to the relationship.

This superintendent sought input from others when making major decisions, particularly if the decision would directly impact the person or school. She described several situations where there have been “behind the scenes” communications with colleagues and principals to provide the necessary information (RT1 and 2, BP 3) and seek input (BP1) individually from impacted individuals. U2 described herself as flexible with her decision-making, stating that she was comfortable changing her mind if others provided information or perspective that would result in positive results for students. This indicates that she uses a combination of Balanced Processing 1 and Internalized Moral Perspective 3 and 4 to work in the best interest of her

students. In knowing herself (Self Awareness component 3), she is careful not to allow her personal pride to get in the way of good decisions with positive outcomes.

The domain of Internalized Moral Perspective was the most prevalently used by U2. The least applied domain was Relational Transparency. This was significantly lower than the other three domains. The domains of Internalized Moral Perspective, Balanced Processing, and Self Awareness were relatively well balanced.

U3

The third superintendent in the Urban category was a highly seasoned, Caucasian female superintendent who had worked in the field of education for over forty years. She has served as a teacher, director, assistant principal, principal, and superintendent. Specifically, she reported that she served as Superintendent for approximately fifteen years. Since retirement, she has continued to work as a district level leader or consultant in the field of education. However, she stated that regardless of her position, the core of who she is will always be a teacher. In fact, her ability to apply her ethics and morals (IM2) was the strongest of all components applied for U3, and many examples included pieces of this component. For example, she stated, “It came from my compass of believing that all children should benefit from the educational system.”

Whenever she described a challenging situation, U3 would frequently state that she reminded others that they were doing what was best for students, so that students would find success in their lives and careers. She described many situations where she embraced the opportunity to serve as an advocate and support for students and families. For example, while working in an extremely violence infused area of a major city, U3 stated,

So I went to a school of 300 kids and I had 65 fathers murdered in a six-month period. So my job as director of special ed was ensuring, of course, services for kids with



disabilities. But a big part of my job was going out into crisis management, not only as the school, but with the families who didn't necessarily have funeral costs. They didn't necessarily have legal representation. So I would seek out free legal representation for families and that kind of thing. You know, I had one child that murdered his father, and, in front of all the kids; he was a child with emotional disabilities, and he was tired of getting beat with a bat. So, you know, I got legal representation for him, helped his family put together a funeral, make sure they had clothes for the funeral, make sure they had food, worked with the XXX Police Department to make sure that they weren't treating them with any less respect than they deserved.

This superintendent exhibited how she was able to see beyond her position (Self Awareness) to understand that she needed to provide support to students and their families that extended beyond the minimum requirements of the district. She exhibited Internalized Moral Perspective to understand how she applied ethics to work in the best interest of the student and his families, but also to work within the community, with Police for example, to help them understand the needs of the child and the impact of the disability (Balanced Processing component 3 and Relational Transparency component 1). There were many examples of situations where she created opportunities for herself and others to actively support, such as working with Habitat for Humanity as part of her Regional Office of Education's role in the community.

When working with stakeholders to develop trust, U3 recommended being active as a participant and doing whatever it takes,

I think it's really, really important to walk the walk, right, to be willing to roll up your sleeves, work alongside people... spaghetti dinners, whatever, roll up your sleeves, work

alongside everybody, so they see you as invested in the organization, as they are and leave your ego right at the door.

This philosophy of being present was a foundation of who she is as a leader and how she shows that to the world. It encompasses the component of Relational Transparency 3, Balanced Processing 2, Self Awareness 1, 2, and 4, and Internalized Moral Perspective 1 and 2. U3's interview was riddled with many examples of how she applies the components in a balanced and multifaceted manner.

Self Awareness and Internalized Moral Perspective were used in nearly two thirds of the examples (65%) provided. Balanced Processing and Relational Transparency were applied less frequently, but definitely directly addressed by U3. In fact, she directly stated that she did not believe in "top down" leadership, and that it was important to seek the input of others.

S1

Similarly to U3, S1 was also a retired superintendent with extensive experience. He has been in the field of education for nearly fifty years, retired as a superintendent but remains active as an interim. He has completed eight interim positions and describes himself as the ambulance chaser of education, explaining that the interim superintendent's role is to fill in when things go wrong in a district or if there is a falling out between a board and a superintendent. S1 provided the most extensive and longest interview of the nine.

Throughout his interview, S1 showed the most balanced application of the domains and components. The least applied domain was Self Awareness at 23% and the most applied was Balanced Processing at 27%. The other two were in between. Balanced Processing, specifically the seeking of input (BP1) was extremely important to S1. He stated on several occasions that the interviewer should speak with (his principal) because they are always communicating. He

cited several examples of how he seeks feedback from a variety of stakeholders, including principals, colleagues, the Union, community members, students, and parents. For example, he described a situation where he met with his congressman to create funding opportunities. He had several examples where he sought input from the Union, particularly unique to his situation was that principals had a Union in New York, where he was previously employed. He sought feedback from students and parents when changing his district's assessment requirements. Feedback was also important when hiring staff, and S2 expressed the belief that hiring student teachers was a strong way to build staff, as the supervising teacher has had a lengthy opportunity to see the young teacher in action. This was often paired with the components of Relational Transparency, where he provided information to others.

Relational Transparency was evident in many situations, but frequently within the context of evaluation of staff. S1 stated that feedback is the self-correcting mechanism of perception, and he was extremely thorough and strategic in providing it to principals who were underperforming. He described several occasions where his feedback led to the release of administrator or where they have chosen to move on. One example provided described a very religious principal who was discovered "blacking out" sexual references in the biology books. In this situation, Internalized Moral Perspective also played a strong role because S1 believed that schools should not force religious morals into the context of the curriculum. As he stated, "I mean, he was putting his values in. I told him, this was intolerable, that's unacceptable!" There were several situations described that embraced the components of Internalized Moral Perspective, particularly as it related to hiring and retaining staff.

This superintendent used hiring of staff as an example to apply the components of Internalized Moral Perspective. For example, he said,

So that to me is the best way, the most important thing any administrator does is you hire a solid teacher. It's a gift to the kids that experience that person. And the worst thing you do is hire a bad one. So it works both ways.

This statement exemplifies Internalized Moral perspective in many ways. The value of providing quality instruction is evident, but also is the impact of that decision on the students. He also addresses Relational Transparency component 2, as he describes the negative side of hiring staff that are low quality.

S2

The second superintendent interviewed under the Suburban group (S2) was a first year superintendent. This superintendent grew up in the district that he currently serves, and had worked several jobs in the district throughout high school and college. He described himself as extremely experienced, stating that this prior relationship has been beneficial,

Because I've been in this system, so long, I've had previous relationships with a lot of the different stakeholders. So you know, it's easy for me to hop in a building and know names and everything and just talk to different people, and then they take those opportunities to share tons of stuff that unload on me and things that they've got going on or concerns.

He believes that this relationship, in combination with strong communication skills that he developed in his training as a school psychologist, has improved his ability to apply the components of Balanced Processing, specifically components 1 and 3 and Relational Transparency. He perceives himself as approachable to others, because people appear to be open in their expression of information and concerns. This in turn allows him to express his perspective and his values on issues.

This superintendent has applied these components in several situations where he has had to make difficult decisions or gain consensus, applying it to situations with staff and students alike. For example, he described a situation where he needed to transfer a staff member to a different building to provide additional support. Although the administration in the building was unhappy to lose their staff member, they were able to express their concerns, but also understand the reasoning for this change. Likewise, S2 was able to prepare the members of his board for a difficult decision involving a student,

We had a student discipline case, that was a serious one, where we went down the road of expelling a student, and I don't think we would have all been unanimous if I didn't have some of those conversations with them individually and explain the seriousness of it and the long term impact that it could have had, or that it would have had, I think, on our staff and students if we didn't address it appropriately.

He was able to apply the components of several domains in this situation. He utilized Relational Transparency, component 2 by expressing the negative consequences of a decision. He used Internalized Moral Perspective component 4 by applying his values to make decisions in the best interest of the district and staff. He utilized Balanced Processing by explaining the rationale of the decisions.

The application of the components of Balanced Processing was strength of S2, stating several examples. For example, he created a district-wide leadership committee that included central office, building leadership, the Union, and staff. The purpose of this group was to make district-wide decisions, such as calendar, curriculum, etc. While he was open and seeking of feedback from the stakeholders, he was also careful to ensure that the group was working in the best interest of the students.

S2 described an example of when the group lost focus on students' needs while creating the district calendar. In this situation, he applied Internalized Moral Perspective to the components of Balanced Processing,

One of the things I caught in a calendar issue or conversation was interesting to me.

Halfway through the conversation, I noticed, wait a minute, some people aren't arguing for what's best for the students they're looking at what's best for their calendar, their own personal vacations and things like that. So it was a conversation we had the next month and I apologize to them. I said, Listen, that's human nature. I don't have any issues with it. But I think what I'm going to make sure I do a better job in the future is reminding or prefacing some of these conversations with this is about what's best for the students.

He was able to see the situation from others' perspectives and analyzing the data from the perspective of Self Awareness component 2, knowing where one comes from. But he was also able to utilize Internal Moral Perspective to keep the focus on what's best for students. In this situation, there was a conflict in what was best for students and what staff felt was best for them personally. S2 was able to see multiple sides of the situation by using Balanced Processing.

In the examples provided, S2 used components in the Balanced Processing domains twice as often as Internalized Moral Perspectives. The remaining two domains, Relational Transparency and Self Awareness were applied evenly at nearly 25% each.

S3

The third superintendent in the suburban category (S3) was also a first year, Caucasian, male superintendent. This superintendent had been raised in a family of school administrators, coming up through the ranks as a music teacher prior to administration. He had also worked several years as a department chair and principal. This superintendent was unique in that he

enjoyed the benefit of a mentoring relationship with the previous superintendent who had recently retired. He cited this relationship as a foundation for his successful first year,

The transition between myself and the previous superintendent has been a very smooth one. They actually kept her on for 100 day contract, which also kind of helped smooth things over because she has consistently kind of championed my work in the district and built that rapport.

This superintendent was able to understand how the previous superintendent supported his communication with the other district staff, supporting his ability to apply Balanced Processing component 1. It also serves as an example of his Self Awareness, component 2 as well as Relational Transparency, component 1 the sharing of information.

S3 was able to describe several situations where he has been able to develop trust with principals and include them in decisions. He believes that the key to developing trust is getting to know their priorities and understanding their roles in the district, which exhibits his ability to apply Balanced Perspective component 1, seeking input. He also credits that relationship with the previous superintendent, who has served as a bridge builder between S3 and colleagues (Relational Transparency component 1). To include principal, S3 described the creation of the district's strategic plan as an example, highlighting the role of the principals in the strategic plan. In this situation, the principals took on leadership roles, which encouraged them to work together to better understand their similarities and differences as administrators. In doing so, they were able to create goals and objectives that work in the best interest of the students (IM1, 2, 3).

S3 applied Internalized Moral Perspective on several occasions, but specifically he expressed the need to truly believe in the organization's mission and vision. In his opinion, this was something that could not be "faked." He said,

Every public speaking engagement that I've had, you know, and there's been many times, with our district motto has always been: Putting the children first. And we just adopted a new vision statement that uses the modified version of that which is: Putting the children first with a commitment to continuous improvement. Every time that I speak in front of staff or students or parents or community members or at the Chamber of Commerce meetings or things like that, I pretty much drilled that home and you have to really truly believe that and I do...that our district is making decisions in the best interest of kids and that's really the driving force behind all that we do. If you can't be authentic with that, and it has to come from the top. They have to see me speak it, they have to see me model it for them to live it and I feel like it has been lived by the previous Superintendent as well and it really is ingrained in our culture.

For this superintendent, the ethics and values that he has needs to be ingrained in all that he does, a clear representation of Internalized Moral Perspective component 4. He clearly articulates that it is his role to direct express and model the values of the district, which is an example of Relational Transparency and Self Awareness. He knows what he stands for, expresses the morals and values that he stands for, and uses those values as a foundation for his goals and decisions.

When one reviews the examples and statements of S3, he utilizes the components within the domain of Self Awareness the most (39%). Relational Transparency is used the least (16%). Internalized Moral Perspective (19%) and Balanced Processing (26%) fall in between. However, there are several direct statements that reflect his beliefs in the use of Relational Transparency and Internalized Moral Perspective.



The first superintendent interviewed for the rural category was the youngest superintendent, with the least teaching and administrative experience. He also provided the shortest and least detailed interview of all the superintendents. His interview lasted approximately fifteen minutes, with significant prompting from the researcher. This superintendent's strengths were balanced between Self Awareness and Relational Transparency, with the component applied most frequently being RT2, sharing the negative side of situations.

R1 shared that he became a leader because he enjoyed helping teachers, and considered instructional leadership to be his strength. He credits time and continued support of principals to be key in developing trust. He shared that trust development is something that he has struggled with, as he recognizes that it is challenging for some stakeholders to fully express their opinions when interacting with the superintendent, who is their supervisor. He said, "I find that when you're a principal with other principals, I think you can disagree with each other. When you're, when you become a superintendent, what you find out is people don't tell you the truth." In his experience, it is essential to create an environment where principals are comfortable enough to fully express their thoughts and opinions on issues. Without that trusting environment, principals are not able to have the honest conversations that allow for full discussion of issues. It is this level of conversation, of discussion or argument that creates the "push-back" that allows superintendents to make better decisions. R1 was able to express the value and importance of Balanced Processing, seeking input, as well as Relational Transparency, sharing information. These components together lead to Internalized Moral Perspective, components 3 and 4, working in the best interest of the organization and understanding the impact of decisions, "I believe that high conflict, debates debate, like those conversations that are hard, where there's differing opinions, I feel like that's where the best outcome come." However,

he expresses how challenging it is to create those environments where people are truly comfortable enough for the hard conversations, because, “I’m the one who gets rid of people and so they have to agree.” In his opinion, the power of the position truly impacts his ability to create that environment, but it is something that he is actively working on.

R2

The next superintendent interviewed under the rural category (R2) was a female superintendent who is leading a large unified rural district, with problems similar to urban districts. She has served as a superintendent for seven years, and at the district level guiding curriculum development. She has not served as a principal, though that had been a goal of hers. This superintendent believes that teaching is her calling, as her mother was a teacher. She initially fell in love with teaching as a teenager, teaching Sunday School.

The art of teaching has always been a strength and passion for R2. She went into leadership because she found that she had become a teacher leader, as more and more colleagues and administrators sought her out as an example of strong instruction. This exemplifies her ability to understand who she is and how she became who she is (SA2). In order to do this, she used Balanced Processing, both components 1 and 2. She internalized feedback from others and then analyzed this feedback to determine her strengths. Then she used this information to create goals, which is Self Awareness component 4. Even as a leader, she identifies curriculum and instruction as a strength, but has expressed that the softer skills have developed over time.

She was able to bring people on board by sharing this strength with them, and using her strengths as a foundation of her vision. This is a prime example of Relational Transparency, or sharing information and who you are. She explained,

They, at first, they weren't sure what to think but very quickly they started getting on board because I was able to give a very infectious vision of excitement and potential, and, and everyone wanting to be part of that. I think everybody wants to be part of someone who's visionary and has an infectious story, and they want to be part of that and how we're going to make a difference that, you know, this is going to make the difference now. And I think that's what gets people excited about coming to work every day.

Being able to express to others who you are and what you stand for combines Relational Transparency with Internalized Moral Perspective. In this situation, R2 was able to show her followers how they could impact students and make a difference, an example of Internalized Moral Perspective component 3. At the same time, R2 understands that others need to be a part of the process.

In doing so, R2 described herself as a collaborative leader. She stated that she never works in isolation, and takes every opportunity to include others in the decision. As she has served longer in her role and developed more experience, she has learned how to bring others with her. She believes that trust develops with communication,

I think ultimately as a superintendent sometimes you do make decisions that are not popular. And what I've always done is, I listen to what everyone has to say. And though people don't agree with me I'll explain my decision-making. You don't have to like it, but at least you know why I made the decision, and more particularly that I'm consistent in my decisions, that trust comes with consistency of your decisions. People get very lost with leaders that are flip-flop.

In this statement, all three components of Balanced Processing are utilized. She seeks information from others in making her decisions, and she analyzes this and other information.

She also understands the importance of explaining why a certain decision is being made, so that others understand and see that their input has been valued. Additionally, she described the negative impact of inconsistent decisions (RT2). In addition to the communication piece, she explains the importance of Internalized Moral Perspective,

So, you have to continue to self-talk if you will and remind yourself what you're here for, what you're all about, what you're trying to get across, and making sure it is repeated in a variety of ways, and in your behaviors as well.

She explains the importance of using values to work in the best interest of students, by reminding one's self of the purpose of their role. She also stressed that this has to be more than words, that these values must be reflected in action as well. This incorporates all the components of Internalized Moral Perspective.

The strongest domain exemplified by R2 was Self Awareness, specifically using one's ethics and morals as motivation for goal setting and understanding the impact of emotions on behaviors. She was also strong in her seeking of input from others (BP1). Her weakest area was in Relational Transparency, specifically component 2, sharing the negative side of situations. However, she did provide feedback on the challenges of the superintendency, stating that it was the loneliest of jobs, and in the end a superintendent may find him or herself standing alone in their decisions, which is why it is essential to be resolute in who you are and what you stand for.

R3

The final superintendent interviewed in the rural pool (R3) was a male superintendent who was completing his sixth year as a superintendent. Prior to being a superintendent, he had served as a principal and teacher. He found himself to be a natural leader, falling into leadership roles early on. As a young teacher, he credits his colleagues as providing the encouragement to

go into administration. Specifically, he identified how principals and other teachers served as mentors to him, and encouraged him to make more global change as a principal.

This superintendent identified his strength and weakness as being one. He stated that he was a good listener, but almost to a fault. Over time, he has learned to be less of a “yes-man” but he still believes that listening and collaboration are essential to leadership, incorporating Balanced Processing and Relational Transparency. He also expressed the belief that leadership should be developed in a district,

So we've really tried to mentor up emerging, up and coming leaders (from) within, who not only understand the dynamics of our district, but also we can see firsthand that they're authentic, that they're honest, that their ethics are important to them, and that they love kids. And so we've really kind of shifted to a really an internal model of developing leaders and sustainability, and if something ever happens to me, or I leave, or a principal leaves that somebody is ready to keep that us the ship moving forward.

By growing leaders internally, he is able to truly see their morals and ethics in action, ensuring that future leaders have strong Internalized Moral Perspective. This concept embraces all the components of Internalized Moral Perspective, as well as Self Awareness. R3 knows how beneficial mentoring was to his development, and believes that he should provide that level of support to others.

This superintendent provided several examples of how he provided support to his principals. In one situation, a parent had complained about a principal to the Board. There was significant discussion in Executive Session, and the principal was very concerned and wanted to discuss the situation with R3. The superintendent expressed the challenge of maintaining the confidentiality of the Board, while still providing support to the principal. In this situation, R3

relied on his ethics, specifically Internalized Moral Perspective component 4, making decisions in the best interest of the organization. He expressed that he needed to maintain that confidentiality for legal reasons, but also to ensure trust was maintained. By explaining the importance of this to the principal, R3 was also demonstrating Balanced Processing component 3, explaining rationale. Although the principal did not appreciate it at the moment, the superintendent knew that he was doing what was best for everybody.

This superintendent also described situations where principals were placed in difficult situations with parents and students. In these cases, R3 stated,

To be able to say, you know, I would like to offer to come alongside you and sit next to you, as we have this conversation together, that really develops trust, I feel like. I'm thinking of one specific situation this year in which had the principal had to go through it alone, even though they would have been perfectly fine. They're completely competent, I think, just that the relationship between us could have been severed, a little bit if I wasn't by their side, because it was just a complex issue. So it was important for me to say, I know you can handle this yourself, but if you need to, I'm right here, I'm right next to you. And they have the option then to say I'd like you in this meeting or not in this meeting. And I think those situations when you put your money where your mouth is kind of, stand by the individual and do what you said you're going to do really develops trust.

In this particular example, R3 displays his ability to apply Internalized Moral Perspective with multiple components. He clearly articulates his belief in his staff, and explains that he knows that they can appropriately handle the situation (Balanced Processing component 3), but that he is there with them in case they need any support. He explains his rationale, but also presents his

true self (Relational Transparency component 3). He develops trust by openly communicating his trust in them, but also his availability and support.

Superintendent R3 also described several situations with curriculum development and technology where he applied the various components of authenticity. One example cited included how a principal drove the development of Standards Based grading and Professional Learning Communities. R3 expressed the value of ideas coming from his team, rather than just gaining input (Balanced Processing component 1 & 2), Internalized Moral Processing all components). He said,

So we did an analysis of that led by that principal who said, “Nick, I really feel like I know, this is a major district initiative. I know you've got other things on the docket. But I feel like this is critical to our success, long term and helping our students develop.” And we did the research looked into it, and the principals all agreed and we, I mean, as a team, we decided that this initiative that an individual principal was identifying is critical to our district, was going to be the focus.

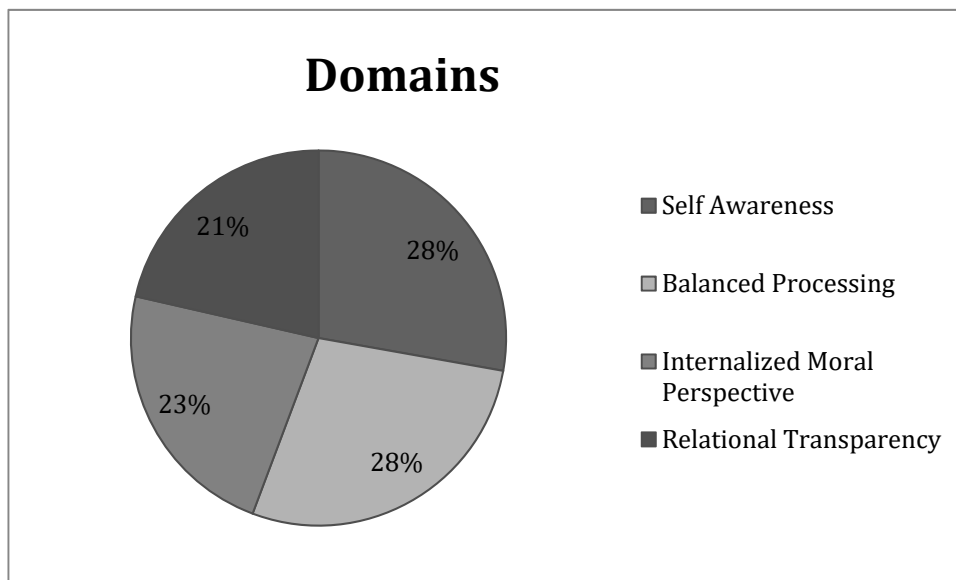
Superintendent R3 provided several examples of how he not only includes principals, but encourages them to lead major initiatives at the district level. He provided the most examples of the Rural cohort, with Balanced Processing leading, specifically component 1, seeking input. The next commonly applied component was Relational Transparency, component 2, expressing the negative side of a situation. The other three domains were similarly balanced in application. The least applied component was Relational Transparency component 3, presenting true self.

### **Data Representation by Domains and Components**

The four domains of authentic leadership are: Self Awareness (SA), Balanced Processing (BP), Internal Moral Perspective (IM), and Relational Transparency (RT). Each of these

domains was broken into three or four different components, which directly correlated with the definition or description of the domain. The intention of these components was to be able to connect a behavior or action. In total, the nine superintendents interviewed provided examples of how they applied the various components a total of 849 times across the four domains. Across all superintendents and questions, the four different domains divided nearly evenly, as indicated in Figure 2 titled Division of Authentic Leadership Domains.

Figure 2. Division of Authentic Leadership Domains



Although the superintendents applied components from Balanced Processing and Self Awareness slightly more frequently than they did Internalized Moral Perspective and Relational Transparency, the data shows the differences to be only five to seven percent.

**Self Awareness & Its Components**

Self-Awareness is described to be leaders who not only know and understand themselves, their morals, their strengths and weaknesses, and their opinions, but they challenge them internally and externally. Within the domain of Self Awareness, there are four components.



Component 1 of Self Awareness (SA1) was defined as knowing ones values. In this component, superintendents simply identify qualities they consider of value. Some of examples of this were being a teacher, being collaborative, being experienced, and being ethical. This component was identified 36 different times across four different questions. The majority of examples of SA1 occurred when superintendents described their journey into education and administration (52.7%), and then as they described their strengths and weaknesses and ability to identify said strengths and weaknesses (33.3%). Superintendents who were able to identify their foundational values as those that reflect who they are as leaders provided examples of how SA1 applied. For example,

So I always think of myself as a teacher first.

I just I thought I'm going to teach my entire career. I love teaching. I love kids, I love baseball. So it's all going to come together.

I thought being an administrator would give me more of an ability to make decisions on a global level and work with others

I just wanted to be able to support teachers.

I hated not having the opportunity to be around kids every single day, I would find myself like just jumping on buses to go right along. On bus routes, I was just had the opportunity to see some friendly faces for my old school and you know, things like that.

I've always felt that I was kind of a born teacher, and this was what I was meant to do.

In total, six of the nine superintendents (67%) identified this component as part of their response to question 1, stressing that leadership offered them an opportunity to impact what they felt was most important, often the children. A key theme is the value of education and being an active contributor to the development of students. These six superintendents represented all three of the types of district, rural, suburban, and urban and included both men and women. They included

superintendents with a variety of experiences, from first year superintendents up to more seasoned superintendents.

Component 2 of Self Awareness, SA2, was defined as knowing who one is and how they became who they are. SA2 was identified 60 times across 5 different questions. It accounted for 26% of components within the Self Awareness category. Over half (58%) of the examples of SA2 came from question 1, where superintendents described their journey into education. All superintendents were able to clearly identify their specific journey into education, what they taught, how long they taught, other leadership opportunities, etc. Except for two superintendents, all expressed several years of experience in the classroom or at the staff level prior to moving into leadership,

I taught for 15 years before feeling that I needed to do more in going into leadership.

I went back to school really relatively early to become an assistant principal and I really only taught like four or five years.

So I was there for four years, and in the fifth year, I had the opportunity to become the principal of the program.

So I decided to become a principal early on in my first or second year of teaching. I went ahead and started working on my license, I became a principal at 25.

They mapped out a pathway to the superintendency. In this process, nearly all included different segues, including lessons learned or situations that developed their style. Only one superintendent expressed a relatively simple pathway to leadership, and this was the superintendent who expressed limited teaching experiences. All superintendents with the exception of one had several years serving in leadership positions prior to acting as superintendents,

Instead of building principal positions, I ended up in Curriculum, in central office curriculum and started working as an Assistant Director. I started taking on mentoring

new teachers in a very large district, mentoring and sharing best practices, and eventually they gave me work with differentiation, they ended up making me the Director of Gifted.

And so I ended up taking a principalship in ----. And I ended up staying there for seven years, and just had an awesome experience with a great team.

So as I was trying to progress towards this chair, I had the opportunity to become kind of a quasi HR / Transportation Director role for a couple of years in this district. So I went from being a building principal at elementary to that role.

I was a support administrator at --- for about five years. And almost the very same thing, I was staying the same community, I eventually transitioned over to --- for 11 years as the principal.

I will probably be the most experienced person you're going to speak to 50, over 50 years in education, almost 30 years as superintendent in two states, Illinois & New York. All of the superintendents were quick to describe how they became superintendents, both in the historical context of their career paths, but also in the context of mentoring. With the exception of one superintendent, all others indicated that they had been encouraged by someone to enter leadership:

So I got into it administration because it was a principal who encouraged me to, and I got into superintendency, because the superintendent I worked for encouraged me to, so it was really others who sort of pushed and motivated me.

I have a grandfather who was a superintendent, a father who was an assistant superintendent, CSBO, a great uncle who was an assistant sup and then a college president, a great aunt who was a professor of Educational Leadership, so like all those pieces kind of influenced using the educational side and combining that with music.

I started to be motivated to become an administrator because I had an incompetent principal I was working with, which was motivation for me. I thought if he can do that, I can do that better.

So people started tapping on me to share everything I was doing with my classroom. So eventually I decided I wanted to go and get my type 75. And perhaps be a building principal so I had more of an effect on teachers teaching kids.

So they really took me under their wing and right away, had encouraged me to, you know, go get my masters and potentially think about being a principal.

Overall, every superintendent except one described the significant impact of encouragement and mentoring on their journey into leadership. Interestingly, this one superintendent is the same one who had the least amount of experience before transitioning into this role. This superintendent is also from the most rural environment. This is also a strong example of how Balanced Processing impacts Self Awareness because they took information or feedback from colleagues or supervisors to make the decision to enter leadership.

The understanding of one's emotions, and the impact of emotions on decision-making is the definition of Self Awareness Component 3 (SA3). Within the domain of Self Awareness, SA3 is represented 23% of the time. This component is represented in every question, and eight of the nine superintendents address it in some manner. That superintendent was in his first year, but with extensive leadership experience from a suburban environment. He was also a superintendent who continuously expressed the positive nature of his transition, and has not yet been challenged in a way that could elicit an emotional reaction. For the remainder, it was evident when superintendents were asked to describe strengths & weaknesses, and how they identified them. For example, when describing weaknesses, several superintendents would identify a feeling of discomfort:

So just that feeling of not being as comfortable, I kind of limit how much of that I do...

I felt my pressure rising whenever I was engaged in conversation with them (about union issues)... So I knew right away that that was a weakness.

Both of the superintendents identified the value of reflection in growth and self-understanding in their interviews, which was particularly strong in their explanation of how their emotional and physical reactions impacted their ability to identify weaknesses particularly. This moderately

experienced female superintendent from a rural environment explains how her strength of being detail-oriented can become a weakness:

If there was, as far as weaknesses go, it's just that, always trying to do better... the self the perfectionism that I think many of us have, the never, never being satisfied... always knowing you can be better. And you know what, plateauing... My fear is be plateauing.

This again connects to the self-reflection piece, both in the context of reflecting on performance, but also a meta-cognition of reflection, reflecting on reflecting, to a certain extent. Another described her ability to balance her strengths and weaknesses in her interactions by saying, "You know, there are times to be gentle, and then you have to be firm..." Both superintendents who expressed a balance between strengths and weaknesses were female, though one was urban while the other was rural. This component was identified several times in a similar manner where superintendents directly connected their emotions with decisions that they had made or would have made:

Now, those are the things that last the longest... is how you treat people, or how you make somebody feel.

(When referring to relationships with students) Yeah, almost to the point where if this (position) didn't come up, I may not have lasted in the profession is for my entire career.

Both superintendents expressing how emotions impacted decisions were first year superintendents, one was male and the other female. Another seasoned superintendent described a pivotal situation her career where she was trying to prevent an underperforming district from be dissolved, and the impact of her emotions on her decision-making, "So during that time, I did not look for another job because I thought that was disloyal, because I was working on their fight."

That feeling of loyalty to the district prevented her from pursuing another position, as if the process of finding another position was admitting that there might not be success. In this case, her emotions affected her negatively because she refused to move her career forward for fear of how it might appear. This is an example of how Balanced Processing and Relational Transparency also impact decisions. While describing her weaknesses, this superintendent describes the impact of her emotions on her decision-making by stating, “Instead of being a mind-maker-upper in some situations where I probably should be, I'm always wanting to give the benefit of the doubt and sometimes, emotionally, I get too involved.” She later describes a situation with a specific student where she allowed her emotions to blur her clarity of what was best for the child. It is essential that superintendents understand how emotions can negatively impact their decisions. Another moderately experienced rural superintendent describes his ability to develop trust with principals and the impact on his emotions:

I don't know if I can trust them, because people naturally are going to disagree with me. Because if I have someone who's regularly agreeing with everything I say, it makes me wonder if they're just giving me you know, lip service, but then saying other things behind my back.

He later goes on to identify that the lack of trust in communication has impacted his decision-making because he now tends to be more of a “top-down” leader than he would like to be. He would like to see his leadership team providing more pushback, but because they are so agreeable, he does not believe that they give their true opinion. This comment also incorporates Relational Transparency in he is expressing the negative side of a situation and Balanced Processing from the negative side, specifically how a lack of Balanced Processing can negatively Impact decision-making.

The final component of Self Awareness, SA4, is identified as knowing ones' motivation and goals and how they impact their decisions. This was the most commonly identified component of Self Awareness, being represented 36% or 85 times within the domain. This component was represented in every question, with examples being provided by all 9 superintendents. The majority of examples were provided in the context of the superintendents' journeys into education and the identification of strengths and weaknesses, accounting for 59% of the examples. Knowing one's motivation was extremely relevant to the superintendent's journey:

And so when I was in college, I decided to get English as my bachelor's degree. And that allowed me to kind of keep both of those worlds open. I knew I could teach high school English, maybe coach baseball, which is the sport that I love, and, or I can become an attorney.

But my goal was to be a superintendent.

But I always had a dream to get to this seat someday, actually, specifically this seat just because I'm a graduate of here. It did not matter if the superintendent was in his first year or his thirtieth year, every superintendent identified that their goal was to be a leader or more specifically superintendent. This was often expressed in alignment with SA1, the drive to help children, teachers, or improve education. Another urban female superintendent applied her awareness of her goals in the context of relationship and trust-building with a principal when she described a situation where she had to take on the task of supervising a principal unexpectedly, and established a goal to develop trust by sharing who she was as a leader:

I kind of walked into a situation where it was a, I guess a quick shift, in leadership change. So one of the things that I knew that I needed to do with coming in, was building that relationship going in, you know, sharing who I am as a leader, sharing my leadership

story, opening myself so they can go from cause people can't trust you unless they know who you are as a leader.

This superintendent was able to apply her feelings to understand how that principal felt, and made a decision to build a relationship with her based on that. Whether it was knowing one's goal as a career, or knowing one's goal when entering a situation, all superintendents provided multiple examples within various contexts of how they applied awareness of goals to their role as a superintendent.

### **Balanced Processing & its Components**

Balanced processing involves the solicitation of feedback, the analysis of this feedback, and the explanation or justification of rationale. It is the heart of decision-making, involving two-way communication, which is a foundation for trust building. The domain of Balanced Processing (BP) is broken into three components: seeking input (BP1), analyzing feedback (BP2), and explaining rationale (BP3). Twenty-eight percent of the components identified were relevant to the Balanced Processing Domain.

Balanced Processing, component 1 (BP1) was described as the seeking of feedback. All superintendents described many instances where they actively and intentionally sought feedback from a variety of stakeholders, including colleagues, teachers, parents, and principals. The most common context of seeking feedback related to determining strengths/weaknesses, developing trust successfully with principals, and including principals in decisions.

Balanced Processing component 1 (BP1) was defined simply as seeking input. It was the most commonly identified of all the components, emerging 117 times or 14%. Every superintendent interviewed applied this component to his or her work. Within the context of this domain, BP1 accounted for 49% of the examples provided by superintendents interviewed.



Superintendents sought input in many contexts, and several of them directly stated that they wanted feedback from their principals or other constituents, identifying collaboration as a leadership style. Some examples included:

I also ask questions of my staff members. So they know that I want to hear their input. I asked them, so what are the blind spots? What am I missing?

When I have to make a decision, or when I have to have people reach consensus, you know, that's my preferred way is that everybody buys in. I'm not a top down leader. I'm someone that likes to engage.

When you set goals, you listen to them and incorporate their thoughts and, and their focus together.

I really try to facilitate an environment where they can disagree with me and we can talk about things.

So I would say that would be the biggest strength is probably adaptability and growth, being people oriented, and very much, I'm not at all type A, authoritarian and have to make all the decisions. I think I'm more of a let's collaborate, we'll get together we'll talk...

So I took some time, even my own staff to just be like, Hey, no, I value your thoughts, that I value your opinions because I don't want a yes-man team.

Regardless of level of experience, environment, or gender, most superintendents directly discussed the value of collaboration and the need to establish an environment that is conducive to discussion. One superintendent expressed concern that he was struggling to create this environment, and that was negatively impacting his decisions. The concept of how to create this environment included openness, communication, intentionality, and time. Other superintendents provided examples of how they used BP2 to gain input to better know their own personal strengths and weaknesses. For example, this superintendent identified how he used BP1 to identify his personal weakness to be listening, stating, "Listening to them, because that's what people tell me now." It is interesting that this superintendent frequently expressed concerns that his team was not comfortable contradicting him or providing controversial input, yet was

comfortable enough to express that he was not listening. Superintendents utilized BP1 more frequently when identifying strengths rather than weaknesses. When identifying her strength, these superintendents stated,

My strength, I think, just really, just folks telling me they've enjoyed working with me, working for me.

I think one, positive feedback that I received from all stakeholders, students, children, parents, colleagues, board members...

Well, a lot of it is just feedback from the board, you know, things that they've shared with me, the things that they're happy about, I was just recently evaluated so that's part of that, but also, you know, just feedback from, verbal feedback from, you know, staff and principals.

...but also the self-assessments and the assessments of colleagues just to say, yeah, you know, we've noticed that you're really strong in this area.

I'm often asking principals, or trusted colleagues, or even those that maybe I don't interact with as much, like we from your perception, what are the strengths? What are the weaknesses?

This included all environments, experiences, and both male and females. This is most likely related to the fact that it is often easier to provide direct, positive feedback rather than negative feedback. Providing negative feedback directly requires significant trust. Because of this, superintendents tended to rely on BP2, the analysis of feedback, to evaluate weaknesses.

Balanced Processing component 2 (BP2) describes the leader's ability to take in information from other sources and analyze that information when making decisions or coming to conclusions. This component was evident in every question, and discussed by every superintendent interviewed. Some examples were provided when they discussed their strengths and weaknesses, was their ability to identify strengths by looking at data and achievements. For example, when asked, some superintendents cited examples,

Professional acknowledgement that I've received, various awards and professional organizations, it's all kind of highlighted those different pieces, like for example, last year

at BLANK high school, my last year there, we were named as ASCD Whole Child Award School for the state of Illinois.

...watching things be successful as I put them into play. Watching change, take place. Having transformative practices and watching those take hold.

These superintendents were able to take in data from a variety of sources, and analyze this data to determine strengths. Some examples of data sources were awards given, scores on federal or state assessments, written evaluations, letters from parents or staff, etc. Similarly, several superintendents use various forms of data, combined with self-reflection to determine their weaknesses or evaluate a situation,

Well, honestly, self reflection, I feel like just being honest with myself knowing kind of some of that internal dialogue, what my strengths and weaknesses are I can't say that. And, you know, the school board or colleagues have said that, to me, it's just knowing things that I need to work on being self reflective.

You know, I go through my day, and each night, typically you don't sleep as a leader. You're laying down, but you're not sleeping, and, you're going over conversations that you had, how did you do that? Could you have improved it, what could have been something done differently?

I can't emphasize that enough because I'm constantly trying to mirror back on myself as a teacher saying if they didn't get it, what did I do wrong? What did I need to do to make them learn? If I'm presenting some information to staff, if they did not get it, what do I need to do to do better? So the reflective practitioner piece I think is a strength of mine.

I think it's really people just trusted me, calling me. I mean, how often do we feel comfortable calling our supervisors saying, I don't know what to do? Can you help me think through this? So that's a success, people being vulnerable enough to trust me, and asking me to be a thought partner with them.

In all of these examples, it was noted that the superintendents were all female and either early in their careers or moderately seasoned. These examples are also deeply connected to Self Awareness, in that the superintendents are reflecting on their roles in situations or decisions and the need to improve their skills. Superintendents are constantly analyzing information and

feedback in order to improve their skills and decision-making. When describing her journey into leadership, this rural superintendent analyzed feedback from her colleagues,

As a classroom teacher, I tried all the progressive strategies. I found that teammates would call me and asked me to share my strategies. My building principals were having people come and observe my classrooms for things that I was trying, and I found out pretty early that people, they started asking me to present things at faculty meetings, and pretty soon they asked me to be in charge of all the curriculum development in the curriculum meetings at our district.

She was encouraged on several levels, verbally but also in action by having her classroom and practices serve as a positive example for others. Analyzing feedback from others provided encouragement to pursue leadership for many. Others have used BP2 in their decision-making with staff. A common example of this was through the Strategic Planning process and goals setting for the district. In reference to Strategic Planning, superintendents said,

Then really strategically being able to put all that information together to figure out what's the best direction we need to go in as a district.

My philosophy that I developed is something called, tight and loose. The tight is, you know, I give them these are the five points I want you to hit. These are your five goals, and how you get there it's completely up to you. That's loose piece. And it started getting a dance going. So they knew where the boundaries were and they knew what targets they needed to meet, how they got this completely up to them.

So I've been a superintendent for six years, again, have just grown in my understanding of kind of, just a holistic kind of picture of what a good district, a good teacher, a good classroom looks like.

So I spent at least a month and a half close to, really taking that time, opportunity doing that and listening to her to understand her ability. I can't design anything as a strategic plan if I don't know who you are, what was some of the changes, you're encountering within your school.

But at the same time, we know, like districts out there are performing higher than we were. So we did an analysis of that led by that principal who said, I really feel like, this is a major district initiative.

A great example that would be our new 2019 to 2024 strategic plan. So as part of the Strategic planning committee we did involve our building principals, we had a lot of other stakeholders as well, but the principals played key leadership roles in that.

All superintendents, except the two most seasoned, expressed the importance of analyzing data from a variety of sources when setting goals for their districts. This is most likely because the most seasoned superintendents are less likely to focus on long term goal setting as interims.

Others have used BP2 when having to make tough decisions where they stand-alone. For example, when lobbying for additional funding for students, this extremely seasoned superintendent was able to assess the outcome and his next actions based on the body language and engagement of his congressman. He said,

So, he was sort of like, between heart attacks, and he was not paying attention to what I was saying, I can tell. So he had basically agreed to this meeting as a favor to a powerful Republican Congressman that's really all it was.

He could evaluate the outcome of the conversation based on the respondents disinterest and made the decision to move in a different direction based on that. Another moderately seasoned superintendent described how she evaluated information and feedback from her Board after a controversial issue, and was able to better understand political affiliations and connections,

I used that going forward to make sure that I stayed aware of some of the allegiances that existed between board members and staff members here, and being aware lets me know what battles I could win and those that I could not.

Overall, all superintendents were able to describe how they take in data from a variety of sources, verbal, actions, quantitative, etc., and apply it to make decisions or change perspectives.

This skill was used for both short term decision-making and long-term planning. It increased trust because it served as an intermediate between BP1, seeking input, and BP3, the explanation of rationale.

Balanced Processing component 3 (BP3) describes the superintendent's ability to explain reasoning or rationale to stakeholders. This component was applied forty seven times, accounting for 20% of the components in Balanced Processing. It was used by six of the nine superintendents, and it was noted that only one of the urban superintendents applied this component in her examples. All three of the superintendents who did not use BP3 were female. Several superintendents described the power of this component both when developing relationships and as a barrier to trust. For example, this superintendent stated,

Because, if I was to put my principal hat back on, and I know there were times where those same kind of conversations happened with me, and I would argue my point, but I never was never told the district office perspective, why some decisions were made.

Although new to the superintendent's role, he felt that it was extremely important that people understood why a decision was being made. By explaining the perspective of district office, he was able to help the principal better understand why a decision had been made, ultimately resulting in that principal supporting the decision. On the flipside, this component could also serve as a barrier to developing trust. For example, several superintendents described situations where there were personnel issues, and they served as a buffer between a staff member and the Board. Specifically, one rural, moderately experienced superintendent described a situation where he was unable to divulge information, and how this negatively impacted his relationship with a principal,

And they were almost like, are you actually siding with the parent in this? And all I could tell them is, you know, I'm on your side, and I'm supporting you, but you have to trust that I can't disclose the details of that conversation. I think at that time, that principal was feeling a violation of that (trust) just because I wasn't sharing everything.

This also connected to Internalized Moral Perspective, because there were ethical components that impacted his ability to share certain confidential information. There was also a piece of Self Awareness, particularly the awareness of how emotions impact decisions in that he felt badly that he was unable to share the information. The ability to balance the competing factors was disheartening to the superintendent. However, he also expressed that in the end, he was able to rebuild trust with the principal. This component was most commonly used in those tough situations where superintendents have to make difficult decisions where they are not supported. In doing so, they attempted to help constituents understand how and why that decision needed to be made, which builds trust.

### **Internalized Moral Perspective & Its Components**

Internalized moral perspective describes the leader's ability to establish high moral and ethical standards, and to use these standards to make decisions that are in the best interest of the group or organization. Leaders with Internalized Moral Perspective understand the impact of their decisions on the group or organization. Internalized moral perspective is broken down into four components: leaders' ability to express their morals and ethics (IM1), using morals or ethics as a standard in decision-making (IM2), working in the best interest of the group or organization (IM3), and understanding how those decisions impact the organization (IM4). Internalized moral perspective represented 23% of the domains break down, and every superintendent expressed the importance of their morals and values and how they impacted their thinking.

Component 1 (IM1) is the most basic level of Internalized Moral Perspective, the identification of one's morals. IM1 emerged the least (14%) of the IM components when considered individually. However, in reality, it emerged throughout all the IM components because one has to know their morals and values when applying them. IM1 was also the least prevalent when considered in the context of total components, probably for similar reasons. Seven of the nine superintendents directly identified the importance of their values in the context of a situation. Outside of both being female, there are no other similarities in the two superintendents. This is not to say that they did not have ethics, as both superintendents identified situation where they applied ethics, therefore assuming that they have ethics to apply. However, some superintendents were more direct in identifying ethics in situations. For example, when describing situations, several superintendents would simply state their ethics or a breach of ethics. For example, these two superintendents directly identify,

It's unethical to do that.

During the summer of 1983, I found him (a principal) going through the biology books blacking out (sections). Okay, but still, I don't care what year it is. I don't care if it was 1800, you don't eliminate sexual references, you don't change the curriculum!

In the first quote, the superintendent is referring to a situation where confidentiality should not be breached. The second situation refers to a violation of ethics, whereas a principal was attempting to apply his personal religious values to the curriculum. Regardless, both simply identify their ethical commitment. Sometimes they identify ethics or values in a positive manner. When referring to his staff, this superintendent said,

“I love them. I care about them. We all work together.” This statement came from a moderately experienced rural superintendent, identifying the value of love and commitment. For many superintendents, ethics was described as the cornerstone of who they were as a leader. For



example, the first quote reflects the values of this extremely seasoned urban superintendent stating her ethics as her strength when she said,

...is that I really believe in education, and how we can change lives. I believe that we can make a difference.

I would say, the going back to listening and trusting and giving people autonomy and freedom to make decisions they want to make and do the things that they feel are important.

I think, the whole Carol Dweck, growth mindset thing is critical to any good leader.

The second quote derived from two suburban superintendents who are relatively new in their careers. One identifies the value of independence, listening, and trust, while the other identifies a value of growth. Being in the midst of a tough situation also provides superintendents opportunity to express their ethics,

For me it was probably the importance of sticking to what you believe is ethically right. This was stated by a new superintendent when referring to a lesson learned when working through a personnel issue. Superintendents are able to describe their morals and ethics, and then apply those ethics and morals to decision-making.

Internal Moral Perspective, component 2 (IM2) allows superintendents to describe how they use their ethics and values in their actions. This was the most common component (33%) with the IM domain, and was evident across all questions and all superintendents regardless of environment or experience. When referring to building trust, these superintendents revealed how they apply ethics to action,

I think it's really, really important to walk the walk, right, to be willing to roll up your sleeves, work alongside people... spaghetti dinners, whatever, roll up your sleeves, work alongside everybody, so they see you as invested in the organization, as they are and you leave your ego right at the door.

I think everybody wants to be part of someone who's visionary and has an infectious story, and they want to be part of that and how we're going to make a difference that, you

know, this is going to make the difference now. And I think that's what gets people excited about coming to work every day.

And through getting to know someone, so you know, you don't come in, you're going back to Maxwell, as a level four or five leader, you come in as a level one leader to everybody your just a position and that trust is developed, obviously, through the experiences.

The superintendents, regardless of experience, gender, or environment, directly stated the importance of showing your values in your behaviors. They insisted that superintendents can not act merely as observers, but must be involved and a role model to others. Applying morals and ethics spanned across all the questions, from building trust,

I want somebody who's able to push back sometimes because again, I don't think that everything I'm creating, if that's the case, and I'm ready to rule the world, if my only perspective is the right perspective,

to supporting people in difficult situations,

...through my working with this person and kind of guiding them, coaching them, and then watching them be able to step forward and actually execute it really effectively in a public way, that the board all saw, that kind of lent the pendulum towards, hey, we trust and support this person again.

Ethics, specifically the applying of ethics, is at the core of every superintendent and every question that they were asked. One seasoned superintendent described how he viewed situations from multiple perspectives, applied morals and connected it to action when working with the union,

(Union's perspective) You know, that's what he says, but you can't believe them, because he's just trying to, you know, squeeze us for this or that. No, our contracts is this, that's

all we're going to do here and what I'm trying to get them to think is, Hey, you know, what can be in the best interest of kids?

This superintendent applied a variety of components from multiple domains, including Balanced Processing and Relational Transparency to create a multifaceted decision-making process.

Taking the morals and values, and applying them into action is key for superintendents, whether working with staff, colleagues, the union, or the community.

IM3 is described as using morals to work in the best interest of the organization. This was evident in 25% of the Internalized Moral Perspective domain. This superintendent directly addresses this component when he says,

And if you can't be authentic with that, and it has to come from the top, you know, they have to see me speak it, they have to see me model it for them to live it and I feel like it has been lived by the previous Superintendent as well and it really is ingrained in our culture.

He not only applies ethics to behavior, but also takes it to the next level to realize that this behavior is in the best interest of the district. Working in the best interest of the organization and/or students is evident in many conversations with superintendents. These superintendents explains how IM3 impacts conversations and works in connection with the organization or students,

And just being able to see how I like to look at things from different angles, and how that's going to impact the hope, the myriad of factors that may be in particularly high impact to students, and how its going to impact schools itself.

Talk about the law, talk about what's best in the best interest in school, how scores are going to improve because they're real tied into that if they provide kids with you know the appropriate education.

It was a struggle to get people to, it was a charter organization, and to get them to understand that these children have rights and their families have rights, and see, the families didn't know how to advocate for themselves

All of the quotes were from female superintendents in urban environments, but from a variety of experience levels. All superintendents were able to describe the bigger picture of their work on students and schools, as they advocated for students or helped build connections for staff or colleagues. One seasoned superintendent described how he revamped the assessment system in the school to ensure that students were achieving and that the assessments were impactful to the students,

And it changed the scores entirely, because those kids that weren't really caring about going to a top college, and they knew that to a lot of universities, it's not a big deal, you don't have to have a 32 (on the ACT) to get in University of Iowa, so a lot of people, they literally spent a lot of time doing the best they could as soon as I connected it to something that made a difference. In the short term, it changed everything.

He understood how his decision to raise academic expectations would impact achievement. He also identified Balanced Processing, as he was able to listen to and understand the perspectives of the students when making this decision. To ensure equity for students, this experienced rural superintendent described how he provided technological access,

We ended up providing connectivity for those that didn't have it, and getting a device to every child throughout the district, doing that over a two year period where it was two--to one and then one-to-one after that; it was very slow and allowed those decisions...

In doing so, he had to use Balanced Processing to evaluate and understand the technological status of his families, and then expressed the importance of ensuring equity of resources for all

students. He was also explicit in connecting that the access to technology would ensure access to information and improve academic outcomes for all students.

The last component of Internalized Moral Perspective connects all components, understanding one's ethics, using those ethics in the best interest of the district, and then understanding the impact of the decision on the district, schools, and students. It is a very intentional and high-level consideration of multiple factors. This component was evident in every question, and 7 of the 9 superintendents described situations or actions where they utilized this component. The most common examples cited was when superintendents were describing difficult situations where they had to stand-alone. Several superintendents used examples of personnel issues, where ethics served as a compass and major tool in decision-making, and there was an awareness of the impact of that decision on the district. For example, when a superintendent was advocating for the hiring of a Director of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning, he had to be able to clearly explain the value and impact on student learning and staff development, and how that decision would improve the organization. He said,

I think once we took probably an hour at a board meeting to go through the plan in detail, to explain what their function would be, how they would improve the district, how we'd be able to quantify and bring those results back to the board.

This superintendent was from the rural environment, and was moderately experienced. He was also explicit and intentional in his planning and preparation. Taking the time to explain what the decision is and how it positively impacts the district can be key to gaining support. Another superintendent described an issue related to creating the district calendar, and expressed how he applied ethics to help everyone make decisions that were in the best interest of the students,

I noticed, wait a minute, some people aren't arguing for what's best for the students but, what's best for their calendar, their own personal vacations and things like that. So it was a conversation we had the next month and I apologize to him. I said, Listen, that's human nature. I don't have any issues with it. But I think that I'm going to make sure I do a better job in the future of reminding or prefacing some of these conversations with this is about what's best for the students.

The art of reminding staff of ethics and values, and how these impact students is essential to superintendents. By explaining the rationale for student-based decisions, the superintendent also touched upon Balanced Processing. When describing the importance of hiring quality staff, this extremely seasoned superintendent explained,

So to me is the best way, you hire you know, and, and the most important thing any administrator does is you know, is hire, you hire a solid teacher. It's a gift to the kids that experience that person. And the worst thing you do is hire a bad one. So it works both ways.

This connection between knowing the value of quality instruction, doing what is best for students, and then understanding the role of that individual hiring decision allows the superintendent to best work in the interest of students and organization. It is a common theme in component that superintendents are connecting many different components, which increases the complexity.

### **Relational Transparency & its Components**

Relational transparency (RT) is defined by how leaders express information honestly and openly, including any negative sides of the situations or mistakes made. The ability to show or express a leader's true self is also a component of Relational transparency. Relational

Transparency accounts for 21% of the four domains, and was considered the weakest of the domains. It is broken into three components: Openly sharing information (RT1), Sharing negative side or mistakes (RT2), and presenting true self (RT3).

Openly sharing information (RT1) represented 28% of the components in this domain. It was evident in every question and addressed by all superintendents. Many expressed the importance of transparency in conversations directly,

Well, my perceptions were don't hide anything.

But building trust is just honest communication. And never, you know, telling someone something I couldn't deliver.

Just regular communication... I'm not even here everyday- I only get to work 120 days a year, but I'm in regular communication seven days a week sometimes with our current principal. I do that with everybody.

Oh, I was just wide open, working with them.

I always try to keep them (principals) updated on things that are going on throughout the district.

I challenge you to, when you're walking out, find Name, the principal here, and ask him if, if our communication is open and you know, continuous and that's what you have to do when working with people.

It did not matter if the superintendent was male or female, from urban or rural environments , or were in their first year or thirtieth year, they all identified that you have to communicate openly with people. This is a key component to trust, and the foundation of many other components. When describing his relationship with the board, this new superintendent stresses the value of openly sharing information,

And then communication as far as being able to communicate with all stakeholders, I work very hard to keep the board updated through tons of emails and phone calls, on a

weekly basis, so that they have a good understanding of everything that's going on in the district.

Although he believes that he has a good relationship with his Board, and has known many of them as a member of the community, he still feels that honest, open, and on-going communication cannot be sacrificed. One cannot assume that there is not a need for this type of communication in other contexts. Superintendents expressed the need to be open in communication with a wide variety of stakeholders, especially the Board.

Being able to share the negative side of a situation or a mistake (RT2) they have made comes up most commonly (50%) within the Relational transparency domain. Overall, this was the second highest referred to component, being addressed 91 times (11%). The most common context was in referring to the stresses of the job overall. Several superintendents expressed high levels of loneliness when they discussed how they stand alone in decisions or actions,

And so and then I think sometimes in the superintendent position, you get a lonely. But for us, yes, it is lonely in this leadership role.

There's so much of this job, being a superintendent is the loneliest job, the loneliest job there is. You have colleagues and people that you work with, but at the end of the day, you stand-alone. You stand-alone against your board. You stand-alone against your staff, even your central office team you stand alone, even with other superintendents in other areas, they are, they are helpful, but everyone stands alone.

I find that people, and this is what I find, Melissa, I find that when you're a principal with other principals, I think you can disagree with each other. When you're, when you become a superintendent, what you find out is people don't tell you the truth.

The loneliness was expressed by moderately experienced superintendents, regardless of environment. Perhaps because of the lack of experience that new superintendents have, they have not yet noted this. Perhaps seasoned superintendents are more comfortable with this fact or have developed strategies and relationships that help offset this. Several superintendents clearly expressed how the stress and loneliness of the position impact their perceptions and their



decision-making. There were other negative aspects of the position discussed. Several explained how some of their strengths could easily be converted to weaknesses,

I was a good listener; I always listened to what they wanted, almost to a fault. To the point where, you know, I was probably more of a yes person than I am now. Because I wanted people to be happy and you could gain a lot of points by solving people's problems.

So the reflective practitioner piece I think is strength of mine. It becomes a weakness because, you know, you're constantly never, you know satisfied, with your work.

Other superintendents described situations where things did not go as expected or planned.

These seasoned urban superintendents expressed disappointment when they was unable to grow principals which ultimately resulted in or forced resignation,

They weren't focused on children. They're focused on adults or focused on themselves.

I evaluated for what I could tell one (principal) who was going to have a difficult time. Most important thing is I spent a lot of time providing feedback. Feedback is the self-correcting mechanism of perception. So I had to change that person's perception. She thought she was doing a great job. In fact, everybody else thought differently. And so my job was to provide extensive feedback, and which I did, and, like some other principals that I experienced, she ended up getting a job someplace else. She resigned before the end of the year.

Other domains and components also are identified in these situations. For example, Internalized Moral Perspective is applied in both situations. Several superintendents expressed frustration in their relationships with the school board. When describing a personnel issue with her board, this superintendent was able to describe her feelings,

I was incredibly disappointed. I was disappointed. I don't know...so much shocked, but more so disappointed in the response of the board.

I went in with an attorney to negotiate my contract. And typically you go back and forth. Well I went in and all I asked for was health care for my children, and they rescinded the offer. They took the offer off the table. And I was shocked. Anyway they offered to a white man. But I share that story because you just have to be careful, and it's so unfortunate as women being able to negotiate having to temper your disposition because some people might feel you're too aggressive.

In this situation, the superintendent was female from an urban environment. The struggle of being female in this position was discussed in several examples. Unfortunately, in these situations, the Board did not react with the level of integrity that she was hoping. This superintendent described a situation where the school board went rogue, and his frustration at not being able to support his staff,

I tried. It was not... I was not successful. So after all these experiences and so forth (shaking head), they made up their minds. They were going to do whatever they decided. And you know what their perception was of the situation... It didn't matter what I recommended or other professionals. I had a real strong district office. Everybody left the district, by the way, but the business manager, and now they're driving her out, which is interesting.

This was a seasoned superintendent, showing that despite years of experience, sometimes trust is difficult to develop and maintain. This new superintendent realized that his communication with his Board has not been as positive as he wanted, and that he had made a mistake in the way that he was communicating with them,

I've also forced myself probably in January or February; I went back and reviewed all of those weekend updates (to the Board). And what I noticed was that I was constantly, the only thing I was putting in there, were problems. So what again, whatever it was February, I emailed out my Weekend Update, I said, I apologize. I've been reviewing these and I noticed it's all negative things. And I said, I hope I'm not giving you guys a bad impression. Those are things you have to be aware of and I'm never going to be able to change that, but I need to do a better job of highlighting positive things.

Though he made a mistake, the superintendent attempted to rectify his error by being honest and open. He incorporated Self Awareness to better understand his role in the situation. Overall, the superintendents were extremely honest about a wide variety of challenges that they have faced in their roles.

The final component of Relational Transparency is the showing of one's true self (RT3). This component was represented the least in the domain at 22%. The most common use of this component was in the development of trust. These superintendents directly described how they have used this component to develop trust,

...by sharing my, my strength in curriculum, and my knowledge base and then being very visible in leading a charge with my vision.

...sharing who I am as a leader, sharing my leadership story, opening myself up, cause people can't trust you unless they know who you are as a leader.

So I spent the majority of my first year really just building a team through creating trust, sharing with them things that I don't know, and being very vulnerable with them so that they can in turn be vulnerable with me.

All the superintendents that directly identified this component in their interviews were female from different environments with different experiences. They expressed that the ability to openly show others who they were was key to developing relationships and creating trust. The ability to openly expose one's vulnerability also appears a common theme in trust development. Others showed their willingness to express their true self indirectly in their humor or how they perceived a situation,

Probably, my weakness is, I don't play golf. And I know, that's really, I know, that's really important for administrators.

And of course, when I went there (college), it was an elementary preparation school. It was 2000 women and 400 men. And I still couldn't get a date. But that's my clean version of that joke.

Both examples come from the seasoned superintendents. Due to their high levels of experience, they may show themselves through humor and sarcasm more than the other superintendents, as they are less connected or tied to a certain position. As one extremely seasoned superintendent directly stated,

Of course, I have the luxury of not caring, because I have no long term commitment on these jobs.

In doing so, he is going to state his opinion and make decisions in the best interest of the people and student.

### **Data Broken down by Question**

The first question called for the superintendents to explain their journey into education and into leadership. It was predicted that this question would focus on Self Awareness. In reality, every component was represented in this question, but the strongest representation was from the Self Awareness domain, accounting for 48% of the total components. Superintendents explained what drove them to enter the field of education (SA1), as well as the pathway they took into education and leadership, which roles they have performed (SA2). Some superintendents expressed how their emotions have impacted their journey, but most clearly understood how they have set goals and their motivation to enter the field. IM2, the use of ethics was prominent as it relates to SA1 and RT2, showing the negative side or showing mistakes, were also prominent, as some were motivated to pursue administration by negative experiences as teachers.

In connection with their journey into education, superintendents were then asked to express their strengths and weaknesses, and then to explain how they determined those to be strengths or weaknesses. It was predicted that Balanced Processing would be the primary domain utilized. Instead, this question provided more of a balance of domains and components.

The most evident domain was Self Awareness at 35%, and next was Balanced Processing at 28%, and Relational Transparency at 19%. The strongest individual component was BP2 (15%), analyzing information. On many occasions, superintendents described a key person who provided feedback or several colleagues who encouraged them to enter leadership with positive feedback. They were provided feedback on their strengths directly. They analyzed information and feedback from several sources, including feedback from colleagues, the Board, the Community, and awards, to determine strengths and weaknesses. This increased their Self Awareness, allowing them to establish goals and motivation in their career path (SA3 and SA4). Superintendents applied every component to determine and identify their strengths and weaknesses. On occasion, they expressed the negative side of their weaknesses and strengths, and how one can negatively impact the other (RT2). Many of these strengths helped to facilitate trust building, such as communication, follow-through honest, and collaboration.

Question three asked superintendents to describe a situation where they were able to successfully develop trust with principals. It was anticipated that the prevalent domain would be situationally dependent. Once again, when considering all superintendents, every component was applied. Balanced Processing (34%), specifically BP1 (18%), the seeking of input, was the most utilized domain and component. Superintendents focused on seeking input from principals in a variety of situations, from hiring, to budgeting, to district-wide planning which increased trust. They carefully considered the information received from their principals and ensured that the principals were aware of the value of their input. Many superintendents repeated that collaboration was key to success. By seeking input, they were able to better include their principals, but when this was combined with applying ethics (IM2) and being transparent with information shared (RT1), they were able to find increased success.

On the flip side, next question sought to understand how superintendents felt or reacted when they were unable to develop that trust with principals. It was predicted that prominent domains would be dependent upon the situation. RT2 was most evident in this question, as superintendents were discussing the frustration or negative side to trust development or when situations did not go as anticipated (18%). BP1 emerged as second highest component (10%), indicating that superintendents continued to make effort to seek input, even when things were not going as planned.

In reality, several new superintendents stated that this was not yet an issue or experience for them. For example, one first year urban superintendent stated,

You know, in my current role, I'll have to say, principals have been really supportive. They've embraced the changes thus far. I really can't say my interactions with the administrators have been anything but positive. They embraced it well.

Okay, trying to think, maybe not so much in this job. I've been pretty supported in this role.

The new superintendents most likely have not experienced the level of discord or disruption that the more experienced ones have. Responses from seasoned superintendents indicated that they had experienced trust issues as they have progressed in their careers. The range of components addressed varied from four through nine. Overall, components addressed tended to increase with experience, with one outlier (Urban 3). SA1, knowing ones values, was absent in this question with the remaining components being represented.

Superintendents were asked to provide a situation where they included principals in major decisions. It was believed that the primary domain represented in the question would be Balanced Processing, which was indicated. The domain of Balanced Processing was clearly primary (36%) when superintendents were asked how they included principals in major decisions. The strongest component in this situation was BP1 (26%), or seeking the perspective

of others when making major decisions. Superintendents included principals in many major decisions, citing examples from budgeting, hiring, and planning. Seeking input from principals was the most common way that principals were included. Superintendents expressed that this component was key in trust building. This was expressed directly and by example. The weakest components related to SA1 and SA2, both of which were absent in all the superintendent's responses. Another weak component was BP3, or explaining rationale. It is unlikely that rationale would need to be explained if there is consensus and buy-in from the administrative team.

The last question asked superintendents to describe a situation where they have stood alone in an action or decision. Several different situations were explained, including issues with personnel or the introduction and implementation of new initiatives. It was predicted that the domain Internalized Moral Perspective would be most prominent. In this question, the overall strongest domain was Balanced Processing (30%). All components were represented. BP1 (13%) and RT2 (13%) emerged as the two strongest components. In several cases, this was related to a negative, where superintendents were struggling to get people on board, expressing frustration in the form of RT2, thus showing the negative side of a situation. BP3 (9%), or explaining of rationale was also prominent, as was IM4 (10%), making decisions in the best interest of the organization. Several superintendents expressed that they would continue to work in the best interest of students even if others disagreed at the moment. They also expressed optimism that people would understand later or would see the positive impact of the decisions.

### **Conclusion**

Data was disaggregated in a variety of ways. When individual superintendent's data was evaluated, it was evident that each superintendent displayed a multifaceted and complex way in

which he or she used the different components of authenticity in their leadership. Each superintendent's experiences and stories were unique to him or her, and this uniqueness did not prove appropriate for analysis. However, when data was aggregated by domain and component, one could evaluate the frequency of each component within its relative domain. For example, within Self Awareness, knowing ones goals and motivation was utilized much more frequently than knowing one's values. Within Balanced Processing, seeking input was used significantly more than analyzing data or explaining rationales. When considering the domain of Internalized Moral Perspective, the least used component was having high morals and ethics, but the rest were more balanced. This may be due to the fact that one must have high morals to apply them, so in actuality, that component was utilized in all the components. The domain of Relational Transparency indicated that component 2, admitting mistakes was utilized most frequently. Aggregating data by question showed the high level of complexity and interdependency of the various components. In four of the six questions, the superintendents applied every component.



## CHAPTER 5

### **Discussion**

This chapter provides an overview of the research, which highlights its purpose, research question, and theoretical framework. It reviews the methodology used to conduct the study. This chapter provides an analysis of the findings. Finally, it discusses implications and makes suggestions for further research and practice in the field.

### **Overview**

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how school superintendents perceive their use of the components of authentic leadership to build trust with their principals. The research question was stated to be:

What is superintendents' perception of their use of the components of authentic leadership?

The study was qualitative in nature, relying on a life stories interview approach. Data was disaggregated by individual superintendent, domain, component, district type, and question. This data was then analyzed and presented in the results section.

### **Analysis of Presented Data**

Data was analyzed by domain, by component, by superintendent, and by question. When the data was analyzed by domain, it was evident that across all questions and all superintendents, overall there was a nearly even application of the domains. The components within the domain of Self Awareness were utilized by superintendents 28% of the time. The components of the Balanced Processing domain were utilized by superintendents 28% of the time. The components of the Internalized Moral Perspective domain were used by superintendents 23% of the time, and the components of Relational Transparency were used 21% of the time. Although individual superintendents may have stressed or utilized one domain over the other, the data shows that

over all the superintendents, the domains are actually applied nearly evenly. This supports the framework in that all domains contribute to the trust built between superintendents and principals, with one domain not overwhelming another. However, the data supports that when approaching decisions and working with others, superintendents utilize a variety of domains and components in complex ways, depending on the specific situation and superintendent. This happens much more frequently than predicted.

### **Analysis of Superintendents' Stories**

Superintendents were asked to share the story of their journeys into the world of education. All superintendents were able to share a variety of positions and jobs that helped to develop them as leaders and drive them into the superintendency. This ability to describe the ordered, logistical series of events demonstrated their application of SA2. However, three superintendents, R2, U2, U3 shared stories that included a deeper drive into education. They knew from a very young age that they wanted to be teachers, describing situations where they played school with dolls or just felt it as their calling when they volunteered with children. This adds the impact of values and ethics into the domain of Self Awareness, and then exemplifies how they applied their values and ethics to their motives and goals, bringing in the components of Internalized Moral Perspective. U2 and U3 also displayed the highest scores for Internalized Moral Perspective, with the concepts connected to morals, ethics, and values being interlaced throughout the stories. Notably, all three of these superintendents were female. There could be some connection to the fact that teaching has been one of the traditionally acceptable fields for women, providing role female role models for little girls throughout history.

Two additional superintendents discussed the larger impact and value of being in the field of education. Both expressed the value of being in education, how they chose education so that

they would have a larger impact on children and the community/world. Like the ladies referenced above, they saw the role of education from a moral and ethical perspective, seeing it within the larger context of the world. This perspective also exemplifies and includes Self Awareness component 1 and Internalized Moral Perspective in that they apply ethics and morals to decisions. R3 exhibited the strongest use of the components of Internalized Moral Perspective of all the superintendents, including these components in every story.

All superintendents, with the exception of R1, included the impact of mentoring or guidance in their journeys into education. This exemplifies the use of Balanced Processing, component 1. For many, this guidance served as a core value that impacted how they interacted with others, which became evident in other stories, specifically stories that discussed how they build trust or how they approached a problem. It is interesting to note that the one superintendent who did not describe the impact of others on his development provided minimal description or examples of how he provided support. Those who did provide support addressed it in various ways. One superintendent, R3, described a very conscious leadership development process that he had developed in his district, expressing the philosophy that they should be developing leaders from within. The majority of others described how they supported principals and other administrators when problems arose.

All superintendents touched on personnel issues in a variety of contexts. In some cases, there were conflicts between administration and the Board. In these cases, the superintendents had to apply different components of authentic leadership as they served as buffers and problem-solvers. For example, when S2's Board lost faith in an administrator, the superintendent found ways to highlight his administrator's skills to the Board. He offered opportunities for the administrator to show his strengths in presentations to the Board. He used the components of

Balanced Processing to understand the Board's concerns, the applied Internalized Moral Processing to connect his opinions of the administrator (which were in conflict with the Board's opinion) and apply his ethics that he needed to support the administrator, because this administrator was a strength to the district. He then put that into action by encouraging and supporting the administrator, providing opportunities for the Board to change their opinion of him.

Rural 3 described similar situations where he saw the strengths of others, believing that these strengths would benefit the district. He described an example where he had to work with the Board to hire a Director of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning. He had to incorporate Balanced Processing components 1 and 3 and Relational Transparency component 1 to connect to Internalized Moral Perspective components 1-4. Even after the Board agreed to the position, he provided continuous feedback to the Board by highlighting this director and providing opportunities for the director to present to the Board. This ensured continuous support for both the position and the person.

Urban 1 explained how she came into direct conflict with a school board when she was negotiating her contract. She believes that her gender and race may have caused the Board to misinterpret her advocacy for insurance for her family as aggression. In this situation, there was a conflict between her values and the values of the Board. In this situation, her Self Awareness, specifically knowing her goals in combination with openly sharing those goals in the form of Relational Transparency caused a conflict with the Board. In the end, she was not employed by this Board, which she felt was best in hind-sight.

Suburban 1 described a situation where he attempted to control a rogue Board. In this situation, the Board wanted to evaluate the administrators and central office employees, even

though this was not in compliance with Illinois School Code. He used Balanced Perspective component 1 to try to understand their concerns, which he felt were invalid. He believed that the employees were doing a good job, but the Board felt that the employees were causing issues with the community because parents were complaining. He attempted to advise the Board, using Relational Transparency, of both School Code and the complexity of following the law and ethics when the staff was making complex decisions. In the end, he applied his Internalized Moral Perspective, component 1 and 2, to work in the best interest of the staff. He assisted them in finding alternative employment, which may not have been in the best interest of the organization. However, he believed that the Board was prioritizing politics over the best interest of the district. This situation exemplified conflicts on two levels, between Board and staff but also conflict on an ethical level.

Several superintendents described conflict between their ethics and the ethics or values of others, specifically principals. For example, U3 described how there have situations where principals did not appear to be working in the best interest of children. She stated that she attempted to build a relationship where she could support the administrator, but with limited success. In that case, she would invite them to find other opportunities. S1 described similar cases, specifically a situation where a principal was receiving complaints from parents and staff that she was not collaborative or communicative. In this case, S1 provided intensive feedback in hopes of helping her improve. However, in the end, she chose to find another position. S1 also described a situation where a principal was forcing his religious beliefs on the students by removing pieces of the text from the Science book. In this situation, he was directly informed that it was not appropriate, and he too chose to leave the position. All these examples demonstrate how Internalized Moral Perspective was the driver of Relational Transparency.

Both superintendents used their moral compass to determine that the principals that they were supervising were not benefitting students or families, and because of this, they openly shared how the principal can improve. When this did not or could not occur, the superintendents made a conscious decision that they believed would positively impact the organization.

Several superintendents described situations where they were able to develop trust. Two superintendents focused on how they made personal connections with principals to develop trust. In her interview, U2 described how she determined early on that she would need to expose herself as a leader in order to build a relationship with a struggling principal. She knew that without this relationship, the principal would not consent to a mentoring relationship. By applying her Self Awareness, specifically component 4, knowing herself and applying that knowledge to the goal of relationship development, she was able to successfully move the relationship forward. She also utilized Relational Transparency, specifically component 3, showing ones' true self to make that connection with the principal.

Similarly, when R2 struggled to move her agenda forward with a specific principal, she found that being genuine and authentic, and willing to help the principal both personally and professionally allowed them to find common ground in their relationship. Rural 2 realized that the principal was resistant to a change, not because of the change itself, but because of her discomfort with technology. Using Balanced Processing component 1 to understand the situation, and 2 to analyze other components, she realized the issue, and offered assistance to the principal, which increased the principal's comfort with both the technology and the new superintendent. When this principal suffered a sudden, personal loss, the superintendent offered to step into the role of principal to allow her to grieve. In the opinion of R2, this personal connection was the olive branch that solidified their relationship, and the principal became her

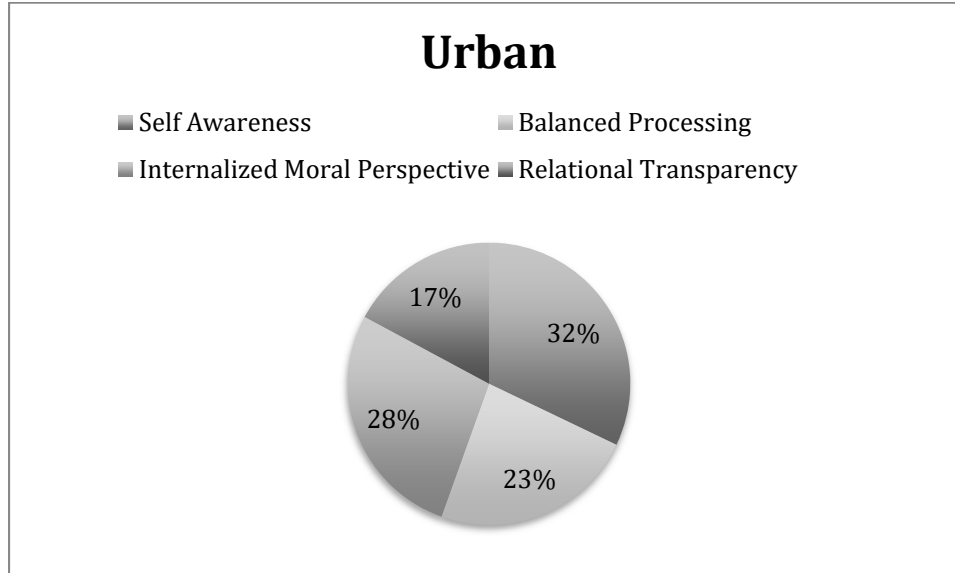
biggest supporter. Presenting her true self, on a personal and professional level, using RT3, allowed her to connect with the principal, moving her agenda forward.

Personal and professional connection was a key component in developing the relationships necessary to elicit change in several of the districts. Urban 3, Rural 3, Suburban 2, and S3 all expressed the value of working side by side with their principals. They all detailed how important it was to not just talk the talk, but walk the walk, to display and reinforce their messages through their behaviors and decisions. This understanding of how their actions and decisions impact the people within the organization exhibit the highest level of Internalized Moral Perspective, IM4. In a way, the transference from words to actions takes authentic leadership to a level where it encompasses components of all the domains. One must be self-aware in a way that they know their goals and use them to impact their decisions. They use behaviors and decisions as opportunities to take in information, analyze information, and then explain their decisions through their words, actions, decisions, and behaviors. They believe in that decision to the extent that they are actively participating in the activity, they are living the mission and vision.

### **Aggregation by District Type**

The Domains were then disaggregated by type of district. According to the data-set shown in Figure 3 below, superintendents working in urban environments used the domains in a slightly different way from those in suburban or rural environments.

Figure 3. Differentiation of Domains in Urban Environments



It would appear that urban superintendents use significantly more components from the Self Awareness domain (32%) and slightly less components from the Relational Transparency domain (17%) than their colleagues from other environments. It could be inferred that given the increased political stressors of the urban environment, with many urban districts being larger and having more complexity in the political environments with higher levels of poverty, high numbers of children of minority status, increased violence, etc., that these superintendents have to be more self-protecting, decreasing trust in others, and reducing their willingness and opportunity to express their perspective through Relational Transparency. They may have to be more self-aware, monitoring their actions and feelings to ensure that they are being perceived in an accurate way.

It is more likely that the disparity was related to the study itself, with its small pool of research subjects. The data differences are more likely to be related to the demographics of the pool. In fact, all superintendents from Urban environments were female. Could it be that female superintendents are more concerned with Self Awareness? Two of the three were in their first



year, and two of the three were African American. It could also be hypothesized that African-American superintendents are more concerned with Self Awareness, or that first year superintendents are more concerned. The average years of experience in the group was four years, the least experience overall of all the categories. In actuality, rural and suburban superintendents were nearly identical in their dispersion of the domains as indicated in the two charts below:

Figure 4. Differentiation of Domains in Rural Environments

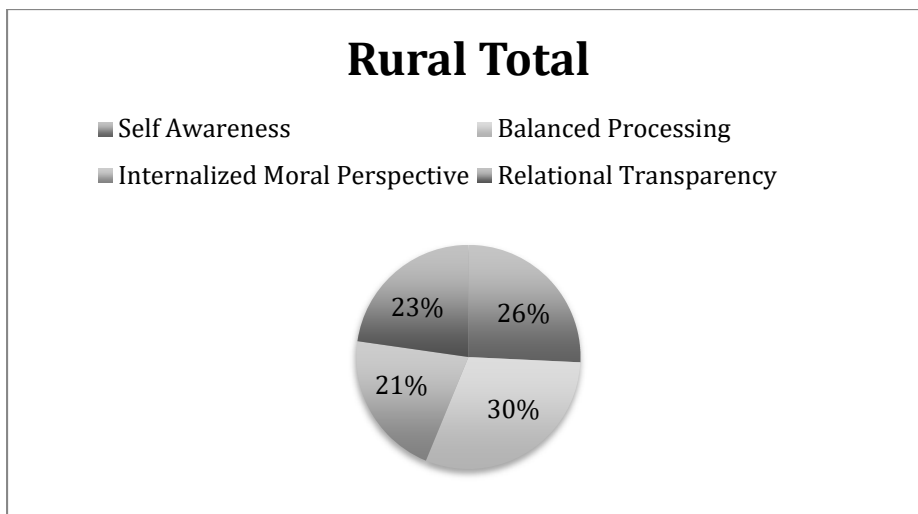
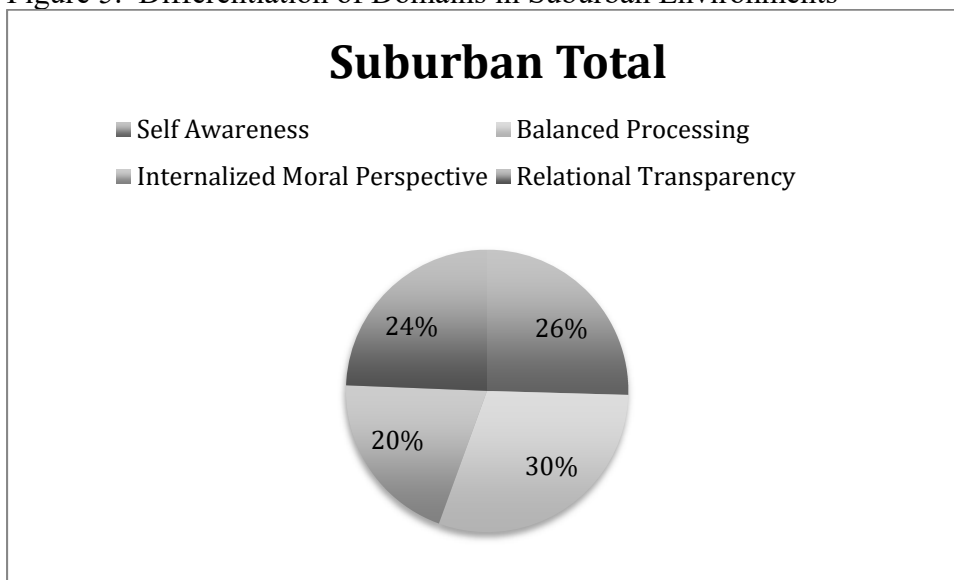


Figure 5. Differentiation of Domains in Suburban Environments



The rural superintendents were more balanced in their demographics of male versus female, and were all considered moderately experienced as superintendents. All the superintendents in this category were Caucasian. The average years of experience of the rural superintendents was 5.3 years. The category of superintendents exhibiting the most balance overall were those from the suburban category because two of the superintendents were in their first year, and one had thirty years experienced. The average years of experience for this category was 10.7 years, and appeared closest in its representation of total superintendents. It should be noted that all the superintendents in the suburban category were male and two of the three were first year superintendents.

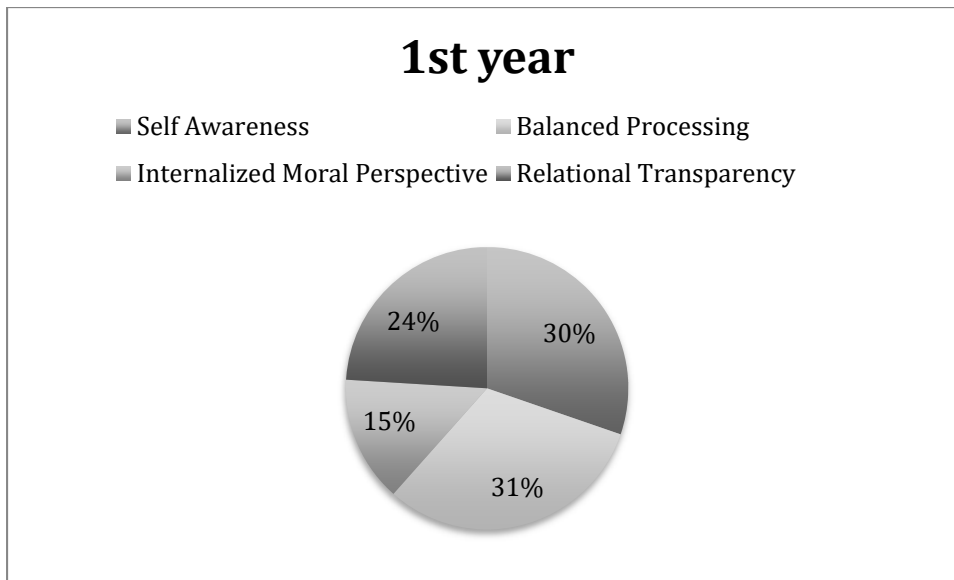
There are so many considerations with such small pools of candidates, it is impossible to determine correlations between demographics and application of domains. Within the comparison of district environments, there was too much variation with minimal statistical trend, and the fact that the disparity was relatively minimal, a different demographic was aggregated. The only significant statistical trend relates to experience. As superintendents are gaining experience, they are gaining balance in their application of the components of authentic leadership.

### **Aggregation by Experience**

Superintendents were also disaggregated by years of experience. It was noted that this particular pool of candidates presented with a unique situation. Specifically, four of the nine respondents were in their first year as superintendents. Three of the nine had worked as a superintendent from 2-9 years, and two superintendents were retired, but still actively employed. They had served as a superintendent for ten or more years. The average years of experience was 7.2 years for the entire pool of subjects.

This data showed a significant difference in how the superintendents balanced the different domains in their first year, and how this changed over time. Superintendents in their first year appear to utilize components in the Balanced Processing (31%) and Self Awareness (30%) domains significantly more than their more seasoned colleagues. Seasoned superintendents used Balanced Processing (23%) significantly less than first year. Moderately experienced superintendents found themselves using Balanced Processing (30%) in the middle. It is hypothesized that as new superintendents, they are seeking to better understand their districts, their colleagues, and themselves. They are intentionally attempting to build trust and new relationships with a wide variety of stakeholders. In doing so, they are actively seeking information and input from stakeholders. They are asking more questions, getting more opinions, and intentionally seeking to better understand themselves, their roles, and their environments.

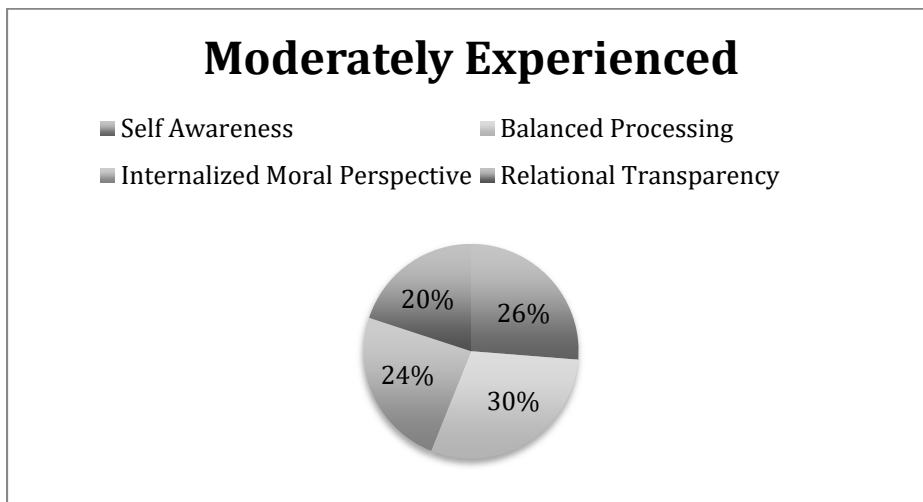
Figure 6. Differentiation of Domains for First Year Superintendents



It is noted that they are applying the components of Internalized Moral Perspective the least (16%), which shifts dramatically as the superintendents become more seasoned (25%).

Moderately experienced superintendents in their second to ninth year apply the components of Internalized Moral Perspective (24%) falling between both new superintendents and seasoned superintendents, while reducing their application of components within the Relational Transparency (20%). It is theorized that at this point in their careers, superintendents are more confident in their roles, know themselves better, and are now focused on their personal ethics and the district’s mission and vision. They are explaining themselves less using Relational Transparency as their confidence builds.

Figure 7. Differentiation of Domains by Moderately Experienced Superintendents

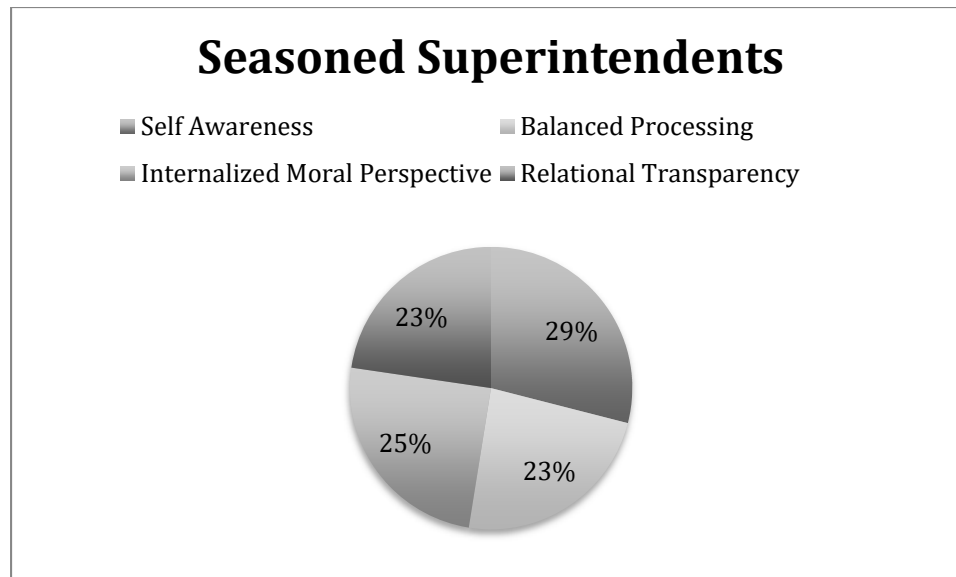


Moderately experienced superintendents are at a point where they have developed trust and relationships, which allows them to apply Balanced Processing frequently, but less than the new superintendent who is constantly seeking feedback. The confidence in their position is reducing Relational Transparency slightly, because they are more confident that others trust them. It is hypothesized that these superintendents learn from experience the value of seeking feedback, and this adjusts as they become more seasoned.

Figure 8 depicts that the most seasoned superintendents interviewed, having served as superintendent over ten years, exhibited a more balanced application of the four domains. It

could be theorized that at this stage of their careers, the superintendents are confident in who they are and their role. They have had multiple positions as superintendents, and have gained the perspective and balance in their leadership skills. They continue to see the value of all the different domains, but do not rely on one more significantly than another.

Figure 8. Differentiation of Domains by Seasoned Superintendents



The seasoned superintendents continue to use the Self Awareness domain the most frequently (29%), citing the most examples and variations of experiences. They exhibit an understanding of who they are and how they got where they are, what they believe, and how it impacts them. They have several examples of situations and lessons that they have learned through a wide variety of experiences. At the same time, of the three groupings, they are the most focused on Internalized Moral Perspective. This may be due to the fact that they have retired and are engaged in short term interim assignments, where there is not the expectation of longevity. This allows them the freedom to make decisions of the most ethical foundation without political consequences. Balanced process is used the least, probably because they are in interim positions, which are short-term positions. These positions reduce the ability to develop relationships in a

way where the superintendent would seek feedback. It was also noted that Balanced Processing was most utilized by superintendents who want to better understand strengths and weaknesses, but these seasoned superintendents are already aware of these qualities.

### **Aggregation by Question**

The theoretical framework indicated that trust was developed when superintendents applied all four domains of authentic leadership. Analyzing the questions showed that this was indeed true, but in a more complex and multifaceted manner than initially anticipated. Given a variety of questions and situations, the superintendents indicated that they actually applied multiple components at any given time. It is the combination of these components that built trust, rather than the simple concept of, in this situation, the superintendent applied that one specific domain. Out of the six questions asked to participating superintendent, four include all the components in the responses. Two of the questions did not include the components in the Self Awareness domain. The question asking about a situation where trust was difficult to develop did not use the SA1 (knowing one's values). The question asking superintendents to discuss situations where they have included principals were missing both SA1 and SA2 (development of one's identity). In general, the domain of Self Awareness increased as superintendents expressed information about their personal selves and decreased as they moved toward responses that encompassed more external factors. The two most seasoned superintendents showed significantly more complex application of components and number of components applied in question 1, question 2, question 3, and question 4. Due to their extensive experiences, they were able to provide several examples and were highly reflective in their analysis and explanation. For example, S1 with 30 years of experience as a superintendent

addressed 43 components in 12 areas in question 1. U3, with 15 years of experience, addressed 72 components in all 13 areas in that question.

When asked about their journeys into education, superintendents most frequently applied SA4, knowing their goals. However, they also explained that in order to know their goals (SA4), they had to know their values (SA1) because it was these values that directed them into education. They had to know how they decided to pursue education, and often explained how other people, their parents, colleagues, and other teachers, encouraged them (BP1). They explained how they developed over time to come to the position they are currently in. In understanding this process, they demonstrated how they analyzed data (BP2), learned from their mistakes (RT2), and applied their ethics and morals (IM2) to work in the best interest of the students, families, and district (IM2 and IM4). This came full circle to Self Awareness, specifically knowing one's values (SA1), understanding emotions (SA3), and understanding motives and goals (SA4). Similar processes occurred as the superintendents expressed how they came to understand their strengths and weaknesses.

Most commonly, superintendents sought feedback (BP1) from colleagues, mentors, and friends to help them understand their strengths and weaknesses. However, in doing so, they were able to take this feedback, applying and analyzing other evidence (BP2) such as evaluations, recognition, results of situations, etc., to better understand who they are. They expressed an ability to learn from mistakes (RT2) and openly share this and other aspects of themselves (RT1), as well as personal pieces of themselves (RT3) to build trust with others. This impacts their Self Awareness, specifically their understanding of their identity (SA2) as they learn to balance strengths and weaknesses to be the best leader that they can be (SA3). Superintendents express an interest and willingness to continue to the process of learning and developing (SA4)

so that they can make the best decisions, working in the best interest of the students (IM3 and IM4). This genuine goal, to be the best leader possible to work in the best interest of students, helps to build trust because the superintendent shares a common purpose with his or her stakeholders.

This common purpose (IM3) brings everyone together to make the best decisions for the students and district (IM4). Whether the task was in planning, budgeting, curriculum development, personnel issues, etc., superintendents attempt to seek input (BP1) so that they can make the best decisions (IM4). They are open and transparent in their discussions (RT1) and are able to express both the positive and the negative side of any situation (BP2) as well as analyze data from multiple sources (BP2). When they need to make decisions where they are unable to seek data and counsel from others, they are willing to discuss their rationale (BP3) and the complexity of the situation with their stakeholders (RT2). This consistent and quality communication that interrelates a variety of components builds trust on the team.

Some superintendents expressed concern when they struggled to build trust. Although they felt that they were applying the above-mentioned components of authentic leadership, they recognized (RT2) that their positional authority might be preventing stakeholders from fully expressing their thoughts and ideas (BP1). They used several situations and experiences (BP2) to come to the conclusion that some members of their team may not be as open and transparent as they would like (RT2). These superintendents expressed how this impacted them emotionally (SA3) in the form of loneliness and distrust. It was expressed that this may just be part of the position of being a superintendent, but it was always the goal to build that trust with stakeholders so that they may feel comfortable enough to fully express their thoughts and ideas, as the value



of multiple perspectives was valued in the superintendent's ability to make good decisions (IM4 and SA4).

This research indicates that superintendents are able to build trust with their principals and stakeholders by applying the components of authentic leadership in unique and complex ways. It is the complexity and multi-faceted manner of application that strengthens the trust. It appears that superintendents are able to apply the components with increased balance with increased experience. Superintendents who have the most experience, and the least political complexity of their position, appear to experience a level of emotional and financial safety that allows for the most balance in how the domains and components are applied. Although this is not the reality for most superintendents, it is important to recognize the value of creating a safe space at all levels.

### **Implications**

Regardless of how the data was disaggregated, the common theme appears to be the complexity of the application of the domains. When the responses of the individual superintendents are analyzed, it is noted that they used several different components to address the situation or resolve the problems. When analyzing the data from each question, one can see the same thing. In most questions, nearly all components were utilized as the superintendents explained their perspectives of what happened and how the situation was resolved. As one seasoned superintendent noted, "We are all problem-solvers." As superintendents are solving problems, they are applying various components of authentic leadership in unique and complex ways. This may change as the individual becomes more comfortable in his or her skills or with their districts.

Due to its quantitative nature, a major limitation of this study is the low number of participants (N=9). Although it appears that a significant factor is experience, this could be related more to the specific experiences and qualities of the individuals who were interviewed, specifically from the Seasoned group (N=2). It would be beneficial for this study to be expanded to include more participants in more of a mixed methodology format. This study could better address whether differences are more connected to experience, gender, or another factor. Another study may be able to more adequately determine why some superintendents are more multifaceted and apply the components in a deeper, more complex manner than others. If the difference is indeed length of tenure, there could be some ramifications at the district level.

From the perspective of the school districts, it is important to note that new superintendents are developing relationships and attempting to determine how their personal qualities fit into the district's mission and vision. This process takes time. Therefore, School Boards might consider extending contracts for two to three years, and avoid one-year contracts with new superintendents. Additionally, some superintendents have found mentoring to be valuable. Therefore School Boards should encourage new superintendents to find support through mentoring, local organizations, or other opportunities through Regional Offices of Education or like organizations.

## Chapter 6

**Summary of Research**

The purpose of this study was to better understand how superintendents applied the components of authentic leadership to develop trust. The research question asked was:

What is superintendents' perception of their use of the components of authentic leadership?

Nine superintendents were interviewed so that the researcher could better understand how they responded in a variety of situations. Results indicated that superintendents used the components in unique, multi-faceted ways. All the superintendents used a variety of the components in a complex manner. It appears that this skill improves over time and with experience, indicating that more seasoned superintendents are able to balance the ways that they apply the components better than new superintendents, who are still adjusting to the demands of their position and trying to better understand their role and the politics and needs of the district.

Districts may consider providing additional support or mentoring for first year superintendents. One district in this study maintained the retired superintendent for 100 days to support the new superintendent. This new superintendent cited this support on several occasions, stating,

The transition between myself and the previous superintendent has been a very smooth one. They actually kept her on for a 100-day contract, which also kind of helped smooth things over because she has consistently kind of championed my work in the district and build that rapport.

Although a more expensive option, this may be something that more school boards might consider, if possible. If this option is not available, school boards may consider providing

mentoring for first year superintendents to provide support as they learn to navigate the complexities of the position. If this mentor cannot be the previous superintendent, then they may consider using superintendents from neighboring districts or somebody recommended by the Illinois Association of School Administrators.

Considering a more global perspective, professional organizations such as the Illinois Association of School Administrators, local Regional Offices of Education, or AASA The School Superintendents Association may want to provide or increase their availability of mentoring opportunities locally. AASA does offer mentoring opportunities for school superintendents, but this may not be well advertised. School boards may want to create policy and/or ensure the practice that all new superintendents to the district will be offered or required to participate in mentoring and area Superintendents' Meetings at their local Regional Office of Education, if provided.

It is important for school boards to recognize the emotional impact of the position and the stress of balancing the political pressures of the position. School boards should have a clear vision of the direction that they would like the district to move, and select superintendents who are in sync with their vision. Both school boards and superintendents should be working together to move the vision forward. In doing so, it is essential that the school board create an emotionally safe space where they are working collaboratively to ensure that both the school board and superintendent are making decisions that are in alignment with the vision. Creating norms, establishing clear expectations, and developing/referring back to the vision of the district should be common practice.

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## Appendix A

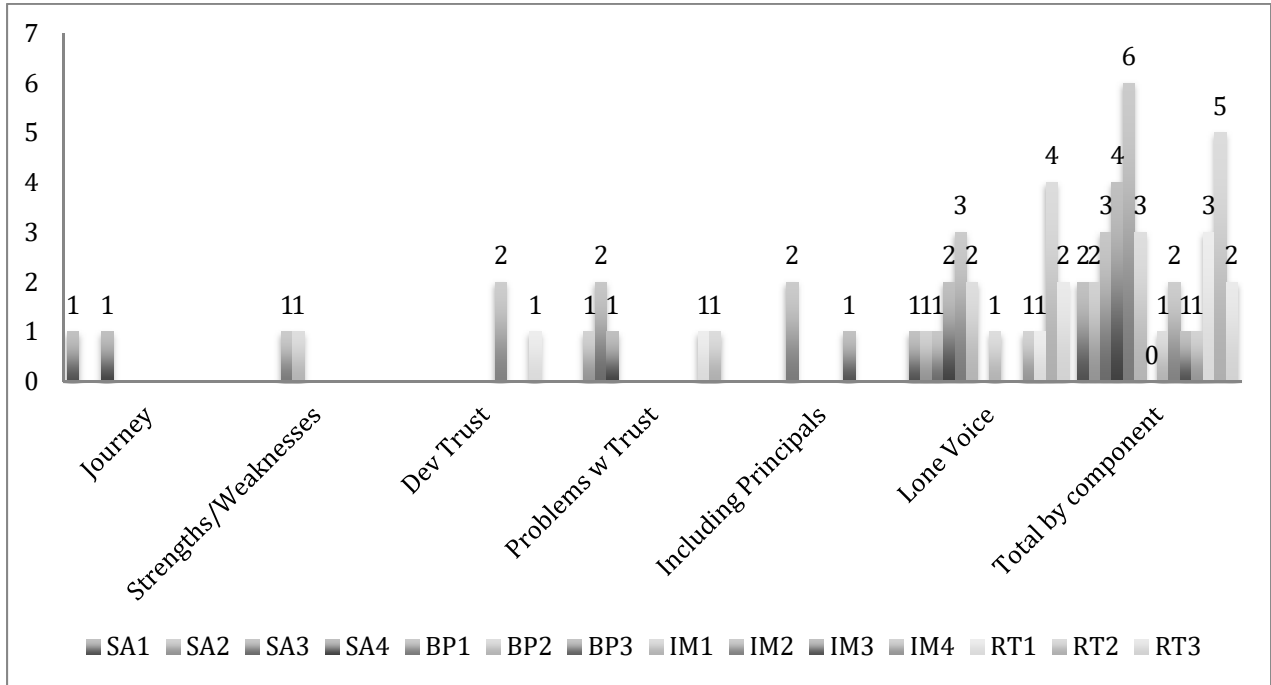
**Interview Questions**

| Question  | Component addressed                   |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1. What was your journey into education and into leadership?  | Self awareness                        |
| 2. What are your strengths and weaknesses as a leader and how do you know?  |                                       |
| 3. Can you tell me about a time(s) when you successfully developed trust between yourself and principals? What were the outcomes? What were the benefits? | To Be Determined (response dependent) |
| 4. Can you tell me about a time(s) when you were not able to establish trust between yourself and principals? What was the impact or consequence of that? | To Be Determined (response dependent) |
| 5. Can you share a situation(s) where you included your principals in a major decision? What was the outcome of that?                                     | Balanced Processing                   |
| 6. Would you please share with me a situation when you have found yourself to be a minority in opinion or action? How did you react to that?              | Internalized Moral Perspective        |

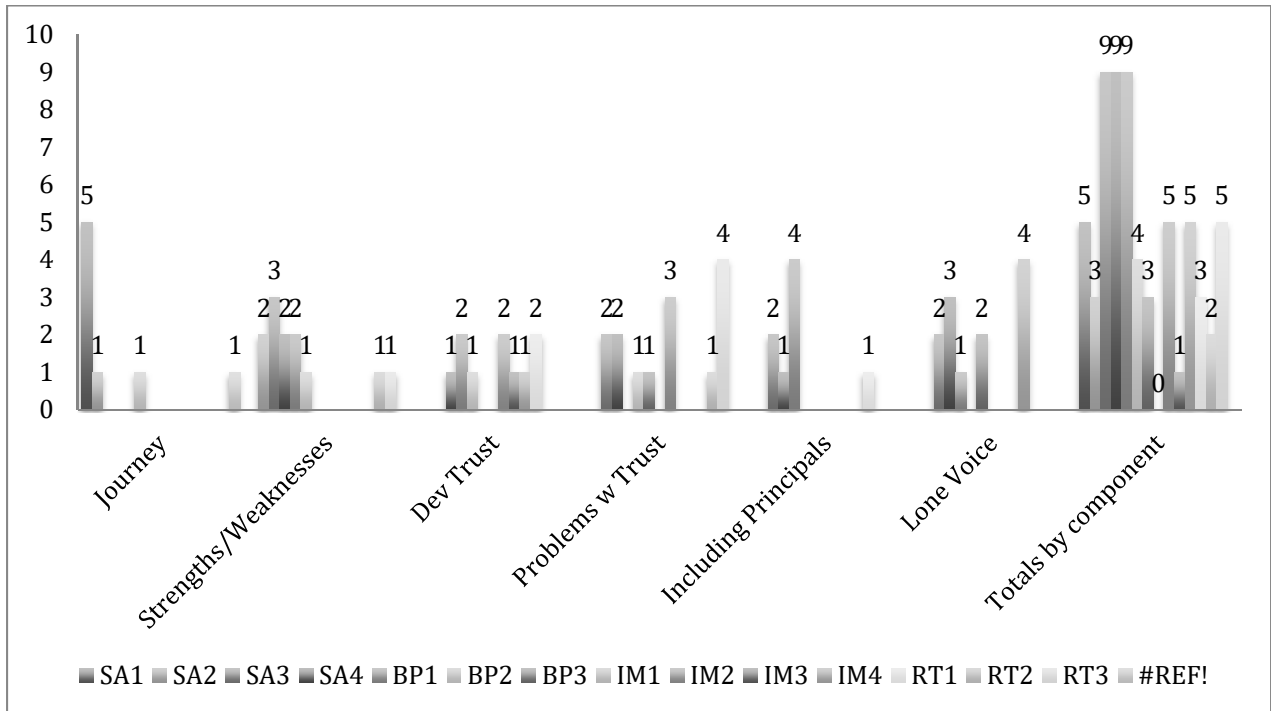
Appendix C

Data by Superintendent

Rural 1

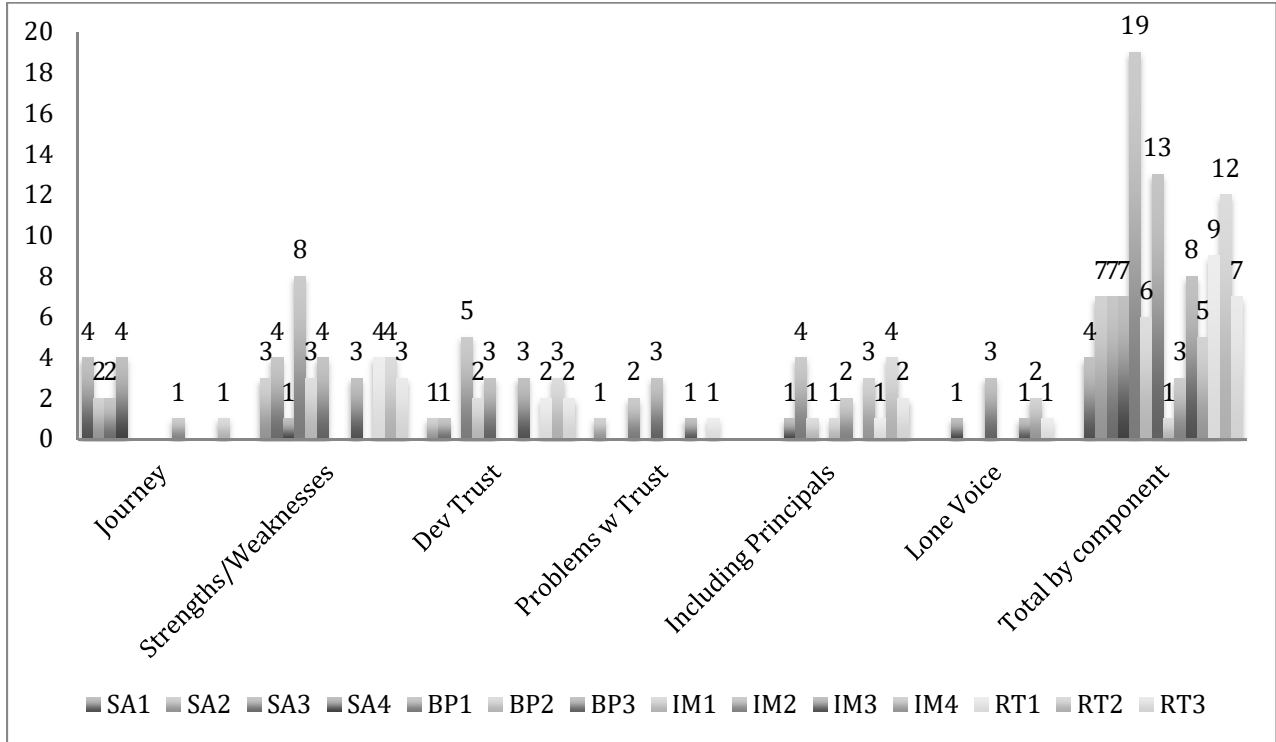


Rural 2

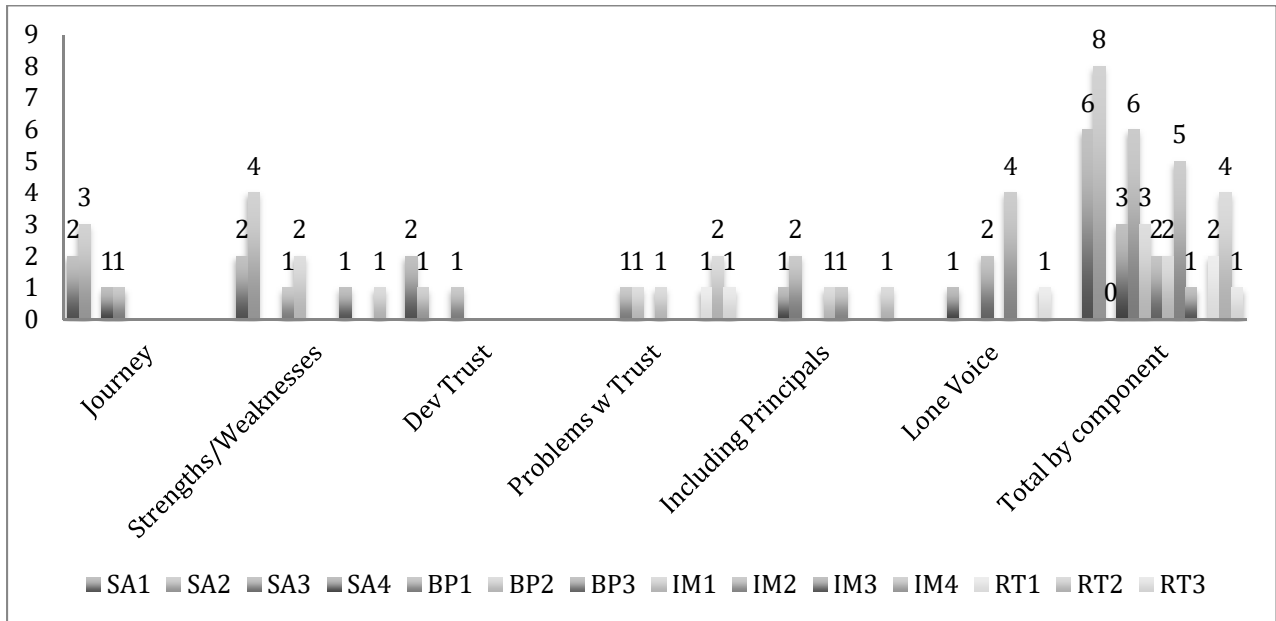




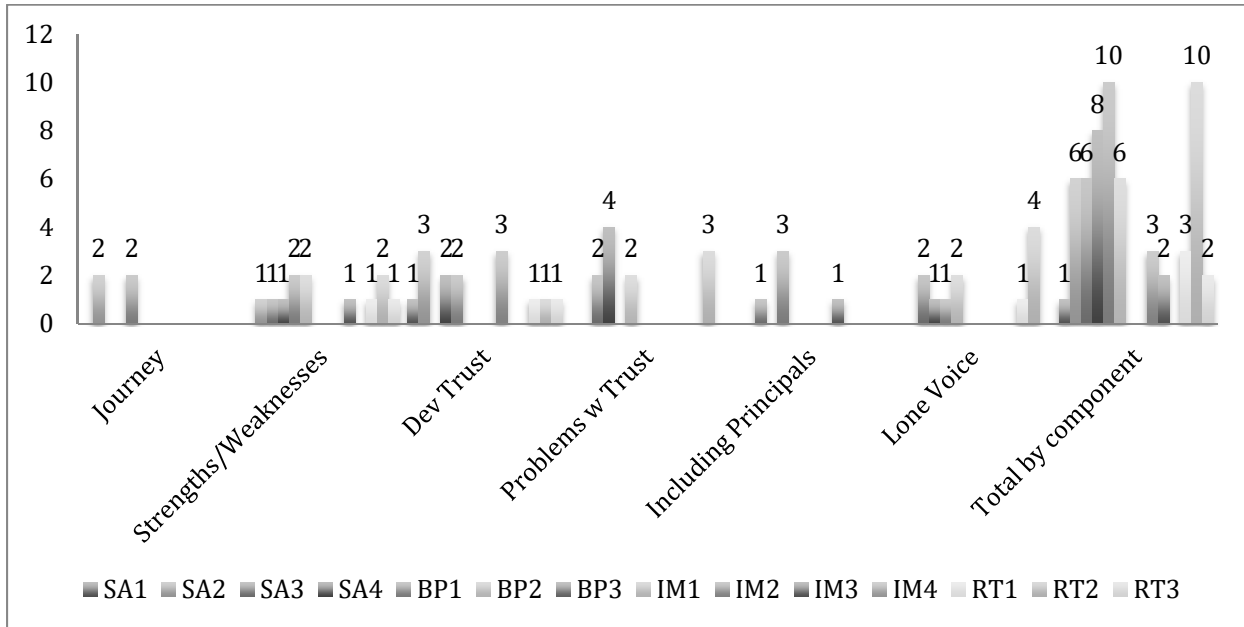
Suburban 2



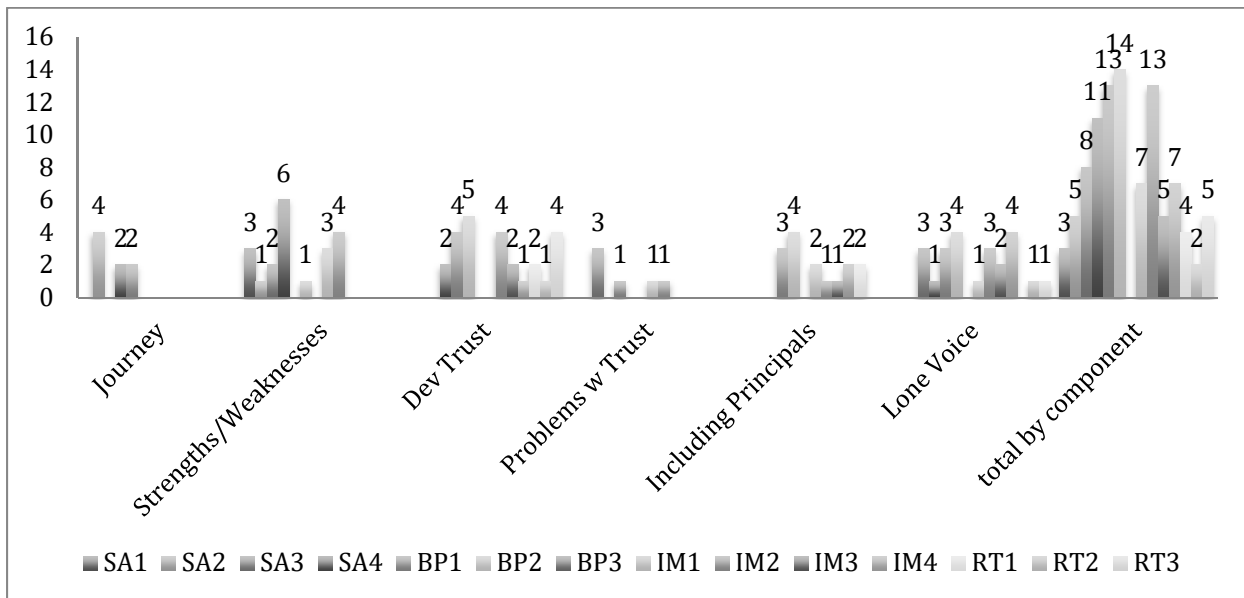
Suburban 3



Urban 1

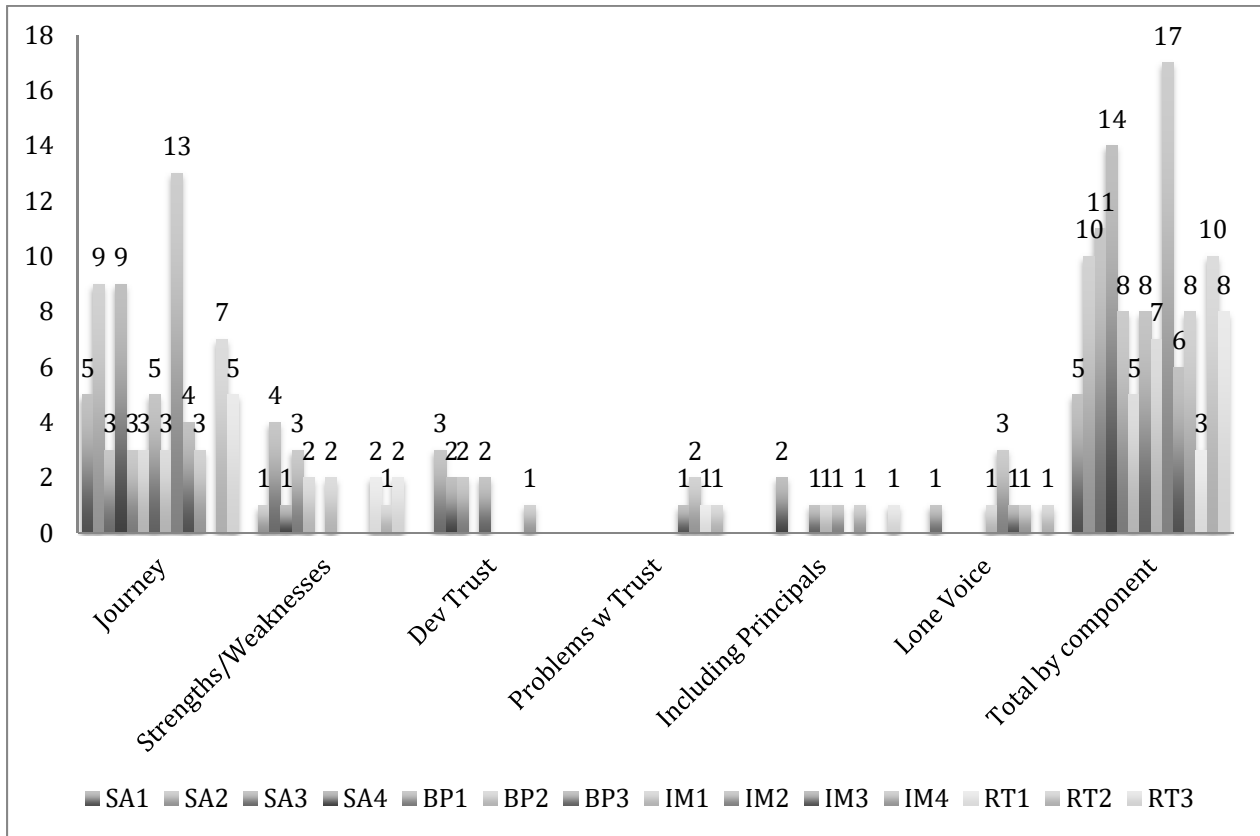


Urban 2



Urban 3





Appendix D

Data Tables by Question

Question 1

|                  | R1 | R2 | R3 | S1 | S2 | S3 | U1 | U2 | U3 |
|------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Experience       | 3  | 7  | 6  | 30 | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 15 |
| SA1              | 1  | 5  | 2  |    | 4  | 2  |    |    | 5  |
| SA2              |    | 1  | 7  | 7  | 2  | 3  | 2  | 4  | 9  |
| SA3              |    |    | 2  |    | 2  |    |    |    | 3  |
| SA4              | 1  |    | 5  | 7  | 4  | 1  |    | 2  | 9  |
| BP1              |    |    | 2  | 1  |    | 1  | 2  | 2  | 3  |
| BP2              |    | 1  | 1  | 4  |    |    |    |    | 3  |
| BP3              |    |    |    | 3  |    |    |    |    | 5  |
| IM1              |    |    | 1  | 1  |    |    |    |    | 3  |
| IM2              |    |    |    | 3  | 1  |    |    |    | 13 |
| IM3              |    |    | 1  | 2  |    |    |    |    | 4  |
| IM4              |    |    | 5  | 3  |    |    |    |    | 3  |
| RT1              |    |    | 4  | 6  |    |    |    |    |    |
| RT2              |    |    | 2  | 5  | 1  |    |    |    | 7  |
| RT3              |    |    |    | 1  |    |    |    |    | 5  |
| Total components | 2  | 7  | 32 | 43 | 14 | 7  | 4  | 8  | 72 |
| # components     | 2  | 3  | 11 | 12 | 5  | 4  | 2  | 3  | 13 |

Question 2

|              | R1 | R2 | R3 | S1 | S2 | S3 | U1 | U2 | U3 |
|--------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Experience   | 3  | 7  | 6  | 30 | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 15 |
| SA1          |    |    | 5  | 2  |    | 2  |    | 3  |    |
| SA2          |    | 2  | 1  | 1  | 3  | 4  | 1  | 1  | 1  |
| SA3          |    | 3  | 5  | 2  | 4  |    | 1  | 2  | 4  |
| SA4          |    | 2  | 4  | 6  | 1  |    | 1  | 6  | 1  |
| BP1          | 1  | 2  | 10 | 1  | 8  | 1  | 2  |    | 3  |
| BP2          | 1  | 1  | 7  | 2  | 3  | 2  | 2  | 1  | 2  |
| BP3          |    |    | 2  | 1  | 4  |    |    |    |    |
| IM1          |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 3  | 2  |
| IM2          |    |    | 3  |    |    |    |    | 4  |    |
| IM3          |    |    | 5  |    | 3  | 1  | 1  |    |    |
| IM4          |    |    | 1  | 4  |    |    |    |    |    |
| RT1          |    |    |    |    | 4  |    | 1  |    | 2  |
| RT2          |    | 1  | 8  | 3  | 4  | 1  | 2  |    | 1  |
| RT3          |    | 1  | 1  | 1  | 3  |    | 1  |    | 2  |
| Total        | 2  | 12 | 52 | 23 | 37 | 11 | 12 | 20 | 18 |
| # components | 2  | 7  | 12 | 10 | 10 | 6  | 9  | 7  | 9  |

Question 3

|              | R1 | R2 | R3 | S1 | S2 | S3 | U1 | U2 | U3 |
|--------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Experience   | 3  | 7  | 6  | 30 | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 15 |
| SA1          |    |    |    |    |    | 2  | 1  |    |    |
| SA2          |    |    | 2  |    | 1  | 1  | 3  |    |    |
| SA3          |    |    |    | 1  | 1  |    |    |    | 3  |
| SA4          |    | 1  | 1  | 2  |    |    | 2  | 2  | 2  |
| BP1          |    | 2  | 3  | 5  | 5  | 1  | 2  | 4  | 2  |
| BP2          |    | 1  | 1  | 4  | 2  |    |    | 5  |    |
| BP3          |    |    | 2  | 1  | 3  |    |    |    | 2  |
| IM1          |    |    | 1  |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| IM2          | 2  | 2  | 2  | 1  |    |    | 3  | 4  |    |
| IM3          |    | 1  |    | 4  | 3  |    |    | 2  |    |
| IM4          |    | 1  | 4  | 3  |    |    |    | 1  | 1  |
| RT1          | 1  | 2  |    | 3  | 2  |    | 1  | 2  |    |
| RT2          |    |    | 3  | 1  | 3  |    | 1  | 1  |    |
| RT3          |    |    | 1  | 2  | 2  |    | 1  | 4  |    |
| Total        | 3  | 10 | 20 | 27 | 21 | 4  | 14 | 25 | 10 |
| # components | 2  | 7  | 10 | 11 | 9  | 3  | 8  | 9  | 5  |

Question 4

|              | R1 | R2 | R3 | S1 | S2 | S3 | U1 | U2 | U3 |
|--------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Experience   | 3  | 7  | 6  | 30 | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 15 |
| SA1          |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| SA2          | 1  |    |    |    | 1  |    |    |    |    |
| SA3          | 2  | 2  |    |    |    |    | 2  | 3  |    |
| SA4          | 1  | 2  |    | 1  |    |    | 4  |    |    |
| BP1          |    |    | 3  | 3  | 2  | 1  |    | 1  |    |
| BP2          |    | 1  | 1  | 1  |    | 1  | 2  |    |    |
| BP3          |    | 1  | 2  | 3  | 3  |    |    |    |    |
| IM1          |    |    | 2  | 2  |    | 1  |    | 1  |    |
| IM2          |    | 3  | 2  | 3  |    |    |    | 1  |    |
| IM3          |    |    | 1  | 1  | 1  |    |    |    | 1  |
| IM4          |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 2  |
| RT1          | 1  |    |    | 2  | 1  | 1  |    |    | 1  |
| RT2          | 1  | 1  | 7  | 2  |    | 2  | 3  |    | 1  |
| RT3          |    | 4  | 1  |    |    | 1  |    |    |    |
| Total        | 6  | 14 | 19 | 18 | 8  | 7  | 11 | 6  | 5  |
| # components | 5  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 5  | 6  | 4  | 4  | 4  |

Question 5

|              | R1 | R2 | R3 | S1 | S2 | S3 | U1 | U2 | U3 |
|--------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Experience   | 3  | 7  | 6  | 30 | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 15 |
| SA1          |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| SA2          |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| SA3          |    | 2  |    |    |    |    | 1  |    |    |
| SA4          |    | 1  | 2  |    | 1  | 1  |    |    | 2  |
| BP1          | 2  | 4  | 5  | 2  | 4  | 2  | 3  | 3  |    |
| BP2          |    |    | 3  | 1  | 1  |    |    | 4  |    |
| BP3          |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1  |
| IM1          |    |    | 1  |    | 1  | 1  |    | 2  | 1  |
| IM2          |    |    |    |    | 2  | 1  |    | 1  | 1  |
| IM3          | 1  |    | 5  |    |    |    | 1  | 1  |    |
| IM4          |    |    | 5  |    | 3  |    |    | 2  | 1  |
| RT1          |    | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  |    |    | 2  |    |
| RT2          |    |    | 5  |    | 4  | 1  |    |    |    |
| RT3          |    |    | 2  |    | 2  |    |    |    | 1  |
| Total        | 3  | 8  | 29 | 4  | 19 | 6  | 5  | 15 | 7  |
| # Components | 2  | 4  | 9  | 3  | 9  | 5  | 3  | 7  | 6  |

Question 6

|              | R1 | R2 | R3 | S1 | S2 | S3 | U1 | U2 | U3 |
|--------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Experience   | 3  | 7  | 6  | 30 | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 15 |
| SA1          | 1  |    | 1  |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| SA2          | 1  |    | 1  |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| SA3          | 1  | 2  | 1  |    |    |    | 2  | 3  | 1  |
| SA4          | 2  | 3  | 1  |    | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  |    |
| BP1          | 3  | 1  | 11 | 1  |    |    | 1  | 3  |    |
| BP2          | 2  |    | 7  | 1  |    |    | 2  | 4  |    |
| BP3          |    | 2  | 6  | 1  | 3  | 2  |    |    |    |
| IM1          | 1  |    | 1  |    |    |    |    | 1  | 1  |
| IM2          |    |    | 1  | 2  |    | 4  |    | 3  | 3  |
| IM3          |    |    | 3  | 2  | 1  |    |    | 2  | 1  |
| IM4          | 1  | 4  | 3  |    | 2  |    |    | 4  | 1  |
| RT1          | 1  |    | 5  | 2  | 1  | 1  | 1  |    |    |
| RT2          | 4  |    | 7  | 3  |    |    | 4  | 1  | 1  |
| RT3          | 2  |    |    | 1  |    |    |    | 1  |    |
| Total        | 19 | 12 | 48 | 13 | 8  | 8  | 11 | 23 | 8  |
| # Components | 11 | 5  | 13 | 8  | 5  | 4  | 6  | 10 | 6  |

Total of All Questions

|                      | Journey | Strengths/<br>weak | Trust | Lack trust | Include<br>principals | Stand Alone | Total<br>component |
|----------------------|---------|--------------------|-------|------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| SA1                  | 19      | 12                 | 3     | 0          | 0                     | 2           | 36                 |
| SA2                  | 35      | 14                 | 7     | 2          | 0                     | 2           | 60                 |
| SA3                  | 7       | 21                 | 5     | 9          | 3                     | 10          | 55                 |
| SA4                  | 29      | 21                 | 10    | 8          | 7                     | 10          | 85                 |
| BP1                  | 11      | 27                 | 24    | 10         | 25                    | 20          | 117                |
| BP2                  | 9       | 20                 | 13    | 6          | 9                     | 16          | 73                 |
| BP3                  | 8       | 7                  | 8     | 9          | 1                     | 14          | 47                 |
| IM1                  | 5       | 5                  | 1     | 6          | 6                     | 4           | 27                 |
| IM2                  | 17      | 7                  | 14    | 9          | 5                     | 13          | 65                 |
| IM3                  | 7       | 10                 | 10    | 4          | 8                     | 9           | 48                 |
| IM4                  | 11      | 5                  | 10    | 2          | 11                    | 15          | 54                 |
| RT1                  | 10      | 7                  | 11    | 6          | 6                     | 11          | 51                 |
| RT2                  | 15      | 20                 | 9     | 17         | 10                    | 20          | 91                 |
| RT3                  | 6       | 9                  | 10    | 6          | 5                     | 4           | 40                 |
| Total by<br>Question | 189     | 185                | 134   | 94         | 96                    | 150         |                    |

