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ACTIONS AND BEHAVIORS PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS PERCEIVE

TO BUILD TRUST WITH DIVERSE AND COMPETING CONSTITUENCIES

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by

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ACTIONS AND BEHAVIORS PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS PERCEIVE

TO BUILD TRUST WITH DIVERSE AND COMPETING CONSTITUENCIES

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Educational leaders serve in a context that has grown increasingly complex. The change in student demographics, pressures of high stakes testing and accountability, and high turnover rates among educational leaders have created significant leadership challenges. To effectively execute the mission of public schools, superintendents muster resources and glean contributions from various stakeholders with whom they have developed some degree of trust. Research suggests trust levels between school leaders and the public is at an all time low. Effectiveness in the current educational landscape requires leaders capable of generating trust.

Successful superintendents take actions and behave in ways that build trust with diverse and competing constituencies. This treatise uses a case study design to describe and analyze the actions and behaviors of three superintendents that they perceive as building trust with diverse and competing constituencies. The Lewis and Weigert (1985)

analytical framework guides the data collection and analysis of this data demonstrates emergent themes. This study suggests the participants act and behave in ways that align with the framing theory and makes conclusions about the tension that exists as school system leaders attempt to generate the highest levels of trust while limiting their vulnerability.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background

The current landscape of American education poses numerous challenges to the effective leadership of school systems. Demographic shifts, pressures of federal accountability, and the mobility of educational leaders produce a difficult leadership environment. School superintendents need the ability to build and maintain meaningful relationships with competing groups if they intend to marshal the resources necessary to meet the challenges of school leadership. Effective relationships are rooted in trust. The literature and experience demonstrate that producing trust while working with diverse and competing people is becoming increasingly difficult and this difficulty creates an additional barrier to strong school leadership. Lewis and Weigert (1985) assert the importance of trust when they state, "It [trust] is the mutual 'faithfulness' on which all social relationships ultimately depend" (p. 968). Creation of trust specifically, and school leadership generally, has become more important and demanding because of the increased complexity of school environments. The reduction of trust often serves to create factionalism and an anecdote will support this proposition.

In a large Texas urban school district, reform activity designed to increase student performance required the superintendent to reduce the number central office personnel. Some of the positions eliminated were held by members of a racial group. The affected racial group voiced loud protests, mobilized the media, and accused the superintendent of acting only to protect his people. The situation grew contentious and it took years for the

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community to heal. This anecdote highlights the lack of trust many leaders labor with and the fact that trust production must not be taken for granted.

In the following sections, the challenges facing educational leaders and the need for trust are established. Definitions of trust and a review of the literature related to trust production are also detailed. Having demonstrated the increased need for trust and examining the literature regarding trust, building the case that leaders should know about trust and develop it is offered as a conclusion. Leadership of schools has never been more daunting. Demographic shifts, pressures of federal accountability, and the mobility of educational leaders produce a difficult leadership environment worthy of additional consideration.

Demographics

The changing demographics in Texas have increased the complexity of school leadership in this state. In 2000 Anglos in Texas represented 53.1% of the population; in 2005 they accounted for 49.2%. The same comparison showed a slight decrease in the African American population, as well, from 11.6% of Texans to 11.2%. The Hispanic population increased from 32% in 2000 to 35.1% by 2005. Other racial/ethnic groups increased their percentages of the Texas population from 3.3% to 4.5% for the same time periods (Texas State Data Center, 2007). The change in the composition of Texas' population affects the nature of relationships, cultures, and interpersonal understandings. It also effects changes in the demographics of student bodies, parents, communities, elected boards, and other groups. Coupled with the federal edict for increased accountability in closing the achievement gap (No Child Left Behind Act [NCLB], 2001),

the demographic shift in Texas (and indeed across the nation) has added to the challenge of school leadership.

Accountability

Educational reform has been a hot topic since the 1983 Commission on Excellence in Education issued its report titled *A Nation at Risk*. This report detailed the poor performance of America's schools and provided the impetus for educational reform movements across the United States. In 2002, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) became law. NCLB reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and re-energized the reform effort by instituting high levels of accountability. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act required standardized testing in math and reading every year for all students in grades three through eight. NCLB aims to improve American education by mandating schools to close the achievement gap between students of different ethnicities and socio-economic statuses, accomplish instruction utilizing best practices, implement research based curricula, and offer more flexibility in accommodating student needs. Other tenets of NCLB include increased accountability, more choice for parents and students, and greater flexibility for states, school districts, and schools. Schools are making substantial efforts to meet the challenges created by NCLB and its emphasis on accountability.

One of the most influential aspects of NCLB has been the accountability requirements. NCLB uses summative assessments administered to students at various grade levels to measure the effectiveness of schools and their instructional programs. What follows is the three year plan to phase in all NCLB testing requirements:

Through the 2004-2005 school year, a State must administer annual assessments in reading/language arts and mathematics at least once during grades 3 through 5; grades 6 through 9; and grades 10 through 12.

Beginning no later than the 2005-2006 school year, a State must administer annual assessments in reading/language arts and mathematics in each of grades 3 through 8 and at least once in grades 10 through 12.

Beginning no later than the 2007-2008 school year, a State must administer annual assessments in science at least once in grades 3 through 5; grades 6 through 9; and grades 10 through 12. (United States Department of Education, 2003)

NCLB requires that the results of these tests be reported to the public and used to assess the progress of schools toward the stated goals of high academic achievement and closure of the achievement gap. Schools that fail to demonstrate adequate progress face a series of sanctions that may include the re-development or closure of low performing schools. The nature of these high stakes tests and reporting requirements have increased the public scrutiny of schools and school leadership.

NCLB has made summative testing the performance measure of American schools. Because the data from these reports clearly delineate the scope of the achievement gap and other struggles related to education in America, NCLB facilitates the increased public scrutiny and political wrangling related to school reform efforts (Elmore, Abelman, & Fuhrman, 1996; Reeves, 2004). To meet the challenges of NCLB, and the public debate with which it is often associated, school superintendents must act as agents of change and school reform. Change requires time and stable leadership, both of which are becoming limited in public school systems.

Mobility of Educators

Another one of the major trends in education augmenting the complexity of school system leadership is the mobility of educational employees, especially educational leaders. According to a report issued by the Task Force on School District Leadership (2001), the average tenure of urban superintendents is less than three years. The average service of all superintendents is approximately six years (Glass, 2007). The high turnover rate of superintendents and other educators makes it difficult for schools to build and maintain effective relationships. McKnight, Cummings, and Chervany (1998, p. 474) note that, "In today's work environment, interacting with a new manager or with new coworkers is becoming quite commonplace". Mobility hinders trust building which is needed for the cultivation of relationships essential to effective leadership (McKnight, et al). This poses a demanding challenge for the contemporary school leader. As the instructional leader, the superintendent is expected to work with various competing constituencies to create and implement reform that will achieve success for all students. This work requires time and cooperation. Trust production is needed to mitigate the negative consequences generated by the lack of time and competition instead of cooperation. Tackling the problem of understanding how leaders create trust that allows for the establishment of relevant working relationships would seem to be an issue of high priority.

Statement of Problem

Effective school leadership depends on the ability of the superintendent to create and maintain relationships for the advancement of student achievement. Vital to a

productive relationship is the presence of trust (McKnight, et al., 1998). The presence of trust improves worker satisfaction, creates positive work cultures, encourages self management, facilitates group decision making, and aids leaders as they confront poor performance (Yukl, 2005; Nyberg, 1998). "Trust is central to legitimate democratic government, to the formation of public policy, and to its implementation" (Ruscio, 1996, p. 462). A high level of trust provides superintendents with the latitude needed to build consensus with complex and competing constituencies that mobilize resources for accomplishing educational goals. The importance of trust may best be understood by examining the effects of its absence.

One common reason employees display resistance to change and hinder transformational leadership is the lack of trust (Yukl, 2005). An absence of trust adds complexity to change initiatives, and the value of trust is manifested in its ability to "reduce complexity" (Luhmann, 1980). With the emphasis on reform, a resistance to change can cripple a superintendent's ability to lead. The unfortunate reality is that trust in leaders, especially those serving in the public sector, is on the decline (Uslaner, 2001; LaPorte & Metlay, 1996; Ruscio, 1996).

The more one understands the importance of trust, the more critical the problem facing educational leaders appears. Trust would seem to be on the decline in our society (Uslaner, 2001; LaPorte & Metlay, 1996; Ruscio, 1996) at a time when the added complexity of educational leadership has generated the need for high levels of trust. Eric Uslaner (2001) states:

> Trust in other people has fallen dramatically in the United States over the past four decades as Americans have become less engaged in their communities and as

compromise in our political life has become more and more elusive. The waning of faith in our fellow citizens is thus cause for great concern. (p. 569)

This same lack of trust Uslaner (2001) observed between citizens may also be found in the relationships between people and organizations (LaPorte & Metlay, 1996). From a high point during the 1960s, trust in governments and associated agencies (i.e. public education) has been on a steady decline (Ruscio, 1996). In the quote that follows, Covey (2006) offers additional evidence highlighting the decline of trust.

> Only 51% of employees have trust and confidence in senior management, only 36% of employees believe their leaders acts with honesty and integrity, and over the past twelve months, 76% of employees have observed illegal or unethical conduct on the job-conduct which, if exposed, would seriously violate the public trust. (p.11)

We are now in a time when trust is essential to effective leadership (Yukl, 2005; Luhmann, 1980; Greenleaf, 1977), when challenges facing school leaders are more demanding, and yet trust is on the decline. This poses a problem for those practicing, and those hoping to be, school leaders. To build understanding related to the production of trustworthy school leadership in complex educational environments this paper will examine what the literature says about the importance and significance of trust.

Purpose of Study

This study describes and analyzes the actions taken by superintendents that they perceive to build trust with diverse and competing constituencies. Specifically, this study examines: (a) the development of social capital for the production of trust, (b) the use of exchange for the development of trust, (c) how shared values and beliefs work to engender trust, and (d) the creation of structures that promote the development of trust.

Research Question

This study asked the following question. What are the superintendents' reflections and considerations regarding actions and behaviors they employ to produce trust with diverse and competing constituencies? To answer this question a qualitative design is utilized.

Methodology

To answer the research question, the study employed a qualitative method called a case study. A general discussion of qualitative research is followed by a more detailed description of case study. After establishing the methodological underpinnings, this study continued by focusing on the setting, participants, researcher, process, credibility, reliability, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and timeline of the research. This study adhered to the five basic tenets of qualitative research that follow which may be differentiated by the following essential characteristics:

1. Qualitative research is interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed.

2. The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis.

3. Qualitative research usually involves fieldwork.

4. It employs an inductive research strategy.

5. Qualitative research provides a study that is richly descriptive. (Merriam, 1998, p. 6-8)

Action. Action includes activities and behaviors that are either intentional or unintentional.

Diverse. Diverse includes race/ethnicity as labeled and defined by the Texas Education Agency's Academic Excellence Indicator report.

Competing constituencies. Competing constituencies captures the idea that schools operate with limited resources that must be allocated to meet the needs of the school system. Often the needs exceed the resources and constituency groups (often formed along racial, geographic, economic, and professional lines) use a number of strategies to compete for and secure their desired share of the allocations.

Social capital. Social capital is best defined by Bourdieu (1986) in the following:

> Social capital is the network of relationships is the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term, i.e., at transforming contingent relationships, such as those of neighborhood, the workplace, or even kinship, into relationships that are at once necessary and elective implying durable obligations subjectively felt or institutionally guaranteed. (p. 249)

Trust. Trust captures the idea that risk and vulnerability exist in relationships (whether they are interpersonal or organizational). There must be the presence of some factor or factors that mitigates the risk and limits the vulnerability to the point that people and organizations will act in other than purely self centered and Machiavellian ways.

Significance

The literature related to the study of trust has focused, primarily, on the production of trust between managers and workers, and politicians and voters. LaPorte

and Metlay (1996) elaborated by stating, "Surprisingly little attention has been paid to the relationship of trust between citizens and stakeholders, on the one hand, and administrative agencies or firms, on the other" (p. 342). The literature has paid little attention to the unique position of school superintendents and their attempts to build trust. This seems surprising given the highly political and managerial nature of the job coupled with the daunting environment present in contemporary education. This study provides valuable information to present and future superintendents and a deeper understanding of what actions and activities may produce trust with various and competing stakeholders.

Assumptions

This research was based on the assumption that participants would answer truthfully and completely any questions posed by the researcher. This required the researcher to develop a relationship of trust with the participants, as well as assurance of confidentiality, as discussed in Chapter 3. It was also assumed that the interview process would successfully inspire and glean participants' true perceptions.

Delimitations and Limitations

The following delimitations defined the scope of this study. Results relied entirely on qualitative data rather than any quantitative data. This study was limited to three superintendents of Texas public school districts.

Limitations of this study include those relevant to qualitative research and case study in particular. The findings of this case study only apply to the districts studied and are not generalizable to other districts. However, the findings can provide a basis for other research on similar districts. Additionally, the number of participants was limited.

This work is limited by the fact that it does not take into account the numerous contextual factors that effect trust production and makes no effort to control for the countless situational variables beyond the reach of the superintendent that influence trust generation. Yukl (2006) criticizes leadership research for its failure to investigate the scope of leadership activity and its tendency to offer narrowly tailored investigations. This work is one example of one such the narrow investigation. Finally, in spite of efforts to minimize differences between the researcher and participants, the researcher, who aspires to be a superintendent, might not have maintained total objectivity or received answers from participants that conveyed total accuracy. In other words, respondents might have formulated answers in the role of mentor or teacher instead of reporters of the actual condition.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the research focus and established the context for the study of actions that superintendents perceive to produce trust with diverse and competing constituencies. The chapter also provided the research questions and the general areas of research explored. The remaining chapters include a review of the related literature, the research design and methodology, the results of the research, and the discussion and recommendations for future study.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

Introduction

Meaningful investigation of literature regarding how leaders create trust details

the relational definition of leadership, the importance and dynamics of trust, and

establishes the need for such research. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) describe trust

as "fundamental to the functioning in our complex and interdependent society" and as

"pivotal" for the effective functioning of American schools (p. 548). Trust is vital

because of the current nature of school reform and governance. Site-based management

and shared decision-making requires trust from school administrators. Allowing parents

to participate in school processes means non-participative parents must trust others to

think of the interests of all students, not just their own. During a time when school leaders

encourage innovation and change, they must believe they have the support of the

community (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000). Not surprisingly, Tschannen-Moran and

Hoy continue by stating, "Trust is necessary for effective cooperation and

communication, the foundations for cohesive and productive relationships in

organizations." (p. 550) Again, Ruscio (1996) states: "trust is central to legitimate

democratic government, to the formation of public policy, and to its implementation"

(p.462). Undoubtedly, effective leadership requires trust, therefore; one may be alarmed

that research shows a trend of declining trust between leaders and followers. Ruscio

emphasized this by pointing out that, "opinion polls chart the steady decline in trust from

a high point in the early sixties to its depths today" (p. 461). One researcher even

suggested the lack of trust accounts for the 1.23 million American children who were home schooled in 1997 (Ray, 1997). In *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, Greenleaf (1977) contends that without trust leadership is not possible. A leader serving a diverse school system must find ways to create trust; to successfully do so he or she must be cognizant of various definitions, relevant concepts, productive behaviors, and other aspects of trust. The literature suggests that leaders, who increase social capital, manage rational exchanges, work for shared values and beliefs, and employ structures for the production of trust are more likely to engender trust from their constituencies.

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Trust

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Trust is an elusive term; therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that defining trust would guide and facilitate meaningful discourse. Trust must be understood as a social concept. It does not occur in isolation. It may be regarded then as a "mutual faithfulness" of people or groups (Lewis & Weigert, 1985). Trust occurs when people or groups believe that the recipient of trust is acting to secure the best interest of the one or ones investing trust. (Das & Teng, 1998) To some, trust is rooted in self-interest and is therefore a rational choice; thus, certain conditions generally promote the development of trust. This idea is more completely developed later, but trust requires the presence of risk and the expectancy that an alliance built on trust will moderate the risk (Bhattacharya, Devinney, & Pillutla, 1998). Based on the notions of self-interest and risk limitation, Bhattacharya, Devinney, and Pillutla (1998) offer the following definition of trust, "Trust is an expectancy of positive (or non-negative) outcomes that one can receive based on the

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expected action of another party in an interaction characterized by uncertainty" (p. 460).

Many other definitions of trust may be found, but the one offered by Bhattacharya, Devinney, and Pillutla incorporates the key ideas of risk, expectancy, and rational choice generally found throughout the literature. Defining trust has been attempted throughout the literature and in the following section we review the research to develop a greater understanding for the complexity of trust.

Research Regarding Trust

Much of the literature related to trust attempts to define the term, and adding other research findings augments the existent definitions. Combining the research and definitions regarding trust allows for the emergence of five existent themes about how trust is viewed. These themes are delineated as follows:

1. "trust exists in an uncertain and risky environment"

2. "trust reflects an aspect of predictability – that is an expectancy"

3. "any definition of trust must account for the strength and importance of trust"

4. "trust exists in an environment of mutuality – that is, it is situation and person specific"

5. "trust is good" (Bhattacharya, Devinney, & Pillutla, 1998)

These five key concepts occur throughout the literature and are generally carried forward in the present work. The most recent work analyzes various manifestations, utilities, and exchanges of trust among workers at all levels of the organization.

No definition of trust is complete without some discussion regarding the types of trust. Given that trust occurs among and between people it stands to reason that

individuals will grant and earn trust based on different criteria. These criteria of trust may be broken into three categories: (a) cognitive trust, (b) emotional trust, and (c) behavioral trust (Lewis & Weigert, 1985). Cognitive trust may be conceived of as a relationship based on "good rational reasons" (Lewis & Weigert). Emotional trust is motivated by an affective bond between actors in a trusting relationship. The strong feelings engender trust. Behavioral trust is the practical expression of this social exchange. Behavioral trust is engaging in risky activity as if there were no risk based on an expectancy that fellow related actors will behave in a way that eliminates or mitigates the risk. This form of trust requires the dutiful execution of anticipated behavior by those involved in a trust laden relationship. (Lewis & Weigert) The delineation of these trust types highlights its conceptualization as a form of social capital, an exchange relationship, the result of shared values, and encouraged by structural safeguards. Researchers across numerous academic fields have analyzed and interpreted the importance of trust and a brief sampling of frameworks employed for the study of this concept provides one a more complex understanding of trust.

Frameworks of Trust

Throughout the research several concepts frame the study of trust. In the broadest sense trust must be seen as a social reality; it does not occur in isolation. (Lewis & Weigert, 1985) Trust is also an aspect of social capital. It is developed and used as a commodity. (Spillane, Hallett, & Diamond, 2003) The capital concept relates neatly with the belief that trust is offered as a rational choice (Bhattacharya, Devinney, & Pillutla, 1998) and has been analyzed using exchange theory (Whitener, Brodt, Koorsgaard, &

Werner, 1998). Exchanges occur with greater ease when the trusting partners have shared values and beliefs (Ruscio, 1996). People may be hesitant to risk trust if they are highly vulnerable; in this case, organizations may institute structures that moderate the risks and facilitate trust production (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001). The literature related to trust production offers a conceptualization of trust rooted in ideas related to social capital, exchange, shared values and beliefs, and structural assurances. This synthesis of literature provides a framework for how leaders may think about trust production.

These frames come together to develop an understanding of how leaders and organizations depend on trust. Leaders must earn the "commodity" of trust by providing the "trustors" with some benefit or structural assurance they believe the leaders and/or organization is capable of providing but the trustor cannot provide alone. The belief in the leader's ability to reduce risks often depends on a sense of shared values. These frameworks center trust among the disciplines of political science (rational choice theory), economics (rational choice and exchange theories), and sociology (social capital). The convergence of these forces requires strong leaders to navigate organizations toward desired outcomes. The complexity of trust is not limited to its presence across several arenas of life; it also manifests itself in different forms throughout an organization. Organization of ideas related to the multiple aspects of trust is accomplished through the development of research models.

Social Capital

Trust is conceptualized in many ways, and one of the more common and interesting theories of trust relies on concepts of social capital. This perspective offers a

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unique definition of trust and suggests actions that produce trust. Important terms related to trust as a function of social capital are confidence and reliance (Svensson, 2006). Social capitalists view trust as a commodity one accrues by interacting and grouping with others as part of social, regional, and occupational networks (Coleman, 1990). These networks lend credibility among those involved, moderate risk, and reduce anxiety about risks. This process increases confidence and allows for the production of trust between and among members of a group. In what follows, the relevant literature's definitions and concepts of a social capital perspective regarding trust are summarized.

As defined by social capital theorists, trust "is based on norms of confidence and networks between members of a system, which is supposed to ameliorate social relations and reduce complexity, risks, and insecurity" (Svensson, 2006, p. 583). Another definition suggests "because those who are grouped together tend to share common goals and values, they tend to perceive each other in a positive light" (McKnight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998). These definitions come as a result of numerous studies. Several studies have found a relationship between the existence of trust and the degree to which people are involved in associations beyond family and work (e.g. Putnam, 1996; Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Uslaner, 1998; Shan, 1998; Stolle, 1998). Thus taken as a whole, a social capital frame contends that trust is produced as people interact as part of social networks. These interactions communicate norms and help group members evaluate other members' ability to adhere to such norms in a consistent manner (Coleman, 1990). As conformity to expected behavior increases, trust develops among members of certain groups. As Uslaner (2001) rather succinctly states, "people join groups and the camaraderie of group

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membership builds trust" (p. 570). Based on this concept, leaders may produce trust by

spending time in secondary associations such as churches, clubs, business organizations,

civic groups, etc. (Uslaner, 2001). The social capital conceptualization of trust offers

what may seem like simple guidance for producing trust, but embedded within this

concept are interesting challenges to trust production.

According to a social capital view of trust, one may produce trust by joining and

being associated with groups, but this rather simple act may prove problematic. Bourdieu

(1986) explains the potential utility of social capital in the following quote.

> In other words, the network of relationships is the product of investment
> strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at
> establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short
> or long term, i.e., at transforming contingent relationships, such as those of
> neighborhood, the workplace, or even kinship, into relationships that are at once
> necessary and elective implying durable obligations subjectively felt or
> institutionally guaranteed. (p. 249)

For example, some people are associated with groups as a by-product of their

occupation (Svensson, 2006). School superintendents are usually viewed as professionals

and civil servants (among other things). As professionals they are expected to have

acquired certain skills, knowledge, and behaviors known as "professionalism" (Svensson,

p. 585). This will allow superintendents to curry favor with other professionals such as

lawyers, doctors, and architects. As civil servants, superintendents are often viewed in the

same light as government officials. Many non-professionals and members of lower socio-

economic groups will automatically demonstrate higher levels of distrust for

professionals and civil servants (Svensson). The same holds true for group identification

based on geographic location. People who live in the same geographic area tend to view

each other as a group and trust each other more than they would trust someone from another region (Veenstra, 2002). This would seem a barrier to a leader who moved from one region to join an organization in another region. For this reason it is important for leaders to identify and understand the different ways in which they are "grouped" (McKnight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998, p. 481). One way to overcome the public perception that fairly or unfairly categorizes people is to join civic groups. This action may overcome any negative and unearned stigma, but changing held perceptions is always a daunting task.

Utilizing social capital to produce trust is a matter that requires deliberation. Joining volunteer groups is usually an informal and social affair (Uslaner, 2001). People join groups with friends, and they associate in places and are attracted to activities that align with their beliefs and place in society (i.e. socio-economic status, religious affiliation, regional activities, etc.) (Uslaner, 2006). For example, middle class business owners may join the Chamber of Commerce while wealthy elites may be members of yacht clubs. This suggests that one seeking to produce social capital that leads to trust with a diverse group of people will need a pro-active approach to group affiliation. This is no small task. Gaining an ally that would act as an envoy to groups with which one is not normally associated requires patience, skill, and courage. To create trust, this view insists one cultivate social capital among the people from which one seeks trust. Cultivating social capital can be accomplished. Dr. Nolan Estes, Professor Emeritus at the University of Texas, said that while he was superintendent of the Dallas Independent School District (DISD), he made it a practice to visit the churches primarily composed of

African Americans (Dr. Estes is Anglo). This was a strong act as it was during the time that DISD was undergoing a contentious integration process. He felt his church attendance let those members know he cared for all students. Actions such as Dr. Estes' show a need to develop social capital which will catalyze the trust production process.

This section has delineated the social capital perspective of trust. This view proposes that trust is formed as people associate in groups. It defines trust as the confidence people develop in one another as they interact in social groups. These groups may be defined based on occupation, secondary associations, geography, and other such linkages among people. The important aspect for leaders to remember is that if trust is to be developed among a diverse group, leaders must be deliberate about cultivating social capital by associating with organizations that are representative of all group members. The social capital view of trust seems to be a valuable perspective, and examining other perspectives should add to the concept of trust production.

Exchange

Trust is a multifaceted concept that to some might be difficult to define and understand; but researchers recognize its importance. To better understand, and in some cases attempt to measure trust, researchers rely on the exchange model; it is the most widely accepted and tenured of the trust conceptualizations (Davis, Schoorman, Mayer, & Tan, 2000). This conceptualization of trust applies economic theories of rational choice in an attempt to determine why people trust and what one may do to produce trust. Central to understanding this concept of trust are risks and vulnerability. Clearly stated

definitions of trust based on rational choice theories will inform one regarding trust production.

Even within the same perspective of trust based on rational choice, several definitions of trust are offered. Trust is viewed as "an expression of confidence between parties in an exchange of some kind – confidence that they will not be harmed or put at risk by the actions of the other party" (Jones & George, 1988, p. 531), or " confidence that no party to the exchange will exploit the other's vulnerability" (Sabel, 1993). Other exchange definitions contend that trust is,

> the willingness of a party (trustor) to be vulnerable to the actions of another party (trustee) based on the expectation that the trustee will perform an action important to the trustor, regardless of the trustor's ability to monitor or control the trustee (Davis, et al., 2000, p. 564).

A brief definition of trust that points directly to the economic theoretical roots of the exchange model posits that trust is the result of a cost benefit analysis where cost is vulnerability and benefit is some gain worth the risk of being vulnerable (McKnight, Cummings & Chervany, 1998). Sitkin and Roth (1983) state that trust is simply a risk one is willing to take based on the assurance that another party will act in a manner advantageous to the risk taker. Each definition contributes to the understanding of trust as an exchange process, but more investigation of these meanings will further clarify the topic.

Because of the popularity of the exchange model, many researchers use this concept of trust and define it in slightly different ways, but drawing on these numerous ideas one may find some essential components of the trust as an exchange model. Present within all these concepts is the idea of risk. Implicit is the idea that trust requires the

person offering trust to take some risk; in fact, it is a requirement. "Trust cannot exist in an environment of certainty; if it did, it would do so trivially" (Bhattacharya, Devinney, & Pillutla, 1998, p. 461). Another common concept that is similar to risk is vulnerability. Logic suggests that people will not risk, or that risk will have no influence, if the risk taker is not vulnerable to negative outcomes. Expectancy occurs in rational explanations of trust. Those who trust will only risk being vulnerable because they expect a positive outcome as a result of the exchange. Choice plays a critical role in these definitions of trust. Embedded is the idea that people may choose to trust or not to trust based on their options. This idea also captures the process of calculation. Sitkin and Roth (1983) described trust in cost/benefit terminology. Evaluating costs and benefits requires some calculation. Finally, the exchange concept of trust expects people to act as rational beings. Researchers who adopt the exchange concept of trust "assume that individuals are expected utility maximizers" (Bhattacharya, et al., 1998, p. 465). People are expected to work in ways that benefit them. This underpins the entire exchange theory and explains why some trust and the need to trust. These concepts and definitions point to clear implications regarding how leaders may produce trust.

An effective leader needs to develop as much trust as is reasonable, but from an exchange perspective it is important to remember that he or she cannot give everyone everything they want all the time. Developing trust without creating entanglements would be impossible to meet. Leaders must know their constituency to align interests. This alignment helps reduce feelings of vulnerability while offering a mutually beneficial reward (Ruscio, 1996). The benefits of alignment allow rational individuals to take the

risk of trusting. It is not likely all people will have interests that naturally align, so leaders

may need to take steps to create alignment of interests. Leaders may increase alignment

by providing incentives to trust (McKnight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998). Incentives

do not reduce vulnerability, but they can make the rewards enticing enough to make the

risk of trusting acceptable. Promoting one's ability may also increase alignment (Davis et

al., 2000). A leader who can convince followers that he or she possesses valued abilities

reduces vulnerability among those being led. Sharing knowledge, especially tacit

knowledge, generates alignment (Jones & George, 1998). Making information known

increases the likelihood that people will find a natural incentive to trust and decreases

vulnerability. All of these actions may create alignment and additional trust producing

strategies are implied by an exchange model of trust.

Understanding the definition and concepts related to the exchange concept of trust

suggests ways leaders may engender trust among followers. If a trusting relationship is to

meet the challenge of a cost benefit analysis, it is important for one to carefully deliberate

about the people with whom one initiates a partnership (Bhattacharya, et al, 1998). The

likelihood the partnership will successfully produce trust will be increased if the

participants reduce vulnerability related anxiety. This creates an atmosphere in which

benefits seem more desirable and costs less burdensome (Bhattacharya, et al.). One way

to reduce anxiety is to start with small agreements and allow trust to develop with

increasing complexity and gravity of trusting agreements (Jones & George, 1998).

Finally, one act that may do the most to reduce anxiety is fostering a reputation of

benevolence (Bhattacharya, et al.). Genuinely caring about the interest of others will greatly reduce feelings of anxiety and generate the confidence people need to risk trust.

Shared Values and Beliefs

There are numerous ways in which one may construct an understanding of trust and how it is produced. Leaders must cultivate trust if they are to build the relationships that allow for effective leadership. One key aspect to the process of engendering trust is recognizing the role of values and beliefs. A body of research exists claiming that people trust those with whom they have shared values and beliefs. As one researcher stated:

> the entire basis for my argument is that trust is one of those issues in the social sciences that is unavoidably intertwined with the values of people involved in a relationship. As soon as we ask why people are willing to trust, we are led directly into a discussion of values. (Ruscio, 1996, p. 473)

What follows are definitions developed from this line of research, discussion of key concepts embedded within this conceptualization of trust, and actions implied for the production of trust. Some researchers view trust as the outflow of relationships between people with shared values and beliefs. Trust may be defined as a confidence or faith in a person to meet an expectation based on the belief the trusted individual possesses certain desirable moral attributes (Veenstra, 2002). As one study of restaurant general managers plainly stated it, "employees in restaurants are more likely to trust their GM if they believe that the GM has integrity" (Davis, et al., 2000, p. 571). Svensson (2006) calling this form of trust "vertrauen" (p. 584), suggests that people will trust when they perceive honesty and observe conduct consistent with one that possesses other character qualities deemed valuable. Trust occurs when there is a belief that a person's character will lead them to approach all situations in an acceptable manner (Bigley & Pearce, 1998). Even in

situations that appear as though trust would be difficult to form, shared values can overcome those hindrances and generate trust. "Values can contribute to the generalized experience of trust and can even create a propensity to trust that surpasses specific situations and relationships" (Jones & George, 1998, p. 532). The influence of shared values and beliefs on the ability of leaders to generate trust appears substantial. Clearly, the relevant literature suggests that trust may be defined in terms of common desirable character attributes, and the elaboration of key concepts related to this conceptualization adds depth of understanding related to this frame.

To suggest the production of trust is facilitated by a sense of shared values between two parties in a relationship seems apparent, but the related concepts begin to develop this idea. A key idea to understanding the relationship between trust and shared values is that of involvement (Jones & George, 1998). The more members of an organization interact with leaders in active pursuit of some goal, the more values, morals, and conduct become known. These interactions serve to better communicate values and engender trust than mere words and platitudes (Jones & George, 1998). The interactions that occur early in a relationship are especially influenced by perceived values. As McKnight, et al. (1998) stated "in the initial relationship, trusting intention will be a function of benevolence belief, competence belief, honesty belief, and predictability belief" (p. 480). The predictability serves a major function in adding confidence while reducing risks. Another concept of relevance is past experience. Followers will judge the trustworthiness of a leader by evaluating how his or her previously observed actions have informed thoughts regarding the leader's beliefs and value system (Jones and George).

This evaluative process may have important results, as "perceptions of value incongruence can quickly lead to distrust" (Jones & George, p. 535). These definitions and concepts serve to suggest actions that a leader may wish to consider as he or she contemplates the production of trust.

The definitions and concepts related to trust as a function of shared values and beliefs serve more than as points for philosophical dialogue; they contain suggestions for trust building action. Leaders must be careful to evaluate the alignment of personal values and the values of the organization; they should seek what Uslaner (2001) calls "common values" (p. 574). This creates long term stability and facilitates positive initial interactions. The initial interactions are of particular importance, so leaders should use the transition to a new position to create interactions that develop a sense of shared beliefs (McKnight, et al., 1998). Once the newness of a relationship has waned, leaders may continue to develop trust with broader networks of people by working to cultivate a good reputation. A reputation can communicate values about a leader to people with whom the leader has had no personal interaction. Trust "is often based upon the attributes ascribed to them [leaders] by reputation or indirect sources, without personal experience from an interaction or exchange process" (Svensson, 2006, p. 584). This implies leaders must maintain value standards that are not only acceptable, but for the purposes of reputation preservation, beyond reproach. One key to establishing a desirable reputation that facilitates trust formation is consistency (Jones & George, 1998). As previously noted, one display that demonstrates undesirable values or beliefs may undermine the leader's best efforts to engender trust. Coupled with initial interactions and general

guidelines, superintendents may glean a practical process for developing a sense of shared values with followers. Allowing for high levels of involvement between leaders and their constituencies produces a context for communicating values and beliefs. Team work, accessibility, and sharing of information are just three ways that leaders may organize interactions that foster a perception of shared beliefs and values (Jones & George). The literature informs leaders about how certain actions may help create a perception of shared values and beliefs that will facilitate the development of positive relationships and leader effectiveness.

Structure for the Production of Trust

A straightforward approach to producing trust involves using structure. Understanding a definition of trust from the structural perspective requires no great leap of faith, but the concepts related to trust and organizational structure do present a special circumstance. Understanding how trust may be defined from a structural perspective and delving into the concepts related to trust and structure will inform leaders' decisions regarding how they may engender trust by managing the organizational structure.

Defining trust from the structural point of view incorporates ideas from the exchange frame and applies them to structural decisions. Shapiro (1987) stated "trust researchers maintain that trust reflects the security one feels about a situation based on the guarantees, safety nets, or other structures" (p. 642). Simply stated, trust occurs when the organizational roles, responsibilities, and policies are designed in a way that reduces risk. In this case the structure acts as a form of third party enforcement (Schepsle & Bonchek, 1997) allowing members of an organization to exhibit more trust than they

might without the assurance of an organizational construct. This view of trust production examines the importance of control mechanisms (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001). The greater the sense of vulnerability, the more control may help encourage trust, but in low vulnerability situations, high levels of control encourage suspicion and undermine trust (Dirks & Ferrin). From the structural perspective, engendering trust results as a function of structures mitigating risks. Although clear in its workings, the concept of structural based trust is more complex.

Analyzing trust from a structural perspective requires careful attention to the fact that organizations act as "arenas and agents" (Bolman & Deal, 2006). The dual nature of organizations implies that leaders must understand that there is a relationship within the organization and a relationship between the organization and other entities. Both relationships can be managed in a way that helps produce trust. Two approaches to trust may facilitate a better understanding of this process.

The literature suggests that trust shapes behaviors in manners that are both direct and indirect. The direct model is straightforward and posits a causal relationship between higher levels of trust and positive behavior. This idea is related to organizations as agents. If the organizational structure promotes trust then it is likely the firm and its leader will be perceived as trustworthy. The indirect power of trust rests in its ability to provide the conditions needed for the growth of trusting attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes. In this case, structure creates a safe arena in which people may take risks and demonstrate trust toward the leaders and within the organization (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001). In each case, the

decisions about rules, roles, and policies will either produce or undermine the amount of trust the organization's leader receives.

Using the structural view of trust and related concepts, one may glean structure-related actions a leader may take to produce trust; structures that promote transparency and access build trust. The more followers know about and avail themselves to certain processes, the more likely they are to trust the leader (LaPorte & Metlay, 1996). For example, when school superintendents allow numerous people from diverse groups to observe the budget creation process, less suspicion about use of resources develops and people are more likely to trust the actions of the leader. Again, if employees are aware of hiring practices, firms are less likely to be accused of "cronyism". Another key structural concept is accountability (LaPorte & Metlay). Policies that delineate oversight of key personnel and activities engender trust. Clear systems and channels of communication help develop trust (Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard, & Werner, 1998; Yukl, 2005; Das & Teng, 1998). Rules and regulations that enforce equity and egalitarianism allow trust to increase as followers see alignment between espoused beliefs and policy (Bhattacharya, et al., 1998). Although not an exhaustive list, these ideas broadly categorize actions the literature suggests a leader may take if he or she desires to build trust through organizational structure.

Organizational structure is a vast subject and the point here is not to unpackage the dearth of knowledge related to this topic, but to demonstrate a foundation in the literature for the idea that leaders may use structure to produce trust. Trust may be engendered (or compromised) by the rules, policies, and role assignments of the structure

the leader oversees. The organization acts as an agent producing trust with external followers and as an arena developing trust between employed followers of the leader. There are actions a leader may take to maximize the structure's ability to help in the creation of trust between the leader and followers.

Leadership

Organizations that desire cultures of trust must identify leaders that have the ability to build such an environment. Exploring definitions of leadership is appropriate for clarifying the link between leadership and trust. Several definitions of leadership have been offered by researchers throughout the years. Some examples follow.

1. Directing group activity toward a shared goal

2. Giving purpose to collective effort

3. Stepping outside the culture to start evolutionary change processes

4. Influencing, motivating, and enabling others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organization (Yukl, 2005)

For the purpose of establishing a strong connection between trust and leadership, the following definition offered by Yukl (2005) seems best. "Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective effort to accomplish shared objectives" (Yukl). This definition highlights the idea that leadership is a process that largely depends on the ability to form relationships. The amount of influence a leader may have is directly affected by the leader's ability for generating trust (Whitener, et al, 1998). Thus, an effective organizational leader must recognize and build trust.

Leaders and Trust

The ability of a leader to develop trust has been an important factor in leadership research. Relationship oriented behavior was the focus of a Michigan study that concluded that leaders showing trust and confidence in followers results in higher levels of worker satisfaction with employment tasks and the leader (Yukl, 2005). Additionally, supportive leaders receive more trust from followers (Yukl). In this way, trust flows between leaders and followers to create positive work cultures and efficient task accomplishment (Nyberg, 1998). Leaders who promote atmospheres of trust are viewed as empowering, given the latitude to treat people as individuals, and encourage self management (Yukl). Building trust facilitates group decision making (which improves decision quality) and aids leaders as they correct performance deficiencies (Yukl). One common reason employees display resistance to change and hinder transformational leadership is the lack of trust (Yukl). In short, there is no action or activity in which a leader may engage that trust or the lack thereof plays a significant role. The ability to serve and be seen as a leader with integrity largely depends on the leader's ability to generate trust throughout the organization (Yukl). Trust acts as the invisible hand that prompts action forward, or if it is missing, trust is the invisible blockade that brings all organizational movement to a halt. Because of the importance of trust, actions that promote trust need examination.

No leader may effectively lead without creating meaningful relationships, and the basis of strong relationships is trust. Leaders must proactively seek to produce trust among various constituencies. The literature clearly defines the different

conceptualizations of trust, highlights key ideas of each concept, and informs behaviors

and actions a leader may take to engender trust. Leaders may initiate actions based on the

theory that increasing social capital, analyzing and being aware of exchange

relationships, cultivating and seeking shared values, and organizing structures of

accountability and transparency will facilitate the production of trust. This research

formed with a multi-frame perspective regarding trust production informs leader behavior

and decision making for effective leadership practice. Figure 1 details a research based

conceptual framework that demonstrates how leaders produce trust. This framework,

based on the work of Lewis and Weigert (1985), provides clarity and direction to

research regarding actions superintendents believe produce trust with diverse and

competing stakeholders.

Social Capital: By associating themselves with groups and organizations, leaders are visible which helps produce trust.

Exchange Theory: Leaders may offer intangible benefits to those that offer them trust.

Activities of Leaders that Produce Trust

Shared Values: Stakeholders will trust leaders that share their values, beliefs, and attitudes

Structure: People are more likely to trust leaders that adhere to organizational standards, rules and policies that hold them accountable.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework: The activities of leaders that produce trust.

Summary

In the current educational climate, public school superintendents face increasing challenges. Continuous national and state educational accountability and reform movements have increased the need to understand trust producing actions of the superintendent. One avenue is to examine perceptions of superintendents related to actions that build trust. This study examines how superintendents perceive their own leadership activities as they relate to the creation of trust in diverse and competitive environments. Superintendents in diverse public school districts must analyze information, solve problems, motivate subordinates, direct group activities, inspire confidence, and so on while paying close attention to image management, relationship development, and team resource utilization. The employment and utilization of these functions impact the successful leadership of superintendents. To prepare for this study, a review of the literature was conducted. The review revealed a lack of research regarding the proactive steps taken by superintendents to engender trust from diverse and competing constituencies. Thus, this research helps fill that gap in the literature. This chapter has reviewed the multiple conceptualizations of trust, the need for trust for effective leadership, and the actions leaders may initiate to produce trust. In addition, a literature-based conceptual framework of trust has been offered.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology and study design used to collect and analyze data and interprets findings of perceptions male superintendents have related to their actions and behaviors that produce trust among diverse and competing constituencies. This case study collected data by visiting three superintendents who met research criteria and sorted the data based on start codes gleaned from the literature-supported conceptual framework. After categorizing the data and identifying emergent themes, the data will be interpreted, synthesized, and reported. The philosophical roots and specific procedures of the study are explained in the remainder of this chapter.

Research Question

This study initiates the description and analysis related to the research question by investigating issues related to: how, where, and with whom these superintendents spend their time; how resources are exchanged; how a sense of shared values and beliefs is cultivated; and the ways in which organizational structures are designed and managed. The research question guiding this study asked "What are the superintendents' reflections and considerations regarding actions and behaviors they perceive to build trust with diverse and competing constituencies?" To answer these research questions, the study employed a qualitative method called a case study.

A general discussion of qualitative research is followed by a more detailed description of case study. Having established the methodological underpinnings, this

chapter continues by focusing on the setting, participants, researcher, process, credibility, reliability, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and timeline of the research. Meaningful research requires a connection between the study method and its philosophical moorings and that connection is created in what follows.

Case Study Methodology

Qualitative research may be differentiated by the following essential characteristics:

1. Qualitative research is interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed.

2. The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis.

3. Qualitative research usually involves fieldwork.

4. It employs an inductive research strategy.

5. Qualitative research provides a study that is richly descriptive. (Merriam, 1998, p. 6-8)

In addition to these attributes, qualitative research is also typified by other common characteristics. The design of this form of research is flexible and responsive to the emerging conditions of the study. Qualitative samples are not usually random, but small and purposeful. These studies often call upon the researcher to spend considerable time in the "natural setting of the study" and engaged in "intense contact with participants" (Merriam, 1998, p. 8). These unique qualities apply to numerous types of qualitative research; therefore, clarity demands a specific description of the type of qualitative research undertaken.

Qualitative research appears as one of the more common methods utilized by researchers of the social sciences, and its proliferation has spawned numerous types of qualitative designs. Among the study designs commonly found in educational research is the case study (Merriam, 1998). The distinction of case study design may be understood as an inquiry process (Yin, 1994), unit of analysis (Stake, 1995), or the product of a study (Merriam). This design is interested in "interpretation rather than hypothesis testing" (Merriam) and is best suited for situations in which it is difficult to separate the influences on the object of study from their context (Yin). In addition to these characteristics, case studies have three more special features:

1. Particularistic-"case studies focus on a particular situation, event or program" (Merriam, 1998, p. 29)

2. Descriptive-the product "is a rich 'thick' description" (Merriam, 1998, p. 29)

3. Heuristic-the case "illuminates the reader's understanding" (Merriam, 1998, p. 30)

Case studies may be found unique not only by the process, but also by the nature and intent of their product.

Case study not only describes a research method, but it also indicates the type and nature of product. Case studies offer information that is "more concrete, more contextual, more developed by reader interpretation, and based more on reference populations" (Stake, 1981, p. 35-36). In addition, case studies may have one of numerous intentions. The present study would be called a "descriptive" (Merriam, 1998, p. 38) case study because it aims to provide an account of what actions superintendents take that they

perceive to produce trust. This differs from other case studies that may intend to develop concepts or challenge theory (interpretive case study), or studies that want to explain and judge (evaluative case study) (Merriam). This summary of qualitative methods in general and the case study design specifically provides the methodological foundation needed to guide the present research. The remainder of this chapter outlines the method of study based on this understanding of qualitative research philosophy and case study design.

Participants

Selection of participants for this study adheres to qualitative methodology in that it is purposeful and nonrandom (Patton, 1990) as to facilitate the case study design that focuses on a particular situation or event (Yin, 1994). The specifics related to the participating superintendents and purpose for their selection appears in what follows.

Superintendent A. Superintendent A is an African American male that has been serving a Texas independent school district of approximately 20,000 students for over ten years. Prior to serving in his current post, Superintendent A served as the school leader in various districts and during that time was named superintendent of the year for the state of Texas. He currently serves an economically and ethnically diverse community. The student demographics of his district are: African-American 64%, White 20%, Hispanic 13%, and 3% other groups (Academic Excellence Indicator System [AEIS], 2006). This district earned an "Academically Acceptable" accountability rating from TEA in 2006 (AEIS, 2006). Superintendent A serves a seven member board that is currently stable. Prior to Superintendent A's arrival, the school district he currently serves was among the lowest ranked in the state, but now the district is one of the highest performing (District

A website). The district of Superintendent A appears to be operating in a manner that serves students.

Superintendent B. Superintendent B is an Anglo male who has been serving an urban Texas school district of approximately 80,000 students for seven years. He has served in education for approximately forty years. Prior to taking his current post he worked as a leader of educational organizations at the state and national level. Superintendent B also works in an economically and ethnically diverse community. His district's demographics are: 57% Hispanic, 13% African-American, 27% White, and 3% other groups (District B website). The district earned an "Academically Acceptable" accountability rating from TEA in 2006 (AEIS, 2006). Superintendent B serves a nine member board and, like Superintendent A, they currently appear stable, but have a history marked by factionalism and race politics. The teachers are represented by powerful and vocal teacher associations. The media outlets in this area are similar to those of Superintendent A and the various constituency groups use the media to voice their opinions. This district has had periods of upheaval but is currently operating in a way that appears stable and effective.

Superintendent C. Superintendent C is a Hispanic male who has been serving a Texas school district of approximately 40,000 students for a little less than two years. He has served in education for over twenty eight years and has been a superintendent in other smaller districts. Superintendent C works with an ethnically diverse community and a school district that received an "Academically Acceptable" accountability rating from the TEA in 2006 (AEIS, 2006). The students of his district are composed of 15% Hispanic,

8% African-American, 70% White, and 2% other classifications (AEIS). As is typical of many suburban districts, this community is composed of the very wealthy and very poor. Superintendent C works with a seven member board that is currently stable but has a history of volatility marked by power plays and race politics. The teachers are represented by powerful and vocal teacher associations. The media outlets in this area are not exactly sympathetic to the schools and the various and competing constituency groups use the media to forward their agendas. This district has had periods of tremendous turmoil but is currently being managed in a way that appears stable and effective.

Setting

The setting of the study encompasses three male superintendents serving separate Texas public school districts that are located in different geographic regions of the state. The districts vary in size of population and geographic location within the Texas. One district is large-urban, one is small urban, and the other is a suburban school district. The study is bound by its focus on superintendents serving ethnically and economically diverse school districts.

Merriam (1998) suggests that conducting research in "the natural setting" (p. 8) of the observed phenomenon is not only acceptable, but appropriate. In addition, Yin (1994) describes the case study as best suited for situations in which it is difficult to separate the influences on the object of study from their context. Thus, in accordance with the qualitative method and case study design, the setting of this study occurred in a time and place convenient and comfortable to the participants. The natural setting of

superintendents is difficult to define because they work in numerous environments, but the best location for this research will be the office of the school superintendent. This location is natural and comfortable to the superintendent and made reference material and additional documents easily accessible. Appointments were set in accordance with the wishes of the superintendents and the researcher entered the field (the office of the superintendent) to collect data.

Sampling: Purposeful Selection

The sample of superintendents was chosen based on several criteria. The central aim of this study was to describe and analyze the actions of superintendents that they feel allow them to build trust with diverse and competing constituencies. This study applied a typical sample type that, although it seeks positive examples of trust production, is "not intensely unusual" (Patton, 1990, p. 173). To this end, the sample must meet the following parameters:

1. The superintendents must have developed some level of trust as is evidenced by a relationship with their board that facilitates relational stability.

2. The communities must be racially and economically diverse.

To identify participants who would meet these broad guidelines and provide useful data, the researcher employed a snowballing selection method by asking people considered informed and knowledgeable to suggest potential participants (Mertens, 2005). These criteria were important to the study for numerous reasons. School boards are supposed to represent the concerns of the communities they serve and, because they are elected positions, school boards are inherently political. Superintendents who have

relational stability with their boards must have constructed some level of trust upon which that relationship is established. The second criterion speaks to the challenge of establishing trust in diverse communities. One way to establish this ability is to select communities that are racially and economically diverse. A community that lacks diversity does not accurately reflect the reality of most Texas school districts. The final criterion establishes the idea that the community being served by the sampled superintendent is naturally trusting. It helps the strength of the study to negate the idea the community being served is composed of a naturally trusting group of people. In addition to meeting the criteria listed above, there were other justifications for this sample selection.

Although they all appeared to be managing effective school systems that serve diverse constituencies, they represent school systems with different situational contexts. In addition, these men come from different parts of the state and are in different stages of their careers. Although not a specific focus of this study, it is noteworthy that these superintendents themselves represent a diverse group except that they are all men. The selection adhered to the case study design which allows purposeful selection of samples to acquire knowledge about a process or phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). As Patton (1990) stated, "the logic of and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information rich cases for in depth study" (p. 169). The phenomenon studied in this research was trust production, thus the sample represents the creation of trust by leaders serving in contexts that are similar enough to offer relevant knowledge and different enough to provide knowledge from various context and settings.

Data Collection

Yin (2003) lists six sources of evidence appropriate to case studies. Of those six, this study used three forms of data collection: (a) interviews, (b) direct observation, (c) documents. Each of these data collection activities receives a brief explanation in what follows.

Interviews

The interviews occurred at a time and in a place convenient to the participants of the study. Each participant was interviewed twice. The first round of interviews took approximately one hour each and focused on the research questions specifically. Answers from these interviews, data from documents, and observations received preliminary analysis and served as the basis for the second set of interviews. The second interview sessions addressed concerns and clarified concepts that developed from the initial analysis.

Direct Observation

The direct observations followed an informal data collection method in which information was gathered through observations of the relationships and attitudes of people working with the participants. The data was recorded in a research journal during both site visits and is the basis of additional interview questions for the participant. In addition, informal observations included any data received from the trapping and symbols of the organization that either align with or refute the trust building practices advocated by the participant.

Documents

  Documents related to the research questions were collected during both site visits and analyzed. If documents could not be collected as originals, copies were requested. This data was especially helpful in analyzing the structural practices of the participant. Most organizational structures are chronicled. These data were analyzed and used to create clarifying questions for the second round of interviews.

  These three forms of data increase research validity (discussed in detail in another section of this chapter) and provide the information needed for thorough analysis. Before detailing the process of data collection, delineating the role of the researcher is appropriate.

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Data Analysis

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  The data from this study was analyzed by "relying on theoretical propositions" (Yin, 2003, p. 111). This was accomplished by using an analytic strategy adapted from techniques offered by Bodgan and Bilken (1982). The literature offered insight to help create codes to begin analysis and allowed for data to drive the generation of additional analysis structures.

Round One

  This analysis relied on start codes that are found in the theoretical framework developed from the literature (Bodgan & Bilken, 1982). These codes were applied to the data collected during the first round of interviews and site visits. The researcher used a manual coding technique that required sections of interview transcripts, documents, and field notes to be cut up and sorted into the start code categories. Throughout this aspect of

the coding process, the researcher made note of reflections in an analysis journal. The data was then sorted to locate and identify similarities, differences, themes, patterns, and other relevant relationships (Bodgan & Bilken, 1982). These relationships and findings were discussed with a peer or peers to encourage the researcher to confront personal values and guide additional thinking. These findings were the basis for the development of emergent codes. Along with confirmation of initial interpretations, the emergent codes served as part of the basis for the questions used in the second round of interviews and site visits.

Round Two

Using the hand coding technique from round one, the start and emergent codes were used to analyze and sort data from the second round of collection. Again, peer debriefing occurred. Analysis of the codes generated generalizations that recombined the data into discernable findings. The findings were examined against the backdrop of the theoretical framework, the literature, and peer input; and some conclusions about contributing to the understanding of trust production were developed (Bodgan & Bilken, 1982; Miles & Huberman, 1994). This data analysis process adhered to the analytic strategies typical of qualitative research. The data analysis of this study was rooted in the principles of qualitative research because it applied the following procedures:

1. Analysis occurs throughout the data collection.

2. The analysis is systematic and thorough but flexible.

3. Analysis provides accountability because it creates reflective process notes.

4. The process begins with the body of data and then moves to create smaller units of meaning.

5. The data process is inductive.

6. The analytic process builds and refines categories, relationships, and patterns.

7. The analytic codes are flexible and may be modified.

8. The data analysis relies on participant corroboration.

9. The results of the analysis are descriptive of ideas based on a synthesis of data interpretation. (Mertens, 2005)

Validity

Integral to the data collection and analysis process was working to implement a design that met the demands of validity. Efforts to ensure the validity of this study included prolonged engagement, persistent observation, peer debriefing, progressive subjectivity, member checks, triangulation of data (Mertens, 2005), and maintenance of a chain of evidence (Yin, 2003). A summary of how the research design met the standards of credibility follows.

Prolonged Engagement

This standard requires the researcher to remain in the field until he or she is confident that the data does not offer new, but repeated information (Mertens, 2005). This study accomplished this task by scheduling two rather lengthy visits focused on interviews and other data collection activities.

Persistent Observation

"The researcher should observe long enough to identify salient issues" (Mertens, 2005, p. 254). The process, including two lengthy site visits, accomplished the goal of persistent observation.

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing challenged the influence of the researcher's personal beliefs and guided the data analysis (Mertens, 2005). Peer debriefing appeared prior to and following the second round of site visits.

Progressive Subjectivity

Progressive subjectivity required the researcher to document developing "constructions" (Mertens, 2005, p. 255) and to facilitate the maintenance of a subjective approach to the study and related data. The analytic journal was used to record developing beliefs throughout the study. Contents of this journal were used during peer debriefing to help the researcher maintain an "open mind".

Member Checks

This process demanded the researcher verify participants' formulations and ideas discerned from the data (Mertens, 2005). The study design included member checks during the second round of participant interviews.

Triangulation of Data

Triangulation of data calls for the analysis of at least three forms of data to be collected and analyzed. The analysis should check for consistency of evidence across

different data sources (Mertens, 2005). The design of the present study utilized interviews, direct observation, and documents to accomplish triangulation.

Transferability

"In qualitative research, the burden of transferability is on the reader to determine the degree of similarity between the study site and the receiving context" (Mertens, 2005, p. 256). This quote defines transferability and suggests ways that research design meets the rigor of transferability. Since the burden to determine transferability rests with readers, it was required that the researcher provide a "thick description" (Mertens, 2005, p. 256) of the "time, place, context, and culture" (Mertens, p. 256) of the site to enable readers to make fully informed judgments. This study offered a "thick description" of the samples and their sites. The need for detail was satisfied as the study design was executed.

Dependability

Just as a sound study design accounts for the burden of validity, it is incumbent on the researcher to use techniques that increase dependability. In qualitative research, dependability is achieved by tracking and making publicly available the record of change during the study (Mertens, 2005). This may be accomplished by establishing a process that outlines each step of the study (Yin, 2003). In so doing, changes in researcher beliefs, organizational codes, and other dynamics of the study may be tallied and examined in such a way to "attest to the quality and appropriateness of the inquiry process" (Mertens, p. 257).

Confirmability

Qualitative researchers define confirmability to mean "the data and their interpretation are not figments of the researcher's imagination" (Mertens, 2005, p. 257). Yin (2003) suggested that researchers accomplish confirmability with a chain of evidence. This calls for data to be collected, maintained, and referenced in a way that shows a clear line of connection between data and conclusions (Yin). The overall design of the study, field journal, analytic journal, and preservation of documents (i.e. field documents, transcripts, cut up and coded data, etc.) provides a chain of evidence that increases confirmability.

Limitations of the Study

The Participants

Limitations of this study included those typical of qualitative research and case studies. The case study findings apply only to the three Texas public school district superintendents studied and are not generalizable to other leaders or other districts. The findings can, however, provide a basis for other research related to trust production. Additionally, the number of participants was limited and the duration of the study was only nine months.

The Researcher

This qualitative study was also limited by researcher bias, because the researcher is an aspiring superintendent. Although concerted efforts were made to limit researcher bias, it might have caused some influence on data collection and interpretation.

Additionally, being an aspiring superintendent and conducting a study involving practicing superintendents, the researcher might have obtained biased responses from participants. The researcher attempted to maintain receptivity and availability to the input provided by those interviewed and made an effort to report the results of the study through the words of those interviewed.

A distinction of qualitative methods is that the researcher is the primary data collection tool; therefore, it is incumbent upon the researcher to detail "values, assumptions, beliefs, or biases" (Mertens, 2005, p. 247) and monitor how those beliefs advance throughout the study. What follows is a summary of the values and beliefs of this study's researcher.

The researcher conducting this case study has been an educator for eleven years. During that time, he served as a middle and high school coach and teacher and high school assistant principal. He worked as a curriculum coordinator while pursuing a doctorate in educational administration from the University of Texas. His beliefs about superintendency, leadership, and the importance of trust have been significantly shaped by work experience and knowledge gleaned from the University of Texas.

Using start codes developed from the literature, the researcher followed a line of inquiry that guided the participants to unveil their thinking regarding trust building actions that are related to developing social capital, managing exchanges, creating a sense of shared values and beliefs, and implementing organizational structures. Because the researcher had limited relationships with the participants of this study (and indeed may aspire to work for them in the future), he assumed the role that may best be described as

colleague. The data from the study and its analysis is organized to provide the insight the researcher seeks.

Summary

This chapter described the methodology used to study the perceptions that superintendents have related to actions that produce trust in diverse and competitive communities. A qualitative, case study research approach was used to provide the researcher with rich, in-depth, relevant data. The researcher conducted multiple interviews of three superintendents from diverse public school districts in Texas. Additional data was gathered through observations, documents, and a reflective journal. Data analysis was guided by a literature supported analytic framework.

This chapter also described the methods of data collection, purposeful sampling and criteria for participants, and efforts to maximize trustworthiness of the study. Many of the challenges anticipated throughout the course of this study were met, and the findings may prove informative to current and future superintendents working in diverse school districts.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze the actions taken by superintendents that they perceive to build trust with diverse and competing constituencies. Specifically, this study examined: (a) the development of social capital for the production of trust, (b) the use of exchange for the development of trust, (c) how shared values and beliefs work to engender trust, and (d) the creation of structures that promote the development of trust.

The data collected described the actions of three superintendents who have established at least some degree of trust while leading diverse and competing constituencies. By engaging in trust building activities, they have engendered the trust required to lead diverse school districts such that there has been increased student performance and institutional stability. This is an account of actions taken, both intentional and unintentional, by three trusted superintendents that have resulted in the creation of high levels of trust from complex educational stakeholders. This study contributes to the literature about trust production and can assist school system administrators in understanding the critical role of trust production and suggesting specific trust producing activities and behaviors as they lead diverse groups of educational stakeholders in the pursuit of academic successes.

This chapter reviews the research questions, describes the site and sample, and presents the results by themes gleaned from the data. The results are presented in terms of

the data themes: (a) social capital, (b) utilitarian exchanges, (c) shared values and beliefs, and (d) structures that support trust. The results are also broken into sub-themes that emerged from a comparison of the interviews.

Research Question

This research asked what are the superintendents' reflections and considerations regarding actions and behaviors employed to produce trust with diverse and competing constituencies. The study initiated the development of understanding as it relates to the research question by investigating issues related to: (a) how, where, and with whom these superintendents spend their time, (b) how resources are exchanged, (c) how a sense of shared values and beliefs is cultivated, (d) and the ways in which organizational structures are designed and managed.

Research Site and Sample

Purposeful Selection

The sample of superintendents was chosen based on the following criteria:

1. The superintendents must have developed some level of trust as is evidenced by a relationship with their board that facilitates relational stability.

2. The communities must be racially and economically diverse.

These criteria highlight the factors that would indicate the ability of the participants to build trust with school personnel and a diverse community. The school board is the most powerful connection point between the community and the superintendent, and racial and economic diversity represent two of the more common factors that create tension within

school systems. This study utilizes a sample type that seeks positive examples of trust production without attempting to identify and study exemplars (Patton, 1990).

The researcher used a snowballing selection method. Knowledgeable individuals with field-based experience and university expertise were asked to offer the names of individuals that meet the broad guidelines set by the selection criteria and would provide good data. These participants appear to have generated trusting relationships with diverse populations, but the situational context of each district differs. In addition, the participants represent leaders in different stages of their career, different ages, and working in different parts of the state. The participants come from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and it is worth noting that they are all men.

The selection adheres to the case study design, which allows purposeful selection of samples in order to acquire knowledge about a process or phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). As Patton (1990) stated "the logic of and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information rich cases for in depth study" (p. 169).The phenomenon studied in this research was trust production, thus the sample represents the creation of trust by leaders serving in context that are similar enough to offer relevant knowledge and different enough to provide knowledge from various context and settings.

Participants Profile

Selection of participants for this study adhered to qualitative methodology in that it was purposeful and nonrandom (Patton, 1990) as to facilitate the case study design which focuses on a particular situation or event (Yin, 1994). The specifics related to the participating superintendents and purpose for their selection appears in what follows.

Superintendent A. Superintendent A serves an economically and racially diverse community. He had been a superintendent in one district prior to joining the district he has currently served for twelve years. In his previous district he earned the Superintendent of the Year for that region, and he was one of three finalists for the award of Superintendent of the Year in the state of Texas. When He came to District A, the district was one of the lowest performing districts in the state, but is now ranked among the top school districts in Texas for improving student performance. Shortly after Superintendent A arrived in his current district he began the design of a new Student Assignment Plan, one that ended years of turmoil over integration. The entire community accepted the plan and it was endorsed by the local Chamber of Commerce, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), as well as many other organizations. Enrollment is stable and both staff and student attendance rates have improved drastically; discipline problems have steadily declined and morale has improved throughout the district and community, as seen by a reduction of complaints by staff and patrons. He is a member of numerous professional and civic organizations and has received numerous honors including Educator of the Month for the Texas School Business Magazine. Superintendent A was also cited by the Texas Legislature for outstanding leadership as a superintendent, and the National Association of Secondary School Principals recognized him as one of the nation's top administrators. In 1998, He was honored as one of 11 Exemplary Texas Superintendents by the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Texas-Austin. This group of

superintendents were recognized because of their outstanding success in increasing student achievement as found by the University of Texas Dana Center study. (District A website, 2008).

This participant currently serves an economically and ethnically diverse community. His student demographics are: African-American 64%, White 20%, Hispanic 13%, and 3% other groups (TEA, 2006). This district earned an "Academically Acceptable" accountability rating from TEA in 2006 (TEA, 2006). At the time of this study Superintendent A was serving a seven member board that appeared stable. Prior to Superintendent A's arrival, the school district he currently serves was among the lowest ranked in the state, but now the district is one of the highest performing (District A website). The district of Superintendent A appears to be operating in a manner that serves students.

Superintendent B. Superintendent B also serves an economically and racially diverse community. During his tenure as an educator, Superintendent B has been as educational leader at various levels including time spent with his current district. Superintendent B inherited a district in disarray when he started in the late 1990's. The district was facing criminal indictments on charges related to accountability data. Since then, enrollment and performance ratings have continued to increase, and the district's financial state is healthy. This superintendent's leadership has brought his district positive recognition. He has earned praise from the Center on Education Policy in Washington, and the students of his district generally outperform their peers in other urban cities on national assessments (Archived Record, 20). District B's demographics are 57%

Hispanic, 13% African American, 27% White, and 3% other groups, according to the district's Web site. The district earned an Academically Acceptable accountability rating from TEA in 2006.

   Superintendent C. Superintendent C is a Hispanic male that has served an economically and racially diverse suburban school district for the last three years. Prior to returning to his current district, Superintendent C served as the system leader in two other Texas school districts. He was a district level leader in District C prior to accepting his first superintendency. This superintendent led his first district to a Recognized TEA accountability rating four years in a row, and twenty of twenty-one schools were designated as Recognized. In his first year as District C's superintendent, he and the Board of Trustees presented an approximately 270 million dollar bond package that voters approved. During his short time at District C, this superintendent has led the district to an increase in student performance based on 2007 Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) results. He has received a University of Texas Center for Performance Excellence award and the Policymaker of the Year award from The Central Texas Afterschool Network. The students in District C are composed of 15% Hispanic, 8% African-American, 70% White, and 2% other classifications (TEA, 2006). As is typical of many suburban districts, this community is currently composed of the very wealthy and very poor. Superintendent C works with a seven member board that appeared stable at the time of this study, but has a history of volatility marked by power plays and race politics. The teachers are represented by powerful and vocal teacher associations. The media outlets in this area are not exactly sympathetic to the schools and

the various and competing constituency groups use the media to forward their agendas. This district has had periods of tremendous turmoil, but is currently being managed in a way that appears stable and effective.

The experiences and perspectives of these superintendents provided rich data from which to draw themes that summarize the trust creating actions and behaviors of three superintendents leading in Texas Independent School Districts.

Data Description and Analysis

This study purposed to describe and analyze the actions and behaviors of three superintendents that they perceive to build trust with diverse and competing constituencies. The Lewis and Weigert (1985) analytical framework suggests trust building actions and behaviors may be grouped into four broad categories: (a) actions designed to build social capital, (b) use of exchanges to create a basis for trust, (c) developing a sense of shared value and beliefs, and (d) creating and implementing structures that support high trust environments. These four categories informed the research questions posed to the participating superintendents and was used to organize the initial reporting of data and analysis.

Presentation of Social Capital Data

The participants of this study had much to say about the importance of building social capital and the development of trust. They identified three broad groups of people with whom they network: (a) the district's board of trustees [the board], (b) the district's personnel, (c) and the community. According to the data, each set of relationships contribute to the creation of trust in different ways, and this reality informs the actions

and behaviors of the participants. The idea about which there was the most adamant and uniform agreement was that there is no group with whom positive association is more important that the school board.

The school district's board of trustees. The data suggests that the most influential action related to the generation of trust is the creation of a positive relationship with the board. The following lines spoken by Superintendent A provided the best representation of this idea.

> I think the number one thing – and I think superintendents drop the ball here – if you are going to be a superintendent, and this is one of the things I tell them time and time again – and I don't care what the text books say – but you need to spend time with your board. They were elected by the community, and you know, like we have a diverse community – they have to trust you – they have to have confidence in you – they know the community and the people – you have to put them in a situation where they can believe in you and understand what you are telling them is factual – more so than any other person or whatever. (10/1/2007-3)

Superintendent B, when asked to elaborate about the relationship with the board said,

> The board will be a given, and you better make sure you have a board that you will be able to develop a relationship with – when you're young, you have to take it as a given and see if you can do it. When you get older, like I am, you look and see if you have a board that will match your background. (10/2/2007-14)

Superintendent C noted at several points his desire to create a culture of "teamwork" with his board. Thus, the participants agreed that a positive relationship with the board is essential for the creation of broad based trust. The data continues by demonstrating how this association provides these superintendents with higher levels of trust.

The participants contended that a strong relationship with the board is vital for trust production. This contention led to requests for an explanation of how a good

relationship with the board provides the superintendent with increased trust. The following answer from Superintendent A represents the idea that the board has the power to add credibility to the superintendent.

> You must gain the school board's trust, and they have the responsibility because they were elected by people, that somebody trusted them to get elected, and if they say I am all right, then chances are that people out there are going to believe that I am all right. (10/1/2007-3)

By infusing the superintendent with credibility, the board increases the level of trust among the district's stakeholders.

In addition to credibility, the board acts as a bridge connecting the community and the superintendent. In this capacity they serve as ambassadors of the superintendent's message. As Superintendent C stated, "They [the board] have the responsibility to go out and tell their constituents this is why we are doing this, and this is why we have enacted that" (10/4/2007-30). In their role as ambassadors, the board can also defend the superintendent and protect his image. Superintendent A highlighted this function in these lines.

> Whatever they [the media] can create they're going to. They're going to jump on the band wagon, whether it's good or not, about why I should do differently. So as a result, working and having a relationship with the board, they were strong enough to see the truth and defend me. (10/1/2007-12)

Superintendent B noted that the value of an effective board relationship is that "they can help you get through some tough times" (10/2/2007-20). The data demonstrates that the board can defend the superintendent in a manner that increases trust levels. The bridging activity also allows the superintendent to connect with the concerns of the community. Superintendent B elaborated this with the following quote.

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You get from them [the board] a better direction for the district than if it came from one single superintendent who sees things from one perspective – from those different [board] members you get a better feel for the community, what it will tolerate, and I do think what we do here, because of that feeling, is aligned and trusted by people. (10/2/2007-12)

Superintendent A noted the negative effects of the connection between the board and the community when he said "The worse thing you can do is to get the board into a major fall out or break up, and then your community falls apart – your community breaks up" (10/1/2007-5). The ability of the board to connect the community with the superintendent allows for increased understanding resulting in higher levels of trust.

According to these participants, trust increases when there is stability on the board. The longer board members serve, the deeper a trusting relationship can become. Moreover, the re-election of a board member signals the community's approval for the board member and encourages the members to trust the superintendent whose actions resulted in their re-election. This quote from Superintendent A best summarizes the participants' ideas.

We have been a recognized district, because they [the board] have trusted me, they have trust– not absolute trust – but for the most part trust. Because of that they have been stable – the board has not switched and changed. M., L., H., S. was here when I started – so that was four board members that were here when I got here. Rev. W. got on the board one year after I got here. R. has been on about eight years, and B., she is the only new one – she has been there about two years. There is stability on the board – that's not to say that it's perfect and we don't get criticized – but the fact of the matter is that when it comes to Election Day, the community keeps them there. That makes a statement about the trust and confidence the community has in them and that leads them to trust me. (10/1/2007-4)

These data suggest that the participants believe no single association has more power to increase the trust stakeholders' vest in the superintendent than his relationship

with the board. However vital the role of the board, there are other group relationships these participants cite as important to the generation of trust.

District personnel. According to these data, the importance of the relationship with the board for the generation of trust cannot be overestimated, but the ability to relate with school district personnel also has substantive influence on these superintendents' creation of trust. This quote from Superintendent C best exemplifies the notion.

> Internally, [relationships] within the district, that is important as well. Usually, when they [the board] are courting you or interviewing, they will take you around to visit some schools. Once you are on the job, I always felt it was important for the superintendent to go out – be at PTA meetings, visit the school, shake the teachers' hands, and continue that through your tenure as superintendent. (10/4/2007-28)

These participants have each noted how they spend time on campuses and with administrators to make sure they maintain the relationships within the district. Superintendent A mentioned that he visits campuses "almost weekly" in order to "keep in contact with them [campus personnel]" (10/1/2007-10). In addition, the superintendents have regularly scheduled meetings with campus level personnel. Superintendent B said "I meet with principals on a regular basis, to know them and their people – the issues that concern them" (10/2/2007-25). Just as was the case with the board, the participants were asked to explain how the relational investment with campus personnel led to increased trust levels. The data from their answers detail that networking within the district leads to increased trust of the superintendent.

One way the development of social capital at the campus level provides the superintendent with increased trust levels is through the development of intermediaries.

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To generate trust, superintendents need to interface with numerous people on a regular basis. The challenge of meeting with people may be met with the use of intermediaries who represent the superintendent and his ideas. Superintendent B best explained this idea in the following lines.

> When I look at the networks of interest, you know, I think about a diagram, people overlapping, and how I can I reach the teacher down here. The only way to do it is through intermediaries – as you begin to build those intermediaries, whether it is an instructional specialist at the district, who connects with the principal, who then connects with the teacher, or you know, it is hard for me to connect, but I do feel that I rely on these intermediaries when building trust. (10/2/2007-13)

District level intermediaries also help the superintendent reach community members. Superintendent B continued with this line of thought.

> That's why M. W. – that guy knows this city. He's Jewish – my first wife was Jewish; I studied Hebrew – I studied to be a Priest – it's funny, M. had helped me to connect to the community, but Dr. W., a wonderful African-American professional, she goes to black churches but her role is in all the churches. She is not an activist, so you can't ask her to do something that is outside her venue. P. C. just joined me – he knows how to connect to the community as well. (10/2/2007-17)

The other superintendents noted the use of district level people to help school employees "stay on message" and reach the community "because they live in the places and spend time with the people we serve" (Superintendent C, 10/4/2007-29). In their role as intermediaries, the district level people disseminate more accurate information about the superintendent and his initiatives, and, in addition, their approval of the superintendent fosters trust among people who do not have the access to the superintendent these intermediaries do. The result is the development of high levels of trust between the superintendent and stakeholders. The trust building utility of district

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level networking encompasses more than the use of intermediaries, it also leverages the extension of organizational trust to the superintendent.

These participants recognize that the degree of trust they receive as individuals is influenced by the district's reputation. To this end, the superintendents spend time cultivating relationships with school personnel for the purpose of setting expectations. Superintendent A noted the time he spends working to ensure the district is above reproach.

> I spend a lot of time with school people being sure that the school district is running and functioning like it should, and they [the media] can't attack that – they can attack some of the superficial things about "well, this teacher did that – well, I can't control 3000 employees so you are going to have teachers do things and they will make a big to do about. I will do the best I possibly can…Now you concentrate more solidness of the school system and those kinds of things, and let them speak for themselves. (10/1/2007-7)

He continued by saying, "You spend a lot of time with teachers about being above board, being sure that they are familiar with the policies, not having any problems so that it can't be said 'the schools are bad places for kids' – or whatever" (10/1/2007-1). Superintendent C noted his time spent relating to people at the district level and encouraging ethical behavior.

> You have to invest in people and be sure that you're operating with honor, integrity… you know that the bids are handled correctly and making sure the information is out there – so everyone knows that whatever your doing, it is above board. (10/2/2007-28)

These quotes highlight actions meant to ensure trustworthy school districts. When the district is perceived as trustworthy, these participants receive higher levels of individual trust.

The data indicates one additional way in which relationship building helps the participating superintendents grow trust. A significant investment of time in people allows for relationships to develop that aid stability. Over time, people grow together and unhealthy organizational turnover decreases. This allows for the development of deeper, more trusting relationships. Superintendent B offered words that best explain this concept.

> My team, amazingly – L. F., D. W., myself, M. W.-we've all been here seven years together. That's amazing, you know. Then the next level down, I probably have half of those people be here for 7 years. That's unusual – so there must be some social glue working. (10/2/2007-17)

The stability described above allows Superintendent B more time to deepen trust instead of constantly attempting to create it with a caravan of new employees.

The participating superintendents noted the need to form meaningful relationships with school personnel if one plans to be trusted. These relationships help the participants build a wide network of trust and the relationships formed with the community expand that trust-filled network.

The community. The participants of this study noted the importance of finding ways to establish relationships with the community. Superintendent A described his beliefs about the importance of community interactions when he said, "I think they [community interactions] are very important – I did a lot of that when I first came here….I think those are important for you when you first join a district" (10/1/2007-2). Superintendent B agreed, "You do have to do a lot of those visitations and stuff, and I probably should do more" (10/2/2007-17). Finally, Participant C placed his emphasis on creating community relationships with these thoughts.

Probably, when I first started I didn't realize that relationship was very important, not only to the individual but to the work of the district. As I've gone from one superintendency to the next, I've gotten the sense that this is very important. When you first get selected, one of the things I like to do up front – probably in the first six months – is to get to know the community very well. (10/4/2007-27)

The participants agreed that connecting to the community should be a high priority. Relating to an entire community requires numerous access points and strategies. Unlike district personnel and the board, there is limited compulsion for the community to interface with the superintendent, so in forming these relationships, participating superintendents use a more proactive approach toward making these connections. They utilize a variety of strategies to interact with people. Superintendent B uses "Chats with Superintendent B-you know, about six to eight business people meet with me for breakfast once a month" (10/2/2007-22). Superintendent C employs a similar, but more directed method described with these words.

I make it a point of making sure that I work with the staff of that district that I'm coming to, and from them get a listing of folks that are community leaders, parent leaders, and business leaders. Then in the first six months, I get together with my secretary; make an appointment with these individuals. Sometimes, those meetings will be facilitated by the organizations that are here – Chamber of Commerce – you get invited to meet. (10/4/2007-28)

Superintendent A described one of his strategies for meeting the community when he said "I went to all the Chambers, civic meetings, Kiwanis, all kinds of meetings at that particular point. Every time someone was meeting, neighborhood associations, man I was meet'ned out" (10/1/2007-2). In addition, these participants use school board recognitions to support relationship building with the community. School board meeting agendas from the participants show special recognition and attention given to community groups and members (archived records 1-8). These acts of appreciation and praise create

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an atmosphere for the creation of positive relationships. Using small group meetings with business leaders, individual appointments with influential community members, or attendance at organizational gatherings, participants of this study spend considerable energy in the pursuit of forming a relationship with the community. The data describes how these superintendents believe these actions help build trust.

Just as was observed with the board and district personnel, having relationships with the community offers the superintendent spokespeople. No one states this idea better than Superintendent A when he said the following.

> So you constantly are trying to be sure that you have community groups out there that you are trying to speak to so they can spread your story, versus the story that the media tries to put a spin on, sometime for sensationalism. (10/1/2007-1)

The following ideas of Superintendent B mirror those of Superintendent A.

> Every time I go there [a meeting with business people], I say 'what am I going to say to these people?' I kind of give this same scenario because they need 101 Superintendent B, and that little activity pays dividends, because these people go back to their companies, and say 'I met this guy today. He is so dynamic –he's crazy – he's so driven, but I kind of like what I heard'. It's only an hour – but I tell you, you take twelve of those a year, or you get about seventy people you meet, seventy different organizations – let me tell you, it pays off. (10/2/2007-22)

The relationships formed allow people to hear from the superintendent and recount his message; this activity creates trust by reducing confusion, granting access, and supporting unity. The superintendents engage in these activities to spur a sense of connection.

Personally engaging the community allows the superintendent to create the perception (if not the reality) of a personal connection to the community. This connection deals mainly with these superintendents allowing themselves to be known and know the community. Superintendent A stated as well with this quote:

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But when you first get there, they [the community] need to see you, know who you are, and know something about you, and hear from the horse's mouth who you are. I think that it is credible to visit many churches and everything else. So I think those things are crucial. Know the stakeholders – know who they are, find out their wants and desires, and those kinds of things. (10/1/2007-3)

Superintendent B referred to "public-ness" as a tool for creating connection.

Some of them [the relationships] have to be formal, organized. I'm on the Symphony Board, the Assistance League, Boys and Girls Clubs, and my wife does a bunch. I came here – my wife and I love it – it keeps you connected. She is on the Girl Scouts, assistance leagues, – you know, it's a way to stay connected. The beginning of that public-ness – that's what I think established my commitment – then when I had to make some hard decisions, people could see my metal in public. (10/2/2007-16)

This is a topic about which the participants showed interesting uniformity as is displayed

in this statement by Superintendent C.

I think it is important for people to know the individual – to know the superintendent on a personal basis. I think it is important to create those relationships between – like the superintendent and the mayor – the superintendent and the city manager – the superintendent and some of the key community leaders. They know you, and feel comfortable in working with you, because we are going to need each other as time goes on. (10/4/2007-28)

These data are clear about the personal connection these superintendents attempt to forge,

and the connection promotes feelings of familiarity which, in turn, promote trust.

Another concept relevant to the community connection regards teamwork. If the

superintendent has a challenge, his relationship with the community allows him to call on

their resources to help solve problems. Superintendent C made this point with the

following anecdote.

We met with the police chief and some of the officers – a captain and one of the other officers, about nine months ago. The issue was that we were seeing a jump in juvenile crime – we are seeing a jump of gang involvement in our community. They invited me, the mayor, and it was kind of alarming. They were saying we have problems in our community, and you have the problem in your schools.

> Well – we got to know each other – the mayor and I – enough to say 'ok it's not your fault and it's not his fault'. It's about addressing the issues together, so we then said we were both committed to addressing those things, and we've been working over the last nine months to implement some specific programming for kids. (10/4/2007-28)

The relationship with community leaders allowed the superintendent to be part of marshalling resources in response to a specific need. Working together, knowing one another, and seeing results fosters the generation of trust.

The data suggests that these school leaders actively form meaningful relationships with various groups of people, both within and beyond the school districts. In addition, the participants understand that these relationships foster the generation of trust. This activity aligns with the social capital conceptualization of trust formation. Other views of trust suggest it may be generated through the strategic use of exchange processes between people or groups involved in a relationship.

Analysis of Social Capital Data

The data largely validates the research related trust production as a result of social capital development. The participants of this study spoke most often about developing relationships with their school board, the district personnel, and the community. Focusing on these relationships aligns with much of the social capital literature.

The superintendents interviewed seemed to agree that trust may increase with the development of social capital. The literature suggests that as leaders form group associations, members of that group and those that respect the group gain confidence in the leader (Svensson, 2006). This may be clearly observed in the data collected as part of this study. The superintendents noted the importance of knowing and having strong

relationships with different groups in their district. These relationships allow them to gain

acceptance and confidence from the individuals and groups, which allow the foundation

of trust to be established. The leader's relationship with the school board, community,

and district personnel serves as a good example of how association aids trust production.

The board is not only the governing body of the district, but they also represent

the will of the community. The board's trust in the superintendent increases the

community's confidence in his leadership. The idea that trust may be conferred based

upon group association supports Bourdieu's (1986) ideas regarding a network of

associations that may support one another. Thus, the trust production becomes reciprocal

in nature. As the superintendents receive more trust from the board, he may leverage that

"investment" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249) to gain more trust from the community. And, as

the community develops increasing support for the superintendent, the board's belief in

the school leader grows. This same dynamic may be observed in the superintendent's

relationship with district personnel. They are employees of the district and usually

community members as well. If the teachers and other educators speak well of the

superintendent, it is likely that the community and school board will be predisposed to

trusting his leadership. Leveraging the trust of one group to gain acceptance from another

is noted in the data. The superintendents noted the usefulness of board members and

district personnel as intermediaries and spokespersons. The superintendent represents the

district, and school workers represent the superintendent. It is worth noting how the

reciprocal relationship may be detrimental as well. If the community begins to withdraw

support from the superintendent, it is only a matter of time before district personnel and

board members reduce their confidence in the school leader. The data not only highlights ways in which trust is developed through the development of social capital, but it also hints at why it happens.

Uslaner (2001) underscored the importance of social capital and its ability to demonstrate approval of a leader's values and beliefs. The community is more likely to trust a leader accepted by the respected groups because of what that acceptance communicates. The formation of secondary associations proves quite valuable in this regard (Putnam, 1996; Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Uslaner, 1998; Shan, 1998; Stolle, 1998). School board acceptance sends the message to the community that the school leader shares the goals and values that are important to educational stakeholders. If the superintendent joins civic and business organizations, it communicates the superintendent's concern for business issues, and the acceptance of leaders sends the message that those concerns are shared and valued. Religious group affiliation by the superintendents speaks to the community about the leader's understanding of moral, ethical, and spiritual concerns. The general idea is that if the group accepts the leader, the superintendent has adhered to whatever norms are expected of that group. The ability to show compliance with expected norms results from acceptance and association with numerous groups (Uslaner, 2001). The data compliments this research. The superintendents each noted the need to associate with several different groups, from attendance at community gatherings (i.e. the local symphony and local celebrations) to joining rotary clubs and chambers of commerce. The participants of this study highlighted how one must be perceived as associated with respected groups in order to

increase levels of trust. It is worth noting that the presence of the superintendent (the most powerful educator in most communities) adds cache to the groups as well. It is this exchange of validity that the superintendent may leverage to gain trust from other groups and gain the trust needed to accomplish risky tasks. The alignment of the collected data and research regarding social capital and its relationship to trust proves interesting, especially when compared to other trust building activities such as the management of exchange relationships.

Presentation of Exchange Data

The Lewis and Weigert (1985) framework suggests leaders use the exchange of resources to establish a relationship of trust. The data offered by the participants of this study demonstrates different types of actions and behaviors related to exchanges.

Resistance to use of exchanges. The data describes a type of superintendent behavior that may best be characterized as resistant to the idea of utilizing the exchange concept. Superintendent B succinctly captured this approach to exchange when he stated, "I don't do patronage – it's a slippery slope. You start doing that and it doesn't end" (10/2/2007-18). In addition to resisting actions rooted in exchange, the following line demonstrates Superintendent B's desire to avoid the topic.

> Each of these get at the idea of exchange that you want to negotiate resources for ends, and you try to achieve goals, and sometimes superintendents over stretch it, and his team can say, 'no we can only go this far'. So you know, you don't want to impugn these people, but you've got to go back to the context, experience, and expertise and figure it out. These simplistic notions are not typically very helpful. The world is much more complex, and so I do feel that this idea of exchanges is an interesting one. (10/2/2007-20)

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Following this line of thought, Superintendent B implied that the use of exchanges does not help generate trust, but instead threatens its generation. He expressed this idea with this quote.

> You know, I wish L. – but I didn't do a quid pro quo with L. I didn't go to him, and say 'L., I'm going to do this so you be sure you give me your trust'. I've never asked for that – I kind of expect it but I don't want to ask for it because you got to earn it. That's when you have to hold people accountable…because there has to be a basis for the trust. (10/2/2007-28)

Although this participant claimed an unwillingness to entertain the idea of using exchanges to acquire trust, not all of the participants agreed. There are data supporting the idea that some of these participants are willing to use exchanges to avoid the loss of trust.

Compensation for trust. Superintendent B espoused disdain for the idea of exchange, but Superintendent A offered a different perspective. He sees the exchange of resources as a way to solidify trust and support. He offered an example of this type of action in the following lines.

> For example, I need a custodian – a board member asks 'could you hire this friend to be the custodian?' Well some [superintendents] don't want to take a name or whatever. I'll take it and try to get the guy an interview so if something else comes up I will have the member's support for this or that. (10/1/2007-13)

Even though Superintendent B offered aversion to the exchange idea, he did make the following statement.

> Let me tell you – I want the best people in our community calling me, because I want their children to get employed here, but all I can guarantee is that they will get an interview. You got to win it. I tell you out of about a dozen, only one of them didn't get a job, and that was hard. (10/2/2007-18)

If one out of a dozen potential candidates who were recommended by the superintendent, one did not get the desired job, it seems reasonable to believe that describing a superintendent's use of exchanged becomes a task burdened with the complexity of situational variables . The compensation idea may manifest itself in other ways as well. For example, this participant offered another use of compensation.

> We had to make some changes-like we teach policy to teachers, we put in some things like incentive pay for teachers. At the end of the year when they got those incentive checks, it made it good so teachers got on board with me. (Superintendent A, 10/1/2007-6)

The compensation may take less tangible forms. Superintendent B noted the exchange of social capital rewards by stating, "There is an exchange of capital for rewards, recognition, and you've got to realize that. How to recognize people – what is their needs set" (10/2/2007-20). I witnessed the action of sharing capital through recognition as I met with Superintendent A. I complimented an aspect of his district's communication structure. He responded to the compliment by calling the assistant superintendent that oversees communication into the office where we met. Superintendent A then asked me to repeat my compliment, which I did. Then this participant told the assistant superintendent he wanted her to hear the praise from the source. The assistant superintendent smiled and left the room. This simple act held much trust building power because the superintendent (and the social capital held by that office) offered public praise to a subordinate. Superintendents A and B offered quite different ideas regarding actions of exchange in the pursuit of gathering trust; Superintendent C provided another set of behaviors less extreme than the previous two.

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Mutual interests. Superintendent C utilized exchange in a manner that leverages

the mutual interests of the superintendent and another party. He explained this action with

the following quote.

> I don't view it as we are going to exchange things – or you owe me one, or I owe you one. I see it more from the stand point, we've got some mutual interests and because we know each other and work with each other, we both commit to making each other successful. (10/4/2007-29)

He continued with this theme by saying the following:

> We have a lot of companies involved in our schools. The benefit there is they want our students to be successful and go on to college. They want qualified workers in the business areas. I take advantage of that in that I – if we want more scientists or more science people, then I'm going to one of those companies and ask them to come help me. (10/4/2007-30)

By seeking to understand the areas of mutual interest, Superintendent C creates an

exchange that is symbiotic and generative of trust. This type of behavior engenders trust

by identifying and responding to need. The final idea observed in the data involves the

idea of negotiation.

Negotiation. To execute initial trust formation, the participating superintendents

noted the need to consider negotiation for needed resources. Superintendent A best

encapsulated this thought.

> I do see those types of things [exchanges] happening. You know, I may have to tell the board member that if you want this, these other board members over here they are going to do this so you are going to have to give in a little bit here, so we can get it done. There is some swap out. (10/1/2007-5)

To start the next thought, Superintendent B used strong language in defiance of

exchange, but toward the end of the thought he employed strategic language to hint at

opportunistic negotiation. "You don't want to be a whore – I'm not exchanging my

success but it doesn't mean that you can't – you know – position yourself" (10/2/2007-21). In response to the previous lines, one may ask to "position" oneself for what? This participant addressed that implied question in the following lines.

> In the place of exchange, you might talk about compacts. I don't think that is as offensive. We had a fellow named T. S. He invented the Coalition for Essential Schools. He once wrote a great article about treaties. Principals make treaties with their teachers – I won't bother you if you don't bother me. That's the thing you've got to get it – you don't take them on. (10/2/2007-26)

The art of negotiation takes skill and in the process of negotiating one may build the foundation for trust.

This section described and analyzed the data related to how superintendents use exchanges for the generation of trust. It is a topic the participants approached with caution and hesitation, and provides data demonstrating a wide range of concepts. The range of ideas inspired by exchange does exist in the data related to building trust through the creation of a sense of shared values and beliefs.

Analysis of Data Related to Exchange

The data gathered regarding the relationship between strategic management of exchanges and trust production may be the most interesting. The participants offer widely differing perspectives on this matter, which in some ways support the literature and others interrupt the research; however, the overarching ideas seem to align well with the research.

The research suggests that trust increases when it is tested by measuring the manner in which a party reacts to a proposed exchange of resources (Davis, et al., 2000). This conceptualization contends superintendents may build trust by showing willingness

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to use their power in ways that benefit the party from whom the leader is seeking to build trust. This idea is based on an expectancy (often unspoken) that the superintendent's cooperation will be rewarded with trust and confidence of the other party, and that both individuals will work to maximize the utility of the other (Bhattacharya, Devinney, & Pillutla, 1998). In addition, this model of trust borrows ideas from economic theories that suggest the act of trusting is a rational decision (Sitkin & Roth, 1993). The participants of this study, sometimes quite reluctantly, offer data that supports this concept.

The superintendents offered data that revealed the great tension associated with the idea of brokered exchanges. One of the participants unabashedly admitted that he is willing to exchange the assignment of certain personnel positions for the support and trust of a school board member. He feels an unwillingness to entertain these types of agreements as naive and evidences stubbornness on the part of the superintendent. Thus, his data most pointedly shows acquiescence to the utility of exchange.

Another sort of data admits to the importance of exchange in milder terms. The idea of mutual interest surfaced in the data. This concept suggests school leaders do not exchange resources so much as leverage the mutual interest of two parties in a manner that benefits the school and the other involved party. This concept does not disagree with the exchange concept, but agrees with it in language that is less offensive to school leaders. One participant spoke of negotiated agreements that align with the goals of different stakeholders within the school community. This data casts the superintendent in the role of broker; he uses his position to negotiate terms that will bring agreement among parties with differing interests. The school leader exchanges the power of his

position for agreement among influential parties. Each of these ideas expressed in the data demonstrates that the school leader exchanges some resource (usually access and power) for agreement from a needed party (usually a school board member or powerful business interests). Not all of the data demonstrates agreement with the exchange literature.

One participant was offended by the notion of trust production through exchange. It took some prodding on the part of the researcher to elicit any useful data on this point. He vehemently denied the use of exchange and argued that exchanges undermine trust instead of build it. What is most interesting about the data offered from this participant is its inconsistency. At a latter point in the interview, when we were not discussing exchanges, this leader mentioned his willingness to secure an interview for the friends or family of important and influential people to the school. Thus, although there is a stern denial of exchange, the data suggest this superintendent is willing to use his influence to benefit people important to the school. The expectation is that the superintendent's cooperation allows him to maintain and build confidence with key educational stakeholders. This practice aligns with the suggested role of exchange as a trust building activity. The exchange concept elicits the most contested and divergent data and creates a need for further reflection. The suggestion that trust develops when leaders create a sense of shared values and beliefs was met with agreement from the participants and created no sense of struggle.

Presentation of Values and Beliefs Data.

The Lewis and Weigert (1985) framework suggests that when people have a sense

of shared values and beliefs trust levels increase. The participants of this study shared

ways they work to create a sense of shared values with a diversity of educational

stakeholders.

Programs and plans. The data offered by the participating superintendents

suggest one way to create a sense of shared values is through programs and plans. These

actions embed messages about values in the activities and structures of the district.

Superintendent A explained his participation in this type of action with district level

operations.

> You have this happen to people like 'got ya', so you have to be on top of things
> and be sure that your ship is rolling with honor and integrity. And you know that
> the bids are there – the bids are public – make sure the right information is out
> there – so everyone knows that whatever you're doing, it is above board and to
> the point. (10/1/2007-1)

This quote underscores several key points. Superintendent A communicates and honors

values by emphasizing the need of the district to operate with "honor and integrity";

moreover, he cited the bidding process as one way to ensure practice and structures

evidence the expected values. This action lets people know the values of the district and

that the district is "above board."

Superintendent B uses a similar systemic approach to embedded values in the

school's educational programming.

> Like I'm now articulating them [values] through my health program – we just got
> nine million dollar Safe Schools Healthy Kids grant, but its positive behavior, its
> character education. See, it is not your standard – its character education –

respect, caring, honesty, courage, perseverance. Our kids – I brought that to my district – I'm prouder of that then of anything I've done. (10/2/2007-23)

This participant used the structure of the educational program and underscored the idea that the values coalesced around may not be personal values, but those accepted by the community. Superintendent C expected the values of the district to be shared and guarded through campus level administrative plans. This act allowed the shared values to be codified at multiple levels of the organization.

> I've communicated that [beliefs] with our central office staff, our principals. I've asked them to address those things in their campus improvement plans. We make sure everyone has it in writing, and have incorporated into their work and improvement plan. We focus on work and our energies around the beliefs we have, tied to the specific goals we set for ourselves. (10/4/2007-31)

In addition to campus level value incorporation, these values are linked to goals. This structural task aligns with the other data suggesting the participating superintendents identified the need to embed the district's values in plans and programs.

Direct communication. Although there may be merit in sharing values through programs and plans, the superintendents of this study feel one cannot assume those values will be clearly understood. To address this weakness, they directly communicate the values they share. Superintendent C emphasized the need to clearly articulate values during interactions with the district personnel.

> The superintendent should go out and work with his staff, and work with the schools to be sure that they are working with those values. One of the things that I need to do is communicate those beliefs to our upper leadership team. In addition to that, making sure I'm communicating that to our principals because they are the ones that are going to put it into action. (10/4/2007-31)

These lines demonstrate that Superintendent B begins the content of most speaking engagements with an attempt to connect values: "But the first things I always open

[speeches] with are the TEKS and the Principles of Learning because it goes back to that sense of what we value" (10/2/2007-15). He continued this point with an anecdote about how values influence the educational endeavor and inspire.

> It's articulating your shared values. I had a lady who has been to these 'Chats with Superintendent B' for six years now. She came up to me at the last meeting, and her daughter had been a difficult person – she's from money, and her daughter went to Hawaii and Europe and her daughter is now at the community college. She's come back home and she's not damaged – she's very smart now – she's seen the world. Hey – I think that is reality. She said you made a difference in my relationship with my daughter. I said how. She said the other day, her daughter came up – I was telling her that her efforts created her smartness. The daughter got it. She said that helped us to bond together. Man! I mean that's like I'm going to go to Heaven. (10/2/2007-23)

This anecdote demonstrates how values Superintendent B espoused during a speaking engagement resonated with a mother/daughter relationship in a way that had a positive influence. This action raises the trust levels and inspires the superintendent. Regardless of how clear one may feel values are expressed through latent behaviors, the data indicates these superintendents feel the need to pointedly articulate them. Sharing values is an ongoing activity that involves more than the delivery of speeches. Each of the participants contributes an expression of thought in a regularly published district newsletter. The letters from the superintendent consistently express value statements. In one instance, Superintendent C specifically values generosity (archived record 9). In another letter Superintendent A highlights the value of hard work (archived record 11); and Superintendent B reminds readers that his district values continuous improvement (archived record 10). These reoccurring publications allow these leaders to consistently communicate values. Sharing values through systems and speech will not be effective unless they are consistently focused by the conviction of the superintendent.

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Focus. The participants of this study contended that a sense of shared values occurs when the convictions of the superintendent focus the activity of the district. In the quote that follows, Superintendent C noted the importance of being honest with one's self and establishing an internal compass that guides the district toward a sense of shared values.

> I've come to realize that you got to be very honest with yourself about the beliefs, what is the right thing to do, and to always keep that purpose pointed in the right direction, so that you can give good guidance to the staff and to the district. (10/4/2007-33)

Superintendent A echoed this thought in reference to the community.

> When you say we want to pass a bond, and I want to do this – the bottom line is at the end of the day, are those kids learning. You can keep focusing the community's attention back to that, and then they will do what you want. (10/1/2007-6)

> In the lines that follow, Superintendent B recognized that the attention to values

and beliefs can cause a district to coalesce.

> That's the difference – you need the glue that keeps this together. I do believe it's about teaching and learning. I have the same philosophy – failure is not an option. We say effort creates intelligence. … yes it's about shared values and beliefs. (10/2/2007-14)

> These superintendents develop and maintain the internal values they deem vital to

the district's success and attempt to act in accordance with those values. According to the participants, this activity acts as glue that binds the educational community and leads to increased levels of trust. Whether working to increase social capital, manage exchanges, create a sense of shared values, or generate trust in other ways, structural arrangements need consideration if trust building attempts are to be maximized.

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Analysis of Data Related to Creating a Sense of Shared Values and Beliefs

The literature contends that trust increases when there is a sense of shared values and beliefs among the leader and those that are led. The data offered by the superintendents underscores the relationship between shared values and trust levels. This is one aspect of the data that appears to find agreement among the participants; they all agreed that shared values lead to increased levels of trust.

A sense of shared values and beliefs increases trust. Shared values decrease risk because of the expectancy that people with common values will make decisions and act in ways that are deemed acceptable by the parties involved (Bigley & Pearce, 1998). The superintendents interviewed demonstrated agreement with this general concept. They work to create a sense of shared values with their programs, communications, and focus. It is clear that communicating a value and belief system, an activity in which the participants engage, can generate some sense of shared values, but there must be actions to accompany the words.

Stating values serves to generate an initial sense of shared values. The literature suggests sharing values with others in the organization can be a powerful activity for building trust (Davis, et al., 2000; Svensson, 2006). The participants speak of sharing values and the need to communicate them directly to different stakeholder groups in order to establish clarity. Communicating values is only briefly noted in the data and is said to serve the purpose of providing clarity. This suggests the superintendents are aware that the professions of public figures are usually met with cynicism, and actions do more to communicate values and build trust. For this reason the participants tend to focus more

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on the application of values throughout the organization. Words lose power if not followed with aligned actions.

Jones and George (1998) found that creating shared values that generate stronger ties of trust develops as leaders become involved in pursuing some goal with members of the organization. The data from the superintendents clearly supports this research finding. The superintendents noted the importance of expressing values through systemic arrangements. They discussed programs and initiatives the schools and communities design to support, communicate, and build valued qualities and behaviors. In addition, the participants utilize mechanisms to hold people accountable to the highest standards of conduct and appropriate activity. These programs, systems, and initiatives demonstrate values in a manner that is more authentic, meaningful, and substantive. Another key to increasing trust through value building is consistency.

Another central idea expressed by the superintendents is that of focus. The focus they invoke serves to add consistency and help ensure the district trains its action in a way that aligns with its educational values. This idea is vital because educational values represent a more specific value set that generalizes values of desired behaviors and actions. It is consistently holding to the values of the district and its stakeholders, which allows the leader to build long term trust. The idea that consistently holding to cherished values builds long term and increasing trust aligns with the trust literature offered by Jones and George (1998).

Presentation of Data Related to Structuring for Trust Production

The Lewis and Weigert (1985) framework draws on literature contending there are structural arrangements that may increase trust production. Whether structures that act as a third party enforcer-like incentives, or maximize effective influence such as transparency, the data from this study suggests structures play a noteworthy role in trust generation.

Empowerment. Empowerment in this context refers to the act of outlining occupational goals, identifying, supporting, and training people to accomplish those goals, and then allowing employees to determine how best to reach the goals. One participant best summarized this idea in the lines that follow.

> Structure is empowering people so they know who is responsible for what, and hold them responsible for it, and not accepting anything less than outstanding performance from your staff. (Superintendent C, 10/4/2007-33)

Superintendent A addressed the need for clear delineation of responsibilities and its influence on trust.

> People have jobs and responsibilities that they are going to be held responsible for and then they are going to be empowered to do their job. You get a lot of people that meddle in on the part of everybody else's job – everybody thinks they know more than the person doing the job. You got your people that want to take on that trust [to do the job] because they were allowed to do certain things, they were allowed to fail or succeed. (10/1/2007-7)

According to the next quote offered by Superintendent C, the danger occurs when school leaders fail to empower people.

> I think what happens is when you have a situation where a superintendent tries to micro manage everything that goes on, then there is no creativity – there is a fear of doing it wrong so people don't move forward with things. That superintendent tells them exactly how the program should work and unfolds – I don't think that is

good for the organization. It stifles progress and trust. They feel they have to wait for the superintendent. (10/4/2007-32)

In the absence of empowerment, fear and distrust takes root. In addition to allowing employees the freedom to complete their jobs, superintendents must empower people by training and supporting personnel in a manner that prepares them for occupational success. Superintendent B underscored this idea when he said, "That is where you have to find the capacity of your people, and grow them, and support them, and stretch them a little bit" (10/2/2007-15). Superintendent A highlighted the same idea with more specificity regarding systemic measures aimed at support.

> For the most part, we have a strong staff development type of program and those types of programs that help you do what you need to do – so I believe in supporting and training rather than working on firing people. (10/1/2007-9)

The participating superintendents offered insight related to building systems and structures that promote trust through systems of empowerment. Another concept found in the data about trust producing structures emphasizes a team organizational approach.

Teaming. Teaming allows people to take risks, gain additional knowledge, and receive various types of support. Creating teams is an activity these participants mentioned as a trust building activity. Superintendent B spoke of teaming for interdependency in these lines.

> You know – by going to two academic officers, the sun of my universe, with four associates – high school, middle, and two elementary because I'm so big, I've gotten more coherence out of that world so I think the two issues I would bring up are coherence and what I call, interdependency. The attribute I seek from our structure is interdependency. (10/2/2007-25)

Superintendent C was valuing a team structure when he said, "I guess the way I like to think about that is that I describe myself as someone who supports a team

approach to our working structure" (10/4/2007-32). He continued with the following

expressions.

> I'm one who brings that team together – we make decisions – once the decisions
> are made, I want those people who are responsible for those areas to carry that
> work forward. The whole team comes together and puts it all together with the
> parameters I've laid out. I'm not involved in the detail – they set that up. On the
> day to day things, they are pretty much left to work amongst themselves. The job
> will get done, and if it doesn't get done, we'll have conversations about that.
> That's how we approach that. (10/4/2007-32)

> Superintendent C uses the team structure and approach to accomplish the

district's work and as a way to structure the work of the board.

> We are a team of eight trying to get people to work for the school system. In this
> district that is very difficult to get because you have so much, but as a board they
> have solidified as a team and made great progress. (10/4/2007-33)

Utilizing team structures aids the participating superintendents as they work to

accomplish the goals of the district and generate trust. Another structural component uses

rewards to increase feelings of trust.

> *Incentives*. Certain situations may require structures that address a lack of trust

with mechanisms designed to create an increased sense of confidence and trust. One such

strategy employs the use of incentives. Knowing a reward awaits the compliant will cause

levels of trust to increase. Superintendent A outlined how positive actions and feelings

may result from incentive structures.

> I know that when you push people, some don't like it and don't want to be pushed
> as hard, but when success comes around, they know what they have
> accomplished. That's the good think about incentive pay versus regular pay –
> because they know they have to do something to get it. They knew it wasn't just
> given to them-they got some results and the desired results they should have
> gotten to get that. That makes them feel part of it, and again board members are
> politicians so it makes people feel good – they're feeling good. Good feelings

grow trust, and the incentives keep going on, and that's why we keep moving on like we are, I guess. (10/1/2007-6)

According to an internal district newsletter, the workers serving Superintendent A received more than one million dollars of incentive pay for the 2006-2007 school year (archived record 14).

Incentives may take the form of advancement or acceptance. Superintendent C explained these actions in the lines that follow.

The ones that get here and are in the system and understand the system, they get rewarded. We don't even concern ourselves about firing people and that helps trust. I would bet –since I've been here I've probably fired four to eight employees. (10/4/2007-31)

Rewarding desired behavior reinforces expectations and sends clear messages about the organization. These actions facilitate trust by adding clarity related to organizational goals.

Another aspect of incentives relates to credibility. The idea of incentives suggests that if one party accomplishes a task, the other party will reward them. If the rewards come as promised, then trust builds on feelings of reliability and credibility. This strategy may be seen in the contract of Superintendent A. It was written into his contract that he receives an automatic 3.9% raise if he earns a positive board evaluation (archived record 17). During his tenure, Superintendent A's district had performed well, he has received positive evaluations, and his salary increases as promised. This pattern has allowed some higher level of trusts to occur than if the raises were not granted by some surreptitious act. As was noted earlier, incentive structures reinforce organizational expectations. Structures that communicate expectations foster trust development.

Expectations. Individuals express more trust when they know clearly what is expected of them. Clear expectations reduce uncertainty and the confusion and fear that uncertainty brings. Superintendent A demonstrated clearly the power of expectations with the following quote.

> You have a lot of that kind of confusion, so you need to know who is the direct person, who should be getting the guidance and direction to, and who we need to support, and who is responsible for what. (10/1/2007-8)

> This participant continued this line of thought by saying, "If I put you over

maintenance and this isn't cleaned up or whatever and the expectations are clear and the structure is set up, I know who to come to at this particular point" (10/1/2007-9). Simply setting expectations will not engender trust if the expectations are not fair. These words from Superintendent B underscore the need for fair and reasonable expectations.

> Sometimes I worry that I push people too much, but I won't – I'm not going to drink the Kool-Aid. I don't believe that I can – I don't set metrics saying that you'd better make 3% growth, and I know I'll be at risk for not doing it. I find that mechanical model sends a very perverse signal. I'd rather hold you accountable for growth, and I don't have level playing fields, I have fair playing fields. (10/2/2007-17)

This participant appreciates the structure used to communicate his board's expectations of him. The system they use is not only fair for him, but it also creates a de facto system of expectations for his administrative cabinet. Read below for further explanation from Superintendent B.

> We believe in that, but the thing that I like best is what we call our executive limitations. Remember the board in the executive limitations defines the playing field. If you want to control me, you say under EL3, 'Poor Joe will fail not to do', and what you could do is expand the playing field. But you can't tell me what to do, but if through my evaluation, you don't think I'm treating parents well, you may want to narrow my playing field. But that's the way to do it. I have 16 or 17 of these things – financial accounting, curriculum discipline, achievement – all

these things. I'll tell you – I would not report on these things in the old world – the world you come from – unless there was a problem. Now I have to give a report – I love these reports because it makes me go through every dimension of my operation and say 'how are we doing.'

But see, I've set a structure up and this is the structure that I set up – executive limitation – that allows me to say 'D. you have to do something on curriculum and instruction. – P. C. – you're going to have to make a report on discipline and attendance.' This is the way my cabinet and I – there is whole bunch of measures in here – this is the way we review ourselves. Are we happy? Do we need more parent specialists? Are we putting the drop-out specialists in the right past? Is positive behavior working? This gives me the structure to review, and that's what it is all about. It's analytical – if you couldn't review and monitor regularly – it's the regular review that I find so effective, it builds trust because we are always reporting on our current state. (10/2/2007-25)

Superintendent B not only addressed fair accountability structures, but also a need for

realistic and fair assignment of roles and responsibilities.

We are looking at some linkage people, and we are overloading them. Wait a minute – you can't do three different initiatives; you can't do eight piece strategies, and you can't do IFL, and you can't do disciplinary literacy – the work expectation must be reasonable. (10/2/2007-15)

Another conceptualization of expectations uses standards. A uniform standard

may align actions and activities throughout a district. These standards define what good is

and allows school personnel to trust that they will be well received if they meet the

standard. Superintendent C spoke to this concept below.

We here in this district have been at a point where it was – we didn't have as many controls on how things were organized. We didn't have a lot of standards as far as how it was done in here. There was a high school program that we could have been doing in four different ways – we have four high schools. We actually have tried to bring that more to the center. We are going to standardize and there are going to be similarities around our high schools. (10/4/2007-32)

The use of standards to set expectations sends clear messages about what is

approved and this leads to reduced uncertainty. Another important structural concern

addresses organizational integrity. There must be systems that help the school maintain

honorable practice.

Integrity. School law and community expectations require schools to operate in

ways that demonstrate integrity. Trust increases when the organization is perceived to

operationalize the concepts of integrity. Superintendent A addressed the need to have

structures that encourage teachers to operate in accordance with the community's

moral/political expectations.

> You spend a lot of time developing a structure for teachers about being above
> board, being sure that they are familiar with school policies and wants of the
> community. You do not want to have any problems. Because you know one – one
> teacher showed the movie *9/11* – Oh My Gosh! You know – it just rolled back to
> the community – there's a sensitivity on that at a particular point – you would
> assume that every teacher in an ISD showed *Fahrenheit 9/11* so you spend a lot of
> time trying to diffuse that-looking into our film selection structure and how we
> look at films and make sure that something like that that doesn't slip through the
> cracks again. (10/1/2007-2)

This participant continued by speaking of structures to ensure central office compliance

with state standards for ethical business practice.

> You have to invest in people and be sure that you're operating with honor,
> integrity… you know that the bids are handled correctly and making sure the
> information is out there – so everyone knows that whatever you're doing, it is
> above board. (10/1/2007-1)

The development of oversight structures for the insurance of ethical business practice and

teacher activity that is deemed appropriate builds trust as educational stakeholders come

to believe the district is one of integrity.

This section of analysis has detailed data that aligns with the Lewis and Weigert

(1985) conceptualization of actions and behaviors leaders feel help them generate trust.

In the sections that follow, there will be the presentation of data in support of additional

trust building actions and behaviors that emerged from the data analysis process. The data

demonstrates that the participants feel trust may be generated when leaders show results,

invest trust in others, manage communications, and develop and demonstrate professional

expertise.

Analysis of Data Related to Structuring for Trust Production

Analyzing the data related to structures that support the creation of trust highlights

those aspects of structure the participants feel are important and demonstrates the

agreement among the practitioners interviewed and the literature reviewed. The literature

suggests systemic structures that use less restrictive control mechanisms, offer

transparency, and establish clear expectations can increase levels of trust within an

organization (Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard, & Werner, 1998; Yukl, 2005; Das & Teng,

1998). The data the participants offered agrees with the literature and extends some of the

concepts.

The participants of this study described the structures that produce trust as

empowering, team-oriented, incentive laden, and rooted in the clear communication of

job expectations and systems of accountability. The superintendents suggested that

actions to create structures that have aforementioned attributes are more likely to

engender trust among educational stakeholders. This data means the superintendents of

this study understand the role of structure in trust formation and apply structural

components the literature suggests will increase levels of trust. In addition, the

participants did not mention any specific structural arrangements or organizational types.

These leaders recognize that the specific organizational and structural decisions are

context specific, but the general concepts of trust building structures may be accomplished in numerous ways. The data of these school leaders suggests it is the application of key concepts to structural arrangements that leads to higher levels of trust.

The data from this study also describes the participant's depth of understanding related to structure and trust production. These school system leaders not only utilize structural components essential to trust production, but in the data they articulated how the concept builds trust. They not only discussed the need to empower employees, but also articulated how that increases trust and what happens when structures fail to empower school personnel. The same is true of other trust building structural arrangements. Moreover, the superintendents displayed their structural acumen by offering data that encourages several trust building aspects of structure that must be utilized if organizational arrangements are to effectively build trust. However much these participants appreciate the power of structure to build trust, they also saw the need to moderate these concepts in ways that reduce the risks of the superintendent.

Presentation of Data Regarding Earned Results and Trust Levels

When analyzing the initial data set it became clear the participating superintendents related trust production with earning and demonstrating results. Superintendent A encapsulated the idea of using results to establish trust when he said the following.

> There are a long term and short term results. There have to be successes along the way in order to get the long term trust you are looking for. Along the way, there have to be things that make sense – there must be things that are important. When you get to the short term success, I believe that is a building block. After a period of time, they trust to make long term decisions at that particular point.(11/5/2007-1)

School constituencies want to see results as showing school achievement and making strong decisions.

Results for school improvement. Results oriented actions may focus on gaining and showing increased school performance. Superintendent A suggested that accomplished schools help the superintendent engender confidence. "The standards have to be high and the schools have to be accomplishing them in order for us to receive confidence" (11/5/2007-1). One meaningful way to demonstrate increased school performance utilizes the Texas Education Agency's academic accountability rating for campuses. Superintendent A highlighted this idea with, "three of the schools are exemplary in the district – we have about ten schools that are recognized and one that all schools showed improvement – it makes for us to be able to survive" (11/5/2007-2). In addition to the accountability ratings, campuses may demonstrate their ability to be responsive to community goals and expectations. School board agenda items from the districts Superintendents B and C serve demonstrate a desire to show non-academic as well as academic results (archived records 1-8). In Superintendent C's district, students received school board recognition for achievements in band, art, athletics, choir, robotics, Special Olympics, and other activities (archived records 1&2). Superintendent C elaborated more in the lines that follow.

> Part of the trust that I believe can be created is by working very closely with businesses in the community – the chamber – and making sure that, yes, the school system are delivering on those needs that they have. You know highly educated workers. I think that is very important for the business support and trust. (11/8/2007-18)

The ability to survive largely depends on how well schools achieve. Superintendent C noted that acquiring results is not enough to build trust, one must demonstrate those results.

> I will go speak to them [the community] at least once during the year and I also highlight the accomplishments that we have made and the improvements we have had over time. I also talk to them about the work we are doing to get the improvement. Once we get the improvement, making sure that we are communicating and that we are recognizing that. (11/8/2007-17)

Publicizing results occurs as part of formalized activities of these districts as well. All the participants have a reoccurring school board meeting agenda item dedicated to sharing positive school results (archived records 1-8). This activity exceeds the state requirement to share achievement school results by including awards and accolades earned by students, teachers, parents, and other community members (archived records 1-3 & 5). Thus, for these participants earning and publicizing results seems an essential activity to building trust.

The mission of the superintendent is to educate students, and this takes place at the campus level. If campuses are accomplishing the educational mission and that accomplishment is being recognized, then superintendents have more credibility and receive higher levels of trust. For this reason, these superintendents work to gain and show positive campus level results. Gaining results is a complex task and may be demonstrated in a variety of ways. One type of result regards the ability to make decisions.

Making strong decisions. Raising the achievement level of school performance takes time and effort, but stakeholders want to evidence competence quickly. As

Superintendent B stated, "your trust does come with positive school results – it does confirm it but I must admit those are lagging indicators" (11/6/2007-7). A leading indicator is the ability to make decisions. Again, Superintendent B underscored the ability of decision making to aid initial trust formation: "I think initially when you come into a district it is your decision making and your capacity to make decisions, and to kind of – you know- implement them successfully. I think this started to build some trust in me" (11/6/2007-7).

Superintendent A offered an anecdote that explains how decisions that were initially met with skepticism became validated and increased his credibility with the community.

> For example, one of our schools, we set the camera system up and the kids down the street – well not kids, but guys – got out and shot one of the guys and chased him through the school. Well, automatically, we got the security camera catching him coming along – we have our own police department that we just implemented – the school locked down real quick – as a result of that, the police were notified where they chased through and apprehended the guys. That could have been very negative but as a result of everybody seeing, cameras picked it up right then – there was immediate lock down. They also saw the police department reacting to that. We just put the security cameras in about a year ago, and we just implemented the police department. People were wondering about the cameras. They saw how we can react and they see how safe the schools are. In a situation that could have been negative, turned out very positive when they say it on TV. The TV people had access to that tape and they saw how fast that situation was concluded. That gains confidence from people. (11/5/2007-5)

Interested parties want to know if the school leader has the courage and ability to make decisions as a precursor to evaluating the effectiveness of the decisions made. Superintendent B elaborated on this idea in what follows.

> Certainly results help you build trust. When you come into a district as I did, I had to make an incredible set of decisions in the spring of my first year and there were no results. I got rid of block scheduling – I had mold in the schools – my

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food service program-I had a whole set of these decisions. In fact, I think trust comes out of your ability to effect the decisions. Just making them is easy. But how do you show people the effectiveness of the decisions? When I held firm on a couple of things and people marched down the street on me, you know, I build some trust with the community perhaps more than the board. The community was dying to have a leader and they saw this hard assed S.O.B making decisions that was very credible with them. (11/6/2007-7)

The desired result is having and demonstrating the mettle to make difficult decisions. Making good decisions that show positive results encourages trust and followers, or as Superintendent B stated, "I think if you do make good decisions and have good results, and sure, people want to be on a winning team" (11/6/2007-7). Part of being on a winning team is working together. The data suggest the participants believe part of building trust involves bestowing trust in others.

Analysis of Data Regarding Earned Results and Trust Levels

The data related to achieving results focuses on the ability to show school performance improvement and make decisions. This data loosely aligns with the research related to trusted leaders and their ability to effectively manage the organization toward a desired goal (Yukl, 2005). The interesting aspect of these data involves the manner in which school improvement is measured and communicated, and the unexpected power of simply making decisions.

The participants noted the importance of getting results for the production of trust. They contend that leaders may enact trust building strategies, but without results the initial bank of trust will quickly erode. The superintendents discussed communicating results not just in terms of state accountability ratings, but they also related to community expectations. For example, sharing news of increased state accountability test scores may

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inspire trust among some stakeholders (i.e. parents), but demonstrating higher levels of college readiness may be more important to others (i.e. business leaders). These distinctions in the data mean the school leaders of this study suggest that building trust is an activity of communicating positive results to the groups for which they hold the most meaning. This implies a level of message tailoring and a complex analysis of school performance that surpasses simple reliance on state accountability ratings. These data show the participant's realization that trust levels increase most when school results are measured and expressed in several different ways. In addition, participants of this study contended that trust levels rise when the school performance improvement is repeatedly communicated to various educational stakeholder groups. These actions and behaviors will foster trust building; however, the data also highlights the fact that school performance is a lagging indicator and other results oriented actions may inspire trust as well.

Superintendent C was especially convinced that school leaders can show results that build trust without having to wait for the results of school improvement. He suggested that effecting decisions is a type of result that inspires trust. These data contend that people respect and trust leaders that have the capacity to make decisions (especially difficult ones). This line of discussion implies that simply demonstrating the courage and ability to make and execute decisions is a result of sorts that inspires trust. Superintendent C's contention argued that making decisions at the executive level is a challenging task that many leaders fail to do well, and that if one can establish himself/herself as a decision maker, that person will earn the trust of followers. Although Superintendent C

was not alone in this belief, he certainly stated the case most ardently. This conceptualization of showing results underscores the challenge of school leadership.

Gaining and showing results for the production of trust describes an activity espoused by the participants of this study. Although they suggest different ways to get and show results, they agree that without some validation of the school leader, any trust that does exist will quickly fade.

Presentation of Data Related to Investing Trust in Others

One of the ideas that surfaced during the first set of interviews suggests superintendents believe that investing trust in others allows them to garner higher trust levels in return. In speaking about trust investment the participating superintendents spoke about the importance of recognizing context, setting goals as part of bestowing trust, and the concept of trust with verification. The dominant theme was to organize activities such that trust may be shared while limiting professional vulnerability. In addition, they provided data maintaining the importance of sharing trust to facilitate reliable feedback.

Context. According to the data, understanding the context in which trust exists is essential to giving trust away in a manner that is not naïve. As this concept relates to the abilities of individuals, one participant states,

> If you are a new principal, I'm not going to give you the same rope as I would an experienced one. I think it is much more contextual, but I do agree that you do earn the trust of your colleagues as you share it. (Superintendent B, 11/6/2007-9)

In addition to the general abilities of others, Superintendent B suggested a close examination of people's prior performance as it relates to the task requiring trust. This, he suggested, is often more important than official titles and positions.

> But I think generally this concept [gain trust by giving it away] is correct but I would just make sure you are applying it in an idiographic way who you are giving away your trust to. That's where – like on our high school redesign – a couple of the young people on that team, they are so terrific. See I don't go by your title meaning I give you more. I go by the track record you have. T. S. and the way he lays out stuff, I will trust that guy more than I will do my directors. That's the whole point – it's kinda negotiated. (11/6/2007-9)

Examining context as a precursor to sharing trust can be problematic. If it appears trust is bestowed in an unfair manner, then trust production may become compromised. To address this issue, one superintendent suggested a calculated and logical approach when making decisions about whom and to what degree to bestow trust.

> You're right – its – receiving trust by giving it is probably correct but I think again that you have to be situational. You don't give the same level of trust that you do to a master teacher as you do to a rookie. That's the hard part. How do you decide – because you look very – you look very – what's the term I'm looking for – you don't want to seem random to how you are approaching it but what you are being is more calculated trying to assess it. (Superintendent B 11/6/2007-9)

These data have delineated the concern of these participants with sharing trust in a manner that is not naïve and uninformed. Examining the contextual factors allowed these superintendents to create a reciprocal sharing of trust without losing the ability to properly maintain the school district. In addition to thoughtful consideration of the context, participants suggested sharing trust while maintaining security may be accomplished with goal alignment.

Goal alignment and sharing trust. The participants expressed a greater freedom to

confidently share trust when they felt there was proper goal alignment. The idea is that if

personnel are working toward the established goals then they can be trusted to execute

effectively. In the following quote, Superintendent A expressed the connection between

trust, empowerment, and goal alignment.

> So the staff is about half and half experience and youth. They have to be given
> responsibilities – that go out and be empowered to make those decisions. They've
> done a really good job of taking care of business and doing what they have to do
> at that particular point. They have to know what the goals are – they have to be
> empowered and given the means to accomplish those goals and let them go out ---
> yes you have to trust people in order to be trusted and be supportive of persons
> and most cases I think they will respond to that. (11/5/2007-2)

This participant highlighted the need to align goals, be supportive, share trust, and then

received increased levels of trust in return. Superintendent B reiterated this concept when

he says the following.

> So – once I was able to put my team in place – you are absolutely right. You have
> to trust them – that is where you have to be clear up front saying this is the goal,
> and then letting them get to it, and periodically monitoring it. (11/6/2007-8)

These data demonstrate the participants' belief that one action needed for creating

trust is goal alignment for the facilitation of shared trust. It is interesting that in the

previous quote the participant mentioned monitoring. Another idea emerging from the

shared trust conceptualization is that of trusting with verification.

Trust but verify. "Trust but verify" is a phrase that best describes the actions

described in this section of analysis. The participants agreed that one must share trust to

generate it, but they also knew the high stakes of failure. Once the context has been

evaluated and goal alignment has occurred, the participants felt more confident in sharing

trust, but since the superintendent was ultimately accountable they added security to their

trust positions with monitoring activities. Superintendent A succinctly expressed this

thought with, "You know we believe here that we teach, monitor to get it done, and you

monitor people to make sure they are successful" (11/5/2007-2). In addition,

Superintendent B added the idea of timeliness to the monitoring process.

> You've got to bring accountability with your empowerment. So hopefully when I empower you, you are becoming more accountable. That's when you would want to loop back to me to give me a feedback on how it's going early on. (11/6/2007-9)

"Trust but verify" allows participants to share trust without the discomfort of

insecurity. Many monitoring processes require feedback from the task performers. This

feedback must be accurate and authentic. Ideas related to reliable feedback receive

attention in what follows.

Shared trust and reliable feedback. The participants conveyed the need to share

trust so that subordinates had the confidence to provide accurate and reliable feedback. If

the employees do not feel trusted and secure they may not provide the superintendent

with much needed information about the current condition of performance.

Superintendent B cited an example of this in action with what follows.

> The reciprocal part of it [shared trust] is that people are always nice to me. You know, I'm the top dog. But the question is how do you let your guard down and let people be honest with you. That is what I really respect. The push back that I get at some of the high school redesign meetings, saying that is a stupid idea – that's not how they say it that way, but it was. I come up on a lot of them – if you can get feedback. (11/6/2007-10)

Honest feedback requires a high degree of mutual trust; this does not occur by

accident. Receiving authentic feedback is most difficult in situations where the

subordinate's thoughts challenge those of the superintendent. Superintendent C addressed

the need to create protocols that raise trust and allow for accurate and honest feedback.

> The other piece is to be sure that there is some good understanding about – about how we are going to relate to each other. I told our folks, come in and close the door – I want to know how you feel and if I'm heading in the wrong direction, you need to tell me. We are going to do that behind closed doors and, be very honest with me, be very straight forward with me, and you might change my mind. If indeed, we have a change of mind, we are going to say that we had a change of mind. We're heading in this direction, but that's not the right thing to do, and this is why we are moving in this other direction. I expect our folks to feel enough trust to feel comfortable and come in, close the door, give their personal views and opinions, even if indeed they are contrary to the direction I am. (11/8/2007-19)

These data demonstrate the agreement of the participants that trust may be gained

by giving it away, but it also underscores the need of these superintendents to have high

levels of confidence before sharing trust. To that end, these data suggest actions and

behaviors that look for opportunities to share trust while mitigating low levels of

confidence.

Low levels of trust often occur because people receive untimely or incorrect

information. Thus, the data from these participants show concern for taking actions that

provide for accurate and timely communications.

Analysis of Data Related to Investing Trust in Others

The concept that leaders must share trust in order to receive it is acknowledged by

the participants of this study, but the data they offered in response to this idea focuses on

actions that invest trust wisely. In addressing this topic they discussed context, goal

alignment, feedback loops, and verification. The concern of the participants with these

specific topics provides useful insight about the trust production activities of these school system leaders.

The superintendents interviewed for this study clearly understand the need to build trust with the educational stakeholders they serve; and they recognize the need to give trust if they expect it to increase. There is a literature base to support this thinking, and it suggests results are essential to the creation of long term trust (Covey, 2006). This recognition does not lead to naïve activities designed to engender trust, but occurs as a strategic process designed to maximize the trust the participants receive while minimizing the trust (and liability) they must offer. The data related to trust investment demonstrates the tension of this process.

These participants contended that context influences the degree of trust a person or group receives. The experience, knowledge, task to be accomplished, and history of reliability affect the willingness of the superintendent to confer trust. The data suggests these school system leaders are concerned with reducing risk and accomplish this by evaluating several contextual factors before sharing trust. Another strategy for reducing risks apparent in the data is goal alignment.

One of the strategies designed to balance the give and take of trust is described by the participants as goal alignment. These superintendents stated they are reluctant to share trust with individuals unless there has been some effort toward aligning goals. This evidences a desire of these school system leaders to ensure that they are trusting people who will act in a predetermined manner. If people know the thoughts and goals of the

superintendent, they are less likely to take action that strays from accepted practice. The need to reduce liability also manifests itself in the form of feedback loops.

The participants reduce liability by using the closely related systems of feedback loops and verification. Evaluating the situational context and aligning the goals of potential trust receivers allows the superintendents of this study to have sufficiently reduced risk to bestow trust. However, the desire to manage liability does not completely wane. These superintendents also create structures that facilitate the consistent monitoring to verify acceptable activity. The gifting of trust is closely followed with security of verification. The actions described by the data reveal an underlying theme that runs through much of the data.

Presentation of Data Regarding Communication to Increase and Maintain Trust

To offer a comprehensive investigation of the relationship between trust and communication would take several voluminous tomes and is not the purpose of this study; however, the theme of communication emerged from an analysis of the data supplied during the primary round of data collection. The participants addressed three general communication behaviors and/or activities that increase trust: (a) an emphasis on communication that promotes transparency, (b) description of communication structures, and (c) actions that engage in message management.

Transparency. The participants agreed that establishing communication that promotes transparency increases the trust received by the superintendent. Superintendent B summarized the data related to transparency in the anecdote that follows.

> I'm trying to tell my people that we are open – that is how I got my reputation here – I tell you before someone else tells you. I got picked up for speeding in a

school zone as I'm leaving the school. That night, my board president said 'oh don't worry – I'm chief of staff'. That night I went home and called the local newspaper and told them. (11/6/2007-12)

This superintendent believes transparency means taking action that distributes

information to all stakeholders.

All my important letters are communicated in English and Spanish simultaneously, but I try to – sometimes I can't do it because I have to get things out to the community. But again, I'm getting everything out in English and Spanish. (11/6/2007-13)

Superintendents B and C expressed how transparency combats misinformation

and dispels media negativity. Superintendent C offered the following:

I think that is very important for superintendents to know – you've got to work very well with the board, communicate with them on a weekly basis, make sure you are keeping them informed, make sure they have the information that they need for the things they are hearing from the community because if they are hearing some bad things from the community, a parent or a community person is calling the board member – it usually is not to praise the district – it means they have an issue or problem. (11/8/2007-19)

Superintendent B added his thoughts with the following lines.

I think it is a steady effort of just being certain that you get the truth out. Transparency is important. I think as much as people try to come up with something, the fact of the matter there is never any fire there – smoke may be there, but they don't see fire. (11/6/2007-11)

The recurring idea is that communication that is open and honest, even if the

message is uncomfortable or negative, will be well received and increase trust. If people

discover negative information that has been covered up or intentionally left unmentioned,

trust decreases. Expressions extolling the virtue of transparency fail to explain how these

participants structure communication to allow for the reciprocal sharing of information.

Structures of communication. The three most commonly used structures for communication noted by the participants include meetings, campus visits, and the use of technology systems. The meetings described include a variety of groups and accomplish various tasks. Superintendent A described the common practice of meeting with the district's upper administration. This action allows for responsiveness and consistent access to the superintendent.

> Well – you try to make yourself available as much as you could. I think there are certain issues that they need to talk to me about with regards to things. We meet once a week – in the inner cabinet meets once a week, sometimes daily, depending on the time of year, or crisis situation. They have access to make aware of some things that I need to be talked about. (11/5/2007-4)

In addition to district level meetings, meetings with campus level leaders are common. Superintendent C highlighted the benefits of these meetings in what follows.

> We have principals on our leadership team – tomorrow I'm meeting with about fourteen principals – just myself and them. We have the teacher's advisory group that is required under the law – we are meeting with teachers. So all of these things are meetings and conversations that we have dialogue with concerns and issues that are on their mind and the trust gets built when I come back and then work with our leaders in the central office, and make changes as a result of that input. They say, 'Oh, he did listen to me – oh, they are taking care of those issues that we have'. (11/8/2007-20)

This quote underscores a vital aspect of meetings. Although some meetings are required by law, meetings have no trust building result unless there in genuine follow through based on the concerns expressed. In addition to meetings with school personnel, the participants regularly interface with the community. Superintendent C described one format meant to facilitate communication between the superintendent and the community.

I haven't done it here yet – we've talked about this where we would set up some community coffees. In C. C., what I did, we went to the movies, and they were gracious enough to open up for a 10:00 meeting, if you will. They had coffee and doughnuts and I spoke for fifteen minutes, and then we took questions. It was an open dialogue and if you had a concern about transportation, you would raise that. We would have our transportation director right there. If I couldn't answer it then we would call the individuals and they knew they had to be there to respond to those questions. (11/8/2007-21)

Some meetings are purposed to foster communication in pursuit of a specific goal.

One superintendent described this mechanism in what follows.

Right now over the athletic conflicts we've got a group of folks who were brought together to give us the good, the bad, and the ugly about human resources. Well, that is another process of telling them 'hey guys – take a look at ourselves and what are we doing well by you in H.R.?' What other help do they need – what other things would you like for us to do better? All of these meetings and avenues for communicating and having a dialogue help in creating that trust. (Superintendent C, 11/8/2007-20)

Meetings are common to almost all organizations. These participants demonstrate the importance of meetings to receive information about conditions in all levels of the organization and use meetings to grant stakeholders access to the highest levels of school district leadership. These actions, the participants argued, build trust. Effective meetings reap many rewards, but visiting campuses demonstrates a higher level of commitment.

Campus visits demonstrate the willingness of the superintendent to hear from people at all levels of the district and allows the visited campus leader the comfort of discussing issues within the context they occur. Superintendent A noted the spontaneity and inclusiveness of communication that occurs during a campus visit when he said, "I visit schools quite often where people see me walking around, and they come up and visit" (11/5/2007-4). Superintendent C agreed and noted the importance of making these visits specifically for the good of campus principals and receiving their feedback when he

stated, "Well, for me with the principals specifically, it's making some school visits – and just for different things getting feedback" (11/8/2007-20). Many visits are informal and provide opportunities for individual conversations and communications at a more personal level. Superintendent B underscored the previous thought when he said, "informally, in individual conversations, I'm getting information and feedback, and learning about people" (11/6/2007-14). These interactions allow the superintendent to appear more human accessible, which in turn increases trust. Campus visits are seen as such a given, the participants did not elaborate at great length about that process, but they did enjoy speaking about the use of communication systems.

Technology has added to the ease with which people can communicate. A number of technologies facilitate fast and efficient communication, and to delineate all of them is pointless. Superintendent A highlighted a number of technology systems used by all the participants as they seek to make certain types of communication faster and more efficient.

> We have a weekly newsletter we send out on computer – that's a means. We send emails and that type of thing making sure people are aware. TV stations – we put a lot of things on TV – be aware of that. We also have the website like everyone else-we post stuff to that. (11/5/2007-3)

One superintendent uses a form of telecommunication that creates mass communication opportunities.

> We've got a new system that we can call – now if I want to talk to all employees, I can call all of them. One phone call, and within – o gosh – ten minutes, everybody has received a call. We do that to welcome them back to school. We do that, say for example, when we were going to have a hurricane, I called all 3000 employees and within ten minutes, they all have been notified that we were not going to have school – that school had been cancelled. (Superintendent A, 11/5/2007-4)

These electronic forms of mass communication are augmented by a number of printed materials. The participants of this study serve in districts that use a number of print communications. They all use some form of district published newsletter for the community (archived records 9-11). They also publish and distribute an internal newsletter (archived record 12-14). The district of Superintendent A also offers an information guide that communicates information relevant to virtually all aspects of the district (archived record 15). The communications department of Superintendent A has published a small book of his wit and wisdom (archived record 16). These publications are in addition to those communications required by law (i.e. academic and financial progress reports). All of this communication structure reduces risk and increases trust by empowering people through available information. These forms of communication do not provide the personal contact of meetings and visits, but they bolster trust by helping people know where to turn if they need information applicable to the entire district in a hurry (as was the case during the hurricane referenced above).

Another aspect of communication systems concerns the creation of occupational positions dedicated to communicating with and hearing from specific groups of people. Superintendent B thoroughly addressed this form of communication structure in what follows.

> I created a position, J. G., who is my executive director for planning and community relations. I've got an ombudsman that we created. We've created a network with customer service standards, you know. So we have standards of customer service. I'm about to hire a diversity director cause I realize that I have to be more sensitive to the cultures of my district. I'm an Anglo – you know, I may be an Italian – I'm a mongrel Italian Irish the whole bit. It doesn't give me much credibility with the African American or Hispanic community. (11/6/2007-13)

Creating personnel positions at the district level to communicate with and reach certain people emphasizes the importance of communication and the degree to which these participants feel opening a dialogue bolsters feelings of trust.

The desire for communication and transparency cannot lead one into a naïve view of the issue. Message control and management is necessary for effective and trust building communication.

Message management. Although the participants believe in open communication, they also feel the superintendent must act in ways that manage and sometimes control the message being communicated. Superintendent B plainly stated what others may address with more caution when he made the following statement.

> It is really something in managing a message – it sounds like we are deviants when we say it – cause it has that latent context – shouldn't we be open? But come on – you can't be naïve. (11/6/2007-11)

This conflict between openness and naiveté is addressed by the actions of other superintendents. According to Superintendent A, the media creates some of the tension between transparency and message management because of their disingenuous practices. He expounded on this idea and offered his solution in the lines that follow.

> I would rather go live with a statement than have a statement that they sound bite you out. You see stuff that they just take bits and pieces you say, and then you are supporting what they are trying to make their story about. I've learned to be smarter about it after all these years. If I do say something, I want it to be live, or be sure what the reporter says and you say fully what I'm saying here. (11/5/2007-3)

Another aspect related to control involves the issues about which one is willing to communicate. There are some topics Superintendent B will not entertain because it is not worth the media scrutiny and potential litigation.

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You know – I mean – that's the part of it – in some ways, I love when J. is getting sued like crazy but it looks like he's created these issues on religion. Why would you create these issues to eat up your time? But there are in a different context up there. They wanted to say that we could have prayer. O boy! You'd better be careful cause the witches in this town would want their prayer, or the Muslims, and then we'll see what happens. We are a little more sophisticated so – and we got to get ahead – I don't want any part of sex ed. I don't want to do it on my watch cause all it's going to do is eat me alive, and we'll get no place, you know. (11/6/2007-11)

Superintendent B also fears mistaken communication with the personnel of his district. To help combat misinformation and misinterpretation he has devised a strategy described here.

You know, and what some of my managers don't like, I'll leave a message for K. E., P. E., and T. S. I just don't leave it for P., for K. to tell P. Some of them don't like that. My point is that I'm telling your people what I'm thinking. I don't want you to translate my thinking. I don't want you to translate my thinking, because by the time it got to T., it would be a different message. Boy, some of them get uptight, but I broke them on that. L. wanted me to come to him so I want J. to hear what I'm saying, and make sure that L. gets it. (11/6/2007-10)

Superintendent B often sends identical messages throughout the organization via voice-mail, and even then he struggles to communicate the correct message in the appropriate tone.

He hears my voice – and I try – I erase voice messages cause I get so pumped up – I'll hit 76 and do it again – I've done them four times cause I can't find the right tone – I'm so wrapped up you know – and if I did that in an email – you know what would happen – Oh God, you know. (11/6/2007-10)

These data suggest conveying truthful and accurate information requires more than determining the truth and communicating it; it requires strategic thought and planning. Strategy is not always to avoid negatives. Superintendent C has a proactive structure to control the timing of information in a manner that is favorable to his work.

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> I think besides your instincts, you know, those ideas of taking the opportunity of being proactive you know. Like when I have a big event, I had my assistant call twenty influential citizens of this community-call them! And said that tomorrow you are going to hear about this – the superintendent just wanted you to know it. So tomorrow when they open the paper, they can say 'hey – he just called me about this'. That just means a lot and adds trust. (11/8/2007-21)

Message management may sound Machiavellian, but the participants suggested in the context of high media scrutiny and litigious activity, communication for trust must be managed to a high level of precision.

The knowledge needed to manage complex educational systems that require superintendents to be organizational, educational, and financial leaders cannot be overstated. To this end, the superintendents intoned a belief that school system leaders must engage in activities designed to augment their professional expertise.

Analysis of Data Regarding Communication to Increase and Maintain Trust

The ability to share and receive information aids trust production, and the literature suggests that when leaders listen to their followers and show action based on that information, trust levels show increased growth (Svensson, 2006; Yukl, 2005). The data from this study support the literature and reveals additional communication activities in support of trust building.

According to these data, transparency surfaces as one key aspect of trust forming communication. This idea encourages communication that is open, honest, and frank. It seeks to admit failures, share concerns, and reveal decision making processes. In addition, the data reveals the ability of transparent communication to avoid controversy and negative media attention. There is an aspect of transparency that serves to get ahead of the story. The logic of this thought suggests that if the superintendent frankly

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communicates some of the district's faults it limits the media's power to trap the district with negative information. Self-disclosure of failure appears more honest and trustworthy that getting caught in a mistake. Thus, the transparency aids in the free flow of communication, an action which build trust, and makes the trust eroding practice of negative reporting less potent. Discussing communication addresses intent, and structuring for communication shows action.

The participants of this study offered data demonstrating a desire to establish numerous lines of communication. They use technology, personal visits, large and small group meetings, and other communication structures. Deciding which communication structure best accomplishes a desired outcome requires some strategic planning, but every attempt is made to exhaust all reasonable communication methods and structures. The desire to so thoroughly communicate demonstrates these superintendents' understanding of the primary importance of communication. In addition, it expresses certain sensitivity to the ability of various stakeholder groups to access information (i.e. not all people have internet access, and some need information in a language other than English). Understanding and addressing the need to disseminate information evidences at least an intuitive understanding of the power effective communication holds to engender trust. In addition, many structures seek not only to share information, but also receive it. Providing access to the superintendent appears in the data as a priority. In this way communication and concepts related to social capital intersect. Granting access to the school system leader through communication systems allows association which in turn creates trust (the intersection of these themes will be explored in Chapter 5 of this study).

The communication systems aid the dispersal of information, but designing the information to be shared also needs attention.

Much of the data related to communication relates in some way to concerns about media coverage. All of the participants noted the media pressure and spoke of the negative bias of the media toward public schools. The belief in this negative bias shapes the thinking of the participants as it relates to communication. To this end, the data explores these superintendents' attempts to manage the messages communicated from schools. There is an admission that this activity sounds sinister, but these school leaders insist failure to manage the message is naïve. One strategy for managing the message is communicating directly to audiences without the use of intermediaries. For example, Superintendent B leaves voice mails for an entire department, not just the department leader, and Superintendent A may insist on live media interviews instead of pre-recorded messages that may be surreptitiously edited. These actions reveal the school system leaders' distrust of the media and attempts to bolster their security when communicating through media outlets. In this way, the trust is maintained by crafting what these superintendents would argue is an accurate message and protecting the school from malicious media coverage. This is telling as it relates to the strained relationship between the media and public schools and the willingness, if not necessity, of these participants to micromanage certain communications. The importance of communication to trust cannot be overstated, but other factors such as the expertise of the system leader effects trust levels as well.

Presentation of Data Addressing Expertise and Trust Levels

As data from the initial collection effort received analysis, one topic receiving

attention was that of expertise. Participants spoke of the need to have and establish a

broad base of knowledge in order to have the trust of the educational community. In

addition, expertise allows the superintendent to actually offer the guidance and gain the

results needed to cement feelings of trust between the school leader and his constituents.

Superintendent C made this point clear in the following lines.

> They [educational stakeholders] are looking at you. Even though they may have
> expertise in curriculum, they are also wanting for you to demonstrate that so that
> indeed when you say I'm about curriculum alignment, that they know that you're
> going to ask those tough questions – have you developed the curriculum – have
> you analyzed what level it is and is it appropriate – is it appropriate across all
> schools or do we have different levels of curriculum at different schools? So the
> knowledge base is important in order for them to be trusting so that when you
> speak you are not only speaking for what is right for kids in the community, but
> you are speaking from a base of expertise, if you will, and that indeed – I think up
> front, the superintendent has to spend a whole lot of time with the individuals.
> (11/8/2007-18)

The relationship between expertise and trust production received more probing

during subsequent data collection and the results were a bit surprising. The themes related

to expertise are staying current, drawing attention to superintendent expertise, and the

limits of expertise to generate trust.

Staying current. The participants suggested that staying abreast of educational

innovation is an important action related to generating trust through the acquisition and

maintenance of expertise. Superintendent A offered thoughts that best exemplify the

pressures to stay current.

> I not only lead a school district, but a nation of educators and how do you
> improve the plight of kids who normally have all kinds of issues and problems.

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So what that does – it forces me to study and research how to stay on top of things, to be sure that I have this district cause everyone in America is going to be looking at us. Never been satisfied – always having to try to find new ways and new ideas and how to keep up with them. Keep things that help you with your board, having confidence in you, to say that you are the professional expert. (11/5/2007-5)

The work of continuous education reaps benefits of additional confidence and

trust. Superintendent A continued by outlining the benefit of staying current.

I think when board members go to professional organizations and hear and see what's going on and outside of the school district, that's just a lot more confidence that they have in you. It brings about that they are going to listen to you more. (11/5/2007-6)

The ability of the superintendent to be aware of the most current educational

issues lends credibility to the superintendent. In the quote that follows, Superintendent C

described his efforts at professional development and how that sets an example for others.

I take the advantage of conferences – you know – there are some broad programs when you come to conferences. I usually pick them both – pick those things that are coming up in our district, that I want to learn more about – I pick those things that I'm not as strong in. Just to give you an example –right now, narrowing the gap, high school reform, creating academies – those are high interest topics to me. So when I go to a conference that is what I gravitate to. What are people doing? I want to compare my thoughts with what they are doing and learn some more so that as we develop our academy program that we refine it to a higher level, and learn from what others have done already. I think it is important to people to take advantage of that learning that is out there – you can do the book studies as well – so that is another way of doing that. I think the central office staff and leadership need to see you as continuing to learn. (11/8/2007-23)

This participant sees the need to continually refine his knowledge and display

himself as an example for others. When the superintendent speaks of the need to improve

and then sets the example, trust increases in two ways. First, followers believe in the

ability of the superintendent to lead. Second, they see him as genuine because his actions

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follow his words. It is not enough to have expertise and develop them; the participants

spoke of a need to draw attention to their ability.

Draw attention to expertise. Having expertise may not generate trust unless

followers are aware of the leader's knowledge and skills. This may seem self promoting,

but these participants feel it is necessary. Superintendent A's lines note the need to have

expertise and make sure they are noticed.

> Staying abreast of what is new and what helps you – and seeing that others notice
> what you are doing. You can be doing these things and it is not seen it or known,
> and they [educational stakeholders] can't appreciate it as well. (11/5/2007-4)

Interestingly, while sitting in Superintendent A's office, I could not help but notice how

proximately he displayed his state and national awards and recognitions. This may have

been a deliberate action designed to publicize his expertise.

Superintendent C stated the position with more strength. In what follows he

suggested superintendents must sell their abilities. "You really have to sell that and have

them know that yes you are sincere in what you want to do, and that you have the

knowledge base. They are looking at you" (11/8/2007-18).

Thus, having expertise has little influence unless the educational community is

made aware of the superintendent's knowledge and skills. Knowing the superintendent is

indeed the educational expert adds credibility and trust in the superintendent. Not all of

the data agreed with this premise. Superintendent B offered data explaining the limits of

expertise to generate trust.

Limits of expertise to generate trust. Superintendent B felt the ability of expertise

to gain trust is quite limited. He suggested expertise may help one get hired, but that trust

is superficial and short lived. He stated, "It [expertise] might get you hired but, it's really – at least in this town – people want to see more", and "expertise did get me the job superficially, but I think it's much more than that that allows me to keep it" (11/6/2007-14). He offered the idea that context plays a role in how much expertise may add to the perceived trustworthiness of a superintendent when he said, "So – I think rural districts and smaller districts – that might go over a little bit – I'm doctor this and I know more than you" (11/6/2007-14). It is worth noting as a reminder that neither Superintendent A nor C is in a rural or small district. What is interesting is the very different opinion of expertise from Superintendent B. This will garner more discussion in the final chapter.

Expertise may allow superintendents to generate trust among diverse and competing constituencies, but there is some data to suggest this power of expertise is limited. The issue of expertise and the need to develop a broad base of knowledge for the generation of trust emerged from the initial data collection, and yet on the second round of questioning received mixed opinions from the participants.

Analysis of Data Addressing Expertise and Trust Levels

The data presented in this study suggests that, in general, these superintendents generate trust by maintaining and promoting their level of professional expertise. Relevant literature agrees that a high degree of professional knowledge and skill engenders trust amongst followers (Yukl, 2005; Covey, 2006; and Roscio, 1996). The belief in the ability of expertise to generate trust is not universal and draws attention to matters of context. These educational leaders described expertise in terms of acquiring and maintaining expertise, promoting expertise, and the limits of expertise to increase

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trust levels. This data demonstrates the strategic use of professional development for trust production and the importance of influence of situational factors on trust levels.

For all of the political wrangling that typifies the superintendency (and especially the relationship between the superintendent and the school board) the participants were quick to note the almost universally acknowledged role of the superintendent as the educational expert of the district. In addition, it is the job of the school system leader to guide and advise the board on educational matters. This situation creates a scenario in which the perceived expertise of the superintendent may increase the level of trust he/she receives from the board and other stakeholders. To this end, the data contends trust levels increase as the school system leader pursues ever increasing levels of professional development. In addition, these leaders explained that staying current on national trends and issues also add to their credibility and therefore trust levels. All of this underscores the role of professional development not only as essential for acceptable job performance, but also as a strategy for maintaining and increasing levels of trust. In short, these data state that school leaders must appear as though they know what they are doing. One implied aspect of this activity addresses the need for superintendents to not only have expertise, but also promote their ability.

Another interesting action related to expertise and building trust addresses the need of the school leaders to advertise their abilities. These data note that having expertise does not build trust unless the expertise is recognized. To this end, these participants engage in activities designed to publicize their skills, abilities, and knowledge. Essential to this effort is bringing attention to expertise without seeming self-

aggrandizing and/or insincere. These actions again highlight the complexity of trust formation. If one is viewed as genuine and able, the data suggests trust levels will increase, but if the presentation of expertise gives the appearance of arrogance, then these superintendents believe trust levels will decrease (regardless of expertise). This example of complexity provides a micro view of the generalized idea that trust formation is an extremely complex act of numerous and fluctuating factors. In some cases, expertise may not build trust at all.

Superintendent B stated quite clearly that using expertise to build trust is fruitless. He contended that expertise may provide the credentials needed to receive a job interview, but that they do little to inspire trust. In response, the researcher shared the thoughts of other participants and solicited reaction. The data from Superintendent B pointed to the influential role of context. He believes expertise may build trust in generally un-credentialed, non-professional communities, but that in his context many of the stakeholders view themselves as experts in some area, if not education. This data supports the contention that no trust building activity possesses the same power to engender trust to the same degree in all settings. Again, the intricate intersection of situational and contextual factors steeps any discussion of trust production in complexity.

Summary

The evidence describes the actions and behaviors of three superintendents that they perceive to generate trust with diverse and competing constituencies. These actions may be broadly categorized as those which develop social capital, manage exchange relationships, create a sense of shared values and beliefs, use structures that support trust,

demonstrate positive results, bestow trust to others, organize and manage communication, and develop and advertise expertise. This chapter presented the data collected from the interviews, document analysis, and observations of three Texas public school superintendents. The collected data were analyzed in light of Lewis and Weigert's (1985) framework of trust production to determine sub-themes. The next chapter discusses these findings.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Introduction

The contemporary American educational context presents mounting challenges to the effective leadership of public school districts. Demographic shifts, pressures of federal accountability, and the mobility of educational leaders produce a difficult leadership environment. School superintendents must have the ability to create and sustain meaningful relationships with competing stakeholders if they intend to meet the challenges of school leadership. The effectiveness of relationships depends on trust. The literature and experience demonstrate that producing trust while working with diverse and competing people is becoming increasingly difficult and this difficulty creates an additional barrier to strong school leadership. Bennis (1994) asserts the importance of trust when he states the following.

> The most important point I can make about leadership in light of the seismic changes taking place in our global economy is that followers need from their leaders three basic qualities: they want direction; they want trust; and they want hope. ....with respect to the spastic changes taking place in the world today, the trust factor will reign as the most pivotal factor of a leader's success.(Bennis, 1994, p. 151)

Creation of trust specifically, and school leadership generally, has become more important and demanding because of the increased complexity of school environments. Thus, the perceptions held by superintendents regarding what actions and behaviors build trust become critical to the effective leadership of modern school systems.

Given the relationship between trust creation and effective leadership, this study purposed to describe and analyze the actions taken by three superintendents that they

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perceive to build trust with diverse and competing constituencies. Specifically, this study examines: (a) the development of social capital for the production of trust, (b) the use of exchange for the development of trust, (c) how shared values and beliefs work to engender trust, and (d) the creation of structures that promote the development of trust. In addition, themes emerged from the data that suggest the need to investigate: (a) gaining results, (b) investing trust, (c) communication, and (d) expertise and their relationship to trust production.

The current level of education related contention throughout the nation creates a need for school district leaders to understand the trust building strategies and acts used successfully by district leaders to increase a leader's received trust levels. Given the multidimensional nature of experiences encountered by superintendents within their school communities, there is a need to describe their trust generating practices in relation to leading a diverse group of stakeholders in public school districts.

Study Design

This study asked the following question. What are superintendents' reflections and considerations regarding actions and behaviors that they perceive to build trust with diverse and competing constituencies? To answer the research question, the study employed a qualitative method called a case study. This study adhered to the five basic tenets of qualitative research.

Sampling: Purposeful Selection

The sample of superintendents was chosen based on several criteria. The central aim of this study was to describe and analyze the actions of three superintendents that

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they feel allows them to build trust with diverse and competing constituencies. This study applied a typical sample type that, although sought positive examples of trust production, is "not intensely unusual" (Patton, 1990, p. 173). To this end, the sample must have met the following parameters:

1. The superintendents must have developed some level of trust as is evidenced by a relationship with their board that facilitates relational stability.

2. The communities must be racially and economically diverse.

To identify participants who would meet these broad guidelines and provide useful data, the researcher employed a snowballing selection method by asking people considered informed and knowledgeable to suggest potential participants (Mertens, 2005).

Data Collection and Analysis

Yin (2003) listed six sources of evidence appropriate to case studies. Of those six, this study used three forms of data collection: (a) interviews, (b) direct observation, and (c) documents. Each of these data collection activities receives a brief explanation in what follows. The data from this study was analyzed by "relying on theoretical propositions" (Yin, 2003, p. 111). This was accomplished by using an analytic strategy adapted from techniques offered by Bodgan and Bilken (1982). The Lewis and Weigert (1985) framework offered insight to help create codes to begin analysis and allowed for data to drive the generation of four additional analysis structures.

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the actions and behaviors public school superintendents perceive as building trust with diverse and competing constituencies. The research is guided by the Lewis and Weigert (1985) framework of trust producing actions and behaviors. The researcher interviewed participants expecting data related to specific actions and behaviors that build trust. This is not exactly what the data produced. The data offered much discussion of trust building activity in general terms, but, unexpectedly, the participants also provided data regarding why and how these types of behaviors generate trust. This study and related discussion does describe and analyze actions and behaviors public school superintendents perceive to build trust, and it also includes data and analysis regarding how and why some of these action and behaviors generate and/or increase trust.

The findings of this study suggest the participants hold perceptions about trust building actions and behaviors that generally align with related literature. In addition, these findings highlight areas in which the perceptions of the participants do not fully embrace the theoretical positions conveyed in the research. The sections that follow will discuss these findings and their relationship to the literature.

Three Texas Public School District Superintendents' Perceptions about Trust Building

Social capital. The first theme explored by this study is the development of social capital for trust creation. The literature contends group association allows one to accrue a form of capital that manifests itself in the form acceptance, positive perceptions, and trust (Bourdieu, 1986; Svensson, 2006). The power of social capital compels Lewis and

Weigert (1985) to include its development in their frame describing actions and behaviors of leaders that produce trust. The participants of this study hold perceptions that value social capital for its ability to generate trust. Each offered data that suggests trust increases as leaders develop relationships with key stakeholder groups. These relationships lead to group association and increased acceptance from the general educational community. In addition, these leaders hint at leveraging their acceptance by one group to make acceptance by other groups easier. This strategic use of group association underscores a concept key to social capital literature, and that is the idea of capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Capital may be thought of as a resource intended for investment, and this study found that these superintendents perceive their investment in relationships as a resource essential to trust building across the district. Thus, the development of social capital for the production of trust includes a twofold procedure. First, group acceptance and trust must be earned, and second, the acceptance must be used to gain the trust of other associated groups (Bordieu, 1986). In this way, the participants perceive themselves to employ the strategic use of social capital in a way that aligns with the literature. Although the participants demonstrated agreement with the fundamental idea found in the related literature, this study found some divergence in the nuances.

The development of social capital for trust is an idea generally adhered to by the participants of this study, but this study also found the perceptions of the participants about the use of social capital somewhat limited. Each of the participants voiced agreement with the need to develop social capital and to recognize its power to generate

trust. In fact, of all the topics addressed in this study, social capital generated the most data and was of the most interest to the participants; however, these superintendents tend to focus their efforts at developing social capital with one group. They talked about several stakeholder groups, but the findings contend they privilege one group. Superintendent A believes the relationship with the school board reaps the most reward; Superintendent B relies on the relationships forged with key district personnel; and Superintendent C seems to especially curry the favor of important business leaders. The findings point out that these participants understand the essential nature of relating to numerous groups, but in practice they perceive one group as more valuable than another. In addition, each superintendent favors a different group. This does not demonstrate a break with the literature, but it does suggest the practice of building trust through increased social capital may include complexities not fully addressed in the literature. The complexity of social capital proves thought provoking, and the same is true of the findings related to the strategic use of exchange for trust building.

Exchange. These findings evidenced mixed reactions to the idea of managing exchanges for the development of trust, and, therefore demonstrate various degrees of alignment with the literature. Research addressing the management of exchanges for the development of trust suggests leaders occasionally need to reduce the liability and/or increase the benefit for a party in order to secure their trust (McKnight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998). Increasing benefit and/or reducing liability may require the leader to exchange some resources in return for trust. In addition, this literature contends some exchanges serve as tests to validate or negate the trust a leader receives (Exchanges will

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be opportunities for a leader to show he/she is willing to "play ball".) (Bhattacharya, et al., 1998). These findings show these participants recognize the use of exchange as a strategy, but a mixed willingness to employ the method.

The participants of this study perceive themselves to use exchange for the creation of trust in different ways. Superintendent A is willing to exchange quite a bit of his power and position for the trust and support from a school board member. Superintendent C avoids the term exchange, but does speak of leveraging the mutual interests of parties in the pursuit of trust creation. Superintendent B vehemently expresses distaste for the whole concept and says he will not engage in exchanges. However, at a point when exchange is not the topic of conversation, Superintendent B states that if a person of influence asks him to hire a particular person in the school system he will only promise an interview for the prospective employee. This promise represents a subtle form of exchange that may hold tremendous power and give the job seeker a notable advantage in the selection process. These findings highlight the variety of responses to questions of exchange and show the degree to which the findings agree and disagree with the literature.

The findings regarding exchange express different attitudes toward this concept. This may be explained by the desire of these school leaders to appear at all times fair, equal, and ethical. The idea of exchange is not inherently unethical, but even the appearance of chicanery proved off-putting to some of the participants. This may highlight the superintendents' awareness of how difficult is to gain trust and how quickly it is lost. Although the findings revealed attitudes toward the idea of exchange that are

somewhat negative, the actual actions described show a use of this strategy. Whether the leader uses personnel positions to maintain favor, or negotiate agreements, the exchange is used in a way that promotes stability, allows the work to progress, and builds trust. This veiled but real disconnect between attitude and action may evidence the tension that exists as leaders struggle to balance pragmatism with principle. Each of the superintendents made clear that there are exchanges they will not make, but the line of acceptability is different for each leader. Understanding the complexity of what influences how each leader decides what are allowable and unallowable exchanges is the topic of another study, but these findings suggest the idea of the strategic use of exchange to build trust reveals a point of struggle for these school leaders. In addition, this study found general agreement between the literature and actions of the superintendents, but the perceptions of these superintendents tended to show some disdain for this concept.

Values and beliefs. This study found the participants' perceptions about the ability of shared values to build trust mostly agree with the literature. The research suggests trust occurs when there is a belief that a person's values will lead them to approach all situations in a manner deemed acceptable (Bigley & Pearce, 1998; Davis, et al., 2000). These participants not only communicate their values directly, but they also use educational and systemic programs and an intent focus on beliefs to create a sense of shared values. In addition, the study suggests they may avoid value laden topics that are seen as controversial and unfeasible. Thus, the participants recognize the influence of shared values upon the ability to generate trust, but they appear to avoid the value related issues that may reap the highest levels of trust.

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When questioned about creating a sense of shared values, the participants immediately offered answers about educational values. These findings offer valuable insight regarding these superintendents' actions and behaviors; however, it is noteworthy that none of the participants volunteered discussions of more generalized values. The researcher even directed questions to the idea of values in the sense of desired character qualities and beliefs and/or ethics and morality. These participants offered no useful responses to this line of questioning. They were much more comfortable talking about educational values and community expectations and were reluctant to discuss the need to establish a sense of shared personal values. The literature suggests trust increases most when personal values are communicated and shared (Davis, et al., 2000; Svensson, 2006), yet the school leaders of this study circumvent the topic. This may indicate a desire of these school leaders to maintain some personal distance or their hesitancy to create tension by inviting conflict regarding controversial topics. The importance is the data suggests these leaders maintain shared professional values. The importance of building shared values and its relationship to trust production rings true to practitioners and researchers. One tool used by school system leaders to create a sense of shared values is organizational structures. School system structures may be organized in a manner that produces higher levels of trust and is a topic worthy of additional consideration.

Structure. The literature maintains systemic structure may increase the trust levels experienced by the organizational leader (Shapiro, 1987; Bolman & Deal, 2006). Systems promoting transparency, empowerment, clearly set and defined expectations, and other attributes of loose controlled organizations promote trust (Bolman & Deal, 2006; Dirks &

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Ferrin, 2001). This study shows strong alignment between the perceptions of the participants and the literary findings. These superintendents discussed that trust levels increase because of structures that empower, promote teamwork, offer incentives (tangible and intangible), and are based on clearly articulated lines of authority and expectations. Each of these structural attributes generates trust because they either reduce risk or increase benefit. Thus, the system leaders of this study show knowledge of the connection between structure and trust levels.

Although the findings demonstrated the superintendents' clear understanding of structures that support trust production, they also interjected measures to limit their insecurity. For example, the findings related to empowerment include prerequisites to receiving that privilege. One's level of empowerment may be contingent on factors such as expertise, years of proven reliability, accomplishing some training, or receiving some specific guidance and direction from the superintendent. In another example, work teams may be restricted to specific job parameters set by the superintendent. In short, the participants understand in a general way that they gain trust when they share trust, but they are inclined to only trust to a certain degree. The willingness to trust may be different for each leader, but each approaches trust production in a strategic manner. This likely results from the highly political and contentious nature of the superintendency as outlined in Chapter 1 and the natural human desire to limit liability described in Chapter 2. These factors make trust building a complex issue and deserve more attention later. Structures promote trust in subtle ways, but accomplishing positive results achieves trust in a more direct manner.

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Results. Relevant writing contends that eventually, no matter how or what actions a leader takes to build trust, he/she will lose the faith of followers if they do not demonstrate results (Covey, 2006). This plain and simple belief is stated in literature and agrees with the findings of this study. As the participants discuss trust building activities, they note the need to show some positive outcomes of their leadership. The interesting aspect of these findings involves how these leaders describe the types of results that maximize trust production.

The participants of this study agree leaders must show positive results to sustain high levels of trust; however, they offer very different ideas about what types of results one should first pursue. Superintendent A contends showing school improvement as measured by state accountability ratings garners high levels of trust. He argues that trust increases as stakeholders see the schools accomplishing the task of educating students as validated by state measurements. Superintendent B describes state accountability measures as lagging in results and suggests trust levels rise when leaders make good decisions, especially tough decisions. He feels it is the ability to affect decision making and use effective decision making processes that quickly garner high trust levels. Superintendent C privileges results that align with community expectations of the schools. His stance is not unlike Superintendent A's except his measurement includes more community standards and relies less on the state accountability ratings. These findings, regarding which results best build trust, may again suggest the influence of situational and/or personal context, but all the participants agree that results do not build trust until they are communicated. Regardless of which results these leaders prioritize,

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they communicate them with stakeholders in the belief that the stakeholder will respond by investing higher levels of trust.

Invest trust. Literature exists that supports the idea that one receives trust when they invest it in others (LaPorte & Metlay, 1996; Yukl, 2005). The findings of this study suggest these participants act and behave in ways that align with the literature. They agree that sharing trust with stakeholders is a powerful trust building activity, but insist on actions that limit the risk of investing trust. To this end, prior to investing trust these superintendents work for goal alignment, context analysis, and implement feedback structures that support a 'trust but verify' philosophy. The need of investing trust with notable limitations emerges from the data offered by each participant. This willingness to share trust for trust production is evident in the literature, but placing significant controls on those that receive trust is not as prevalent in the research. This struggle to balance the release of trust with the reduction of risk affects the actions and behaviors of this study's participants. The need to address this struggle highlights a concept observed throughout this study.

This section of data, more than any other, highlights a concept embedded throughout the study. The participants of this study clearly understand the need to build trust and employ strategies for the generation of trust. They also recognize the reality that trust builds when trust is shared, but trust generation appears to be task fraught with complexity and that is highly contextual. The data suggests this trust tension occupies much of the strategic analysis executed by these school system leaders and profoundly influences their actions and behaviors.

Communication. The participants of the study discuss communication for trust in terms of desired attributes of communication structures. They emphasize communication structures that are transparent and use numerous methods of transmission. These ideas align with literature that contends clear and effective communication reduces risks and bolsters a leader's appearance of authenticity (Yukl, 2005; Bolman & Deal, 2006). The participants discuss the comfort taken by stakeholders when they believe controversial and important issues will not take them by surprise. This need to bolster the security of the educational community provides these school system leaders with an opportunity to increase trust levels. One aspect of communication that addresses the need of the participants to reduce their own risks is message management.

The literature related to using communication to build trust does not generally include topics of message management, but this idea surfaces in the findings of this study. Because the superintendents of this study are very suspicious of the media, they explain the need to control how, when, what, and to whom information is communicated. The energy spent on message management yields additional security for the school leader and is intended to ensure the accuracy of delivered communications. The school system leaders of this study do believe message management builds trust by helping to reduce the number of miscommunications that need attention, but the general function of message management is to shield the school system leader from negative media. Managing the media requires expertise of the school system leader, and the ability to maintain and publicize their expertise also increases their ability to generate trust.

Expertise. This study found the participants generally believe trust increases when leaders develop and communicate professional expertise. This belief is supported by the literature which states followers trust leaders who possess and display knowledge of their profession and maintain expected levels of professional development (Yukl, 2005; Covey, 2006; Ruscio, 1996). The findings related to expertise highlight the importance of continual education, spotlighting expertise, and the limits of expertise to build trust. In addition, the findings hint at how the situational context influences the ability of expertise to effect trust creation.

This study found that the participating superintendents strategically plan their professional development, and two superintendents actively publicize their acquired knowledge. A certain level of expertise often serves as a prerequisite to gaining employment as a school superintendent, but this study suggests trust increases when these school system leaders acquire expertise specifically related to their district's needs. This learning may occur as a result of trainings and seminars or as a result of networking with other professionals; and these superintendents perceive trust to grow when they can address the concerns of their educational stakeholders with relevant and effective answers. In addition, Superintendent A believes he is more trusted because the offices he holds with professional organizations give him the appearance of elevated expertise. In situations like Superintendent A's, expertise seems to intersect with ideas related to social capital. Although all the participants place some trust building value with expertise, Superintendent C discussed the limitations of expertise.

The related research generally suggests a dearth of professional knowledge and skills elevate a leaders trust levels, but Superintendent C diverges from this reasoning by highlighting the limits of expertise to engender trust. Thus, this study found that one of the participants believes expertise is important to securing employment as a school system leader, but that it does little to secure trust beyond that. When probed on this point, he noted that his community is replete with individuals who see themselves as experts and, his expert knowledge and skills has little cache with school stakeholders. This suggests that situational context may influence the ability of expertise to generate trust in notable ways. The use of expertise to build trust may indeed be a useful strategy, but limitations may be embedded in the context within which the superintendent leads. A synthesis of this discussion appears on the following pages in table 1.

Table 1

Synthesis of Trust Generating Actions and Behaviors of Participating Superintendents

Theme	Strategy	Trust generating benefit	Example actions/behaviors
Develop social capital	Build relationships with: • School board • District personnel • Community	• School boards can mitigate crisis • District personnel serve as intermediaries • The community communicates expectations	• Invest time and energy in informal and unstructured time with individual board members and school personnel. • Attend numerous and various campus and community functions and events (i.e. join local Rotary Club, visit local churches, and attend PTA meetings).

Table 1 (continued)

Theme	Strategy	Trust generating benefit	Example actions/behaviors
Use of exchange	• Compensation • Leverage mutual interest • Negotiation • Limited use	• Compensation increases benefit of trusting and generates support • Leveraging mutual interests reduces risk by responding to a common need • Negotiation fosters cooperation • Limited use protects integrity	• Use incentive pay and public recognition as rewards • Identify shared needs and marshal resources to address the need • Include concerns of stakeholders in decisions that affect them • Be guarded about items of exchange
Create a sense of shared values and beliefs	• Embed values in programs and plans • Overtly communicate values and beliefs • Allow values to focus the work	• Embedding values adds authenticity to belief statements • Overt communication reduces confusion and sets expectations • Using values to add focus increases consistency	• Implement value laden curriculum (i.e. certain health and safety programs) • Use speaking engagements as an opportunity to state values • Use values as a decision filter

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Table 1 (continued)

Theme	Strategy	Trust generating benefit	Example actions/behaviors
Structures for trust	Create structures that offer: • Empowerment • Teaming • Incentives • Expectations • Operationalize integrity	• Structures of empowerment reduce risk suspicion • Teaming reduces risk and increases cooperation • Incentives may mitigate a lack of trust • Clear expectations reduce risk and anxiety • Integrity can be maintained with structural safeguards	• Identify needs and build the capacity of personnel to meet those needs • Use work teams to accomplish organizational goals • Have incentive structures that reward met expectations • Clearly delineate job roles and responsibilities • Implement legal compliance measures.
Earned results	• Improve and publicize school performance • Make strong decisions	• Getting and publicizing results validates and encourages trust • Making decisions demonstrates leadership and competence	• Highlights improvement as measured by state accountability and use board meetings and other functions to publicize accomplishments important to the community (academic and non-academic) • Make bold decisions and publicize the success of those decisions

Table 1 (continued)

Theme	Strategy	Trust generating benefit	Example actions/behaviors
Invest trust in others	• Evaluate context • Align goals • Trust but verify • Encourage honest feedback	• Context helps these superintendents decide whom to trust and with what assignments • Goal alignment sets expectations and defines the limits of trust • Verification reduces the superintendent's risk to trusting others • Honest feedback also reduces risk and maintains quality control	• Diligently examine aspects of an assignment and the background of potential candidates to complete that assignment • Prior to delegating an assignment, use goals to define acceptability and set expectations • Create structured feedback loops • Engender a culture of honesty and professional disagreement
Communication to increase trust	• Transparency • Communication structures • Message management	• Open, honest communication reduces risk and anxiety • Structures ensure pertinent information is reaching the right people in a timely manner • Message management protects the preferred version of the truth	• Proactively admit mistakes; do not get caught • Use all numerous structures, technologies, and languages • Be consistent and regulate the method and timing of communications

Table 1 (continued)

Theme	Strategy	Trust generating benefit	Example actions/behaviors
Expertise	• Stay current • Publicize expertise • Recognize limitations	• Staying current on best practice encourage trust by increasing credibility • Publicizing expertise maintains the role of the superintendent as the educational expert • Superintendents need to know the context in which they work before relying on expertise to build trust	• Attend workshops and conferences and join educational organizations • Demonstrate how new learning has had a positive influence on decisions • Be aware of what the community deems credible and impressive

Conclusions

There are three general conclusions related to this study that warrant additional

consideration. Each of the conclusions exist embedded within and throughout the data

and have been alluded to in the data analysis and discussion of this study. These

conclusions include: (a) the intersection of trust building activities across different

themes, (b) the influence of context on the perceptions held by these superintendents

related to trust building actions and behaviors, (c) and the complexity of trust generation

with diverse and competing constituencies.

Throughout the study, the intersection of themes related to trust building activities

adds a layer of complexity. For example, Superintendent A stated his service to

professional organizations adds to his perceived level of expertise. This may be

conceptualized as trust building through the maintenance of expertise and/or the

development of social capital. In another example, using various methods to communicate information may be viewed as trust building through structure and communication. In each of these examples the trust building action may be categorized in more than one theme, and this reality adds complexity to the perceptions held by the participants. Another source of complexity is the context of the school leader.

Each superintendent seems to perceive building trust with one group as more essential than others. This belief affects their actions and behaviors related to trust production. Superintendent A favors discussing the importance of building trust with the school board, thus when asked about communication he immediately mentioned structures to share information with this group. By contrast, Superintendent B discussed the significance of his upper administration. To use a similar example, his first thought related to communication centered on his use of voice mail to convey information to his top level administrators. This tendency to focus trust building activity with a preferred group may be due to contextual factors. The situational context may shape the leader's perceptions, or the personal context may have the influence, or both. Teasing out how context influences perceptions of trust building activities may be worth additional research. Although context differs, one aspect of varying agreement addresses these participants desire to provide educational excellence in a complex setting.

Much of the literature describes the actions and behaviors of leaders that build trust. It has been much reviewed in this study. An idea present in this study regards the great complexity of trust production. These superintendents work to provide an excellent educational experience for the students they serve. This work requires trust from various

and often competing stakeholder groups. There are numerous factors which complicate this work. Superintendents serve in districts that have a history and present a specific context with layers that complicate the trust generating activity. Superintendents also have a personal history which colors the manner in which they evaluate and interpret the history and context of the schools and communities they serve. In addition, these data suggests effort to build trust with competing groups often interferes with actions that best serve students and this interference creates tension. Because of the highly complicated nature of trust production, these leaders use a strategic approach to the management of trust. They are aware that they have been invested with trust and have a responsibility to act as good stewards of the received trust. These general conclusions highlight some of the implications of the study and point to areas of future research.

Implications

Texas public school superintendents are faced with many challenges and barriers that they must overcome. This study sought to examine the perceptions of three superintendents related to trust building actions and behaviors. Three superintendents were interviewed to obtain their perceptions regarding trust generating actions and behaviors in the context of Lewis and Weigert's (1985) frame for describing activities of leaders that build trust. The findings suggest a number of important implications.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study describe the participants' perceptions about actions and behaviors that increase trust levels, and these perceptions agree with the broad concepts found in the related research. The superintendents employ a range of trust building

strategies but tend to favor certain activities and focus their trust building energies on highly valued groups. Thus, the data suggests leaders of diverse and competing groups of followers may need to incorporate a wider range of trust building actions in a more systematic and equitable manner. Although a leader's actions and behaviors can increase trust levels, careful attention to contextual factors likely needs attention.

Additionally, this study suggested the importance of not only engaging in trustworthy behavior, but also publicizing those actions. Communicating worthy actions allows trust to increase by demonstrating how risk is being decreased and/or benefit increased for potential stakeholders. These participants believe the strategies described allow the superintendent to progress the work of school leadership.

Finally, this study offers data suggesting the tension and complexity that exists as school leaders work to create trust. The participants offered data that describes a willingness to share and generate trust to a degree that is not naive. This implies that trust building activities increase as confidence levels increase, creating a reciprocal relationship between increased trust and increased willingness to share trust.

Practical Implications

This study identified the following six practical implications:

1. These superintendents perceive trust generating actions and behaviors that align with the literature. This is a qualitative study that involves a limited number of participants; nonetheless, leaders seem to be aware of their potential to generate trust.

2. These participants tend to favor a few trust building strategies focused on a privileged group. Leaders should examine their behaviors in hopes of identifying feasible trust building strategies and stakeholders that are possibly being overlooked.

3. Contextual factors seem to influence the trust building activities of leaders and with whom they invest that energy. Leaders may consider investigating their personal context and experiences to avoid the possibility of relying on trust building strategies because they are comfortable. In addition, they should reflect on the situational context to check perceptions of what effectively builds trust.

4. Many trust building actions and behaviors appear to involve numerous aspects of leadership and organizational management. This suggests the potential for high leverage trust generating actions. Leaders that feel un-trusted may consider employing those trust increasing actions that cut across several organizational frames.

5. Superintendent preparation programs may consider overtly teaching the benefits and strategies of building trust.

Recommendations for Future Research

A reality of a descriptive study is the tendency to identify areas of future research instead of reach definitive conclusions. This study describes and analyzes the perceptions

of three superintendents about what actions and behaviors generate high levels of trust. This specific area of study has received limited literary attention and to progress this research the following recommendations are offered:

1. Research should be conducted that examines how situational context affects a leader's perceptions about which actions and behaviors generate trust.

2. A study that compares the perceptions of leaders about trust building from different educational settings and context would seem valuable.

3. Studies should investigate how personal context and life histories influence a leader's perceptions about actions and behaviors that generate trust.

4. A study that compares how leaders from different racial or ethnic groups perceive actions that build trust would bolster the literature.

5. Research should be conducted that compares the perceptions of female and male leaders related to trust production.

6. Studies should compare which actions and behaviors leaders perceive to build trust actually lead to increased levels of trust from various stakeholder groups (i.e. the school board).

7. Research might investigate the degree to which a superintendent is reluctant to share more trust is valid.

Important insights about the generation of trust can be discovered by examining the leadership acts and strategies used by effective superintendents received from the stakeholders in their districts. The insights gained from this study can be shared with educational practitioners, policymakers, and researchers to promote understanding about

how these superintendents build trust for successful improvement of student achievement. This study offers descriptions and analysis that may provoke questions about the actions and behaviors employed by school leaders to generate trust while leading a diverse and competing group of educational stakeholders.

Summary of the Dissertation

Contemporary American education offers numerous challenges to the effective leadership of public schools. Demographic shifts, pressures of federal accountability, and the mobility of educational leaders produce a difficult leadership environment. Essential for school leadership is the ability to build and maintain relationships with competing groups. Effective relationships depend on acceptable levels of trust. The literature demonstrates producing trust while in the contemporary educational context is becoming increasingly difficult. Lewis and Weigert (1985) assert the importance of trust when they state, "It [trust] is the mutual 'faithfulness' on which all social relationships ultimately depend" (p. 968). Creation of trust specifically, and school leadership generally, has become more important and demanding because of the increased complexity of school environments.

This study examines how superintendents perceive their own leadership activities as they relate to the creation of trust in diverse and competitive environments. Superintendents in diverse public school districts must analyze information, solve problems, motivate subordinates, direct group activities, inspire confidence, and so on while paying close attention to image management, relationship development, and team resource utilization. The employment and utilization of these functions impact the

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successful leadership of superintendents. To prepare for this study, a review of the literature was conducted, and the Lewis and Weigert (1985) frame for describing actions and behaviors that build trust was identified as the theoretical guide of this work. In addition, the review revealed a lack of research regarding the proactive steps taken by superintendents to engender trust from diverse and competing constituencies.

To accomplish this study, a qualitative, case study research approach was used to provide the researcher with rich, in-depth, relevant data. The researcher conducted multiple interviews of three superintendents from diverse public school districts in Texas. Additional data was gathered through observations and document analysis. Data analysis was guided by a literature supported analytic framework. A description of the methods of data collection, purposeful sampling, and criteria for participants is offered in an attempt to maximize trustworthiness of the study.

The evidence describes the actions and behaviors of three superintendents that they perceive to generate trust with diverse and competing constituencies. These actions may be broadly categorized as those which develop social capital, manage exchange relationships, create a sense of shared values and beliefs, use structures that support trust, demonstrate positive results, bestow trust to others, organize and manage communication, and develop and advertise expertise. This study presented the data collected from the interviews, document analysis, and observations of three Texas public school superintendents. The collected data were analyzed in light of Lewis and Weigert's (1985) framework of trust production to determine and analyze sub themes.

The findings of this study suggest the participants hold perceptions about trust building actions and behaviors that broadly align with the literature. In addition, these findings highlight areas in which the perceptions of the participants diverge from the theoretical positions conveyed in the research. Three broad conclusions examine: (a) the intersection of trust building activities across different themes, (b) the influence of context on the perceptions held by these superintendents related to trust building actions and behaviors, (c) and the complexity of trust generation with diverse and competing constituencies. The conclusions are followed by suggested implications of the research and recommendations for future research.

The importance of trust production cannot be underestimated and this study suggests the participants have knowledge regarding effective trust producing behaviors. This proves heartening considering the vast challenges facing the next wave of educational leaders. Although sharing trust appears to cause tension for these leaders, they demonstrate the courage to risk trusting for the sake of accomplishing educational goals.

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VITA

Christopher Shawn Allen was born in Pensacola, Florida on December 21, 1972, the son of Gary Wayne and Donna Kay Allen. After completing his work started at Escambia High and finished at Haltom High School, Haltom City, Texas, in 1991, he attended Tarrant County College in Hurst, Texas. From there he attended the University of Texas at Arlington in Arlington, Texas and in May of 1996, he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in History. That same year he married the former Ms. Natalie Ann Canup. They have two children. During the following 8 years he was employed as a middle and high school teacher and coach in the Birdville Independent School District in North Richland Hills, Texas. In 2004, he received a Masters of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from the University of Texas at Arlington in Arlington, Texas. From 2004-2006 he was employed by the Grapevine-Colleyville Independent School District, where he served as an assistant principal. He is currently employed by the University of Texas University Charter School as a Curriculum Coordinator. In June 2006 he entered the Graduate School for the University of Texas in Austin.

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