

GIVING VOICE TO K-12 INTROVERTED ADMINISTRATOR COMMUNICATION
SKILLS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

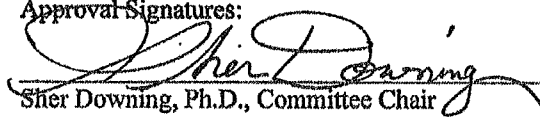



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ABSTRACT

Since the Industrial Revolution, extraverts have been preferred in leadership over introverts. Their outgoing and social nature suggests they are better communicators in comparison to introverts. Job descriptions of K-12 administrators require skills of both introverts and extraverts, however. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore how K-12 introverted administrators experience communication in their leadership role. In this study, the introverted perspective of K-12 leadership was explored in regards to: (a) identifying the unique communication skills and traits; (b) how they adapt to the leadership communication requirements of their position; and, (c) how they identify when to use the various communication skills required of the job. A census sample was used and 15 introverted K-12 administrators, verified using the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory®, participated in the study by responding to open-ended questions. The responses were then coded, and common themes were determined. It was found that introverted administrators utilize their natural tendency to process information to be strategic and purposeful in order to achieve success. They also utilize their natural preference of small groups or one-on-one interactions and their tendency to be good listeners to develop personal relationships with their stakeholders. Their listening skills and intuitive nature allow them to adapt to their stakeholders and determine the most appropriate type of communication for the situation. They also adapt to the many demands of their work by refreshing and recharging daily. The findings have implications for leadership development and hiring practices in K-12 education. Future research that

includes observable data on introverted communication and success rates of introverted administrators should be conducted to further expand the literature on introverted leadership.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ix
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY.....	1
Study Background/Foundation	4
Historical Background	5
Deficiencies in the Evidence.....	8
Problem Statement.....	10
Audience	10
Specific Leadership Problem	11
Purpose of the Study	12
Significance of the Study	12
Methodology Overview	13
Research Design.....	14
Research Questions.....	16
Study Limitations.....	16
Delimitations.....	18
Definitions of Key Terms	18
Summary.....	20
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	21
Introduction.....	21

Introvert and Extravert Comparisons.....	22
Brain Functions.....	23
Appearance	24
Learning Preferences	25
Leadership.....	27
Traits	28
Behaviors	30
Introvert Dissonance	31
Effective Communication	34
Leadership Communication.....	36
Extravert Communication Style Preference.....	37
K-12 Administrator Leadership Communication	38
Summary.....	40
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	41
Introduction.....	41
Research Method	42
Research Design.....	44
Participants.....	45
Instruments.....	47
Data Analysis Methods	52
Limitations	55
Delimitations.....	57
Summary.....	57

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS	59
Introduction.....	59
Background.....	60
Presentation of Findings	62
Summary.....	82
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION.....	84
Introduction.....	84
Discussion of Findings and Conclusions	85
Application of Findings and Conclusions to the Problem Statement	89
Application to Leadership.....	92
Recommendations for Action	94
Recommendations for Further Research.....	96
Concluding Statement.....	98
REFERENCES	102
APPENDIX A.....	118
APPENDIX B	121

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Summary of Participants.....	60

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Being an introvert or an extravert can affect a person's leadership approach. Introverts tend to be more reserved and passive in nature, while extraverts are more outgoing and visibly social, which impacts communication and styles of educational leadership, K-12 administration specifically. There are leaders who identify more with being introverted, and leaders who connect more with being extraverted. Negative perceptions of introverts exist that imply they cannot perform well in leadership roles, because of more reserved communication tendencies. In a study on workplace ostracism, Wu, Wei, and Hui (2011) said both types of people utilize their brains to maximum capacity in different contexts, but introverts spend less time on social interactions, while extraverts are said to be stronger communicators who are more sociable and friendly. Cain (2012), who has called attention to the introverted personality with her published work *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*, discussed how introverts are sometimes erroneously categorized as shy. In a study on the effects of extraversion and communication on team satisfaction, Medina and Srivastava (2016) also perceived introverts as being passive communicators who are lacking confidence. People who relate more to being introverted look inward in search of depth and inner peace, while extraverts are thought to display a more daring disposition.

Communication is a complex, multifaceted interaction, from which relationships are built, and influence occurs. Tomescu-Dumitrescu (2016) studied communication and discussed important facets of healthy communication to include listening, respect, and

trust. Martin (2017) also studied leadership communication, and he discussed communication as more than dialogue, but also consisting of verbal and nonverbal exchanges. When the positive aspects of communication are lacking, disruptions can occur. Blidaru and Blidaru (2015) studied communication breakdowns and found faulty delivery, lack of listening, or overload can interrupt the flow of progress. Gut, Wilczewski, and Gorbaniuk (2017) conducted research and also found stereotypes and attitudes toward differences as contributing to a negative impact, and potentially damaging the relationship as well. Levels of introversion and extraversion are factors in how communication is delivered in leadership roles.

The contrast in how introverts and extraverts are perceived, as a result of communication differences, is apparent throughout the different phases of life, beginning in childhood and continuing through adulthood. In a study about children's popularity, Ilmarinen, Vainikainen, Verkasalo, and Lönnqvist (2015) found extraverted elementary students to be more popular with their peers because of more developed communication skills. Young adults also described friendships with introverts and extraverts differently. Nelson and Thorne (2012) studied introverted and extraverted friendships and found introverted companions described their friendships as more gradual, while friendships with extraverts were described more as "friends-at-first-sight" interactions. College students who are extraverted also reported being happier and more satisfied in a study by Harris et al. (2017), because of their natural social tendencies and ability to make friends during the college years, when navigating new social environments is important. In

adulthood, when introverts and extraverts head into the workforce, extraverts continue to be the preferred personality type, just as they were in childhood. Kluemper, McLarty, Bishop, and Sen (2015) studied interview performance, and they reported emotionally intelligent extraverts often prevailed over introverts in job interviews because of their assertive verbal communication skills and outgoing nature. This preference occurs even though their interview performance is not always indicative of their job performance.

Introverts have authentic strengths to contribute to organizations and leadership roles that are not always recognized. In an essay about introverts, Mihaila (2016) described several strengths of introverts, many of which could be applied to effective leadership. She said they are naturally inclined to be good listeners and slower thinkers who process information gradually and take action only after they have thought twice about the problem. She also stated the ability of introverts to work alone and accurately also improves the efficiency of organizational processes, even though initially the slow and quiet nature of introverts can seem to decrease productivity. Furthermore, she stated the introverted personality is the basis for creativity, as there is an intellectual curiosity and imagination of introverts that come from within. In another article about introverts, Dannar (2016) said introverts are intuitive individuals who can separate the emotional aspect of situations. In an essay about introverts, habits, and thinking, Dilevko (2015) also described introverts as people who validate their thoughts with facts. The creative and patient nature of introverts allows them, using a carefully thought-out manner, to make informed decisions that can improve the efficiency of institutions.

Although introverts have many unique strengths, the natural outgoing and transparent communication style of extraverts is often viewed as superior and more advantageous to leadership. Conversely, Dilevko (2015) cautioned against the consistent preference for the extravert communication style, citing fast actions that were not always precise, or good stories created using poor evidence. In a study about extraversion and job satisfaction, Huang et al. (2016) found people spanning the introversion-extraversion spectrum bring value to different contexts, including leadership, and it is important to match communication skills and traits of people to the task being completed. In addition, in a published reference about critical theory, L'Etang (2016) asserted everyone is of value, and should be treated as such. This idea applies to introverts, rather than giving extraverts all of the credibility.

Study Background/Foundation

Examining and defining the terms introversion and extraversion from both historical and current perspectives is important grounding for this study. In an online blog, Kaufman (2015) used primary sources to show how Carl Jung, one of the first to distinguish between the two personalities, named the two personalities based on Latin language origins to describe their uniqueness. Extravert, containing the base word “extra” meaning outside in Latin, relates to those who seek their energy from outside themselves. Introverts, however, get energy from looking inward. When observing society in its current form, introverts are more likely to be ostracized (Wu, Wei, & Hui, 2011), while extraversion is the expected pattern of behavior (Cain, 2012). Furnham (2015) said

introverts are seen as less efficient, harder to read, and more difficult to manage, while extraverts are commonly seen as more likable, and more fit to do stimulating jobs. Cain (2012) brought attention to the idea that not all people get energy from other people, and, historically speaking, extraversion has not always been the preference in society the same way it is now.

Historical Background

Prior to the Industrial Revolution, introversion was considered normal and average (Cain, 2012). North American culture was not as quick and busy as it is today, and character was viewed differently. Passiveness and slower thinking were considered dignified. As technology progressed during the Industrial Revolution, the needs of society changed. With the inventions of electricity and advancement in transportation came the need for more salespeople. New inventions required marketing, and thus extraverts had a specific purpose (Cain, 2012). The economy began to flourish, and in order to promote and distribute the new merchandise, extraversion was key. As society evolved, the world did not slow to its previous state, but instead society continued to move at a faster pace. The external rewards of the economic growth of the time led to the extravert preference, and thus began the standard for increased stimulation and fast-paced action. It was then that extraversion began to flourish.

In his essay, Dilevko (2015) replicated Cain's (2012) descriptions of history and discussed the extravert preference originating with advertisers and corporations. He warned of society being influenced in ways that are not necessarily beneficial, suggesting

it is easy for society to be manipulated in a high-speed culture by hidden agendas, or to mistake errors for skill or legitimacy. Dilevko (2015) claimed this is how the extravert preference was born, when people began being rewarded for orally offering thoughts or opinions, regardless of their accuracy and usefulness.

As a result of society's evolution, the extraverted preference became the basis for the institutional models we currently utilize in schools, offices, meetings (Mihaila, 2016), and business education (Dilevko, 2015). In these models, cooperation and group work are the expectation, regardless of personality or preference for work conditions.

Collaboration of groups is the promoted and expected form of task accomplishment, but there are questions about whether or not this method is the most productive. Mihaila (2016) noted social inertia, exposure blockage, and evaluation fear as reasons why collaborative brainstorming sessions are not as beneficial as people think, especially for introverts. Further explained, there are introverts who will passively listen to group ideas, despite not believing in them, to allow extraverts, who need to take initiative, the space to do so. There are also those who may have great ideas who do not participate to avoid negative judgments from the team. The collaborative format of work completion is a promotion of extraverted tendencies that can exclude introverts who would rather focus independently on the task, without the extra social energy required in mandatory collaborative workshops (Mihaila, 2016).

Ideas that repeatedly occur tend to get promoted, known as the mere exposure effect, while those experiences that transpire less frequently, or not at all, get fewer

positive responses (Dilevko, 2015). The aspects of life happening in the present receive the focus at the expense of ignoring what is absent. Introverts tend to be passive and quiet and may appear “absent.” Therefore, introverts not given positive affirmation or voice. The technological advances during the Industrial Revolution, influences of mass media, and human nature to readily accept what is exposed most often have led to the current preference for extraversion.

Despite society’s preference for extraversion over the last century, Sritharan and Ragel (2016) confirmed in a study that identified personality preference using Myers-Briggs personality profiles that there is a balance of both introverts and extraverts serving in leadership roles across different professions. The controlled and planned introverted style of leadership does not maintain a good reputation, however. In a study on the perceptions of leaders, Stephens-Craig, Kuofie, and Dool (2015) found introverted leaders were perceived to not speak up enough. Likewise, Solaja, Idowu, and James (2016) studied the relationship between communication style, personality, and organizational productivity. They determined introverts are too passive and diminish productivity in the organization. Hassan, Bashir, and Abbas (2017) examined personality and project success and found openness and agreeableness, usually associated with extraverts, to be top traits in management success. Additionally, Northouse (2016), a well-known name in leadership publications, presented lists of preferred traits in leadership and how they have changed over time. Extraversion, and traits associated with it, were repeatedly mentioned as being preferred over the last century.

Deficiencies in the Evidence

One-third to one-half of the population is introverts (Cain, 2012; Sritharan & Ragel, 2016) who serve in various roles in society, including educational K-12 administrator positions. In spite of this balance of personality types, introverts are not acknowledged for the strengths in communication they bring to leadership roles. The more assertive extraverted communication habits are cited in the literature as being preferred, while introverts are deemed too passive and inefficient for leadership roles. However, the job descriptions for K-12 administrator positions include a balance of both introverted and extraverted communication skills. Argenti (2017), who studied how leaders use communication to execute strategy, found that leadership communication is more about personal style than personality, but the introverted perspective on leadership communication is currently missing from the literature.

Introverts have natural skills and traits that can positively influence organizations; however, they are not seen as ideal for leadership roles. In a study about the relationship between principals' leadership behaviors and teacher trust, Kars and Inandi (2018) noted some of the K-12 leadership requirements include thoughtful decision making and listening, which are skills connected to introverts. There is also a need to create partnerships in education with all stakeholders, including students, families, staff, and the community. Richardson, Watts, Hollis, and McLeod (2016), who questioned if changing school needs are reflected in principal job ads, said it is important that administrators sit back, listen, and focus less on power and assertive behaviors, and more on balanced

collaboration, actions more natural for introverts than extraverts. Despite the current leadership needs in K-12 administration, there is an expectation for extraverted communication styles. Although there are unique strengths introverts have to offer in leadership roles, society has shown preference for the assertive, open, and outgoing tendencies of extraverts since the Industrial Revolution.

Current job descriptions for K-12 administrator roles require skills and traits of both introverts and extraverts (Kars & Inandi, 2018). The job requirements require leaders to have strong communication skills (Richardson, Watts, Hollis, & McLeod, 2016) that include listening and assertive speaking, a balance of natural introverted and extraverted communication skills. AlShamsi (2016), who explored effective leadership styles, also posited that leadership communication is a mature process that creates culture in an organization, and the leader's personality traits alone do not matter. In addition, Mayfield and Mayfield (2017) asserted in an essay about leadership that communication is an important, unique, and mindful process that consists of verbal and nonverbal actions. Apolo, Baex, Pauker, and Pasquel (2017) agreed in a publication on corporate communication, as they described leadership communication as multi-faceted, conscious, harmonious, and the management of identity, both in actions and exchange of knowledge and thoughts. Effective leadership communication is making a consistent personal strategy (Argenti, 2017) and can be executed by different personality types. Therefore, it is important to also explore the introverted perspective, and the communication strategies

introverts utilize in their work as leaders, rather than solely focusing on the strengths of extraverts.

Problem Statement

Extraverted communication skills and traits, such as dominance and sociability, are preferred in leadership (Hassan, Bashir, & Abbas, 2017; Northouse, 2016), but descriptions of necessary K-12 leadership communication skills include both introverted and extraverted qualities (Kars & Inandi, 2018). Effective K-12 leadership communication requires active listening to create partnerships with stakeholders (Richardson et al., 2016), a more natural skill of introverts, and assertive sharing of organizational visions (Richardson et al., 2016), a skill more connected with extraverts. Both introverts and extraverts bring strengths to leadership roles; however, introverted leadership communication skills are currently not positively represented in the research. Findings from qualitative research focused on introverted leaders can illuminate specific communication strategies that introverted administrators utilize in K-12 school-based leadership, bring more balance to the literature, and bring forth the educational introverted leader voice.

Audience

This research study was designed to explore how K-12 introverted administrators, including principals and assistant principals, experienced communication in their leadership roles. Results of this study may inform aspiring introverted administrators about the valuable communication skills and traits they bring to leadership, despite not

having the expected extraverted tendencies. Additionally, if introverts expressed struggle in communication, it may discourage introverts from pursuing administrator roles in education.

Specific Leadership Problem

Current job requirements for K-12 administrators dictate communication skills that require a balance of listening and speaking (Richardson et al., 2016). Fox, Gong, and Attoh (2015), who studied principals and trust, concluded leaders who are genuine and can create interpersonal relationships between teachers and principals are also essential to successful K-12 leadership. Current researchers, however, concentrate on extraverted leaders and their more assertive communication skills. Introverts can be considered a burden in leadership with their more passive communication habits, while extraverts are frequently celebrated for their commanding leadership style (Huang et al., 2016). The common myths surrounding introverts that they dislike people, are antisocial, and incompetent when it comes to socializing (Mihaila, 2016) imply introverts cannot be successful leaders.

K-12 introverted administrators should lead in a way that fits them, rather than organizations' being wooed by extraverts (Huang et al., 2016). Introverts have positive qualities that should be developed (Sritharan & Ragel, 2016), and it is important to explore the unique communication skills and traits of introverted K-12 administrators. Developing skills of different types of people helps create successful and diverse leadership, rather than solely relying on extraverted strengths. It is also important for K-

12 education systems to value diversity in the personalities and styles of leaders, to match the diverse population of stakeholders involved.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore how K-12 introverted administrators experience communication aspects of leadership. By exploring the unique communication skills and traits of introverted administrators in K-12 education, there was potential to uncover introverted communication strategies that are effective in leadership. Prior to this research there were no studies published from the perspective of the introvert, and few publications highlighting the strengths introverts bring to leadership. Conducting this study helped bring balance, variety, and distinction to the sparse literature on introverted leaders.

Significance of the Study

By exploring how K-12 introverted administrators experience communication aspects of leadership, the current research that shows preference to extraverted leaders and their communication skills was challenged. This research also advanced the work of those who have advocated for introverts and the strengths they bring. For example, this study advanced the work of Huang et al. (2016) and Mihaila (2016) who declared introverts do bring positive communication traits and skills to leadership, but people are often swayed by extraverts and their outgoing personalities. This research study was also significant in advancing critical theory. Critical theory, sometimes known as Frankfurt School because of its origins in Frankfurt in 1923 (L'Etang, 2016), states that everyone is

of value, regardless of gender, race, and in this case, personality. The theory states that everyone is not only of value, but also worthy of being treated justly. In current literature, introverts are not viewed positively in leadership positions; therefore, this research brings awareness to the positive skills and traits introverts can bring to leadership.

In addition, this research may inspire introverts, who might have previously been deterred from taking on leadership responsibilities, because they did not feel they had adequate skills and traits, to see their own worth and pursue leadership roles. As a result of this study, hiring agents may also change the way they review and hire leadership candidates, promote more diversity in leadership styles, and further advance the field of education.

Methodology Overview

This qualitative study was conducted to explore how K-12 introverted administrators experience communication in their leadership role that requires a balance of introverted and extraverted skills. This methodology provided an opportunity for introverted administrators to share their leadership experiences and have a voice regarding their communication skills and traits in their leadership roles. A quantitative or mixed methods study would have included numerical items, potentially focusing on results, instead of highlighting the introverted perspective. There has not yet been a study that solely focuses on the introverted leader voice; therefore, a qualitative study had the most positive contribution to the literature.

Research Design

Creswell (2014), one of the leading names in qualitative research, said phenomenology is a research design where a phenomenon is studied, and the lived experiences of the participants are analyzed and described. Patton (2015), in a detailed work on qualitative research, stated after acquiring the selected group of participants, the perceptions, descriptions, feelings, judgments, and memories of experiences should be collected directly from participants, often in an interview format. Responses obtained from the interviews should then be transcribed and coded for common themes. In a book on crafting phenomenological research, Vale (2018) recommended after multiple line-by-line readings of the transcriptions, significant statements should be made into clusters of meaning to create the essence of the phenomenon.

Introverted administrators who work in a K-12 east coast suburban public school district were invited to participate in the study. The principals or assistant principals were administrators of elementary, middle, high school, or specialized learning centers. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®), an inventory based on the work on Carl Jung, that has shown reliability across most age and ethnic groups (The Myers & Briggs Foundation, 2018b), was administered to verify the introvert status of those who volunteered to participate in the study. Those administrators whose preference emerged as introverted through the MBTI® were invited to choose between face-to-face interviews or answer the interview questions digitally in narrative format. The interview questions were field-tested to verify they would elicit the intended quality of responses to

address the research questions. Digital responses and face-to-face interview transcriptions were first analyzed separately to search for systemic differences, before being combined in search of the essence of the phenomenon.

To be able to give introverts the most accurate and complete voice possible in the research, saturation should be achieved (Patton, 2015). This is the process when no more information can be absorbed, and participant responses begin to sound the same. Depending on the nature of the research, Creswell (2007) recommended five to 25 participants for qualitative studies. To reach saturation in the data collection, 15 to 25 introverted administrators were sought for an adequate sample size. If not enough current K-12 introverted administrators from the selected district volunteered for the study, introverts that previously served in an administrator role (retired or serving in other positions currently), or introverted administrators in another local district, could have also been included. The purpose of this sampling was to provide rich information about the typical experiences of introverted K-12 administrators and examine the similar communication skills and traits they bring to leadership.

Data analysis included coding of each line of transcription for all participant responses, multiple times. In a publication about coding, Saldaña (2016) claimed the purpose of this process is to search for important meanings that can later be linked and to find themes and common traits utilized in K-12 leadership between individual replies, as well as the collective reactions. This is inductive analysis, looking for patterns and

themes without predetermined categories. General patterns were first determined, and then common themes over the collection were revealed (Patton, 2015).

The importance of the findings was determined when common themes emerged in the responses of the introverted administrators. Since the problem is introverted and extraverted communication skills and traits are not equally regarded in the literature on leadership, the purpose of the study was to explore and better understand if introverted administrators can adapt to the leadership communication requirements of a K-12 administrator. Chapter 3: Methodology will provide more details about the methodology.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided the study were:

1. What unique communication skills and traits do K-12 introverted administrators utilize in leadership?
2. How do K-12 introverted administrators adapt to the leadership communication requirements of their position?
3. How do K-12 introverted administrators identify when to use the various communication skills required of the job?

Study Limitations

In a book about research proposals, Punch (2008) stated all studies have limitations, including resource limitations, institutional limitations, ethical limitations, and time limits. Access and cooperation from organizations and potential participants

must be considered, and it is important to make sure what is being asked of participants is reasonable. Each methodology also has its own unique set of limitations.

Phenomenology is a research design that has no recipe or formula for implementation, which can create limitations for debate (Patton, 2015). While all introverted administrators of the chosen school district were invited to participate to create the largest sample possible, not all introverted principals were willing or able to take part in the study. Therefore, the unique perspectives of all introverted administrators were not included in the data analysis. Those who did not participate may be withholding important data that are absent from the study. Those introverted participants who did participate in the study could represent a wide range of introversion. The participants may have ranged from high to low preferences of introversion, which may have influenced their responses. Participants were also given opportunities to choose how to answer the interview questions, either in person or digital narrative format. Even though the questions were the same for each type of participation, this could have created a participant-interview format interaction effect, meaning the same participant could have responded to a face-to-face interview differently than a digital response. Finally, the results were based on responses to open-ended questions, which is typical of qualitative research, but direct observations were intentionally not included. Because this study focused more on capturing the lived experiences of the introverts, how they perceive their leadership roles, and giving them voice in the literature, the research did not include

direct observation of the leaders. Direct observation would have helped to fully capture the phenomenon (Patton, 2015); therefore, its absence is a limitation in this study.

Delimitations

The boundaries of this study were within the confines of a single school district and the administrators employed in it. In other parts of the nation, administrators may experience leadership communication differently, as a result of potential variances in the stakeholders served or culture of the educational environment. As a result, the results of this study should not yet be generalized to all K-12 administrators.

Definitions of Key Terms

There were several disciplines merging together in this topic of study. The communication differences between introverts and extraverts were the foundation for the study, and how introverts utilize their unique communication skills and traits in leadership guided the research. The following terms were used operationally throughout the study.

Administrator is anyone serving in a principal role in a single K-12 school or learning center. This includes principals and assistant principals.

Communication is defined as transmission and sharing of information between people, movement expressions, opinions, value judgments, affective states, orders, etc., which influence the conduct of participants in the process (Tomescu-Dumitrescu, 2016).

Extravert is a person who has a preferred focus of energy to the outer world (The Myers & Briggs Foundation, 2018a). People high in extraversion get energy from interacting with others and are more outgoing and visibly social.

Introvert is a person who has a preferred focus of energy on the inner world (The Myers & Briggs Foundation, 2018a). People high in introversion get energy from spending time alone thinking or having one-on-one interactions with others.

K-12 administrator leadership communication is how a principal or assistant principal creates trust (Kars & Inandi, 2018; Sutherland & Yoshida, 2015), and serves all stakeholders in a school, including students, staff, and the community.

Leadership is the adopted style that emerges from those who train, equip, and influence followers, and has impact on an organization and its stakeholders (Gandolfi & Stone, 2016).

Leadership communication is a unique, mindful, and mature process of creating a culture (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2017).

Personality refers to the total of the behavioral and mental characteristics that are distinctive of an individual (Oxford Dictionary of Psychology, 2015).

Skill is the expertise or accomplishment in any field, or any complex organized pattern of behavior acquired through training and practice to include cognitive and social skills such as nonverbal communication (Oxford Dictionary of Psychology, 2015).

Trait is a stable disposition or description of individual differences in styles of thought, feeling, and behavior (Matthews, 2018).

Summary

This phenomenological research study was designed to explore and better understand the leadership communication of K-12 introverted administrators. Although existing literature describes extraversion as a preferred leadership trait, effective leadership communication requires unique and natural skills of both introverts and extraverts. The research findings have potential to balance the literature on effective communication, inspire introverts who have been previously deterred from taking on leadership responsibilities, and inform the way hiring agents review and hire leadership candidates.

Chapter 2: Literature Review is a discussion of the findings surrounding introverts and extraverts and their communication skills and traits in leadership roles. Relevant theories regarding this topic are also discussed. The review details comparisons of introverts and extraverts, leadership, effective communication, and concludes with examination of K-12 administrator leadership communication.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

There are differences in the way introverts and extraverts communicate. In a study comparing how different personalities react to interactive narratives, Soto-Sanfiel, Aymerich-Franch, and Romero (2014) described introverts as quiet and reserved, and people high in extraversion as generally more outgoing and openly communicating their thoughts and feelings. Aligning with those descriptions, Akhavan, Dehghani, Rajabpour, and Pezeshkan (2016) after studying different personalities on language acquisition, said introverts are cautious, relaxed, and in control of their emotions, while extraverts are social, carefree, impulsive, and skilled in witty conversation.

Communication is a fundamental part of society and the way we engage with the world. It is an interaction, an information exchange, and how a relationship is formed (Tomescu-Dumitrescu, 2016). When analyzing organizational structures, effective communication is important to the success of leaders because it is the foundation for inspiring the completion of tasks that lead to advancement (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2017).

The more outgoing and social communication style of extraverts has become preferred in leadership over the slower, more controlled style of introverts (Solaja, Idowu, & James, 2016). In an online publication, Crockett (2018) agreed society shows preference to extravert leaders, and he declared at some point the term “leader” stopped meaning someone who encourages organizational success, and instead conjures a picture of an outward spokesperson. However, the job descriptions of K-12 administrators call

for a balance of natural skills and traits of both personality types. A review of the literature provides comparisons of the traits and behaviors of introverts and extraverts, descriptions of leadership traits and behaviors, effective communication, and K-12 administrator leadership communication.

Introvert and Extravert Comparisons

Introverts and extraverts cannot be labeled by appearance alone. Exploration is required to determine which distinction is more accurate for any individual, as there are many facets to examine in order to help distinguish where someone might fall along the introversion-extraversion spectrum. North Jr. (1949) wrote an analysis of the personality types and recalled how Jung became known for labeling the two different personalities, when others thought the differences to be random. In an article about the personality theories of Adler, Freud, and Jung, Dolliver (1994) clarified that everyone spends time doing activities that are introverted and extraverted, but one of those personalities may be more developed than the other. Isabel Briggs Myers and Katharine Briggs' work on the opposing personality types extends the work of Jung. They stated having preference for introversion or extraversion helps define how people get their energy and where they focus attention (The Myers & Briggs Foundation, 2018a). Reveille and Oehlberg (2008) looked at applications of the work of Eysenck on introverts and extraverts, and they stated to get an accurate analysis of the two personalities, properly executed experimentation that includes multiple aspects of the individual and their environment is

required. The review of the literature includes comparisons of introverts and extraverts with regard to brain functions, appearance, learning styles, and leadership abilities.

Brain Functions

The brain is an important and complex organ that essentially controls all functions of the body. The Mayfield Clinic (n.d.), an online physician group focusing on brain and spine care, stated the brain controls the movement of the limbs and other physical parts of the body. The brain also manages intelligence, memory, creativity, and emotion.

Introverts and extraverts process and perform differently, beginning with the biology of their brains. Shaw, Nguyen, Satterfield, Ramirez, and McKnight (2016) compared the cerebral blood flow in introverts and extraverts during vigilance, or protecting oneself, and found the way the hemispheres of the brain processed for each group was different. Introverts and extraverts also process caffeine differently. Smith (2013), who was successful in replicating previous results on the effects of caffeine on introverts and extraverts, found extraverts, who are known to seek out stimulus, benefitted from caffeine, while introverts were stunted by it. Human, Thorson, and Mendes (2016) also studied differences in the way introverts and extraverts processed oxytocin, a natural hormone related to social bonding. They found those who were lower in extraversion (introverts) benefitted from the administration, while there were negative social consequences for those who were higher in extraversion. This is likely because extraverts are already known to have high social motivations; therefore, the oxytocin was less inclined to be beneficial. The results of a study on distraction conducted by Von

Gehlen and Sachse (2015) were parallel. They concluded introverts do not have the same natural social tendencies as extraverts; therefore, they responded differently to stimulation. The two personalities have different chemical reactions to various neurotransmitters (Mihaila, 2016), indicating the differences in the personalities originate in nature, in the nature versus nurture debate.

Appearance

There are noticeable differences in the outward displays of introverts and extraverts. Smillie, DeYoung, and Hall (2015), who studied the relationship between extraversion and positive affect, found introverts to be more reserved and stoic in nature, while extraverts project energetic and enthusiastic body language, which was viewed as a more positive affect. Introverts favor slower and quieter experiences that do not demand as many distinct facial expressions. Additionally, there are differences between how each personality reveals emotions. Introverts can deal with emotions more internally, whereas extraverts tend to outwardly display their emotions. Seger-Guttmann and Meddler-Liraz (2016) studied emotions and concluded those who are low in extraversion had no physical health concerns in relation to hiding emotions, whereas people higher in extraversion dealt with negative health consequences. Introverts are more likely to keep their perceptions of the world private, while extraverts have the natural inclination to show their thoughts and feelings outwardly.

There are perceived differences in oral communication between the two personalities as well. Lee, Diefendorff, Kim, and Bian (2014) studied voice behaviors,

and found in a group environment extraverts have been said to have more positive vocal contributions. The practiced oral fluency also helped extraverted children to be more popular than introverts with their peers, (Ilmarinen, Vainikainen, Verkasalo, & Lonnqvist, 2015), and extraverted adults are more likely to be selected during job interviews (Kluemper, McLarty, Bishop, & Sen, 2015). Additionally, extraverts are linked to helpfulness and volunteerism (Human, Thorson, & Mendes, 2016). Where communication is concerned, extraverts tend to be more communicative, positive, and practiced, while introverts are known to sit back quietly and take in what is happening (Mihaila, 2016). Extraverts are viewed as contributing more positively than introverts as a result.

The two differing personalities also handle stress uniquely. Not surprisingly, because of their outwardly positive and upbeat personality, extraverts reacted less to social stresses in a study conducted by Lu and Wang (2017), and they recovered faster after stress than introverts. Conversely, introverts handled the stresses of telecommuting better than extraverts in a study conducted by Meymadpour and Begheri (2017). This is likely because introverts do not struggle as much to work alone, whereas extraverts, who are of a more social nature, have a preference for interacting with people.

Learning Preferences

There are many ways of acquiring new knowledge, and the methods of doing so are unique to each individual. Although some people prefer to watch a teacher in a structured manner to obtain new skills, others prefer independent trial and error. When

learning new concepts, there are several cognitive factors utilized in the process. In an online article that overviewed learning processes, Thomas (2010) listed six interactive components of learning: attention, memory, language, organizing, writing, and higher order thinking. Attention and memory both relate to connecting to new concepts, using already existing interests or rhythms, making it easier to store in long term memory. Language relates to the methods by which people give and receive information, which can be done in written or oral forms. Harris and Zha (2017), researchers on concept mapping, defined concept mapping as a graphic depiction to help develop and make sense of one's own critical thinking. All of these components are examples of different ways to organize new knowledge. Knowing different strategies to learn material can help people obtain new information in a way that fits them.

Introverts and extraverts each have preferred methods of processing and learning when they are presented with new information. Extraverts can easily be mistaken to have performed better because of their stronger ability to deal with various pressures of completing a task, such as time constraints (Von Gehlen & Sachse, 2015), while introverts show preference for working more slowly and carefully (Mihaila, 2016). Introverts preferred concept mapping types of learning in a study by Akhavan, Dehghani, and Rajabpour (2014), indicating a preference for being more creative in their thinking, as opposed to linear. When attempting to remember the content of a text, extraverts showed greater improvement in performance on consecutive tasks (Von Gehlen & Sachse, 2015), as they enjoy the satisfaction of being rewarded instantly after each step.

It can easily be misinterpreted that extraverts are the more intelligent, or better performing, when comparing introverts and extraverts in the way they process tasks, because extraverts often work more quickly. When looking deeper, however, Von Gehlen and Sachse (2015) studied arousal and found introverts had a greater working memory, despite the extraverts having outperformed them.

The differences between the two personality types are evident, each with strengths and weaknesses. Introverts are independent and creative, while extraverts are articulate and energetic. Because of their openness and quick response, however, extraverts are often viewed as more approachable, successful, and the preferred personality type. When comparing the two, it is important to discern that outcomes of each personality are not always based on potential, but rather on the environment in which the tasks were completed.

Leadership

Leadership is a multifaceted topic that has significant impact in this complex world. In a paper on destructive leadership, Thoroughgood, Sawyer, Padilla, and Lunsford (2018) said historically leadership has been narrowly defined and leader-centered, placing emphasis on the traits and behaviors of individual leaders.

Organizations sometimes utilize personality strengths assessments as part of the search for leaders or professional development. Looking beyond personality traits alone may help organizations find leaders who can accomplish or delegate tasks specific to the mission of the organization. According to Thoroughgood et al. (2018), leadership could

benefit from a more inclusive view, one that incorporates leaders, followers, and environments over time.

The ideas presented in the literature on leadership suggest extraverts are the favored personality type over introverts. Grant, Gino, and Hofmann (2011) questioned the promotion of extraverted leadership, but agreed that having an extraverted leader is seen as a key to success in organizations. In the literature, regardless of which element of leadership was studied, researchers often concluded with an inclination toward extraverted patterns, at the expense of introverts being dismissed. A review of the literature on traits and behaviors in leadership contexts confirmed the extravert preference.

Traits

The trait lists that have emerged in the research on leadership over the past century can sometimes seem limitless. The list of ideal traits has also continuously changed, so it is difficult to narrow down the exact traits needed for successful leadership. Despite the uncertainty of exactly which traits produce successful leadership, Unsar and Karalar (2013) studied the connection between personality traits and leadership, and asserted that superior traits contribute to successful leadership. Leadership trait theory also states that certain traits are preferred in leadership, and multiple trait theorists have attempted to distinguish exactly what traits are worthiest. Northouse (2016) presented a list of researchers over time and the traits they deemed important. Beginning in 1948 with Stogdill, initiative, persistence, self-confidence, and

sociability made the list of important leadership traits. A decade later, Mann's list included masculinity, dominance, and extraversion. Stogdill adjusted his list in 1974 to include cooperativeness and tolerance, in addition to some of his previous traits. Over this period of a quarter of a century, the researchers created lists with traits that allude to authoritarian ways, and then evolved to include more interactive traits. By 2004, Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader's list included extraversion, openness, agreeableness, social/emotional intelligence, and problem solving. The researchers who created the more modern lists alluded to working with people, directness, and overall positive affect as being important. Both earlier and later researchers mentioned extraversion (and related traits) as worthy, indicating this has been a decades-old preference.

More recently, Hassan, Bashir, and Abbas (2017) studied project management and which traits contributed to project success. As a result of their study, they concluded that openness, as previously mentioned, was the largest contributor to success. Agreeableness was the second-largest predictor, while extraversion was the third. The social and communicative aspects of extraversion contributed to a successful working environment (Hassan et al., 2017). These traits run parallel with lists of early trait researchers as put forth by Northouse (2016).

In face-to-face interviews during the hiring process, personality is a factor in the selection of leaders. Carnes, Houghton, and Ellison (2015) studied leader selection and concluded leaders are often chosen based on both the applicant's and rater's personality types, giving significance to levels of introversion and extraversion. In a study on team

performance and leadership, Li, Zhou, Zhao, Zhang, and Zhang (2015) concluded extraversion was said to be one of the most desirable personality traits in leadership. Similarly, Lounsbury, Sundstrom, Gibson, Loveland, and Drost (2016) studied personality traits. They found extraversion to be a core trait of managers, along with assertiveness and emotional stability (traits also associated with extraversion). Carnes, Houghton, and Ellison (2015) found parallel results, but suggested interview procedures that focus more on organizational needs rather than personality. According to the literature, extraversion has repeatedly made the preferred leadership trait list, while introverts, and positive associations with them, are rarely mentioned.

Behaviors

Beyond personality labels alone, there are behaviors that are said to be ideal for leadership. Cullen-Lester, Leroy, Gerbasi, and Nishii (2016) aspired to look deeper into the extravert advantage. They found extraverts bring energy and form more positive relationships, which are perceived as positive contributions. Langford, Dougall, and Parkes (2017) published a higher-order factors list of effective leader behaviors. Voice and connection, behaviors associated with extraversion, were on the list. Despite extraverts being identified as forming more positive relationships and being more connected, Zell, McGrath, and Vance (2014) studied the social networks of introverts and extraverts, and they found no difference in the size, diversity, and strength of ties in social networks of introverts versus extraverts in social media. Both groups had comparable numbers, types, and connections with online friends. The frequently

mentioned idea that extraverts are the more socially inclined is a contradiction to the results of this study. However, they did conclude that extraverts trust more in their social networks; therefore, they do better in management.

The trusting nature of extraverts does have its controversies and is not always seen as positive. Zell, McGrath, and Vance (2014), the rare researchers who detailed negative attributes of extraverts, warned against extraverts trusting too quickly and giving more trust than is deserved, creating a false depiction of people. They said the cautiousness of introverts provides a more valid portrayal of a person's actual personality. Conversely, and more in line with the majority of the research, Erez, Schilpzand, Leavitt, Woolum, and Judge (2015) examined the interactions of introverts and extraverts, and concluded that introverts are harsh and quick to judge relative to extraverts. In their report, they discussed the lack of trust in introverted leaders having a negative carryover to evaluations. The outgoing social nature of extraverts can be seen as threatening; therefore introverted leaders can be influenced to negatively evaluate their subordinates.

Introvert Dissonance

Introverts are not favored for leadership positions. After studying social networks, Regts and Molleman (2016) claimed it could be costly for an organization when introverts are selected. Introverts are said to not speak up enough (Stephens-Craig, Kuofie, & Dool, 2015) and are often ostracized; therefore, they have lower job performance (Wu, Wei, & Hui, 2011). Gkorezis and Bellou (2016) followed up with their

own research on workplace ostracism, and recommended avoiding recruiting introverts to avoid the ostracism.

Since the Industrial Revolution, extraversion and its associated traits, are preferred and expected (Cain, 2012). As a result, introverts in leadership can cause cognitive dissonance, a stress associated with the unknown. Brickson (2013) published an encyclopedia reference on cognitive dissonance theory, a theory introduced by Leon Festinger. In the publication, she described psychological discomfort connected with inconsistencies, or what is expected. Jackson and Hogg (2010) elaborated in their own reference, stating that when these inconsistencies arise, the natural desire is to restore normalcy. In the case of introverted leaders, the tendency to restore may come in the form of ostracism (Wu, Wei, & Hui, 2011), hiring extraverts more often after interviews (Carnes, Houghton, & Ellison, 2015), or sending introverts to specialized training (Regts & Molleman, 2016). In an article reviewing cognitive dissonance theory, Hinojosa, Gardner, Walker, Coglisier, and Gullifor (2017) said those responsible for the choice, such as hiring an introverted leader, will experience greater dissonance, or uneasiness, and feel they have to mend the situation.

Although the ideas presented in much of the literature depict extraversion as the preferred and expected personality in leadership, several researchers found, depending on the context, high levels of extraversion can be perceived positively or negatively. Cullen-Lester et al. (2016) found the high energy of extraverts can be seen by introverts as aggressive leadership when there is conflict among the team. However, when the team

was getting along, the perceived proactive contributions of extraverts were viewed as positive. Likewise, Grant, Gino, and Hofmann (2011) found that extraverted leadership works well when the followers are introverted. However, when extraverted leaders were paired with extraverted subordinates, extraverted leadership became a disadvantage. Tett and Burnett (2003) published an article describing a model of job performance that pointed to the idea that both personality types can be effective leaders in the right context.

L'Etang (2016) cautioned against continuing the standard, expected communication practices and ignoring unexplored perspectives. Hodges (2014), in a paper reviewing critical theory, also asserted everyone is of value and should not be taken for granted. Critical theory, associated with Horkheimer and Marx, deals with domination that limits human potential, and connects with the ideas presented in much of the literature about extraverts being preferred in leadership. L'Etang (2016) explained that organizational power originated from private media and organizations promoting their own ideas, rather than evidence of superior performance of extraverts in leadership positions. This matches Cain's (2012) historical explanation of the beginnings of a preference for extraverts, when advertising and media were in high demand in society. In an article that discussed hiring effective principals, Palmer (2016) said that, because organizations are not systems of charts and processes, organizations should incorporate hiring practices that are more objective and align with the demands of the real world. Bandow and Self (2016), who published an article about leadership development,

expanded on that idea, and said leadership is a collection of interactive networks of a variety of humans progressing each other.

Effective Communication

Communication occurs daily in personal and professional settings. The basics of communication include the back-and-forth exchanges, both verbal and nonverbal, and the receiving of communication as well. Those in leadership must understand their role in creating a culture that depends on communication. Much of the literature on leadership communication is consistent in that it requires no formula, recipe, or personality type. In spite of this, the research promotes an extravert preference, and little to no research on effective introverted leadership exists. K-12 administrator leadership, however, requires a balance of both passive and assertive communication skills, natural qualities of introverts and extraverts.

Communication is an interaction, and an information exchange by which people can begin to understand and influence each other (Tomescu-Dumitrescu, 2016). Tomescu-Dumitrescu (2016) discussed many aspects of effective communication including verbal and nonverbal expressions of self, active listening, respect, trust, and problem solving, which include a combination of introverted and extraverted behaviors. He indicated the best communicators are attentive listeners who seek feedback and build relationships that include trust and respect. He also mentioned the importance of nonverbal mannerisms, including smiling and eye contact, and the importance of the assertive aspects of communication. He said assertive communication skills point toward

respect, and they are an expression of authentic feelings and thoughts. Being that assertive communication skills are more natural to extraverts, this conclusion implies that extraverts are more likely than introverts to build respect with their more open communication style, and introverts are not being authentic with their feelings and thoughts.

One of the goals of communication is to trade thoughts and experiences, with the intent of gaining better understanding of each other and the world. Nelson (2016) conducted research where he explored perspective taking and its relationship to effective communication. It was found that positive affect and mood, both of which are frequently associated with extravert tendencies, lead to better perspective taking. Positive moods also led to fewer misunderstandings, which make it easier for people to relate to one another.

There are also barriers to effective communication. Blidaru and Blidaru (2015) listed several causes of blockages in personal communication. Technology, decoding difficulties, status, attitude, and methods of delivery were all included on their list. They also mentioned the more people who are involved in the communication, the more likely a breakdown will occur. Additionally, Gut, Wilczewski, and Gorbaniuk (2017) included ignoring or disrespecting cultural identities as communication barriers. They said respecting the differences of people is important for effective communication.

Leadership Communication

Leadership communication is unique to each leader (Argenti, 2017; Martin Jr., 2017; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2017) and there is no exact recipe. Instead it is a mindful (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2017) and mature process of creating a culture that includes subordinates (AlShamsi, 2016). Modeling actions that run parallel with the spoken words is of high importance (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2017), which includes verbal and nonverbal messages (Martin Jr., 2017). Leadership communication is not dependent on personality traits (AlShamsi, 2016), but rather it is more about creating a consistent personal strategy (Argenti, 2017).

Although there are no specific formulas, effective leadership communication includes actions and exchanges of knowledge and thoughts (Apolo, Baez, Pauker, & Pasquel, 2017). Allen, Lehmann-Willenbrock, and Landowski (2014), who published a study about pre-meeting effectiveness, said one action leaders can take to promote a culture for effective communication for all is arranging pre-meeting gatherings. It was found that having time to talk informally before a meeting created a more comfortable atmosphere for sharing ideas. It was especially beneficial for introverts who may not have shared their ideas otherwise. In this case, it was not necessarily how the leader communicated, but rather the actions of the leader that created a safe space for others to more openly communicate.

Despite there not being specific procedures for effective leadership communication, there are identifiable causes of disruption. Three blockages to

organizational communication are faulty processes, faulty timing, and a lack of communication (Blidaru & Blidaru, 2015). A faulty process can occur as a result of an excessive chain of command through which the communication must filter. Equally disruptive can be late communication, or lack of communication altogether. The absence of care toward these issues can create neglect or indifference within the organization (Blidaru & Blidaru, 2015).

Leadership communication has changed over time. In a journal article about efficient and effective communication in modern society, Iacob and Badina (2017) recalled the history of one of the early forms of corporate communication: advertising. The large quantities of advertising (often seen as propaganda) became the proper norm during the Industrial Age. Present-day corporate communication should be much more harmonious and more about aligning with the vision of the company (Apolo, Baez, Pauker, & Pasquel, 2017; Iacob & Badina, 2017).

Extravert Communication Style Preference

There are researchers who promote extraverted styles of communication. Solaja, Idowu, and James (2016) concluded there is a connection between communication style, personality traits, and productivity. They said passive communication styles such as relaxed, indecisive, or contentious are not optimal for increasing productivity. Being that relaxed and passive are generally connected to more introverted habits, this suggests a more extraverted communication style should be executed in leadership.

O'Neal, Green, Gergen, and Yu (2016) also studied communication expressions, and concluded more dominating demeanors were most effective, again showing preference to extraverted communication habits. Most of the literature on leadership communication suggests that dominance, which is associated with extraversion, is preferred in leadership; however, there is not a specific formula for optimal success.

K-12 Administrator Leadership Communication

Effective communication is a necessary skill in K-12 leadership (Palmer, 2016; Richardson et al., 2016). There are many stakeholders to be considered in K-12 leadership including students, staff, and the community. In order to serve all stakeholders effectively, administrators must have strong communication skills to create partnerships with all involved (Richardson et al., 2016). Administrators must create a participative environment where the stakeholders are part of the communication process to help in decision making (Kars & Inandi, 2018). Student voice should also be incorporated, which requires leaders that bring stakeholders together and sit back, listen, and focus less on power and more on collaboration (Richardson et al., 2016). Leaders should be careful to balance assertive and passive communication skills because a laissez-faire leadership style can also diminish the relationship building that is necessary in effective K-12 leadership (Kars & Inandi, 2018).

Successful communication for administrators in K-12 education involves creating trust (Kars & Inandi, 2018). Building trust is achieved through an open, collaborative learning environment (Fox, Gong, & Attoh, 2015; Kars & Inandi, 2018), and deliberate

communication high in attentiveness coordination (communication including both leaders and followers). Building relationships between all stakeholders matters more in building trust than the technical aspects of the job; therefore, it should be a top priority (Fox, Gong, & Attoh, 2015). Sutherland and Yoshida (2015) studied trust in leaders and said it is important that this practice of building relationships not be mistaken for expressiveness and composure. This is a change from the traditional top-down leadership model. This is more of a bottom-up approach and has been found to be better aligned for a more introverted leadership style (Grant, Gino, & Hofmann, 2011).

Having the right communication style is essential because the principal of a school affects student achievement, and communication skills are an important aspect of the job (Palmer, 2016). Intentional communication practices that are well thought out are crucial. Having communication competence is a predictor of conflict management, according to Uzun and Ayik (2017). Their research revealed the use of a compromising communication style is the most effective way for resolving conflict within a school, while dominating, avoiding, and obliging are less effective, because that approach may cause a repeat of the conflict or negative perceptions. Communication method, either electronic media or face-to-face, is also an important choice for administrators. Elmer, Holt, and Thompson (2015), after studying the relationship between principal communication and campus morale, wrote that choosing the right method is important because it affects the morale of the campus.

Summary

Extraverts and introverts differ in the ways they communicate and interact with others in the world. Introverts are private and acquire energy from within, while extraverts exhibit a more open and positive affect. The review of the literature indicates introverts are said to be less likable and not suited for leadership, while the traits and behaviors of extraverts have become what is expected since the Industrial Revolution. Effective communication, however, is an expression of self that includes natural skills and traits of both introverts and extraverts. Effective leadership communication is also mindful, multifaceted, and without a specific recipe or formula. The job requirements of K-12 administrators call for leaders who can establish their own personal strategy for effective communication that includes trust through open and collaborative learning environments, and not necessarily extravert qualities, as the ideas in the literature would suggest. Creating a trust-filled and collaborative atmosphere includes a balance of listening and assertive speaking, natural qualities of both introverts and extraverts.

Chapter 3: Methodology will present the methodology of this study and will describe the phenomenological design of the study. It includes the population and sample that was included, along with the data collection and analysis methods. The limitations and trustworthiness of the study will also be explained.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Over the last century, extraverts have been preferred over introverts; therefore, positive contributions of introverted leaders have gone mainly unheard in the literature. This qualitative study was designed to explore how K-12 introverted administrators experience communication in leadership, specifically what skills and traits they bring to the position. This study was also designed to examine the adaptations introverted administrators make to fulfill the leadership communication requirements of the job. The specific research questions that guided the study were:

1. What unique communication skills and traits do K-12 introverted administrators utilize in leadership?
2. How do K-12 introverted administrators adapt to the leadership communication requirements of their position?
3. How do K-12 introverted administrators identify when to use the various communication skills required of the job?

Chapter 3: Methodology will detail the research method and design of this qualitative study. The selection process used to gather introverted K-12 administrators for the study is described, as well as the instruments used in the study. A detailed description of the data analysis methods is explained step by step, and the limitations of the study are also discussed.

Research Method

This qualitative study was designed to explore how K-12 introverted administrators experience communication in leadership, specifically what communication skills and traits introverts utilize in their position as school leaders. Using a qualitative design gave voice to K-12 introverted leaders to share their lived experiences regarding leadership communication. Giving voice to introverted leaders using qualitative research challenges the current research that shows preference to extraversion and marginalizes introverted leaders.

Qualitative research is a process used when a problem needs in-depth exploration. The problems can be explored through individuals or groups and focus on the meanings connected to those problems (Creswell, 2007; Creswell, 2014). Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), published authors on qualitative research, said qualitative research places emphasis on the lived experiences of those involved with social or human issues, and allows for exploration and discovery in new areas that have not previously been uncovered. Qualitative studies are built around social, political, or historical contexts of problems, and they provide opportunities to hear unheard perspectives of those who may have previously been silenced by empowering them to share their stories (Creswell, 2007).

The data collected in qualitative research comes from field work, as opposed to a laboratory (Patton, 2015), and voices of the participants are heard by interacting directly with them. Researchers go into the natural settings where the problem occurs (Miles,

Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014), and collect information in real time or gather artifacts from the lived experiences of the participants. Through data analysis, patterns emerge from the details of those interactions and larger consistent themes materialize (Creswell, 2007). The final report has a flexible structure that is created from the interpretations of the researcher (Creswell, 2007).

Researchers in qualitative studies have background knowledge and reason for their inquiries; therefore, they bring a personal connection to the process (Patton, 2015). They become part of the research study and the credibility of the study relies on their competence (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Therefore, the researcher must be planned and practiced, and be careful to interact in a way that makes the participants feel comfortable to share their experiences. This helps maintain integrity and reliability in reporting the findings. As a result, the role of the researcher in qualitative research is important.

Although there is no recipe or formula for selecting a research method (Patton, 2015), a qualitative study seemed the most appropriate for studying the communication skills and traits of introverted K-12 administrators. With a transformative worldview as the foundation for the study, a view that focuses on empowerment, inequality, oppression, and domination issues (Creswell, 2014), a qualitative study allowed introverted administrators to have a voice regarding leadership, as they are overlooked in current literature. This method also allowed for the unique individual communication skills and traits of introverts to be explored, whereas a quantitative study would overlook

these features (Creswell, 2007). Giving introverts a voice to share their lived experiences regarding leadership, in a world where they have been relatively disregarded over the last century, was determined to be a worthy contribution to the literature.

Research Design

The specific research design utilized for this study was phenomenology. Moustakas (1994), one of the leading experts in psychology and phenomenology, said phenomenology is concerned with analyzing experiences from many sides until unification of the experiences is achieved. Utilizing a phenomenological design means the topic is approached without judgments, or predictions of the outcomes, and instead is designed to find the “what” and the “how” of lived experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2007). Typical questions in phenomenology include “What have you experienced?” and “What have typically influenced or affected your experiences of this phenomenon?” (Creswell, 2007).

Phenomenology, connected with German philosopher Edmund Husserl, emerged when there was failure to take into account the experiences of the person and the connection with human consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). In phenomenology, both real and imagined recollections are of interest, because the focus of this research design is less about facts, and more about making meaning (Patton, 2015). A researcher captures individual lived experiences of multiple participants, compiles and highlights significant statements, and then develops the findings into clusters of meaning called horizontalization (Creswell, 2014). The essence of a phenomenon is never totally

exhausted, but each horizon in the process offers distinct value, and we seek to disclose its nature (Moustakas, 1994). The commonalities of the data are noted during the horizontalization process and become the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). After thorough data analysis, the essence of the phenomenon will be more descriptive in nature, as opposed to explanatory (Moustakas, 1994).

The phenomenon of interest in this study was introverted communication in leadership. Using a phenomenological approach gave an opportunity for K-12 introverted administrators to describe the communication strategies they utilize, and how they experience communication in their leadership role. Phenomenology provides structure to collect data on the firsthand experiences and find commonalities among the experiences of K-12 introverted administrators. Each experience is considered unique, and then the phenomenon is explained in its totality with an open mindedness (Moustakas, 1994). Using a phenomenological design gave introverts voice to share how they experience communication, which in turn would add to the sparse literature on introverted leadership.

Participants

Although there are no methodological rules for qualitative inquiries, the largest number of participants that can be recruited for qualitative studies is helpful in exploring the phenomenon of introverted communication skills in leadership to saturation (Patton, 2015). The size of the sample depends on the study (Patton, 2015), but Creswell (2007) recommended five to 25 participants for qualitative studies.

The participants used in this study were part of a census, as an entire population was invited to take part in the study. In this case, all introverted administrators from a specific public school district were called on to potentially participate. A homogeneous sampling of introverted administrators specifically was desired to explore communication in leadership.

Introverted administrators who work in a specific K-12 east coast suburban public school district were invited to participate in this study, with the goal of at least 15 to 25 introverted administrators agreeing to participate. The principals or assistant principals could be administrators of elementary, middle, high school, or specialized learning centers within the district. The district employs about 185 administrators; however, which administrators were introverts was unknown. Therefore, all administrators were invited to participate in the study, specifying those who identify with being introverted were sought. Formal invitations were sent via email to all principals and assistant principals in the district. Follow-up email invitations were sent to administrators when necessary to obtain an adequate sample size. Nineteen administrators responded they would participate, with 15 of them following through with all steps. The four that did not complete the study dropped out at various stages of the study, and it is unknown why they chose not to finish.

It is important to ensure ethical protection and confidentiality of the participants. Participants were notified of the purpose of collecting the information and how it would be used. They were also given an informed consent form (see Appendix A) to complete

prior to interviews and were reminded they may withdraw from the study at any time during the process. Participants' oral contributions to the study were audio recorded and stored on a password-protected device. Participants were also identified by self-chosen pseudonyms in reporting on the study, with all identifying information of the participants stored on a password-protected device for researcher use only. The study was approved by City University's Institutional Review Board for the protection of the participants.

Instruments

The Myers-Briggs Type Inventory® (MBTI®) Form M was utilized for verifying the introverted status of the participants. The general purpose of the inventory is to identify personality types, based on the work of Carl Jung, spanning back to the 1920s. The results of the inventory are individual and indicate one of 16 personality types across four different preferences. The 93-question inventory contains two response options that are forced choice, or word pairs in which respondents are asked to select the word most relevant to them. The results are designed to be descriptive, not predictive or diagnostic. It also does not box people into certain categories, but rather interprets the results on a scale. The inventory proves reliable across most age and ethnic groups, and people show the same personality type 75% - 90% of the time on retests (The Myers & Briggs Foundation, 2018b). Bower (2015), who published work that focused on developing personality self-awareness utilizing the MBTI®, said the inventory also deems every personality type to be normal, and shows no judgments about any type being preferred over another. Though the inventory identifies and describes 16 personality types resulting

from preferences in four categories, only the first category of introversion or extraversion was of importance to this study.

Each volunteer participant completed the MBTI® online inventory prior to setting up face-to-face interviews or submitting written digital responses. Some participants had already taken the MBTI® prior to the study and had a personalized report that was verified by the researcher; therefore, they did not need to retake the inventory. Several participants had completed the inventory years prior and knew their personality type; however, they did not have the report. Participants who fell into this category completed the inventory again to verify their preference for introversion. All volunteers who took the online inventory were self-aware of their introverted preference, as no volunteers emerged as extraverted using the inventory. After participants were verified of their introverted preference, they were invited to participate in a standard phenomenological open-ended interview. It was preferred if participants engaged in a face-to-face interview with the researcher. However, written digital responses were offered and utilized in order to obtain as many participants as possible.

For those who agreed to a face-to-face interview, a time convenient to both the researcher and participant was arranged, and the interview took place in the office of the administrator. The interview questions were provided ahead of time so participants could prepare if they desired, and the consent form was presented and signed prior to the start of the interview. Participants were reminded they may withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences. The WavePad Audio Editor application was utilized

for audio recording each face-to-face interview for transcription, and a protocol sheet, suggested by Creswell (2007), was used for note-taking in case of audio recorder failure. The demographics of the participant, including gender, age range, and years serving in a K-12 administrator role were recorded at the top of the protocol sheet in the header, along with other logistics, including date and time of the interview. A resource sheet (see Appendix B), listing communication aspects, was provided to each participant at the beginning of the interview, as it was unlikely the participants would be authorities or experts on communication. The resource sheet was used infrequently, if at all, by the participants. Then the open-ended questioning began, first giving participants an opportunity to describe the path to their current administrator role. The purpose of the introduction was to make participants feel comfortable speaking generally about themselves, and to give background knowledge about how they acquired their leadership role.

Patton (2015) suggested knowing exactly what is desired from the interview and developing the right questions ahead of time to obtain it. He articulated the type of questions asked, and the sequence in which they are delivered, are relevant to the results that will be gained. The interview questions utilized in this study to guide the interview consisted of a variety of knowledge, experience, behavior, sensory, and opinion questions by design. The questions were also ordered from a more descriptive to a more interpretive nature as the interview developed (Patton, 2015). They were developed based on field-testing, and also to align with the research questions. While the researcher asked

participants to expand or further explain an idea during the interview in certain instances, the following questions were the foundation for the interviews:

1. What methods of communication are required in your administrator role?
2. What messages of communication are required in your administrator role?
3. Describe the communication style you utilize in your administrator role.
4. What communication skills do you consider to be your strengths?
Weaknesses?
5. How do you incorporate your most natural communication skills and traits in your role?
6. How do you balance all the communication requirements of your leadership role?
7. What (if any) specific practices do you utilize to create an atmosphere of trust, open collaboration, and communication for your stakeholders?
8. What are the most difficult aspects of communication required of your role as an administrator? Why are they difficult?

Those who participated in a digital format followed a similar procedure. After verification of the introvert status using the MBTI®, participants were emailed a link to a Google® form. This procedure was an additional layer of confidentiality for the participant, so responses to the study could not be accessed by the participants' employer through an email system. The first items on the form covered the same demographic information obtained in the face-to-face interviews, including gender, age range, and

years serving in a K-12 administrator role. Participants selected among various choices to provide this information. The open-ended questions on the form included a text box for participants to offer narrative answers, beginning with background about how they acquired their administrator role. There was a separate box for each of the interview questions to be answered, following the background information question. An additional box was also provided for any further information participants wished to share on the topic. Each box expanded depending on how much text was typed, giving participants freedom to type the quantity of information desired. After finishing the responses, participants were instructed to press “Submit” at the bottom of the form. Responses populated into a password-protected format accessible only by the researcher.

While the face-to-face interview responses and digital responses were transcribed and coded together, they were also analyzed separately to check for systemic differences. It was possible that those who decided to respond digitally differed in responses from those who chose to share in person, so the differences were considered. Systemic differences in the varying formats of responses could have altered the conclusion; therefore, they were of importance. Differences could also lead to research topics for the future.

The research questions were field-tested with introverted leaders in professions other than K-12 education to ensure a high quality of responses could be obtained. The questions were field-tested by four male and two female introverted leaders. The interview questions were field-tested by four people who participated in face-to-face

interviews and two who submitted responses digitally. Both the face-to-face leaders and those responding digitally had access to the communication aspect resource sheet (see Appendix B). Follow-up questions, outside of the planned interview questions, were asked of both face-to-face responders, as well as those responding in digital format, when necessary, to obtain a thorough picture of all participant communication experiences.

Data Analysis Methods

The data were analyzed using an inductive, whole-part-whole method as described by Vagle (2018) in a book about crafting phenomenology research. In this method, the transcripts from the interviews were first read independently for examinations as a whole. Then, the data were analyzed in parts, without any predetermined categories. Coding of each line of each participant transcript occurred, looking for important meanings that could later be linked (Saldaña, 2016). After each transcript was coded multiple times in a cyclical fashion, the data were combined as a whole, with meaningful statements clustered together into themes that became the essence of the phenomenon. This provided a logical and systemic sequence to arrive at the essence of the introvert administrator experience (Moustakas, 1994).

After each interview took place, the audio recording was transcribed by Temi, an online speech-to-text transcription. The transcription was exported as a Microsoft Word document. To verify the accuracy of the transcription, the text version was compared to the audio recording. Identifying aspects, such as names of people and school districts, were removed to ensure confidentiality during this phase as well. The transcript was then

copied and pasted into a double-spaced format on the left side of a coding sheet template that was used for all participants, leaving room on the right side for codes and notes (Saldaña, 2016). A separate codebook, or spreadsheet of codes, was also utilized for a cumulative look at the data. A holistic reading of each individual transcription occurred first to provide opportunity for an initial statement of sentiment (Vagle, 2018), and was recorded on the codebook.

After the transcript was read by the researcher for a holistic view, a Colaizzi-style method (Vagle, 2018) was utilized to begin the coding process. The transcript was read, line-by-line, and significant statements were given a code, or number, with a note on the right side of the transcript giving that statement a meaning. This process was completed for the entire transcript of each participant. Each code was also recorded on the codebook for further analysis, with a separate spreadsheet for each participant at this stage.

The next line-by-line readings involved articulating the meanings based on the previous round of codes (Vagle, 2018). Although the coding process does not have any specific formulas that create a mean, as in quantitative data, this is the stage in the process where the analysis began to take on a consolidated meaning (Saldaña, 2016). As each transcript was read, categories began to emerge and were recorded on the template and in the codebook. As categories emerged, they were clustered together in another column on the template and color coded. Participants were also contacted for follow-up conversations when necessary if additional information was requested. The follow-up

responses were also recorded at the bottom of the transcripts to be included with the coding.

After all of the transcripts were coded and recorded in the codebook, separating the digital and face-to-face responses, the analysis continued. During this stage of analysis, organization of the meanings into clusters of themes occurred, and titles were given to the themes. This part of the process was flexible, where new ideas may have appeared and previous ideas deleted (Vagle, 2018). There were also some ideas that fit into multiple categories. It was at this point in the analysis where the essence of the phenomenon of communication with introverted administrators began to emerge. Systemic differences between the digital and face-to-face responses were minimal, but it was at this point in the analysis that they became evident. Outlier responses became an important part of the essence as well. These types of responses were important to the analysis by offering new perspectives (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Outlier responses were considered valuable, and were included in the findings.

Throughout this process, it was important to remove researcher bias and not have predetermined ideas about the phenomenon as the essence emerges. Credible research encompasses openness and careful documentation. Trustworthiness and authenticity include balance, fairness, and neutrality throughout the research process (Patton, 2015). Bracketing, a term coined by Husserl (Patton, 2015; Vagle, 2018), is the idea of looking backward and getting rid of predetermined ideas during reduction, or the dissecting of

data. Isolating key phrases during data analysis aided in finding the subjects' interpretations (Patton, 2015) and eliminating researcher bias.

Limitations

Although there is not a set formula for how to conduct a qualitative phenomenological study, there are still limitations that prevent the results from being generalized to large populations. While this study yielded only very few reliability considerations, there were still some aspects necessary to disclose. The limitations related more to what was withheld, or not included in the study, as opposed to the process.

One limitation was the population of the study did not necessarily include all introverted principals in the selected district. Although all introverted principals were invited to participate, there were introverted administrators who opted not to partake. At least one administrator responded to the invitation stating she was an introvert but would not like to participate. As previously stated, there were also introverted administrators who took the MBTI® and then did not complete all of the stages of the research study. The reasons for any of the administrators opting out may have been unrelated to their introvert status, and more about not having the time or interest, but those reasons are unknown. The perspectives of the introverted administrators who did not participate in the study were not included in the data analysis, which was a limitation of the results. Measures were taken to include as many introverted administrators as possible by sending follow-up email invitations and giving different options for how to participate.

Another limitation to be addressed was the potential, and the unknown, varying range of introversion among the participants. Although all of the participants were deemed to have preference for their introverted personality trait more than their extraverted one according to the MBTI®, there could have been a variety of types of introverts who participated in the study. Some of the introverts may have been closer on the scale to an extravert, while other participants may have been on the other end of the introversion-extraversion spectrum. The percentage of introversion of each participant could change the communication experience in leadership; therefore, it could have affected the results. Although this might have been a limitation, it also may have offered diversity among the responses and enhanced the data.

Patton (2015) discussed the importance of gathering as much data about the lived experience as possible when utilizing a phenomenological research design. This includes inclusion of the voices of the people involved, artifacts of the context, and observations. This phenomenological study intentionally included only the voice of the introverted leaders. There were no observations of the administrators communicating with stakeholders in their leadership roles, nor were there statements from the stakeholders regarding how they receive the communication of the introverted administrators. This information was purposefully withheld because this study focused on capturing the lived experiences of the introverts, and how they perceive communication in their leadership roles. The focus was not how they are viewed by others. This may be a consideration for future research.

The participants were given the opportunity to participate in the study in one of two different formats. In an effort to acquire the most participants possible, administrators were given the option of face-to-face interviews or a written digital response. Although both types of participation contained the same open-ended questions, this potentially created a participant-interview format interaction effect, as the same participant could have responded differently to a different format. Both formats were coded and analyzed separately to see if there were any systemic differences. Offering the different formats for response may have been a limitation, but it may have also offered additional insight into the research questions.

Delimitations

This research study took place in a single east coast school district; therefore, the results cannot yet be generalized to all K-12 administrator leaders. In other districts, administrators may experience leadership communication differently, based on geography or stakeholder differences. Education cultures may also vary in different parts of the country, causing K-12 introverted leaders to experience communication differently. The study should be replicated in multiple areas before being generalized to all K-12 introverted administrators.

Summary

This qualitative phenomenological study gave K-12 introverted administrators voice in the literature, where they were underrepresented prior to the study. The communication skills and traits of 15 to 25 introverted administrators were explored to

find out how they experience and adapt to the communication requirements of their leadership role. Participants were verified of their introverted status by utilizing the MBTI®, and then they responded to open-ended questions either in a face-to-face interview or written digital response format. Data analysis was conducted using a cyclical coding method, ultimately leading to the essence of the phenomenon of introverted communication skills in K-12 administrator leadership. The identity of the participants was protected, and confidentiality procedures were in place to further safeguard the responses of the participants. The limitations of the study were also disclosed. The findings and conclusions will be detailed in Chapter 4: Findings.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

A qualitative study on introverted administrator communication was conducted to give voice to introverted leaders on their experiences in serving in K-12 administrator roles. The job descriptions of K-12 administrator roles dictate a balance of introverted and extraverted communication skills, but research frequently highlights the natural qualities of extraverted leaders. Nine different themes emerged in this study to address the communication skills and traits introverted administrators bring to their leadership roles, and the ways they adapt to the communication requirements of their position. The specific research questions that guided the study were:

1. What unique communication skills and traits do K-12 introverted administrators utilize in leadership?
2. How do K-12 introverted administrators adapt to the leadership communication requirements of their position?
3. How do K-12 introverted administrators identify when to use the various communication skills required of the job?

In this chapter a review of the data collected from the participants via face-to-face interviews or digitally captured responses to specific open-ended questions about communication in K-12 administrator roles will be presented. The data were analyzed, and the themes are explained relative to each of the three research questions.

Background

The participants in this study included 15 introverted administrators currently serving in an east coast public school district. There were 19 total participants who initially agreed to participate, with 15 administrators completing all of the steps of the study and whose data were included in the findings. It is unknown why the four who initially agreed did not complete the research study. There were seven participants who submitted responses digitally and eight participants who participated in a face-to-face interview. There were four male administrators and 11 female administrators who participated in the study. A summary of the participants to show additional diversification is listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary of Participants

Pseudonym	Years as Administrator	Age Range	School Type
Sunshine	22	46-55	Elementary
Lisa	17	46-55	High
Dede	14	56-65	Elementary
Lucky	16	46-55	Elementary
Hal	17	46-55	Specialized
Burt	9	46-55	Elementary
Bea	7.5	36-45	Elementary
London	8	36-45	Elementary
Justin	16	36-45	Middle
Doc	7	36-45	Elementary
Lilly	16	46-55	Middle
Marie Peters	8	36-45	Elementary
Onyx	17	46-55	Elementary
Autumn	1	36-45	Middle
Alexander	6	36-45	Elementary

The data were collected in the summer over a six-week time period. During the time of the data collection, school was not in session and the majority of the school staff was not working. The face-to-face interviews lasted 20 to 45 minutes, depending on the participant. The participants seemed to talk comfortably and confidently during the interviews. All participants had been given the questions ahead of time, and some wrote out notes in preparation, while others did not. Those that offered responses using the digital format were not given a deadline, and usually submitted the responses within one to two weeks of receiving the link to the form.

Some participants shared interest in wanting to participate because of having read about introversion in various contexts, and one participant had attended a workshop about young introverted students that intrigued her to participate in the study. Another participant shared she had just been promoted from assistant principal to principal and was overwhelmed. She agreed to participate, however, because she recently was a doctoral candidate herself, and wanted to give back to the doctoral process. There were also a few volunteers who participated because of fellow introverted co-workers who inspired them to take part. All of the participants were eager to answer the questions, and offered to answer any follow-up questions if necessary.

The responses of the digital responders versus those who participated in oral interviews were coded and analyzed separately. While the digital responses generated significantly fewer codes, the themes that emerged from each type of response overlapped. The average number of codes for digital responses was 48 per participant,

while the average number for face-to-face participants was 148. Those who participated in face-to-face interviews shared examples of their experiences; therefore, more codes were produced. The digital responders were more concise; consequently, fewer codes were generated. The amount shared among the two types of participants was the biggest difference, but the ideas were similar among the differing types of responses.

Each of the participants was unique in their explanation of their communication style and habits; however, there were many commonalities that emerged. There were no outlier participants, as every participant shared thoughts and experiences that connected to the themes that formed the essence of the introvert's leadership communication phenomenon. There were unexpected outlier responses that occurred, however. For example, the participant utilizing the pseudonym Justin described one of his strengths as being good with impromptu public speaking. Conversely, most other participants indicated they did not like impromptu speaking, and would much rather prepare when speaking publicly to larger groups. Many of his other responses, however, contributed to the main themes that emerged. Every participant had unique responses that did not always fit in with the overarching themes, but saturation was achieved as the same types of responses were repeated over the course of the data collection.

Presentation of Findings

Nine themes emerged from the responses of the fifteen introverted administrators. Each of the themes connected to the three research questions with several of them

overlapping multiple questions. The themes are presented in relation to how they connect to each of the research questions.

What unique communication skills and traits do K-12 introverted administrators utilize in leadership?

Introverted administrators do best when they have time and space to process their thoughts. They do not like to act impulsively, and showed preference for being able to think through decisions carefully before acting. This is important to them as they care deeply about being successful and making the right decisions. The following three themes of achievement, being strategic and purposeful, and personal relationships emerged in relation to what unique communication skills and traits introverted administrators utilize in leadership.

Theme 1: The introverted administrators care deeply about success and achievement in their role.

Every participant began with sharing the background of their current leadership position. Although the question was meant to get the participants comfortable with talking about themselves and sharing information, the question revealed the administrators shared the trait of being achievers. It was clear the school district had done work on personal strengths using CliftonStrengths, an assessment that sequences a person's 34 talents. Many participants mentioned their top five strengths, with "achiever" repeatedly being mentioned. While achievement is not intuitively connected with communication skills and traits, it was clear through the responses of the participants that

achievement was a driving force that influenced their communication. Therefore, achievement is a relevant finding in this study. The desire to achieve success overpowered feelings of being uncomfortable in relation to different communication contexts.

Participants described their experiences of thinking outside the box to solve problems when they emerged, earning additional degrees because of interest in different topics, and a willingness to go out of their comfort zone in order to be successful. While they each shared different journeys and reasons for their aspirations, feeling the rewards of achievement were commonalities among the participants.

All the participants shared they worked toward earning the degrees necessary to serve in educational leadership positions. Most of the participants also shared about additional duties outside of formal schooling and their expected job requirements. Marie Peters showed initiative to achieve in leadership when she shared:

I had always wanted to be an educational leader when I started my career. As a teacher, I continually pursued opportunities for leadership in my school and in the county. I became an instructional team leader my second year of teaching while I worked towards my supervision certification. A few years later, I applied for an assistant principal position and was placed in the pool of candidates. I then applied for a leadership intern position, and was granted that position at an elementary school in the county. A year later, I was promoted to assistant principal in the same school.

Participants going by the pseudonyms London and Lucky began their leadership journeys by wanting to go above and beyond helping students and their families when they saw a need. While serving in a teaching position, Lucky described a homework club she and another teacher coordinated for the students in their grade. She was struggling to

get her students to complete homework, so she got permission for students to stay after school while she helped them finish their homework. She said, “We just wanted to do it. I liked overseeing that. I liked the paperwork and the coordination of it.” Early on in her teaching career, Lucky had a similar experience and used her strength as an achiever to start a group to help those families in need. She had a specific student whose mother expressed difficulty in helping her child with school-related concerns. Lucky described:

So, it was my first reality check that every school system is different and there are different accesses to different things. And so, I made a group myself. I put a letter together and I had so much response from that parent community...I'm having a purpose here to help in different capacities.

Both Hal and Burt also expressed having been successful in their leadership endeavors. Hal expressed achievement when he said, “I am a successful and quiet school leader. It is possible!” Burt also described his work during the summers in human resources, going through “piles of paper,” which he found interesting in relation to hiring educators, eventually leading him to serve as a human resources recruiter. That job ultimately led him to be a chief negotiator representing the board of education at the negotiating table with all of the unions. The superintendent saw his achievements in those roles and suggested he go back into the schools serving as a principal.

Sunshine said she never really thought about formally being a leader or having a specific leadership title; however, those who worked with her both early on in her teaching career and later in her leadership roles recognized her achievements. She described a natural love for learning, and eventually earned an additional graduate degree in public relations and journalism because of her love of writing. Although she did not

like the spotlight, Sunshine said she could not hide from her achievements when she won principal of the year. As an introvert, she described that it was hard for her to have her achievements recognized publicly, but others noticed all that she had done for the school and community and felt it necessary to bring it to light.

The participants shared the common trait of achievement during their pursuits of leadership and in their current roles. Their pursuits included focus and pride in wanting to do well to communicate, nonverbally, the desire to act in the best interests of students. The participants also shared a willingness to go above and beyond the expected duties of their roles to ensure success.

Theme 2: The introverted administrators are strategic and purposeful.

Introverts have a reputation for being quiet and passive. The results of this study revealed the cause is not out of fear or shyness, but is largely because of a desire to be strategic and purposeful. Introverts appreciate having space and time to process their thoughts before acting; therefore, they may not respond immediately to outside stimuli. The introverted administrators discussed understanding the consequences of their verbal and nonverbal communication, being clear and concise in their communication, and prepared in their delivery.

Burt described that his presence, or lack of presence, is always communicating something to his staff. He said, "...we're always communicating...Our presence or absence also communicates." As a result of this knowledge, he is strategic in everything he says and does. He makes sure to be in attendance for as many committee meetings as

possible, even if he is not leading them. He wants to communicate a message of being involved and knowledgeable about what is occurring at the school. Conversely, while personal relationships are a priority to him, he is strategic about not attending any happy hours after work hours with the staff. He does not want to “kill the room,” meaning that his presence censors what his staff members say. He is strategic not to put himself, or his staff members, in an uncomfortable situation outside of work hours. He also described being strategic down to the messages he sends based on what he wears. He recalled wearing a reindeer tie in the month of December one year, and having a student ask if he also had a Hanukkah tie. He then had more awareness of how even his clothing communicates a message. Burt described thinking strategically and acting purposefully with as many aspects of communication as possible.

The participant going by the name Dede described liking to be able to gather all the information, and then knowing what she wants to communicate regarding that issue. This takes time, observation, and listening skills before putting together a message to communicate. She described her strengths as being clear, concise, and confident. “I don't like to be wordy, and don't like a lot of ‘fluff’ in my messages.”

Most of the participants described in one way or another that they prefer to be prepared and organized in their delivery. Many participants described liking to practice a formal presentation to a larger group multiple times before the actual presentation. London said she likes to process and think through what she is going to say, and how she

is going to say it. Discussing one particular presentation she was preparing, London commented:

I had note cards. I recorded myself. I went through it religiously. I had my husband sit there and listen...I had been like weeks of prepping. So, for any of those like big-ticket situations, I have to be prepared and I don't, I don't do well if I'm not, but I know that about myself.

Lisa, a high school administrator, described being extremely strategic in showing support of the students and the programs in which they participate. She described a lot of emphasis on athletics in the schools she has served, and wanted to make sure the students in the art and music departments were also recognized for their achievements. She shared her natural tendencies are to observe and sit quietly, but also recognized her influence as an administrator. She strategically integrated her strength to take in what was happening, and utilized her influence as an administrator by attending as many music and art events after school as possible, knowing that her presence alone would make an impact. Her presence indicated to the students that their efforts were important, and they had administrator support in the school. She would then take it one step further and report to an extraverted co-administrator in her building to announce the great work of these students. She called herself a "little birdie" in the school, giving recognition to those less acknowledged while using her own quiet tendencies.

Being purposeful and strategic were the most repeated responses of the research study. The introverted administrators described their natural tendencies to quietly and collect information through listening and observation, and then process it before formal

communication occurred. They said they think carefully through what is happening, and then respond accordingly in hopes of getting the most meaningful and productive result.

Theme 3: The introverted administrators place a high priority and emphasis on developing and maintaining personal relationships.

A strength that emerged through the interactions with the participants was maintaining positive personal relationships. Several participants admitted they would not be the “life of the party,” and it was repeated by many that they do not enjoy social gatherings of large groups of people, either personal or professional. Lilly said she dislikes the large group settings because “they feel impersonal.”

Despite not enjoying large group activities, many of the participants enjoyed one-on-one and small group interactions. Several of the participants described acquiring their leadership roles as a result of relating with “students of all backgrounds and abilities,” or “students of promise, particularly those coming from poverty.” The introverted administrators also described enjoying knowing the staff members individually. They make an effort to know every staff member on a personal level, and enjoy talking with them about subjects outside of the typical work topics.

One participant, Doc, discussed leaving her roles as special education literacy coach and intervention coordinator, which were based at the district’s central office, because she really missed building those relationships that happen while working in individual schools. She also discussed a recent promotion to principal where she spent

her first few days of the position inviting the staff members to come and have individual meetings with her, just to get to know them on a more personal level.

Sunshine discussed her enjoyment of writing personal notes to staff members when she sees them doing something outstanding, and she also said she enjoys following up on issues staff members may be having in their personal lives. Those follow-ups always happen in person, rather than in writing, to ensure the personal connection is communicated. She also described the way her own children saw her, saying:

Now that my children are older, it's funny because they never believed I was an introvert, because they always thought mom was so friendly. You know, she talks to people in stores, um, when she's out, you know, there's students that see her and families, and she's always warm and welcoming and, and they never understood.

Lisa also had a unique way of using her natural tendencies to interact one-on-one to make sure to form and maintain positive relationships. She described going to after-school events where students were in attendance, and how she often navigated making personal connections when there might be bigger groups:

...like if there are a group of guys and I know that I've made a connection with one of them, I will insert myself in that group, and they'll kind of look at me like what on God's green earth is she doing? And then I try to make the connection with the one so the others know it's okay. Especially with um, males, especially with African American males. Um, because I've kind of found that if I'm okay with one or two, then the others know now.

The introverted administrators discussed how their preference for small groups or one-on-one interactions helps them form positive personal relationships with their stakeholders. They are able to get to know people well because they give their full

attention and listen to each individual as a person. They also discussed how this relationship building leads to trust in the professional setting.

The common responses of the participants relating to how they use their natural skills and traits in their leadership positions came back to achievement, being strategic and purposeful, and placing importance on personal relationships. The administrators discussed their tendencies to be naturally driven and wanting to complete tasks, which created a feeling of accomplishment. They said they are strategic in how they do things, often taking time to think through the best plan of action. It can also take on the form of wanting to practice and prepare ahead of time, to create a feeling of being organized. In addition, the participants shared the importance of having positive personal relationships with their stakeholders, which they typically create and maintain through small group or one-on-one interactions.

How do K-12 introverted administrators adapt to the leadership communication requirements of their position?

There are a lot of communication requirements of administrators in their leadership positions. They must continually communicate their vision for the school to the staff and community through both face-to-face and written methods. Introverted administrators can become drained from all of the demands put on them in their roles, so they have to find ways to adapt to the leadership communication requirements. The themes that emerged relative to this research question were the need to refresh and recharge, writing preference, and small group preference.

Theme 4: The introverted administrators have a need to refresh and recharge.

The timely demands put on administrators and frequent interactions in their leadership positions can leave them exhausted and drained at the end of each day.

Sunshine described the level of demand:

I heard there was a study done that school principals, next to like air traffic controllers, make more decisions in a day. I think the average is 1200 decisions a day. Now, they included things like, do we go out for recess because it's going to rain, you know, do I park here or park there because the PTA is coming...what do I do with this child that just hit a teacher? You know, it's such a range, you know, of, um, decisions that you're making. But all of that thinking and processing throughout the day just really exhausted me.

As a result, administrators must determine how to adapt to all the communication demands. Although each person refreshes and recharges somewhat differently, there was consensus that some down time was needed during each day where the administrators take some time for themselves and are not communicating with anyone. Lilly said, "I go home at the end of every day spent and have little energy for personal interactions." In order to return to her role ready for the next day, she described needing time alone every day, going to bed early, reading, and using the summer to recharge since there are significantly fewer interactions to manage.

Lisa also talked about needing to recharge at the end of each day. She talked about how she would concentrate on mindless jobs at home, like opening mail and folding laundry, in order to get ready for the next day. In addition, she spoke of adapting to certain tasks by doing them at a time that was best for her, where she could get "in the zone." For example, she described typing up teacher observations on the weekend or in

the evening, where she knew she can dedicate all of her focused energy to it when she was not so drained.

Bea discussed how all the interactions during the day make her exhausted, and how she has certain adaptations she uses to maximize her alone time when she is not interacting with others. She described her recharging as a preparation, gaining energy in the morning when the day starts, rather than after a full day's work. She said:

I like to get there early and...normally my lights are never on. So, I'm usually sitting in the dark and, and like I'll have the blinds open and stuff, but it's kind of like I need to recharge and just have quiet alone time. So you know I get here at like 7:30, when staff are around at like 8:00. I just need to sit in here and maybe do my, do my things and check my email and just sit in the dark and quiet...I have to sit here first and get myself together and then I can be out. I have to kind of like gear up, particularly if there's a morning meeting or to go out front and then welcome the kids and be ready. I have to like charge up. And then the same thing at the end, I kind of have to sit and kind of, I take naps a lot and it's not because the day's like crazy, but I'm drained. Um, I'm, I'm tired at the end of the day.

London also mentioned that she sometimes needs time to rejuvenate during the school day. She described her way of adapting like this:

I'll like really have to like come into my office and like shut the door for a minute, and like sort of have to process through everything that's happening. Um, and I'm very comfortable...It's not a ton, but it does happen where, uh, you know, somebody will knock on my door and I'll say, 'I'm so sorry. I just need a couple minutes because I'm trying to kind of go through my day and get everything organized in my brain.'

Although Autumn did not officially include aspects of recharging in her written responses, she too informally mentioned in an email during the study solicitation process being tired by interactions. When communicating about seeking introverted

administrators, she mentioned she thought she might be an introvert because she becomes drained after so many interactions during a workday.

While each introverted administrator had different methods of refreshing and recharging, it was a necessary adaptation for meeting all the communication demands and being successful in the position. The high quantity of interactions that occur daily cause the introverted administrators to become drained. They adapt to the communication requirements of the job by utilizing their personal refresh and recharge strategies. At the conclusion of his interview, Burt summed up this theme by saying, “Self-care, especially important for introverts. It’s necessary to build self-care in.”

Theme 5: The introverted administrators strategize about how and when to utilize written communication.

Although the theme of written communication frequently appeared in the responses throughout the study, participants expressed different ideas about when written communication should be used. The introverted administrators described adapting differently to their role in terms of written communication. Some administrators said they prefer written communication, while others write a lot less and prefer the face-to-face interactions over written communication.

London said she prefers to communicate with a text or an email, as compared to a face-to-face interaction. She prefers to be able to think through her communication behind a computer screen, and can be a better, more detailed, communicator when she is

able to write out her thoughts. Sunshine also expressed a preference for written communication. She said:

I do like to write a lot. So, for introvert, if you want to look at that perspective of it, I think a lot of my feelings about things are best expressed in writing because I process it internally.

Doc also expressed preferring written rather than face-to-face communication. She likes email because she can process what she wants to say. Email communication gives her time to process, and the opportunity to read and reread before she hits send. With that said, she does not consider all written communication equal. She mentioned struggling with Twitter multiple times in her interview. At one point she said:

I think that trying to figure out what you want to say in a very short, concise, um, kind of creative manner...Like you don't want to be boring and like write a sentence. Like you really want to be like this kind of fun and hip...that is very difficult for me. I think one of my strengths is to kind of sit with it. And that's probably why I like email, because I can sit; I can think out what I want to say. Twitter it is more of that like, 'Let's go with it.'

Bea talked about having communication flexibility. She utilizes verbal and written communication equally in her role because she recognizes written communication is not everyone's preferred method of receiving communication, despite her own preference for writing. When asked how she knows how to figure out what type of personal communication individual people desire, she responded that it depends on the situation. She usually responds in the same way communication was initiated, or higher priority communication usually calls for a phone call or face-to-face interaction. She also felt that introductions were best handled by being able to hear a voice.

Dede uses written communication as a part of her routine. She communicates with her staff via a written newsletter daily and writes a weekly newsletter for the community. As soon as she sends out a newsletter, she organizes herself by starting the next one. Written communication is a way that she has adapted, and it has become an important part of her routine.

Justin has adapted by listening to the stakeholders he serves. As a result of feedback, he has minimalized the amount of written communication sent to the community. He said, "...personally I do not do weekly because I find my communities only want to hear from me when needed - too frequently and they stop reading and miss important information."

Other participants, such as Burt, show a preference for face-to-face communication because of a self-described weakness in keeping up with email communication. He has had to adapt to his own personal strengths and weaknesses, and finds himself going around the building because he can "knock out two to three emails in a few minutes walking down the hall."

Written communication was cited as a regular part of being an administrator; however, each administrator had a different preference and way of handling it. While some preferred written communication, others described face-to-face communication as more beneficial. Depending on the personal strengths and preferences of the administrator, each individual adapted to written communication by either utilizing it more or less than other forms of communication.

Theme 6: The introverted administrators prefer small group or one-on-one interactions.

The introverted administrators shared their preference for small rather than larger group interactions. Although they know whole group meetings or presentations are necessary some of the time, they adapt to their natural tendencies by communicating in small groups more frequently. They said that larger group presentations can be accomplished effectively when there is preparation time; however, the smaller group communication can be more informal and personal. When the participant using the pseudonym Onyx was asked how she incorporates her most natural communication skills and traits into her role, she answered, “Structuring meetings in more small group settings.”

London described going out of her way sometimes to go and visit individual teams to communicate information. She knows it is not always the most efficient way, but has adapted to that practice to make her job more manageable. She described it as follows:

I've done it in years where I've gone to each individual team cause it's more of my style. It sucks more time. So, I have to kind of balance sometimes. Um, but sometimes I'll tweak the way I'm delivering things because it feels a little bit more comfortable. And then sometimes I throw myself in and say, nope, because of these time constraints, you have to do it with everybody, and I just suck it up and then I prepare, and I prefer not to.

Despite citing a strength of his being impromptu public speaking, Justin said that that strength feels natural only within his own community. He also said influence is something that comes naturally to him, but he does not, “like to always be in the forefront

and often avoids social situations outside of [his] inner circle.” To adapt, he will leverage the strengths of others and use “other groups/influences to deliver messages.”

According to the participants, the amount of information to process while serving as a K-12 administrator role can be very demanding and overwhelming. In order to balance the requirements of the job and be successful, the introverted administrators expressed needing to refresh and recharge in various ways as a result of a high volume of interactions daily. Writing was also a theme among the administrators to adapt to the job, sometimes as a preference and other times to be avoided for various reasons.

Administrators reflected on their own personalities and the preferences of their stakeholders to determine if more or less written communication would be delivered. The administrators also adapt to the communication requirements by giving preference to smaller group communication. While every administrator admits to having the ability to present to larger groups, smaller group or one-on-one interactions are the preferred way to interact with their stakeholders.

How do K-12 introverted administrators identify when to use the various communication skills required of the job?

These introverted administrators described a common tendency to want to sit back, listen, and observe situations. They also recognized that society does not always allow time or patience when decisions have to be made. The themes that emerged in relation to administrators identifying when to utilize the various communication skills required of the job were societal expectations, listening, and being direct.

Theme 7: The introverted administrators have awareness of society's communication expectations of them.

Although not all participants mentioned having experiences that go against societal expectations with their natural introverted tendencies, several of the participants did offer examples of times when they recognized their habits of communication were considered inferior, or not correct according to society. Bea described an interaction with an elementary student while walking her dog in the school neighborhood. As she walked with just her dog, one of her students asked her if she was lonely. She recognized at that time that society assumes if you are alone and not interacting with others, you must be lonely. The reality was she was having a moment of recharge after a workday, and was content to be alone.

London had a more exaggerated experience at a district-wide workshop. Although she had participated all day in the tasks assigned at her small group table, she was “called out” in the bigger group toward the end of the workshop. Despite her extensive content knowledge, sharing with the bigger group was not her natural or preferred method of participation. After the workshop, the facilitator addressed her personally, telling her she needed to speak out more because she was very knowledgeable, but no one knew of her knowledge and skills. It was the first time anyone had made her aware of how she was viewed because of her small group preference. While she was reflective and told herself she would speak out more in groups, she was also disappointed that the feedback was “you just didn't realize I existed for seven years.”

Doc also discussed that those with the loudest voices are the ones who get heard. She understands her role and influence as the leader, and wants to communicate a culture for her entire school that every voice matters, no matter how loud or quiet. She is making an effort to “manage those voices,” which she says is not easy because of “the extraverts that want to just like spew out, and so really being mindful of that...and making sure that we are keeping everybody in mind.”

Dede shared an expectation to behave in a way more associated with extraverts. She expressed the need to be outgoing in her role and said:

Even though I consider myself an introvert, I believe I can become more of an extravert at work since that is required of the position. Most people are very surprised when I say I am an introvert because of how they see me interact and communicate at school.

Several of the participants recognized the expectations and trends of introverted and extraverted behavior, and have developed strategies to deal with these expectations. Some of the more experienced administrators expressed a confidence and comfort with knowing themselves, and being able to identify when certain communication must be done, while some of the less experienced administrators stated they are learning how to navigate their communication needs.

Theme 8: A natural strength and tendency of the introverted administrators is to listen and seek feedback from others.

One of the requirements of the K-12 administrator role is to collaborate with stakeholders, which sometimes requires sitting back and listening. The introverted administrators in this study repeatedly said it was natural for them to sit back and take in

what others were saying. Getting feedback was consistently mentioned as a common practice, which is a form of listening. Listening is a tool to hear others, and identify when and how to respond. It was cited by the participants as necessary to develop personal relationships, to deliver constructive criticism, and hear the perspectives of others.

Bea discussed how she is very good at listening to others, which helps her learn about people and their personal lives. The downfall is she sometimes listens too much, and perhaps does not talk enough. She recognized this when she once mentioned that she liked giraffes, and suddenly she was being gifted with a plethora of giraffes. Upon further reflection, she realized she had not been sharing a lot of information about herself so the one thing she had shared, people had latched onto. She now better understands the importance of not listening too much, and sharing more about herself so others can know her. Marie Peters also said listening has a place and time. She shared that she tends to listen and observe first, and then responds. She does recognize, however, that “sometimes listening first is not appropriate,” referring to instances where a quick decision needs to be made, or a stressful situation diffused immediately.

Theme 9: The introverted administrators generally have a direct approach to communication.

Introverts are thought to be more passive types of communicators, but most of the administrators described utilizing a direct communication style. They naturally take time to process their thoughts and choose their words carefully. Therefore, they know what they want to say, and usually say it directly. Alexander described himself as a consistent

and articulate leader who likes to be transparent. Lucky also said, “What you see is what you get, and I'm always going to be the same person.”

While there were multiple reflections of the societal expectations to sometimes communicate with a more outgoing style, most of the introverts shared they know themselves well and are comfortable communicating in a way that is natural for them. They said they are not afraid to be direct and take the extra processing time to listen first and think about things. They also felt comfortable to say, “I’ll get back to you on that.”

Summary

The findings of the study revealed nine themes relating to the natural communication skills and traits of K-12 introverted administrators, how they adapt to the communication requirements, and how they identify when to use different communication skills required of the job. The participants commonly revealed their communication skills are driven by achievement, strategy, and purpose. They utilize their tendency to listen and observe first before talking, and they consistently prioritize personal relationships. Despite introverts being known for not being as social as extraverts, the participants revealed they adapt by utilizing their preference for small group or one-on-one interactions to develop and maintain their personal relationships with their stakeholders. They also shared that their work is draining because of the constant communication demands, but employ various strategies to refresh and recharge daily. Additionally, writing emerged as a theme for adaptation, either being utilized more or less, depending on the leader and situation. Lastly, the introverts decide when to utilize

the various communication skills based on societal expectations, what they hear when listening or gathering feedback, or using their natural tendency to be direct because they are comfortable with who they are.

In Chapter 5, the conclusions resulting from the data will be synthesized in accordance to the review of the literature and the statement of the problem.

Recommendations for action and further research will also be presented.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the communication skills and traits of K-12 introverted administrators. Through the exploration, the natural skills and traits of introverted K-12 administrators were exposed. The results of the study also revealed different ways introverted administrators adapt to the overwhelming communication demands of their leadership role, and how they identify when to use the most appropriate form of communication to achieve success.

Data gathered from the participants were analyzed and synthesized to answer the following research questions:

1. What unique communication skills and traits do K-12 introverted administrators utilize in leadership?
2. How do K-12 introverted administrators adapt to the leadership communication requirements of their position?
3. How do K-12 introverted administrators identify when to use the various communication skills required of the job?

The research findings contradict some of the literature on an introvert's shortcomings, and challenge some of the previous ideas about an introvert's leadership. The findings of this study could be used to inform hiring procedures of K-12 administrators and leadership development practices.

Discussion of Findings and Conclusions

Utilizing both face-to-face interviews and written responses of 15 current administrators in a public school district, nine themes emerged relating to communication of introverts. Each theme is distinct, but they are interconnected. The themes, ordered from those most to least commonly appearing, are as follows:

- The introverted administrators are strategic and purposeful.
- The introverted administrators place a high priority and emphasis on developing and maintaining personal relationships.
- The introverted administrators care deeply about success and achievement in their role.
- The introverted administrators generally have a direct approach to communication.
- The introverted administrators have a need to refresh and recharge.
- The introverted administrators prefer small group or one-on-one interactions.
- A natural strength and tendency of the introverted administrators is to listen and seek feedback from others.
- The introverted administrators strategize about how and when to utilize written communication.
- The introverted administrators have awareness of society's communication expectations of them.

The most consistent foundational theme for K-12 introverted administrator communication in this study was introverted administrators are strategic and purposeful. The administrators revealed they are natural listeners who like to take in both verbal and nonverbal aspects of communication, and instinctively take time to process and carefully decide their reaction. They do best when they have adequate processing time to precisely choose their words in response, and often have a concise and direct approach as a result of the strategic processing time. Achievement may not appear to have a direct connection to communication; however, it was mentioned by many of the participants as an important aspect of their leadership roles. The time given to processing and strategizing their communication was often driven by a need for success. Taking time to think through decisions would lead them to sound and rationale resolutions. Prior research, such as the research by Solaja, Idowu, and James (2016), also found that introverts utilize processing time, but the processing time was seen as a barrier to productivity. In contrast, the participants in this study viewed adequate processing time as fundamental to achievement.

Personal relationships were of importance to the introverted administrators in this study, contradictory to results of research conducted by Zell, McGrath, and Vance (2014). They stated it is the extraverts who are connected and form positive relationships, not the introverts. The administrators in this study, however, described development of personal relationships with their stakeholders to be the key in earning trust in the school community. The introverted administrators talked of having genuine care for knowing

and relating to others in small group or one-on-one interactions. They also discussed utilizing their natural tendency to listen to people to get to know them.

The integration of the introverted administrators' need to process and strategize their communication often led to a preference for written communication for the participants in this study. Written communication affords them the time to reflect and choose words carefully. The importance of personal relationships will sometimes make them adapt and choose face-to-face or phone call communication instead, however. As a result of being able to listen and observe carefully, the introverted administrators have developed an understanding of the perceptions and consequences of each of the different varieties of communication, and they choose the appropriate type based on the situation. Elmer, Holt, and Thompson (2015) also said having the ability to adapt the communication approach to the context is important for maintaining positive interactions with stakeholders.

Being a K-12 administrator has heavy communication demands. There are many stakeholders to be considered daily, and many decisions to be made. As a result, the introverted administrators revealed the need to refresh and recharge. The numerous interactions during the day leave them feeling drained and exhausted. This was consistent with studies conducted by Human, Thorson, and Mendes (2016) and Smith (2016), where differences in reactions to stimulus of introverts and extraverts were revealed, with introverts reacting negatively to outside stimulus. The introverts in this study described learning to adapt to the exhaustion by taking time for themselves either at the beginning,

middle, or end of the day. They gather their thoughts and rejuvenate their energy by going to bed early, taking a walk, reading books, or even just spending some time alone. Getting to work earlier or staying later were also mentioned as routines to help in getting organized and feeling refreshed, so they may have meaningful and productive interactions with their stakeholders.

While one of the lesser-mentioned themes, the introverted administrators did reveal an understanding of the societal expectations of them. Several of the administrators mentioned feeling a societal pull to be more vocal. They also understood how others might feel negatively impacted by their need for processing time. In response, the administrators discussed adapting by sharing leadership and utilizing those that have strengths that make up for their weaknesses. Overall, the participants in this study felt confident in their leadership and communication styles, and they offered no apologies for their natural tendencies.

To summarize, this study further emphasized that introverts show a preference for additional processing time, but revealed they utilize this natural tendency to be strategic and purposeful. The participants in this study also had awareness of their strength of wanting to achieve, and explained the desire to achieve drives their communication habits. While it is said that introverts can be passive communicators (Medina & Srivastava, 2016), the participants in this study had a stronger pull to achieve, even in times of discomfort; therefore, they did not shy away from communication. In addition, the natural preference for small groups or one-on-one interactions of the introverted

administrators was reinforced, along with their tendency to be good listeners to develop personal relationships with their stakeholders. Their listening skills and intuitive nature allow them to adapt to their stakeholders to determine if written or oral communication is the best type of communication for the situation. They also adapt to the many communication demands of their work by refreshing and recharging daily. Some administrators had awareness of society's expectation for them to be more vocal, but showed a confidence in their carefully chosen, direct methods of communicating, which contradicts previous literature.

Application of Findings and Conclusions to the Problem Statement

The results of this study revealed introverts like to be strategic and purposeful in their communication, and they put high priority on personal relationships. The introverted leaders in the study were also found to be mindful thinkers who choose their words carefully; therefore, they are direct in their communication approach. The ideas that introverts place emphasis on personal relationships and are direct communicators are contradictory to some of the communication of introverts, and challenges the notion that introverts cannot be successful leaders.

The stereotypes that introverts dislike people, are antisocial and incompetent when it comes to socializing (Mihaila, 2016), and spend minimal time on social interactions (Wu, Wei, & Hui, 2011) were not borne out for the participants in this study. Instead, the administrators repeatedly mentioned taking significant time to develop personal relationships with the staff within their schools. Tomescu-Dumitrescu (2016)

mentioned healthy communication to include listening and trust, which were occurring according to the participants.

The conclusions of this study also contradict the idea that introverts are passive communicators who lack confidence (Medina & Srivastava, 2016). The results show the introverted administrators are or can be direct communicators who generally know exactly what they want to convey, and they can send an explicit and consistent message. The participants of this study described preparing ahead when they must give presentations to larger groups, so they can deliver the messages confidently.

The perception that introverted leaders do not speak up enough (Stephens-Craig, Kuofie, & Dool, 2015) was not lost on the introverted administrators in this study. However, their beliefs aligned more with the ideas of Mayfield and Mayfield (2017) that leadership communication is a unique and mindful process that is both verbal and nonverbal. The participants also brought to light the same ideas put forth by Mihaila (2016) that introverts are good listeners and slower thinkers who process information gradually. The participants took pride in their ability to sit and listen to their stakeholders, get feedback, and process information before acting impulsively.

The current job requirements for K-12 administrators dictate a balance of listening and speaking skills (Richardson et al., 2016), with listening being more associated with introverts, and assertive speaking skills being more associated with extraverts. The results of this research study show that introverted administrators can balance the communication requirements of their role. The administrators were genuine

and created interpersonal relationships with teachers, which was concluded by Fox, Gong, and Attoh (2015) as essential to successful K-12 leadership. They also were not only meeting the requirements of thoughtful decision-making said to be important for leadership by Kars and Inandi (2018), but the participants described it as being a natural habit.

The assertive speaking said to be required of K-12 administrators was not a barrier to successful leadership, according to the participants. The participants described less of a passive communication style, and more of a direct style. They know what they want to communicate, and they think carefully about the words they will use to communicate the message. They did recognize their preference for small group interactions over larger groups; however, they have been able to adapt to larger group communication by preparing ahead of time. They also know how to share leadership responsibilities by utilizing the strengths of others when necessary. They match communication skills to the task that needs to be completed, determined by Huang et al. (2016) to be important in leadership. Their determination to achieve also overrides being out of their comfort zone in various communication contexts.

The results of this study indicate that introverted administrators can balance the overwhelming amount of communication demands of their role. They use their unique and natural communication skills and traits of processing and building personal relationships, but they also have learned how to adapt to their areas of weakness, such as interacting in large group settings. Some of the revelations in this study contradict the

current stereotypes of introverts; therefore, it is important to know individual leaders personally before making assumptions about their leadership abilities.

Application to Leadership

The findings in this study suggest that introverts can competently and confidently lead K-12 schools. It is important to know that introverts do not always match the stereotypes put upon them, and they can adapt for their areas of weakness. Those in this study who participated via an interview spoke confidently, and those that provided written responses described themselves as quiet but never as passive or cautious, as the literature frequently describes. There is also a stereotype about extraverts performing better because of their stronger ability to deal with the pressures of a task (Van Gehlen & Sachse, 2015), but the findings in this study were parallel to the ideas of Mihaila (2016) that introverts prefer to work more slowly and carefully. Working quickly does not necessarily indicate better performance. It is important to look deeper and beyond the stereotypes of different personality types, and explore leadership through different lenses for a more complete picture.

The results of this study confirm the ideas of Argenti (2017) that leadership communication is more about personal style than personality alone. Although there were themes common to the participants of this study, each of the participants had their own style and techniques to make their leadership personal and manageable. Leadership is also a process that evolves, and K-12 administrators should lead in a way that fits them (Huang et al., 2016).

With extraversion sometimes being an expectation and a more dominating personality type in today's society, it is important to know the tendencies of different personality types, introversion specifically. Although each person is a unique individual who does not fit into any one category entirely, understanding the habits and behaviors of people can be advantageous. For example, the introverted administrators in this study spoke about often being quiet in larger group settings or in professional development workshops. It can and has been perceived that they are disinterested, lacking knowledge, or not friendly as a result of this behavior. What was revealed in this study, however, is introverts often like to take time to process what is being communicated. While some may think someone is disinterested, they could in fact be very interested and perhaps deep in thought about what was presented. They also may have a response to what has been presented, but they have not been provided adequate thinking time to process what the response will be. Knowing the audience would help understand the truth of the situation, rather than making assumptions.

Having knowledge of personality types, introversion included, is important from a few angles. It is important from the human resources angle when hiring leaders. Knowledge of personalities is also essential for knowing who is being served, and for finding the best kind of leader for the population. It is also important for leaders to expose who they are to their stakeholders, so there is understanding of leadership actions or lack of actions. These things can be accomplished by getting to know people on a

personal level, and learning about the microaggressions toward introverts. Having understanding creates an environment where people can lead in a way that fits them.

Recommendations for Action

The findings in this study gave new perspective on introverted leadership for K-12 administrators. Some stereotypes that had previously been designated for introverts were not consistent with the participants in this study, and it was concluded that introverted administrators execute strategies to balance both the introverted and extraverted communication requirements of their position. As a result of the findings of this study, it is recommended that professional development on personality types be utilized in leadership development, hiring practices be evaluated, and introverted administrator successes be recognized. It is also recommended that diverse leadership teams be formed for optimal leadership capacity.

The participants in this study had taken part in various professional development regarding personality awareness. As a result, they knew their strengths and weaknesses, and could speak about them freely and confidently. They also knew the traits of their co-workers. Having knowledge and awareness of different personality skills and traits is valuable to leadership. It helps in developing a leadership style, as well as in developing others. It is recommended that K-12 administrators take part in professional development to learn their own personality skills and traits. These recommendations could take place during coursework prior to obtaining a leadership position, or when serving in a leadership role, as leadership is always evolving. It is also recommended that system

leaders have an education on the personality types of their school-based leaders, and an awareness of the systemic microaggressions that may be present surrounding introverted leaders. When administrators participate in professional learning, the environment should be structured in a way that can be beneficial for a variety of personalities. Knowing the strengths of introvert administrators as strategic thinkers and good listeners should be the blueprint for creating leadership development programs, in order to capitalize on those skills and traits.

It is also recommended that hiring practices be evaluated for equity of different personality types. A major finding of this research study is that introverted administrators like time to think through their verbal communication. Traditional interviews, however, often require that applicants speak on command to unknown questions. It might be considered that applicants be presented with the questions ahead of time, so those who prefer processing time have an opportunity to perform their best. Applicants could be invited to arrive an hour prior to their interview appointment time to view and process the interview questions without outside consultation to maintain the integrity of the interview.

Other hiring practices should also be evaluated to align with the findings of this study. Panel interviews should be implemented with awareness, for example. It is known that introverts dislike large group interactions where they are presenting information without practice, and a panel interview has potential to create this type of atmosphere. Panel interviews could be altered to include fewer numbers of interviewers, or perhaps

become more of a dialogue, to make those with introverted tendencies feel the interaction aligns more with a small group environment. This would create a more comfortable atmosphere, where applicants would be more likely to communicate their best thoughts and plans.

Another recommendation is to recognize the successes of introverted leaders. By recognizing achievements, or highlighting relationships introverts have built with stakeholders, for example, the negative stereotypes and microaggressions can be eliminated, and new ways of thinking about leadership could emerge. The successes of introverted administrators could be acknowledged as best practices, in addition to the successes of extraverted leaders, for better balance.

A final recommendation is to form diverse leadership teams. One of the strategies revealed by the participants in this study for adapting to the communication requirements of school leadership was utilizing shared leadership. The administrators delegated the communication requirements, and they made up for their weaknesses with the strengths of others. If school leadership teams were strategically diverse, it would allow for shared leadership opportunities for maximum benefits.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this study was to give voice to K-12 introverted administrators and how they experience the communication aspects of leadership. Prior to this study, there were no studies published from the perspective of the introvert, and few publications highlighted the positive qualities introverts can bring to leadership.

Additional studies should be conducted to expand the number of studies on this topic. Specifically, it is recommended this study be replicated to expand to a larger geographic area. It would also be suggested to expand to include more male, middle, and high school introverted perspectives. The current participant group offered valuable information to help balance out the literature, but it is acknowledged the amount of information collected was limited; therefore, it cannot yet be generalized to all K-12 introverted administrators. Should the study be replicated, it is recommended, if possible, to redesign the study to have all participants participate in a face-to-face interview. While offering two different types of responses likely helped recruit participants for this study, those who participated in face-to-face interviews offered a more thorough picture of their perspective.

It is also recommended that this study be replicated to see if the results that contradicted the current literature are repeated. In order to be able to generalize and further inform K-12 introverted administrator leadership communication patterns, it is necessary to find out if other studies would duplicate the personal relationship and direct communication results. It is also unknown if other introverted administrators are strategic in their written communication habits, and if and how they adapt to the communication demands of the role.

To expand the information gathered from this study, it is also recommended this study be expanded to include not only the introvert's perspective, but also the perspective of the stakeholders served by the introverted leaders. The stakeholders providing data

about how the introvert communication is received could be informative and add additional perspective to the topic. The results of the study would be more inclusive if data collected from observations were also included.

Further research could also include introverted administrator success. A quantitative or mixed methods study on the topic of K-12 communication habits could inform whether the skills and traits of introverted administrators are leading to success of specific aspects of education, such as higher student achievement or the development of future educational leaders. A study of this nature would define successful leadership and determine if the natural skills and traits of introverted administrators contribute to positive outcomes. A study of this nature could also include a comparison of introverted and extraverted administrators.

Concluding Statement

Since the Industrial Revolution, extraverts have been the preferred personality type in various aspects of society, leadership included. Their outgoing and friendly nature alludes to superior communication skills, while negative perceptions of introverts exist because of their more reserved and quiet nature. Numerous research studies have been published citing the advantages of the extravert's leadership. Prior to this study, there were no studies published from the introvert's perspective, despite one-third to one-half of the American population being introverts (Cain, 2012; Sritharan & Ragel, 2016).

The job requirements of K-12 administrators dictate a balance of natural introverted and extraverted traits, however. The requirements call for strong

communication skills that include listening and assertive speaking, and balancing natural introverted and extraverted communication skills. Both introverts and extraverts bring strengths to leadership roles; however, the introvert's communication skills are currently not positively represented in the literature.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore how K-12 introverted administrators experience communication aspects of leadership. As a result of exploring the unique perspective of K-12 introverted leaders, introverted communication strategies that are effective in leadership were uncovered. The findings of this phenomenological study of 15 introverted administrator participants revealed that strategy and purposefulness are a natural strength of introverted administrators. Introverted administrators are often listening and taking in what is being presented to them, and then they are carefully and mindfully processing how to act on the information. It was also revealed that despite what the current literature describes, the introverted administrators value personal relationships with their stakeholders. They spend much time in small groups and in one-on-one interactions getting to know people on a personal level. There is currently a stereotype that introverts are passive communicators, although this study revealed that introverted administrators exhibit a more direct communication approach. As a result of taking time to process information, the introverted administrators are able to carefully choose the precise words to communicate their messages in a direct and consistent way.

The introverted administrators in this study shared awareness of the societal message that attention is more likely to be given to those who are more talkative. This societal norm did not stop them from being their authentic selves and developing their own unique leadership style, however. They also expressed knowing when they need to adapt where their strengths stop and their weaknesses begin. They described taking advantage of a shared leadership approach and utilizing the strengths of extraverts to deliver more animated messages when they can. Their desire to achieve success drives their communication habits and replaces a tendency to fall silent. They also make sure to build in self-care, as the communication demands of their role leave them drained daily. They utilize personal strategies to help them refresh and recharge so they can begin each day ready to lead.

The findings in this study were valuable in bringing balance to the current literature that favors extraverted leadership. It also challenged the current literature and the stereotypes put on introverted leaders. As a result of this study, it is recommended that professional development on personality traits take place during leadership development, diverse personality leadership teams be formed, and praise for an introvert's successes be made public to change the negative perceptions of introverted leaders. It is also recommended that hiring agents review practices for hiring K-12 administrators to ensure equity for all leadership candidates. The most important revelation of this study was K-12 introvert administrators confidently perform in their

leadership positions by utilizing their natural skills and traits to create a personal style that fits them and serves their stakeholders well.

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



School/Division of Applied Leadership

CITYU RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

I, _____, agree to participate in the following research project to be conducted by Paige Zimmer, faculty member or student, in the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Leadership Program. I understand this research study has been approved by the City University of Seattle Institutional Review Board.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form, signed by all persons involved. I further acknowledge that I have been provided an overview of the research protocol as well as a detailed explanation of the informed consent process.

Title of Project:

K-12 Introvert Administrator Communication Skills: Giving Voice to those who are Quiet: A Phenomenological Study

Name and Title of Researcher(s):

Paige Zimmer - Doctoral Student City University of Seattle

For Faculty Researcher(s):

Department: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Immediate Supervisor: _____

For Student Researcher(s):

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Sher Downing

Department: School of Applied Leadership

Telephone: 803.714.3770

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Program Coordinator (or Program Director):

Dr. Joel Domingo

Sponsor, if any:

N/A

Purpose of Study:

To explore how K-12 introvert administrators experience leadership, focusing on communication skills, traits, and adaptations to the communication requirements of their leadership role. The study has potential to expose strategies for balanced communication skills and traits in K-12 administrative leadership.

Research Participation:

I understand I am being asked to participate in this study in one or more of the following ways (the checked options below apply):

- Respond to in-person and/or telephone Interview questions;
- Answer written questionnaire(s);
- Participate in other data gathering activities, specifically, _____;
- Other, specifically, respond to open-ended interview questions in written digital format.

I further understand that my involvement is voluntary and I may refuse to participate or withdraw my participation at any time without negative consequences. I have been advised that I may request a copy of the final research study report. Should I request a copy, I understand I may be asked to pay the costs of photocopying and mailing.

Confidentiality

I understand that participation is confidential to the limits of applicable privacy laws. No one except the faculty researcher or student researcher, his/her supervisor and Program Coordinator (or Program Director) will be allowed to view any information or data collected whether by questionnaire, interview and/or other means. If the student researcher's cooperating classroom teacher will also have access to raw data, the following box will be checked. All data (the questionnaires, audio/video tapes, typed records of the interview, interview notes, informed consent forms, computer discs, any backup of computer discs and any other storage devices) are kept locked and password protected by the researcher. The research data will be stored for 5 years (5 years or more if required by local regulations). At the end of that time all data of whatever nature will be permanently destroyed. The published results of the study will contain data from which no individual participant can be identified.

Signatures

I have carefully reviewed and understand this consent form. I understand the description of the research protocol and consent process provided to me by the researcher. My signature on this form indicates that I understand to my satisfaction the information provided to me about my participation in this research project. My signature also indicates that I have been apprised of the potential risks involved in my participation. Lastly, my signature indicates that I agree to participate as a research subject.

My consent to participate does not waive my legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, and/or City University of Seattle from their legal and professional responsibilities with respect to this research. I understand I am free to withdraw from this research project at any time. I further understand that I may ask for clarification or new information throughout my participation at any time during this research.

Participant's Name: _____
Please Print

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: Paige Zimmer
Please Print

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

If I have any questions about this research, I have been advised to contact the researcher and/or his/her supervisor, as listed on page one of this consent form.

Should I have any concerns about the way I have been treated as a research participant, I may contact the following individual(s):

Dr. Joel Domingo, Program Coordinator (and/or Program Director), City University of Seattle, at
City University of Seattle
521 Wall Street Suite 100
Seattle, WA 98121
(206) - 239 - 4770
jdomingo@cityu.edu

APPENDIX B

COMMUNICATION ASPECTS RESOURCE SHEET

Communication Aspects*

Initiative	Persistence	Confidence	Sociability
	Masculinity	Dominance	Cooperativeness
Agreeableness	Verbal Cues	Nonverbal Cues	Passiveness
Judgmental	Listening	Aggressive	Respect
Trust			
Problem Solving	Feedback	Smiling	Eye Contact
Expressive	Authentic	Perspective Taking	Transparent
Mood	Delivery	Culture	Reflection
Actions	Exchanges	Blockages	Timing
Methods	Disruption	Absence	Neglect
Indifference	Alignment	Task	Relationship
Productivity	Results	Relaxed	Indecisive
Partnerships			
Collaboration	Deliberate	Composure	Affect
Goals			
Personal	Relationships	Speaking	Balance
Humor	Knowledge	Questioning	Consistency

*This list is designed to be used as a reference and is not an all-inclusive list. The above-mentioned aspects are based on a literature review on leadership communication

