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The Effect Of Principals' Thinker Communication Style On School Improvement

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THE EFFECT OF PRINCIPALS' THINKER COMMUNICATION STYLE
ON SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

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Abstract

This dissertation sought to examine the effect of the communication of Thinker

personality type principals on school improvement efforts. Thinker principals prefer to

communicate through thoughts and logic. The Process Communication Model® was used to

determine participants' personality types. This examination consisted of a qualitative study that

included data collected from surveys administered to principals of buildings with Federal Level

IV Special Education programs and alternative high schools. The participating principals had

Thinker personality types, and the participating teachers served on their School Improvement

Leadership Teams that were led by the participating principals. The teachers had similar and

different personality types to the principals. The study concluded that teachers with similar

personality types to the principals were less clear about meeting outcomes than teachers with

other personality types. Study findings also concluded that teachers with a Harmonizer base or

phase personality type with a preference to communicate through emotions and feelings most

commonly identified meeting outcomes with principals and were most motivated by the

principals' communication compared to teachers with other personality types.

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Doctor of Education
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CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION

The effectiveness of a school principal's communication with the teachers he/she leads is
the primary factor in successful school improvement efforts in the United States today
(Chenoweth, 2015; Johnson, 2005; Labby, Lunenburg, & Slate, 2012; Ramalho, Garza &
Merchant, 2010; Waters & Cameron, 2007). According to a 2013 Gallup study, over one-third of
teachers indicated that they had left a job because their principal did not make them feel valued
or give them opportunities to be actively engaged in their work (Gallup, 2014). The study
further reported that in order for teachers to be effective in increasing student achievement they
must feel actively engaged and valued. It is a principal's job to empower teachers to apply their
strengths (Labby, Lunenburg, & Slate, 2012). It is only possible for a principal to do this if
he/she is able to communicate effectively with each teacher to accurately identify and
successfully encourage the use of his/her strengths (Gilbert, 2012; Kahler, 2008; Pauley &
Pauley, 2009). Being able to communicate effectively so teachers feel valued and actively
engaged is dependent upon the principal's ability to bring about those feelings in others
(Robertson, 2007).

Having experienced K-12 education as a student during the 20th century, starting my
career as a teacher in the 20th century, and taking on different teacher-leader and administrative
positions in the 21st century, this researcher has seen the needs of students, teachers, and
principals change. The need for principals to communicate more effectively became more
apparent during the researcher's first year of work in Intermediate District 287 and Process
Communication Model® training and more so after becoming a Process Communication Model
trainer in 2012. Intermediate District 287 located in Plymouth, Minnesota, is different from a

traditional school district. It was created to provide member districts with services for students with low incidence disabilities (such as the blind and visually impaired) and students needing more than 50% of their instruction in a special education setting (Special Education Instructional Federal Setting IV). Currently, District 287 provides over 120 programs and services to its 12 member districts, located in the western suburbs of the Minneapolis/St. Paul Metro Area, as well as non-member school districts and students throughout Minnesota (District 287, 2013). Because of the unique learning needs of the students our District serves, and their physical, emotional, and behavioral challenges, the demands placed on and stress experienced by our teachers and principals are often higher than in traditional school settings. Kahler (2012), the founder of the Process Communication Model, discovered through his research that the deeper in distress people get the less clearly they can think and the less able they are to communicate effectively.

Statement of the Problem

Multiple challenges have come, gone, and stayed in K-12 education over the past 20 years and poor communication by school leaders has played a role in each challenge (Brooks, 2012). School administrators' leadership of teachers is a key factor in the success of school improvement efforts. It is critical that they are effectual communicators (Brown, 2006; Labby, Lunenburg, & Slate, 2012; Reeves, 2006). The need for principals in District 287 to adapt their communication styles to be compatible with the preferred styles of the teachers they lead became more apparent since District 287 began implementing the Process Communication Model in 2012. According to a 2015 study conducted by the researcher, the majority of District principals primarily perceive the world through thoughts and logic, whereas the majority of teachers primarily perceive the world through emotions and feelings (Intermediate District 287, 2015).

The difference in primary perceptions is also a mismatch in the preferred communication styles of principals and teachers (Kahler, 2012). That mismatch can result in distress and miscommunication that directly ties to people's emotions, thereby negatively affecting their ability to perform optimally in the work environment (Pauley & Pauley, 2009).

Purpose of the Study

When principals' primary communication mode is through information and data sharing, an opportunity for miscommunication is created with teachers whose primary communication mode is through emotion and compassion sharing (Kahler, 2012). Conducting a study that more closely examines the impact of communication styles will be beneficial for District 287 in order to determine the supports that might be helpful for principals in increasing their effectiveness as school leaders. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the self-perception of the effectiveness of District 287 principals' current communication style to lead school improvement efforts compared to their teachers' perception of the principals' effectiveness to lead school improvement efforts.

Research Questions

The problem this research addressed was examined through the answers that emerged to the following questions:

1.   How do Intermediate District 287 principals perceive the effectiveness of their communication style when leading school improvement leadership team meetings?

2.   How do Intermediate District 287 teachers perceive the effectiveness of their principals' communication style when the principal leads school improvement leadership team meetings?

3.   To what degree do District 287 teachers with the same and different personality types as their principals have a shared understanding with their principal of what is to be accomplished from a school improvement leadership team meeting?

4.   To what degree are District 287 teachers with the same and different personality types as their principals motivated to accomplish school improvement tasks because of the communication style used by their principals to lead school improvement leadership team meetings?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research study derived from a triangulation of theory, literature reviewed, and the researcher's experience as they pertain to effective educational leadership and communication styles. An educational leader's ability to communicate clearly is identified in literature as being essential in order for him/her to be effective (Kouzes & Posner, 2006; Lai, 2015, Northouse, 2013).

Rather than being perceived as a manager focusing on transactional tasks, principals need to be viewed as transformative leaders focused on both academic and social betterment when leading school improvement efforts (Shields, 2010). Being effective transformative leaders is challenging for some school principals in District 287 because of the difference between their preferred communication style and the preferred style of many of the teachers they lead. The majority of the District's principals prefer to communicate through thoughts about information and logic whereas the majority of teachers prefer to communicate through emotions about feelings and compassion. The result of these different styles in communication is frequent miscommunication, particularly when either the administrator or the teacher is in distress (Kahler, 2008).

Based on this conceptual framework, this research study examined the self-perception of the effectiveness of District 287 principals' current communication style to lead school improvement efforts compared to their teachers' perception of their principal's effectiveness to lead school improvement efforts. The phenomenon of differences in preferred communication styles of principals and the teachers they led was investigated. This qualitative phenomenological study drew conclusions to the study questions from data collected through participant surveys.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Scope

Limitations of this study were specific to its scope. Three of the eight principals employed at Intermediate District 287at the time of the study met the subject qualification criteria. The three were identified as having a base and/or phase personality type of a Thinker, worked in the District for more than one year, and led School Improvement Leadership Teams (SILT). Three principal candidates is a relatively small sample.

Four assumptions applied to this study. It was assumed that study participants' responses to inventories and surveys reflected their honest perception of the context of inquiry at the time of the submission of their answers. It was also assumed that, although the participants of this study worked in an Intermediate School District, the findings could be applied to any kindergarten through transition age school or program. The third assumption of this study was that the electronic surveys would be completed by the study participants. The concluding assumption was that the high level of needs the students in District 287 have was a factor in principals and teachers experiencing distress, which produces miscommunication (Kahler, 2012).

As a participant researcher, District-level administrator, and Process Communication Model trainer within the school district and being identified as having a Harmonizer base and phase personality type, it will was critical that the researcher received perspectives on this

research from neutral advisors to limit any bias that the researcher might have unintentionally applied to the research methods and data analysis. The researcher did this through ongoing reviews of her work that were conducted by her dissertation committee. Additionally, the researcher maintained professionalism throughout the study by providing open, honest, and transparent communication with participants about her role, the participants' roles, the purpose of the study, the data being collected, and the progress of the study. Participants also received assurance of confidentiality with any personal information collected throughout the study.

Significance of Study

At the time of the study, there was a mismatch in the preferred mode of communication of principals and teachers in Intermediate District 287 as identified through the Personality Pattern Inventory as part of the Process Communication Model (Intermediate District 287, 2015). The mismatch was in the gap between the teachers' preference to communicate through emotions and the limited preference of the principals to communicate in that manner. Principals' inability to do so could lead to miscommunications and misunderstandings with teachers thereby affecting student achievement (Kahler, 2012). District-level administrators will be able to use findings from this research to acknowledge communication strengths principals currently have and will be able to plan and implement specific support efforts through professional learning experiences in order for principals to increase the effectiveness of their communication with teachers. As principals apply the strategies to increase the effectiveness of their communication with teachers, they will have the opportunity to serve as transformative leaders by focusing their efforts on long-term academic and social betterment efforts versus short-term transactional tasks (Shields, 2010).

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as they apply to the purpose of this study.

Base personality type: A person's foundational personality type in Kahler's Process Communication Model which is developed by three months of age and does not change throughout a person's life (Kahler, 2012).

Character strengths: Qualities which come naturally to a personality type (Kahler, 2012).

Communication channel: A complementary offer and acceptance resulting in effective communication (Kahler, 2012).

Distress pattern: A consistent and predictable sequence of behavior that occurs when negative stress is experienced that is unique to each personality types (Kahler, 2012).

Energy level: A person's ability to take on the positive characteristics of a personality type (Kahler, 2012).

Environmental preference: The setting a person favors because it is conducive to their preferred level of goal orientation and involvement with people (Kahler, 2012).

Intermediate District: A cooperative formed by independent K-12 school districts under Minnesota law that provides integrated services primarily in vocational and special education for elementary, secondary, postsecondary, and adult students (Minnesota Statute 2015, section 136D.01).

Instructional administrator: See *principal*.

Instructional staff: See *teacher.*

Instructor. See *teacher.*

Interaction styles: The communication mode used by a personality type when leading (or being led) and/or when managing (or being managed) (Kahler, 2012).

Personality Pattern Inventory: An inventory developed by Dr. Taibi Kahler to determine an individual's unique combination of the six Process Communication Model personality types (Ampaw, Gilbert & Donlan, 2012).

Personality type: A one-word descriptor of an individual's preferred mode and manner of communication, character traits, decision-making and environmental preferences, as well as the behavior patterns the individual will exhibit when under significant stress, or distress. According to Kahler's theory, people possess a combination of the characteristics of six distinct personality types. Thinkers are logical, responsible, and organized. Persisters are dedicated, observant, and conscientious. Harmonizers are compassionate, sensitive, and warm. Promoters are charming, adaptable, and persuasive. Rebels are spontaneous, creative, and playful. Imaginers are reflective, imaginative, and calm (Kahler, 2008).

Phase personality type: The Kahler personality type that a person is currently motivated by and is one of the person's predictable distress patterns (Kahler, 2012).

Perceptual frames of reference: The filter through which people take in and interpret the world around them. The six frames are thoughts, emotions, opinions, actions, inactions, and reactions (Kahler, 2012).

Perception language: A person's primary perception or preference as to how content is to be said (Kahler, 2012).

Personality parts: The unique combinations of words, gestures, postures, tones, and facial expressions that make up productive communication and reflect the positive preference for a given personality type (Kahler, 2012).

Personality structure: In Process Communication Model, it is a visual, horizontal, six-bared graph, referred to as a condominium. The six bars represent each of Kahler's six

personality types and are referred to as the floors of the condominium. The bottom floor/bar is the person's base personality type and his/her least preferred personality type is the sixth floor/ top bar. The Harmonizer type is indicated by the color orange. The Imaginer type is signified by the color brown. Purple identifies the Persister Type, and Red identifies the Promoter type. The Rebel type is represented by the color yellow. The final type, the Thinker type, is shown in the color blue (Kahler, 2014b).

Principal: A licensed administrator who provides administrative, supervisory, and instructional leadership in a school (Minnesota Statutes 2015, section 123B.147). Synonyms in this study include *school leader* and *instructional administrator*.

Process Communication Model® *(PCM*®*)*: Based on Dr. Taibi Kahler's research and concepts, the Model is a non-clinical language-based communication and management methodology that teaches people about their own and others' unique communication styles, psychological needs, and behavior so they are better able to build rapport, communicate effectively, and motivate themselves and others (Kahler, 2014a).

Psychological motivators/needs: A person's born-with attention and motivational needs that must get met in healthy ways in order to maintain positive energy and relate effectively to others (Kahler, 2012).

School Improvement Leadership Teams (SILT): A team of school staff leading the development and implementation of a School Improvement Plan (Moe & Nelson, 2015).

School Improvement Plan: A systematic way to consistently collect data, study, plan, implement, and adjust educational approaches designed to maximize student learning (Moe & Nelson, 2015).

School leader: See *principal*.

SMART goals: Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2013)

Special Education Instructional Federal Setting IV: Typically a whole public school building where students with disabilities, ages 6-21 in grades kindergarten through grade twelve, spend at least 50 percent of their instructional day (State of Minnesota, 2013).

Stage: A personality type that is between a person's base and phase personality types that was his/her phase in the past (Kahler, 2012).

Teacher: Any professional educational employee required to hold a license with the Minnesota Department of Education (Minnesota Statutes 2015, section 122A.40) including school social workers, school counselors, school nurses, school psychologists, general education teachers, and special education teachers. For the purposes of this research, the definition of teachers excludes licensed educational personnel holding administrative positions. Synonyms in this study are *instructional staff* and *instructors*.

Conclusion

This research study examined the self-perception of the effectiveness of District 287's principals' current communication style to lead school improvement efforts compared to their teachers' perception of the principals' effectiveness to lead school improvement efforts. Because the number one trait of a leader's effectiveness identified in literature is his/her ability to accurately convey a vision of what the organization is seeking to achieve, principals must be effective communicators if school improvement efforts are to be successful (Bennis and Nanus, 2007; Bolman & Deal, 2013; Kotter, 1996; Kouzes & Posner, 2006; Lai, 2015; Northouse, 2013). Because at the time of this study, the majority of teachers in Intermediate District 287 preferred to communicate through emotions and the majority of principals preferred to

communicate through logic, miscommunication occurred (Gilbert, 2012; Kahler, 2008; Pauley & Pauley, 2009). This phenomenon was more closely examined in order for the District to determine and provide appropriate supports to principals to increase the effectiveness of their communication with teachers.

An in-depth review of relevant literature is presented in the chapter that follows. Research findings, theories, and emerging theories about effective educational leadership and communication are analyzed. A convergence of the two core topics as they relate to the problem statement this research proposal seeks to address concludes Chapter 2. Research methodologies will be provided in Chapter 3, followed by study results in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 ends the study with conclusions.

CHAPTER 2.

LITERATURE REVIEW

School improvement initiatives as a whole have been commonplace in U.S. schools for many years. Some of these initiatives have been successful in increasing student achievement while many have not. If 90% of communication is miscommunication (Kahler, 2012), might school leaders who lead school improvement initiatives, which requires them to communicate with teachers about the initiatives, be a factor in the success of the outcomes?

In order to explore this phenomenon this literature review is organized by two core themes. The broad theme of effective leadership is presented first followed by the narrowed theme of communication. The review ends with the focal point, or local context, of the study with a description of how the synthesis of literature reviewed applies to Intermediate District 287 in Plymouth, Minnesota.

The two core themes are further broken down into subthemes that examine literature that is specific to components of the theme. The five subthemes of effective leadership examined are: (1) characteristics of effective leadership; (2) leadership styles; (3) attributes of transformative leaders; (4) characteristics of effective school principals; and (5) leading change through school improvement initiatives. The narrowed core theme of communication is broken down into the following three subthemes: (1) traits of effective communication; (2) convergence of effective leadership and communication; and (3) Process Communication Model® overview.

The convergence of the two core themes is followed by the application of the convergence of those themes to the identified setting of Intermediate District 287. The identified core themes and their respective subthemes support the study's purpose of examining the self-perception of the effectiveness of District 287 principals' current communication style to lead

school improvement efforts compared to their teachers' perception of the principals' effectiveness to lead school improvement efforts.

This literature review examines research findings, theories, and emerging theories about effective educational leadership and communication. The researcher employed traditional methods to locate relevant sources including the use of online academic database searches, references listed in other related documents, and known sources. Literature referenced in this review consists of primary, secondary, peer reviewed, and non-peer reviewed sources in the forms of journal articles, dissertations, research reports, and books that represent a mix of theory and research. The non-peer reviewed sources have been included to represent emerging theories regarding the theme or subtheme they address.

Effective Leadership

The literature reviewed on effective leadership presented commonalities and differences in research findings, theories, and emerging theories. Those commonalities and differences are analyzed throughout each of the theme's five subthemes: (1) characteristics of effective leadership; (2) leadership styles; (3) attributes of transformative leaders; (4) characteristics of effective school principals; and (5) leading change through school improvement initiatives. The theme section ends with a synthesis of the five analyses of the subthemes.

Characteristics of Effective Leadership

Different theories about leadership have evolved throughout history and the identified characteristics of effective leadership have generally been unique to each. Northouse's (2013) review of literature identified seven shifts in leaders' roles from the beginning of the 20th century to the beginning of the 21st century. Leadership in the first three decades of the 20th century was seen as a dominating role with centralized power. The 1930s shifted the focus of leadership to

being a role of influence. This shift emphasized the importance of a leader's personality traits in relation to his/her interaction with others. Another shift took place the following decade to leadership as a group-directing role. The group leadership focus continued in the 1950s and was joined by the theme of leaders as relationship builders around common goals and the theme of effective leadership as it related to a person's capacity to affect group effectiveness. The theme of leadership in the 1960s was a blending of the three themes from the previous decade. The blended leadership focus was on a leader's ability to influence others to have common goals.

Leadership as an organizational behavior approach followed in the 1970s. This form of leadership included leading groups around common goals and expanded to include organizational goals as well which could be more individual in nature (Northouse, 2013). The 1980s consisted of a plethora of works on leadership. Those works concentrated on leadership as the leader's ability to get those he/she leads to accomplish what the leader covets, leadership as an influencing role versus a managing role, leadership as the result of people having certain traits, and leadership as transformation through interactions between leaders and followers that results in an increase in motivation and morality in both (Northouse, 2013).

The seventh historical shift was to the view of leadership in the first decades of the 21st century. There has been no singular shared perspective on leadership during this century at the date of the completion of this literature review. As such, the leadership characteristics identified in 21st century literature vary based on the author's perspective of leadership as a person's traits, as a relational process or as management (Northouse, 2013). Because the purpose of this study is relational in nature with its focus on interactions between school leaders and the teachers they lead, the literature reviewed on effective leadership for this study stems from a relational approach to leadership.

Northhouse (2013, p. 8) defines relational leadership as a leader's behavior when interacting with his/her followers which is an observable and learnable process. The most common relational trait found across literature reviewed in this study is a leader's ability to clearly communicate the vision (Bennis & Nanus, 2007; Bolman & Deal, 2013; Kotter, 1996; Kouzes & Posner, 2006; Northhouse, 2013; Shippen & Shippen, 2004). This is a relational trait as communication is founded on the interaction between the sender of the information and the receiver of it. The effectiveness of the communication is dependent on how the information is interpreted by the receiver. Kouzes and Posner's (2006) reference to an effective leader's ability to communicate the vision furthered it as a relational leadership trait by specifying it as a leader's ability to teach the vision to others. Like communication, teaching is the relationship between what and how something is being taught by a person and how another person learns it. Although some authors recognized certain nuances in the trait of being able to unambiguously communicate the vision, the overall intended result of a leader articulating a vision is that the vision is understood by all to whom it relates, and more importantly, shared by all.

Another highly common relational trait of effective leaders identified in the review of literature is their ability to build relationships and trust (Bennis & Nanus, 2007; Bolman & Deal, 2013; Kotter, 1996; Kouzes & Posner, 2006; Marazza, 2003; Pauley & Pauley, 2009). Bennis and Nanus (2007) ascertained effective relational skills as *emotional wisdom* from their study of 90 effective leaders (p. 61). Their study's identification of the trait of building relationships and trust was specific to a leader's capacity to engage with relationships in the present instead of in the past; relate to those he/she is close to with the respect and courtesy he/she would extend to a new acquaintance; and be adept to trust others even when he/she is in vulnerable situations.

Another more specific trait for building relationships and trust was articulated by Pauley and Pauley (2009) as the leader's ability to communicate in different ways in order to reach others.

Although seemingly unique when first reviewed, other effective relational traits were found in literature. Those traits are a leader's ability to elevate others and model what he/she expects of others (Shippen & Shippen, 2004); motivate others (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Lawler, 2006); listen well (Kouzes & Posner, 2006); be highly empathetic to employees and their work (Goffee & Jones, 2000, as cited in Fullan, 2001, p. 55); be finely tuned into their emotions and the impact their emotions have on others (Northouse, 2013); and care deeply about those doing the work (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Upon further consideration there is commonality between them. Each trait can be directly related to either the leader's ability to communicate the vision and/or the leader's ability to build relationships and trust. Modelling what is expected and listening well are forms of communication. Motivating others, authentically elevating others, being empathetic and being aware of one's own emotions and their impact on others all correlate with building relationships that lead to trust.

Leadership Styles

Three leadership styles were similarly defined by multiple authors in the literature that was reviewed. The first is a leadership style that is described as a task, performance, and structural-oriented leader who uses commands and directives to get followers to do what he/she has identified was referred to by Bolman and Deal (2013) as *structural leadership*; Goleman (2000) as the *coercive* and *pacesetting* styles*;* and Kahler (2012) as the *autocratic* style. A second leadership style commonly named in literature was the democratic style (Goleman, 2000; Kahler, 2012). This style is expressed as a thinking-oriented leader who encourages group participation and consensus in decision-making. A leadership style that concentrates on creating

harmony, emotional connections, a sense of belonging, acceptance, and good feelings for all

people is the third commonly identified style. Goleman (2000) identified this style as *affiliative*;

Kahler (2012) referred to it as the *benevolent* style; and Bolman and Deal (2013) named this kind

of leadership *human resource*.

Some unique leadership styles were identified by single authors in literature as well. The

laissez-faire style was described by Kahler (2012) as a leader who invites others to assume as

much responsibility as they can handle. Goleman (2000) wrote of two styles, the *authoritative*

and *coaching* styles that were not mentioned in other literature that was reviewed. The

authoritative style is evidenced as a leader who rallies followers toward a vision. Just as a vision

is something that is often a picture of what is yet to be realized, the coaching style focuses on the

future. It differs from the authoritative style as it spotlights a leader's development of people for

times ahead.

Bolman and Deal (2013) identified two additional leadership styles that are unique to

those commonly identified in literature. *Political* leadership was described by the authors as a

leader who is focused on getting what he/she wants, assessing interests of stakeholders and

building relationships with them based on those interests, and using their power to persuade,

negotiate, and coerce when needed. This style is related to the task, performance, and structural-

oriented leadership style as its focus is on what the leader has identified. It could also be argued

that *political* leadership related to the leadership style that centers on people and relationships;

however, the purpose of relating to people in the political style is solely on getting what the

leader wants versus making emotional connections. The second unique style Bolman and Deal

(2013) identified is that of *symbolic* leadership. The authors described this style as a leader who

models what is expected and uses symbols as the vehicle to acquire attention, frame experiences,

and communicate a vision. A symbolic leader tells stories and honors history. No other identified style emphasized the leader as a model or storyteller.

What is more significant than the identified leadership styles and the names they have been given is their effectiveness. Goleman's (2000) research showed that the *coercive* and *pacesetting* styles negatively affect work climate and employee performance resulting in employee resentment, resistance, and burn out. Conversely, the *democratic*, *affiliative,* *authoritative,* and *coaching* styles positively affect work climate employee performance.

Similarly, Kahler's (2012) research found that 85% of the North American population least prefers the autocratic style of leadership which leads to employee distress when it is the only style a leader uses. Goodwin 's (2015b) research contradicted Goleman (2000) and Kahler's (2012) findings with his discovery that the style of leadership that is described as a task-oriented or performance-oriented leader (one who uses commands and directives to get followers to do what he/she has identified) is effective when implementation dips first and improvement strategies are clear-cut.

A key shared research finding presents another perspective on the leadership style that is most effective. Kahler (2012) stressed that effective leaders use an *individualistic* leadership style by shifting their preferred style to the style that is preferred by each employee whenever possible. Likewise, Fullan (2001) contended that each leadership style identified by Goleman (2000) could be beneficial if used in combination with the other styles, and Bolman and Deal (2013) pointed out that any style they identified is incomplete when used singularly. This perspective requires leaders to be skilled in their ability to adapt their leadership styles to ones they might not prefer and/or might find uncomfortable, if they want to lead effectively, particularly as agents of change.

Attributes of Transformative Leaders

Attributes of transformative leaders have been identified in research as early as the 1970s, which has contributed to its present-day meaning (Shields, 2010). Those attributes directly reflect the seven primary themes Shields (2010) found in literature she reviewed pertaining to transformative leadership theory. The themes are:

…a combination of both critique and promise; attempts to effect both deep and equitable changes; deconstruction and reconstruction of the knowledge frameworks that generate inequity; acknowledgment of power and privilege; emphasis on both individual achievement and the public good; a focus on liberation, democracy, equity, and justice; and finally, evidence of moral courage and activism. (p. 562)

These themes are present throughout transformative leadership attributes found in this literature review.

Although worded somewhat differently, the attributes of transformative leaders used in descriptions in literature reviewed are founded in Shields' (2010) seven themes. Bennis and Nanus (2007) defined a transformative leader as a person who compels others to take action; transitions followers into leaders; empowers leaders to become agents of change, when possible; develops collective aspirations through their comprehension of employees' needs and wants; empowers their employees to fulfill their needs and wants; is driven by moral purpose; creates a social architecture that supports collectively crafted principles, vision, and values; and increases his/her employees' awareness of liberty, freedom, and justice. Weiner (2003) more poignantly emphasized the use of a leader's power to positively affect social equality issues in his description of transformative leader attributes. He asserted that transformative leaders must be able to effectively and courageously use their power within dominant social structures to

advocate for change by taking risks, forming intentional alliances, deconstructing and

reconstructing the power they possess and dedicating their work to the ideals of equality, liberty,

and democracy for all people (p. 102).

Throughout the literature reviewed, several similar attributes surfaced as essential for

transformative leaders that can be viewed as attributes that enhance one another as they are

further developed. Primarily, Bennis and Nanus (2007), Shields (2010), and Weiner (2003)

emphasized the critical need for a transformative leader to have the attribute of being motivated

by and committed to social reform that entails equal treatment of and equitable practices for all

people in a democracy. In order to be able to comprehend inequalities that exist, the attribute of

being able to deconstruct and come to a new understanding of the power and privilege the leader

possesses is necessary (Bennis & Nanus, 2007; Shields, 2010; Weiner, 2003). That

understanding and commitment must be acted upon in order for social justice to be realized.

Having courage to take risks and work against dominant social norms articulates the commonly

identified attribute transformative leaders need in order to take action (Bennis & Nanus, 2007;

Shields, 2010; Weiner, 2003).

Characteristics of Effective School Principals

School principals have many responsibilities. As their responsibilities have changed, so

has the need for their roles to change arisen (Institute of Educational Leadership, 2000). In the

past, a principal's main role was seen as that of a manager whose primary responsibility was to

manage a school (Ediger, 2014; Institute of Educational Leadership, 2000). More specifically, as

managers they focused on the execution of day-to-day organizational tasks (Bolman & Deal,

2013). The change in a principal's primary role to one that is concentrated on process and vision

now requires that he/she serve as a leader (Bolman & Deal, 2013). A principal whose main

efforts strive to create a future of improved teaching and learning will be far more likely realize that future if he/she serves as a leader versus a manager (Ediger, 2014; Institute of Educational Leadership, 2000). This is accentuated by the number of authors that underscored principals as instructional leaders (Ediger, 2014; Institute of Educational Leadership, 2000; Reeves, 2006; Reeves, 2009; Sparks, 2005; Spiro, 2013). Reality is that principals must be leaders and administrative managers concurrently (Reeves, 2009).

Characteristics of effective school leaders were shared in literature that was reviewed. Bolman and Deal (2013), Ediger (2014), the Institute of Educational Leadership (2000), and Reeves (2006) recognized a characteristic of an effective school leader as being a visionary. The same authors similarly articulated that a visionary school principal looks toward the future and the betterment of it through education. Believing in students' ability to achieve was also cited as a characteristic of an effective school leader (Ediger, 2014; Institute of Educational Leadership, 2000; Reeves, 2006). A principal's ability to collaborate with various stakeholders was another commonly identified effective characteristic (Ediger, 2014; Institute of Educational Leadership, 2000; Reeves, 2006).

The characteristic of a principal's ability to communicate as an indicator of his/her effectiveness was also common among authors (Ediger, 2014; Marazza, 2003; Reeves, 2006). What was unique to each author was the aspect of communication he/she emphasized. Ediger (2014) wrote about the criticalness of principals' communication being clear, concise, and accurate in order for direction and information to serve as a benefit versus a hindrance. Marazza's (2003) emphasis was on the school leader's need to be aware that how he/she says something determines whether he/she is being supportive or critical. Finally, Reeves (2006)

stressed communication as a characteristic of effective school leaders specific to the leader's ability to personalize communication so others do not question what is happening.

The ability to build relationships was the final shared characteristic of effective principals that was found in the literature reviewed (Institute of Educational Leadership, 2000; Reeves, 2006; Spiro, 2013). Spiro (2013) and Reeves (2006) similarly called attention to the importance of developing trust in order to develop long-lasting relationships, and the Institute of Educational Leadership (2000) highlighted the need for principals to develop close relationships with others. An argument can be made that in order for a relationship to become close, it is dependent on mutual trust.

In summary, seven common characteristics of effective school principals emerged from this literature review. Those characteristics are the principal's ability to: (1) be an instructional leader; (2) be an administrative manager; (3) be a visionary; (4) believe in students' ability; (5) collaborate; (6) communicate; and (7) ability to build relationships. All of these characteristics are vital for the principal to successfully lead change in schools.

Leading Change through School Improvement Initiatives

U. S. K-12 education reform efforts established by the Obama administration in 2009 attend to the needs of equitable educational opportunities for all children including the opportunity to go to college (U. S. Department of Education, 2015). Those needs drive state and local school improvement initiatives. Ultimately, "the public expects school officials to meet the needs of all students—a fundamental premise of education within our democracy" (Johnson, 2005, p.114).

Researchers have discovered different essential pieces of successful school improvement initiatives. Beginning with the earliest literature reviewed, Oakley and Krug (1991) stipulated

that creating, growing, and renewing change-oriented mindsets is the sole responsibility of the leader. Ten years later, Fullan (2001) surmised that leaders as agents of change must focus primarily on people and relationships in order to succeed in reaching enduring results. Mindsets lie within people, and building relationships with people allows the leader to understand and influence thinking to be open to change. At the same time, Fullan (2001) identified the importance of a leader having good ideas, effectively sharing them, and listening to resisters as critical in times of change.

Four years later Walters, Marzano, and McNulty (2005) completed a meta-analysis of research on school leadership. Their analysis determined that only three leadership characteristics are related to short and long-term student achievement. Those characteristics are the leader's ideals and beliefs; monitoring and evaluation; and application of research-based strategies. Within a year of their meta-analysis, Reeves' (2006) published the Planning, Improvement, and Monitoring (PIM) research findings. Those findings further verified Walters, Marzano, and McNulty's (2005) analyses by determining that the more important parts of school improvement efforts to increase student achievement and educational equity are implementation, execution, and monitoring while planning and processes are less important. The PIM study proposed to identify the variables that are related to improved student achievement and educational equity when external variables such as budget, legislative requirements, and/or labor agreements are fixed. The study involved over 280,000 students from Nevada's Clark County School District, the majority of whom were ethnic minorities.

In 2009, Reeves added to his 2006 findings. He affirmed that leaders who affect change are certain that change will not be realized if the behavior of individuals remains unchanged and that they, as leaders, must acknowledge the people behind those behaviors (p. 10). Reeves went

on to contend that change leaders cannot encourage others to change if the leaders have not examined their own behaviors (p. 11). To reiterate the level of importance of this act, Reeves (2009) wrote, "But of all the things leaders do in order to create the conditions for change, the most important are their thousands of moments of truth when their actions speak louder than words" (p. 12). That aligns with his 2009 published research findings that were considered surprising. His research on change initiatives concluded that implementation efforts that were average or infrequent were no more effective than were no more effective than no implementation efforts at all. It was deep implementation that positively affected student achievement. That kind of change, profound and sustained, requires a change in behavior of those who are resistant to change.

More recently, Goodwin (2015a) promoted the notion that school improvement efforts that involve tougher, more muddied challenges are best approached from what he terms inside-out improvements of a school versus improvements directed from the top of the organization down. The inside-out approach involves ground-level work by a group that includes the school leader in a more democratic way (p. 11). Brown (2006) identified five things groups need to be effective: strong self-management, positive group process, financial backing, effective communication, and trust among its members. Trust brings us full-circle to Fullan's (2001) identification of change leaders as people and relationship centered.

Communication

Communication appeared multiple times in literature pertaining to effective leadership. It reappeared in literature reviewed for effective school principals and leading change through school improvement. In this section of the literature review, the theme of communication is more closely examined through the subthemes of (1) traits of effective communication; (2)

convergence of effective leadership and communication; and (3) Process Communication

Model® overview.

Traits of Effective Communication

Some common traits emerged from the literature reviewed about traits of effective

communication. A general description of what effective communication is surfaced initially.

Gilbert (2012) ascertained that effective communication takes place when what is communicated

is understood in the way it was meant to be conveyed. Likewise, Marazza (2003) identified the

first step in having a productive conversation as a person being clear about his/her intention and

that the intention is being communicated, and Kahler (2008) theorized that the intention comes

from the deliverer, and the meaning comes from the receiver. Gilbert (2012), Kahler (2008),

Marazza (2003), and Pauley and Pauley (2009) wrote that the delivery of the intended

communication relies on the deliverer's tone, posture, facial expressions, and gestures as

validation of the words used by the deliverer. The same researchers defended the idea that the

response of the receiver will indicate if the intended message was successfully relayed.

The second common trait was trust. Covey (2006) declared that trust plays a critical role

in effective relationships. In his book *The Speed of Trust*, he wrote that people with a high level

of trust can misspeak and still be understood whereas when people have a low level of trust a

person can be misunderstood even if he/she is precise. Bolman and Deal (2013), Pauley and

Pauley (2009), Marazza (2003), Northouse (2013), and Parker (2006) all made connections

between trust and effective communication.

A third common trait of effective communication was creating images. Bennis and Nanus

(2007), Northouse (2013), and Kouzes and Posner (2006) similarly summarized this trait as the

ability to relay an image of what is to be achieved in a way that inspires others to action.

Bolman and Deal (2013) referred to the images as symbols, and Kotter (1996) referred to them as pictures. Regardless of the synonym used, in essence each author described the trait as the ability to create a visual of a desired future state.

The final trait of effective communication identified in literature related to a person's ability to adapt his/her communication to meet the needs of others. According to Bennis and Nanus (2007), "Every person is a summation of various 'selves.' If those units of the person are not in communication, then the person cannot maintain valid communications with others" (p. 47). Reeves (2006) cautioned readers on the need to personalize communications. Personalizing communications has a direct effect on Maxwell's (2010) theory that effective communication is contingent on connecting. He wrote that in order to connect one, must find commonalities, simplify his/her communication, capture the interest of others, be inspirational, and be one's self. At the core of literature reviewed that mentioned adaptability in communication as a trait of effective communication is the idea that "flexibility in communication is the key to successful interaction" (Kahler, 2012, p. 19).

Adapting one's communication in order to be effective was also mentioned in literature as it relates to different generations of people. Hartman & McCambrigde (2011) based their findings of Millennial's communication needs on literature they reviewed. They identified Millennials as people who were born between 1980 and 2002. The authors asserted that in order for this technology-reliant generation to achieve success, they must develop interpersonal and other communication skills. Many Millennials will or have joined the workforce at places that were established by people from generations that came before them that emphasize communication aspects differently than Millennials. Previous generations did not have technology, including the internet, that provided instant feedback, and those generations instead

relied on getting unknown information from other people. Dominant communication preferences of each generation have served different purposes yet there will always be a need for people to be able to communicate with people who vary from themselves in a multitude of ways.

Convergence of Effective Leadership and Communication

The literature reviewed on effective leadership traits and leading for change have communication in common. Bennis and Nanus (2007) contended that effective leadership cannot exist without the mastering of communication, and Kouzes & Posner (2006) reminded "…that leadership is a dialogue, not a monologue" (p. 518). A leader's ability to successfully convey a vision of what the organization is aspiring to achieve was the most commonly identified trait of an effective leader (Bennis and Nanus, 2007; Bolman & Deal, 2013; Kotter, 1996; Kouzes & Posner, 2006; Northouse, 2013; Shippen & Shippen, 2004). Specific to change in schools, Fullan (2001) urged that leaders must be able to have good ideas, communicate them effectively, and listen to resisters.

Different theories exist regarding how a leader can improve his/her communication but there is agreement in literature that communication can be improved in leaders. Kouzes and Posner (2006) declared that effective leaders improve their communication skills by learning to summarize, expressing emotions, sharing personal information, admitting to mistakes, responding without being defensive, requesting clarification, and seeking differing viewpoints. Northouse (2013) contended that leaders' interaction behavior process is observable and learnable and can be bettered through experience and training. Gilbert (2012), Kahler (2008), and Pauley and Pauley (2009) endorse the theory that everyone is capable of learning to more effectively communicate by understanding language to listen for, behaviors to observe, and effective ways to respond.

Process Communication Model® Overview

The Process Communication Model® was created by Dr. Taibi Kahler. In 1971, through Kahler's work as a psychologist in a clinical setting, he discovered patterns in the way people with similar personality types interacted with others positively and negatively. What made this discovery different from other transactional analysis findings is that human behavior could be predicted second by second as being effective communication or miscommunication (Kahler Washington, n.d.). In 1977, Dr. Kahler was awarded Eric Berne Memorial Prize for his discovery (Process Communication UK Ltd., 2013). Kahler took his findings from the clinical setting, The Process Therapy Model, and modified it into a model that could be used in business and other non-clinical settings to increase effective communication. This became the Process Communication Model (PCM).

Kahler identified six key personality types and determined that each person is a combination of all six, with stronger preferences for some over others (Pauley & Pauley, 2009). The types are based on how people prefer to interact with each other.   Thinkers are logical, responsible, and organized. Persisters are dedicated, observant, and conscientious. Harmonizers are compassionate, sensitive, and warm. Promoters are charming, adaptable, and persuasive. Rebels are spontaneous, creative, and playful. Imaginers are reflective, imaginative, and calm (Kahler, 2008). He developed the Personality Pattern Inventory (PPI) to determine an individual's unique combination of each of the six types.

The standard PPI is comprised of 45 questions, and the results are provided in a profile document. Six possible answers are provided for each question, and the participant ranks up to five of the six answers he/she prefers (Kahler Communications, 2014c). Participant PPI results arrive in an electronic file to the trainer's website and are named by the profile or seminar the

trainer orders. "The Process Communication Model Personality Profile" is the typical format of the participant's results for initial Process Communication Model training (see Appendix A). The results include data that identifies the confidence levels and validity of the participant's scores and potential distress levels of the participant (Kahler Communications, 2014). Also, the participant's perceptual frames of reference, personality structure (including base, phase, and stage), character strengths, preferred interaction styles, level of energy for using four personality parts, preferred communication channel(s), environmental preference(s), psychological motivators, phase and base distress patterns, and base and phase action plans for meeting psychological needs are provided.

Ampaw, Gilbert, and Donlan (2012) conducted a study to test the validity and reliability of the PPI. They investigated two hypotheses in the study: 1) There is no relationship between and among the items of the Personality Pattern Inventory; 2) There is no consistency of responses between subjects completing the Personality Pattern Inventory. Over 50,000 Personality Pattern Inventory results were used in the study and analyzed through exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis. Their research resulted in both hypotheses being rejected, thus confirming the validity and reliability of the expanded Personality Pattern Inventory.

Bolman and Deal (2013) contend that personality inventories such as Myers-Briggs help leaders understand what they might not realize to be their preferences and styles and provide a common framework and vernacular for people to learn around. Marazza (2003) argued that not understanding different personality types leads people to see others' thinking as incorrect and ultimately stop listening to them. McGuire, Kahler and Stansbury (1990) conducted research that compared the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) to Kahler's Personality Pattern Inventory.

They used data from 253 participants who had completed both inventories to determine if there

was an algorithm that would demonstrate a predictable personality descriptor from either the

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator or Kahler's Personality Pattern Inventory. Their research

concluded that there is a significant relationship between the two. Based on the research findings,

the researchers advised that if only one instrument could be used, the Personality Pattern

Inventory would be the better choice as it incorporates stress in the environment, which Myers-

Briggs does not. Additionally, McGuire, Kahler, and Stansbury (1990) purport that it would be

beneficial to use both instruments particularly if there is a discrepancy between what is observed

in a personal interview and the results of either instrument (p. 36).

Each of the six Kahler personality types in PCM prefer to communicate through the

perception language of emotions, imagination, action, reactions, thoughts, or opinions (Kahler,

2008). The Personality Pattern Inventory provides results that show a person's foundation or

base personality type, which is developed by three months of age and does not change

throughout a person's life. Based on Kahler's theory that people possess a combination of the

characteristics of all six types, the Personality Pattern Inventory measures the strength of each of

the remaining five types and orders them by preference. The order of a person's preference for

the five non-foundational types is set by age seven years, and that order likely does not change

throughout life; however, a person's ability to communicate using the preferred language of each

of the types can strengthen throughout life. The order of preference and strength of a person's six

personality types is called his/her personal profile.

In PCM a personality structure is a visual, horizontal, six-barred graph, referred to as a

condominium (see Appendix A for a black and white condominium example). The six bars

represent each of Kahler's six personality types and are referred to as the floors of the

condominium. The Harmonizer type is indicated by the color orange. The Imaginer type is signified by the color brown. Purple identifies the Persister Type, and Red identifies the Promoter type. The Rebel type is represented by the color yellow. The final type, the Thinker type, is shown in the color blue.

A person's base personality type is represented by the bottom bar (first floor) has a length that is always at the 100 percent mark on the *x*-axis. The order of floors two through six is set by age seven. The amount of energy a person has to communicate and experience things in the personality types in floors two through six is represented by the number value associated with the length of each of the bars (floors) on the graph (condominium) (Kahler, 2014b). A score (numeric value of a bar on the condominium graph) of 80-100 represents a participant's strong level of energy to display that personality type. Scores below 30 are considered blind spots and are personality types the participant has little energy to interact with. Any floors with a value of 30-80 are thought to be personality types the participant has the potential to grown in (Kahler, 2012).

Another unique dimension of PCM that was touched upon in the findings of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and Kahler's Personality Pattern Inventory is the concept of phasing (Kahler, 2012). A person's phase is the personality type that a person is currently motivated by, and it is one of the person's predictable distress patterns. Sixty-six percent of the North American population have base and phase personality types that are different, and 33% have base and phase types that are the same. Of the 66 percent having different base and phase personality types, 33 percent have a stage personality type. A stage personality type was how a person was previously motivated and was one of the ways he/she experienced distress and might presently (Kahler, 2012). The determining factor for a person having the same or different base

and phase types is if he/she has been able to deal authentically with unresolved issues and if so, the length of time it took him/her to do so. The unresolved issues are specific to each of the six personality types, and it is possible for a person to have authentically worked through issues of more than one personality type over a long period, thus being motivated differently during different times in his/her life.

Demographic statistics have been calculated for the population of North America. The North American population is comprised of the following percentages of identified base personality types: 30% Harmonizer; 25% Thinker; 20% Rebel; 10% Persister; 10% Imaginer; and 5% Promoter (Kahler, 2012). That means the majority of people in North America prefer to communicate through compassion, with the next largest group preferring to communicate through logic followed by the third largest group that prefers to communicate through humor. The fourth and fifth smallest populations prefer to communicate through values and imagination, and the smallest population prefers to communicate through actions.

Based on demographic data, typical profiles were constructed for people working in similar fields. Based on an analysis of 1539 educators' Personality Pattern Inventory personal profiles from 1994-2014 throughout 10 U. S. states, educators typically have a base type of Harmonizer (47%), followed by a tie of 22% being base Thinkers or Persisters (Atoire Communications, LLC., 2014). More specifically, elementary teachers tend to have a base personality type of Harmonizer, followed by their preference of the Thinker type and then the Persister type, whereas secondary teachers tend to have a base personality type of Persister, followed by their preference of the Thinker type and then the Harmonizer type (Taibi Kahler Associates Inc., 2001). This finding tells us that elementary teachers focus first on emotions while secondary teachers focus first on opinions.

Applications to Intermediate District 287

Approximately one third of staff in Intermediate District 287 completed PCM training

between 2012 and 2015. Their personality profiles are stored in a database and used to calculate

and report the district's personality type demographics. Table 1 shows a summary of the

district's personality profiles.

Table 1.

287's Process Communication Model Demographics Report

Date calculated July 10, 2015 Total District 287 staff ~800	**3 Highest Base Personality Types** *Base isa person's foundational personality type.*	**3 Highest Phase Personality Types** *Phase is the personality type that currently motivates the person.*
District 287 Staff Personality Profiles n=279	Harmonizer 45% Thinker 33% Persister 16%	Persister 33% Thinker 32% Harmonizer 28%
Instructional Staff Personality Profiles n=125	Harmonizer 57% Thinker 26% Persister 13%	Harmonizer 36% Thinker 30% Persister 26%
Instructional Administrators Personality Profiles n=26	Thinker 38% Harmonizer 31% Persister 23%	Thinker 42% Persister 38% Harmonizer 12%
Greatest gap in personality types between Instructional Staff and Instructional Administrators	**Base Harmonizer** *higher in* *Instructional Staff*	**Phase Harmonizer** *higher in* *Instructional Staff*

Note. Intermediate District 287. (2015). *287's Process Communication Model demographics report*. Plymouth, MN: Author

In both base and phase, the highest gap in percentage in personality types between

instructional staff (teachers) and instructional administrators (principals) was Harmonizer with

the administrators having less of that type. Harmonizers perceive the world through emotions

that center on compassion, relationships, and are sensory (Kahler, 2012). As is with any type, if

Harmonizers are not often communicated with through their preferred perception language, they

will experience distress and miscommunication will occur, according to Kahler. The majority of instructional administrators in District 287 had a base type of Thinker and perceived the world through thoughts that center on data, organization, and time structure. This gap in personality types, and ultimately communication styles, impeded school improvement efforts because miscommunication became inherent in the culture. Instructional administrators in Intermediate District 287 must be able to adapt their communication so that it matches the preferred communication language of the instructional staff they lead in order to be an effective leader (Pauley & Pauley, 2009). Doing so will create a common understanding and desire to achieve the school's improvement plan (Robertson, 2007).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research study derived from a triangulation of theory, literature reviewed, and the researcher's experience as they pertained to effective educational leadership and communication styles. An educational leader's ability to communicate clearly was identified in literature as being essential in order for him/her to be effective (Kouzes & Posner, 2006; Labby, Lunenberg, & Slate, 2012; Lai, 2015, Northouse, 2013; Reeves, 2006).

As stated earlier, multiple challenges have come, gone, and stayed in K-12 education over the past twenty years, and poor communication by school leaders has played a role in each challenge (Brooks, 2012). Because school administrators typically coordinate school improvement efforts, it is critical that they be effective communicators as their leadership of teachers is a key factor in the success of these efforts (Brown, 2006; Fullan, 2001; Reeves, 2006). Rather than being perceived as a manager focusing on transactional tasks, principals need to be viewed as transformative leaders focused on both academic and social betterment efforts (Shields, 2010).

Being effective transformative leaders has been challenging for some school principals in District 287 because of the difference between their preferred communication style and the preferred style of many of the teachers they lead. The majority of the District's principals preferred to communicate through thoughts about information and logic whereas the majority of teachers preferred to communicate through emotions about feelings and compassion. The result of these different styles in communication was frequent miscommunication, particularly when either the administrator or the teacher was in distress (Kahler, 2008).

Based on this conceptual framework, the research study examined the self-perception of the effectiveness of District 287 principals' current communication style to lead school improvement efforts compared to their teachers' perception of the principals' effectiveness to lead school improvement efforts. The phenomenon of differences in preferred communication styles of principals and the teachers they led was investigated. This qualitative phenomenological study drew conclusions to the study questions from data collected through participant surveys.

Conclusion

This literature review represents a comprehensive perspective of research, theories, and emerging theories regarding effective leadership and communication. Each major theme was more closely examined by relative subthemes. Literature reviewed on effective leadership included (1) characteristics of effective leadership; (2) leadership styles; (3) attributes of transformative leaders; (4) characteristics of effective school principals; and (5) leading change through school improvement initiatives. The second major theme of communication, an essential part of effective leadership, was more closely studied through literature on (1) traits of effective communication; (2) convergence of effective leadership and communication; and (3) Process Communication Model® overview.

The strength of this review came from the strong connections made between the two core topics. The broad topic of effective leadership led to communication. The convergence of the themes directly linked to the local context in which the findings of this review were studied by the researcher.

There was a mismatch in the preferred communication of instructional administrators and instructional staff in Intermediate District 287 as identified through the Personality Pattern Inventory as part of the PCM. The mismatch was in the gap between the teachers' preference to communicate through emotions and the limited preference of the administrators to communicate in that manner. Principals' inability to do so could lead to miscommunications and misunderstandings of school improvement efforts. The following chapter will detail methodologies that were used to examine this phenomenon.

CHAPTER 3.

METHODOLOGY

A leader's ability to clearly communicate the vision was the most commonly found effective relational leadership trait across literature reviewed (Bennis & Nanus, 2007; Bolman & Deal, 2013; Kouzes & Posner, 2006; Northouse, 2013). A principal's ability to deliver information in a way that his/her teachers are able to receive it as the principal intended can be challenged when the principal's preferred communication style differs from the teachers he/she leads (Gilbert, 2012; Kahler, 2008; Pauley &Pauley, 2009). In Intermediate District 287 the majority of principals had an identified personality type and accompanying communication style that differed from the personality type and communication style of the majority of teachers (Intermediate District 287, 2015). The difference between the preferred communication style of the District principals and teachers was the phenomenon this study explored.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the self-perception of the effectiveness of District 287s principals' current communication style to lead school improvement efforts compared to their teachers' perception of the principals' effectiveness to lead school improvement efforts. The problem this research addressed was be examined through the answers that emerged to the following questions:

1. How do Intermediate District 287's principals perceive the effectiveness of their communication style when leading school improvement leadership team meetings?

2. How do Intermediate District 287's teachers perceive the effectiveness of their principals' communication style when the principal leads school improvement leadership team meetings?

3. To what degree do District 287 teachers with the same and different personality types as their principals have a shared understanding with their principal of what is to be accomplished from a school improvement leadership team meeting?

4. To what degree are District 287 teachers with the same and different personality types as their principals motivated to accomplish school improvement tasks as a result of the communication style used by their principals to lead school improvement leadership team meetings?

The methodology used to collect data that was analyzed and used to determine the answers to the study's questions was a participant survey with Likert-type and open-ended questions.

Setting

Intermediate District 287 located in Plymouth, Minnesota, is different from a traditional school district. It was created to provide member districts with services for students with low incidence disabilities (such as the blind and visually impaired) and students needing more than 50% of their instruction in a special education setting (Special Education Instructional Federal Setting IV). Currently, District 287 provides over 120 programs and services to its 12 member districts, located in the western suburbs of the Minneapolis/St. Paul Metro Area, as well as non-member school districts and students throughout Minnesota (District 287, 2013). At the time of the study, the District employed approximately 900 total employees. About 350 of the total employees were licensed teachers, and 16 were licensed educational administrators. Because of the unique learning needs of the students our District serves, and their physical, emotional and behavioral challenges, the demands placed on and stress experienced by our teachers and principals are often higher than in traditional school settings. Kahler (2012), the founder of the Process Communication Model (PCM), discovered through his research that the deeper in

distress people get the less clearly they can think and the less able they are to communicate effectively. The need for District principals to communicate more effectively became increasingly apparent during the researcher's first year of work in District 287 during the 2010-11 school year, participation in PCM training in 2011, and work as a Process Communication Model trainer in the District starting in 2012.

At the time of the study, the researcher served in a district-level administrator position as the Director of Planning and Improvement. Her general work with staff was specific to the development and implementation of the District's Strategic Plan, the development and implementation of School Improvement Plans, and the coordination and often delivery of many professional learning opportunities. PCM trainings and review activities were a primary professional learning opportunity the researcher coordinated, created, and trained for District 287.

The study was conducted in conjunction with three School Improvement Leadership Team (SILT) meetings. Each school held a SILT meeting in December, January, February, and March. Immediately following three of the meetings, the principal and teacher participants completed an online survey about their perception of the effectiveness of the principal's communication during the meeting.

Participants

The Personality Pattern Inventory (PPI) was the tool that was used to determine the study participant candidates in Intermediate District 287. The PPI was selected because of its district-wide use in District 287 and because it is aligned with Kahler's Process Communication Model (PCM), one of the theories upon which this study is based. The PPI is an inventory developed by Dr. Taibi Kahler to determine an individual's unique combination of the six PCM personality

types (Ampaw, Gilbert & Donlan, 2012). The PPI is taken online through a certified Process Communication Model (PCM) trainer. The PCM trainer creates a unique code for the person or group taking the inventory on his/her trainer web page through Kahler Communications, Inc. Being a certified PCM trainer, the researcher administered the PPI to any teacher participant candidates serving on the School Improvement Leadership Teams of the participating principals. All District administrators had previously completed the PPI.

At the time of the research, Intermediate District 287 employed eight staff serving in principal roles. Of the eight principals, one did not be lead a School Improvement Leadership Team and did not qualify as a study subject. According to a 2015 Intermediate District 287 report, five of the remaining seven principals who led School Improvement Leadership Teams (SILTs) had either their base (foundational) and/or phase (motivational) Kahler personality type identified as the Thinker type. Additionally, the five principals did not have a base, phase, or stage (past motivational) type as Harmonizer. As primarily Thinker types, these principals had a preferred communication style that centered on information, data, time structure, categorization and organization (Kahler, 2012). Not having a base, phase, or stage personality type as the Harmonizer type, these principals did not prefer to communicate through emotions and feelings.

Two factors further narrowed the number of principal participant candidates. One of the five remaining principals had only one teacher on his/her School Improvement Leadership Team (SILT). As a result, the principal did not qualify to participate because a sufficient amount of comparative data from teachers he/she led was not available. The second narrowing factor was the length of time one of the principal had worked in District 287. One principal was new to the District, having a start date of August 2015. His/her lack of knowledge of District practices was

a variable that might invalidate data collected about the effectiveness of his/her communication style. The three remaining principals had each worked for District 287 for two or more years.

The three qualifying principal candidates represented a relatively small and minimally diverse sample group. All three had worked in District 287 between two and four years. Their experience working in the field of education ranged from eight to 28 years. Two of the three began their educational careers as school social workers, and the third began as a speech/language pathologist. All three held professional administrative licenses as K-12 principals in the state of Minnesota, and two held director of special education licenses at the time of the study. New for all three starting fall 2015 were their positions as primary principals of schools in the district that house multiple Special Education Instructional Federal Level IV programs. This was also the first year the District was requiring School Improvement Plans and SILTs.

The number of teacher participant candidates represented a larger sample group than the principal group. The two main criteria teacher participants had to meet in order to be eligible to participate in the study was to hold a valid Minnesota teaching license and to have already taken or to be willing to take the PPI. Because Minnesota law requires teachers to be licensed in order to teach, it is assumed that any person holding a teaching position in District 287 has a valid Minnesota teaching license. Upon acceptance to participate in the study, demographic-type data was be collected specific to the teachers' work experience, background and age.

The number of SILT members varied from school to school depending on the number of staff in the school, and the number of staff the principal chose to include on the team. Teams were comprised of the principal, assistant principal(s), reading specialist, and other teachers. Educational assistant(s) (paraprofessionals) also participated on the principal participants' SILTs

and did not participate in this study. There were between 12 and 14 members on each of the

three SILTs. The total number of teachers on all three SILTs was 26. Of the 26 teachers, 13 had

already taken the PPI. Some of those 13 teachers had the same base, phase, or stage personality

type as the principal's base or phase personality types and others differ. Additionally, some of

the 13 teachers had similar and differing base and phase personality types among themselves.

Data Collection

Multiple interviews with participants who have experienced the same phenomenon are

the most common method of data collection in phenomenological research (Creswell, 2013). For

efficiency, a survey (Appendix B) was administered to participants three times throughout the

study in place of interviews. The survey for both principals and teachers included Likert-type

and open-ended questions. These two forms of questions allowed the researcher to triangulate

the data during analysis (p. 251). The questions were similar for principals and teachers and

differed to appropriately address the applicable respondent group.

The Likert-type questions were designed to measure the degree to which teachers with

the same and different personality types as their principal have a shared understanding with the

principal of what needed to be accomplished and vice versa following the SILT meetings.

Additionally, the Likert-type questions measured the degree to which teachers with the same and

different personality types as their principal were motivated to perform the work that was needed

to achieve school improvement. That work was outlined during the SILT meetings.

According to Lee and Paek (2014), Likert-type rating scales are the most commonly used

measurement method for psychoeducational construct studies. Much research has investigated

the ideal number of response choices resulting in no clear optimal number (p. 664). Lee and

Paek's (2014) study concluded that there are no substantial differences in scales' psychometric

properties between scales with four, five, or six response categories. Because researchers have not come to consensus on a number of response categories being more valid than another number of categories, and to avoid central tendency error, a four-item scale was used to create the survey for this study. According to Cohen, Swerdlik, and Stuman (2012), central tendency error takes place when respondents are hesitant to offer a positive or negative answer and instead select a neutral or midpoint answer. A four-item scale forces participants to make a choice and does not allow for neutrality. Additionally, Harmonizers in first-degree distress seek to please others (Kahler, 2012). Because, according to Kahler (2012), all people are in and out of first-degree distress all day, Harmonizers might have been more inclined to respond in a neutral way in an attempt to please someone else. Using a four point scale required participants to give either a more positively or negatively worded response.

Data from the open-ended questions addressed the remaining study questions. The questions solicited principals' perception of the effectiveness of their communication at SILT meetings. Participating teachers answered questions about their perception of the effectiveness of the principals' communication while leading SILT meetings.

The open-ended questions were crafted based on research-based best practices. According to Merriam (2009) good open-ended questions produce descriptive data. The six types of questions identified by Patton (as cited in Merriam, 2009, pp. 96-97) were used in the survey to encourage participants to provide descriptive answers about the phenomenon of communication. The first type of questions were those that inquired about a person's experience and/or behavior as they related to either being the deliverer of information (the principal) or the receiver of information (the teacher). Second were questions that elicited the participant's opinions and values about interactions between the principal and teachers at an SILT meeting.

Questions about participants' feelings regarding communication exchanges were the third type of questions included in the survey. The fourth type were knowledge questions about the participants' understanding of the content of the meetings. Sensory questions were also included to collect participants' perception of what they saw and heard.

Three types of the open-ended questions used language that is preferred by the three largest personality types identified in District 287s staff. Harmonizers, Thinkers and Persisters made up the largest portion of base personality types of staff (Intermediate District 287, 2015). The largest group was the Harmonizer personality type with 45%. The questions about feelings and senses aligned with the perception language this type prefers (Kahler, 2012). The second largest personality type of District staff was that of the Thinker with 33%. Because thinkers prefer language specific to data and information, the knowledge questions would resonnate with them (Kahler, 2012). Finally, Persisters make up the third largest base personality type of staff at 16%. Persisters' preferred perception language requests their opinions, thus the opinion questions would be most fitting (Kahler, 2012).

Principal and teacher participants completed the same survey three times throughout the study. This redundancy allowed for a triangulation of data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The first completion took place immediately after the participants' December or January SILT meeting. The second and third survey completion dates took place in conjunction with the participants' January, February, or March 2016 SILT meetings. The surveys were administered electronically by the researcher via a Google Form.

To ensure that the survey would extract data needed to answer the study questions, the researcher conducted a preliminary test prior to administering the survey to participants. Based on the recommendation of Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), the researcher grouped the survey

questions by the the study questions they are designed to support (Appendix B: Preliminary Question Groupings). Then the researcher, along with another Process Communication Model trainer and colleague, considered all of the possible answers each question might elicit (p. 109). Based on the possible answers, the researcher refined the questions until they were worded in a way that would generate data that would answer the study questions.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data from open-ended and Likert-type survey questions served as the primary data source for this phenomenological study. Data collected from these questions was analyzed following Tesch's eight step process (as cited in Roberts, 2010, pp. 159-160). The researcher first read all of the survey responses and wrote down any related thoughts. Next, she examined the responses one participant provided to one survey administration. She looked for the essence of the responses, made note of it, and repeated the process with other participant responses. The third step was for the researcher to list all of the topics she noted and group them into like topics. This was followed by the researcher assigning codes to the topics and applying those codes to the remaining data. After the data were coded, the researcher synthesized like topics into appropriately and descriptively named categories. The sixth step was completed when the researcher had created final codes for each category and had alphabetized the codes. Data that was applicable to each category was then organized accordingly and analyzed. The eighth step was not needed, which would have required the researcher to recode existing data.

During the analysis, the researcher looked for trends within the categories. Trends she looked for included similarity or differences in teachers' responses as a whole, in teachers' responses that had the same base or phase personality type, and between principals' and teachers' responses.

It was essential for the researcher to obtain verification of her interpretation of respondents' answers to survey questions. Merriam (2009) stated that participants' answers could be affected by things such as their health and mood (p. 114). As a result, the researcher asked respondents to review her paraphrasing or summarizing of their words and refined the wording until it reflected the respondents' meaning prior to submitting the data. Verification was conducted via email.

Participant Rights

The participant right policies of the university and the site of study the researcher was affiliated with were observed throughout this study. *The University of New England Policies, Procedure, and Guidance on Research with Human Subjects* (2010) included respect for persons, beneficence, justice, and informed consent (University of New England, 2010). Intermediate District 287s *CI1100 Request to Conduct Research Procedure* addressed participant rights as well (see Appendix D). In addition to meeting all of the requirements of the University of New England's Internal Review Board, District 287 required that research conducted in the district followed the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. FERPA was specific to student rights and did not apply to this study. Furthermore, no data that has been collected, created, received, maintained, or disseminated by a state government agency was utilized in this study. The District's procedure also included a safeguard that any research conducted in the district will directly improve students' educational outcomes.

In alignment with the aforementioned policies, participant rights were protected in several ways throughout this study. The ethical principles of the Belmont Report, designed to protect human subjects of research, were employed by the researcher. The three principles

included respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in Biomedical and Behavioral Research [NCPHSBBR], 1979). Respect for persons was exercised in this study through voluntary participation. Participants were treated as self-governing and were able to end their participation in the study at any time. The principle of beneficence was met by the researcher augmenting the potential benefits participants would have while diminishing any potential harms they might have experienced from participating in the study. The final principle of justice was met by participants being treated as equals; no participant was more advantaged or disadvantaged by the design of this study.

Informed consent (Appendix C) was requested of participants to further the study's respect for persons (NCPHSBBR, 1979). Roberts (2010) postulated that informed consent entails the providing of potential study participants with information about the study's purpose, duration, procedures, potential risks and benefits, methods for keeping participant data confidential, contact information for participant questions, and the participant's right to terminate his/her participation in the study at any time without penalty (pp. 33-34). Participant candidates received this information via an email and confirmed their participation by returning a signed copy to the researcher.

Participant confidentiality was protected throughout this study based on Sieber's work (as cited in Roberts, 2010). Participants were assigned pseudonyms and any identifiable characteristics were not disclosed. Data was stored on a flash drive. The flash drive and researcher's hand-written notes were kept in a secure location in the researcher's home. The researcher only reviewed the materials in a secure place. Upon acceptance of the research by the university, the flash drive and papers containing notes related to the study were destroyed.

Codes were used throughout the study to protect participants' identities. Creswell (2012) advised that assigning numbers to participants for instruments they need to return keeps their participation confidential and respects their privacy (p. 169). Table 2 shows the method that was used to code participant information. The key for the code was kept in a separate document and was stored in a separate location from other study documentation.

Table 2.

Study Data Collection Coding

Study Element	Code	Key
Principals	P1-3	Example: P2 represents Principal from School 2.
Teachers	1-3T1-6	Example: 1T5 represents a Teacher from School 1 who is the 5th teacher from the school.

Limitations of the Study

The limitation of this phenomenological study was the number of principal participants. There were only three qualifying principal candidates for the study. Although this was a relatively small sample, the study of a phenomenon requires that all participants have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Thus, a group of participants in this kind of study can vary in size from three to 15 participants (p.78).

There were also assumptions that were applied to this study. It was assumed that participants completed their own surveys and provided genuine feedback to survey questions. Because staff in District 287 work with students with high levels of needs, it was assumed that the source of some participants' distress during the study would be from that work (Kahler, 2012). Finally, although the study was conducted in an Intermediate School District, it was

assumed that the findings could be applicable to other kindergarten through transition age schools or programs.

The researcher employed strategies to check for any unintentional biases she could bring to the study and maintained professionalism in her roles as a participant researcher. Because the researcher was a District-level administrator, Process Communication Model trainer, and Harmonizer base and phase personality type, it was essential that she debriefed with her peers by having them review her notes and data to check for neutrality (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The researcher also maintained professionalism throughout the study by providing open, honest, and transparent communication with participants about her role, the participants' role, the purpose of the study, the data being collected, and the progress of the study. Additionally, professionalism included the researcher's assurance to participants that any personal information collected during the study would be kept confidential.

Conclusion

Ethical research practices were employed throughout the course of the participant solicitation, data collection, and data analysis portions of this study. The researcher kept subject participation confidential and used a coding system to protect identities. Data collected was analyzed using an eight-step process that resulted in the identification of categories that reflected trends in survey responses. Detailed information about the researcher's data analysis process follows in Chapter 4 and study findings are presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the self-perception of the effectiveness of District 287 principals' current communication style to lead school improvement efforts compared to their teachers' perceptions. To fulfill that purpose, this study sought to answer four questions: How do Intermediate District 287 principals perceive the effectiveness of their communication style when leading school improvement leadership team meetings? How do Intermediate District 287 teachers perceive the effectiveness of their principals' communication style when the principal leads school improvement leadership team meetings? To what degree do District 287 teachers with the same and different personality types as their principals' have a shared understanding with their principal of what is to be accomplished from a school improvement leadership team meeting? To what degree are District 287 teachers with the same and different personality types as their principals' motivated to accomplish school improvement tasks because of the communication style used by their principals to lead school improvement leadership team meetings? Survey data collected to answer these questions are summarized in this chapter, and the methodology used to analyze the data is described.

Study Overview

This study included principals and teachers from three schools in Intermediate District 287 in Plymouth, Minnesota. Three principals participated ranging in ages in their forties and fifties. Their experience serving in the role of principal varied from 3-15 years, and the years they have spent working in education ranged from 15-28 years. A total of 12 teachers

participated in the study. Their ages ranged from 26-57 years old, and their years of experience

working in education extended from 3-34 years.

The participating principals had similar personality types whereas the teachers'

personality types differed. Table 3 shows a list of the participants and their base and phase

personality types. Several codes are used within the table to identify each participant. The letter

P stands for a principal participant, and the letter T stands for a teacher participant. The number

after a P and before a T indicates the school the participant was from. The number after the T is

unique to each teacher participant for that school. One teacher participant (1T1) is noted as

miscoded as that participant was originally coded under the incorrect school. The participants'

personality types are also provided in Table 3. Their base personality type is considered to be

their foundational personality type and identifies their foremost preferred communication style

(Kahler, 2012). Their phase personality type shows the personality type that currently motivates

them and is a preferred communication style (Kahler, 2012). The principals (P1, P2, and P3)

each had either a base or phase Thinker type. Specific to communication, that means that they

prefer to communicate through thoughts that include data, information, and logic (Kahler, 2012).

Two teachers (3T1 and 3T6) also shared the Thinker base or phase personality type. All three

principals also had either a Persister base or phase type. Persisters prefer to communicate

through opinions. This often involves their values and beliefs (Kahler, 2012). Several teachers

(1T2, 2T1, 2T2, 3T2, 3T3, and 3T5) had a base or phase type identified as Persister as well. The

most common base or phase personality type for the teachers was Harmonizer. Teachers 1T2,

2T1, 2T3, 2T4, 3T2, 3T3, 3T4, and 3T5 prefer to communicate through emotions, which would

include how they and others are feeling (Kahler, 2012). Another personality type was

represented among the teachers. Teachers 1T3, 2T3, and 3T4 have either or both a base or phase

personality type identified as Rebel. As such, they prefer to communicate through their reactions

to things. This includes responding to things they encounter as things they like or do not like.

They also like to use humor to communicate (Kahler, 2012). One additional personality type, the

Imaginer, was represented by one of the teachers (3T4). Having a phase of Imaginer, teacher

3T4 prefers to reflect and will communicate when directed to do so. Of Kahler's six personality

types, the Promoter type was the only type not represented by any of the teachers. Promoters

prefer to communicate through actions and are charming (Kahler, 2012).

Table 3.

Study Participants

Participant	Base Personality Type	Phase Personality Type
P1	Persister	Thinker
1T1	miscoded	miscoded
1T2	Harmonizer	Persister
1T3	Rebel	Rebel
P2	Thinker	Persister
2T1	Harmonizer	Persister
2T2	Persister	Persister
2T3	Harmonizer	Rebel
2T4	Harmonizer	Harmonizer
P3	Persister	Thinker
3T1	Thinker	Thinker
3T2	Harmonizer	Persister
3T3	Harmonizer	Persister
3T4	Rebel	Imaginer
3T5	Persister	Harmonizer
3T6	Thinker	Thinker

Note. P=Principal; T=Teacher; # after P=school; # before T=School; # after T=participant;
miscoded=participant was assigned a code for the incorrect school

Analysis Method

The data collected from open-ended and Likert-type scale questions for this qualitative phenomenological study were analyzed using Tesch's eight step process (as cited in Roberts, 2010, pp. 159-160). The researcher began her analysis by reading all of the survey responses and writing down initial thoughts as the first step in the process. She then looked at the responses from one respondent to one survey administration and noted the essence of them. This process was repeated for the responses received from all participants. As a third step, the researcher created a list of the essence of each participant's responses and combined them into similar topics. Those topics were then coded and those codes were applied to data from the subsequent two surveys. As a fifth step, the researcher synthesized similar topics into appropriately and descriptively named categories. After that, she finalized the codes and alphabetized them. The data that was applicable to each category was organized and analyzed as such. Tesch's (as cited in Roberts, 2010) final step of recoding existing data was not needed.

Throughout the analysis process, the researcher looked for themes within the identified categories. The themes were based on similarities and differences in all of the teachers' responses in general and then specifically to their personality types. Themes were examined between teachers with like and different base personality types, like and different phase personality types and like and different base and phase personality types between teachers and their principals. Because the initial study premise came from the emergence of miscommunications between Thinker principals and Harmonizer teachers, the participant responses were broken into four groups for comparison. The first group was the principals (P1, P2, and P3) with either base or phase types as Thinker or Persister. The second group was teachers with either a base or phase type as Harmonizer (1T2, 2T1, 2T3, 2T4, 3T2, 3T3, and

3T5). The third group included teachers who had either a Thinker base and phase (3T1 and 3T6) or a Persister base and phase (2T2), being somewhat comparable to the principals' personality types. The final group included teachers with either a Rebel base and phase type (1T3) or a Rebel base and Imaginer phase type (1T3) which this study did not focus on.

The researcher obtained verification of her interpretation of the respondents' answers during the analysis phase. The researcher sent the participants their responses along with her paraphrases via email. Participants responded via email either verifying the researcher's interpretation or by clarifying the meaning of their responses.

<div align="center">

Results

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This section provides a description of the analysis of this study's data. Results are presented by the four aforementioned groups of participants; principals with base or phase Thinker or Persister personality types, teachers with Harmonizer base or phase personality types (Group 1), teachers with Thinker base and phase and teachers with Persister base and phase personality types (Group 2), and teachers with Rebel base and phase and teachers with Rebel base and Imaginer phase personality types (Group 3). The results are presented as a summary of all nine survey administrations by three categories; the principals' perception of their communication, the teachers' perception of the principals' communication, and the impact the principals' communication had on the teachers' motivation to accomplish tasks assigned at School Improvement Leadership Team meetings.

Principals' Perception of their Communication

The participating principals similarly positively rated their confidence in their ability to communicate clearly at the School Improvement Leadership Team meetings and typically used positive descriptors for their feelings about their communication at those meetings. Table 4

shows the scores each principal gave his/her clarity and the words each used to describe his/her feelings about his/her communication. Of the nine ratings over the three surveys, seven were *above average* or *highly* and two were *somewhat* and *not at all*. The lowest rating was from P2 who was not able to attend a meeting because of a student emergency. The other lower rating from P3 included the principal's feeling of concern about the time that was spent on one task, but the principal noted that his/her communication was effective. Positive descriptors used by more than one principal included *effective* (P1 and P3) and the inclusion of input and viewpoints from the team (P1 and P2).

Table 4.

Principals' Confidence and Feelings About Their Communication

Principal	Personality Type			Survey 1		Survey 2		Survey 3
	Base	Phase	#	Words	#	Words	#	Words
P1	Per	Th	3	-pretty effective -I clarified -kept moving	2	-effective in getting team to share and give input	2	-pretty effective
P2	Per	Th	3	-pretty clear communicator	0	NA	3	-clear -inclusive of other viewpoints
P3	Th	Per	2	-confident in ability of SLT to meet outcomes	3	-confident	1	-effective -time spent on a task concerns me

Note: P=principal; # after P=school; Per=Persister; Th=Thinker; #=rating; 0=not at all, 1=somewhat; 2=above average, 3=highly

The principals noted similar and differing indicators of understanding what was to be accomplished as a result of the School Improvement Leadership Team meetings compared to the teachers. All three principals and the majority of teachers mentioned indicators of the teachers'

understanding as being either verbal such as participating in discussions and asking questions or

accomplishing tasks as shown in Table 5. The Harmonizer base or phase teachers' (Group 1)

predominantly noted their indicators of understanding as being relative to participation in

discussions. The Thinker/Thinker and Persister/Persister teachers (Group 2) were prone to

submitting responses describing non-verbal indicators such as nodding of the head and following

the agenda, neither of which were mentioned by the principals. Likewise, the Rebel/Rebel and

Rebel/Imaginer teachers (Group 3) noted several non-verbal indicators that were not mentioned

by the principals such as helping a group member and listening.

Table 5.

Teachers Indicators of Understanding at Meetings

Participant	Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3
Base Phase			
P1 Per Th	reporting out of specific responsibilities; focus of our discussions	team was able to mention what we were doing and what we needed to work towards	comments made by staff; staff just needed time to respond
P2 Per Th	accomplished outcomes; feedback; plans	NA	all engaged in problem solving
P3 Th Per	able to determine priorities for action steps; dashboards were compared	members were engaged in the process; provided information to be submitted in progress report; asked questions and made promises	analyzing data; made recommendations for priorities
Group 1			
2T3 H R	asked questions; participated in discussion; acknowledged responsibilities	Took notes and sent them to [principal]	-
2T4 H H	verbal input	-	part of the conversation and discussion; present in meeting; responded
1T2 H Per	contributed to the conversation; able to explain approaches that might work	-	I have suggestions on how to collect data for this year.
2T1 H Per	participated in discussion; committed to being a mentor	Principal was not in attendance.	engaged in dialogue; shared thoughts; clarified responsibilities
3T2 H Per	verbal acknowledgement; notes entered; review of promises	responding to checks for understanding; asking questions; engaging in hands-on work	discussion; active in activity; verbal acknowledgement; thumbs up/down
3T3 H Per	did not show indicators	asked questions	asked questions
3T5 Per H	created a list of priority action steps, ideas/suggestions	Verbal cues; visuals with Cognos work	Verbal assent; thumbs up; facial expressions
Group 2			
2T2 Per Per	following agenda; contributing ideas; actively listening	N/A principal was not present	followed agenda; offered options and thoughts when asked
3T1 Th Th	asked questions; nodded; participated	asked questions; nodded my head	nodded head; provided input
3T6 Th Th	group participation; completed tasks; discussion; dashboard check-in	discussion; notes; 'present' in documents	collaboration and participation
Group 3			
1T3 R R	participated in the group discussions and gave ideas	participating in and staying within the topics of discussions on agenda	-
3T4 R I	-	helped group member; active listening; posture; followed agenda; attendance	spoke; maintained listening posture; engaged in materials and process

Note: T=Teacher; # before T=School; # after T=participant; H=Harmonizer; I=Imaginer; Per=Persister; R=Rebel; Th=Thinker; - =not completed

Teachers' Perception of Principals' Communication

A trend appeared in the data from teachers' ratings of the principals' communication. Table 6 displays the ratings each teacher submitted for each survey of the effectiveness of the principals' communication. Group 3, the Rebel/Rebel or Rebel/Imaginer teachers, gave the highest average rating of the effectiveness of the principals' communication at 2.5. The Harmonizer teachers, Group 1, gave the second highest rating at an average of 2.3. The teacher group with more similar personality types to the principals, Group 3, had the lowest perception of the effectiveness of the principals' communication at the School Improvement Leadership Team meetings with an average rating of 1.6.

Table 6.

Teachers' Rating of Effectiveness of Principal's Communication

Participant	Personality Type		Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3
	Base	Phase			
Group 1					
2T3	Harmonizer	Rebel	3	3	-
2T4	Harmonizer	Harmonizer	2	-	3
1T2	Harmonizer	Persister	2	2	-
2T1	Harmonizer	Persister	2	1	3
3T2	Harmonizer	Persister	2	2	3
3T3	Harmonizer	Persister	3	2	3
3T5	Persister	Harmonizer	2	2	2
Group 2					
2T2	Persister	Persister	1	0	1
3T1	Thinker	Thinker	1	1	2
3T6	Thinker	Thinker	3	3	2
Group 3					
1T3	Rebel	Rebel	2	-	2
3T4	Rebel	Imaginer	-	3	3

Note: T=Teacher; # before T=School; # after T=participant; 0=not at all, 1=somewhat; 2=above average, 3=highly; - =not completed

When analyzing the descriptors the participating teachers used regarding the principals' communication, no clear patterns arose, however, a theme of generally positive descriptors was detected. Table 7 shows that none of the three groups of teachers submitted more positive descriptors of their principals' communication than others. Only one negative comment was made amongst the twelve teachers over the three surveys. Respondent 2T2 (Persister/Persister)

of Group 3 commented that it was hard to come up with ideas on the spot as the agenda was not shared prior to the meeting.

Table 7.

Descriptors Used by Teachers to Describe Principal's Communication

Teacher	Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3
Base Phase			
Group 1			
2T3 H R	direct; to-the-point; felt heard; kept meeting moving	Principal was not at the meeting due to a student emergency; gave notes; notes effectively communicated what we needed to do	-
2T4 H H	strong; open; brings the group back	-	open; wanting everyone's input and voices; encourages staff opinion and ideas; aware of staff
1T2 H Per	great job keeping us focused and opening up the group for discussion and decision making.	able to let us know how we are doing and how [principal] can support the next steps	-
2T1 H Per	felt valued; easy to contribute	Principal was not at the meeting.	actively engaged; clearly communicated outcomes; able to address questions for clarification clearly and efficiently
3T2 H Per	effectively; pulled us back together	good; adjusting; effective; respectful; motivating	effective; respectful
3T3 H Per	-organized; clear; easy to follow	clear	positive tone; great energy; clear directions; organized; prepared
3T5 Per H	well; clear	good	Clear
Group 2			
2T2 Per Per	Clear; consistent with agenda	Principal was not present at the meeting.	did not share agenda prior to meeting; hard to come up with ideas on the spot; allowed everyone to voice their opinion; decisions were made as a group
3T1 Th Th	unclear; left hanging	good	clear; concise
3T6 Th Th	clear; concise; caring; organized; efficient	clear; concise; reflective; caring; kept things moving along	clear; described well
Group 3			
1T3 R R	accurate; precise; informative; supportive; fostered a great atmosphere for effective communication	-	effective; concise; time effective; stayed on topic
3T4 R I	-	direct; short; succinct; clear; easy to discern; somniferous; relaxed tone	effective; necessary; clear

Note: T=Teacher; # before T=School; # after T=participant; H=Harmonizer; I=Imaginer; Per=Persister; R=Rebel; Th=Thinker; - =not completed

Another pattern emerged during the analysis of the number of meeting outcomes that were matched between the principals and the teacher groups. Table 8 shows that teachers in Group 2, with Harmonizer base or phase personality types, matched the most outcomes with the principals. Group 1 similarly identified meeting outcomes with the principal 69% of the time. The Thinker/Thinker and Persister/Persister teachers in Group 2 matched the principals 58% of the time. The lowest number of matches of meeting outcomes between the principals and teachers was with Group 3, the Rebel/Rebel and Rebel/Imaginer teachers, at 43%.

Table 8.

Outcomes Commonly Identified by Teacher and Principal

Participant	Personality Type		Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3
	Base	Phase			
Group 1					
2T3	Harmonizer	Rebel	2/3	3/3	-
2T4	Harmonizer	Harmonizer	2/3	-	3/4
1T2	Harmonizer	Persister	1/1	2/2	-
2T1	Harmonizer	Persister	2/3	3/3	4/4
3T2	Harmonizer	Persister	3/3	6/7	3/4
3T3	Harmonizer	Persister	1/3	6/7	1/4
3T5	Persister	Harmonizer	1/3	2/7	1/4
Group 2					
2T2	Persister	Persister	2/3	3/3	3/4
3T1	Thinker	Thinker	2/3	1/7	2/4
3T6	Thinker	Thinker	3/3	5/7	1/4
Group 3					
1T3	Rebel	Rebel	1/1	-	2/2
3T4	Rebel	Imaginer	-	2/7	1/4

Note: # of teacher identified outcomes/# of principal's intended outcome; - =not completed

When asked if there were any outcomes they were unclear about from the meeting, each group of responding teachers had different levels of clarity. Although Group 3, the Rebel/Rebel and Rebel/Imaginer teachers, matched the least amount of understood outcomes with the principals, Table 9 shows that they reported being clear about all of the meeting outcomes. The Harmonizer base and phase group (Group 1) not only matched the most identified meeting outcomes to the principals', they also reported the most clarity in meeting outcomes with ten of 18 being clear. The principals' counterpart teachers, Group 2, reported the least amount of clarity of meeting outcomes with only being clear three of nine meeting outcomes.

Table 9.

Teachers' Clarity of Meeting Outcomes

Participant	Personality Type		Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3
	Base	Phase			
Group 1					
2T3	Harmonizer	Rebel	clear	clear	-
2T4	Harmonizer	Harmonizer	clear	-	clear
1T2	Harmonizer	Persister	unclear	unclear	-
2T1	Harmonizer	Persister	clear	unclear	clear
3T2	Harmonizer	Persister	clear	unclear	unclear
3T3	Harmonizer	Persister	clear	clear	clear
3T5	Persister	Harmonizer	unclear	unclear	unclear
Group 2					
2T2	Persister	Persister	clear	unclear	clear
3T1	Thinker	Thinker	unclear	clear	unclear
3T6	Thinker	Thinker	unclear	unclear	unclear
Group 3					
1T3	Rebel	Rebel	clear	-	clear
3T4	Rebel	Imaginer	-	clear	clear

Note: T=Teacher; # before T=School; # after T=participant; - =not completed

Another similarity from the responses received from teachers was the typical rating of *above average* when scoring their level of confidence in their understanding of what was to be accomplished as a result of the meetings. Table 10 shows the ratings from all the teachers for all three schools. Of the 36 possible responses, 23 were *above average*, six were *highly*, and two were *somewhat*. The remaining five did not respond. Group 3 with the Rebel/Rebel and Rebel/Imaginer teachers reported having the highest average level of confidence in understanding what they needed to accomplish at 2.5. Not far behind was the Harmonizer base or phase teachers, Group 1, with an average confidence level of 2.2. The lowest level of confidence (1.8) in their understanding of what was expected of them was Group 2, the Persister/Persister and Thinker/Thinker teachers, with similar communication style preferences to the principals.

Table 10.

Teachers' Confidence in Understanding What Was to be Accomplished

Participant	Personality Type		Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3
	Base	Phase			
Group 1					
2T3	Harmonizer	Rebel	2	3	-
2T4	Harmonizer	Harmonizer	2	-	3
1T2	Harmonizer	Persister	2	2	-
2T1	Harmonizer	Persister	3	2	3
3T2	Harmonizer	Persister	2	2	2
3T3	Harmonizer	Persister	2	2	2
3T5	Persister	Harmonizer	2	2	2
Group 2					
2T2	Persister	Persister	2	1	1
3T1	Thinker	Thinker	2	2	2
3T6	Thinker	Thinker	2	2	2
Group 3					
1T3	Rebel	Rebel	2	-	3
3T4	Rebel	Imaginer	-	2	3

Note: T=Teacher; # before T=School; # after T=participant; 0=not at all, 1=somewhat; 2=above average, 3=highly; - =not completed

Impact of Principals' Communication on Teachers' Motivation

The analysis of the data received from the participating teachers' rating of the impact of the principals' communication on their level of motivation to accomplish their assigned school improvement tasks presented another trend across groups. In Table 11, the majority of teachers reported that the principals' communication had an above average impact on their motivation to complete their tasks. However, Group 3 (Rebel/Rebel and Rebel/Imaginer teachers) reported an average impact rating of .8, the lowest of the three groups. The Thinker/Thinker and

Persister/Persister teachers (Group 2) reported an average impact rating of 1.3, just above

somewhat. Group 3 (Harmonizer base or phase teachers) had the highest average rating of the

impact of the principals' communication on their motivation to accomplish their assigned tasks.

Their average rating was 2.3, just above an *above average* rating.

Table 11.

Teachers' Rating of the Impact of the Principal's Communication on Their Motivation

Participant	Personality Type		Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3
	Base	Phase			
Group 1					
2T3	Harmonizer	Rebel	3	2	-
2T4	Harmonizer	Harmonizer	2	-	3
1T2	Harmonizer	Persister	2	1	-
2T1	Harmonizer	Persister	2	2	3
3T2	Harmonizer	Persister	3	3	3
3T3	Harmonizer	Persister	2	2	2
3T5	Persister	Harmonizer	2	2	2
Group 2					
2T2	Persister	Persister	1	0	2
3T1	Thinker	Thinker	1	1	1
3T6	Thinker	Thinker	2	2	2
Group 3					
1T3	Rebel	Rebel	1	-	2
3T4	Rebel	Imaginer	-	2	2

Note: T=Teacher; # before T=School; # after T=participant; 0=not at all, 1=somewhat; 2=above average, 3=highly; - =not completed

Summary

Survey data was collected for this qualitative phenomenological study to examine the self-perception of the effectiveness of District 287 principals' current communication style to lead school improvement efforts compared to their teachers' perceptions. Answers submitted by three principal and twelve teacher respondents were analyzed and themes were reported. The following chapter, Chapter 5, presents the conclusions drawn from this analysis to answer four key questions: How do Intermediate District 287 principals perceive the effectiveness of their communication style when leading school improvement leadership team meetings? How do Intermediate District 287 teachers perceive the effectiveness of their principals' communication style when the principal leads school improvement leadership team meetings? To what degree do District 287 teachers with the same and different personality types as their principals' have a shared understanding with their principal of what is to be accomplished from a school improvement leadership team meeting? To what degree are District 287 teachers with the same and different personality types as their principals' motivated to accomplish school improvement tasks because of the communication style used by their principals to lead school improvement leadership team meetings?

CHAPTER 5.

CONCLUSION

This phenomenological qualitative study was designed to examine the effectiveness of principals' Thinker communication style on the school improvement process. Literature reviewed emphasized the importance of principals having effective communication in order for school improvement efforts to be a success (Brown, 2006; Labby, Lunenburg, & Slate, 2012; Reeves, 2006). In Intermediate District 287, located in Plymouth, Minnesota, data collected through the Process Communication Model® Personality Pattern Inventory® showed that the majority of district administrators had a preference to communicate through thoughts and logic as Thinker types whereas the majority of teachers had a preference to communicate through emotions and feelings as Harmonizer Types (Intermediate District 287, 2015). Having different preferences for communication styles can lead to an increase in miscommunication (Kahler, 2008).

Survey data collected from 15 participants was analyzed and interpreted based on four questions the study sought to answer. Those questions were:

1. How do Intermediate District 287 principals perceive the effectiveness of their communication style when leading school improvement leadership team meetings?

2. How do Intermediate District 287 teachers perceive the effectiveness of their principals' communication style when the principal leads school improvement leadership team meetings?

3.   To what degree do District 287 teachers with the same and different personality types as their principals' have a shared understanding with their principal of what is to be accomplished from a school improvement leadership team meeting?

4.   To what degree are District 287 teachers with the same and different personality types as their principals' motivated to accomplish school improvement tasks because of the communication style used by their principals to lead school improvement leadership team meetings?

The 15 participants were from three schools and included three principals and twelve teachers. Three identical surveys were administered over three months to each of the principals, and three identical surveys were administered over three months to each of the teachers. Participants completed the surveys after their School Improvement Leadership Team meetings and provided information about communication that occurred during the meetings. It is important to note that because this study consisted of a small sample of principal participants, the researcher's interpretation is based on that limited data from that sample group

Five sections comprise the remainder of this chapter. The first is the interpretation of the findings from Chapter 4. The next section identifies possible implications of the study for Intermediate District 287 and other educational settings. The third section details recommendations for action by Intermediate District 287. Recommendations for further study follow, and the chapter ends with a conclusion that articulates the significance of this study.

Interpretation of Findings

Based on the findings of this study, principals with Thinker base or phase personality types typically perceived the effectiveness of their communication style when leading school improvement leadership team meetings to be effective. In this study, seven of the nine

principals' ratings of the effectiveness of their communication were *above average* or *highly.* The same principals used positive descriptors such as *effective* (P1, P2, and P3), *clear* (P2) or *confident* (P3) and used the phrases *getting team input* (P1), *I clarified* (P1), and *including differing viewpoints* (P2) to demonstrate what they did that made their communication effective during the School Improvement Leadership Team meetings.

This study's data also showed that Thinker principals have a tendency to note indicators of teachers' understanding through verbal responses and the accomplishment of tasks whereas some of the teachers identified additional indicators of understanding. Teachers of all personality types did concur with the principals in recognizing that they showed their understanding by participating in discussions or asking questions. This was a particularly common kind of indicator noted by the Harmonizer base or phase teachers. The Thinker principals were not inclined to identify non-verbal cues as indicators of the teachers' understanding. The teachers in Group 2 (Thinker/Thinker and Persister/Persister) and Group 3 (Rebel/Rebel and Rebel/Imaginer) did, however. They identified taking notes, listening and following the agenda as indicators of their understanding.

This study revealed that regardless of a teacher's personality type, he/she had a tendency to describe his/her Thinker base or phase principal's communication positively. Teachers in all three groups used the word *clear* to describe their principals' communication. Likewise, teachers from all three groups noted the principals' ability to keep the meetings moving and on track.

Although this study did not show a significant difference in the tendency of teachers with different personality types to positively describe their principals' communication, it did show a difference in ratings of the effectiveness of the principals' communication. One of the

underlying assumptions prior to this study was that teachers with similar personality types as their principals would rate their principals' communication higher than teachers with other personality types. Conversely, data from this study showed that Harmonizer base or phase personality type teachers were more likely than teachers with other base or phase personality types to rate their Thinker principals' communication during meetings as *highly effective*. Because Harmonizers are natural people pleasers, it is possible that having that characteristic would veer them to give high ratings. It is possible, too, that Thinker/Thinker types need more details such as data and information, than teachers with other personality types in order to feel they have a full understanding. Another possibility is that the Thinker/Thinker teachers were experiencing some distress during the meeting which would have increased the probability of miscommunication taking place (Kahler, 2012). That possibility could explain the low ratings by the Rebel/Rebel and Rebel/Imaginer teachers as well.

Teacher and Principal Personality Types and Shared Understanding

Teachers with certain personality types understand meeting outcomes similarly to their Thinker principals whereas teachers who tend to be unclear about a meeting outcome have different personality types. Teachers with Harmonizer base or phase personality types in this study were more apt than teachers with other personality types to report a similar understanding of School Improvement Leadership Team meeting outcomes as their Thinker principals. Because Harmonizers have a preference for emotions and feelings (Kahler, 2008), this could be a result of them feeling good during the meeting and as a result being able to take in information more clearly. It could also be possible that the Harmonizer teachers listened more intently during the meeting because of their inclination to please others.

Contradictory to the assumption that teachers with Thinker personality types would more commonly match intended meeting outcomes with the principals and have the most confidence in their understanding of what was to be accomplished as communicated by their Thinker principals, they did not. In fact they were the most likely personality type in this study to leave a meeting with a lack of clear understanding about something that was to be accomplished and reported having the lowest level of confidence in their understanding. Although there were only two Thinker/Thinker teachers in this study, they reported being unclear about a meeting outcome 83% of the time. As stated earlier, this could be a result of the Thinker's need for information. The Thinkers might have needed more details than the teachers with other personality types in order to be clear about the meeting outcomes.

Impact of Principals' Communication on Teachers' Motivation

The Thinker base or phase personality type principals' communication is significantly more likely to impact the motivation of teachers with a specific personality type over teachers with other personality types. The communication of the Thinker principals in this study was most likely to positively impact the Harmonizer teachers' motivation to accomplish school improvement activities. The other groups of teachers were on average only somewhat motivated by the principals' communication.

Implications

There are different ways in which the findings of the study can be useful to principals and other leaders working in educational organizations. First of all, when principals are looking for indicators of understanding from their teachers, it is important that they become more aware of non-verbal indicators. Verbal aspects are only one part of communication (Gilbert, 2012; Kahler, 2008; Marazza, 2003; and Pauley and Pauley, 2009) and a leader could easily misinterpret

others' understanding by only paying attention to some indicators. This study also shows that principals who communicate effectively with the teacher stakeholder group are able to advance their desired outcomes for school improvement (Ediger, 2014; Institute of Educational Leadership, 2000; Reeves, 2006). Arguably, this same premise could be said to be true with other educational leaders in other educational settings. Additionally, transformative school improvement efforts aimed at achieving social justice and equity require transformative leaders. Bennis and Nanus (2007) noted that a transformative leader compels others to take action. In this study, it was reported by the Harmonizer teachers that the principals' communication style positively impacted their motivation to complete their school improvement responsibilities. Although it is not conclusive from this study that the impact on the Harmonizers' motivation was from the principals' communication or from the Harmonizers' desire to please others, it is critical for leaders of school improvement efforts to be aware of the impact of their communication style and, when needed, adjust it to positively impact the level of motivation of those they lead. Similarly, an implication of this study relates to Ediger's (2014) writing that principals' communication being clear, concise, and accurate are critical in order for direction and information to serve as a benefit versus a hindrance. This study showed that teachers with different personality types had different levels of clarity about the meeting outcomes and about the tasks they were assigned.

Recommendations for Action

The examination of the phenomenon of the principal Thinker types in Intermediate District 287 provided guidance for actions to take. The results of this study will be made available to all District 287 principals. The principals will then be able to reflect on their communication style as it relates to the study findings. That reflection will help them to examine

their own behaviors so they are better able to encourage change in others (Reeves, 2009).

Opportunities will be provided during leadership meetings for the principals to review and

practice effective communication strategies. Because the theory of the Process Communication

Model (PCM) is that people who are in a healthy place and are not experiencing distress can

effectively communicate regardless of their primary preferred communication styles, it is

recommended that the principals continue to practice strategies from the model to stay in a

healthy place. It is also recommended that training of staff in PCM continue for the same reason.

Recommendations for Further Study

It would be beneficial for further studies to be conducted that relate to and continue this

study. This same study can be done with a larger sample size of principals and teachers to

determine if there is a correlation between this study's findings and its own. Also, because the

Harmonizers in this study most commonly understood the principals' intended outcomes and

were the most likely type to rate the principals' communication as highly effective, a similar

study that more closely examines communication between teachers with Harmonizer base and

phase personality types and principals with Thinker base and phase personality types would be

warranted. Having participants in a larger group that have the same base and phase types would

allow for a clearer examination of the difference in preferred communication styles. That study

could also include an examination of indicators of distress shown at meetings by the Harmonizer

teachers to show if they are in first degree distress which specifically shows their desire to please

others. Another follow-up study to this one could involve participants having the same base and

phase types with no stage types in between. That could provide more definitive results about the

perception and understanding of each type when working on school improvement efforts as there

were some teachers in this study that had stage personality types that were not examined.

Similarly, a follow-up study could be conducted to determine if a teacher's perception of the effectiveness of the principal's communication is affected by any stage personality type he/she has. Only 33% of people have a stage personality type which is a personality type that is between a person's base and phase personality types that was his/her phase type in the past (Kahler, 2012). Three of the teachers in this study had stage personality types (2T3, 3T2, and 3T4). Another study could be conducted to determine the effectiveness of the recommended action steps for this study. A study that more deeply examines why Harmonizers rate the effectiveness of the principals' communication higher than other personality types would also be worthwhile. The length of the relationships between the teachers and principals was not taken into consideration in this study. Because length of relationship was a commonly referenced trait of an effective leader mentioned across literature (Bennis & Nanus, 2007; Bolman & Deal, 2013; Kotter, 1996; Kouzes & Posner, 2006; Marazza, 2003; Pauley & Pauley, 2009), a future study could determine if the length of the relationships between the principals and teachers impacts the teachers' perception of the effectiveness of the principals' communication.

Conclusion

This study sought to examine the impact of the Thinker principals' communication style on school improvement efforts. The findings of the study showed that teachers with Harmonizer personality types are more likely than teachers with other personality types to rate the effectiveness of the principals' communication as high and to be positively motivated by the principals' communication. Teachers with similar or differing personality types did not seem to perceive the Thinker principals' communication more positively or negatively than other teachers. These study findings are significant for educational leaders who strive to be change agents through the work of school improvement initiatives.

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Appendix A

The Process Communication Model® Profile

A Kahler Communications Seminar Using
The Process Communication Model

Seminar One
Core Topics

JOHN DOE

JOHN DOE's
Perceptual Frames of Reference

Frame	Value
Actions	
Inactions	
Opinions	
Emotions	
Reactions	
Thoughts	

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
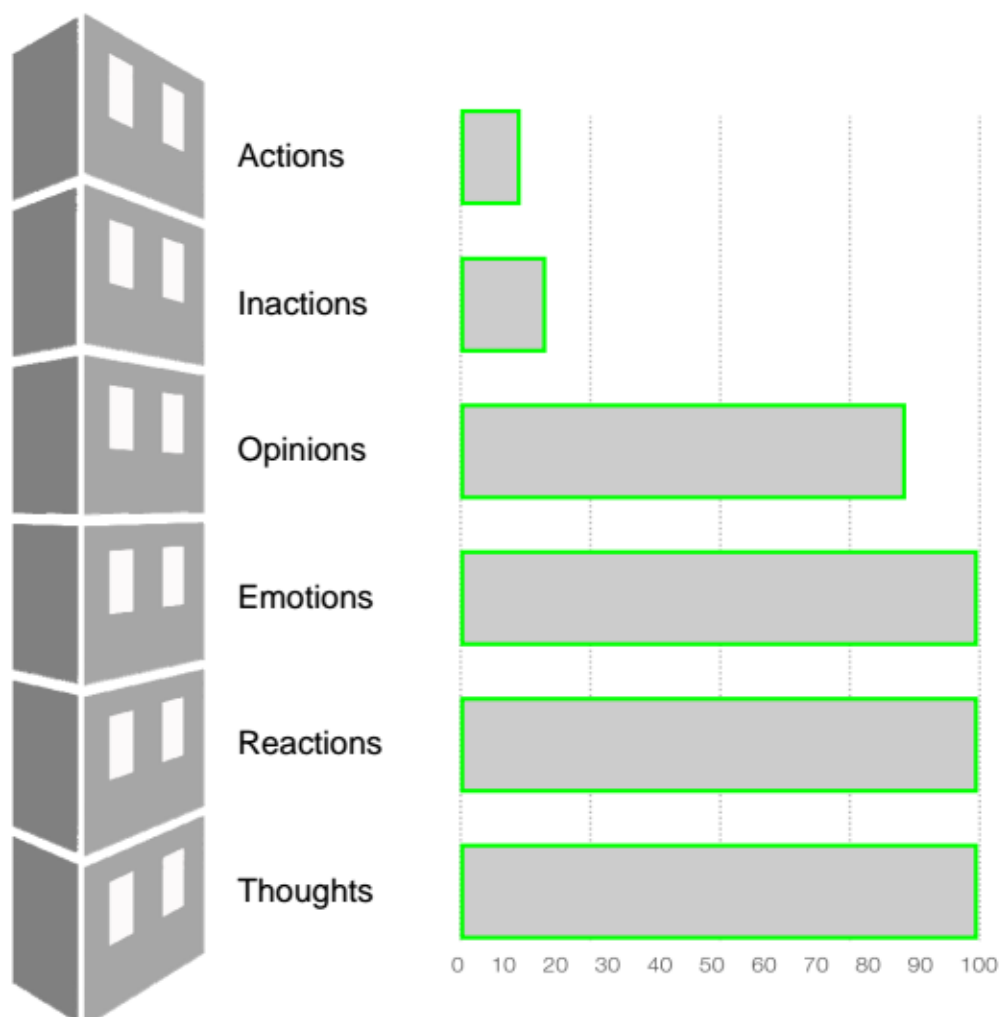
JOHN DOE's
Personality Condominium

	0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
Promoter	
Imaginer	
Persister	
Harmonizer	
Rebel	
Thinker	
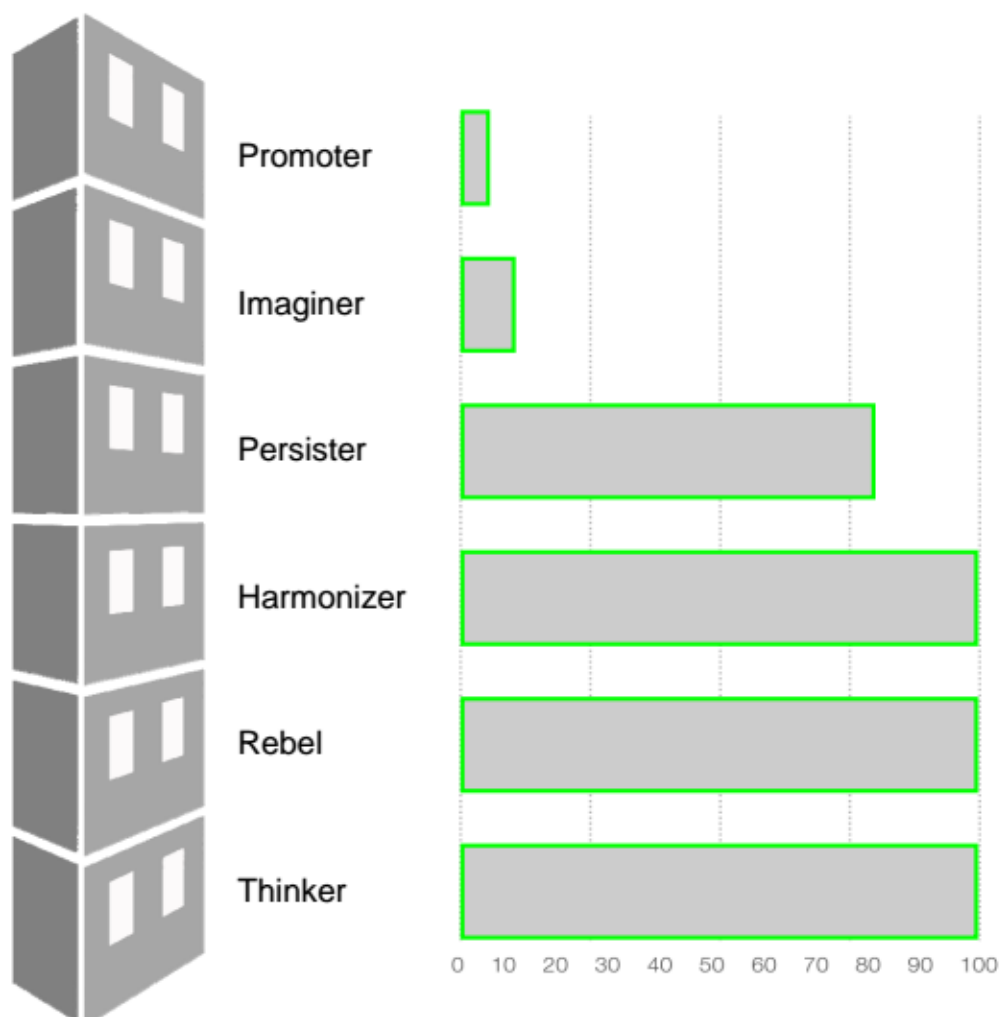
JOHN DOE's
Character Strengths

.

Strength	Value
adaptable, persuasive, and charming	
imaginative, reflective, and calm	
dedicated, observant, and conscientious	
compassionate, sensitive, and warm	
spontaneous, creative, and playful	
responsible, logical, and organized	

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
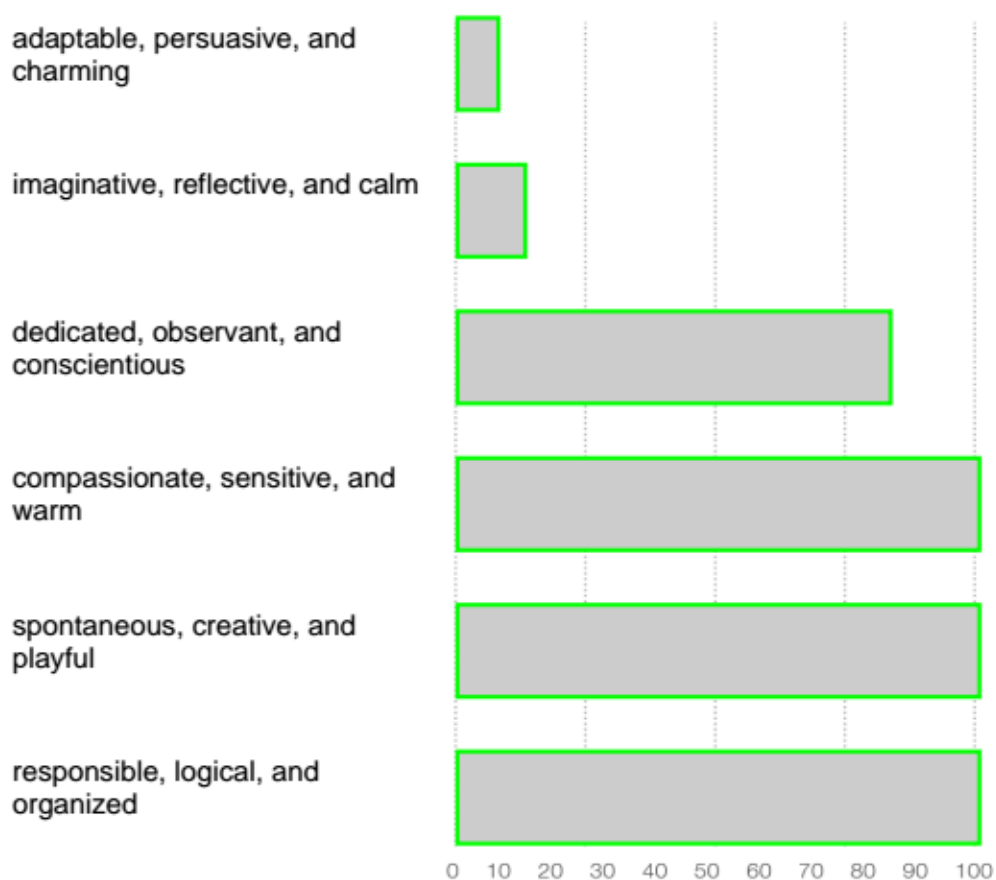
JOHN DOE's
Interaction Styles

Autocratic

Benevolent

Laissez-Faire

Democratic

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
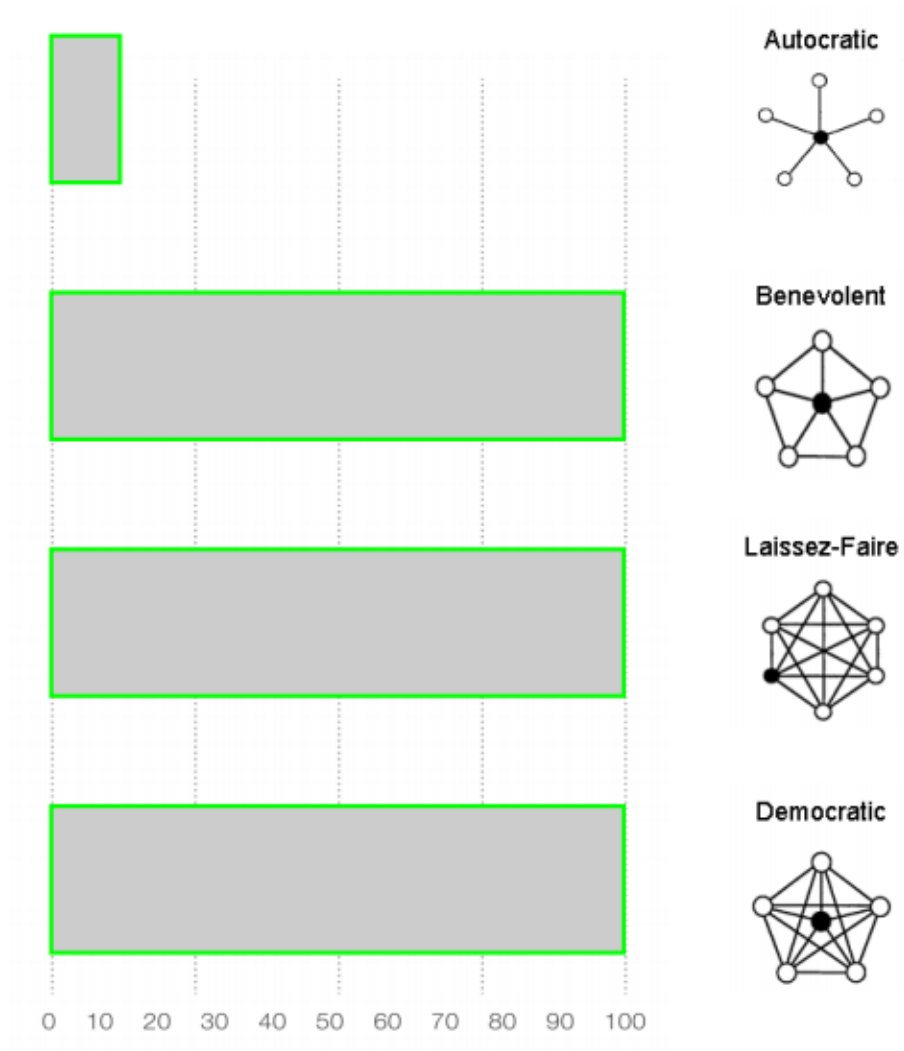
JOHN DOE's
Personality Parts
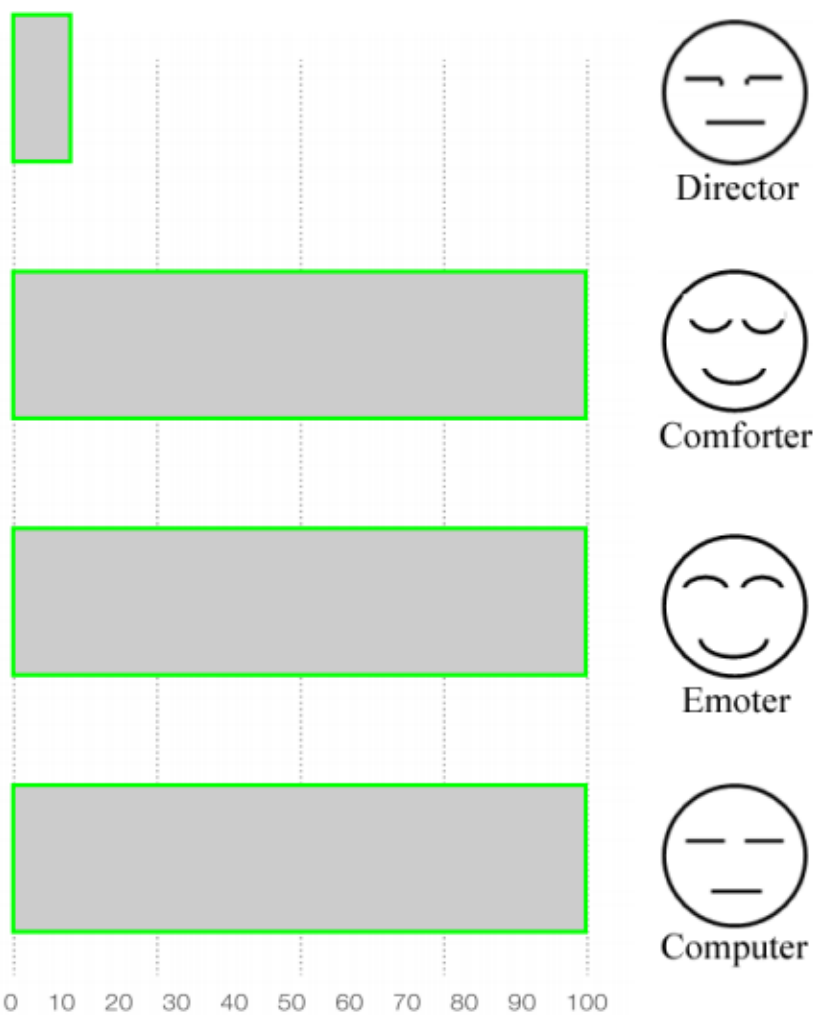
JOHN DOE's
Channels of Communication

Directive (2)

Nurturative (4)

Emotive (5)

Requestive (3)

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

JOHN DOE's
Environmental Preference

Alone

Group

Group to Group

One to One

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
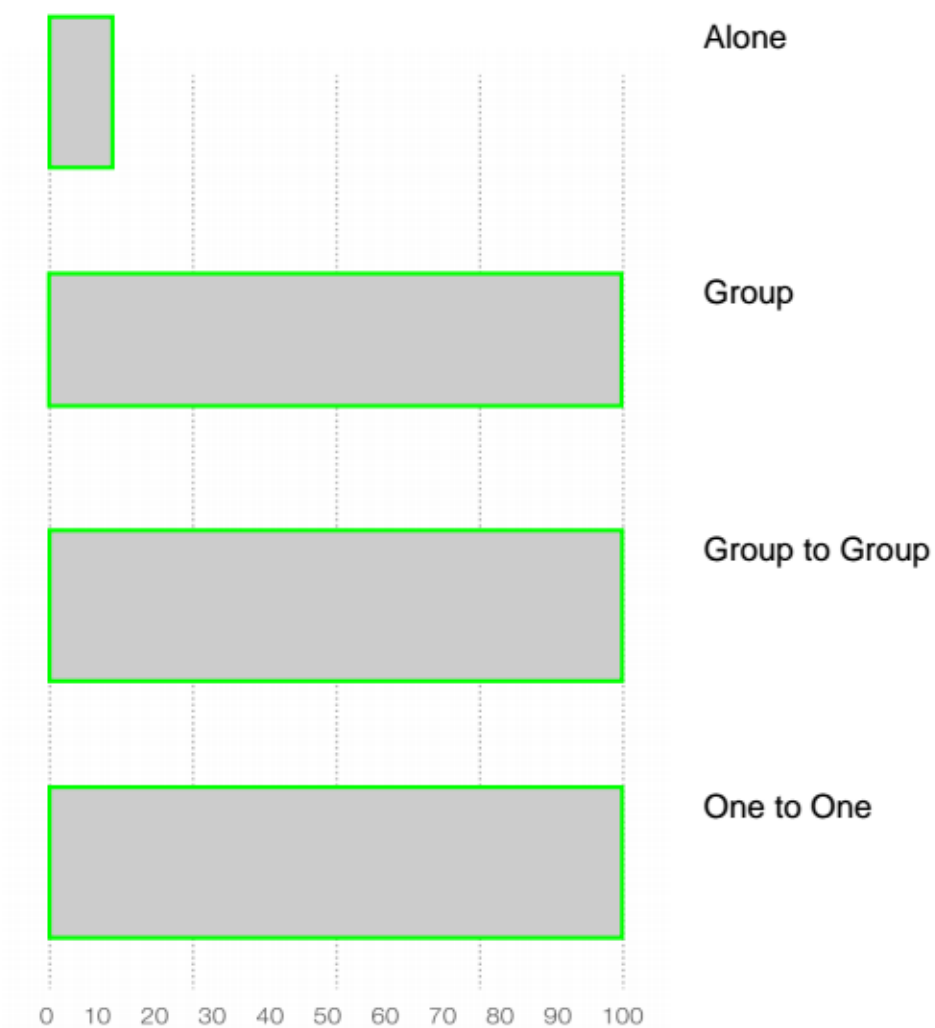
JOHN DOE's
Psychological Motivators

Motivator	
Incidence	
Solitude	
Recognition of Work and Conviction	
Recognition of Person and Sensory	
Contact	
Recognition of Work and Time Structure	

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
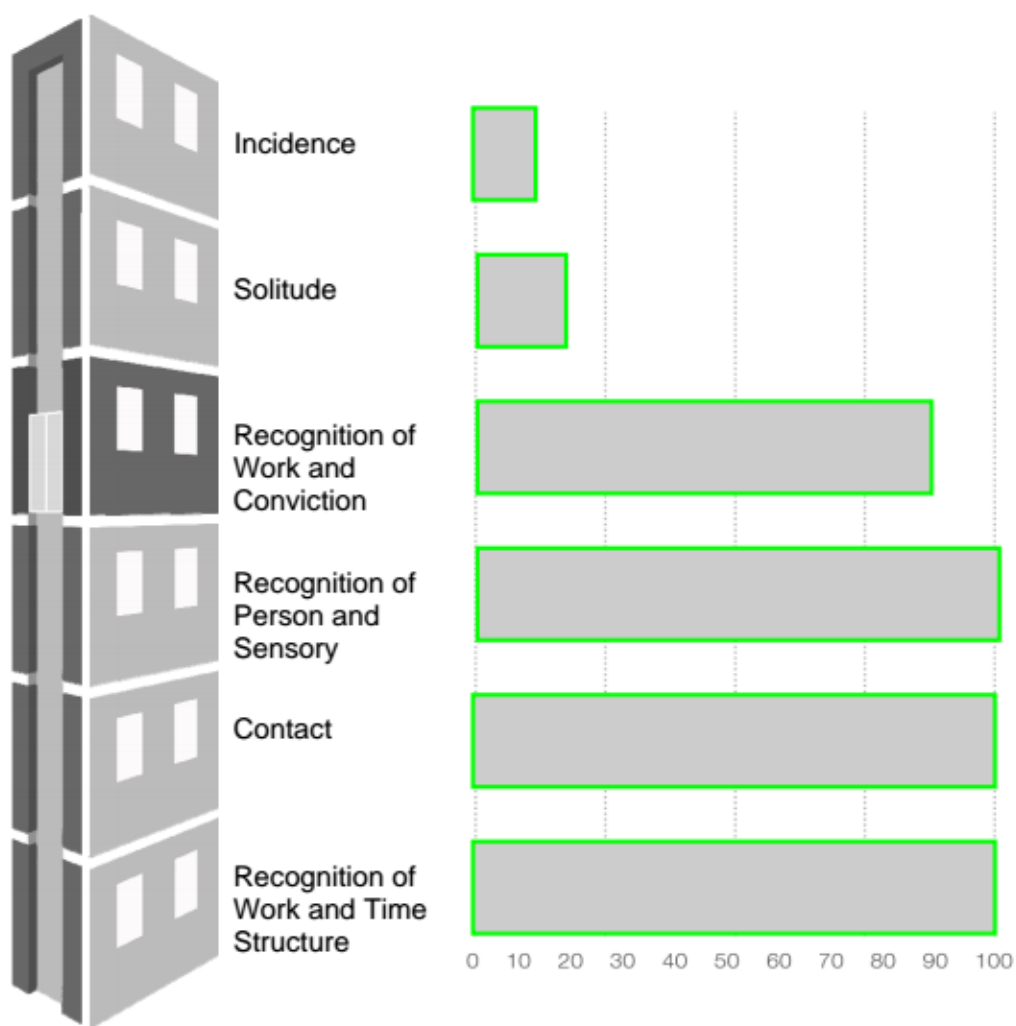
JOHN DOE's

Phase Distress Sequence

We are all OK. Sometimes we get into negative, non-productive and self-sabotaging behavior in order to cope and survive. However, this is only negative behavior not the real person inside. It is like wearing a mask. If our hands are dirty, we wash them -- we don't cut them off. If we get into "masked" behavior, we don't need to reject ourselves or someone else as Not OK.

Persister Phase

Doorway of Distress
1st°

"You have to be perfect to be worthwhile."
• Focuses on what is wrong instead of what is right.
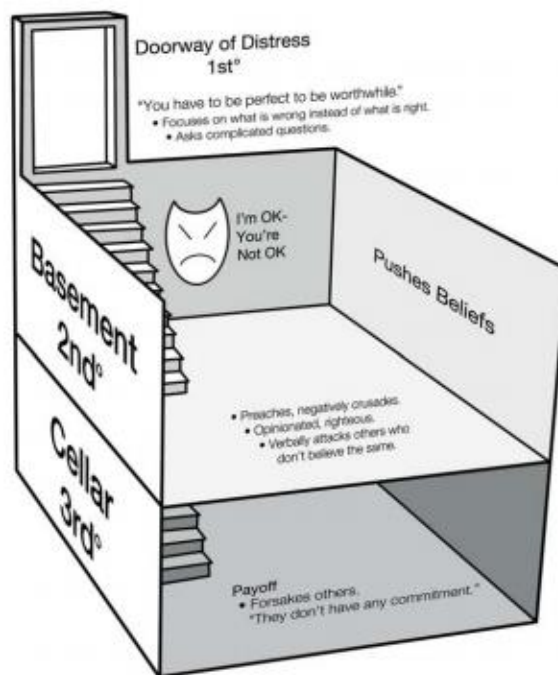• Asks complicated questions.

I'm OK-
You're
Not OK

Pushes Beliefs

Basement
2nd°

Cellar
3rd°

• Preaches, negatively crusades.
• Opinionated, righteous.
• Verbally attacks others who don't believe the same.

Payoff
• Forsakes others.
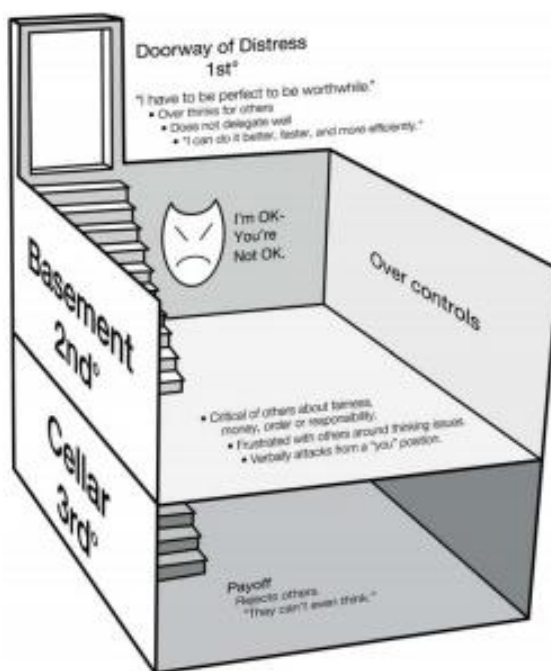"They don't have any commitment."

JOHN DOE's

Base Distress Sequence

When we are experiencing Base Distress we no longer demonstrate the negative behaviors of our Phase. Rather, we experience and show the negative behaviors of our Base.

Thinker Base

Doorway of Distress
1st°

"I have to be perfect to be worthwhile."
- Over thinks for others
- Does not delegate well
- "I can do it better, faster, and more efficiently."

I'm OK-
You're
Not OK.

Over controls

Basement
2nd°

Cellar
3rd°

- Critical of others about fairness, money, order or responsibility.
- Frustrated with others around thinking issues.
- Verbally attacks from a "you" position.

Payoff
Rejects others.
"They can't even think."

JOHN DOE's

Phase Action Plan

Your assurance of personal and professional satisfaction depends on knowing how to, and arranging to, get your Psychological Needs met positively.

First and foremost, it is important to satisfy your Persister Phase needs on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis.

Here are some suggestions regarding how you can satisfy your Persister Phase Psychological Needs in positive, constructive ways. By all means, feel free to elaborate or personalize these lists in whatever ways suit you.

Need: Recognition of Work and Conviction

It is important for you to lead a life consistent with your beliefs, values and opinions. Whenever possible, you like to exercise your influence, impacting the growth and direction of others. You need to be around others who share your high standards of integrity, dependability and trust. For example, you could meet your needs in the following ways:

PROFESSIONAL
- Each day prioritize what you believe will be the best investment of your time to ensure quality expenditure of effort.
- Reaffirm daily to yourself the value of your accomplishments even before you review your "to do"lists.
- Make agendas for your meetings.
- Reward yourself for dedicated service.
- Earn and display any awards that you've received for accomplishing something you believed was important.
- Display picture of yourself with people whom you respect.
- Review the mission statement of any organization over which you have influence to be sure that goals and objectives are consistent.
- Share your work with others and enjoy their positive feedback on the quality of your labors.
- Join a civic group.

- Make suggestions to appropriate persons regarding your ideas for the organization's improvement.
- Organize an office charitable contribution campaign, or get involved in an existing one.
- Speak to local school groups about professional issues or business ethics.
- Involve yourself with quality control projects.
- Write a business article about good business principles or ethics.
- Demonstrate your loyalty, committment and dedication to your organization in work and deed on a daily basis.

PERSONAL
- Share the personal importance of your successes and accomplishments with your family and friends.
- Let your family or friends know that you need admiration and respect.
- Create and display your favorite slogans, mottos, and creeds.
- Keep a journal of insights that you believe are important.
- Join or increase political or religious activities.
- Make a political or religious contribution.
- Teach and model your values and beliefs to [your] children.
- Contribute to a worthy cause with time or money.
- Involve yourself in community based activities.
- Write a letter to the editor about an important issue.
- Campaign on behalf of a candidate for election.
- Become a leader of an organization that has a mission consistent with your beliefs.

JOHN DOE's

Base Action Plan

Your assurance of personal and professional satisfaction depend on knowing how to, and arranging to, get your Psychological Needs met positively.

Also it is important to satisfy your Thinker Base needs on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis.

Here are some suggestions regarding how you can satisfy your Base Psychological Needs in positive, constructive ways. By all means, feel free to elaborate or personalize these lists in whatever ways suit you.

Need: Recognition of Work and Time Structure
You take pride in your ability to think and perform and you are willing to work hard to reach your goals. You prefer to set your own goals but can also work as a team player to accomplish something you believe in or accept as worthwhile. Achievement is important to you and you need not only to recognize your own work, but also to have others recognize your accomplishments. You additionally like to plan and schedule your activities and have your day proceed accordingly. You could arrange to get your needs met in the following ways:

PROFESSIONAL
- Take time each day to set priorities and focus on doing what's most important.
- Each day, recognize what you have accomplished, before you set goals for the next day.
- Make lists and cross items off as you complete them.
- Reward yourself for tasks that you've completed.
- Earn and display one or more certificates, plaques or awards for accomplishing something you wanted to do.
- Set short, medium, and long term goals and track your progress regularly.
- Share your ideas with others.
- Set priorities and follow them.
- Work from "to do" lists.
- Give yourself adequate time to be on time for appointments.

- Be careful not to take on more projects than you have time for.
- Take a time management course or read time management books.
- Be direct and honest about what you can and can't do. Dedication is admirable. Accomplishments with efficiency are more desirable.

PERSONAL

- Identify and firm up important personal rituals.
- Explain time structure needs to family or friends and ask for their assistance or cooperation.
- Schedule in some amount of "time to be cheerfully wasted" each day.
- Structure regular time to be spent with family or friends. Plan how you want to use this time.
- Plan your vacation.
- Wear a watch and keep clocks in all important areas--office, kitchen, car, etc.
- Set realistic "going to bed" and "getting up" times to allow for rest and relaxation.
- Tell your family about your successes and accomplishments.
- Keep a journal.
- Learn to play a sport that you can enjoy playing well.
- Paint, write, or engage in some other hobby or task where you can see immediate results.

BC: 99 PC: 99

Appendix B

Study Questions
Survey Questions

1. **How do Intermediate District 287 principals perceive the effectiveness of their communication style when leading school improvement leadership team meetings?**

   Audience: Principals

   - Describe your feelings about the effectiveness of your communication at today's School Improvement Leadership Team meeting.

   - What were your expected outcomes for today's meeting?

   - How confident are you in your ability to clearly communicate the outcomes for the meeting? Not at all, Somewhat, Above average, or Highly

   - In your opinion, how clear were staff in their understanding of what they need to accomplish as a result of today's meeting? Not at all, Somewhat, Above average, or Highly

   - What did you consider when deciding what you would communicate to staff at the meeting?

   - What indicators confirmed staff's understanding of your communication at today's meeting?

2. **How do Intermediate District 287 teachers perceive the effectiveness of their principals' communication style when the principal leads school improvement leadership team meetings?**

   Audience: Teachers

   - Describe your feelings about the principal's communication at today's School Improvement Leadership Team meeting.

   - In your opinion, what did the principal expect you to accomplish as a result of today's meeting?

   - What, if anything, are you still unclear about related to your School Improvement Plan after today's meeting?

   - How effective was your principal's communication at today's meeting? Not at all, Somewhat, Above average, or Highly

3. **To what degree do District 287 teachers with the same and different personality types as their principals' have a shared understanding with their principal of what is to be accomplished from a school improvement leadership team meeting?**

Audience: Teachers

- What is your understanding of what is to be accomplished from today's meeting?

- What indicators did you show to the principal that demonstrated your level of understanding of what is to be accomplished as a result of today's meeting?

- How confident are you in your level of understanding of what is to be accomplished as a result of today's meeting? Not at all, Somewhat, Above average, or Highly

4. **To what degree are District 287 teachers with the same and different personality types as their principals' motivated to accomplish school improvement tasks as a result of the communication style used by their principals to lead school improvement leadership team meetings?**

Audience: Teachers

- How motivated are you to accomplish the tasks you are responsible for that were identified at today's meeting? Not at all, Somewhat, Above average, or Highly

- What impact did the principal's communication have on your motivation to accomplish the tasks you were assigned to at the meeting? Not at all, Somewhat, Above average, or Highly

Appendix C

Dear Research Study Candidate,

You are invited to participate in a research study. Participation in this study is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time throughout the study. The following information provides more specific information about the study to help you make an informed decision.

The purpose of this study is to examine the self-perception of the effectiveness of District 287 principals' current communication style to lead school improvement efforts compared to their teachers' perceptions of the principals' effectiveness to lead school improvement efforts. This research is being conducted as part of a doctoral program in the area of Education Leadership through the University of New England.

Data collection will take place in the form of an online survey that will be administered to participants immediately following the December, January, and February School Improvement Leadership meetings and through the completion of the Personality Pattern Inventory (the instrument used for Process Communication Model® and Process Education Model® training). Your name and participation in the study will be kept confidential by the researcher. A code will be assigned to you for submission of the surveys, and you will not be asked to log in to an account in order to complete the surveys.

There are no foreseen risks involved in participating in this study. Potential benefits of participating will be the experience of participating in a qualitative study, the impact your participation will have on future support that will be provided to principals in the area of communication, and the opportunity for you to participate in the next Process Education Model training, if you have not participated previously.

Study findings will be presented to the researcher's Dissertation Committee in April 2016. The findings will be made available to you upon request. The researcher will also be available throughout the study to answer any questions you might have.

If you accept this invitation and consent to participate, will you please return a signed copy of this letter to the researcher at the address below no later than December 1, 2015?

Sincerely,

Jennifer Nelson

By signing below, I agree to participate in the aforementioned study.

_____   _____   _____

Participant's printed name   Participant's signature   Date

Appendix D

SUBJECT: Request to Conduct Research
RELATES TO POLICY SERIES: Curriculum & Instruction
SUPPORTS POLICY#:
DATE CABINET APPROVED: 12-3-14
ACTIVITY: Curriculum & Instruction

CI1100 Request to Conduct Research

Individuals conducting educational research studies may be granted access to study-related data on Intermediate District 287 students, staff, or programs if the following conditions are met:

1. The research is part of an approved course of study from a recognized and accredited institution of higher learning or research group.

2. The research has the potential to improve directly educational outcomes for students of Intermediate District 287 and is not tangentially related but requested for other reasons including convenience of access to the population. For example, smoking cessation studies would be considered not of direct educational benefit to students and would therefore not be allowed.

3. The request for access with respect to the study design is made in writing to the Executive Director of Planning and Improvement and/or the Executive Director of Special Services and Educational Programs. The request should include:
   a. A comprehensive outline of the study purpose, procedures, and methods;
   b. Assurances the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act will be followed in all aspects of data collection, reporting, disclosure and security;
   c. Explicit information about how the study has the potential to advance educational outcomes for students such as those served by Intermediate District 287;
   d. Documentation that the appropriate institutional review board has approved the study design as meeting protocols for protecting research participants as stipulated by the research institution; and
   e. All informed consent documents that would be used in the study.

4. Requests should be made with sufficient lead time in order to consider fully the implications of data collection and to cause minimal disruption to the educational program.

5. There should be no data collection started or any assumption made about the approval for the study until the requestor is notified in writing by the Executive Director of Planning and Improvement or the Executive Director of Special Services and Educational Programs.

6. The researcher will provide Intermediate District 287 with a summary report of the research findings upon completion of the study. Access to the summary report shall be made available by the researcher to research participants and parents/guardians upon request.