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Changing Mindsets: A Case Study of a Community of Practice between Charter and Traditional Public School Leaders in the School Leaders Network

Manuel Nicolas Ponce Jr.
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LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

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by

Manuel N. Ponce, Jr.

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This dissertation written by Manuel N. Ponce, Jr., under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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ABSTRACT

Changing Mindsets:

A Case Study of a Community of Practice between Charter and

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By

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The purpose of this study was to examine the essential elements of a community of practice intended to increase communication and collaboration between traditional public and charter school leaders. Members of the Los Angeles Cohort of the School Leaders Network participated in this study.

This case study triangulated observation, interview, and document review data to identify the factors that were most beneficial to this particular community of practice. Drawing on the research of communities of practice, constructivism, and leadership theory, these factors were articulated into five domains with the hope that, with further research, this framework could influence the creation of additional communities of practice between traditional public and charter school leaders.

This framework, including indicators and action steps to aid in creating a community of practice, identified five key factors: knowledge, relationships, authenticity, constructivism, and

leadership. The convergence of these five domains pointed to two key take-aways: Communities of practice must create a risk-free environment in which sharing can occur so that participants can use storytelling as a vehicle for the exchange of ideas. Essential in creating this environment is the influence of a skilled facilitator who can drive these conversations. Ultimately, in sharing stories and building community, these communities of practice are meant to further the cause of a socially just education for all students regardless of the type of schools they attend.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

The voucher movement of the early 1990s led to a compromise in educational reform: charter schools. Charter schools are public schools of choice, in which parents can enroll their students even if it's not the child's prescribed school based on residence (Estes, 2004; Izu, 1999). Charters became an education reform that gave parental choice through the existing public school system without the same constraints and bureaucracy as traditional public schools. These schools were able to experiment based on the needs of the students and to deliver a more personalized education while exchanging autonomy for greater accountability (Nathan, 1996; Weil, 2000). Although charter legislation had already passed in Minnesota, California passed its own piece of charter legislation, which approved an education reform initiative that allowed charter schools to open in the state in 1992. This legislation was in response to the recently defeated voucher initiative and was seen as an acceptable compromise for those looking for autonomy within schools (Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2000).

The initial framework for charter schools was the idea that a team of teachers would be appointed directly by the district board of education and would therefore be able to make decisions they believed would be most beneficial for their students without interference from bureaucratic entities such as the school board (Budde, 1996). The philosophy behind this model is that with the increased autonomy, charter schools would be a model of innovation in practice and therefore would yield higher student achievement (Finnigan, 2007). Charter schools are looked at to "carry an exhausted wave of education reform into the future—rejecting the

bureaucracy and standardization that they perceive as a frustration to other education reformers" (Lockwood, 2004, p. 23). The purpose of the entire historical progression of charter schools has been to return to the traditional schoolhouse mentality, in which the autonomy of deciding how funds are spent and how students are taught resides with the practitioners at the school site and not within the bureaucracy of a district (Lockwood, 2004).

The charter school movement, specifically in California, has been growing exponentially. In 2010, there were 809 charter schools in California. By the 2011–2012 school year, this number had grown to 982 charter schools serving approximately 412,000students (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools [NAPCS], 2011). In the Los Angeles Unified School District, in which this study takes place, charter schools educate 81,163 students or 11.4% of all public school students within the district (NAPCS, 2011). This growth in California, and across the nation, speaks to the notion that school reform and parent choice are gaining momentum. It can therefore be concluded that charter schools—as a movement and means of educational reform—will exist for the foreseeable future (Izu, 1999; Lockwood, 2004).

With any innovation or new initiative, some unwanted repercussions are inevitable. Concurrent with the growth of charter schools has been an intensification of animosity and mistrust between charter schools and their traditional public school counterparts (Kirst, 2007). Charter school opponents see charters as the privatization of public education (Ravitch, 2010) and look to minimize growth by capping the number of charter schools, giving less money per pupil, or charging an encroachment fee (Kirst, 2007). This perceived lack of respect between charter schools and their traditional public school counterparts has led to a lack of collaboration.

The importance of this study, and any subsequent research and investigation, depends on the current state of the charter school movement, public education reform, and the financial state of the educational system as a whole. For example, California has seen $18 billion cut from funding in the last three years (Brown, 2011). With the charter school movement growing in great numbers in the past decade, proponents of public education must understand the issues regarding the relationships among charters, their authorizers, and their traditional public school counterparts, in order to investigate the ways these two entities may work in concert.

Understanding the historical perspectives of the charter school movement is essential to this study. Subsequent chapters will trace the historical progression of charter schools from the first charter legislation to its present state. The political, economic, and cultural underpinnings of the current state of contention between charter and traditional public schools and their influence on the implications for future study will also be addressed.

To further illustrate this current climate and to investigate possible solutions, this study utilized a case study of a School Leaders Network in Los Angeles consisting of charter and traditional public school leaders engaged in a community of practice designed to share school-based knowledge and to improve their leadership capacities.

Setting the context of charter schools is important for the understanding of this study. Thus, a brief background of charters is provided. Charter schools are public schools of choice. *School of choice* can be defined as a school that parents can choose for their students that is not the public school designated by their residential boundaries. Just as parents would have a choice to select a private school for their child, a parent can choose a charter school as an alternative to a traditional public education. Charter schools collect public funds for each student, just as

traditional public schools do; however, charters have exchanged autonomy for increased accountability for their results. Charter schools are required to show that they can deliver on the promises enumerated in their charters (Estes, 2004; Izu, 1999; Kansas Department of Education, 2006; Rhim & Lange, 2007; Stillings, 2005). The greater good of the promise of charter schools is the premise that charter schools, as innovators and vehicles for education reform, would share best practices with all schools in order to push the agenda of school reform (Izu, 1999).

The origin of the term and idea of a "charter" is a 1974 conference paper titled "Education by Charter: Key to a New Model of a School District," which was presented by New England educator Ray Budde at a General Systems of Research meeting (Budde 1996; Cobb & Garn, 2001; Renzulli & Roscigno, 2005). This paper described a reform effort in which schools would be given greater control and would have more success if they were afforded the opportunity to set their own policies (Budde, 1996; Renzulli & Roscigno, 2005).

The historical progression of charter schools has been of education reform in a way that diverges from the cycle of previous reforms that have failed to fundamentally change the landscape of education. The intent of this movement was to give all people, regardless of zip code and socioeconomic status, an authentic opportunity to receive a quality education that would provide them the opportunity to break the cycle of poverty in their communities, whether economic, social, political, or cultural. In this respect, an innovative, socially just education for all has been the focus of charter schools. However, factions from both sides of the charter school movements—proponents and opponents alike—have fostered a competitive, politically adverse, and combative relationship, as opposed to a culture of support and sharing for the good of all students (Kirst, 2007; Lockwood, 2004).

Problem Statement

The literature holds a plethora of findings that support that collaboration around best practices has a positive impact upon student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Louis & Kruse, 1995; Newman & Wehlage, 1995). The creation of a collaborative culture, such as a professional learning community (PLC), allows sustained professional development, through which ideas and practices can reach the classroom and support students (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). This study focused on collaboration as a means of creating a paradigm shift through which an environment for such collaboration could be created between charter and traditional public school leaders.

The problem lies in the lack of understanding of the benefits of collaboration. Instead of a collaborative culture between charter schools and their traditional public school counterparts, the opposite has occurred. Charter schools and public schools have fostered a combative and negative relationship with political posturing and general mistrust (Kirst, 2007; Lockwood, 2004).

Additionally, when compared to myriad research in the field of traditional public education, extensive research within the domain of charter schools is lacking. This dearth of research reflects how the relatively short life of charter school legislation inhibits specific and comprehensive research on varied topics. Consequently, current research on charter education has its limitations. Whereas the research has clearly identified conditions that have caused the present state of contention among charters, their authorizing agencies, and their traditional public school counterparts, the scope of these studies tend to be very narrow. Authorizing agencies are public school entities, such as local school districts, which are legally responsible for granting a

charter petition and providing oversight of that charter school to ensure they fulfill their charter (Nathan, 1996).

This noted lack of literature poses a problem for charter schools and collaboration with traditional public schools, especially as the charter school movement continues to grow. Bell hooks (2003) highlighted the danger of this issue when she wrote, "When we only name the problem, when we state complaint without a constructive focus on resolution, we take away hope" (p. xiv). The goal of this research was therefore to construct a framework for remedying the situation by understanding the origins of the charter school movement and the subsequent issues that have given rise to negative and combative relationships between charter schools and their traditional public school counterparts.

Additionally, this study is predicated on the issue of education reform and the dire need for reform. Currently, there are six million students in California's public school system, with one in five children living in poverty and about half participating in the federal free and reduced-price meal program (EdSource, 2013).

In 2009–2010, the dropout rate for Hispanics and African Americans in the state of California was 21.9% and 29.2%, respectively. In a more focused region, such as the Los Angeles Unified School District, the dropout rate for Hispanics and African-Americans was reported as 26.1% and 32.6%, respectively (California Department of Education, 2010).

Trends from a variety of state and national tests have reported a consistent lower score for certain groups of students, namely Hispanics and African Americans, compared to other groups such as White and Asian students. EdSource (2013) summarized the issue as follows:

> On the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and California's own standards-based tests (CSTs), poor students, African Americans and Latinos, and English learners are over-represented among

> students scoring at the lowest levels and under-represented among the highest scoring. Other measures of student achievement—including dropout and graduation rates, completion of the a–g courses required for eligibility to the state's four-year universities, and college admissions—reveal similar achievement patterns between these groups of students and their peers. These results are important because they predict later success, including students' ability as adults to secure jobs that pay a living wage

The mere existence of an achievement gap from a social justice perspective became the catalyst for this study, which looks to provide a model for dealing with the issues of education in a different way. The opportunity to try something new in the hopes that, with implementation and further longitudinal research, a change in this trend in education can be reversed is the long-term objective.

Purpose of the Study

The goal of this study was to construct a framework for developing communities of practice between charter and traditional public school counterparts. This study promoted a paradigm shift from competition and combativeness to collaboration and respect. Elements for the development of such a framework were measured within a set of data points gathered through a case study design.

This study also attempted to identify the major political and economic issues that have influenced the current state of contention between charters and their authorizing districts—contention that consequently damages or prevents relationships with charter's neighboring traditional public schools (Kirst, 2007). To be proactive in solving this dilemma, this study also analyzed the structure in place within the School Leaders Network (SLN), a network of charter and traditional public school leaders that meet in Los Angeles as a community of practice to foster collaboration between charter schools and traditional public schools.

The detrimental consequences of the combative relations between authorizing districts and charters fall squarely on the students—the very population both parties vow to serve. With

charter schools and their traditional public school counterparts coexisting in communities and drawing on the same pool of students, collaboration is essential to promoting an equal education for all.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the need for greater communication and collaboration between charter schools and traditional public schools so that a change in mindset can occur; a change from distrust and blame, to one in which collaboration can flourish. Research has articulated the positive impact that collaborative teams such as professional learning communities have on school culture, teaching practice, and ultimately student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Kruse & Louis, 1997). This study focused on creating a model for that collaboration to occur. The Los Angles cohort of the School Leaders Network, a group of charter and traditional public school leaders, served as a case study of collaboration. As a result of this study, a conceptual framework was created to articulate essential elements in forming a community of practice between traditional public and charter school leaders.

This study provided the opportunity for a positive exchange of ideas between charter school and traditional public school leaders. Secondly, an underlying objective of this study was to identify the attributes a leader of such communities of practice must possess to develop a model of a community of practice that allows the opportunity to exchange ideas. Additionally, this study sought to help fill the void in the literature addressing the specific needs of charter and traditional public school leaders, schools, and districts and to encourage and support establishing communities of practice between the two entities.

The information gathered from the Los Angeles Network was synthesized to create a framework for communities of practice. Charter schools and traditional public schools would benefit from the creation of this framework, which addresses their specific context and needs. This framework will allow further discourse to occur around how all schools can move toward educating all students to the highest quality and achievement.

Most importantly, long-term benefits will be reaped by students who reside in a community that both of these entities serve. Future studies can use the present study as a foundation to discover how charter schools and public schools, working together to improve their practice, can promote achievement for all students regardless of school placement.

Conceptual Framework

In researching this problem, the researcher discerned the lack of one comprehensive theory that addresses the specific issues of creating communities of practice for traditional public school and charter school leaders. Consequently, a conceptual framework was needed to inform the study. This framework utilized three contributing theories and acted as the lens through which all data were collected and analyzed in order to answer the research questions. This led to the development of a set of clear domains and indicators for creating a model for communities of practice between these two specific groups of leaders. The ultimate goal of these communities of practice was to ensure equity in education through school choice, innovation, and working together toward a socially just educational system that provides all students access to the highest quality education possible.

The three theories used to construct the conceptual framework for this study were communities of practice theory—primarily posited by Etienne Wenger; constructivist theory,

with its roots in Vygotsky (1978); and leadership theory, specifically situational leadership, as proposed by John Adair (1973) and Bolden (2004).

The community of practice theory, authored by Wenger (1998), can be summarized as a process in which a group of people with a common interest collaborate over time, share ideas and practices, and develop solutions and innovations. This framework discusses the explicit requirements of a community of practice as well as the variations in the communities that do exist.

Central to the idea of a community of practice are the opportunities presented for participants to work together to create new knowledge. To understand this way of thinking, a second theory was investigated. First introduced by Vygotsky, the theory of constructivism posits that language and social interaction are the primary indicators of learning (Clemente, 2010). For this study, examining how knowledge is created with others in constructivist theory provided a necessary background to understanding the structure and success of communities of practice.

Finally, the development of leadership theory was of central importance. For the proposed framework to flourish with charter and public school partners, careful attention must be paid to the characteristics of a successful leader. In aligning the theories of communities of practice and constructivism with contemporary leadership theories, the researcher determined that the model of situational leadership posited by John Adair (1973) and Bolden (2004) fit best because it balances the needs of the task, the team, and the individual to harness growth for every aspect of the group.

The intersection among community of practice theory, constructivist theory, and leadership theory served as the theoretical framework for public and charter school collaboration. In highlighting the key components of each theory, the researcher proposed a framework that could guide the creation, implementation, and sustainability of a community of practice that was specifically tailored to fit the needs of traditional public and charter school leaders.

Although theories may be the foundation for this study's framework, the call for socially just education is the true heart of this work. The goal of a socially just education through equality in schools, access, and opportunities, drove this study, and ultimately resulted in a programmatic solution that systematically increased academic achievement results for all children, regardless of their school placement.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study centered on uncovering the crucial elements of communities of practice, informed by literature and case study research, between traditional public school and charter school leaders. These research questions were intended to construct a framework for fostering a collaborative culture that, as a long-term goal, would benefit all students equally. The following research questions were addressed:

1) What steps were taken, and what processes were put in place to create the community of practice?
2) What knowledge, skills, and dispositions must a facilitator possess in order to lead this model of a community of practice?
3) What are the elements deemed most important in creating and maintaining this model of a community of practice?

Research Design and Methodology

This study employed qualitative approaches, via a case study, to answer the research questions and to ultimately uncover the elements deemed most important in creating and maintaining a specific model of community of practice for a diverse group of school leaders. Baxter and Jack (2008) described the case study as an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using many data sources. Yin (2008) posited that a case study should be used when a "how" or "why" question is being asked through the research, when the behavior of participants cannot or will not be changed, and when the context in which a phenomenon occurred is important to the research.

This particular study's research questions focused solely on the "how" and "why" of the community of practice between charter schools and traditional public schools within the School Leaders Network. Additionally, because this study did not engage in the manipulation of participants or environments in which they operate, a case study was utilized. Furthermore, this study design was descriptive in nature in that it describes a particular phenomenon in the specific context in which it transpired (Yin, 2008).

Limitations

Although a great deal of effort and care was used in crafting the literature review, conceptual framework, research design, and critical analysis, limitations to this particular study must be noted. One major limitation of this study was the lack of extensive research on charter schools and their relationships to their traditional public school counterparts compared to the breadth of research in the field of education as a whole. In the same respect, however, a gap in the current research means that the conditions that have caused the present state of contention

between charters and their traditional public school counterparts has not been clearly identified. Research reported only that there were issues between the two parties without further investigation of those issues or proposing a framework to solve the problem.

A second limitation of the study was that an original interview protocol was constructed and used for the data collection portion of the study. An item analysis was conducted by experts in the field, and changes were made; however, there may be unintended flaws with the instrument.

Additionally, the reach of this study is limited in that it dealt with a small number of charter and traditional public schools in one district. The next limitation is closely associated with the previous limitation in that it deals with the fact that conditions between charter schools and their traditional public school counterparts can vary in direct correlation to their size and financial situation. Larger school districts may have specific issues—whether financially, politically, or philosophically—that the smaller districts do not.

Consequently, the study results are not generalizable to all charters and traditional public school counterparts, but rather, exhibited that a framework for collaboration and community of practice between charters and traditional public school leaders can, indeed, exist.

Delimitations

This case study focused on a community of practice between charter and traditional public school leaders. Interviews were conducted within that network. The objective was to describe the phenomenon occurring within the district to identify patterns that aligned with the tenets of communities of practice. Consequently, generalizations to other leader networks or learning community contexts may not be accurate.

Additionally, a choice was been made at the onset of this study to focus on the essential elements of community of practice with this specific group of charter and traditional public school leaders. By doing so, the focus of the study was specific to what could be learned from the interactions and understandings of this particular group with the hope that a framework could be constructed to aid in the creation of these communities of practice in the future. There are no claims of effectiveness in terms of student achievement, as this focus was outside the purview of this study and is, as such, an essential element of the recommendations for further study.

Definition of Terms

The following list of terms is included to support clarity and understanding of the various content-specific terms in charter and traditional public school education.

Authenticity: as it pertains to this study and Domain 3, authenticity is the commitment a participant/leader makes to ensure that what is being learned is brought back to the school to benefit his/her site.

Charter School: a public school that receives the same per-pupil funds as traditional public schools. Charter Schools are still accountable for achieving educational results. Waivers exempt charter schools from many of restrictions and bureaucratic rules by which traditional public schools must abide.

Community of Practice: a group of people with a common interest that utilizes collaboration over time to share ideas and practices to develop solutions and innovations.

Constructivism: within this study, constructivism pertains to the idea that to truly learn, people must construct knowledge together and be given opportunities to do so.

Knowledge: as it pertains to this study and to Domain 1, knowledge describes the discrete pieces of information and resources used for professional development within the School Leaders Network.

Leadership Theory (Situational Leadership): this theory of leadership describes a leader's ability to adapt to the needs of those he or she is leading and to adjust activities and learning experiences to fit that need.

Relationships: as it pertains to this study and to Domain 2, relationships are the connections that participants in a community of practice foster and the specific needs and importance of such relationships.

School Leaders Network (SLN): a group with cohorts around the country that strives to bring leaders together to engage in activities that will foster professional development and gain support from colleagues. The Los Angeles Cohort, which consists of a mix of charter and traditional public school leaders, was the focus of this case study.

Traditional Public Schools: a school run by a local district and must follow the rules and regulations of that district

Summary

Charter schools are an educational reform movement that has grown exponentially in the nearly 20 years since the first charter legislation was passed. Charter schools in California now educate 412,000 students (CCSA, 2012). As such, charter schools and their traditional public school counterparts have an opportunity to engage in purposeful collaborations to support one another in pursuit of social justice. Unfortunately, charter schools and their traditional public

school counterparts have tended to engage in mistrust, political posturing, and negative relationships (Kirst, 2007; Lockwood, 2004).

A paradigm shift must occur between the two entities, and purposeful collaboration between them must be constructed to foster the opportunity for students to benefit. This study identified and analyzed the underlying issues that caused this current state of noncollaboration. The researcher sought to understand the key elements needed to foster collaboration in the future and to synthesize communities of practice. Constructivist and leadership theories were applied to create a framework that supports collaboration and leads to a change in mindset for leadership counterparts in charter and traditional public schools.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of the following literature review is to summarize and assess some of the specific conditions present within the structure of the charter schools that have created a negative, even combative, working relationship between charter schools and their traditional public school counterparts, as well as between charter school operators and their respective authorizers. Additionally, this literature review traces the historical progression of charter schools from the first charter legislation to its present state. The political, financial, and cultural underpinnings of the current state of contention between charter and traditional public schools are also addressed.

This literature review also postulates a conceptual framework. This conceptual framework aids in articulating the research design and methodology that have been used to conduct the study.

To gain a basic understanding of the historical progression of the charter school movement and the subsequent problems, this review of the literature addresses the following question:

> What are the specific conditions that have influenced the current state of animosity and mistrust between charter schools and charter school authorizers as evidenced by political posturing, lobbying for capping of charters, and a mistrust of charters by the general public? (Kirst, 2007; Lockwood, 2004)

The importance of this question and the subsequent investigation and research was based on the current state of the charter school reform movement, public education reform, and the financial state of the educational system as a whole. Because of the charter school movement growth in the past decade, proponents of public education must understand the issues around the

relationships between charters and traditional public schools and investigate the ways these two entities may work in concert to benefit one another, in the altruistic sense of raising student achievement, but also in the realistic sense of the improving the bottom line, politically or financially.

History of Charter Schools

Largely a response to the voucher movement of the early 1990s, charter schools became an alternative form of innovation and education that would offer parental choice through the existing public school system without the same constraints and bureaucracy as traditional public schools. In turn, these schools would be able to innovate based on the needs of the students and deliver a more personalized education while exchanging autonomy for accountability (Nathan, 1996; Weil, 2000).

Charter schools are public schools of choice, meaning that parents can choose to enroll their child in the school even if it is not their geographically prescribed school. These schools, which are maintained with public funds, must demonstrate that their student achievement rates meet those stated in their school's charter (Estes, 2004; Izu, 1999; Kansas Department of Education, 2006; Rhim & Lange, 2007; Stillings, 2005). The promise of charter schools lies in the idea that charter schools, as innovators and incubators of new practices, will share best practices with all to support school reform (Izu, 1999).

The historical progression of charter schools, as a component of school reform, is a contemporary form of the historical pattern by which schools react to economic changes. The progression is similar to education reforms that occurred as the country moved from an agrarian society to an industrial one, in which the workforce needed standardized education (Lockwood,

2004). Consequently, the solution was to implement a standardized educational system and measures of quality. Charter schools, largely, are looked at to "carry an exhausted wave of education reform into the future—rejecting the bureaucracy and standardization that they perceive as a frustration to other education reformers" (Lockwood, 2004, p. 23). The entire historical progression of charter schools has been to return to the schoolhouse mentality, in which the autonomy of deciding how funds are spent and students are taught resides with the practitioners at the school site and not within the bureaucracy of the district (Lockwood, 2004).

In 1974, a conference paper titled "Education by Charter: Key to a New Model of a School District" was presented by New England educator Ray Budde at a General Systems of Research meeting addressing reform for public schools (Budde 1996; Cobb & Garn, 2001; Renzulli & Roscigno, 2005). Budde used the term *charter schools* for the first time and described a reform effort in which schools would be given greater control and have more success when afforded the opportunity to set their own policy (Budde, 1996; Renzulli & Roscigno, 2005). After a lackluster response to his initial ideas, Budde set aside the idea until 1998, when he published his book *Education by Charter: Restructuring School Districts*. This book presented his thoughts on allowing a team of teachers appointed directly by the governing board to make decisions it believed most beneficial for the students without obstruction from bureaucratic entities such as the school board (Zavislak, 2002). The idea behind this philosophy is that, with the increased autonomy, day-to-day decisions can be made without interference from a district's policies, and charter schools will become models of innovation (Finnigan, 2007).

Charter schools began when Minnesota Governor Arne Carlson and the Minnesota legislation signed the nation's first charter school legislation into law (Wong & Langevin, 2007). Over the next 15 years, charter school legislation would take place in 39 states (Renzulli & Roscigno, 2005; Wong & Langevin, 2007).

Charter schools have grown steadily in the almost 20 years since the first charter school legislation was passed in Minnesota (Osborne, 1999) and the opening of the first charter school in 1992 in St. Paul, Minnesota (Kansas Department of Education, 2006; Osborne, 1999; Renzulli & Roscigno, 2005; Wong & Langevin 2007). The charter schools movement was seen as a vehicle for school reform and has become more and more mainstream and nationwide as time has passed (Izu, 1999; Nathan, 1996). In California, the number of charter schools has grown to 982 in 2011–2012, with 412,000 students enrolled (CCSA, 2012).

In 1992, California was the second state to enact charter legislation. At the time of its passing, the bill SB 1448, sponsored by Democratic senator Gary Hart, responded to the recently defeated voucher initiative and was seen as an acceptable alternative for those looking for autonomy within schools and for school choice (Finn et al., 2000).

Because there is a market for such school reforms, the implication is that charter schools, as a movement and means of educational reform, will exist for the foreseeable future (Izu, 1999; Lockwood, 2004). In the Los Angeles Unified School District, which educates approximately 12% of all students from K–12 in California, charter schools are now part of the mainstream and have even become a choice for schools that are under program improvement and in need of reform (Izu, 1999).

Charter School Authorizing

In an attempt to define the relationship between charter schools and authorizers, the literature has suggested that it is little more than a contractual agreement between two entities in which parameters are set for accountability for both parties (Palmer & Gau, 2005). Charter school operators must be financially sound and produce student achievement results (Izu, 1999; Kansas Department of Education, 2006; Palmer & Gau, 2005). The consensus is that a charter school can only be as effective as the effectiveness of the charter authorizer (Gau, 2006; Palmer & Gau, 2005).

Charter schools operate under an authorizing agency that, in recent years, has begun to vary. They include such authorizing bodies such as local education agencies (LEAs) (school districts), state education agencies (SEAs)—such as the local county board or state board of education—institutions of higher education, specially appointed charter boards, and nonprofit organizations (Izu, 1999; Rhim & Lange, 2007).

Within the state of California, a large number of charter schools are authorized by local districts that must have or develop the capacity to meet state and federal requirements for accountability, while holding charter schools accountable to the charter law (Henderson, 2003). These measures of accountability exist as the "single greatest challenge for the U.S. charter schools movement" (Ladd, 2002, p. 26). Selected literature suggested that charter schools are held to two types of accountability measures: legal accountability and market performance (Adams & Krist, 1999). Consequently, it is apparent that authorizers must strike a balance between accountability and the autonomy of charter schools (Herdman, Smith, & Skinner, 2002).

Charter schools also enjoy increased autonomy in everyday decision-making at the school-site level, including the freedom to make fiscal and curricular decisions, in exchange for increased accountability for student achievement (Finnigan, 2007; Hubbard & Kulkarni, 2009; Izu, 1999; Kansas Department of Education, 2006).

Lockwood (2004) discussed how charter schools, and the rhetoric around charter schools, have become a symbol of reform and a choice for parents who want something more for their children. Lockwood (2004) contended that the positive perspective that charters are the answer to the failing school systems could influence entities charged with creating legislation and educational reform.

Part and parcel of the charter school authorizing schema is the right of the charter authorizer to close down schools that are not meeting standards of performance as designated by the state board of education or as defined by the school's charter (Stillings, 2005). According to Stillings (2005), charter school proponents and founders desired to take the bureaucracy out of educating of children by being accountable to their authorizers, and therefore being accountable by the state itself. However, the issue today is that charters are becoming more and more regulated and, as a result, are becoming more like the status quo instead of being the reformers they were intended to be (Stillings, 2005).

A report by the United States Department of Education (2007) concluded that the growth of the charter school movement has placed a stronger focus on the effectiveness of the charter school authorizer and its practices as a direct correlation to the success of the charter schools it authorizes. Because it plays a large role in the success of the movement itself, the authorizer clearly cannot be a "hands off" entity.

Political posturing and pressure has increased in the charter school movement in the last decade (Kirst, 2007; Lockwood, 2004). Opponents of the charter movement have mobilized and lobbied states to "cap the number of charter schools, provide less money per pupil, underfund state categorical aid, and restrict the types of authorizers" (Kirst, 2007, p. 189).

In the case of closing down a charter school, it is very easy for a small community, which has chosen the school for its students, to organize, mobilize, and bring pressure on the school board to renew a charter that may not be performing up to par (Hess, 2004; Kirst, 2007). Furthermore, it is very apparent that support for charter schools by local political heavyweights can make it extremely difficult to close an underperforming charter school (Gerwitz, 2004). Allowing other entities to authorize charters, such as the state board of education, universities, and other state bodies, is one way to combat the use of local politics when it comes to charters (Vergari, 2002). However, this political give and take can provoke conflict on the part of school board members and noncharter public schools that may see this pressure in a negative light and without regulation or consequences for failing to meet their charter.

Synthesizing current research led to the identification of five major conditions, or factors, that have influenced the current combative relationship between some charter schools and their authorizers; they are: autonomy and accountability, ambiguous laws, financial competition, special education students and charter school enrollment, and lack of communication and understanding.

These wide-ranging conditions fostered within the charter movement have contributed to a combative relationship between some charter schools and their authorizers, a phenomenon

described by Izu (1999) and further explicated by Lockwood (2004) during discussion of the distrust that noncharter public schools have for charter schools.

The following provides a summation of each of the identified conditions, which will be discussed in further detail. Autonomy and accountability deals with the delicate balance that charter schools and authorizers must maintain because, in most instances, charter authorizers are also charged with overseeing the charter, a responsibility that may involve competition for political power as well as for the financial benefits of student ADA (Izu, 1999; Williams, 2007). Ambiguous laws concerning authorizing, oversight, money allocation, and special education funding and regulations have also been a point of contention due to lack of clarity and specificity in the laws (Izu, 1999; Rhim & Lange, 2007). Consequently, interpretation based in biases is prevalent (Izu, 1999; Lockwood, 2004). Charter schools also may be in financial competition with the authorizer for average daily attendance funding, time and allocation of resources within the authorizing district, and other public and private support, including political support (Izu, 1999; Williams, 2007; Wong & Langevin, 2007).

Additionally, contention surrounds charter schools and their enrollment practices concerning students with disabilities. The perception, based in facts, misunderstandings, and half-truths, has been that charter schools do not support or serve an entire community of students that need specialized attention (Arsen & Ray, 2004; Estes, 2004; Rhim & Lange, 2007).

Lack of communication leads to misunderstanding between the two entities also fuels contention. A distrust of charter schools begins and ends with rumors, slander, lawsuits, and a lack of unbiased liaisons working on behalf of both sides to create open lines of communication and share best practices (Izu, 1999; Lockwood, 2004; Williams, 2007).

Charter School Autonomy and Accountability

Autonomy for charter schools is not the end-all factor for student achievement. Charter school autonomy is only as beneficial and effective as it is innovative in creating and implementing practices not previously allowed or attempted (Finnigan, 2007). Charter schools enjoy autonomy in two ways: more independence from formal regulations and standards set by districts or states and increased opportunity to make decisions in financial and curricular matters (Finnigan, 2007; Hubbard & Kulkarni, 2009; Kansas Department of Education, 2006).

Charter school laws, written in very ambiguous terms, do allow for more autonomy for charter schools; however, greater autonomy is not always realized (Finnigan, 2007). An issue of contention is the increased oversight of local districts that hold their charter schools to high expectations and place restrictions on the autonomy that schools can exercise (Finnigan, 2007; Izu, 1999). Additionally, teacher autonomy is not being realized due to centralized decision-making by charter school administration that is focused on results such as API scores stemming from measures of accountability and success prescribed by charter school regulations (Finnigan, 2007).

A major tenet of the charter school movement is, if a charter school is not living up to the student achievement promises, financial performance, and facility regulations made in their charter, the authorizer has the authority to revoke or not renew the charter (Izu, 1999; Palmer & Gau, 2005). Most charter schools that are closed are done so for financial, facilities, or mismanagement reasons, as opposed to low academic performance (Hess, 2004). This inconsistency adds to the ambiguity and perception that charter schools are, in actuality, not held to higher accountability. This perception, in turn, creates controversy and debate among various entities in education.

Accountability for charter schools is the responsibility of more than just the authorizing entity. As schools of choice, charter schools have greater accountability to important stakeholders, such as parents and communities that can assist charters in shielding their school and their movement for reform from the regulatory reach of the government (Stillings, 2005). This isolation can create a contentious relationship with public schools that operate in a more restricted environment.

Ambiguous Laws

An additional point of contention between charter schools and their authorizers has been ambiguous and unclear laws and regulations passed by legislators, school boards, and other authorizing agencies. Charter schools are, in theory, allowed greater autonomy in their decisions and daily operations; however, due to ambiguity within charter school legislation, greater autonomy is not always achieved (Finnigan, 2007). This particular ambiguity sets up authorizers and charter schools for debate as to the letter of the law and its implications on charter school autonomy (Izu, 1999).

Ambiguity also leads to different answers to charter school questions by different entities with their own interpretations of the law (Izu, 1999). The lack of clear expectations for charter schools and clear criteria for authorizing and renewal has become the focus of debate and disagreement between charter schools and their authorizers, and has even spilled into the state and national realm (Izu, 1999).

Special education laws are also a tense issue with respect to charter schools developing special education programs. State charter laws that do not specify roles and responsibilities related to special education in charter schools create the potential for negative discourse and

competing perspectives (Rhim & Lange, 2007). There is growing concern that charter schools are not servicing all students—only those not in need of special services or supports (Rhim & Lange, 2007).

Financial Competition

When the entity charged with passing along funding, allocating facilities, and other financial support does not agree with the charter school movement or disagrees with the charter school's existence, the result may be a strenuous relationship in which many issues and contentious debates escalate to the detriment of all involved (Williams, 2007). Financial concerns are a large part of the relationship between state and local governments and local districts (Rhim & Lange, 2007) and, consequently, charter schools and their authorizers.

Time and resources are an additional strain on the charter school and charter authorizer relationships. Districts must contend with charter school dealings and those of their own district schools. The time and resources utilized for charter school issues can lead to negative perceptions of charter schools by noncharter school entities (Izu, 1999). Large districts, such as LAUSD, have established entire divisions to manage the operations and oversight of charter schools (LAUSD, 2010).

The use of facilities on district school campuses and providing charters with district-owned land and buildings is another point of dispute for charter schools and authorizers. These concerns regard the financial well being of a district forced to give land or facilities, especially in California, which passed Proposition 39, mandating districts to provide adequate facilities to charter schools (Williams, 2007). Some districts have attempted to thwart the charter school movement by seizing property by eminent domain before a charter school could be built upon it

or by using small loopholes in local laws to refuse to allocate funds to charters, thus causing the charter schools to close (Williams, 2007).

Special Education and Charter Schools

Questions surrounding the practices of charter schools with respect to special education have added to the taxing relationship between charters and authorizers as well as to public opinion. The question has been whether charter schools are educating their share of special education students and whether their enrollment, or lack thereof, of students with disabilities is tied to financial matters (Arsen & Ray, 2004).

Although they enjoy greater autonomy from regulations, because charter schools are public school entities, they are subject to all mandates where students with disabilities are concerned, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Americans with Disability Act (Estes, 2004). However, there is concern that charter schools may discriminate against students with disabilities because they may be expensive and more difficult to teach (Estes, 2004). This concern has resulted in misconceptions of charter schools as unwilling to educate special education students and has created a stereotype within the communities they serve.

The ambiguity of laws with regard to special education (Rhim & Lange, 2007) has created a debate between charters and their authorizers over special education funding—a debate that has become increasingly negative. Notably, however, some researchers see many similarities between proponents of special education and proponents of charter schools. Rhim and Lange (2007) wrote, “Special education is not the antithesis of charter schools. Rather, at their core, special education and charter schools are simply different approaches to providing students with

educational opportunities that ideally match their unique educational requirements" (p. 51). Finding the common ground for both parties through reforms, such as initiating greater transparency for all charter schools and their enrollment processes, may allow both groups to foster more positive working relationships.

Lack of Communication and Understanding

Fundamental to any positive relationship, be it personal or business related, is an open line of communication and understanding between the two subjects. One could argue that the charter school movement has experienced inadequate communication between proponents and opponents, which has led to conflict being the focus, as opposed to student achievement. Williams (2007) found instances where disinformation and slander had become prevalent within the charter school movement. Williams (2007) also found examples of lawsuits, less-than-accurate research, and special interest groups' contributions becoming tools in the political struggle between charter schools and their authorizing agencies.

Some have suggested that having a liaison between district and charter schools would remedy this particular issue by clearing up communication and ensuring the flow of information in a nonbiased way (Izu, 1999). Many districts have begun this process and created intermediaries. For example, California's Los Angeles Unified School District employs coordinators that act as liaisons and supporters for charter schools through the process of charter approval, compliance, and renewal (LAUSD, 2010; Williams, 2007).

Additionally, intermediaries such as the California Charter School Association (CCSA) have been formed to assist the charter school movement in its growth and sustainability. According to the CCSA website, its main function is to "[Advance] the charter school movement

through state and local advocacy, leadership on quality and extensive resources" (CCSA, 2009). Illustrating the kind of relationship that charter schools have experienced with their authorizers and others, Lockwood (2004) stated, "The educational establishment has both a profound dislike and a deep distrust of charter schools" (p. 1). Although providing a quality education for all students is a tenet of all educational institutions, an underlying distrust has arisen between the two entities engaged in the same mission (Lockwood, 2004).

A review of the literature indicated that a main cause of these combative relationships has been the misconceptions and preconceptions of what each entity brings to the relationship. There is a question surrounding equity when dealing with district staff and staff of charter schools (Izu, 1999). Some opponents of charter schools believe that all schools should abide by the same regulations, of which charter schools enjoy increased autonomy and flexibility (Izu, 1999). Izu (1999) also identified two issues at the heart of the charter school controversy: the need to balance the accountability and autonomy issue within the context of a system that is highly regulated *and* the ability to create and maintain relationships between charters and the larger, more complex bureaucracies that serve as their authorizers.

Contributing Theories

A theoretical framework posed for this study must act as a lever for a change in mindset and a bridge to relieve the lack of communication and collaboration between charters and traditional public schools. The theoretical framework for this particular research addresses two constructs specific to the problem posed. The framework informs the creation of a new model of partnership and a collaborative environment in which charter schools and their traditional public school counterparts work together. Additionally, it enlightened the researcher and built the

capacity to create a programmatic solution to the current state of charter schools and traditional public school relationships. These collaborative environments should be constructed in ways that go beyond professional learning communities.

Due to the complex nature of identifying a single theoretical framework to inform the study and to create a model of collaboration between these two distinct groups, constructing a conceptual framework using three distinct theories was necessary. The first of these theories is communities of practice based on the work of Etienne Wenger. The second is constructivist theory, and the third is leadership theory, specifically situational leadership, as studied by John Adair (1973) and Bolden (2004). Collectively, these three separate frameworks inform the critical aspects necessary for a community of practice between traditional public school and charter school leaders.

First, the structure of the framework is grounded in community of practice theory posited by Etienne Wenger (1998). Because communities of practice build knowledge as a group, an understanding of constructivist theory must be included. Finally, because the facilitator of the group plays a major role in a community of practice, an understanding of leadership theory and traits is needed (Snyder, Wenger, & de Sousa Briggs, 2010).

Communities of Practice

This study addressed these constructs by utilizing the communities of practice framework posited by Etienne Wenger (1998). This framework can be summarized as a process in which a group of people with a common interest utilizes collaboration over time to share ideas and practices that develop solutions and innovations (Wenger, 1998).

Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) further identified communities of practice as groups of people that share concerns, sets of problems, and clear passion about a specific topic. Communities of practice interact consistently to increase their knowledge and expertise, and they "exist to promote learning via a communication among their members" (Johnson, 2001, p. 48). Furthermore, a key component and driving principle of communities of practice lies in the idea that the knowledge of the community is greater than the knowledge of the individual (Gherardi & Nicolini, 2000).

Notably, Wenger (2004) presented significant research on the additional components necessary for a successful community of practice. First and foremost, members of a community of practice must concur on a domain, which is an agreed-upon area of knowledge that needs to be explored and developed (Wenger, 2004). The domain describes the common knowledge that the members have as a whole (Douglas, 2010). The domain of knowledge represents the "common ground" that members share and describes and defines sets of problems and values and "guides their learning by defining the boundaries that decide what is worth sharing" (Douglas, 2010, p. 21). This domain of knowledge is "the minimal competence that differentiates members from non-members" (Li et al., 2009, p. 6).

Secondly, a community of practice is defined by the people in the group and the relationships they form within the group (Wenger, 1998). Wenger also went one step further to state that people must also implicitly, if not explicitly, state the boundaries that exist within the group and exterior to the group. In his studies, Wenger contended that defining these boundaries helps further identify and refine the domain of the group. Finally, Wenger contended that a community of practice is not just bound by the domain, the people, and the group, but also by the

work they create, which is defined as "practice." This concept, which all studies on communities of practices agree upon, states that, for a community to flourish, participants must be engaged in real work in authentic settings.

Wenger also contended that for these participants to actively engage, there must be a sense of "legitimate peripheral participation," which Lave and Wenger (1991) defined as "communities [which] introduced and assimilated novices, developed their expertise and hence reproduced and perpetuated themselves, while at the same time evolving" (p. 107). For participants to really feel engaged in the community of practice, they must have a sense that they are moving from the periphery of the group toward the center of the group's knowledge as their understanding of the work of the group increases. Only when participants increase their ability to create and understand knowledge can a community of practice flourish. As Johnson (2001) stated, "It is not the knowledge itself that is so valuable, rather it is the ability of an organization's members to generate knowledge and innovate using that knowledge" (p. 49).

A careful distinction must be made, however, between knowledge sharing and knowledge production. As Klein, Connell, and Meyer (2005) wrote, "Knowledge is an object, privately owned by the organization in which it is resides; knowledge embedded in people, privately owned by the people; and knowledge embedded in community, owned by the community" (p. 113). If Klein et al.'s (2005) assertion that knowledge is an object owned by a group of people is correct, the goal of a community of practice cannot be to share knowledge, but rather to produce new knowledge that can be owned by all members of the community equally.

Johnson (2001) contended that two more elements are essential to defining a community of practice. In referencing a study done by Edmundson in 1999, Johnson stated that establishing

a climate of safety and trust is necessary to promoting the expected outcomes of a community of practice. Trust and safety are necessary to properly allow participants to interpret the intentions of other group members. By assuming positive intentions, participants will be more likely to take risks, as they can immediately take corrective action on all shared knowledge. This climate of growth fosters continual change and experimentation for the entire community.

If all of these criteria are met in defining a community of practice, the members will reap many tangible rewards. Warhurst (2006) described these outcomes in four categories: belonging, experience, doing, and becoming. First and foremost, Warhurst contended that being a member of a successful community of practice creates a sense of belonging and protects against professional isolation. By simply being connected to a small group or cohort engaged purposefully in the same work, participants are able to find more meaning within their profession. Secondly, communities of practice foster growth by providing meaningful experiences. As Warhurst stated, participants create a shared language that pushes their thinking and generates a higher level of pedagogic meaning.

A third tenet of Warhurst's outcomes is derived directly from Lave and Wenger (1991). As already defined, the idea of legitimate peripheral participation is that participants engage in authentic and legitimate practice to feel that they are increasing their knowledge. Warhurst took this idea one step further by asserting that legitimate peripheral participation leads to fulfillment by helping participants feel accepted by established colleagues and by propelling their growth toward the center of knowledge in the group (p. 116). Finally, Warhurst asserted, "Perhaps the single most important contribution that membership of the communities (of practice) made to new lecturers' practice was the formation of an academic teacher identity" (p. 119). Therefore,

the ultimate goal of a community of practice is to propel participants to form a new identity, one that includes the new knowledge it has created and a new sense of belonging in the community.

Types of communities of practice. Even within the framework created above, different types of communities of practice can still exist. Klein et al. (2005) asserted that these variations result from the discrepancies between the people who have the knowledge within a community of practice and those who gain the knowledge, as well as the continuum on which this knowledge can exist. Using this differentiation, Klein et al. (2005) identified four types of groups that are characterized by the structure (stratified versus egalitarian) and the attitude (sharing versus nurturing) of its members. In stratified-sharing communities of practice, knowledge flows down. The overarching mentality is that the purpose of the community is to share knowledge from a few people in power, down to the newer ranks at the bottom.

Contrasting this style is egalitarian-sharing, whereby knowledge is openly shared up and down among new and older members. Further along the spectrum is the stratified-nurturing community. In this community, knowledge may be shared and grown by numerous people, but the intention of the process is to complete a predetermined order of steps to help all members grow from novice to master. This scenario can be likened to completing the gradual growth from teacher, to a site coordinator, to an assistant principal position before finally assuming the principalship of a school. At the opposite end of the spectrum are egalitarian-nurturing communities. In these groups, knowledge is meant to be created by and grown in all. However, when no structure is set up to support this knowledge, a feeling of anarchy is created (Klein et al., 2005).

Although distinct strengths and challenges can be seen in all four types of communities, Klein et al. (2005) argued that the most effective type of community must be determined by both the members of the group and the purpose of the group. One additional consideration the authors highlighted is that timing may play a role in the type of group that is established: "Knowledge within stratified communities tends to evolve slowly, in effect braked by the influence of the community elders; knowledge in egalitarian communities evolves more rapidly" (p. 113). Therefore, the leadership of a community of practice must be determined alongside the type of community one wishes to establish.

Role of leadership in communities of practice. Leadership of communities of practice plays a crucial role in its success (Snyder et al., 2010). Leadership structure must be fostered for a community of practice to "guide, support, and renew the community initiative over time" (p. 8). Leadership within communities of practice is charged with fostering participation and fidelity in the process. Additionally, leaders must help bridge the gap between the traditional isolation of practice, motivation, and support for community, and a lack of measurability (Snyder et al., 2010).

In considering the membership of a community of practice, it is imperative to begin by cultivating the leadership. Johnson (2001) likens communities of practice to constructivism, in that communities of practice grow organically through inquiry, and use support from facilitators and coaches to allow each member to develop at their own pace. Referencing a study by Palloff and Pratt (1999), Johnson (2001) stated that the leader of a community of practice serves as a gentle guide who fulfills three main roles: to set goals and criteria for meetings goals, to evaluate

if goals have been met, and to provide opportunities within the group for peer evaluation and self-evaluation.

Having constructivist leaders in communities of practice supports the notion that the main role of a community of practice is to further the growth and reflection of every member of a group. Therefore, the main role of a leader or coach must simply be to facilitate conversations and learning experiences that allow each member to push him- or herself to the next level of understanding. If leaders are successful in facilitating these conversations, more peer interactions will occur in the group (Johnson, 2001).

Implications for creating and maintaining a community of practice. Additional consideration must be given to the ideas of creation versus evolution of communities of practice. Johnson (2001) pointed to Wenger (1998) in stating that all communities of practice are fluid structures; they are created and dissolved at the will of the members in order to share a distinct purpose. Therefore, the intention to share knowledge must exist before creating the structure of a community of practice.

Once the intent has been established, Wenger (2004) articulated, several distinct steps must occur in creating a community of practice. First, and most importantly, the domain, or agreed-upon topic, has to be set. Secondly, a community has to be cultivated. Wenger (2004) argued that ideal membership comes from a cross-section of formalized groups or departments. As Warhurst (2006) also found, colleagues gathered from several different disciplines in a cohort model were well situated for a community of practice because their coming together required that a new community be created. Once this community has been created, and practitioners from several arenas have been engaged, participants must translate knowledge into refined practices.

It is then the goal of the community to think strategically to create support structures both internally and externally so that productivity continues.

Johnson, in his case studies of communities of practice in electronic settings, explained that, "Community of practice is what emerges from the designed community when there is balance between creating structure and allowing community to form on its own" (2001, p. 53). Johnson went on to state, "Therefore, the best one can do is to set up a design and hope the emerging community of practice can achieve its goals of learning and growth within and around it" (2001, p. 53).

Facilitating learning through discussion and building relationships defines community and the sharing of knowledge and practice (Li et al., 2009, p.6). The participatory nature of the process of learning through practice and activities dictates and guides what each member in the community of practice will ultimately learn (Wenger et al., 2002).

The goal of communities of practice does not reside in the product or performance goal. Instead, these communities of collaboration create an avenue for the exchange of knowledge and for increased understanding between one participant and another (Wenger, 1998). Bielaczyc and Collins (1999) posited that discussion is the necessary component for the exchange and increase in knowledge. Thus, the "main function of a community of practice is to help establish discussion" (Johnson, 2001, p. 49). This discussion between charter schools and traditional public schools will promote the exchange of knowledge and best practices to influence practice in schools and to benefit students within the classroom.

Constructivist Theory

Constructivism was conceived by Vygotsky, who stated that language and social interaction are the primary indicators of learning (Clemente, 2010). Central to Vygotsky's theory are two ideas that define the scope of individual growth. First, when crafting learning activities, one must always consider an individual's zone of proximal development (ZPD). The zone of proximal development theory posits that a student's learning is ideal when it is just outside of his realm of current knowledge so he can grow in close proximity to what he already knows (Galloway, 2001). Critical to the ZPD is the availability of a more knowledgeable other (MKO). This peer or teacher is always slightly ahead in the learning process and serves as a guide as the student navigates the learning process (Galloway, 2001). Galloway (2001) further explained that constructivism requires a social setting in order to grow and should be thought of as a method of constructing rather than of acquiring knowledge. As Fosnot (2005a, 2005b) stated, participants create meaning by establishing relationships in which they reflect upon and explain their actions. In summary, Vygotsky's theory of constructivism is a tool for learning that allows learners to work toward an understanding of new concepts as a community.

This theory of constructivism can be contrasted to constructionism—an idea first conceived by Papert in 1993. Whereas constructivism relies heavily on the learner and his or her relationship with peers, constructionist theory implies that the learner creates artifacts that are necessary to understanding the external world or phenomena (Han & Bhattacharya, n.d.). Because this study focused on creating a community of practice that may or may not include the creation of artifacts, the research had to stay true to Vygotsky's view of constructivism and focus primarily on the role of the learner in relationship to his or her peers.

Vygotsky's vision of constructivism places heavy emphasis on the role of the teacher. The role of the teacher can be assumed by a facilitator or leader of a community of practice. Meyers (2008) found that, initially, teachers in a constructivist classroom must focus on creating a safe and welcoming space. Once this environment has been established, teachers must switch their focus to helping students construct—rather than share—knowledge (Meyers, 2008). Clemente (2010) did suggest that a possible disadvantage of this model is that learning in a constructivist classroom can vary depending on the amount of student participation and the nature and the influence of the social environment. A teacher must therefore be steadfast in stimulating the process of making meaning together as a community. Because this study involved creating a community of practice based on a constructivist classroom, the ideals of a constructivist leader guided the process.

Lambert (2003) sought to tie the ideals of constructivism to leadership. Before melding these two ideas, Lambert articulated six assumptions of leadership, which are:

- Leadership may be understood as reciprocal, purposeful learning in a community;
- Everyone has the right, responsibility and capability to be a leader;
- The adult learning environment in the school and district is the most critical factor in evoking leadership identities and actions;
- Within that environment, opportunities for skillful participation top the list of priorities;
- How we define leadership frames how people will participate;
- Educators are purposeful—leading realizes purpose.

Essential to these assumptions is the understanding that leadership is reciprocal: learning can happen in a community, and everyone has the right, responsibility and capability to be a leader. Lambert (2003) continued to state that defining leadership in inclusive terms is essential to cultivating participation by all members.

From this mindset came Lambert's dispositions of a constructivist leader. Besides an understanding of constructivist learning, constructivist leaders must have facilitation skills, a profound understanding of change and transitions, and an understanding of the context. However, Lambert also argued that, beyond traditional facilitator qualities, a constructivist leader must possess a sense of purpose and ethics, a personal identity that allows for courage and risk taking, and an intention to redistribute power and authority. Lambert's final assertion leads to a more holistic picture of a constructivist leader.

Many elements of constructivism and constructivist leadership can be applied to communities of practice. Constructivism's focus on creating knowledge in a community is essential to forming the foundation of a community of practice. Additionally, Lambert's essential elements of constructivist leadership add definition to the role of a community of practice facilitator. However, communities of practice have distinct needs that are not thoroughly addressed by constructivist frameworks. Whereas constructivist leaders must only understand context and a critical community, communities of practice must be able to create them (Wenger, 2004). In addition, because communities of practice seek to grow collective leadership and shared knowledge in all members, the intention is not necessarily to redistribute power, but to recognize different sources of power that will continue to exist within the community of practice. Therefore a new framework must be created for a community of practice that not only

acknowledges elements from the constructivist perspective, but also incorporates necessary elements, such as the specific role of a community of practice leader.

Leadership Theory

The success of a community of practice relies, in large part, on a strong facilitator or leader (Snyder et al., 2010). Therefore, in creating a framework for a community of practice, a review of leadership literature must be included. Surprisingly, a clear definition of leadership theory is not readily available. Stogdill (1974), in his review of the literature and as cited in Bolden (2004), suggested that there are as many definitions of leadership as there are people who have studied the topic. While opinions on leadership may vary, Northouse (2007) narrowed these perspectives to two ideas that frame current definitions of leadership. First, leadership is a process that happens over time and requires influencing a group of people. Secondly, leadership generally revolves around moving that group of people toward the attainment of a certain goal. Out of these important and relevant factors, a definition of leadership can evolve.

Even with Northouse's framework, more distinctions must be made. Contemporary leadership literature often focuses on a distinction between leadership and management. Zaleznik (1977) suggested that management is often bureaucratic and inflexible, whereas leadership is a more dynamic and strategic process. He went further to define the type of leaders who focus on management as impersonal people who view their task as work to be done, whereas those who focus on leadership are engaging people who look to inspire others to act. Buchanan and Huzynski (2004) made the argument that these two visions of leadership and management are not as disparate as might be imagined. They articulated four common elements that, although manifesting differently, hold the same purpose for managers and leaders alike.

These elements include creating an agenda, developing people, executing a plan, and producing outcomes. As such, a definite overlap exists between management and leadership. Bolden (2004) stated that leadership for an organization must essentially reside in one person who can balance management and leadership based on the current needs of the organization. He further said:

> In conclusion, whilst the distinction between management and leadership may have been useful in drawing attention to the strategic and motivational qualities required during periods of change, the bipolar representation of managers and leaders as completely different people can be misleading and potentially harmful in practice. (Bolden, 2004, p. 7)

With this lens in mind, the researcher reviewed the current theories of leadership to evaluate them against the criteria listed above. Situational leadership was first introduced by Fiedler in 1964. Bolden (2004) summarized his theory by stating, "There is no single best way to lead; instead, the leaders' style should be selected according to the situation" (p. 10). Hersey and Blanchard (1969, 1977) also have developed ideas on situational leadership. They argued that the levels at which subordinates are functioning is the greatest determining factor for how leaders must adapt their styles. Whereas situational leadership meets Buchanan and Huzynski's (2004) criteria of task orientation, the loose definition does not guarantee the strategic type of leadership demanded of leaders of communities of practice.

A second influential leadership theory is transformational leadership, introduced by James MacGregor Burns in 1978. Burns suggested that transformational leadership occurs when "one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (Bolden 2004, p. 11). The goal of a transformational leader is not only defined by Buchanan and Huzynski's (2004) idea of setting and reaching an outcome; it also sets the explicit additional outcome of bringing both the

participants and the leader to a higher level of morality. Although this aim may address the ethic needs of a community of practice and does inspire individual growth, communities of practice seek to create knowledge in a community. As a result, an ideal theory of leadership must allocate as much energy for group growth as it does for individual growth.

For similar reasons, well-known theories such as servant leadership, charismatic leadership, and distributed leadership must be dismissed when forming a community of practice. Servant leadership, with its focus on the personal growth of the leader by serving others, is too leader-centric for a community of practice. Similarly, charismatic leadership, with its dominant leader focus, is too centered on the needs of the leader to inspire the personal and communal growth required of a community of practice (Rowald & Laukamp, 2009). Conversely, distributed leadership disperses leadership too much to participants, and the power to set and achieve a singular vision is not clear (Angelle, 2010). This model also fails to fit the diverse needs of a community of practice.

In analyzing established theories, the researcher determined that situational leadership lends the most structure to the goals set by a community of practice. Situational leadership fits because the goals of the leader are defined by the needs of the group (Bolden, 2004). In a community of practice, a leader must be aware of the group's needs to determine the appropriate steps in constructing knowledge (Johnson, 2001). A specific model of situational leadership discussed by Adair (1973) and Bolden (2004) balances the needs of the task, the team, and the individual. These three areas overlap because each area influences the outcomes of the other (Bailey, 2006). The result is that all three aspects of leadership are balanced so that a learning culture can be created. This result is where Adair and Bolden's ideals align with that of a

community of practice. In creating a learning culture where leadership ensures the balances of task needs, team needs, and individual needs, the creation of knowledge that a community of practice demands can occur.

Articulating the Difference

A primary purpose of this study was to propose a framework for communities of practice between specific groups of leaders and to add to the scholarly literature on this particular topic of study. In doing so, this research and the researcher had to distinguish the proposed framework and community of practice from iterations and structures for collaboration that have been articulated in numerous previous studies.

To illustrate the distinguishing factors of this particular framework, identification of those other structures must occur. For the purposes of this research, Professional Learning Communities and Critical Friends Groups, which are prevalent in education and lend themselves to this framework, will be discussed.

Literature can be a support for this analysis, as myriad studies on Professional Learning Communities (DuFour & Eaker, 1998) articulate the importance, and the major tenets of, an effective PLC. Specifically, PLCs are steeped in gathering knowledge that focuses on group improvement (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). This effort may be in the form of learning cycles or professional development sessions.

The primary distinction between Communities of Practice and PLCs is the electiveness of the latter. PLCs exist, for the most part, as a school-wide initiative. They are prescribed as functions of the school and their goals align to that function. The specific difference in this study's proposed framework is that a community of practice for charter school leaders is based

on a goal formulated within the group, and the entire group is made up of leaders that have "opted in" to the learning.

The second group structure from which this framework must be distinguished is the Critical Friends Groups. The SLN utilizes CFG protocols extensively, but as part of the entire process and not as the only activity at the core of the group structure. CFG protocols have been used to foster the creation of knowledge, relationship development and trust, and authenticity as dilemmas are dealt with that allow leaders to "take away" learning from the structures (Curry, 2008).

The distinction between this framework and Critical Friends Groups is in the domains of knowledge and leadership. Within the domain of knowledge, the data show that part of the group structure and learning cycle is to bring outside resources to read, review, and discuss within the planned structure of the group. Critical Friends Groups, on the other hand, focus on utilizing the authentic experiences as vehicles for learning (Curry 2008). Leadership is another domain in which distinctions can be made. In Critical Friends Groups, the problem and protocol drive the facilitation. A group of critical friend participants can, and often do, take turns facilitating and supporting the protocol chosen and the problem posed. Within this proposed framework, the facilitator drives the group through situational leadership (Adair, 2009; Bolden 2004; Northouse, 2007), knowing the needs of the group, balancing its needs with the task at hand, and allowing the development of a time and space to collaborate in a safe and authentic way.

The following table illustrates the comparison by identifying the domains in which each group's structure holds an essential element of their group:

Table 1

Models of Collaboration Compared

Group Structure	Domain 1: Knowledge	Domain 2: Relationships	Domain 3: Authenticity	Domain 4: Constructivism	Domain 5: Leadership
CoP Framework	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Professional Learning Communities	✓			✓	✓
Critical Friends Group		✓	✓	✓	

The focus of the proposed framework is on the interplay of each domain. A skilled leader is necessary to fostering the use of all elements in a way that will benefit each group member. This method goes beyond the strategic nature of some other collaborative groups in deliberately incorporating each domain into the fabric of the group structure. In sum, the community of practice framework incorporates elements of both PLCs and CFGs, but deliberately adds the essential facilitation elements to get a focused collaborative model. The creation, then, of the new framework proposed by this research held true to the purpose of the study and adds to the literature and body of education in a way that has not been done before.

Socially Just Education

Although this model for charter school and public school collaboration can be based on the theories of communities of practice, constructivism, and leadership, the true foundation and overall purpose of this work was its focus on a socially just education. The purpose behind the collaboration between educators from multiple sectors is solely to educate, support, and promote equal education for all students regardless of their school placement. As Loyola Marymount University School of Education's Conceptual Framework (2009) has explained, "Unjust social

structures are a major reason for inequities and social stratification" (p. 2). Education must be a social structure that remedies social inequality instead of perpetuating it. The creation of charter schools was, in its essence, a chance for parents to have a choice in schools for their children and for schools to have the autonomy to make decisions that would benefit the students and create a quality education for all (Budde, 1996; Izu, 1999). The arguments and disagreements that have resulted from the formation of charter schools have not met this ideal and, as a result, have harmed students. A quality and socially just education can only be provided to all students when charter school and traditional public school educators come together to share best practices.

The goal of a socially just education, through equality in schools, access, and opportunities, drove this study and, ultimately, resulted in a programmatic solution through the creation of a framework for a community of practice between charter schools and their traditional public school counterparts.

Conceptual Framework

A careful review of the literature has shown that, to create a successful community of practice between traditional public school and charter school leaders, many facets of constructivist learning, community of practice, and leadership must be considered. The goal of the conceptual framework was to distill the essential elements of each of the foundational theories and to synthesize them into a framework that was used to code and evaluate evidence gathered as a part of this research project. The framework describes the necessary roles that participants and facilitators must take on to cultivate collaborative relationships between traditional public and charter school leaders.

A community of charter school and traditional public school leaders must be grounded in the elements of community of practice. This idea, which was proposed by Etienne Wenger (1998), can be summarized as a process in which a group of people with a common interest utilizes collaboration over time to share ideas and practices to develop solutions and innovations. Foundational to the understanding of community of practice are the following tenets:

Domain 1: Knowledge

- Participants must agree that the knowledge of the community is greater than the knowledge of the individual (Gherardi & Nicolini, 2000).
- Participants must agree on a common domain that describes the common knowledge that participants want to create.
- Participants must define a set of problems and values and guide their learning by defining the boundaries that decide what is worth sharing.
- Participants must agree that it is not the knowledge itself that is so valuable; rather the ability of an organization's members to generate knowledge and innovate using that knowledge is most important.

Domain 2: Relationships

- Participants commit to creating relationships with other group members.
- Participants must agree to create a climate of safety and trust.

Domain 3: Authenticity

- Participants must commit to being engaged in real work in authentic settings.
- Participants must commit to fully engaging in all four aspects of the learning cycle, including belonging, experiencing, doing, and becoming.

- Participants must commit to participating in meaningful experiences.

Secondly, charter school leaders and traditional public school leaders looking to form a community of practice need to define their learning experiences in terms of Vygotsky's theory of constructivism, which can be summarized as a tool for learning that allows learners to work in a community to define and grow in their understanding of new concepts.

Domain 4: Constructivism

- Participants agree to build knowledge as a group.
- Participants agree to continually push their practice by openly sharing and reaching into their zone of proximal development.
- Participants agree to serve as more knowledgeable others for their colleagues, so that everyone can learn from each other's experiences.
- Participants agree to appoint a facilitator that can guide the learning of the group.

Finally, for a community of practice to flourish and sustain its efforts of learning, a dedicated leader must be fluent in the tenants of Adair and Bolden's conceptual theory of situational leadership.

Domain 5: Leadership

- The leader must cultivate participation by all members so that knowledge is created equally.
- The leader must balance the needs of the task, the team, and the individual members.

The research has stated that these domains, although unique, are all essential to the implementation and longevity of a community of practice. Using the domains outlined above, the

researcher coded case study interviews, observations, and document review. In reflecting on this data, the researcher was able to validate the proposed framework and make any revisions that were necessary.

The interplay among the three individual theories informed the framework for a community of practice specifically appropriate for charter school and traditional public school leaders. Communities of practice served as the overarching construct to which the other theories contributed. Constructivist theory informed the type of activities and structure that contributed to a community of practice in this instance. Leadership theory is a vital, albeit smaller and more specific component, of a community of practice. This type of deductive thinking allowed the creation of a conceptual framework model for traditional public and charter school leaders in a community of practice. (see Figure 1).

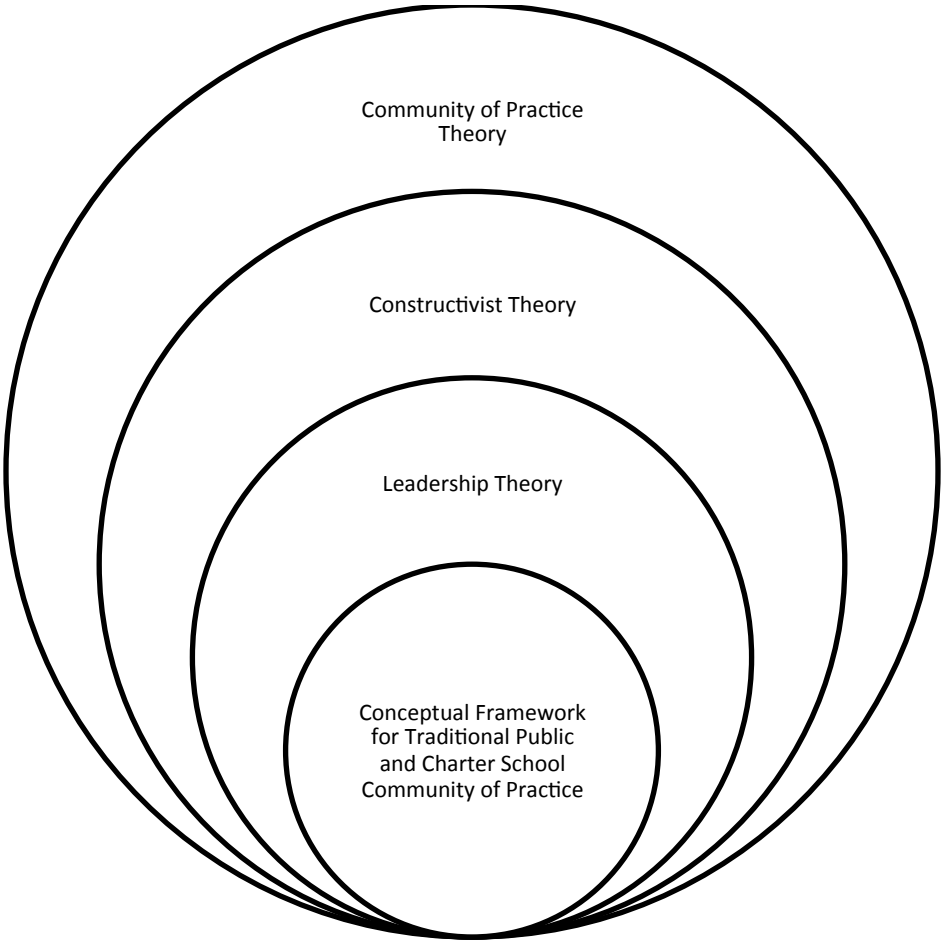

Figure 1. Contributing theories conceptual framework graphic.

Figure 2, below, illustrates the design of the conceptual framework. The domains represent the five areas informed by the literature gathered from communities of practice, constructivism, and leadership theory, and served as the basis for the study. More importantly, these domains became the anchors for coding and categorizing data gathered from observations, focus groups, discussions, and interviews.

The final product of the study involved using the data gathered to validate the domains and descriptors and to build specific indicators for each domain to inform future study and to facilitate communities of practice between traditional and charter school counterparts.

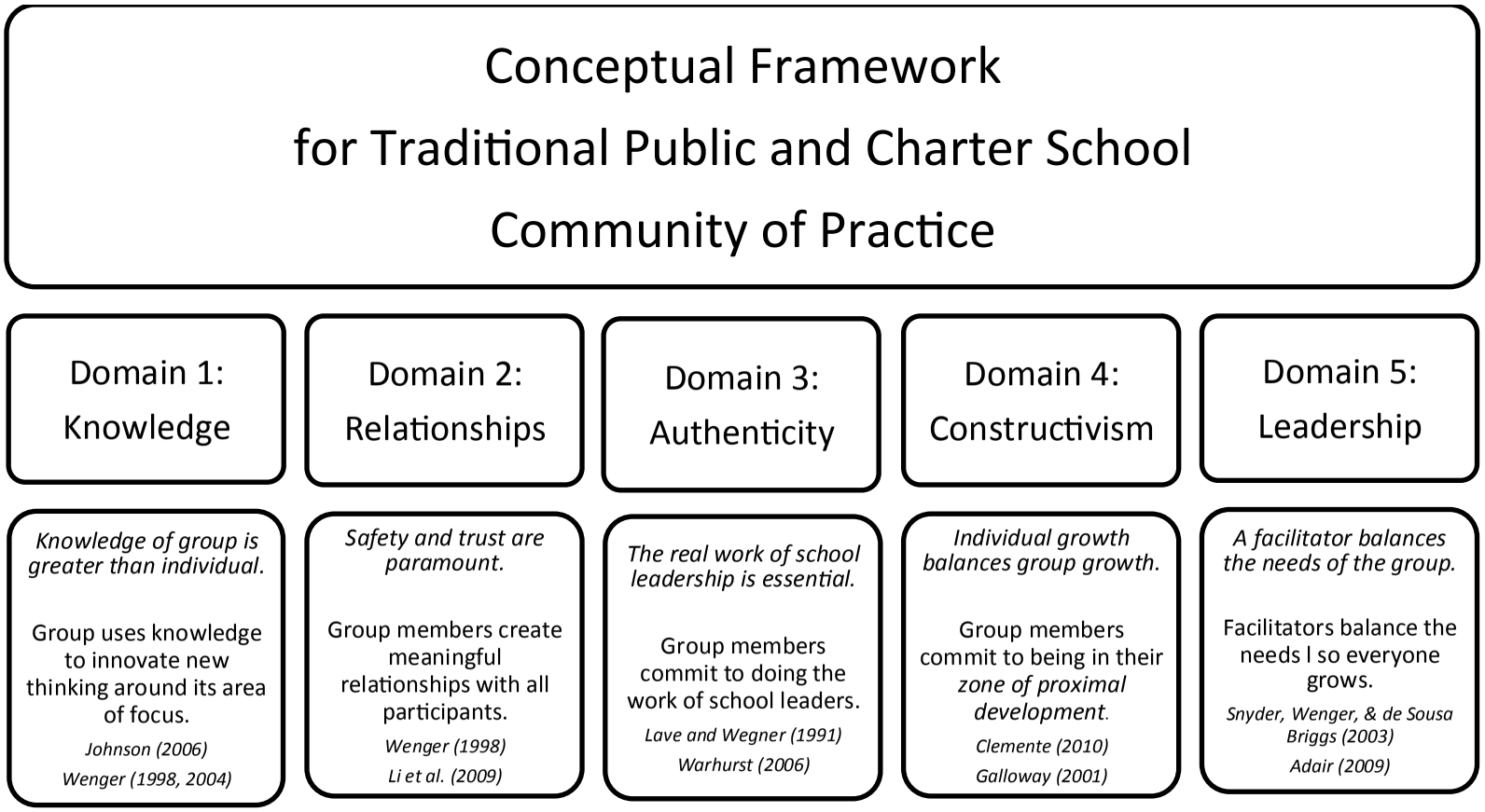

Figure 2. Conceptual framework domains and indicators.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Restatement of Problem and Purpose

Charter schools have grown steadily in recent years. Today, 982 charter schools educate over 412,000 of California's students (CCSA, 2012). Despite the fact that charters, their respective authorizers, and traditional public schools are all fighting to end the miseducation of our youth, their discourse tends to be uncooperative, negative, and combative (Kirst, 2007). When any business meets a competitor, two possible reactions can arise: one can choose to close the business or adapt and look within to improve practice and products. When attempting the latter, the competitor studies his or her rival and tries to learn as much as possible to capitalize on what is already known and to analyze what can be improved. Within education, however, most organizations have refused to take this route and, instead, their reaction to reform efforts has largely been to shut down communication and attempt to stop the reform from taking place (Kirst, 2007; Lockwood, 2004). Consequently, the reform movement is forced to take on the identity of savior or keeper of the solution and meets the combative nature of protectors of the status quo with their own stubbornness and negative rhetoric.

The root of this negative relationship lies in both groups' failure to collaborate, strengthen their practices, and use the current competition to drive the quality of education higher across the board. The resulting unconstructive rhetoric and posturing can and will affect the education of the students in a way that counters the mission of each educational structure.

This study had two main purposes. First, it created the opportunity for a positive exchange of ideas between charter school and traditional public school leaders by designing a framework dedicated to bridging the divide between the two and creating a collaborative culture that benefits education as a whole. Secondly, an underlying objective of this study was to identify the attributes a leader of such communities of practice needs in order to address the specific needs of this particular group of leaders.

In this chapter, the researcher describes the design of the study, the methods in which data were collected and analyzed, the reliability and validity of the design and results, as well as how the role of participant-observer was managed.

Research Questions

1. What steps were taken and what processes were put in place to create the community of practice?
2. What knowledge, skills, and dispositions must a facilitator possess in order to lead this model of a community of practice?
3. What are the elements deemed most important in creating and maintaining this model of a community of practice?

Design of Study

This study employed a qualitative approach, via a case study, to answer the research questions and, ultimately, to uncover the elements deemed most important to creating and maintaining a specific model of community of practice that addressed the particular needs of traditional public and charter school leaders in this group.

This study analyzed three data sources: observation data from four School Leaders Network meetings; semistructured interviews with the facilitator and school leaders; and document reviews—which were a vehicle for greater understanding of the vision and purpose of the network—as well as the reflections of the leaders participating in the study.

The interviews, observations, and document reviews were conducted over a four-month period. The data were then triangulated and analyzed to create a framework for the implementation and leadership of a community of practice for charter and traditional public school leaders. Throughout the observations, interviews, and document reviews, the conceptual framework acted as the structural gatekeeper for all data collected. Using a pattern matching data analysis (Yin 2008), data gathered were compared against the conceptual framework domains and indicators for those domains. In analyzing results, a clear pattern emerged that informed the development of a collaboration framework to facilitate and guide the creation of a specific model of a community of practice.

Network

The School Leaders Network chosen for this study met monthly in Los Angeles, CA, and was led by two facilitators during the study. The School Leaders Network "brings together school leaders across Los Angeles to *learn, improve, and support* each other in their *efforts to innovatively change the face of education* for the students they serve" (Cone, Personal Communication, March 10, 2011). The Los Angeles network of 12 school leaders is shown in Table 2, below.

Table 2

School Leaders Network Cohort Demographics

Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Charter/Traditional Public	Current Capacity	Years in Current Capacity
Female	Latina	Traditional Public	Principal – Elementary	2
Female	African American	Traditional Public	Principal – HS	3
Female	Latina	Charter	Principal – Elementary	3
Male	Latino	Traditional Public	Principal – Middle School	3
Male	Caucasian	Charter	Principal – Middle/High school	2
Male	Caucasian	Charter	Principal – Elementary/Middle School	1
Male	Latino	Charter	Principal – Middle School	4
Female	Caucasian	Charter	Principal – Elementary School	2
Female	Latina	Traditional Public	Principal – Elementary	2
Female	Caucasian	Charter	Principal – High School	1
Female	African American	Traditional Public	Principal – Elementary	3
Female	Asian	Traditional Public	Assistant Principal-Middle School	2

The group met each month at a downtown Los Angeles restaurant from 4:30 pm to 8:30 pm. During meetings, the group engaged in a series of protocols and activities to uncover leadership and strategies for the implementation of best practices at their respective schools. Topics ranged from creating a meaningful and shared vision to fostering an environment of shared leadership at the school. The timeline for this study is represented in Table 3.

Table 3

Timeline of Elements of Case Study

Task	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
Interview of SLN Leadership/Document Review	X	X			
Meeting Observation	X	X	X	X	
Facilitator Interviews	X	X	X	X	
Leader Interviews	X	X	X		
Analysis of Data	X	X	X		
Present Findings to SLN and LMU					X

Research Methods

Qualitative Methodology

The use of a qualitative methodology was based on the premise that the data gathered can help a researcher uncover and explain "the meaning of social phenomenon with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible" (Merriam, 1998, p. 5). As with constructivism as a teaching pedagogy, a qualitative approach allows the researcher to observe and examine participants as they construct meaning from their interactions with others in a particular setting (Merriam, 1998).

Notably, using a qualitative methodology did not set the researcher up to make predictions about present and future behavior. Instead, it allowed the researcher to have a greater depth of understanding of the environment in which the phenomenon occurred (Patton, 1985). Qualitative methodology also requires the researcher to be the leading entity of data gathering; the researcher must go out into the field and gather data in the context in which the phenomenon is occurring (Merriam, 1998).

The qualitative approach also prescribes that theory be built through induction. More specifically, "Qualitative [research] build[s] toward theory from observations and intuitive understanding gained from the field" (Merriam, 1998, p. 7). Because the research questions were answered through the use of inductive reasoning, a qualitative methodology lent itself to the study. To identify the key elements of a successful community of practice and to align those elements to specific standards and indicators of successful collaboration, this study was based on observations of collaboration meetings as well as on interviews and document analysis. A theory, plan of action, or framework, for a community of practice between traditional and charter school leaders was then developed from "intuitive understandings gained from the field" (Merriam, 1998, p. 7).

Qualitative data were collected from three sources: observations of the community of practice sessions, interviews with facilitators and participants, and document reviews of written reflections from the network participants.

Case Study

The type of qualitative research employed to answer the research questions was a case study. Yin (2008) prescribed the use of a case study when the following are considered: firstly, the research questions focus on the "how" or "why" of a phenomenon; secondly, manipulation of behaviors does not occur; thirdly, the environment where the phenomenon happens is of utmost importance. Merriam (1998) articulated that a case study is used to "gain in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved" (p. 19). The research questions called for an understanding of the environment in which the network occurred and the perceptions of the participants involved. Even more pertinent to this research was that instead of focusing on the outcomes, case studies allow the researcher to gain an understanding of the process of the phenomenon. As a result, data from the study can influence "policy, practice, and future research" (Merriam, 1998, p. 19).

The data gathered from this case study were utilized to construct a framework, or a set of guidelines and procedures, for the facilitation of a community of practice with this diverse group of leaders. Careful consideration was paid to the unit of analysis for this case study. The unit of analysis was the Los Angeles–based School Leadership Network (SLN), which consisted of school principals from charter and traditional public middle and high schools. Entry to this group of professionals was gained through collaboration with Mariah Cone, Ed.D. The objectives of the group are to foster a community of practice between charter and traditional public school leaders. These group objectives paralleled those of this study and became a benefit for both groups. Data from the SLN group were

gathered for the study, and the results and suggestions for further study were shared with the leadership at SLN.

The consideration did not end with identifying and understanding the unit of analysis. Attention was also given to establishing how the study utilized the emic, or the perspective, of the participant—as opposed to that of the researcher (Merriam, 1998). The researcher was a participant observer in the School Leaders Network, and a working member of the group. As such, the researcher gathered and conducted an analysis of data from the perspective of a member of the group projecting outward, rather than from the perspective of an outside researcher reporting what is seen.

The use of interviews, small focus group interviews, and artifacts of each participant's work within the network further allowed the researcher to triangulate the data and answer the research questions through the perspective of the participants.

Observations

The researcher observed four monthly meetings, from December 2011 to March 2012. During these sessions, field notes and audio recordings of the facilitator and group member comments were taken. The researcher took a position of participant observer and engaged in the group sessions unless otherwise noted in the data analysis.

During observations, specific notes were taken through the lens of the study's conceptual framework, consisting of the essential elements of community of practice, constructivism, and leadership traits necessary for the facilitation of this particular type of community of practice.

To focus the observation notes and data gathering on the conceptual framework and study objectives, particular occurrences were tracked. Each of the following occurrences is followed by an indication as to which domain that particular data would focus on answering (i.e., Domain 5 pertains to leadership).

Some of the essential occurrences were:

- Interactions between leaders of similar school types (charter with charter/traditional public with traditional public), and interactions between school leaders of different school types. Specific changes in behaviors, language, and questions were recorded (Domain 2).
- Particular protocols and procedures utilized by the group facilitator to create the environment for the community of practice (Domains 4 and 5).
- Specific quotes indicating the leader's experience and reaction to learning experiences (Domains 3 and 4).
- Specific quotes articulated by the participants that lent themselves to understanding the processes and benefits of the protocols and activities employed in the sessions (Domain 4).
- Specific quotes articulated by the participants that described how they were constructing knowledge through the social engagement in the group (Domain 1).
- The facilitator's attention to the needs of the group, and how she articulated the response to that need (Domain 5).
- The nature of the questions asked by participants, including probing, clarifying, and push-back to any of the activities proposed. (Domain 4).

- Evidence of learning that all types of school leaders received as a result of protocols and sharing of best practices (Domain 3).

Interviews

Semistructured, one-on-one interviews were conducted in 30-45–minute timeframes with two subjects: (a) the facilitators of the Los Angeles network, and (b) each participating leader from the Los Angeles network. The facilitator interviews were used to gather the perceptions of how the meeting went, how well the agenda was followed, general to specific thoughts on facilitation, and successes and room for growth. Reflections and plans for the next meeting were also addressed.

The facilitator interviews attempted to reveal where the use of constructivism and key leadership traits, as outlined in the conceptual framework, were present and employed during the sessions. The knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for successful facilitation were addressed through the questions and subsequent discussions. (See Appendix A).

The participants were interviewed one-on-one outside of the context of the sessions. To create consistency and allow the experiences from the sessions to be readily remembered, the interviews were conducted within two weeks following a network meeting. These interviews gathered data on the participants' perspectives of the facilitation of the meeting as well as on the overall structure of the meeting. The key components this interview sought to identify were the necessary attributes they believed the facilitator possessed, or did not possess, to make the group meetings positive from their perspective. Overall perceptions and the identification of the essential elements to

fostering an environment that allows for a community of practice among charter and traditional public school leaders were also discussed and noted.

A regional director of the School Leaders Network was interviewed to provide a historical perspective on why the School Leaders Network was created and why a mixed group of charter and traditional public school leaders became a focus for the Los Angeles Network. The interview also sought to identify the steps and processes needed to create such a network. The data gathered from this interview provided a historical baseline as to the philosophy and mission of the network.

Reflections and Artifacts

Artifacts, in the form of written reflections, graphic organizers, and other documents generated during the meeting, as well as historical data provided by the School Leaders Network, were collected. The data were utilized to analyze perceptions of the facilitation of the meeting and to test these perceptions against the interview data gathered by the facilitator and through participant interviews.

The artifacts were coded for each of the conceptual framework domains. Major themes from the artifact and participant reflections were then used to inform the answering of the research questions. The questions of focus were those concerning the knowledge, skills, and dispositions a facilitator must possess to foster this model of a community of practice, as well as the essential elements for creating and maintaining a community of practice.

Data Analysis

The objectives of both the case study and the collection of data from the unit of analysis (SLN Network) were twofold: (a) the data were utilized to answer the research questions of this study; and (b) the data influenced the creation of a guiding framework for a model of a community of practice between charter and traditional school leaders in the future.

The procedure for data analysis followed the construct posited by Yin (2008), in which the unit of analysis should align to the research question. This study focused on the Los Angeles School Leaders Network; therefore, the data collected from this area were used as the case data. A repeated process of aligning data with the conceptual framework of communities of practice (Douglas, 2010) served to answer the research questions. To successfully reach the objectives stated above, data from the case study were analyzed and held against the conceptual framework constructed for this study. The triangulation of data from the observations, interviews, and document review were aligned and tested against the essential elements of community of practice, the main tenets of constructivism within the network sessions, and the leadership attributes needed to implement this specific model for this specific group of leaders. Detailed quotes, behaviors, and patterns identified from the gathered data were coded to correspond to the domain in which they most closely aligned, thus creating a hierarchy of each domain and indicator. The consistent elements were then used to develop a framework for a community of practice between charter and traditional public schools.

For the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the information, the interviews were recorded and then read through by the researcher. The responses were then coded to align with each of the main tenets of communities of practice: attributes, practices, relationships of the facilitators, and environmental factors conducive to network meetings from the perspective of the participants. The same process was followed for interviews, observation data, and historical document analysis. Importantly, throughout this process all names were omitted and replaced with random labels, such as "participant," to hold identities confidential. All transcripts, tape recording, and any other such identifying materials were destroyed upon the publishing of the dissertation.

Validity

Based on the primarily descriptive nature of this case study, a causal relationship between the actions or establishment of communities of practice and student achievement results or specific behaviors of the participants cannot be established, nor was that the intention of the study. Instead, the focus was to identify the important tenets of communities of practice within this one case and to describe, both from a policy and practitioner standpoint, the structure of a community of practice between two entities. In this case, internal validity was not appropriate as a measure of quality of this study (Yin, 2008). The purpose of the study was to identify how the main ideas of this particular community of practice supported Wenger's (1998) proposed framework. This information was then extrapolated into a framework for this specific context.

IRB

This study gained IRB approval, effective on December 7, 2011, through December 6, 2012. The assigned protocol number is LMU IRB 2011 F 35.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Restatement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to develop a framework for a model of a community of practice between charter and traditional public school leaders. The problem of the study arose from the current state of charter and traditional relations as discussed throughout the study and as made evident in the literature review. Charter schools and public schools have fostered a combative and negative relationship that has encompassed political posturing and a general mistrust (Kirst, 2007; Lockwood, 2004). With the breadth of literature informing us of the benefits of collaboration (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Louis & Kruse, 1995; Newman & Wehlage, 1995), this study sought to provide a model to remedy the lack of collaboration between two particular entities.

To develop this framework, the researcher utilized a case study methodology to analyze the Los Angeles Cohort of the School Leaders Network. This network was designed for charter and traditional public school principals who met once a month to engage in a community of practice. Meeting observations, interviews with the group facilitators as well as the participants, and document reviews were utilized.

The method of analysis, including the variety of data points gathered, is of great importance when discussing the findings. Understanding the method of analysis warrants a brief discussion of the literature, and structure used, to inform the process. The three theories that used to construct the conceptual framework for this study were communities of practice theory—primarily posited by Etienne Wenger; constructivist theory—with its

roots in Vygotsky; and leadership theory—specifically situational leadership, as discussed by Adair (2009) and Bolden (2004).

The community of practice theory, authored by Wenger (1998), can be summarized as a process in which a group of people with a common interest share ideas and practices, and develop solutions and innovations by collaborating over a period of time. Central to the idea of a community of practice is participants working together to create new knowledge (Wenger, 1998).

To understand the aforementioned method of creating knowledge, a second theory was investigated. First introduced by Vygotsky, the theory of constructivism states that language and social interaction are the primary indicators of learning (Clemente, 2010). Examining how knowledge is created with others in constructivist theory provides the background necessary to understanding the structure and success of communities of practice.

Finally, attention was paid to the development of leadership theory. For the proposed framework to flourish with charter and public school partners, careful attention had to be paid to the characteristics of a successful leader. In attempting to align the theories of communities of practice and constructivism to contemporary leadership theories, the models of leadership posited by Bolden (2004) by Adair (2009) seemed to fit best. These theories included situational leadership and balancing the needs of the task, the team, and the individual to harness growth for every aspect of the group.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study centered on uncovering the crucial elements of a community of practice between traditional public school and charter school leaders. The purpose of these questions was to evaluate the data and align it to the proposed communities of practice framework to ensure that the framework was aligned to the original objective of the study. The following research questions were addressed:

1) What steps were taken and what processes were put in place to create the community of practice?
2) What knowledge, skills, and dispositions must a facilitator possess in order to lead this model of a community of practice?
3) What are the elements deemed most important in creating and maintaining this model of a community of practice?

Research Process

This study employed qualitative approaches, via a case study, to answer the research questions and to ultimately uncover the elements deemed most important in creating and maintaining this model of a community of practice between charter and traditional public school leaders. This study analyzed three data sources: observation data from four School Leaders Network meetings and transcripts of one-on-one interviews of participating leaders and of facilitators from the network. Document reviews were also employed as a vehicle for achieving a greater understanding of the vision and purpose of the network as well as of the reflections of the leaders participating in the study.

The observations and one-on-one interviews were conducted over a four-month period. The observations and field notes were taken at four monthly School Leaders Network meetings that ran from 4:30pm to 8:30pm at a restaurant in downtown Los Angeles, CA. The participant-researcher and research assistant took field notes and gathered documents from the meetings.

The Los Angeles School Leaders Network consisted of 12 participants of diverse backgrounds and leadership experience. The group consisted of eight females and four males; six of the leaders were charter school leaders with the other six leaders serving as administrators of traditional public schools.

There were five elementary school leaders, two middle school and two high school leaders, as well as two leaders of a middle school and high school combination, and two who were leaders of an elementary and middle school combination. The group's average experience in their leadership role was 2.4 years.

Participants, including the facilitators, were interviewed using a semistructured interview protocol created for this study. Each leader was interviewed individually, either in person or over the phone. Notes were taken and included in a learning log and further refined through the writing process.

Finally, documents gathered from the meetings, as well as from the School Leaders Network, were coded using the identified domains, and included in a learning log.

The data were then triangulated and analyzed to create a framework for the implementation and leadership of communities of practice for charter and traditional public school leaders. Throughout the observations, interviews, and document reviews, the

conceptual framework acted as the structural gatekeeper for all data collected. Using a pattern matching data analysis (Yin 2008), data gathered were compared to the conceptual framework domains and indicators for those domains. In analyzing results, the researcher discerned a clear pattern, which informed the development of a collaboration framework to facilitate and guide the creation of a model of a community of practice for this type of group.

As Merriam (1998) discussed, appropriate firsthand data collection for case studies includes interviews and observations. Document reviews were used to augment the data gathered from the interviews and observations and to validate the data collected. Collected documents, such as reflections and surveys, were taken from participants after network meetings to gauge their perceptions of the effectiveness of the meeting.

The need for a conceptual framework to guide this study was apparent due to the lack of one comprehensive theory that addresses the specific issues around creating communities of practice for traditional public school and charter school leaders. The intersections among community of practice theory, constructivist theory, and leadership theory served as the foundation for the theoretical framework for public and charter school collaboration. In highlighting the key components of each theory, the researcher created a framework that acted as the filter through which all data gathered were collected and analyzed in order to answer the research questions.

This data analysis led to the development of a set of clear domains and indicators for creating a model of a community of practice between traditional public school and charter school leaders. This framework can be applied to guide the creation,

implementation, and sustainability of a community of practice specifically tailored to fit the needs of traditional public and charter school leaders. Although the scope of this framework was intentionally narrow, elements that would be beneficial for any type of community of practice were uncovered and suggestions for further study have been made. Even as theories were the foundation for the framework, the call for a socially just education is the true heart of this work. The goal of a socially just education through equality in schools, access, and opportunities drove this study, and ultimately inspired a programmatic solution to systematically increase academic achievement results for all children, regardless of their school placement.

Organization of Chapter 4

In Chapter 4, the data gathered through the research process is presented by domains and aligned to the pertinent literature. The domains are as follows: Domain 1: Knowledge; Domain 2: Relationships; Domain 3: Authenticity; Domain 4: Constructivism; and Domain 5: Leadership. Each domain is further explored through the use of the meeting observation data and interviews with the participants, as well as through document review data, where applicable. The answers to the research questions posed by this study will be given and discussed in Chapter 5.

School Leaders Network

The School Leaders Network (SLN) began six years ago as a Harvard Principal Group spinoff. Founder Elizabeth Neale wanted to build a national movement centered on supporting principals in school leadership roles. Neale's model was designed so that a

facilitator could start a group with 15 members. The network created 42 groups across the nation in a year.

Three years later, Dr. Neale was pushed by her funders to track the outcomes of her groups. Until that point, the success of a SLN group had been defined primarily by the happiness of its members. As Vice President of Program Mariah Cone stated, "[At that time] groups looked a lot more like a Critical Friends Group. [Because they were] initial groups, group had to bond and build levels of trust. The rigor piece wasn't there yet." Cone continued, "They were using *Instructional Rounds* as rigor arm to build on good community piece." At this time, SLN made a conscious shift toward developing best practices in school leadership. It developed the notion that leaders have to target their leadership practices so their schools can be better. This shift in thinking was a major transition for facilitators.

In articulating their program, the School Leaders Network identifies creating community as its first pillar. Essential to this pillar is the creation of a safe environment to foster risk-taking among participants. Also important to this pillar is the use of protocols to help participants analyze practices and articulate steps for continuous improvement (School Leaders Network, 2011).

The first Los Angeles chapter of the School Leader's Network was formed in January of 2011. Dr. Neale knew that Los Angeles was a hotbed for school reform, so she called on Mariah Cone to bring the theory of the SLN program and put it into practice in Los Angeles. Dr. Neale presented the idea at the California Charter School Association Conference in March of 2011 to insure that charter school leaders were involved in this

initial group. The intention was not to cultivate a group of charter and public school leaders coming together to discuss issues. As Cone stated:

> A leader is a leader is a leader. To be honest, it did not occur to me that we were going to create this collaborative platform. It didn't occur to me that it wouldn't work. We had never done the mixing, but it never occurred that we didn't want to.

In cultivating the Los Angeles group, Cone steered away from issues of facilities and funding that can be divisive between charter and traditional public school leaders. Cone stated, "We were going to talk about healthy communities. If we stay coherent to what we have in common, what are the common challenges, then it would be beneficial for both." Through facilitating this group, Cone established three essential elements of effective network meetings: highly relevant learning experiences, critical dialogue, and trust building.

Domains

To synthesize the findings of this study, a review of each data type is presented by domain. Using each domain of the framework as a lens, key patterns and ideas were magnified so that they could be discussed further.

Domain 1: Knowledge

Domain 1 pertains to the idea that knowledge, or the increase of knowledge, is a clear objective of engaging in a community of practice. Johnson (2001) explained that communities of practice "exist to promote learning via a communication among their members" (p. 48). Attaining knowledge by way of the various learning experiences within the group sessions is a crucial part of the framework and community of practice. Additionally, however, using that knowledge to innovate new thinking around the foci committed to by the group is also essential.

Although the domain of knowledge parallels quite closely to that of authenticity and constructivism, a distinction between knowledge sharing and knowledge production must be made. Domain 1: Knowledge focuses solely on the type of knowledge and resources shared by participants in the meetings. Although Domains 3 and 4 are the vehicles for bringing knowledge to another level of practice, Domain 1 describes the knowledge itself. In defining this knowledge, Domain 1 explains the discrete pieces of information and presentation resources that facilitators used in meetings. The following factors represents a set of salient patterns that arose from the data analysis conducted during the case study. These patterns are discussed in order to build the proposed framework.

Agreed-upon purpose. Wenger (2004) has presented significant research on the necessary components that ensure that success of a community of practice. First and foremost, members of a community of practice must agree on a domain, which Wenger (2004) has stated is an agreed-upon area of knowledge that needs to be explored and developed.

A review of documents provided by the facilitators uncovered that the participants had participated in a "starring" activity, in which many different objectives—ranging from how to effectively evaluate teachers, to how to build trust amongst the staff—were presented. Each member was given three star stickers to be placed on the three objectives they believed were most important in their present practice. These stars were then tallied and the main objectives for the networks were then identified. One participant articulated the importance of this when she stated:

> The chance to decide what would be the focus for the group this year was very important and helpful. It made us feel like we had a choice about what to learn.

Utilizing the feedback and themes from previous meetings to develop and create a common core of thinking across the entire group illustrates the subtle nuance of what Gherardi and Nicolini (2000) described as participants agreeing that the knowledge of the community is greater than that of the knowledge of the individual. This also supports the idea posited by Wenger (1998) that participants must agree on a common domain that describes a common knowledge participants want to create. During the December meeting the facilitator reminded the group of this idea:

> (Last session) . . . you wrote on cards what your barriers were based on the agreed upon objectives of the year…so we (facilitator 1 and 2) went through those and analyzed for patterns. They were around 2 themes and they are going to be our focus for this month and January. One focused around the external factors (the district, people's expectations, distractions and urgencies of the day). The other focus was centered around trust (some blatant, some under the surface—why aren't students taking ownership . . . so to me, why aren't teachers taking ownership). Getting people on board; working with resistance. Working with staffs where there was mistrust between staff and administration.

It is within a foundational understanding of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) that a group with a common interest can collaborate over a length of time to share and learn from one another. First and foremost, this work sought to create a common objective informed by the previous work and feedback from the group. This was echoed during an interview when one facilitator stated:

> If we stay coherent to what we have in common, what are the common challenges, then it would be beneficial for both.

During the February network meeting, the facilitator recapped the steps taken to establish a common set of goals and selection of knowledge to be discussed by the group:

> Let's go back to the first meeting we had here. Most of you were here and we looked at goals for SLN and about what these goals looked like at your school. Then we did a hot dots thing and you voted with what seemed most important to you. So, I took that information and put it together to be our identified area of focus (references participant packet). Then we did an envisioning activity.

> What are the barriers? And then from those barriers we turned it into dilemmas. Then we turned those dilemmas and turned them into goals. We stated them as "how can I when…." And then I went back and analyzed those. What kind of learning needs to take place in these sessions? Then I aligned it to the Wallace School Leaders report and the SLN standards.

Resources. The facilitator utilized numerous learning experiences and materials at his or her disposal. The use of articles and pertinent readings from leadership texts were frequently used to support the objective and frame the dialogue for the day. Additionally, the group used a series of clips from high performing schools, courtesy of the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC), whose mission is to "improve educational policy and practices that will increase student success, particularly for students historically underserved by public schools" (Educational Policy Improvement Center, 2013).

The clips illustrated a promising practice identified by EPIC for its ability to raise student achievement and add to the edification of educators at their own school sites. Participants then engaged in discussion about the tenets presented in the video as they pertained to the objectives for the meeting.

Further, the resource of participant experience to share and learn knowledge was a focus for the groups. The group used journal prompts, such as the one used during the January meeting, "How did you use your time as a principal today? What worked? Where did you get distracted? What can you learn from what happened?" as well as Critical Friends Group protocols such as the Issaquah protocol, which asked participants to reflect from individual perspectives on the following prompt: "What action steps can a leadership team take to help very motivated teachers strike a balance between working towards excellence and taking care of themselves as human beings?" EPIC clips, readings, and

protocols to allow for storytelling based on goals set forth from the group at the beginning of the year were also used.

Through the use of participant surveys and reflections, the facilitators for the School Leaders Network provided an opportunity for participants to rate their experience with myriad aspects of the network meetings. The following is an analysis of those reflections and a discussion of how those ratings assisted in the development of the community of practice framework.

The participants were asked questions that pertained to their experience at the meeting. The survey consisted of questions or prompts with responses on a Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The first prompt was, "The personal examination of practice and activities helped me to examine my own leadership practices." This prompt focused on the heart of Domain 1 as it pertained to examining practices to gain insight and innovative ideas to improve one's practice. Ninety percent of the participants answered agree or strongly agree.

The use of resources and the types of resources chosen formed the underlying structure of Domain 1: Knowledge. EPIC videos that promoted refinements in practice and new learning were a consistent resource during the community of practice meetings. When asked about the effectiveness of those videos, participants overwhelmingly responded that the use of the videos was a beneficial aspect of the meeting for them.

Specifically, the prompts that stated, "The videos helped to ground our conversations in concrete examples of effective leadership," and "The videos helped to establish a forum for exploring my own leadership approaches and actions" were rated

agree or strongly agree by 100% of the participants. The use of videos of exemplary practice helped to foster discussion and examination of participants' own practices. When coupled with articles and opportunities to learn from one another's experiences, the videos became a resource used to ensure the meetings supported building new knowledge among the participants.

Domain 2: Relationships

Domain 2 was rooted in the understanding based in literature that to foster an effective community of practice, that entity must be defined by the people in the group and the relationships they form within the group (Wenger, 1998). This definition was expanded by the assertion facilitating learning through discussion and building relationships define community and the sharing of knowledge and practice (Li et al., 2009).

The ultimate goal of communities of practice does not lie in the product or performance goal. Instead, these communities of collaboration create an avenue for the exchange of knowledge and for increased understanding from one participant to the other (Wenger, 1998). Unfortunately, as we have seen from the literature, charter schools and their traditional public school counterparts have engaged more in mistrust, political posturing, and negative relationships than in constructive mutual collaboration (Kirst, 2007; Lockwood, 2004).

The idea of relationships in which members are cordial and willing to share practices was only the surface objective of this community of practice. One facilitator, when interviewed and asked about the importance and role of building relationships said:

> The development of relationships must be done in order to foster an intimacy that allows group members to become vulnerable with what they do not know and ask for specific support in learning from others. The development of trust among the group becomes a necessary element of an effective community of practice.

Using this understanding informed by literature, the following findings were gathered from SLN meetings, participant interviews, and document reviews. The findings that pertained to this domain supported the creation of the framework for a model of a community of practice.

Specific actions to build trust. One pattern that emerged from the data analysis was how the facilitator's use of explicit activities designed to build relationships among the group members was viewed by group members and promoted trust among them.

Johnson (2001) contended that two more elements are essential to defining a community of practice. In referencing a study done by Edmundson (1999), Johnson stated that establishing a climate of safety and trust is necessary to promoting the expected outcomes of a community of practice. Trust and safety are necessary to properly allow participants to interpret the intentions of other group members. By assuming positive intentions, participants can immediately take corrective action on all shared knowledge, which leads to risk taking. This climate of growth fostered continual change and experimentation for the entire community.

One of the strongest articulations of building trust, or of being mindful of the need for trust, was discussed by facilitator 2, who articulated it this way:

> The other piece that is extremely important is that they could trust . . . they could take a risk in a way that they could not with their supervisor present. There are some members that had to take that risk in the first meeting so having strong norms in place is important and having a supportive facilitator that will make sure conversations stay there. Rich and real conversations and take risk and be real, then you really can form community of practice where skills can be built in that kind of forum.

Each observed meeting began with a counsel protocol that included all participants. The facilitator explained the purpose of the counsel when she stated, "We know the rules of counsel and we know that we can suspend the pain we have for a few hours and nourish each other." Counsel began with a prompt chosen by the facilitator, which was meant to foster a sharing of personal experiences through storytelling and to allow participants to "warm up" for the sharing that occurred during the meeting. Each participant shared his or her experience and answered the prompt.

This cycle was repeated up to two times, and the participants shared in similar fashion. Counsel then concluded with a witness round, in which each participant had an opportunity to express any feedback and appreciation, or to articulate any thoughts or ideas that particularly resonated with them. The facilitator described to the group the use of counsel as a way to build trust:

> It's an indirect way of building trust; you know you're going through something together, but it's a way of modeling trust. Whenever I'm with a group, I try to do whatever the work is; I wouldn't ask them to come up with something that I haven't done. The reason I think that is effective is when I ask people to do something they feel that it is reasonable, and something that I may need their help on. It's kind of a way to evening it out. That's one of the things I've used.

Facilitator 2 continued about the intention of counsel, "So, the work that is important is not sharing just your professional self but also a little of your personal self." The specific actions that can be taken are also important to identify, as a participant noted:

> We have our opener activities, where the interviewer can't ask anything professional related, where we see the human side of each other. It takes time, it builds, when you take those risks and you know someone has your back. The first questions that people ask are not the deep ones, the facilitator has to be mindful about that and not push people to a level that they are not ready for.

Dinner time during the School Leaders Meeting was used strategically, as well. During one meeting the facilitator explicitly stated, "Let's have some nice dinner conversation and talk about whatever you want to talk about . . . So, enjoy your dinner."

A salient point made through analyzing the patterns from participant interviews and observation notes was that the facilitator was successful in building trust and facilitating relationships. When asked about the facilitator's role in building this trust, Participant 2 stated bluntly, "Her (the facilitator's) role is to facilitate team building activities . . . definitely important you build relationships so you also build respect." This idea was echoed by Participant 1:

> I think it is extremely important and I personally value my relationships with other people and it is very important to build relationships not only in the meeting but outside as well. I think everyone is honest and sincere.

Participant 7 agreed:

> Building relationships in the group is really important because you are with them for a night and to benefit from each of them there is needed good relationships. For example, if I don't have [a good relationship with you] we don't have a phone conference, or I would not ask to come see your school. It is really important to get the maximum out of the meetings.

The importance of building relationships among the group members was reinforced by the participants' responses to the following prompt on a Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree:

- The teambuilding activities helped me develop a strong sense of community with other principals in the network

In this instance, 100% of the participants responded as agree or strongly agree. This data reinforced that of the observations and interviews.

A safe environment. In addition to the explicit activities and importance of relationships as keys to the data analysis, a pattern arose from the data, which suggested that creating a safe environment was an important element for the participants within this community of practice.

The literature suggested that the lack of relationships, the presence of mistrust, and the want for a true space for safe exchange of ideas creates contention between charter and traditional public schools. This, in turn, leads to contentiousness, which damages or prevents relationships with charters' neighboring traditional public schools (Kirst, 2007).

Wenger (1998) described the idea that people and their relationships must also implicitly, if not explicitly, state the boundaries that exist within the group and exterior to the group. In his studies, Wenger contended that defining these boundaries helps further identify and refine the domain of the group. Boundaries that create a safe environment for sharing and learning were articulated through an analysis of the data.

During an interview, Participant 6 also shared her feelings when it came to the environment being created through the development of relationships within the group:

> [I want] to be a voice. I am the least experienced—I'm a first year assistant principal so some of them [participants in the group] have been doing this for many more years. Just those numbers make me a little hesitant because I am still learning a lot. But I generally feel comfortable sharing my opinion if I feel competent in a topic.

Participant 6 continued:

> Personal things matter so I try to be active in making an investment in the participants as people. I feel like I receive that, too . . . when I talk it's not like people say, oh, ok [Participant 6] just dismissing my thought . . . it's like they push me to dig deeper. I think in the first or second meeting of sharing our paths and our stories and I feel like so many of us had many connections and similar stories. I wasn't expecting that. At least three of us had the same story and the same trajectory, which made me feel connected.

During network meetings, small gestures also illustrated the group and the facilitator's focus on creating an atmosphere of respect of others. The facilitator acknowledged the effort and openness of group members numerous times with statements such as, "Thank you for being vulnerable and being open to the process."

During an interview after the December network meeting, Participant 5 described his perspective concerning the importance of a safe environment for sharing:

> At my organization I don't feel I have a forum or a safe place for principals only to express what they are dealing with, you know, without my supervisors present and I have to watch what I say. Not only that makes it really great but it's that the other principals are not associated with each other we can be safe and explore and find support and tell what I am going through.

Participant 6 added:

> There has to be a true desire to listen for understanding. I haven't seen anyone jump to conclusions or attack first and I think for a genuine group of individuals to grow you all have to be willing to grow.

During an analysis of the reflections and survey documents given to all participants, the idea that a safe environment is important for dialogue was reinforced by the participants' responses to the following reflection prompts on a Likert Scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree:

- The discussion protocols helped to create a safe and supportive environment for a dialogue.

In this instance, 100% of the participants responded as agree or strongly agree. This finding regarding the need for a safe environment and for fostering relationships was reinforced during an exchange by participants who were called upon to answer the following prompt: What are some of the pieces in what makes our network successful in coming together as practitioners who are concerned about student achievement? Let's popcorn—what works for you? To which the participants responded:

Participant 1:

> "Just being with other principals that are experiencing the same things that I am."

Participant 2:

> "Common practice sharing"

Participant 9:

> "I think candidness."

Participant 1:

> "Being able to share freely"

Participant 4:

> "The level of support and just how they respond to you."

Participant 1:

> "Relationships have been built with one another. Feel confident in one another. You know it's not going to go any further than these walls."

Participant 5:

> "Agreed upon norms."

Participant 6:

> "We all engage fully in what is going on. We all do it so it makes it work."

Participant 4:

> "You can't hide in a small group."

Domain 3: Authenticity

The domain of authenticity pertains to utilizing any new learning to improve practice for moving practice forward. It is the specific act or promotion of moving theory into practice. Johnson (2001) explained, "It is not the knowledge itself that is so valuable, rather it is the ability of an organization's members to generate knowledge and innovate using that knowledge" (p. 49). Domain 3 can be summarized by the following assertions constructed from work by Lave and Wenger (1991), Warhurst (2006), and Johnson (2001):

- Participants must commit to being engaged in real work in authentic settings.
- Participants must commit to fully engaging in all four aspects of the learning cycle, including belonging, experiencing, doing, and becoming.
- Participants must commit to participating in meaningful experiences.

Finally, Wenger contended that a community of practice is not only bound by the domain, the people, and the group, but also by the work they create, which is defined as "practice." This concept, which all studies on community of practices agreed upon, states that, for a community to flourish, participants must be engaged in real work in authentic settings.

Through observations of meetings, interviews with participants, and document reviews, the domain of authenticity is described below.

Making connections. Through the use of strategic objectives that were agreed upon by group members, the facilitator ran the meetings around an agreed focus. The first meeting in a series of meetings observed for this study focused on fostering trust within a school, specifically between administration and staff. As part of planning the meeting, the facilitator mentioned the thought process put into the objectives of the meeting. The facilitator stated:

> They were around 2 themes and they are going to be our focus for this month and January. One focused around external factors . . .The other focus was centered on trust (some blatant, some under the surface—why aren't students taking ownership…so to me, why aren't teachers taking ownership.) Getting people on board . . . working with resistance. Working with staffs where there was mistrust between staff and administration. So, we are going to spend most of our time today talking about trust, which you feel like we can talk about too much, but I like to think about layers of trust.

This became a common objective that the group members could then engage in during the meetings. The benefit of a common core of understanding and learning was described by the statements of participants during discussion. Participant 4 discussed the idea of making connections and the value of take-aways being an important aspect of the meetings.

The facilitator used techniques to facilitate and promote thinking around the objective and common focus. During the discussions on trust, she utilized a journal prompt to synthesize thinking around the topic and to push next steps. The facilitator stated:

> The last thing we're going to do is a journal prompt to send you forth. I'm going to change it just a bit. In looking at the reading and the survey and the video and then just listening with what surfaced with [Participant 5], what it is that you want to start doing or what do you want to start doing more intentionally?

The benefits of this focus were clear to participants, one of which noted:

> I like the idea of making connections. No matter what the story or where you're coming from, you can make those connections. The idea is that we're all in it together. We can come from different places but we can leave it out there and come together in here.

Theory into practice – bringing truths back to the site. Participants also found the research, readings, and protocols on the common topic were fruitful in that the new information could then be brought back to their site for use with their school community. Participant 4 mentioned:

> The take-aways bring value to (the work). So that next time you can go back to it. It makes the focus on how can I get better. I like the idea of [becoming] a teacher of that content and studying it that way.

In describing Domain 3, it is important to take the perspective of those engaged in the meetings and in the learning. The facilitator and participants provided insight into their engagement with Domain 3, not only in terms of uncovering new knowledge, but also in

the importance of having a plan for that knowledge. When asked if bringing new learning to their sites was a focus of the group, Facilitator 1 said:

> I would say that is my primary goal for the group. There are a lot of great things about getting together and camaraderie and dinner, but my primary goal and I'm not going to feel successful unless some of this, preferably lots of it is being applied to the school.

Through this reflection, the facilitator uncovered a new learning:

> Maybe I can make it more if this is my main point if this isn't changing anything at your school then this is really about feeling good and we can't afford to just feel good. It's wonderful to feel good but there is much more urgency with that.

To dig deeper into the learning that occurred at specific meetings, as well as the authenticity of such learning, the participants were asked what "truths" or take-aways they came away from the prior meeting(s) with. One participant stated:

> What I walked away with was a questioning of myself about how willing was I to trust those around me. There is an element of risk and I needed to create or generate the culture at my school around trust. I need to show that I can trust the staff, students or staff and I hadn't thought of it . . . I asked myself how much do I trust all at my school site and how much of it is me, my issues with the trust . . . these conversations allow me to step out and look at it from different angles.

Domain 4: Constructivism

Constructivism, as posited by Vygotsky and many subsequent researchers, simply describes the idea that individual growth must be balanced with the growth of the group (Clemente, 2010). Constructivism, as a theory of learning, was embraced by the facilitator when planning for each meeting, ensuring that adult learners are engaged in the learning experiences and that learning can take place within the group. There must also be a commitment from the participants that they stay in their zone of proximal development and teach others what they may have more knowledge of so that all group members grow (Clemente, 2010).

The idea behind constructivism is that group members who are more knowledgeable about a topic support others who are less knowledgeable. Additionally, courtesy and support must be reciprocated when the roles are reversed. The facilitator's role is crucial in that the facilitator must create the environment and experiences that allow participants to feel that they can be both mentors and mentees, and teach and learn from others in an authentic way.

It is important at this juncture to articulate the contrast between Domain 4: Constructivism and Domain 1: Knowledge. As mentioned earlier in the study, Domain 1 centered on objectives for learning, which were discussed and agreed upon by the participants during the network meetings. The resources, such as readings, videos, and artifacts, fall under this domain. The deliberate nature by which these resources were introduced into a learning experience allowed group members to internalize the information and articulate their learning was described in Domain 4: Constructivism.

Galloway (2001) further explained that constructivism should be thought of as a method of constructing rather than acquiring knowledge, and requires a social setting in order to grow. As Fosnot (2005a, 2005b) stated, participants create meaning by establishing relationships in which they reflect upon and explain their actions.

Warhurst (2006) contended that communities of practice foster growth by providing meaningful experiences. He continued to say that participants create a shared language that pushes their thinking and generates a higher level of pedagogic meaning. The experiences within the SLN meetings were analyzed for the purposes of discovering patterns to reinforce these assertions.

Vygotsky's vision of constructivism places a heavy emphasis on the role of the teacher. This role of the teacher can be aligned with that of a facilitator, or leader, of a community of practice. Meyers (2008) found that, initially, teachers in a constructivist classroom must focus on creating a safe and welcoming space. Once this environment has been established, teachers must switch their focus to helping students construct knowledge together rather than sharing knowledge among themselves (Meyers, 2008).

Additionally, Wenger contended that for participants to actively engage, there has to be a sense of "legitimate peripheral participation," which Lave and Wenger (1991) defined as "communities introduced and assimilated novices, developed their expertise and hence reproduced and perpetuated themselves, while at the same time evolving" (p. 107). For participants to really feel engaged in the community of practice, there must be a feeling that one is becoming more and more part of the group. Only in the participants' increasing ability to create and understand knowledge can a community of practice flourish.

Fostering participation through protocols. The use of protocols as the primary vehicle for participant engagement and sharing authentic experiences with others was the dominant method of constructing knowledge in the meetings observed. Learning experiences and the facilitator and participants' roles within those experiences helped to illustrate the patterns that informed the findings for this domain.

The facilitator in each meeting utilized specific protocols to allow participants to share dilemmas about which they wished to learn from others. In one particular meeting, a

protocol was utilized to support a participant who presented a dilemma around the issue of trust. During that meeting in particular, the facilitator set up the protocol:

> Yes, thank you for always being so honest and being willing to ask such questions. So please make sure you have a question as I remind everyone about the consultancy protocol. We'll ask clarifying and probing questions, probing questions are for her sake so that she can get answers, but she may or may not answer them.

The presenter felt that the protocol was beneficial. At the conclusion of the protocol, after discussing the take-aways she gathered from the group, she stated, "Thank you! I feel better"

The facilitator also encouraged others to participate and share their experiences with others. This allowed the dialogue to continue between the members at different points of their learning. It also allowed members to acknowledge the wealth of expertise in the room that could help others with their own learning, and encourage and motivate others to participate. The facilitator stated, "There is a great bit of knowledge in this room. We are all tired and I know it's only Monday but we're going to speak up. So let us know when you have a question."

Participants also engaged in constructing knowledge together through specific prompts that they contemplated on their own, and then with a partner or small group. They were encouraged to take time to share with one another, meet their fellow members where they were, and support the learning of the group:

> Rather than do a pair share, our group is small, so let's share out. What are the benefits of being direct with teachers and letting them know what you want? And what are the downsides of that? Any stories to tell? Either way? Where you wish you had spoken up or you wish you hadn't?

The use of resources was also a catalyst for these prompts and subsequent discussions among the groups:

> (After the EPIC video of an administrator building trust) . . . if you come back to your seats . . . There is a journal prompt, "how do you convey your dissatisfaction [with the performance of an employee]?" We'll talk as a group a little more, but before, how did it speak to you?

An additional example of a structured conversation designed to solicit participation and sharing experiences came in a protocol during the February network meeting:

> Now we are going to personalize it for you individually. I asked you to bring your notebooks so you can look back at your first notes for the year. A lot of things have happened. I'm going to ask you to go to your tables and reflect individually—what happened? What did you follow up on and drill into? Then when you finish, I want you to be in a partner. We're using the communicate booklets. It's something you will do. It's about listening, paraphrasing, communicating. The idea is that we will spend about 30 minutes on this so that you each get 15 minutes. So you will spend 7 minutes reflecting, then 30 minutes with partners.

Building knowledge using specific protocols to gain insight from the expertise of other leaders in the group, or deliberately using resources to build knowledge as a group, was at the center of the findings for Domain 4: Constructivism.

Facilitator's function. When discussing the findings about constructivism, the role of the facilitator in the process of planning learning experiences as well as fostering an environment conducive to sharing and engaging in constructing knowledge becomes critical. The facilitator's thoughts on developing learning experiences that allow for sharing and supporting those in their zone of proximal development were the keys to the success of this domain and provided insight into the deliberate planning of experiences. Facilitator 1 stated, "I always ask myself, 'what are the opportunities to connect?' That's been intentional in my planning." This intentional and deliberate thinking about interpersonal connections when planning was at the forefront of the patterns found from analyzing the thinking of the facilitators during the construction of learning experiences for the network.

Facilitator 2 described this deliberate planning and setting up of the environment as follows:

> (I hope to design a) highly relevant learning experience. They have to be in a space where they look across the table and see another learner. (The participant had to) look across the table and know that they person across the table wants to be there too. I don't have to be guarded like in my district. Another element along that same arm is engaging in critical dialogue. Amongst members there are great mentors in the group.

The facilitator also described how it was a common practice to question the group about its direction to make the learning experiences relevant and beneficial. During the February meeting, the facilitator engaged the group with the following type of interaction. (This was also a pattern in the facilitation in most meetings):

> So we can bring that up in another month or so? Does that sound good? (participants nod) So I'm merely your facilitator. What do you guys think of this? What do want more of? We are going to go into more detail about what is working and what is not working and applying that to schools. (pauses) Let's talk about what leadership moves you saw me make or something that probed you to go deeper.

A tenet of constructivism is learning from those who are a little above, and a little below, one's own zone of proximal development (Galloway, 2001). One can learn from the experiences of a participant with more experience; one can also learn from teaching experiences to one who has less experience and expertise. Diversity of the group, then, becomes a deliberate part of the planning. Facilitator 2 described:

> It (diversity) is a challenge but good because the greater the diversity, the greater the learning. There are a couple of quotes I can site. A more veteran leader once told me, "I know culture is so important, but I had put it off my radar, but talking to a new leader and that's all that is on their mind, I realized I let it slip and I have to come back to that." The younger members—I really see a whole lot on the potential for mentoring. One particular principal once shared that "I was raised to respect elders but my teachers are older and have been at this longer, so I wasn't confident. But watching others in this group have the courage has encouraged me to do that." I also think with the veterans there isn't always a place to be able to share what has worked and there is great pride in sharing what has actually worked. Sharing that in a network meeting is really empowering.

The ultimate goal, as shared by the facilitator in an interview, would be to facilitate and foster, "Rich and real conversations and take risks and be real . . . (that is when) you really can form community of practice where skills can be built . . . in that kind of forum."

Participants articulated the importance of constructivism in different ways; however, a common pattern that arose through the interviews was that many participants felt comfortable sharing when they felt they had some expertise to share, and felt it was ok to just listen to leaders who had expertise in another area. Participant 6 stated, "It was a comfortable environment, and I learned from the story." She continued: "

> This is a new environment for me to learn how to navigate that. I am rarely in an environment where there are people that know more than me, yet I may have things from my experience that I can share.

Participant 6 added:

> The protocols are helpful, they're structures, but it's the content, the personal story that makes exceptional educators and exceptional leaders. So if we as leaders are not willing to go there I don't know how meaningful our conversations would be.

Participant 2 supported the beneficial nature of the protocols and engaging learning experiences, stating:

> Counsels have helped and the pair shares for sure . . . even when we go around and we just listen and ask clarifying questions, then after give suggestions and that helped and getting a different perspective and those things.

A careful review and analysis of the meeting documents validated the assertion that the protocols supported the construction of new knowledge. When asked which experiences were more conducive to their learning, the participant reflections identified the following:

- Use of protocol: useful way to have structured conversations/discussions—tackling hard issue(s) is important: choosing one issue I have procrastinated about and creating action plan for it

- Consultancy protocol provided me with some excellent ideas on facilitating interactions.

Domain 5: Leadership.

The literature on the importance of leadership is clear: Leadership is a key factor in the success of an organization such as education (Fullan, 2001; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Northouse, 2007). Within a community of practice, leadership becomes the catalyst and gatekeeper of success (Snyder et al., 2010).

John Adair (2009) discussed the importance of a specific focus of leadership that became the lens through which leadership practices were studied in this research. Situational leadership prescribes that a skillful facilitator balances the needs of the group. A facilitator who desires to lead a community of practice, regardless of the participants' background, must thoughtfully balance the needs of the task, the team, and the individual. They must cultivate participation so everyone grows. The role of the facilitator becomes one of ring leader, flexible planner, manager, instructional coach, and reflective practitioner. Northouse (2007) reiterated this idea when he wrote, "The situational approach demands that leaders demonstrate a high degree of flexibility" (p. 96).

Ability to adapt in the moment. The crucial role of the facilitator in a Community of Practice is evident in the patterns of evidence seen throughout the observed meetings. There were numerous instances of the facilitator having to "read the group" and adjust the learning experiences based on the needs of the group. A facilitator makes everything from small adjustments, such as "modifying on the spot because I was

envisioning three groups" due to a small group to begin the November meeting, to larger adjustments and clarification of the goals for the group:

> Its 5:20 and I'm thinking this might be it. So I want to thank each of you to be here. And you're paying and it's a rainy day. So, thank you. So I'm going to do a quick review because a month was a long time ago. We identified this main goal that we all rallied around in establishing, or I'd like to say continuing to establish, a school culture where learning for students and adults is the primary focus. So we kind of unpacked that a little bit, we went into an envisioning activity, and what this would look like at specific months, and then identified 1-3 barriers.

The facilitator also made adjustments within activities or provided "think time" to ensure that each member felt involved and that his/her voice was being heard. One such adjustment came when a twosome was isolated at the end of the table and the facilitator was able to read the group's building frustration. The facilitator mentioned to the group, "They're coming down to join since we are so small they're feeling kind of frustrated."

This attention to the detail and the "pulse" of the group was crucial to the engagement of all members and their ability to attain the benefit they sought from the meeting. The facilitator made another adjustment on the fly that illustrated the fluidity and reading of group as well as the flexibility of the group. The facilitator stated, "Rather than do a pair share, our group is small, so let's share out." This changed a small pair share to a large group discussion in furtherance of the group's objectives. Yet another example involved the facilitator adjusting the final activity was reflected in this remark, "I'm thinking it would be better if we did a whole group rather than two tiny groups, but if you would rather do a group of 3 and a group of 4, we can do that."

A skill that was seen as crucial, due to its pattern and impact, was the ability to read the group and address its needs, balanced with the objectives of the gathering. The importance of validating the feelings of the group, "taking of the pulse," and adjusting the

agenda and learning activities during the night became another trend in the comments from the participants. As one participant commented:

> Facilitators must be observant and good listeners by being able to check in with what they think is said and rephrasing. Facilitators must have a willingness to set aside their agenda for being in tune with what it is the participants are needing. By being flexible, the facilitator is able to pick up on what is asked and what the group wants and needs. Facilitators are willing to push us and dig deeper; it's not always a feel good session but they always are willing to push our thinking.

Facilitators could be heard adjusting to the needs of the participants in the moment by saying:

> I'm thinking it would be better if we did a whole group rather than two tiny groups, but if you would rather do, a group of 3 and a group of 4, we can do that. I've given you two protocols, ping pong I don't think we'll do and we can definitely do it next month because [participant] presented a dilemma for us to dig into today.

The facilitators echoed much of the same sentiment that the participants shared. The facilitators described the importance of their role in identifying what they believed were the most important dispositions a leader must possess and what specific actions they must take when facilitating a group that illustrates those dispositions needed.

> Our most successful leaders are facilitators—they are intuitive. They can read people and can adjust to what the group needs. Can read what still needs to be developed in a group to have them learn. What are the core leadership skills they want to build toward? So if a group talks about managing resistance we have to build that. So, having some knowledge of that is good or the ability to learn on the job…we need lifelong learners. And they have to believe in our mission . . . People are goal oriented and can have them hold themselves accountable to really pushing all of their principals to a higher level. It weighs heavily on them to be successful.

Reflection and planning. Interviews with the facilitators pointed to another essential characteristic: facilitators must be reflective practitioners that use data from the group in order to improve future sessions. As one facilitator said:

> (Facilitators) have to be really reflective. No matter what facilitation skills they have. If they can't reflect then they won't be successful. They have to have a sincere desire to help the people in the room. They have to be committed to the content or it won't work.

Specific actions and activities related to the essential dispositions a leader of a community of practice must possess were described by the facilitators. Facilitator 1

touched on this when stating, “My planning is to have more journal prompts now so that there are more times to reflect. What are the opportunities to connect? That’s been intentional in my planning.” The opportunity to connect is at the forefront of the facilitator’s ability to understand the needs of the group and adjust for their learning.

Considerations must also be made when planning for the differences in the group, whether they are about experience and expertise or the type of school from which they come:

> I want to make sure we’re not talking about LAUSD issues or issues that only one group could talk about. So I avoid any specific initiatives either way because it’s not about the initiatives; it’s about how we’re taking on the responsibility because of or in spite of the initiatives.

Additionally, the ability to take feedback and incorporate that feedback into the plan is a crucial element in the facilitation of this model of a community of practice. As one participant stated:

> I feel the leadership of the network brings the purpose . . . I feel like my voice, there is always a check in process like at the end of each meeting, and the constant asking for feedback. The dot survey which helped pick the direction of the group at the beginning of the year was important. They are getting our input.

To articulate the essential skills and dispositions a facilitator would need to lead this model of community of practice, one can look at the summation of much of the data gathered for all five domains. The essential dispositions can be articulated as:

- Taking time to establish and promote a safe environment in which participants feel confident that their voice can be heard and it is of valued;
- Designing learning experiences that allow for authentic reflection and storytelling;

- Reading the group and being flexible with the agenda to meet the needs of the group; and
- Using the data gathered from meetings, both anecdotal and survey, to refine the experiences for the next meeting.

Summary of Key Findings

Due to the lack of one comprehensive theory that addresses the specific issues related to creating a community of practice for traditional public school and charter school leaders, a conceptual framework was necessary to guide this study. The intersection of community of practice theory, constructivist theory, and leadership theory served as the foundation for the theoretical framework for public and charter school collaboration. In highlighting the key components of each theory, the researcher created a framework that served as the lens through which all data gathered were collected and analyzed to answer the research questions.

This data analysis led to developing a set of clear domains and indicators for creating a model for communities of practice between traditional public school and charter school leaders. This framework can then guide the creation, implementation, and sustainability of a community of practice that is specifically tailored to the needs of traditional public and charter school leaders. While the scope of this framework was intentionally narrow, elements that would be beneficial for any type of community of practice were uncovered and suggestions for further study are made. The ultimate goal of this study was to promote a socially just education, through equality in schools, access, and opportunities. By creating a community of practice framework, this study ultimately

provided a programmatic solution that systematically can increase academic achievement results for all children, regardless of their school placement.

This study employed qualitative approaches, via a case study, to answer the research questions and to ultimately uncover the elements deemed most important in creating and maintaining a community of practice.

The following outline provides a summary of key findings from observations, interviews, and document reviews. This summary is discussed in depth in subsequent sections in this chapter and provides the basis for the completed framework discussed in Chapter 5.

Domain 1: Knowledge

The domain of knowledge as it pertained to the use of resources, whether literacy, video, or personal experience-based, was described by (evidenced by, supported by, discussed by, revolved around) the following elements:

1. Agreed-Upon Purpose
    a. Wenger (2004) presented significant research on the necessary components that ensure the success of a community of practice. First and foremost, members of a community of practice must agree on a domain, which Wenger (2004) stated is an agreed-upon area of knowledge that needs to be explored and developed.
    b. Members were provided with the opportunity to determine the foci for the group through an activity where they chose the 3 topics they wanted to address during the course of the network meetings for the year.

2. Resources
    a. Use of materials such as EPIC video clips, articles, and prompts.
    b. Storytelling as a vehicle for authentic experiences of members are a resource in itself.

Domain 2: Relationships

Domain 2 was rooted in the understanding, based on the literature, that to foster an effective community of practice, the entity must be defined by the people in the group and the relationships they form within the group (Wenger, 1998). This definition was expanded by the assertion that learning through discussion and building relationships define community and the sharing of knowledge and practice (Li et al., 2009).

One facilitator, when interviewed and asked about the importance and role of building relationships described that:

> The development of relationships must be done in order to foster an intimacy that allows group members to become vulnerable with what they do not know and ask for specific support in learning from others. The development of trust among the group becomes a necessary element of an effective community of practice.

1. Explicit actions to build trust
    a. The facilitator utilized explicit team-building activities such as ice breakers and counsel sessions to allow members to build trust.
    b. Explicit discussions about the confidentiality of the group supported an environment of trust.
2. A safe environment
    a. Participants articulated feeling comfortable about sharing their experiences and that this aspect was a crucial part of their participation in the group.

b. Sharing stories allowed many participants to feel connected and not alone in the process of their work.
c. Participants also voiced that this desire to share and understand came from a genuine place for the participants and that the facilitator was a key element in fostering that environment.

Domain 3: Authenticity

Authenticity pertains to the ability and opportunity of participants to take the information that they are receiving at the network meetings, bring it back to their sites, and use it for the betterment of their schools. Johnson (2001) described, "It is not the knowledge itself that is so valuable, rather it is the ability of an organization's members to generate knowledge and innovate using that knowledge" (p. 49).

1. Making Connections
    a. The formulation of a common objective that is decided upon by the group, supported by their buy-in and willingness to engage, and was brought to their site as it was relevant to their needs.
    b. Making connections to the work done in the network meetings was articulated by many participants and reinforced by group surveys and reflections. Deliberately choosing relevant foci and activities through which participants can make connections was a salient trend in the data analyzed.
2. Theory into practice

a. Participants also found that the research, readings, and protocols on the common topic was fruitful in that the new information could then be brought back to their site for use within their school community.

b. The data analysis suggested that not only uncovering new knowledge but also having a plan for that knowledge was essential.

Domain 4: Constructivism

Warhurst (2006) contended that communities of practice foster growth by providing meaningful experiences. He continued to say that participants create a shared language that pushes their thinking and generates a higher level of pedagogic meaning. The experiences within the SLN meetings were analyzed for the purposes of discovering patterns to reinforce these assertions.

Constructivism, as a theory of learning, was embraced by the facilitator when planning for each meeting to ensure that adult learners were engaged in the learning experiences and that learning would take place within the group.

1. Fostering participation through protocols
    a. Protocols as the primary vehicle for participant engagement and sharing authentic experiences with others were the dominant method of constructing knowledge in the meetings observed.
    b. Diversity of the group became a deliberate part of the planning.
    c. Facilitators deliberately provided experiences that afforded the opportunity to share one's story and allow it to help others and, in turn, allowed one to

reflect on the information and experience and find new learning and *truths* within.

2. Facilitator's function
    a. When discovering the findings about constructivism, the role of the facilitator in the process of planning learning experiences, as well as fostering an environment conducive to sharing and engaging in constructing knowledge, became critical.
    b. The facilitators explicitly thought about ways members could connect. As Facilitator 1 stated, "I always ask myself, 'what are the opportunities to connect?' That's been intentional in my planning."
    c. The ultimate goal, as shared by the facilitator in an interview, was to facilitate and foster, "Rich and real conversations and take risks and be real . . . (that is when) you really can form community of practice where skills can be built . . . in that kind of forum."

Domain 5: Leadership

The literature on the importance of leadership was clear: Leadership is a key factor in the success of an organization such as education (Fullan, 2001; Marzano et al., 2005; Northouse, 2007). Within a community of practice, leadership becomes the catalyst and gatekeeper of success (Snyder et al., 2010).

1. Ability to adapt in the moment
    a. There were numerous instances of the facilitator having to "read the group" and adjust the learning experiences based on the needs of the group. Small

adjustments were made, such as "modifying on the spot because I was envisioning three groups."

b. This attention to the detail and the "pulse" of the group was crucial to the engagement of all members and the benefit they sought for the gathering.

2. Reflection and Planning

a. A leader's ability to reflect became a strong trend articulated by many participants. An example follows:

> (Facilitators) have to be really reflective. No matter what facilitation skills they have. If they can't reflect then they won't be successful. They have to have a sincere desire to help the people in the room. They have to be committed to the content or it won't work.

b. The ability to take feedback and incorporate that feedback into the plan was a crucial element of facilitation in this model of a community of practice.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 utilized a strategic and specific coding process in which data was triangulated from observations of School Leader Network meetings, one-on-one interviews, and document reviews and coded analysis based on the five domains of effective communities of practice identified from literature. The findings from this data analysis answered research questions concerning the creation of a diverse group of school leaders from charter and traditional public schools by the School Leaders Network developing and maintaining a community of practice, and identified which skills and dispositions were most important for a facilitator with respect to this particular community of practice.

The data analyzed were categorized under the following domains: Knowledge, Relationships, Authenticity, Constructivism, and Leadership. The trends of the data

gathered, as well as alignment of specific literature, reinforced the importance and functionality of each domain when it came to enabling the development of an effective specific community of practice for this particular type of diverse group of leaders.

The participants, either through their actions during network meetings, their interview commentaries, or their written reflections, articulated patterns consistent with the assertion that the proposed domains are necessary for creating a community of practice between charter and traditional public school leaders.

The parallel between the object of knowledge and the use of carefully constructed prompts, videos, and protocols to build from the current knowledge was supported. The facilitator's role in designing those learning experiences was articulated further by the participants.

The necessity to build relationships and authenticity among the group members as well as to foster the learning that was occurring within the network meetings was articulated as a positive by the members as well as by the facilitators.

Leadership was the largest of the domains, based on the amount of evidence gathered and the emphasis placed on the leader, or facilitator, with respect to the success of such a group. Dispositions such as good listener, flexible thinker, and reflective practitioner were only some of the qualities identified by the participants and facilitators.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Restatement of Purpose

The overall purpose of this study was to create a working framework for a model of a community of practice for leaders of charter and traditional public schools. This framework could then be applied to allow for a new model of collaboration to be fostered among a population of leaders who were diverse in their experiences as well as in their backgrounds and types of schools. This framework was born out of a need to remedy a specific problem that exists between charter and traditional public schools. Animosity and mistrust has plagued these two entities for some time (Lockwood, 2004). This mistrust has created a void in collaboration and a mindset that the "other" cannot be trusted (Kirst, 2007; Lockwood, 2004).

As discussed, to facilitate the development of the Community of Practice Framework, a case study was designed to inform its creation. The researcher utilized this case study approach to study a School Leaders Network in Los Angeles, which consisted of both charter and traditional public school leaders. Field notes were taken during four network meetings, interviews were conducted with the facilitator and each participant in the network, and document reviews were conducted. The data were then triangulated to inform the development of the Community of Practice Framework presented in this study.

This study was predicated on the dire need for education reform. Currently, there are six million students in California's public school system, with one in five children

living in poverty and about half participating in the federal free and reduced-price meal program (EdSource, 2012).

In 2009–2010, the dropout rate for Hispanics and African Americans in the state of California was 21.9% and 29.2%, respectively. In a more dense region such as Los Angeles Unified School District, the dropout rate for Hispanics and African Americans was reported as 26.1% and 32.6%, respectively (California Department of Education, 2012).

Trends from a variety of state and national tests have reported a consistently lower score for certain groups of students, namely Hispanics and African Americans, compared to other groups, such as White and Asian students. EdSource summarized the issue as follows:

> On the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and California's own standards-based tests (CSTs), poor students, African Americans and Latinos, and English learners are over-represented among students scoring at the lowest levels and under-represented among the highest scoring. Other measures of student achievement—including dropout and graduation rates, completion of the a–g courses required for eligibility to the state's four-year universities, and college admissions—reveal similar achievement patterns between these groups of students and their peers. These results are important because they predict later success, including students' ability as adults to secure jobs that pay a living wage. (EdSource, 2012)

Although it was not this study's intent to explore the data of the achievement gap, the mere existence of an achievement gap, from a social justice perspective, became the catalyst for this study, which aimed to provide a model for dealing with the issues of education in a different way. The opportunity to try something new in the hopes that, with implementation and further longitudinal research, a change in this trend in education could be reversed became the long-term objective.

Organization of Chapter 5

The organization of Chapter 5 was designed to provide a final synthesis, analysis, and set of recommendations based on these findings. First, the research questions are specifically addressed and synthesized answers are provided. Second, through synthesis and analysis, I discuss the significance of the findings from the study.

Additionally, I provide a revision to the conceptual framework based on the synthesis and analysis of the research data. This revised framework is presented in Figure 3, which shows added information for each domain in which the findings are incorporated into action steps for use in further study. This revised framework is provided to support the reader's comprehension and own analysis of the findings and recommendations for further research.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to identify the essential elements necessary to develop a community of practice between charter and traditional school leaders. Through the qualitative case study method, this study focused on finding the crucial elements necessary for creating an environment in which collaboration could occur.

The development of a community of practice framework was a primary goal and, through the development of that framework, the following research questions were answered:

1) What steps were taken and what processes were put in place to create the community of practice?

2) What knowledge, skills, and dispositions must a facilitator possess in order to lead this model of a community of practice?
3) What are the elements deemed most important in creating and maintaining this model of a community of practice?

To develop the proposed framework and answer the research questions, data were collected during School Leaders Network monthly meetings and semistructured interviews with the facilitators and each participant, as well as document reviews from the SLN database**.**

Answering the questions.

Research question 1. This cohort was created out of a need to capitalize on funding. It was an afterthought that this group brought together traditional public and charter school leaders. To take advantage of this group of people, the group participated in protocols to set objectives for the year. This indicated a shift from a group of leaders that got together to discuss experiences toward an intentional community of practice.

Research question 2. First and foremost, facilitators must possess the ability to read the needs of the group and to adjust in the moment to make the best use of the time. In addition, facilitators must possess an ability to foster relationships through the use of effective questioning and feedback that provides the opportunity for the participants to drive the conversation. The ability to be a reflective practitioner and to utilize feedback from the participants is essential in planning and designing experiences that will be beneficial for all.

Research question 3. The five domains identified within the study articulated the essential elements for this type of community of practice. They are knowledge, relationships, authenticity, constructivism, and leadership. The nexus of these five domains led to the creation of framework for community of practice between traditional public and charter school leaders.

Significance of Findings

The need for a conceptual framework to guide this study was apparent due to the lack of one comprehensive theory that addressed the specific issues of creating communities of practice for traditional public school and charter school leaders. The intersection of community of practice theory, constructivist theory, and leadership theory served as the foundation for the theoretical framework for public and charter school collaboration. In highlighting the key components of each theory, the researcher created a framework that acted as the lens through which all data gathered were collected and analyzed to answer the research questions.

Focusing on triangulating data to inform and develop the research-based domains present in the community of practice framework allowed the study to reach its goal to create a practical framework that could be used to guide communities of practice in the future. This framework would then allow the researcher to draw connections and answer the research questions posed.

It was discovered that creating a climate of sharing and connecting with the person behind the professional was the key to a successful collaboration and, ultimately, created opportunities to change the mindsets of combative entities. This was not unlike the SLN

program model in that it articulated the need to create a community where participants could take risks. However, this framework expanded on this idea and aimed to bring it closer to practice by integrating the additional domains of leadership and constructivism. The following descriptors act as conclusive statements based on the evidence gathered. Essential elements of the community of practice included:

- The opportunity for the participants in the group to decide the objectives created a sense of belonging. Being able to continue to refer back to these objectives and have the learning experiences align to those objectives made participants feel that their voices were heard and were important. The group became their group and not the group of the facilitator or SLN.
- The use of resources such as readings and videos was important, but such resources must be coupled with a constructivist-minded learning experience. Participants needed the opportunity to share experiences within the group and to create accountability to ensure that the information and new learning was brought back to the leaders' sites. This allowed new leaders to make an impact on their school communities.
- The ability to share their experiences in an authentic conversation allowed other leaders to learn from those stories. Using this constructivist model, a more experienced leader learned from teaching their understanding to others or from revisiting a past concern a less experienced leader was currently dealing with. A new leader learned from hearing the experiences

of veteran leaders and by allowing themselves to be vulnerable enough to say, “I don’t know” or “I struggle and need help with…”

- Leadership/facilitation of this group was critical. The leader had to take into account all of the above and have the fluidity, the wherewithal, and the understanding of the objectives to be intuitive and to read the group’s needs and concerns. In addition, it was essential that leaders fostered an environment where the “truths” of the group were allowed to surface. Patience was required to allow for the trust to build without getting impatient with this essential element.
- The perceptions of charter schools and traditional public school leaders were not as much of a pattern or hindrance as the literature would suggest. Leaders mentioned that they did not have much of a preconception of the other side coming in, other than what they had heard from others, but a change in the mindset occurred through the process. One quote that represented that trend came from a traditional public school leader, who stated:

> I didn’t really have many perceptions of charters coming in other than general perceptions from what I had heard or read but I did not have direct experience, but I certainly had a perception that they were small, had more room to do things . . . I think what made me comfortable was that whether charter or public we still have the same issues, it was not too different for us, we all deal with management of people, teaching and learning.

Based on the data collected and analyzed during this study, a completed framework for a model of a community of practice for a diverse group of school leaders was created, as depicted in Figure 3.

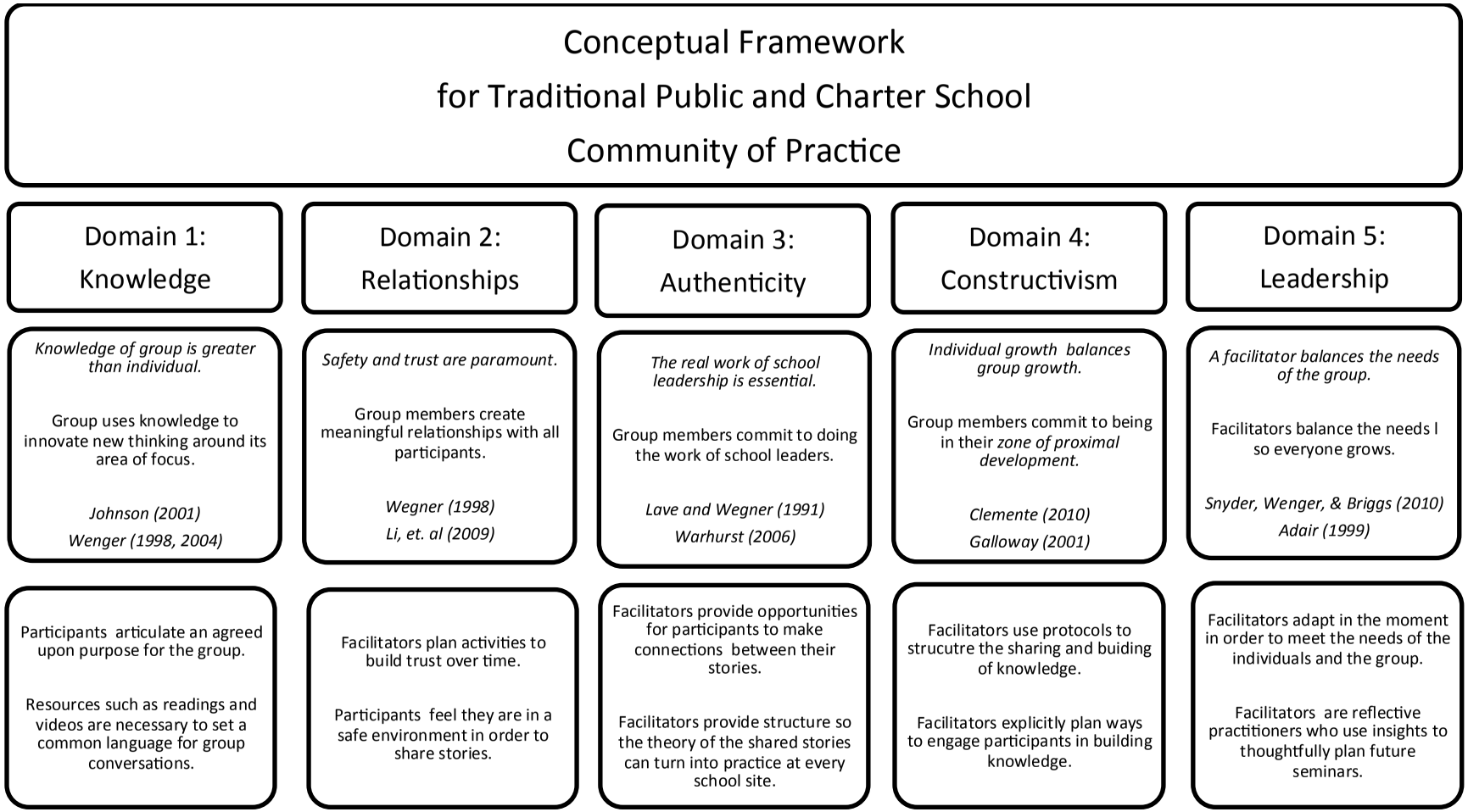

Figure 3. Conceptual framework for a model of community of practice between charter and traditional public school leaders: final.

Recommendations for School Leaders Network

Leaders within all types of schools, traditional public, charter, parochial, and private, can benefit from their leaders taking part of this groundbreaking structure and model for collaboration. Policymakers and the powers that run schools must heed the notion that leaders need to be nourished and supported in an environment that allows them to take risks, ask for help, and discuss, without hesitation, their experiences in order to facilitate growth.

The recommendation for School Leaders Network is to continue to expand its reach and engage in groups that represent and support different types of schools. Utilizing the proposed framework is recommended as a guideline for building on the trends found within this study to allow for such diverse groups to begin engaging in communities of practice and environments in which knowledge can be shared.

Recommendations for Policy

It is recommended that increased capacity must be made and funding must be increased for communities of practice that focus on creating an environment for authentic collaboration. To ease communication and to build trust, districts that authorize charter schools can include stipulations that the authorized charters and their traditional public school counterparts take part in a community of practice.

It is also recommended that communities of practice be used to facilitate future leadership development. Based on current literature, the lack of prepared school leaders in the administration pipeline is a problem in need of serious discussion and action. The lack of leadership could become the downfall of the educational system, especially in the schools that are underperforming and underserving the most marginalized youth in our communities. A

training ground for leaders that would allow a forum for authentic conversations, collaboration, and support would go a long way in supporting leaders in their monumental task of reversing the achievement gap. This is especially true in our current budget climate, in which administrators are being asked to do more with less.

Finally, it is recommended that subsidies for leaders to be a part of leadership groups such as School Leaders Network be provided, especially in areas in which they would not have the means to pay for the program out of their already lean budgets.

Recommendations for Future Research

The scope of this study proved too narrow to allow for a longitudinal study of practices as they were taken back to school sites. It was also impossible to analyze these practices for the benefit that each school site experienced. This was a deliberate decision as the scope of the study pertained to the development of a framework that would guide the creation of communities of practice for which longitudinal work could be done. This study was to lay the groundwork for further research in an area that has not had the benefit of much research in the past.

That being said, the question of "Does it work?" must be addressed. The researcher acknowledges that not to do so would be inappropriate and irresponsible. Therefore, this issue is addressed with the following recommendations for further research.

Utilize the framework as a guiding structure for a future community of practice between charter and traditional public school leaders and test the findings of that group against that of the framework. This research can validate the framework and identify opportunities to revise and refine its use.

Create a longitudinal study to allow the researcher to go beyond the scope of this particular study and gather evidence of the effectiveness of these meetings in a school setting and, ultimately, on student achievement. A quantitative study to analyze the link between the effectiveness of the framework and the implementation and outcomes within a school setting is strongly recommended.

Recommendations for Practice

The gravity of this research does not exist in the findings from the one particular cohort of leaders; rather, it exists in the idea that collaboration between these two entities is possible. It is important to articulate that this study can be a part of a larger context and can add to the larger context of education reform.

The following recommendations pertain to the furtherance of practice in the hope that this study will influence a larger context.

Recommendation 1. It is recommended that as a condition of a charter authorized through a district, leaders must take part in a community of practice that is a blended model with charter and traditional school leaders. This cohort can then share best practices and track progress of their school.

Recommendation 2. As part of a district or charter school's support for leaders a community of practice using the tenets proposed in the community of practice framework should become part of the induction program and program for support of the school leaders.

Recommendation 3. It is recommended that institutions of higher learning, especially in administrative leadership programs, foster communities of practice across the lines of charter, traditional public, and private/parochial school candidates to instill an understanding and comfort

level from all types of schools before they graduate into their roles as administrators. This will increase the likelihood that they will continue to collaborate across these lines.

Summary

The purpose of this study was not only to answer the research questions, but also to develop a framework for communities of practice when a diverse group of leaders is involved. It was appropriate then, that a study focused on changing the mindsets of participants in their work as collaborative educators resulted in a change of mindset for the researcher as well. It is a long-standing idea—one backed by the literature and by anecdote—that charter and traditional school entities do not trust one another and have built animosity toward one another, which has made it difficult to support one another and to share experiences across divisions. When formulating the work for this study, the researcher believed that this difference, this identification by leaders as a charter or traditional public, would be a challenge; however, when the evidence was collected and the case study was completed, a clear and focused understanding was evident that this was not the essential thought or challenge.

Through this study, a truth began to emerge. It became apparent through the patterns and subsequent findings of the study that there was not this preoccupation with questioning the ability and willingness of charter and traditional public school leaders to step away from the imaginary lines that divided them. Rather, this community of practice counted on that ability. In stepping away from these invisible lines, educators were able to tell authentic stories, that, when shared, supported everyone in creating a more socially just education for all of our students.

Storytelling

The idea of storytelling, although not a primary focus when the study began, was explicitly identified by numerous participants. Sharing knowledge and understanding that each other's experiences acted as a resource for learning was clearly articulated when one participant stated, "Hearing the stories gives me a sense that I am not the only one and what I am going through is not unusual. It is helpful to get the validation that you are not the only one."

Additionally, one participant explained the necessary elements for storytelling:

> Creating a safe place to tell your story . . . the more comfortable you feel the more willing you are to be open about it and not feel judged. It makes your story authentic because you are not trying to make the story be pretty and you are exposing yourself and what you struggle with.

Another participant echoed this sentiment when she described her experience of gaining knowledge through sharing when she said, "…but it was a comfortable environment, and I learned from the story." This participant went on to say, "(Meaningful storytelling) is crucial. The protocols are helpful, they're structures, but it's the content, the personal story that makes exceptional educators and exceptional leaders." Further, within this unique group of educators from charter and traditional public schools, an opportunity arose to foster collaboration between the two and perhaps to change the mindsets of the leaders.

One caveat to this idea of storytelling is that the storytelling cannot be for storytelling's sake. This can cause the conversation to become mired in minutiae and keep the storyteller from sharing authentically and the listener from learning. One participant articulated this consideration well when she said that it is crucial to have story telling, but:

> Story telling but with a purpose . . . the protocols help to get to the outcome, the protocol lets you see (the issue) in a different way and helps to make sure that there is something that you walk away with which is different than just talking with someone on the street who is sharing something with you about their day.

It was through this purpose that the underlying, necessary element that ran through the framework and through this study was discovered. The essential idea is that the community of practice and the framework proposed in this study is guided not by innovative, new learning; rather, it is a new model of creating the opportunity for educators to share their authentic experiences through storytelling.

In Furtherance of a Socially Just Education

Establishing a culture of storytelling and a safe place to take risks is essential to repairing the divide between traditional public and charter school leaders. The patterns discussed in this dissertation—of organizational dysfunction and lack of leadership, as well as of conflict versus collaboration in the school reform process—are the essences of social justice researchers, including Noguera and Wing (2006), among others.

Historically, social justice education has its roots in democratic education, which Dover (2010) defined as a system that is

> based on the beliefs that (a) a key role of education is the preparation of students for societal functions, (b) teaching and learning must be grounded in students' lived experiences in order to be effective, and (c) instructional processes that limit students' intellectual freedom and self-governance inhibit their development as fully functional members of society. (e.g., Dewey, 1916/2007).

This idea was built upon by the research of Friere, from whom Dover (2010) defined his theory, critical pedagogy, a system that, "envisions education as means through which individuals can either be subjugated into oppressive systems or gain consciousness about (*conscientização)* and the ability to transform oppressive features of society (praxis)." Dover (2010) pointed to Adams, Bell, and Griffin's 1997 seminal work, which defined social justice education as

> Both an interdisciplinary subject matter that analyzes multiple forms of oppression (such as racism and sexism), and a set of interactive, experiential pedagogical principles that help students understand the meaning of social difference and oppression in their personal lives and the social system. (p. xv)

These researchers, along with Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), and reiterated by Torres and Noguera (2008), discussed the necessity of "crossing borders" within education as an ethical action if we are ever going to educate the masses, not as an act of oppression but of empowerment. Torres and Noguera (2008) stated, "Crossing the lines of difference is, indeed, a central dilemma of transformative social justice learning" (p. 7).

At the heart of this dissertation was the pursuit of a socially just education for all students. The LMU School of Education framework states, "We consider education to be a powerful force for both understanding and responding to social inequities and historical forces of oppression." It goes further to state:

> We also agree with Paulo Freire that education is not a neutral act but rather one that empowers or disempowers (Freire, 1970). We adopt as our own the Freirian notion that, though education should be available for all people and empower them, educators must be especially concerned about individuals and groups that have been historically disempowered by unjust social structures.

In their *Art of Critical Pedagogy,* Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) discussed that the fundamental force in critical pedagogy is to allow students, and educators alike, to develop the motivation and the skill to identify the inequalities present within the educational system, whether in the curriculum or elsewhere, and to work collaboratively to end this inequality.

It is time to move the critical discourse out of the political arena and back into the classroom. Further, schools must eliminate hostility toward conflict and move toward collaborating in the school reform process.

Horace Mann (1846) reminded us that education is the great equalizer in society. The promotion of a socially just education is at the core of this study. An environment that allows educators from all types of educational entities to engage in the practice of storytelling for the edification of others in the group is meaningful. Coupling storytelling with the sole purpose of

bringing learning back to the schools and students is of utmost importance in a time when artificial lines are being drawn between traditional public and charter school leaders.

It has been said many times that education reform is the civil rights issue of our generation, but if it is that important, where is the sense of urgency to address it? This rhetoric, unfortunately, has become part of slogans and stump speeches instead of part of the actual action steps being taken by educators to support the students in this country. The rhetoric of *not in my backyard*, or *we can do this better than you*, has created an environment in which collaboration is taboo rather than a necessity.

It must be made clear to all practitioners that many innovative, creative, passionate educators work right next door. This study has uncovered the essential truth that collaboration between these dedicated professionals is, indeed, possible. A socially just education must be more than a calling card, a shared program, or facility in a school. A socially just education for all students must be a call to action. All leaders, regardless of their background or current place in the educational system, must seize the opportunity to share their expertise and learn from others so that they may bring each other to a higher level of education for all students. Our students and the communities in which they will ultimately be empowered to serve demand at least that much.

APPENDIX A

FACILITATOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Facilitator Questions for Post Network Meeting Debrief

Semi structured interview, December - March

Location and Time: Immediately following the network meetings in the meeting room

1. How do you feel it went? (Probe for details)
2. Why do you think it went this way?
3. How do you feel you were able to balance the needs of the task and the needs of the team tonight? (Domain 5)
    - Were there specific instances where you felt you did that well?
    - Were there specific instances where you felt you didn't meet that balance?
4. Did any of the reactions of the group surprise you?
    - Did that influence how you continued?
5. What did you notice about the level of participation tonight? (Domain 3)
6. Thinking back to your plan was there anything would change to foster more participation? (Domain 5)
7. What new knowledge emerged from the group tonight? (Domain 1)
8. Where do you feel the relationship building in the group has benefitted creation of that new knowledge? (Domain 2)
9. In a group of professionals, what must you think about in fostering relationships between the members? (Domain 2)
10. Which group members do you feel were challenged in the group tonight? (Domain 4)
    - Conversely, who were the leaders and experts of the night? (Domain 4)

APPENDIX B

LEADER/PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Questions for Post Network Meeting Debrief

Semi structured interview, December - March

Location and Time: Immediately following or within 2 weeks of the network meetings

1. Why did you join the School Leaders Network? (Domain 3)
2. What was your perception of traditional public school leaders/charter school leaders before coming in to this group? (Domain 1)
3. You are in a unique group of professionals. Charter and traditional public schools have a history of not collaborating. What makes this group different?
4. What role does the facilitator play in the effectiveness of this community of practice? (Domain 5)
5. What do believe are the essential elements that a facilitator must possess in this type of community of practice with this specific mix of school leaders? (Domain 5)
6. Thinking back to the last meeting, what new knowledge emerged from the group? (Domain 1)
7. During that meeting did you feel challenged as the learner or did you feel empowered as a mentor? (Domain 4)
8. What experiences on your campus informed your participation in the last meeting? (Domain 3)
    - Did you find these experiences similar/dissimilar to your traditional public/charter colleagues?

9. What have you seen as the common understanding or thread between the two types of school leaders (charter or traditional public)? (Domain 2)
10. How would you describe the process of building meaningful relationships with your colleagues from different types of schools? (Domain 2)
11. How have your colleagues supported you in your growth as a leader? (Domain 4)

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