

# **A Sociological Hermeneutic for District Superintendents**

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## **Sociological Hermeneutic For The Socialization of the District Superintendent**

Children are socialized differentially on the basis of parental expectations about the roles the children will assume as adults; understandably, parents base these expectations on their own experiences. However, socialization is a lifelong process. In Kohn's sample men age 50 and older showed shifts in basic personality traits in response to their occupational roles, (Stark 1992, p.162). Socialization prepares people for roles and their roles, in turn, shape socialization.

These studies indicate that we are not children only one time in life, but many times in life. An individual assuming a new occupational position that calls for sensing unfamiliar to him/her, thinking processes that are foreign to his/her patterns, intuitions that have never been tapped, and feelings that arouse responses unexperienced before is a child in a new position.

Socialization of children is designed to train them how to fill roles in society. There are technical and substantive dimensions to these experiences. All people have inner emotional responses that will never be released until triggered by unfamiliar experiences. Then the individual, like a child, substantiates existence by integrating, organizing, and legitimizing them with usage and experiencing.

### **Informal Socialization**

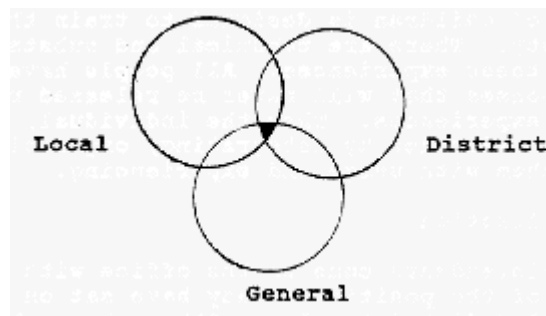
District superintendents come to the office with informal understanding of the position. Many have sat on district boards and filled district roles. Others have observed the activities of the District Superintendent in his duties as a leader of the churches and pastors.

They have observed the position of the DS in the structure of the denomination. They have experienced the structural-functional activities on the district. Each one has a built in image of the superintendency. This image is brought with each one into the position. Included within the image of the superintendency are negative feelings of the changes that appear to take place in a man the longer he stays in the position. For instance, the word is, that DS's begin with the idealism of being a pastor to pastors but over time they become bureaucrats, realists, and pragmatists. They are socialized informally, socialized formally, and then resocialized informally with inputs of formal socialization designed to maintain a balance between idealism and pragmatism.

Superintendents have been criticized and vilified. They work with pastors who live on inadequate salaries, many pastors work with impossible situations, carry great responsibilities with very limited resources, and are pressured to be successful in communities not conducive for growth. The district superintendent works to motivate

these pastors and laymen. There is a mutual feedback that makes it a stand-off in many cases as the superintendents work with many problems. There are not enough "big" or "good" churches to satisfy everyone. Much of the changes we see in the DS over time could be defense mechanisms for emotional and professional survival. The general church adds to this through its need to support its own programs.

The Lord Himself is the only sustainer they have. Some succumb to a power driven life style which causes people to question motives and mission. They also have personality eccentricities like all of us who observe them. They have emotional needs that cannot be met within the district environment. It takes an astute leader to balance the needs of his family and endure the pressures of three interrelated systems with him at the center.



I have tried to put together a hermeneutic that can be used to interpret the interrelated framework that must be formed in the unfolding of the District Superintendent's position. The hermeneutic is implemented on the individual, group, and societal levels of functioning.

There are broad considerations that infiltrate each variable of the hermeneutic:

1. A diachronic view or synchronic view
2. Structure, process and function
3. A micro view or macro view
4. Personal strength-emotion emission and pressures
5. Understanding the use of power bestowed on him by the church as he assumes responsibility for the unfolding of people's lives.

## **Formal Socialization**

### ***Manual statement***

**208.** The duties of a district superintendent shall be:

**208.1.** To organize, recognize, and supervise local churches within the bounds of his assembly district, subject to the approval of the general superintendent having jurisdiction. [100, 310, 411.12]

**208.2.** To visit the local churches in his assembly district at least once a year, insofar as is possible, and as necessary meet with the church board to consult with reference to spiritual, financial, and pastoral matters, giving such helpful advice and assistance as e

may deem proper.

**208.3.** To have special supervision of all the missions of the Church of the Nazarene within the bounds of his assembly district.

**208.4.** To appoint someone to fill a vacancy, should one occur in the office of district secretary. [216.1]

**208.5.** To appoint someone to fill a vacancy, should one occur in the office of district treasurer. [219.1]

**208.6.** To advise with the church board concerning the nomination of an elder or a licensed minister to pastor a local church and to approve or disapprove such nomination. [115, 129.2]

**208.7.** To approve or disapprove the renewal of the call of a pastor. [123]

**208.8.** To approve or disapprove the granting of license to any member of the Church of the Nazarene who may request local minister's license or renewal of local minister's license from the church board of a local church not having an elder as pastor. [402, 402.3]

**208.9.** To approve or disapprove in writing for nomination by the pastor to the local church board such paid local assistants as assistant pastors; ministers or directors of Christian education; directors of children's, youth, and adult work; directors of music; and directors of weekday schools. [129.25, 166–66.7]

**208.10.** To approve or disapprove, with the District Advisory Board, requests from local churches to operate Christian day school programs. [156, 222.12, 339.8, 424]

**208.11.** To execute and sign, along with the secretary of the District Advisory Board, all legal documents of the s\district. [222.6]

**208.12.** To nominate to the District Advisory Board and to supervise any paid assistants on the district. [2499}

**208.13.** To appoint pastors in keeping with 116 and 116.1

**208.14.** The district superintendent may, with the approval of the District Advisory Board, appoint the members of the church board [stewards, trustees], the chairman of the Christian Life and Sunday School Board, and other church officers [secretary, treasurer] if a church has been organized for less than five years, or has less than 35 voting members, and is receiving regular financial assistance from the district.

**209.** The district superintendent, with the consent of the church board, may appoint a pastoral supply to fill a vacancy in the office of pastor until the next district assembly. Such appointed pastoral supply shall be subject to removal by the district superintendent when his services are not satisfactory to the church board and the local church. [129.4, 402.6, 431]

**210.** The district superintendent is authorized to perform for a local church within the bounds of his assembly district all the functions of pastor when that local church is without a pastor or pastoral supply. [422]

**210.1.** The district superintendent may preside at the annual, or a special, meeting of a local church, or appoint someone to represent him. [113.4]

**211.** If for any reason the general superintendent having jurisdiction fails to be present or to appoint a representative to be present in his stead at the district assembly, the district superintendent shall call the district assembly to order and shall preside until other provision may be made by the district assembly. [308]

**212.** The district superintendent may fill vacancies in the District Ministerial Studies

Board [229.1], the District Christian Life and Sunday School Board [239.7], the District Ministerial Credentials Board [226.1], the District Auditing Committee [203.27], the District Home Missions Board [203.21], the District Church Properties Board [203.17], and the District Finance Committee [203.22].

**212.1.** The district superintendent may appoint all chairmen and secretaries of the district boards and standing committees where such are not provided in the *Manual* or assembly action.

**213.** The district superintendent shall be ex officio chairman of the District Christian Life and Sunday School Board, the District Home Missions Board, the District Church Properties Board, the District Finance Committee, the council of the District Nazarene Youth International, and the council of the District Nazarene World Mission Society. [203.21–3.22, 234, 239, 810, 811.2]

**214.** All official acts of the district superintendent shall be subject to review and revision by the district assembly, and subject to appeal. [507.3]

## **Conceptualization – contrast and compare**

### ***Individual level***

1. Superintendent/pastor/counselor
2. Most DS's come from the pastoral ministry. There may be a tendency to be an administrator and pastor to pastors until time and experience contrasts the two roles.
3. Autonomy vs. subordination
4. These variables are never really settled. Situations and leaders change as they grow older and more experienced.
5. View of God
6. Does the DS have a prescriptive, principial, or permissive view of God? Does his view of God coincide with the district as a whole or with segments of the district–people and pastors.
7. View of man
8. Is the DS suspicious of others as to motivation or is he trusting?
9. Theological position
10. Can the DS articulate his theological position to people within the context of the church's position.
11. Self concept
12. This includes self–grasp, self–decision, self–worth. Spiritual dimensions within the position. Extrovert and introvert dimensions.

### ***Group level***

1. Middle management
2. Middle management has normative behaviors that need to be internalized.
3. System Builder
4. Developing an organization that persists over time so that, if a change is made in one part, a ramifying change must be made in all the parts.

### ***Societal level***

1. Family
2. The kinship group cannot be neglected within the busy schedule and demands of superintendency.
3. Status – role–set
4. Defining, experiencing, and behaving in the SD’s position and role both in his own mind, on the district and in the general church is crucial to status crystallization and consistency.

### **Contextualization – culture and coping**

#### ***Individual level***

1. Spiritual dimensions
2. All that is done is done within an environment. The environment plays a big role in spiritual formation and continual growth.
3. Job satisfaction
4. Adjusting to the constraints of the church and the autonomy of professionalism.

#### ***Group Level***

1. Economic
2. Watching the changing environment of the family
3. Boundary maintenance
4. The persistence of the district program and viability in a rapidly changing environment is necessary.

#### ***Social Level***

1. Economic
2. National, district, and personal economies are a constant concern. All church leaders are becoming bi–vocational as they plan for retirement.
3. Political climate
4. The national political atmosphere gives clues for the future. Anticipating change and adapting to political changes are necessary to keep pace in rapidly changing times.
5. Socio–cultural contributaries
6. Being a student of change enables the DS to adjust his thinking, sensing, feelings and intuition, beliefs, values, and norms.

### **Configuration – community & conservation**

#### ***Group Level***

1. Local church

2. Allow each church strong sectarian thrust in the local community
3. District
4. General
5. These groups are organized to develop a community around the conservation of values. Each one takes on a configuration of its own with its constituent parts to give a vision and mission within a "movement" concept.
6. Institutionalization
7. Behavior patterns are established that generate normative behaviors for the continuance of the configured group. These are transferred from generation to generation.
8. Systemic linkage
9. Each of the configurations must be linked with all the other configurations so that the various systems are one at times but still individual. Each church should be functionally sectarian and structurally denominational.

## **Confrontation –continuity and change**

### ***Individual***

1. Individuals
2. The ability to confront and be confronted is a great asset for leaders. The ability to accommodate change in a rapidly changing world is a gift.

### ***Group***

1. New programs
2. Innovation is always confrontive
3. Changing leadership
4. This speaks of the need for adjusting to new personalities
5. Pastors
6. Many problems are created by pastors who seek the DS's help. Pastors may oppose the DS.
7. Boards
8. These groups can confront the DS or oppose him.
9. General Church
10. Response to denominational change can lead to intra-institutional conflict.
11. Social Control
12. All leaders need to control behaviors so that dysfunctional people do not disrupt the boundaries of the DS's roles. More dysfunctional are attending the church.
13. Conflict
14. Conflict can be latent, onset, compromised, solved, or lived with.
15. Family
16. The family confronts all the issues that the DS confronts.

### ***Societal***

## ***Cultural Issues***

How does a DS relate to cultural issues in a heterogeneous environment.

The hermeneutic is designed to raise the level of abstractions high enough to include all the elements in each category. By developing these abstractions special cases can be defined and categorized for the life cycle. A district superintendent will pass through each segment of his life cycle in the occupational role, child, teen, young adult, adult and maturity in his position.

People will view the novice superintendent's role performance in the light of the life cycle segment through which he is passing; first excusing and then accusing as occupational maturity is observed. People allow for the childhood stage and teenage stage but in due time they expect adult and mature behavior.

The district superintendent would do well to develop these sensing, thinking, feeling, intuitive functions along with the attitudes of extroversion and introversion. Understanding who he/she is, is not enough. The superintendent needs to know how he/she feels about being the person he believes himself to be.

This socialization process should elicit positive self-conception within his/her role performance.

In Genesis 50:19–26 Joseph provides us with his approach to life that sustained him in all his experiences.

1. He lived by the principle – God first
2. Principles span the gap between continuity and change
3. He learned from providence
4. Providence spans the gap between fortuitous circumstances over which we have no control and circumstances brought by our own decisions.
5. He learned on the promises
6. The promises span the gap between the present and the future.

So Joseph died being 110 years old: they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

## **Appendix**

### **Six External Variables Leaders Must Take Into Account**

A leader directs an organization sequentially from its present position into the vision of the future. A group in this sense can be considered an emergent organization. If it persists in what it is, it must be in continual change; each part has within it something coming into being and something ceasing to be. It means that the past is continually being absorbed into the present and the present into the future and that each loses part of its identity by this process of absorption. An organization cannot fulfill its mission and be

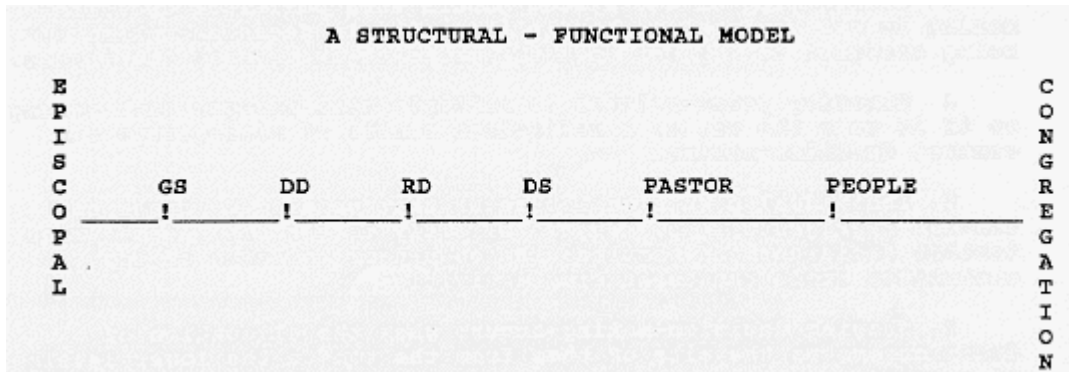
what it should be at any moment in time unless it is always changing and becoming something different.

Most leaders are institutional leaders. Institutional leaders do not have the luxury of synthesizing the elements of the organization. The organization is there before they arrive and it will be there when they leave. A leader finds established patterns of behavior based on regulations either handed down by higher authority or legitimized by precedence or both. The organization has a past history of traditional ways of doing things. Not only have people learned to function in their assigned positions but have also internalized the leadership models and styles of previous leaders.

1. Costs—include prices, escalation of inflation, budgets, and money spent for externalities. Assigned budgets create monetary limits. The parent organization determines the available amount that a leader can spend.
2. Shortages—raise the question of fairness to everybody, entitlement, and allocation of money. In the event of shortages, a leader's role becomes weighted with action and interaction of the people. These are as follows:
  3.
    - Prioritizing – Costs move a leader into deciding first things first
    - Politicizing – this raises questions of fairness, entitlement and building a case for the list of priorities
    - Polarizing – people will not always agree with the prioritized list
    - Paralyzing – people will choose sides and delay decision-making
    - Programmizing – development of an acceptable program
    - Propagandizing – legitimizing and explaining the plans
  4. Overloading of the system—occurs when political decision-making is not equipped to handle the multiple decision-making now being assigned to it; not enough time to think through the issues.
  5. Minority power—relates to multiple mini-groups, each acting as if it were the whole; a sufficient number of mini-groups can control decision-making.
  6. Individual participation—means that people no longer go through representatives, they go directly to the top; people want instant decision and results; the open-door policies of top executives erode representative activities.
  7. Sharing decision-making—occurs when the allocation of decisions moves the site of them from the top to the lower levels of command.

Robert Townsend in *Up the Organization* wrote, "As for the best leaders, the people do not notice their existence. The next best, the people honor and praise. The next, the people fear; and the next, the people hate. When the best leader's work is done the people say, 'We did it ourselves.'"

## Status Roles Sets of the Nazarene Hierarchy – A Structural – Functional Model



1. Imperative coordination vs. voluntary coordination.
2. As the leaders move away from the congregation the pastor is becoming involved with his congregation.
3. Denominational dimensions vs. sectarian dimensions.
4. GS & DS have option to act episcopally or congregationally – the vote prevents episcopacy by the pastor, the risk is too great.
5. Leaders become utilitarian while pastor must remain normative.
6. Real people pursuing real interests.
7. Pursuant and expedient behaviors may be construed as self-seeking.
8. Struggle for status can be hypostatized.
9. Conflict is ever-present.
10. Functionally sectarian and structurally denominational.
11. Scriptural concept – John or Paul.

## Theology of Instrumentalism

### *Theology of Christian Instrumentalism*

1. Implementation of programs in a normative environment.
  - a. Institutional rules
  - b. Biblical interrelationships
  - c. Political Dimensions
2. Implementation of programs for utilitarian purposes.
  - a. Quantitative dimensions
  - b. Qualitative dimensions
3. Implementation of programs to perpetuate the institution
  - a. Hierarchical arrangements
  - b. Monetary and spiritual support
  - c. Legitimation of obligations to the institution

Supplimental diagrams.

RECYCLED LIFE CYCLE

CHILD (0-11)	ADOLESCENT (11-25)	YOUNG ADULT (25-45)	ADULT (45-65)	MATURITY (65+)
Learner	Experimenter	Career	Supportive	Integrity
Learner	Independence	Striving	Meaningfulness	Wise
Curious	Identity	Industrious	Insightful	Philosophical
Trustful	Searching	Enthusiastic	Pragmatic	Secure
Accepting	Tester	Optimistic	Vulnerable	Experienced
Dependent	Egocentric	Intimacy	Frustrated	
Tester		Apprehensive		

COLLEGE - Child Adolescent Young Adult Adult Maturity

OCCUPATION - Child Adolescent Young Adult Adult Maturity

POSITION - Child Adolescent Young Adult Adult Maturity

BOARD MEMBER - Child Adolescent Young Adult Adult Maturity

RETIREMENT - Child Adolescent Young Adult Adult Maturity

SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL - CROSS CULTURAL LIFE CYCLE

