CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

Positive Relationships Between Principals and Teachers

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

By

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Dedication

This dissertation is a testament to the unwavering love and support my family has shown throughout my academic journey, and I dedicate it to them.

To my family, Archpriest Fr. Vazken, Anahid, and Shahan Atmajian: You have been pillars of strength and the inspiration that has fueled my pursuit of knowledge and love for the field of education. Your belief in my potential has been the driving force behind my aspirations and propelled me to reach this milestone. Your collective resilience and grace in the face of challenges have been my greatest life lessons and have reminded me that no challenge is insurmountable when we have the unwavering support of family.

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Abstract

Positive Teacher and Principal Relationships

By

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Doctor of Education, Educational Leadership

Though relationships between students and teachers have been thoroughly researched, the relationship between a teacher and principal have not been researched as precisely. With that notion in mind, the purpose of this study was to investigate the factors of a positive teacher and principal relationship. The study was a mixed-methods research study that included a survey and interviews. I surveyed 75 teacher participants who responded to questions about their thoughts about a positive teacher-principal relationship. If they wanted to be considered for the interview, teachers were asked to nominate a principal with whom they had an excellent relationship. I interviewed five teachers and each of their principals about their positive relationship.

The findings of this study suggest that teachers and principals value a number of the same characteristics, behaviors, and traits when it comes to principal leadership: love, empathy and kindness; and listening, communication, and transparency.
Chapter I: Statement of the Problem

Initiatives like Restorative Justice, Positive Behavior Support, Culturally and Linguistically Relevant Pedagogy, Addressing Implicit Biases, etc., are founded on the idea that a positive teacher and student relationship increases student engagement and achievement (Barile et al., 2010). Rita Pierson, in her Ted Talk, *Every Kid Needs a Champion* (2013), explains that “kids don’t learn from people they don’t like,” and highlights the need for positive relationships in a classroom. The teacher-student relationship is crucial to maintaining a positive environment where students feel safe and supported; but the teacher-student relationship is not the only interaction on a school campus. All groups of stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, families, and administrators, have interactions on a daily basis to ensure that the learning environment is welcoming and safe for all students. School climate is the “feel” (Kane et al., 2016) and shared perceptions (Dou et al., 2017) of a school, created by a shared understanding of normalized relationships and norms among all stakeholders; the climate of a school is influenced by the school culture, which is the individual actions, behaviors, and interactions that are accepted by stakeholders. School climate and culture are improved by the promotion of high standards and cooperation among all stakeholders (Gurr, 2005; Hollingworth et al., 2018; Dou et al., 2017).

The purpose of this study was to inform principal preparation and leadership development programs by determining the factors that impact teacher-principal relationships and the role those relationships play when fostering a positive and productive work environment. Though relationships are a combined effort between two parties, principals are the leaders of a school who have the power to inspire change (Dollarhide et al., 2007), and one of their most significant responsibilities is to lead the school by creating a positive and safe school and
workplace culture (Edmondson & Schein, 2012; Meyer et al., 2020) through informed decision-making (Hollingworth et al., 2018). Teachers can partake in this great undertaking, but because principals hold more authority and have direct access to and influence on a larger group of stakeholders, they can effect change on school climate and culture more swiftly than teachers, especially through modeling, forging positive relationships, and establishing positive norms (Nettles & Herrington, 2007; Carraway & Young, 2014).

On a daily basis, teachers have a long list of responsibilities they are required to fulfill. They are expected to be efficient employees by following district, state, and federal policy and completing their work correctly and in a timely manner. Teachers are expected to meet the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) teaching standards of engaging and supporting all students in learning, creating and maintaining effective environments for student learning, understanding and organizing subject matter for student learning, planning instruction and designing learning experiences for student learning, assessing student learning, and developing as a professional educator (Commission on Teacher Credentialing and California Department of Education, 2009). If teachers are to maintain excellence in the aforementioned standards, they should be supported by their principal, because the principal needs to “tap into their skills and be a sounding board” (Gurr, 2005, p. 542) when teachers need support pertaining to any of their job duties. Each of the six California Standards for the Teaching Profession has a direct impact on students. Therefore, ensuring that teachers feel safe and supported with positive relationships is an indirect factor that influences teachers’ performance in the classroom. For example, Los Angeles Unified School District’s School Leadership Framework requires school principals to “create/maintain a culture conducive to educator growth” by “establishment/maintenance of a positive school climate, including workplace conditions… [and]
communicating with staff” (LAUSD SLF, 2021). Many of the interactions by which administrators are evaluated are based on the effectiveness of the teacher-principal relationship.

Relationships among a school’s stakeholders have an impact on the school culture and climate. The implications of positive student-teacher relationships have been a recent focus of educational research. Research shows that positive relationships increase student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement (Barile et al., 2010). It is expected that adults are intrinsically motivated and have a certain level of self-efficacy, but the intricacy of external relationships and their effect on the general culture of school are what create a welcoming, safe, and supportive environment (Barile et al., 2010). As humans, we are prone to experiencing the effects of external influences (Bartlett, 2012), and though we have researched the student-teacher relationship and implemented programs based on that research, there is a lack of information about the teacher-principal relationship and how principals can help forge and maintain those relationships.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs lays out a simple structure of human existence and humans’ basic, psychological, and self-fulfillment needs (Fisher & Crawford, 2020). The second-largest need humans have is the need to feel safe and secure. Without security and safety, it becomes difficult to move on to the next steps of the pyramid: belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. There is a general expectation that as adults, people must come to the workplace, accomplish tasks, and be efficient employees. However, as Maslow describes, in order to feel accomplished and achieve one’s full potential by participating in creative activities, one must first feel safe, secure, and have good relationships with those who surround them (Dressel, 2020; Bolman & Deal, 2017).
To address relationship needs highlighted by Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs between teachers and students, districts in 20 states (Collaborative for Academics, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2022) have implemented Social-Emotional Learning frameworks like that from Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). One of the components of the CASEL framework is to develop and maintain healthy relationships with others (CASEL, 2022). Though the framework is generally used to build lessons for children in classrooms, it is also useful for adults when it comes to cultivating safe and healthy school communities. CASEL (2022) helps students and educators “leverag[e] social and emotional learning to create safe, supportive, and equitable learning environments where all people can heal and thrive.” Teachers and administrators can benefit from the components of CASEL for their own development and maintenance of healthy relationships.

According to MedlinePlus of the National Library of Medicine (2022), children between ages 12 and 18 begin to “establish and maintain satisfying relationships.” Middle and high schools are pivotal for students’ social and emotional development, and adult relationships can stand as a model for positive relationship building and maintenance in students, which is why I chose to research secondary schools. Additionally, secondary school principals have a responsibility to maintain relationships with a larger pool of faculty and staff members compared to elementary school, and this might be more challenging for principals.

**Problem Statement**

The quality of teaching and learning that takes place in schools heavily relies on how teachers and school principals cooperate (Aslanargun, 2015). The way they speak to each other, interact, and behave with/toward each other in the presence of others are all factors that help determine the quality of relationships among other groups (staff, parents, students, community).
(Aslanargun, 2015). The quality of relationships among teachers and principals sets the tone and foundation for relationships throughout the school because teachers and principals are the two most influential groups in the school site who act as role models for everyone else; the principal-teacher relationships become a predictor of a number of the school’s outcomes (Bogler, 2001). However, most research pertaining to relationships in education focuses on the importance of student-teacher relationships, identifies the many factors (i.e., relationships with students, decision-makers, and policy) that influence teacher retention and attrition, and lists the duties of principals, instead of looking closely at the qualities of the teacher-principal relationship and improving those practices/behaviors. The teacher-principal relationship influences school climate and culture and is integral to the smooth operations of a school site. Further analysis of the topic is needed and could be valuable in informing principal preparation programs.

**Purpose and Significance**

My goal was to examine excellent teacher and principal relationships in an effort to find trends, patterns, behaviors, and/or leadership styles that could inform administrator preparation programs. Understanding the components of an excellent teacher-principal relationship was important for cultivating a more positive school climate that created an environment that was conducive to learning. By leveraging the qualities, behaviors, practices, and/or leadership styles of principals who have a positive relationship with their faculty, we can shape educational leadership (Meyer et al., 2020) and administrator preparation programs to include that information. Budding administrators should be made aware of the qualities and behaviors that could help them forge positive relationships with faculty to create a safe and welcoming teaching and learning environment.
This study gathered information from teachers via surveys and interviews and considered firsthand experiences and voices of both teachers and principals regarding how they felt principals have built and maintained a positive relationship. The surveys played an instrumental role in gathering data from teachers about their relationships with principals and helped identify characteristics, traits, and behaviors that teachers considered both valuable in a principal. The study was an in-depth detailing of specific examples of excellent leadership and relationships that were evidenced with teachers' perspectives, as well as a more general overview of what teachers felt made a principal an excellent and effective one; moreover, the study took the perspectives of the principal about their own practices and how and why they played a role in developing positive relationships with teachers.

This study considered the teacher and principal viewpoints and unveiled information about whether the principals behaved deliberately by employing specific leadership theories or if they were simply acting based on their individual values, beliefs, personalities, and character traits. The findings of this study can inform principals and their preparation programs (including administrative credential coursework at the Tier I [Preliminary] and II [Clear] levels). Additionally, it could help educational leaders in their drafting of administrator evaluation criteria so that criteria are relevant and directly tied to the improvement of school climate and capacity building through positive relationships between teachers and principals.

**Research Questions**

The research questions that guided the investigation of this study were the following:

- What were the features of excellent professional relationships between secondary school teachers and principals?
• What were the characteristics and leadership philosophies of an effective secondary school principal that helped foster excellent relationships with teachers?

**Conceptual Framework**

A leader’s job is to steer an organization to success by having a clear vision and guiding its members. There are many leadership styles that have overlapping characteristics and behaviors. This study was framed by a structure that combines three leadership styles: Bill George’s (2003) authentic leadership, Robert Greenleaf’s (1970) servant leadership, and James MacGregor Burns’s (1978) transformative leadership. These theoretical styles guided the development of the survey instrument and interview protocols, data analysis, and reporting of results. The combination and triangulation of these three leadership styles allow for flexibility when describing principals who had positive relationships with their faculty members.

**Overview of Methodology**

This research used quantitative and qualitative methods (surveys and interviews) to collect data about teacher-principal relationships from secondary schools in urban areas. I collected information from teachers through surveys and from teacher-principal pairs through interviews to compose case studies and gain a general understanding of how teachers perceived an effective principal. The data collected from surveys offered information about what teachers thought did and/or did not make an effective principal. The surveys gathered information from a pool of participants about teacher-principal relationships, formed the groundwork, and established general understanding. The interviews of teachers and principals led to the composition of case studies that painted a richer, more detailed picture of specific cases. These cases offered robust information about teachers’ and principals’ firsthand experiences regarding their excellent relationships.
Limitations and Delimitations

A delimitation of the study was that only five sets of participants (teachers and principals) were selected within a limited geographical boundary and point in time to participate in the interviews. One of the pairs was incomplete, as the teacher was unable to participate in the interview due to unforeseen circumstances. Delimiting the study to a certain geographical location and point in time limited the study to a narrow demographic and socio-economic pool. I spent one hour with each participant. The interview portion of the study targeted secondary school teachers who had positive relationships with principals who were willing to participate in the study. The interview participants were asked to discuss only positive aspects of their relationships, thus removing any negative aspects of a relationship from the study.

A limitation was that interview responses were open to interpretation. Some responses were articulated clearly and thoroughly, while others were insufficient or not expressed eloquently. Because the sample size of the interviews was small, the findings from the case studies were not generalizable to a larger population of teachers and principals. Participating teachers might have nominated an undeserving principal in an effort to flatter the principal. Additionally, participants may have responded to survey or interview questions with positively embellished responses that might have overrepresented the extent of their excellent relationship, and thus could be an inaccurate representation of the relationships they had with their teachers/principals.

The post-COVID school environment had morphed into something different from what it had been prior to the 2020 shutdown. The impacts of COVID changed teaching, schools, and administration, as new dynamics among faculty and administrators have emerged. Schools and staff faced new challenges that might have stressed or shaped relationships in a way that was
new and never been experienced before. Data were collected in May and June of 2023, two years after the shutdown. If post-COVID culture and mindsets revert back to how they were prior to COVID, these results might not be generalizable. For now, schools continue to implement the many adjustments (video conferencing meetings, emphasis on physical, social, mental, and emotional health and wellness) that had taken place during COVID, and if this trend continues, the results may be generalizable and would not be a limitation. Collected data might be impacted by residual sentiments carried over from the shutdown, as people may still feel the financial, physical, and emotional impacts and strains of COVID. The study’s results might not be generalizable to or representative of future circumstances, as we were unable to determine whether things will change.

**Organization of Dissertation**

The first chapter of this dissertation introduced the statement of the problem, along with its guiding research questions, purpose, and significance in the field of education. The introduction is followed by a literature review in Chapter 2 that presents critical and comprehensive discussions of previous research and explains the context and argument for this study. Chapter 3 provides a thorough detailing of the research methodology, including research design/tradition, research setting, instruments, procedures, and data collection methods. Results and findings collected from the research will be presented in Chapter 4, followed by the discussion of results in Chapter 5. The final discussion synthesizes the literature, framework, and findings by in-depth analysis.
Chapter II: Review of Literature

In this chapter, I review the literature that discusses the topics that have been investigated by researchers and define different approaches to leadership and identify specific characteristics, traits, and behaviors. I describe the conceptual framework which grounded my study, provide a brief overview of the effective leader, and detail three specific leadership styles (authentic, servant, and transformational). Subsequently, I compared the three leadership styles, discuss the role of an educational leader, and investigate the significance and impact of a teacher-principal relationship on a school site. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of gaps in the literature.

Conceptual Framework

There are about eight million people in the world, and each of them has a different personality. Though humans might be chunked into categories based on their behaviors, beliefs, personalities, and characteristics, it is impossible that two people are the same. Because the personalities, characteristics, and perceptions are many, so are people’s leadership styles and the interactions that occur among leaders and followers (Aslanargun, 2015). Leaders cannot be minimized to a single leadership style because, to be effective, leaders must embody several skills, beliefs, and traits; they must employ several features from distinct constructs of a variety of leadership styles because their followers have a wide range of characteristics, which translates to followers being responsive to different styles of leadership (Dou et al., 2017; Meyer et al., 2020).

An integration of different leadership styles allows for the shaping of a more influential, well-rounded leader (Dou et al., 2017). For principals to be effective, they should employ many types of behaviors. This study investigated the full scope of characteristics across the three following leadership styles, authentic, servant, and transformational, and used a combination of
the three types of leadership styles as the framework by which to structure survey instruments and interview protocols. I did not anticipate that principals would fit neatly into the respective molds, but I did believe that the most influential leaders who have positive relationships with their followers were those who embodied some combination of authentic, servant, and transformational leadership. Though a variety of other leadership styles beyond these three have been proposed, I used authentic, servant, and transformational leadership to structure my study, as those focused heavily on the relationships between leader and member. Other styles may not necessarily have emphasized the importance of relationships.

Other leadership styles or traits have been promoted as good leadership, but because they lack the relationship component of leadership, I did not include them in this study as effective leadership. In many cases, a list of leadership traits, behaviors, and approaches were characterized as effective leadership; however, they did not encompass a comprehensive system by which to lead. The authentic, servant, and transformational leadership styles were grounded in relationships, values, and beliefs and provide a more inclusive approach to leading.

The Effective Leader

Northouse cites over ten qualities or characteristics, traits, and behaviors of an excellent leader, and though a given leader may not have all of those traits, they might have subsets of them. These ten characteristics, according to Northouse (2019), were:

- Drive for responsibility and task completion;
- Vigor and persistence in pursuit of goals;
- Risk taking and originality in problem solving;
- Drive to exercise initiative in social situations;
- Self-confidence and sense of personal identity;
Willingness to accept consequences of decisions and actions;
Readiness to absorb interpersonal stress;
Willingness to tolerate frustration and delay;
Ability to influence other people’s behavior; and
Capacity to structure social interaction systems to the purpose at hand (p. 21).

Karami et al.’s (2020) “Polyhedron Model of Wisdom” offers a different taxonomy of leadership characteristics and introduces the characteristics of a wise and effective leader: knowledge management, self-regulation, altruism and moral maturity, openness and tolerance, sound judgment and decision making, intelligence and creative thinking, and dynamic balance and synthesis translated into action. Intelligence/cognitive ability was one of the most frequently cited traits of a leader (Stogdill, 1948; Lord et al., 1986; Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1991; Zaccaro et al., 2017), but the second most sought after traits include sociability, conscientiousness, cooperativeness, and influence (Northouse, 2019): all were characteristics that foster positive relationships. I focused on authentic, servant, and transformational leadership styles as the most effective because according to the literature, at the core of effective leadership were traits and behaviors that cultivated positive relationships. Human interactions between leaders and members build relationships, help develop shared visions, and allow for collaborative environments in which to effect change within an organization.

Leadership Styles

School principals are the model of leadership in a school setting and are tasked with encouraging teamwork and creating a culture of shared vision and responsibility (Aslanargun, 2015). Leadership characteristics, traits, and behaviors define the leadership style of individuals, but no matter the method of leadership, theorists agree that certain characteristics, traits, and
behaviors are necessary for effective leadership (Northouse, 2019; Greenleaf, 1991). The ultimate goal of every leadership style is a better society. Organizations set out to refine our society by producing effective employees who have the capacity to find innovative solutions to problems. The vast majority of literature about leadership cites authentic, servant, and transformational leadership as styles of leadership that drive change and build positive relationships in the workplace, thus impacting society in a positive way through a more knowledgeable, creative, kind, and ethical workforce.

I proposed that authentic, servant, and transformational leadership were styles of leadership of which an individual leader can enact more than one, rather than a label for individual leaders. Though I rejected the notion that leaders fall cleanly into leadership styles, for simplicity, I continued to use the language of the authors (authentic leader, servant leader, transformational leader).

**Servant Leadership**

Robert K. Greenleaf coined the term “servant leadership” and defined it as the behavior of a leader who leads selflessly and carries out the social responsibility of removing any inequalities or injustices that may exist in institutions (Greenleaf, 1977; Northouse, 2019). A servant leader empowers followers by granting them authority and autonomy, demonstrates strong moral behavior, values community, and emphasizes followers’ interdependence and development. Greenleaf clarifies the practices of a servant leader by drafting a list of ten characteristics and skills that a servant leader should possess: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to people’s growth, and building community (Spears, 2002; Northouse, 2019).
To be a servant leader, one must want to serve others and place the good of others before self-interests; servant leaders must be attentive to followers and their concerns and empathize, nurture, and cultivate them, while maintaining morality (Northouse, 2019). By paying attention and cultivating an environment of growth, a servant leader develops employees in an effort to serve the organization, community, and society (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017). In the educational realm, a servant leader’s best form of service is to help faculty and staff develop their own abilities in order to lead others (students, student teachers, etc.) to secure a better future (Greenleaf, 1977).

Servant leadership is a behavior that can be learned and improved upon; unlike other styles of leadership, leaders can learn to be servant leaders, as the qualities of a servant leader are not necessarily innate (Greenleaf, 1977). While other leadership styles may focus on the success of the organization, servant leadership strives to lead from the inside out, meaning that their focus is on the growth and well being of the employees. Greenleaf (1977) mentions that servant leadership is “in here, not out there” (p. 57).

Transformational Leadership

*Oxford Languages* defines transformation as a dramatic and thorough change in the appearance, characteristics, and/or form of something. Northouse (2019) defines a transformational leader as someone who “initiates, develops, and carries out significant changes in an organization” (p. 177). Changes in the workplace are inevitable, and to respond appropriately and swiftly, leaders need to be alert and engaged. To execute a successful, equitable, and inclusive transformation a leader must embrace the diversity of followers and know the details and complexities of the situation they are trying to transform (Gundling & Williams, 2021). For decades, the transformation of multiple facets of the educational arena, like
technological integration, educators’ roles, desegregation, funding, culturally and linguistically responsive leadership and teaching, different pedagogical strategies, curriculum, assessments, and many more topics, have been researched, discussed, and implemented (Greenleaf, 1977; Bogler, 2001; Marx, 2014; Muhammad & Cruz, 2019; Zhao, 2019). Because the principal is the school leader, it is their responsibility to carry out such changes and lead the implementation of these initiatives within their schools.

Principals who are able to transform an educational institution are those who have strong transformational leadership and provide teachers with support that is specific to their needs (Dou et al., 2017). Transformational leaders are those who envision transformations and work to improve various aspects of the educational institution through innovation, especially as those aspects pertain to teaching, learning, and academic achievement of students. Behaviors attributed to transformational leadership include individualized attention to teachers’ specific needs, interests, motivations, and expectations in an effort to improve the general culture and productivity of the organization (Bogler, 2001). While transformative leaders direct attention to the development of their employees, their long-term focus is the organization’s progress and goal fulfillment, and not personal satisfaction or that of their employees. This kind of utilitarian leadership allows for teachers to commit to their work and leadership because a sense of community and camaraderie is developed through the communication of a clear vision and the intimate attention that is provided by school leadership (Dou et al., 2017; Bogler 2001). Here, the leader cultivates a culture of building capacity and professional growth and development for the overarching goal of organizational success.

**Authentic Leadership**

Northouse (2019) argues that authentic leadership can be categorized into three aspects:
intrapersonal, interpersonal, and developmental. These three aspects define authentic leadership based, respectively, on points of view: the leader’s self, their relationship with the follower, and the development of the leader over time. The intrapersonal perspective of authentic leadership dives deeper into the leader’s own self: knowledge, awareness, regulation, etc; the interpersonal perspective analyzes leader and follower relationships; and the developmental perspective focuses on how authentic leadership requires a leader to undergo a certain level of change and development. When a leader considers these three perspectives regularly, an authentic leader is born.

An authentic leader is a genuine leader who is not afraid to be themselves and lead with confidence. An authentic leader displays psychological capital, promotes resilience in themselves and others, and has a real sense of purpose due to their life’s experiences (Whitehead & Brown, 2011; Northouse, 2019). Ilies, Morgeson, and Nahrgang (2005, p. 385) note that leaders serve as positive behavioral models to the extent that they are viewed positively by followers. Followers can learn to behave and act authentically by observing authentic leaders’ behaviors and by processing information that is relevant to them. Authentic leaders who use active, adaptive, and positive approaches toward problem solving may cultivate higher levels of optimism in followers (Walumbwa et al., 2011). In addition, authentic leaders develop transparent relationships with followers and openly analyze and share all relevant information with them. Authentic leaders have higher self-awareness, and they may recover quickly from difficulties and adjust the goals that they want followers to accomplish, thus influencing group members’ resilience. Because of their genuine behavior, authentic leaders are more reflective upon their practices and are more likely to possess the ability to develop their own leadership style.
There are five distinctive features of authentic leadership that translate into direct actions: values, purpose, self-discipline, relationships, and heart. The development of leaders’ own authentic leadership is based on a set of values they hold to be true; these values help leaders ground themselves in purposeful and moral behaviors. By understanding their purpose, a leader has a passionate and intrinsic motivation in a mission they genuinely care about. Their vested interest in the task allows for them to invest in ensuring that their goals are met and exceeded. Executing tasks to meet those goals takes self-discipline. By maintaining self-discipline, a leader can lead consistently because they are capable of remaining focused and goal-oriented. The predictability of their actions allows followers to communicate with leaders more openly (Northouse, 2019); positive relationships are built on effective communication because the two member groups are willing to share their own experiences and develop trust and connectedness. Finally, from the trust that is built through relationships, an authentic leader learns to act with heart, integrity, and compassion. To maintain an authentic leadership style, the leader must express genuine concern and care for their followers by communicating (speaking openly and listening attentively), being grounded in their vision and purpose that are guided by values, and remaining consistent.

**Leadership Style Comparison and Contrast**

Authentic, servant, and transformational leadership are three different types of leadership that have a number of overlapping behaviors, traits, and approaches to solving problems.

One of the most imperative claims recognized by all three leadership styles is that transparent and effective communication between leaders and members plays a significant role in the quality of relationships within an organization, as well as overall productivity and success (Franklin, 2018; Berkovich & Eyal, 2017; Edmondson & Schein, 2012; Karami et al., 2020;
Rinio, 2018; Shier et al., 2020). The fostering of interpersonal relationships revolves around the idea of giving and receiving affection and care in a trusting and respectful environment (Edmondson & Schein, 2012) and the successful communication of thoughts and feelings (Shier et al., 2020). Effective communication, which includes speaking and listening, is the foundation of an entire culture within a school; it is an external factor that not only allows for the sharing of ideas and novel resources but also uncovers the values and skills of the communicators (Rinio, 2018). Among a principal’s many duties is to host positive conversations and encourage effective, transparent communication by recognizing when problems exist and addressing them with respect to multiple perspectives (Karami et al., 2020).

To be an effective communicator (speaker and listener), a principal has to understand their own emotions, attitudes, and mindset while attentively listening to and understanding followers’ perspectives, as well (Northouse, 2016). Berkovich and Eyal (2017) find that principal’s empathetic and empowering messages foster an emotionally supportive environment where interpersonal relationships make for better work environments. Factors like how often a person places blame, avoids confrontation, smiles, resists change, and experiences self-doubt can impact communication and relationships and therefore require self-awareness and reflective practices, since communication is key to positive relationships (Franklin, 2018; Berkovich & Eyal, 2017).

Though reflective of many similarities like caring for and nurturing employees and envisioning a successful organization, the three leadership styles are distinguished by unique characteristics and guiding motivations. Authentic leadership emphasizes leading by remaining true to one’s authentic self and maintaining one’s own guiding principles instead of being influenced by external factors. Servant leadership encourages leadership by nurture and empathy
in an effort to offer employees the autonomy and opportunity for professional growth and development. Lastly, transformational leadership takes on a broader perspective that considers a number of external factors and strives to ensure the positive image and overall success of the organization. Authentic leadership focuses on a leader’s self, authentic leadership focuses on the individual employee, and transformational leadership focuses on the organization as a whole.

Table 1 offers a comparison of the three leadership styles and the differences between their goals and beliefs that guide their decision-making and problem solving.

**Table 1**

*Focus, Goals, and Emphases of Leadership Styles*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Style</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Emphases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>Staying true to one’s own beliefs, ethics, and values</td>
<td>Lead through authenticity, personal ethics and values, genuine self in an effort to motivate and encourage employees</td>
<td>Values, Purpose, Self-discipline, Relationships, Heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servant</td>
<td>Employee growth, development, and well-being</td>
<td>Lead by nurturing the employee’s growth and development</td>
<td>Stewardship, Nurture, Empowerment, Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>Success and improvement of organization</td>
<td>Lead with a goal-oriented mindset that ensures the general success of the organization and the partnerships created with community/stakeholders</td>
<td>Transformation, Change, Motivation, Innovation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As in any other workplace, school principals embody different leadership styles in their work. Individual principals, too, can exhibit a combination of authentic, servant, or transformational leadership behaviors and take different approaches to solve problems. The preceding discussion of a general workplace leader and the three leadership styles apply to
principals. The following discussion will highlight the intersection of principalship and the different leadership styles in the school setting.

**Role of an Educational Leader**

At a school site, the highest-level leader is the principal. Because of the power they have to mold the culture of a school, it is one of the principal’s responsibilities to create and maintain positive relationships with their faculty and staff. From the various interactions and relationships that exist at a school on a daily basis, the teacher-principal relationship is among the most impactful, as it sets the tone for the general school climate and culture (Price, 2012; Meyer, et al., 2020). The definition of leadership in institutions has evolved from a dominant, centralized power figure, to an influential figure, to a team-player, a combination of the three, and a meshing of management and leadership theories (Northouse, 2019).

According to Northouse (2019), modern day leadership is “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 5), and it is a leader’s job to cultivate a safe workplace for relationships to be built on a foundation of trust and respect (Edmondson & Schein, 2012; Meyer et al., 2020). There are many leadership styles, but a few of the common components are effective leadership through communication, transparency, and genuine relationship building.

An effective leader is a change agent who leads genuinely and authentically by serving their community and encouraging positive transformation (Northouse, 2019). Research has shown that there is a strong correlation between the principals' leadership and a range of outcomes: teachers’ attitudes, growth and performance, and school climate (Aslanargun, 2015; Dou et al., 2017; Price, 2012). Nettles and Harrington (2007) describe an effective principal as one who recognizes teaching and learning as the school’s main purpose, communicates the
school's mission to all stakeholders, fosters high and attainable standards for teaching and learning, provides clear goals and progress monitoring, spends time in classrooms, listens to teachers, promotes an atmosphere of trust and sharing, and builds an effective staff by prioritizing professional development. In addition to being an effective school leader, a principal has to exhibit excellent general leadership skills.

Significance of a Teacher-Principal Relationship

Dou et al. (2017) posit that principals’ leadership styles are correlated to teachers’ performance and attitudes in the workplace. Feng (2016) examined principals’ leadership styles and their impact on teachers by surveying over 1,600 elementary, junior, and senior high school teachers. Feng’s (2016) study supports the theory that authentic leadership in principals allows for a positive environment and has a positive psychological impact on its teacher members, specifically because authentic behaviors on the leaders’ part build trust and are related to teacher retention and engagement. Though intrinsic motivations and a level of self-efficacy are expected of faculty and staff, the intricacy of external relationships and their effect on the general culture of school should be examined to ensure a positive environment and relationships exist for employees.

Principals’ relationships with their teachers are multifaceted and multi-dimensional, because each person involved in the relationship has a different personality, strengths, weaknesses, struggles, needs, and wants. For there to be a productive relationship where teachers feel comfortable making mistakes, learning, growing, and communicating, principals and teachers need to have positive relationships (Edmondson & Schein, 2012). Based on his interviews and observations of six principals, new teachers, mentors, and other teachers, Youngs’s (2007) determined that 50% of the principal participants had a positive impact on their
new teachers. Young (2007) claims that the positive impact was related to the principals’ professional experiences, their philosophies of leadership, and their approach to and knowledge of induction and teacher evaluation. Thus, teacher-principal relationships can “facilitate natural growth processes including intrinsically motivated behavior and integration of extrinsic motivations” (Deci, 2000, p. 227) within a teacher.

Basarmak, Hamutoglu, and Sahin’s (2020) study of internal and external factors that contribute to teachers’ and principals’ willingness to communicate effectively and transparently, as well as their openness toward growth and development, demonstrates that relationships are difficult to establish; once established, those relationships can reframe individuals’ beliefs and workplace performance. According to Youngs (2007), internal factors can be influenced by external factors. For example, a principal’s positive relationship with a teacher can promote the teacher’s belief in external support. Teachers will be motivated and willing to try new things, and this often entails making mistakes (Edmondson & Schein, 2012). A teacher must be comfortable enough with their principal to know making mistakes is part of the process and is not reason for reprimand, ridicule, or an image risk (being regarded as ignorant, incompetent, etc.) (Edmondson & Schein, 2020).

Impact of Teacher-Principal Relationship on Equity and Justice

A positive teacher-principal relationship can help principals foster a learning environment that promotes equity and justice. Bill Miliken of Communities in Schools says that young people’s lives are changed by relationships, not programs, and he adds that young people thrive when they feel a sense of belonging to a school community (Communities in Schools, 2023). According to the Wallace Foundation, principals are the source of influence. Principals can prepare faculty and staff to support students by “adopt[ing] structures and practices that foster
strong relationships” to create positive climates within schools for students (DePaoli & McCombs, 2023). The “feel” (Kane et al., 2016) and shared perceptions (Dou et al., 2017) of a school, also known as *school climate*, are the interactions and accepted relationships between stakeholders. Because the quality of teaching and learning heavily relies on how teachers and school principals interact, (Aslanargun, 2015) it is important that they operate with the understanding that it is crucial to foster a safe, equitable, and just school environment for all students.

Teacher-principal relationships are influential to the school community and are a predictor of the school’s outcomes (absenteeism, achievement, etc.), as they set the foundation for relationships throughout the school (Bogler, 2001). An inclusive school environment considers differences in many realms of life and “enacts inclusive practices that resist inequities by creating a vision acknowledging the humanity of students, their families, their communities, and the school team members who educate them” (Gooden et al., 2023). Together, the teacher and principal can help put structures in place and become role models to support positive developmental relationships within schools. Such connections and relationships are the strongest protective and preventive factors against “physical violence and bullying…absenteeism, and substance abuse” (Jones et al., 2022).

**Gaps in the Literature**

Though the literature thoroughly explains the various approaches and styles of leadership, the research on firsthand perspectives of teachers and principals and their own opinions of the quality of their relationships with one another was limited. The teacher and principal are the two members at the core of the teacher-principal relationship; however, research on their firsthand experiences and opinions was scarce. Many books and articles are published about the theories
that define good leadership, and a number of research articles even note that teachers expect transparent and clear communication; however, hearing from leaders and followers about what makes their relationship positive and productive would inform leadership practices immensely.

Much of the research that pertains to specific leadership styles like authentic, servant, and transformational leadership are written from a singular lens that encompasses only the one leadership style. Generally, the leadership styles are discussed individually and are exclusive of other styles; however, a “full-range” style that integrates a number of styles was necessary for the forward movement of leadership development (Anderson & Sun, 2017). This study offered a new perspective to the literature by broadening the boundaries of leadership styles and investigating the idea that effective principals are those who employ a combination of leadership styles as opposed to adhering to the behaviors and characteristics of only one leadership style.
Chapter III: Methodology

The goal of my research was to inform principals and their preparation programs (including administrative credential coursework at the Tier I [Preliminary] and II [Clear] levels) about how to be effective principals who have excellent relationships with their faculty. The findings from the study can help develop programs for new principals to implement styles of leadership that would build capacity, trust, respect, productivity, and the execution of a mutual mission and vision. The quality of the teaching and learning that takes place in schools heavily relies on how teachers and school principals cooperate (Aslanargun, 2015). I was interested specifically in factors influencing secondary teachers’ and principals’ positive relationships.

This study focused on the relationship between teachers and principals in secondary schools, and asked:

- What were the features of excellent professional relationships between secondary teachers and principals?
- What were the characteristics and leadership philosophies of an effective principal that helped foster excellent relationships with teachers?

To best understand the experiences and perspectives of teachers and principals involved in the teacher-principal relationships at school sites, it was crucial to gather direct input from the primary sources through surveys and interviews. Data from primary sources informed my research by becoming the foundation by which to understand relationships, experiences, and dynamics between teachers and principals.

Research Tradition

Both qualitative and quantitative methods played an important role in the uncovering of information pertaining to the research questions. This mixed methods study allowed for
collection and integrated both quantitative and qualitative data through surveys and interviews. Survey responses were coded and analyzed to support trends or patterns that emerge; interview transcripts were analyzed and presented as case studies. A mixed-methods approach allowed for limitations of one method to be replaced by the strengths of the other because each method may “fill in the gaps” that were left by the other (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Because there were open and closed-ended questions in this study, the data analysis and discussion provided a stronger understanding of the problem, since more insight was gained via the multiple methods of data collection.

This study gathered information from surveys that were sent to secondary school teachers. Data collection through mostly closed-ended surveys allowed for multiple responses to a set of questions that helped answer the research questions. Surveys were a convenient, fast, and simple way to collect data from large samples without taking too much time from the participants.

Case studies were one of the five research traditions that fall under the umbrella of qualitative studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The case studies offered a thorough description of teacher-participants’ experiences by examining their perceptions and impacts of relationships with their principals (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Participants (public and private school teachers and principals) provided narratives about their positive relationships with one another (teachers and principals).

For this study, gathering data from primary sources (teachers and principals) was the best way to understand the positive experiences and perspectives of teachers and principals involved in the teacher-principal relationships at school sites. Emotions and relationships were an intangible part of our lives that had a grand impact on our daily lives; however, they were
difficult to measure because emotions, relationships, and individuals’ own perceptions or evaluations of certain incidents were not quantifiable, nor were they stable. All of those items were fluid and could have changed based on many complex factors, including the fact that they relied on participants’ willingness and ability to self-analyze and articulate their emotions.

A case study offered robust, primary experiences and details of participants’ own perceptions of interactions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Based on that processing, the participant provided insight and specific details when answering questions during the interview. Any insights and details helped the researcher build a solid and rich description of the interactions between teacher and principal.

**Research Setting**

The settings of this study were public and private secondary schools (middle and high schools) in Southern California. Because elementary schools were smaller communities with fewer teachers, it might have been easier to cultivate and maintain relationships at elementary school sites, whereas the secondary schools had more teachers due to departmentalized instruction and so it might have been more of a challenge to develop positive relationships with individual teachers. The challenges in the secondary setting offered valuable feedback and data about the navigation and building of relationships between teachers and principals. My goal was for the findings of my research to inform programs that train and prepare principals, thus overcoming challenges was an important part to the study. Middle and high schools were pivotal for students’ social and emotional development, and adult relationships could stand as a model for positive relationship building and maintenance in students.
Sample and Recruitment

The study included two data collection methods: (1) surveys and (2) interviews. The survey had six sections which asked respondents to list characteristics/traits/behaviors of principals, rate characteristics of principals, rate behaviors or principals, prioritize the roles of principals, rate the hallmarks of a positive teacher-principal relationship, and, optionally, nominate a principal with whom the respondent had an excellent relationship.

After teachers answered the survey questions and chose to nominate their principals, I asked the nominated principals if they were willing to sit with me for an interview to gain further insight into what leadership styles they deliberately employed to forge positive relationships with faculty. By nominating a principal for interviewing, teachers indicated their own willingness to be interviewed.

No personal data (including years of teaching experience) were collected in the survey. All teachers who participated in the interviews for the case studies had over 10 years of teaching experience. My goal was to have multiple perspectives and experiences that described the positive qualities of their relationships, and to develop a diverse and holistic study. The sample of participants for both the surveys and interviews represented different perspectives from people who provided adequate representations of various positive relationships.

I used the snowball recruitment method to reach potential survey respondents by contacting teachers I knew to participate in surveys, posting recruitment flyers on social media and asking people to share and send to teachers they know. Additionally, I contacted “teacher influencers” who had a social media presence on Instagram and detailed the premises of my study before I requested that they share the survey with followers on their platform. I did not receive any responses from “teacher influencers.”
I collected the necessary consent forms to ensure the protection of human subjects who chose to participate in the interviews. Those participating in the survey were asked to provide consent directly through the survey link, prior to beginning the survey. Those participating in the interview were asked to provide written/signed consent prior to the scheduling of an interview. Consent forms were emailed to participants, and participants were asked to sign and return the consent forms (scanned or signed electronically). Interview participants were selected based on the quality of their relationship with their principal. Selected participants reported on the survey that they had an excellent relationship with a current or former principal. Teacher and principal were interviewed separately. All interview participants were given a $10 Amazon gift card as a show of appreciation for their time and willingness to participate.

There were a total of nine principal nominations. From the nine nominations, four of the teachers nominated the same principal. To make a fair selection between the four who nominated the same principal, I entered all of the nominating teachers’ names into a random name selection tool found on Google. Due to unforeseen circumstances, one teacher was unable to participate in the interview, which was why there were only four case studies represented in Chapter 4.

**Data Collection Instruments**

The study employed two forms of data collection: surveys (see Appendix A) and interviews (see Appendix B). Surveys were a quick way for people to participate in a research study from wherever they were, without having to set aside a large chunk of time. The survey responses were majority multiple choice, and this meant that participants could complete the survey in a timely manner, in less than 15 minutes. The survey questions were directly related to respondents’ experiences, thus making the survey a reasonable and convenient method of data collection from a broad range of participants. Surveys were collected via Qualtrics, a
safeguarded data collection platform. Survey participants remained anonymous. Participant information was collected if they wished to participate in the interview process, but this information was unconnected to participants’ survey responses.

Though surveys were an excellent tool to collect data, they were limited in providing robust information and rich details about participants’ experiences, and therefore the interview process was a relevant and necessary second form of data collection. Selected nominee principals and the teachers who nominated them were asked to participate in an interview (via Zoom). I developed a semi-structured interview protocol grounded in the conceptual framework. The questions were formulated strategically to ensure consistency across the teacher and principal interviews. During the interviews, I gathered details and descriptions of the participants’ experiences via a set of questions intended to garner rich information regarding the social and professional relationships between the principals and teachers. I recorded meetings using the Zoom “record” option.

The interviews were a window into the relationship between the teacher and principal, as both parties provided input regarding specific instances they’ve experienced together, and each of their perspectives and behaviors revolving around the situations.

**Data Collection Procedure**

This research included two sets of data that were collected by a two-part survey and case studies of four selected survey participants who were interviewed along with separate interviews of their nominees. The first part of the survey was administered to teachers in secondary schools. Surveys were sent to participants and responses were collected one time, as opposed to longitudinally.
The teachers were asked to respond to a survey for me to gather information about the general perspectives of each group regarding the other group and the quality of relationships teachers and principals had with one another at the school site. One main focus of the interviews with both teachers and principals was to gather information and encourage reflection regarding how teachers’ and principals’ own perspectives and perceptions influence their opinion of their relationships. I wanted participants to be most focused on their relationships, and that included their own behaviors, the behaviors of principals, their biases, their own perceptions of their behaviors and the others’ behaviors, and possibly even underlying factors from their upbringing or life experiences.

After administering the surveys, participants were selected to participate in interviews that were the data collection method for the case studies. The goal of the first part of the survey was to gather information from a large pool of participants regarding their personal opinions about what an excellent relationship with a principal/leader should be. Within the survey (see Appendix A) was a part that asks about respondents’ interest in participating in an interview to contribute to a case study (if I select them) and for the respondent to nominate a principal who they felt established and maintained an excellent relationship with them. Out of all respondents, five were selected to participate in the interviews; five principals participated, but only four teachers. Interview participants were selected based on specific criteria which was asked about in the second part of the survey.

To select interviewees, responses were narrowed down by those who fit the aforementioned criteria. If a teacher had nominated a principal, I contacted the principal to determine whether they were willing and available to participate in the study. If both parties were willing and available, the selected pairs were contacted to schedule an interview (Appendix B).
The pairs (teacher and principal) were interviewed separately, so as to maintain the integrity of responses. The purpose of interviewing teachers and principals separately was to gather information about what each party feels made the relationship between the teacher and principal an excellent one. Each interviewee was provided with a thorough consent form that details the interview process and how their responses would be used. The interviews were conducted via Zoom. After obtaining consent from the participants to interview them and record our interview, I emailed them to coordinate and schedule an appropriate time to meet with each individual. Teacher interviews took about 30-45 minutes, while principal interviews ranged from 45 minutes to an hour and a half.

Interviews were video and audio recorded and were transcribed verbatim via Otter. To protect respondent identity and keep the surveys anonymous, no identifying information was collected using the surveys. All contact information collected for the interviews, recordings, and transcriptions was entirely separate from the anonymous survey responses and were stored in a password protected folder on a password protected cloud-based storage system, Google Drive, that was maintained by CSUN and cannot be accessed without multi-factor authentication. Interview participants were assigned pseudonyms to be anonymized when referenced in the case studies presented at the end of the study. Because interviews were conducted with pairs and specific instances might have been named, there was a chance that principal and teacher pairs may have referenced one another; still, any of those references were coded and anonymized with pseudonyms.
Data Analysis

Surveys

The data collected from the surveys were analyzed to reveal general response percentages and possible similarities, differences, and perceptions of teachers’ relationships with their principals. I looked for teachers’ preferences as they pertained to the three leadership styles that were discussed in the conceptual framework. The framework suggested that effective principals integrate different leadership styles. A combination of the three types of leadership styles was used to structure survey instruments and interview protocols.

Interviews

Data I collected from the interviews in the form of verbatim transcripts (via Otter) and recordings (recorded Zoom meetings) were coded based on specific words, phrases, or concepts that were repeated throughout interviewees’ responses. Once themes and patterns were identified, they were coded and analyzed in tandem with any trends that presented themselves through the literature and surveys. I organized participants’ transcribed responses in a Google Sheet by titling the columns in Row 1 with the questions that were asked. Column A was populated with the participants’ pseudonyms, and subsequent cells were populated with their responses.

Based on the rich descriptions provided by the participants, findings were coded and analyzed, and a case study was produced for each of the teachers. One summarized case was developed for the principal participants, as their responses included a broader scope of reference. After each case study was completed, I conducted a cross-case analysis where I compared and contrasted the four teacher cases, the one summarized principal case, and the surveys to identify trends or patterns that may or may not have been consistent among them.
**Researcher’s Role**

My role as the researcher was to conduct a study that investigates the quality of relationships between teachers and principals. With this study, I identified the characteristics and behaviors of principals that may have had a positive impact on their relationships with teachers while maintaining the authenticity of each participant’s voice.

I was motivated to conduct this research due to my personal experience and involvement in a negative relationship with an administrator that led me to question how relationships should be developed and maintained; I questioned why some administrators were able to cultivate positive professional relationships with their teachers in other schools, while others had a tendency to minimize teachers’ efforts and discredit their perceptions.

I considered myself to be a reflective and fair person, and I was aware that relationships were built with two people; therefore both members must be understanding, courteous, respectful, and kind. As an out-of-classroom educator, I saw both the administrator and teacher side of daily operations because the administrator was the leader who held the authority but a teacher’s daily work contributed to the smooth running of school operations. If teachers were not doing their part in helping the school by following instructions or utilizing the systems set in place to ensure organized operations, tensions arise between them and their administrators. Holding a unique position of an out-of-classroom teacher really allows a broader view of both the teacher and principal roles and expectations. My experiences led me to hold principals as the main responsible party when developing teacher-principal relationships since they were *the boss*. I believed principals should have been the ones to create opportunities for positive relationship building and should be effective and transparent communicators who have a genuine interest in their faculty’s well-being. It was important that I refrained from unconsciously interpreting
participants’ responses to reflect my own beliefs, as what I valued in my relationship with my principal might not have been as important to other teachers.

As the researcher, I attempted to remove my biases as an out-of-classroom educator and aspiring principal from the study and complete a thorough, objective, and impartial analysis to reach a conclusion according to information yielded by the surveys and interviews; at the same time, I maintained a reflective practice to acknowledge and remove my own personal experiences and values from any lines of questions and interpretation of data. I conducted member-checks to ensure my interpretation of their statements were accurate. Additionally, I worked continuously with my advisor to remove any of my biased analyses or perspectives. My peers were knowledgeable members of the educational community, and I asked them to review my work and coding schemes to advise me of any potential biases that may exist.

**Limitations of Research Design**

Relationships were an intangible experience perceived through participants in that relationship; relationships could be thoroughly described only from the participants in those relationships and others who may be witness to their interactions. Sometimes, even describing one’s own interactions might be a challenge. A limitation of gathering data via interviews about relationships was that interview responses were to be interpreted by me, after they had been verbalized by the participant. It was a possibility that I could have misinterpreted the language or intention of the participant.

My case studies encompassed specific participants’ accounts of their experiences and relationships with their principals. Humans do not all have the same abilities and strengths. Some participants were more perceptive, detailed, and articulate in their descriptions of their experiences, whereas others were extremely vague and general. Additionally, humans were
complex subjects who were impacted by a multitude of things throughout the day, and this may have limited the case study because if the subject had particularly challenging or motivating interactions that day, it may have impacted their response.

Another limitation was that responses could have been embellished, and in an effort to look friendly and personable, participants may not have been completely honest in the way they responded to questions. Because principals might have read the case study and learned much about teachers’ responses regarding their relationship, there was a strong motivation for a teacher to say positive things about their principal, especially if they were the current principal. The opportunity to complete this survey might have disproportionately attracted teachers who had good relationships with their principals, as those teachers might have wanted to look good to their principals by nominating their principal for the interview. They might have provided more positive and/or overly embellished feedback. On the contrary, there may have been teachers who were inclined to respond to the survey who had negative relationships with their principal. These teachers might have offered feedback that was more on the negative end of the spectrum and in an effort to make a point that principals did not have positive relationships with their faculty. There might have been a disproportionate number of teachers who wished to share their grievances. Either way, if there was a large number of teachers who were motivated to share their positive or negative experiences, it would have skewed the data, as there would not be equal representation of positive and negative experiences that were shared.

Because I used the snowball recruitment method and initially sent the survey to those I know, a limitation might have been that the teachers I knew were specific to a certain community that was reflective of a certain demographic, population, and/or socio-economic status. Those I knew could have sent the survey out to teachers they knew, who might have been like-minded or
part of the same community or age group. Additionally, the respondents might have reflected my own views of work ethics and expectations of teachers and/or principals. They may have had similar beliefs or have been in an age group that was concentrated and closer to my own.
Chapter IV: Results and Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate the qualities of positive teacher and principal relationships. Guiding this study were three research questions: (1) What were the features of excellent professional relationships between secondary school teachers and principals? (2) What were the characteristics and leadership philosophies of an effective secondary school principal that helped foster excellent relationships with teachers? Along with the three leadership styles (authentic, servant, and transformational) these questions were the basis to the interview protocols. My goal was to identify the trends, patterns, behaviors, and/or leadership styles that result in excellent teacher-principal relationships by using the data collected in this study. This information can help inform administrator preparation programs.

For this study, I collected data through surveys developed on Qualtrics and conducted interviews via Zoom. Seventy-five participants responded to the surveys, and nine of those participants nominated principals with whom they had excellent relationships to participate in interviews. In this chapter, I discuss the survey and interview results separately and respectively. The section that discusses survey results was broken down into subsections based on the questions about features (characteristics, behaviors, prioritization of roles) of principals. Each subsection describes collected data and includes tables for visual reference.

Interview data were reported in the form of five case studies where teacher and principal responses illustrate the two perspectives on what make up the excellent teacher-principal relationship. The thorough descriptions provided by interview participants allow for data to be presented in robust narratives.
Surveys

The first question of the survey was an open-ended question that asked respondents to list five characteristics, traits, or behaviors they believed enabled a principal to maintain positive relationships with faculty. From the 243 entries that were submitted, the most frequently used word groupings submitted by 10% or more of participants, in order of frequency, were as follows: empathetic, listener, communicator, honest, knowledge, and transparent. Each of these characteristics was described as a feature of all three of the frameworks presented in Chapter 2.

As illustrated in Table 2, researchers cite each of those characteristics, traits, or behaviors as important pieces to effective leadership in all three leadership styles (authentic, servant, and transformational):

Table 2

Open-Ended Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic/Trait/Behavior</th>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Citation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathetic/caring/kind/understanding/compassionate</td>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>Northouse, 2019; Spears, 2002; Greenleaf, 1977; Edmondson &amp; Schein, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Servant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good/active/attentive listener</td>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>Dou et al., 2017; Bogler 2001; Northouse, 2019; Franklin, 2018; Berkovich &amp; Eyal, 2017; Edmondson &amp; Schein, 2012; Karami et al., 2020; Rinio, 2018; Shier et al., 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Servant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good communicator/responsive</td>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>Dou et al., 2017; Bogler 2001; Northouse, 2019; Franklin, 2018; Berkovich &amp; Eyal, 2017; Edmondson &amp; Schein, 2012; Karami et al., 2020; Rinio, 2018; Shier et al., 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Servant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest/trustworthy/reliable</td>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>Northouse, 2019; Edmondson &amp; Schein, 2012; Meyer et al., 2020; Nettles &amp; Harrington, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Servant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to Table 2, teachers’ responses evidence that the most important characteristics, traits, and behaviors of a principal happen to align with the core values of all three leadership styles. However, in addition to the frequently mentioned words in Table 2, a number of participants (less than 10%), responded with words that aligned with the characteristics, behaviors, and traits unique to just one of these leadership or that aligned with leadership styles other than these three. For example, optimistic and open-minded were mentioned in teachers’ open responses, but they were not part of the core foci of any of the three leadership styles studied in this research. None of the characteristics unique to any of the leadership styles were mentioned by more than 10% of respondents. Though those standalone responses were important and highlight differences among the three leadership styles, they were not mentioned frequently.

**Characteristics of an Excellent Principal**

Respondents were asked to rate the characteristics of a principal in terms of their importance to a working relationship. The results in Table 3 show that the majority of respondents, 82.35%, rated honesty and support as the top two Critically Important characteristics of a principal that contribute to a working relationship, while the remaining
17.65% ranked them as Fairly Important. None of the respondents ranked honesty or support as Less Important or Not Important. The second most critically important characteristic to the respondents was empathy. The majority of respondents rated the following as Critically Important characteristics of an excellent principal: intelligent/knowledgeable, fair/consistent, open-minded, has teaching experience, has emotional intelligence, and is kind. Less than 50% of respondents reported that commitment to social justice, being visionary, inspirational, and predictable were Critically Important, and a larger percentage of respondents ranked the three characteristics as either Fairly Important or Less Important. Predictability, commitment to social justice, and being visionary received the most ratings of Less Important or Not Important. Data show that 7.84% of respondents reported that predictability was Not Important. This was the only category that received the most ratings of Not Important.

Table 3

Survey Responses: Characteristics of an Excellent Principal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Less Important</th>
<th>Fairly Important</th>
<th>Critically Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>17.65%</td>
<td>82.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>17.65%</td>
<td>82.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathetic</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>19.61%</td>
<td>80.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent/knowledgeable</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>21.57%</td>
<td>78.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair/consistent</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>23.53%</td>
<td>76.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-minded</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>1.96%</td>
<td>27.45%</td>
<td>70.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has teaching experience</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>1.96%</td>
<td>29.41%</td>
<td>68.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has emotional intelligence</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>43.14%</td>
<td>56.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kind</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>3.92%</td>
<td>43.14%</td>
<td>52.94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Committed to social justice  1.96%  17.65%  31.37%  49.02%
Visionary  1.96%  7.84%  41.18%  49.02%
Inspirational  0.00%  13.73%  41.18%  45.10%
Predictable  7.84%  39.22%  31.37%  21.57%

Behaviors of an Excellent Principal

Respondents were asked to rate the behaviors of an excellent principal. According to Table 4, the vast majority of respondents, about 92%, rated treating teachers like educated professionals as Critically Important. Over 80% of respondents reported that listening actively, exhibiting genuine interest/care about personal life/well being of faculty, and transparent communication were Critically Important behaviors of an excellent principal. Every respondent reported that treating teachers like educated professionals, listening actively, transparent communication, positive attitude, and inspiring change were either Critically Important or Fairly Important, and none reported that any of those behaviors were Less Important or Not Important.

The behavior most often rated as Less Important was for principals to coach faculty.

Table 4

Survey Responses: Behaviors of an Excellent Principal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Less Important</th>
<th>Fairly Important</th>
<th>Critically Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treats teachers like educated professionals</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>7.84%</td>
<td>92.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listens actively</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>13.73%</td>
<td>86.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibits genuine interest/care about personal life/well being of faculty</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>3.92%</td>
<td>15.69%</td>
<td>80.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is transparent with communications</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>19.61%</td>
<td>80.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connects with faculty</td>
<td>1.92%</td>
<td>1.92%</td>
<td>17.31%</td>
<td>78.85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Solicits feedback and input from faculty  0.00%  1.96%  23.53%  74.51%
Exhibits a positive attitude  0.00%  0.00%  31.37%  68.63%
Has an open door policy  0.00%  3.92%  33.33%  62.75%
Inspires change  0.00%  0.00%  52.94%  47.06%
Coaches faculty  1.96%  13.73%  52.94%  31.37%

**Hallmarks of a Positive Teacher-Principal Relationship**

Table 5 shows data regarding the Hallmarks of a Positive Teacher-Principal Relationship. The data illustrate that 90% of respondents rated *clear and effective two-way communication* as Critically Important. *Having a shared vision* was reported as being the least Critically Important, though most agreed that it was Fairly Important. *Presuming positive intentions* had the most ratings for Less Important. No respondents believed that any of the hallmarks presented in Table 5 were Not Important. The majority rated all of the hallmarks as either Critically Important or Fairly Important.

**Table 5**

*Survey Responses: Hallmarks of an Excellent Principal*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hallmarks</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Less Important</th>
<th>Fairly Important</th>
<th>Critically Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear and effective two-way</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>9.80%</td>
<td>90.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual trust</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>13.73%</td>
<td>86.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>23.53%</td>
<td>76.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presuming positive intentions</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5.88%</td>
<td>31.37%</td>
<td>62.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from each other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative decision-making</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>50.98%</td>
<td>49.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing a vision</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>3.92%</td>
<td>52.94%</td>
<td>43.14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Prioritization of Roles of an Excellent Secondary School Principal**

As discussed in the literature review, principals have a number of roles within a school site. They were tasked with instructional, operational, and administrative leadership duties. Seven of the most important roles were identified based on Northouse (2019) and included in the survey for respondents to rank. Respondents were asked to prioritize the roles of an excellent secondary principal in terms of importance to the school, from Most (1) to Least (7) Important.

The role of *Leads instruction* was most frequently ranked as the Most Important role for a principal. *Supports faculty professional growth and development* and *Manages crises* were the second-most-frequently ranked as Most Important roles, as about 24% and 20% of respondents ranked them as Most Important. *Evaluates faculty performance and/or programs, Conducts day-to-day operations, and Establishes community partnerships* were the most frequently ranked for Least Important role, with 19%, 25%, and 30% of Least Important ranks, respectively. None of the respondents ranked *Supports faculty professional growth and development* or *Manages crises* as the Least Important role.

**Table 6**

*Survey Responses: Prioritization of Roles of an Excellent Secondary School Principal*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leads Instruction</td>
<td>26.83%</td>
<td>12.20%</td>
<td>09.76%</td>
<td>04.88%</td>
<td>12.20%</td>
<td>17.07%</td>
<td>17.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports faculty professional growth and development</td>
<td>24.39%</td>
<td>26.83%</td>
<td>19.51%</td>
<td>07.32%</td>
<td>12.20%</td>
<td>09.76%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manages crises</td>
<td>19.51%</td>
<td>21.95%</td>
<td>14.63%</td>
<td>17.07%</td>
<td>09.76%</td>
<td>17.07%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes program improvement and development</td>
<td>12.20%</td>
<td>24.39%</td>
<td>29.27%</td>
<td>19.51%</td>
<td>04.88%</td>
<td>04.88%</td>
<td>04.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducts day-to-day operations</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>05.00%</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
<td>22.50%</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Survey Results

The questions in the survey were developed based on authentic, servant, and transformational leadership theories. Table 7 illustrates how each of these characteristics, behaviors, and hallmarks fits into my hypothesis that a principal or leader with excellent relationships with followers embodies an integration of authentic, servant, and transformational leadership. The data show that effective leaders embody some combination of the three leadership styles mentioned above. Based on the data in Tables 4.1-4.3, teachers perceive that the top five Critically Important characteristics of an excellent principal were honesty, support, empathy, intelligence, and fairness; these characteristics each play a role in authentic, servant, and transformational leadership styles. Most of the data in Table 3 were directly aligned with teachers’ open-ended responses (see Table 2) where the top five characteristics, traits, and behaviors of an excellent principal include honesty (including trustworthy and reliable), empathetic (including caring, kind, understanding, and compassionate, and knowledgeable (including intelligence, expertise, and competence).

Teachers perceive the top five Critically Important behaviors of an excellent principal to be Treating teachers like educated professionals (respect), Listening actively, Exhibiting genuine interest/care/empathy, Communicating transparently, and Connecting with faculty. Teachers report that the top three Critically Important hallmarks of an excellent principal were Clear and effective two-way communication, Mutual trust, and Transparency. Communication was listed twice as it was included in the survey as both a behavior and a hallmark. As further evidence, I
have included a column that determines whether survey respondents included the items (characteristics, traits, or behaviors) in their open-ended response. Every one of the characteristics, behaviors, and traits valued by the teacher respondents aligns with all three of the leadership styles, with one exception: fairness/consistency was associated only with authentic leadership. According to Table 7, there was considerable overlap among the three styles, in particular in the characteristics that teachers value most in their leaders. *Open-minded* was a trait mentioned in the open-ended response, but it was not included in Table 7, as it was not a significant focus of any of the three leadership styles.

**Table 7**

*Data and Framework Alignment*

| Characteristic/Behavior/Trait                        | Authentic | Servant | Transformational | Included in Open-Ended Response |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|-----------------|--------------------------------
| Honesty                                             | ✓         | ✓       | ✓               | ✓                              |
| Supportive                                          | ✓         | ✓       | ✓               | ✓                              |
| Empathetic                                          | ✓         | ✓       | ✓               | ✓                              |
| Intelligent/knowledgeable                          | ✓         | ✓       | ✓               | ✓                              |
| Fair/consistent                                     | ✓         |         |                 |                                |
| Treating teachers like educated professionals (respect) | ✓         | ✓       | ✓               | ✓                              |
| Listens actively                                    | ✓         | ✓       | ✓               | ✓                              |
| Genuine interest/care                               | ✓         | ✓       | ✓               | ✓                              |
| Transparent communication                           | ✓         | ✓       | ✓               | ✓                              |
| Connects with faculty                               | ✓         | ✓       |                 |                                |
| Clear/Effective 2-way communication                 | ✓         | ✓       |                 |                                |
| Mutual trust | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Transparency | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

### Case Studies

The following section of this chapter was a series of narratives in the form of case studies. The information for these case studies was taken directly from interviews conducted with teachers and principals about their positive relationship. In analyzing the interview transcripts, I noticed that teacher responses had a more singular and individualistic view of their relationship with their principal, while principals took a broader and more general approach in responding to questions. For this reason, teacher interviews had a more personalized nuance and were presented as individual case studies. All of the principals’ responses were generally aligned and presented similar information; therefore the principals’ responses were combined into one case.

**Case Study A: Isabella Jenkins (Principal Benjamin Kim)**

Isabella Jenkins was a 6th grade math and science teacher in a public school located in Southern California. Benjamin Kim has been the school principal for the past five years. Ms. Jenkins described their professional relationship as one that was excellent and one of mutual respect. She shared that Principal Kim was a great people-person, compassionate, and transparent. Ms. Jenkins believed that the mutual respect shared between the two was what made their relationship excellent, and she appreciated that he expressed his goals and plans in an understandable and digestible manner. What set Mr. Kim apart from other administrators was that he listened carefully, empathized, and gave his employees an opportunity to share their solution to the problem. She said, “If the solution is one that he can live with, it’s an easy yes.” If
he were to offer criticism, he did so constructively and by offering a concrete, workable alternative.

Her role in their relationship had been one of input and suggestion. She accepted a “no” when necessary and appreciated his open door policy, his willingness to listen, and his ability to “be a real human being.” He talked about his emotions, which was something she believed to be a wonderful quality of his. Because of his openness and active engagement in conversations, he either offered a feasible solution or explained why something cannot be done, and this was why Ms. Jenkins could not recall a time when she had disagreed with one of Mr. Kim’s decisions or that he had disagreed with one of hers. They had always been able to come to a compromise.

Mr. Kim was a principal who allowed his faculty to develop as educators by offering them leeway, freedom, and opportunities to try new things. The faculty had immense trust in their principal due to his transparency and grace. It was important for the teacher-principal relationship to bloom, because it was only when teachers felt supported that they were inclined to be adventurous with their teaching to make it interesting. Ms. Jenkins believed that “not every [strategy] works, but if you know that you can fail in a comfortable atmosphere, that’s a good thing.” She explained that Mr. Kim was “so incredibly encouraging and doesn’t look to stifle anybody’s growth. He does everything he possibly can to encourage.” He was obvious, frequent, and transparent in his communication and lived by an ethical code grounded in honesty. According to Ms. Jenkins, Mr. Kim “does not expect anything of faculty that he would not expect of himself,” and he held himself to a high standard, which was why she felt it was justified for him to hold faculty to that same standard.

Ms. Jenkins shared that Mr. Kim brought upon a big change from former leadership by allowing all stakeholders to share in decision making and communicating transparently, which
created a cohesiveness among staff. Mr. Kim valued the school community and interacted with parents, students, and staff frequently through meetings, with his involvement with the PTSA, and by attending other events/partaking in committees. He knew every student’s name (and the students knew him), he talked to them, and he was present and visible during morning, lunch, and afternoon supervision. Ms. Jenkins placed great emphasis on how Mr. Kim recognized that if every part of the larger infrastructure was satisfied, if they felt like they were heard, “the whole infrastructure works perfectly well together and the outcome [is] a positive one.”

**Case Study B: Benjamin Kim (Principal Dante Shaw)**

Benjamin Kim was the principal of a comprehensive middle school in Southern California. Twenty years ago, Mr. Kim worked as a teacher and school site coordinator under Principal Dante Shaw, then went on to work with him in the district as a district administrator. They worked together for nearly 20 years, until Mr. Shaw’s retirement. Mr. Kim described his teacher-principal relationship with Mr. Shaw as an excellent one that has transcended the lines of the workplace and has become a mentorship and friendship. Though Mr. Shaw was retired, he continued to be an active mentor in Mr. Kim’s principalship. Mr. Kim attributed his success as a teacher to the feedback and opportunities provided to him by his principal, as well as Mr. Shaw’s generosity, listening, and going above and beyond for his faculty. Mr. Kim said that what makes their relationship excellent was that Mr. Shaw trusted his ability to make an impact with students.

Mr. Kim expressed that he, too, played a role in the relationship, and that was to go above and beyond and reciprocate the efforts of the principal for the betterment of the school. Though they had an excellent relationship, Mr. Kim admitted that there may have been a few minor situations when one disagreed with the other. With communication, explanation, clarification,
and informing one another of the intent behind the decision, Mr. Kim and Mr. Shaw came to resolutions. If criticism was to be delivered, Mr. Shaw would offer feedback, give pointers, and explain any corrective actions that he suggested. His feedback and sharing of reasoning, knowledge, and experiences helped Mr. Kim grow and develop professionally. Mr. Kim believed that the broader impact of Mr. Shaw’s relationship with teachers was that it brought teachers together to work collectively to support the principal’s vision.

To illustrate his good relationship with Mr. Shaw, Mr. Kim shared a story that encompasses not only their relationship but also both of their dedication and commitment to the effectiveness of school-wide events. One evening, when Mr. Kim had to prepare materials for school-wide testing, Mr. Shaw did not hesitate to step in and lend a helping hand. Together, the two stayed at school almost until midnight, compiling, counting, and organizing testing materials to ensure a smooth administration of tests the following day. Mr. Kim said, “He was with me until the very end. That is what a good principal does.” Mr. Shaw’s continued support allowed Mr. Kim to try new things, bring in new techniques, and not feel judged.

Mr. Shaw’s dedication to the school community extended to working with the city to tear down a drug infested building across the street from a school, making the school a welcoming environment and safe haven for the community (opening up the school pool, adding murals, etc.). His goal was always to make sure kids were safe, and he did not hesitate to work within and outside the scope of his duties. He demonstrated his commitment to all stakeholders by expending time (even weekends), energy, and resources to serve everyone. His goal was to ensure that everything was to be done in the best interest of kids, to ensure the organization was high functioning, and to push everyone to work to their full potential. He was always visible, communicated often, supported collaboration, held people accountable, and made sure that
everyone contributed to achieving school goals. Mr. Kim shared that Mr. Shaw’s communication was laced with a good sense of humor, was motivational, and encouraged teachers to rise against challenges as a collective.

**Case Study C: Savannah Lears (Principal Lucas Jones)**

Savannah Lears was a county administrator in Southern California. Twelve years ago, she worked as a special education teacher and department chair under the principalship of Lucas Jones. The two reported that their professional relationship was excellent. Ms. Lears explained that they had a “dual relationship, as far as knowing him personally and then as my administrator.” She described their relationship as honest, very open and transparent, and one where there was value placed on academia. What made their relationship excellent was that it was a two-way give and take: he honored who she was as a person and what she brought to the profession. He had a level of professionalism and academic integrity and approached faculty with conversational feedback when things needed to be changed. Ms. Lears said that what set Mr. Jones apart from other administrators was that he was humble and intelligent, a good leader, and one that remembered what it was like to be in the classroom. He had a good heart and was always willing to learn and know more about any arenas in education that he was not necessarily well-versed in.

Ms. Lears acknowledged that her role in their relationship was as the department chair of Special Education and though he was her boss and leader, they had a friendly relationship that added to their connection as employees of the school. Though she could not quite pinpoint a time when the two had disagreed with a decision the other had made, she admitted that there probably were some things they had differing views on, but they always talked it through with honest, transparent, intellectual discussion. His goal was to try to come to a consensus.
One way Mr. Jones helped Ms. Lears grow was to model for her that leaders can be warm demanders, have high expectations, and nurture growth. Mr. Jones recalled and shared his experiences from when he was a classroom teacher, a valuable behavior that Ms. Lears found refreshing. In addition to being a known and loved member of the community, he cultivated a level of camaraderie and work ethic that transformed faculty and staff to a family. Ms. Lears shared that “it was more of a teaching family when he was in the lead.” The positive relationship between the two allowed her to be brave, venture out of her comfort zone, and try new things in the classroom. Ms. Lears described Mr. Jones as a man who “walked the talk” and was a man of his word.

**Case Study D: Oliver Parker (Principal Omar Garcia)**

Omar Garcia hired Oliver Parker over 25 years ago, and their relationship quickly turned into one of mutual trust and respect. For years, their teacher-principal relationship continued to bloom and develop into one of mentorship and friendship. Mr. Parker was an assistant superintendent, and Mr. Garcia was a retired district administrator Mr. Parker recalled stories of their time together as teacher and principal with endearment and a sense of adoration toward his former principal, and he described their relationship as “unique.” One of the most notable parts of their relationship was that Mr. Garcia “got out of the way and let me do what I thought was needed. He had confidence and never told me what to do…he never held me back.” Mr. Parker said that what set Mr. Garcia apart from other principals was that he was kind and nice, and that way, he got more accomplished because he found the best strengths in everybody and found a way to move the school forward. Mr. Parker noted that he believed they have a successful relationship because the two had the same visions and mission, and the principal allowed for him to be successful by supporting him.
Though the two shared a great relationship, Mr. Parker remembered a time when he disagreed with the schedule that Mr. Garcia had published because it did not consider the many activities Mr. Parker had to conduct throughout the day. Mr. Parker was upset at the schedule change, and when he went to discuss it with his principal, it had turned out to be a simple oversight that was corrected. Mr. Parker shared that they “had the same vision…[and] worked together to achieve that vision,” did a lot of things together, and they communicated often to find solutions and ensure all things were run smoothly for the students. He mentioned that even in times where criticism might have been delivered, it was done so in a non-threatening way that was like feedback that “would rub off the rough edges”; however, it never came across as criticism.

Mr. Parker and Mr. Garcia worked hand in hand to ensure that school was a fun and exciting place where students could come to learn. Mr. Garcia “walked the talk” and was a genuine person who “modeled kindness and was a good listener.” Mr. Parker described Mr. Garcia as a “good, decent person [who is] trustworthy, honest, has integrity, and never got mad.” Mr. Parker shared on a few occasions that Mr. Garcia was able to recognize the best qualities and talents of people. He shared a story that he thought encompassed Mr. Garcia’s easy-going approach. He said that when Mr. Garcia called Mr. Parker and invited him to his first teaching interview, he directed Mr. Parker not to wear a tie. Though Mr. Parker thought it funny at the time, he then realized that it was simply a testament to Mr. Garcia’s genuine personality.

Mr. Garcia’s relationships with his teachers transformed the school culture to a positive environment. He brought spirit and fun to the school and was always accessible and visible to the school community. Mr. Garcia attended events and participated in school activities to model how deeply he valued the school community. Mr. Parker attributed the faculty’s happiness to the
positive teacher-principal relationships. He believed that everything should be done to make the school better for kids. Mr. Parker stated that:

If all of us help the principal to make his job easier, he is going to make the teachers’ job easier, and the teacher is going to be happier. If the teacher is happier, the students are going to benefit from a happy teacher. By making the teachers’ jobs easier, the kids are going to learn more because the teachers are going to be happy. They’re going to do their very best, and they’re not going to be grouchy or complain as much.

Mr. Parker recognized that Mr. Garcia’s presence was felt among teachers, students, parents, and the community. He not only invited parents to have roles in decision making committees, but he also forged powerful relationships with community organizations and never hesitated to pitch in to ensure a safe and fun time for students.

**Principals’ Perspectives**

In contrast to the teachers, whose remarks mainly reflected their relationship with a single principal, the principals I interviewed gave responses that considered a broader scope of the school community, including involvement with and impact on students, faculty, staff, parents, and the community. Because of the general direction and similarity of their responses, the principals’ perspectives were combined into one summarized case. Any contrasting notions were quoted and/or noted in the summary.

The five principals who were nominated by their teachers as excellent principals believed they had been nominated because of their ability to empathize and cultivate an environment of teamwork, collaboration, and trust. They each mentioned that caring for those they serve was an important part of building relationships and offering relevant and helpful support. They
participated in school events, lent a helping hand where needed, and accepted a wide range of tasks as being their jobs.

**Characteristics and Leadership Styles.**

The five principals were asked to list their own characteristics and leadership styles/philosophies that were important to their professional relationships. A pattern emerged based on what the principals shared in their responses: doing what was best for kids, trust/honesty, and developing and/or maintaining relationships came up multiple times. Three principals believed they were servant leaders and authentic leaders—they even used these terms—who committed themselves to their work and serving the community. (No principal referred to themselves as a transformational leader.) They provided opportunities for faculty and students to learn and grow and strived to empower the school community they led. Through respectful, honest conversations and by listening to their community members, they created inclusive environments where all members were honored and valued. Being lifelong learners, grounding decisions in student success, and acting with integrity were all qualities that these principals claimed to possess, and all were aspects of theories about authentic, servant, and transformational leadership.

**Decision Making.**

All principals must make multiple decisions on a daily basis, and there were times when people might have disagreed with some decisions. According to Mr. Martinez, “Part of a leader’s role is to effectively handle those collisions.” Mr. Garcia said, “That is part of being a principal,” while Mr. Kim laughed as he noted that disagreements happened “every day!” All principals agreed they made decisions that were criticized on a daily basis; however, as long as decisions were grounded in doing what was best for the students, the principals felt they were justified. Mr.
Jones said, “There is no such thing as the perfect decision that makes everyone happy... The right thing is making sure [decisions are centered] on what is important and best for the kids.” The principals suggested explaining decisions clearly and offering school community members transparency when informing them of decisions. Mr. Jones continued to explain, “I’m not necessarily seeking that teachers leave in agreement with my decision, but I seek for teachers to clearly understand why I made the decision and where I was coming from.” The principals added that it was helpful to garner buy-in from stakeholders and remain transparent with them. Mr. Kim mentioned that when trying school-wide implementations, “you have to start small and build consensus.” Mr. Martinez pointed out that everyone’s active engagement and involvement were what encouraged stakeholders to “get on board and join the effort.” Though it might have taken some time for teachers, students, and families to get on board with a decision, the principals shared that “it works out in the end,” even when everyone did not agree with a decision.

**Principal Roles and Service.**

Another part of a principal’s job was to evaluate teachers and programs and offer actionable feedback to teachers. The principals all agreed that it was important to offer a balance of positive and corrective feedback to ensure a teacher was empowered to grow and learn. Mr. Jones explained, “Providing effective feedback is one key; making sure that it isn’t personal is another. To do this, you make sure you have set out hundreds of hours of groundwork to establish a trusted safe space.” Though the process might include hard conversations, it should not be punitive, and most of the principals mentioned they use the method of leading the teachers to a solution rather than listing shortcomings and solutions for them. This reflective practice allowed teachers to feel more confident in the process. Mr. Shaw offered a piece of advice: “It is
more powerful for a teacher to see where change is needed instead of telling them.” The principals mentioned that honest, kind, and encouraging feedback was the best way to provide feedback to teachers, and the goal should have always been to build teachers up. Mr. Kim recalled a time where he had to offer corrective feedback to a veteran teacher. He said, “[Teachers] should not feel like they are being attacked…criticism is [not] something personal…[and] must be presented as evidenced, constructive feedback [that is] factual.” In the end, the teacher he provided feedback to “was so proud that she was able to incorporate something new in her classes. She would invite me to watch her do inquiry-based activities in her classroom.”

Mr. Jones agreed that feedback should not be personal and was “precious for anybody’s journey and growth.” With a similar story, Mr. Martinez highlighted the importance of being a “warm demander…[to] be honest…, [and] engage the teacher.” He shared a story of when he provided feedback to a teacher: “Years later, the teacher said it was one of the moments that challenged the way he was teaching and that it was a growing opportunity for him.” Mr. Jones found value in “getting [teachers] to see another perspective. After Mr. Jones offered one of his teachers feedback, she would invite him to provide informal feedback when she tried new strategies. Making mistakes was an important part of growth and development, and according to Mr. Jones, principals need to “create an environment where we are taking risks.” Mr. Shaw tried to create opportunities for faculty to make mistakes, where “[teachers] can experiment on things and try out different things with different lessons and methodologies.”

**Role of Relationships.**

Whether the relationships being discussed were those between students and teachers or teachers and principals, all principals agreed that relationships were at the core of cultivating
positive school culture. Mr. Kim said, “It’s all about relationships. I model how to build trusting relationships with my staff so teachers can build those relationships with their kids. When you have relationships, you communicate better, resolve conflict, and work together on complex things.” Mr. Garcia shared the same sentiments when he mentioned, “When everyone is pulling together, you have a happier school community.” In different words, Mr. Jones shared a similar thought: “[We] steer folks in the direction of overcoming and moving on together with a greater sense of purpose.” Similarly, Mr. Shaw explained, “It’s a team effort, and everyone has to be on board.” Mr. Martinez posited that the bottom line was that we were doing “some of the most important work in the lives of our students,” and to do so effectively, there had to be a cohesive and happy school community. The principals had similar things to say when it came to their opinions about how their positive teacher-principal relationships impacted teaching and learning in the classrooms.

A summary of the principals’ remarks regarding the impact of their positive relationships with teachers on teaching and learning in the classroom was shared in Table 8. A few commonalities among the principals’ responses in Table 8 were the idea that the relationship was a reciprocal, give and take; it’s a team effort that trickles down from a good teacher-principal relationship to good student-teacher relationships in the classrooms. The notion of love and happiness came up in principals’ responses, as well. These were two concepts that had not been introduced in authentic, servant, or transformational leadership theories.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Citation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Martinez, Jackson</td>
<td>The relationship is reciprocal. We need to be willing to put in the work. When you love something, you will do anything, and you will find the resources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kim, Benjamin
I hope to bring the best out of them to help them become the best versions of themselves, to be happy when they’re working, to be positive. I hope they would take that and pass it on in their own classrooms.

Garcia, Omar
When they’re happy, students are happy, ultimately parents are happy. When you are in and out of the classroom and giving them positive feedback or pats on the back and telling them you appreciate them, that bodes well for all concerned…it makes for a stronger school community.

Jones, Lucas
The better the relationship, the happier the teacher is. The happier the teacher is, the better outlook they have to be able to deal with the daily challenges of their job. It can have an impact for them to want to be there and do what is best for kids. You don’t have to like all the teachers, but you need to love them. You can still have good, trusting, healthy, solid relationships that are centered around accomplishing what is best for kids.

Shaw, Dante
It is a team effort. I would tell teachers that I will do my best to support, but they need to do their part in the classroom and make sure they are using time effectively to educate students.

Not only were principals accessible to their staff, but they attended events, and were supportive of their students. They were visible, they participated in school events and activities, joined athletic games, and they showed up to their students’ special school events. Mr. Kim’s strategy was being present at school events and during unstructured time to model how a positive and supportive school culture was developed. Mr. Kim hoped that his teachers would employ similar strategies of presence and community building within their classrooms, and Mr. Garcia took advantage of being visible during events so he could interact with teachers, students, and families to foster relationships. The principals demonstrated their commitment to serving students, teachers, and the community by mentoring, being accessible, making sure the school community was safe, and valuing the school community. The principals reported that their favorite ways to show they value the school community was by celebrating the students, teachers, and community members; by showing gratitude; by welcoming two-way communication and dialogue from all stakeholders; by creating a safe and welcoming environment; and by planning fun events for the kids. Mr. Kim liked to celebrate birthdays and
accomplishments by feeding his faculty. Mr. Martinez liked to create a welcoming environment by hiring teachers who love their kids and, like Mr. Shaw, liked adding lots of colors and installing murals to his school to make it a beautiful space.

**Goals, Visions, and Transformation.**

When asked about what visions and goals they had for their schools and what successful transformations they lead at their school sites, principals’ responses were all based on academic achievement/growth and school culture (environment, student leadership/spirit, connectedness of stakeholders, student attendance, etc.). The principals all noted that successful transformational efforts were team efforts. Mr. Garcia said, “I don’t think I will say that I developed significant change because I think that transformational change comes from cohesively working together…[it’s] a collaborative effort.” Mr. Martinez mentioned that the school “needed the buy-in of teachers…this meant rolling up sleeves, getting full commitment from everyone, and really diving deep with those who are willing to put in the work.” Mr. Kim said, “Teachers form their own identities as professionals, and in turn, [together] we build our own identity of who we are as a school. We believe in setting a vision and leaving no student behind.”

To nurture the transformational changes referred to in the prior paragraph, the principals implemented relevant professional development sessions for their teachers. They encouraged and fostered teamwork and collaboration among their teachers while being available to participate in teachers’ collaborative efforts. They allocated funds for teacher professional development opportunities and valued teachers by granting them any opportunities or resources that were within reason. The principals shared that they tried to say “yes” whenever possible because, as Mr. Jones put it, “Teachers express their passion about wanting to learn and grow. When they find the opportunities, the answer should be yes.” Mr. Garcia said, “If I can help, I help.” Mr.
Shaw shared a story of a time he helped a new teacher who was struggling to find an efficient system for grading papers. He joined her in her classroom and helped her grade. Then he showed her how to grade systematically, how to record grades, and how to organize. He says, “I know how it is, and the bottom line is teamwork, plus I remember what it’s like.” These principals were available and accessible to support their staff and offer any opportunity for them to engage in their own learning and growth.

**Values, Ethics, and Authenticity.**

Principals Martinez, Kim, Garcia, Jones, and Shaw had a few things in common when it came to their values, ethics, and developing transparent relationships with stakeholders. They shared that in order to be successful, leaders need to know themselves and be true to themselves. Otherwise, it was easy to be “swayed by the wind,” as Mr. Garcia put it. When leaders were grounded in their values, they were more consistent with their decision making and were more likely to remain authentic. To share those decisions, it was important to remain transparent and to listen to the feedback that was given by stakeholders. Being available and responsive were key components here. Keeping families, teachers, and students informed of decisions and expectations in a clear and concise manner allowed for smooth transitions and implementation of systems.

Finally, the five principals had the opportunity to share what about being a principal gives them a sense of purpose. In summary, the principals noted change, impact, and love as their purpose. Every day, these principals had the opportunity to change lives, to make a difference in people’s lives, to love the kids and teachers, to witness transformation and growth of students right before their eyes, and to be the change agent that leads it all. Mr. Jones remembered his time observing kindergarten classrooms and shared his thoughts: “[You] have
your hand on the direction that this learning can go for any student…[it] is really a powerful thing, it’s a humble thing, and it’s a really honorable task…that’s a purposeful thing.” Mr. Martinez said, “Our work fills the soul…put ego aside so we can move mountains. You don’t have to like everyone, but you need to love on everything because that is what is best for our kids,” and Mr. Shaw mentioned, “You can see the outcomes of the efforts that you have put in…that outcome you get, that is rewarding.”

**Teacher Cases and Principal Summary: Comparative Analysis**

There were a number of similarities in teachers’ and principals’ responses during interviews. Both groups emphasized the importance of the following items multiple times during their interviews: relationships, communication, listening, support, transparency, visibility, accessibility and availability, empathy, kindness, presence, non-threatening feedback, “walking the talk,” warm demanding, and trust/honesty. Both groups shared that they believed they had excellent relationships with one another because they worked together to achieve common goals (student achievement, school culture).

Like Principals Kim, Garcia, and Jones, Mr. Parker mentioned in his interview that “if all of us help the principal to make their job easier, they’re going to make the teacher’s job easier, and the teacher is going to be happier, and the students are going to benefit from a happy teacher.” This confirmed the principal’s statement of the broader impact of the positive teacher-principal relationship both schoolwide and in classrooms. Both groups agreed that when a teacher felt supported, they were more likely to try new strategies and methods in their classroom.

All principals reported they did not have or could not remember any disagreements with the teacher who nominated them. Three of the four teachers reported they did not have
disagreements with the principal they nominated, with the exception of minor instances, which were quickly resolved once there was a line of communication established between the two.

The notion of “walk[ing] the talk/walk” came up three different times in both teacher and principal interviews by Ms. Lears, Mr. Parker, and Mr. Martinez. “Walking the talk/walk” means to follow through with what a person says, and here it was evidenced that it is important for principals and teachers for the principal to mean what they say and see the vision through.

Based on teacher and principal responses, having a supportive principal was crucial for the teacher and principal relationship. Mr. Garcia notes that support was “when you can point out something that is a mistake and [teachers] take it as such…something that needs to be corrected, you approach them…, work with them, …talk to them, and …show them respect.” Ms. Jenkins highlights the importance of “when a teacher feels like the principal has their back.” Saka mentions that having that support allowed him to “try new things, bring in new techniques, and not feel judged, but supported,” This support ties in to principals providing effective feedback to teachers in a safe environment where, as principals and teachers both describe, a teacher does not “get defensive” or “feel attacked.” Here, principals’ teaching experience was brought up multiple times in both principal and teacher interviews, as a principal who leverages their own teaching experience gains the respect of their teachers and remains credible. Mrs. Lears said, “Not only was he a good leader, but I respected the teacher he had been prior.” Similarly, Mr. Shaw said that he “remembers what it’s like [to be a classroom teacher],” and that was why he was able to help and support a first year teacher to set effective grading systems in place.

A few of the most prominent themes and patterns in principals’ responses to questions evidenced a positive relationship building environment; however, they were only discussed by principals. Without love, principals could not carry out their daily roles. There had to be a love of
learning, a love of the role, and a love of the people they worked with (even if they did not necessarily like them). Principals agreed that they could not do it alone, and they placed great value on the learning community, including families, faculty, staff, and students. To create a loving and welcoming learning environment, principals expressed that modeling behaviors they want to see in their staff was crucial, along with being a “yes” principal who goes above and beyond and says what they mean/mean what you say, in order to get buy-in and develop reciprocal relationships.

**Comparative Analysis of Survey Results and Case Studies**

Below is a discussion of survey results as they related to interview responses shared in the case studies. Survey results (open-ended response) showed that empathy, listening, communication, honesty, transparency, and knowledge/intelligence were key characteristics of an excellent principal. Both teacher and principal interview responses confirmed that this was true.

As illustrated in Table 3, survey results determined that over 50% of participants ranked honesty, support, empathy, knowledge, fairness, open-mindedness, teaching experience, emotional intelligence, and kindness as *critically important*. While most of those characteristics were brought up at some point in both teacher and principal interviews, knowledge came up with minimal frequency and fairness was not discussed at all.

Table 4 exhibits survey data regarding behaviors of excellent principals. The table shows that over 50% of participants determined that the following behaviors of principals were *critically important*: treats teachers like educated professionals, listens actively, exhibits genuine interest/care about personal life/well being of faculty, was transparent with communication, connects with faculty, solicits feedback and input from faculty, exhibits a positive attitude, and
has an open-door policy. The importance of all of these behaviors were confirmed in both teacher and principal interviews. When compared with teachers’ responses, it was evidenced that principals placed more emphasis on a principal’s positive attitude than did the teachers.

In Table 5, data presented illustrate the percentages of responses for the level of importance of hallmarks of excellent principals. Over 50% of participants responded that the following four hallmarks were critically important: clear and effective two-way communication, mutual trust, transparency, and presuming positive intentions from each other. The first three were confirmed in teacher and principal interview responses, but the idea of presuming positive intentions did not come up in any interviews.

Table 6 highlights the roles of principals. Most teachers ranked Leads instruction, Supports faculty professional growth and development, and Manages crises as the Most Important roles of a principal. Leads instruction and Manages crises did not come up many times in either teacher or principal interviews; however, Supports faculty professional growth and development came up multiple times in both teacher and principal interviews. Though most people ranked Evaluation of faculty performance and/or programs lower on the importance scale (4-7 on a scale where 7 was lowest importance), there was a lot of discussion about principals offering constructive feedback to teachers in all interviews.

Conclusion

The data from both the surveys and interviews were in line with combined leadership styles of authentic, servant, and transformational leadership. The survey data, teacher, and principal interviews all confirmed that love, empathy, listening, communication, honesty, and relationships were at the core of a positive teacher-principal relationship. It was principals like these that motivated our teachers. The evidence lies in the very fact that four of these five
principals were nominated by teachers with whom they worked years ago. The relationships they forged and maintained with their teachers made a lasting impression on those teachers and contributed positively to their teaching journey.

Authentic, servant, and transformational leadership were three leadership styles that, when combined, offered a powerful set of guiding principles for principals to develop excellent relationships with teachers. Authentic and servant leadership were specifically discussed by both principals and teachers, whereas transformational leadership was not called out as a specific style that was relevant to the individual teacher-principal relationship; however, that does not mean transformational was not an important role or purpose in school leadership. Teachers recognize that an authentic, servant leader is one who can remain grounded in their own values while being a supportive yet warm demander. Principals label themselves as authentic and servant leaders because they find the qualities necessary for those styles of leadership within their own characteristics, traits, and behaviors.

The data suggest that a way to conceptualize the three styles in a way that acknowledges their distinctions but also their significant overlap was to consider them as a developmental process by which principals focus on authentic leadership first, then servant leadership, and finally, on transformational leadership. When a principal knows and understands themselves as an authentic leader, they can become a servant leader because it was only after they understood their own self and values that they could begin to forge connections and understand their members. During the interviews, many teacher and principal responses suggested that before a positive relationship could be forged, a principal must be empathetic, understanding, and communicative. Empathy was a characteristic that could only be present when a person understood themselves, as self-awareness and self-management were two crucial components to
empathizing with another person. After successfully becoming an authentic leader, a principal could begin to serve their community and practice servant leadership; as the principal serves their community, they can begin working on a larger transformational project that involves the greater school community.

Based on the evidence found in Chapter 4, I detailed a robust discussion of the implications and analyses of these findings in Chapter 5.
Chapter V: Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter provides a conclusion of this study. After a summary of the study, I discussed the results of this study by offering an in-depth interpretation and analysis, reviewing the limitations and generalizability of the findings, implications for policy and practice, and recommendations for future research.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the features of excellent professional relationships between secondary school teachers and principals and the characteristics and leadership philosophies of an effective secondary school principal that help foster excellent relationships with teachers. These two guiding questions became the basis by which I developed the framework of this study, which is grounded in the concept of combining multiple leadership styles. I argue that an excellent principal combines three leadership styles, authentic leadership, servant leadership, and transformational leadership, and these styles are more helpfully understood as important aspects of every good principal's work rather than characterizations of three kinds of principal.

The survey and interview protocols were developed with examples specifically related to each leadership style. Survey and interview data confirmed that empathy, listening, communication, honesty, and relationships were core pieces in the positive teacher-principal relationship. According to the data in Table 2, in practice, servant, authentic, and transformational leadership styles are too similar in their core values to be meaningful as three different theories or individual styles of leadership. They overlap to a very large degree in areas that are deemed valuable by teachers. This evidence suggests that the three styles are not a meaningful way to distinguish one good principal from the next.
Survey data show that teachers believed honesty, support, and empathy were the top three Critically Important characteristics of an excellent principal; the top three Critically Important behaviors of an excellent principal were Treats teachers like educated professionals, listens actively, and Exhibits genuine interest/care about personal life/well-being of faculty and Is transparent with communication; the top three hallmarks of a positive teacher-principal relationship that are Critically Important were Clear and effective two-way communication, Mutual trust, and Transparency. For teachers, the top three Most Important roles of a principal were Leading instruction, Supporting faculty professional growth and development, and Managing crises.

The case studies showed the perspectives of the nominating teachers and nominated principals. From the interviews, it became evident that principals believed they had been nominated because of their ability to empathize with their followers and cultivate a safe environment for faculty and staff. The principals referred to themselves as authentic and servant leaders. Both groups emphasized the importance of the following items multiple times during their interviews: relationships, communication, listening, support, transparency, visibility, accessibility and availability, empathy, kindness, presence, non-threatening feedback, “walking the talk,” warm demanding, and trust/honesty. Both groups shared that they believed they had excellent relationships with one another because they worked together to achieve common goals such as student achievement, school culture, etc.

Discussion of Findings

I found that teachers and principals value a number of the same characteristics, behaviors, and traits when it comes to principal leadership. The survey results corroborate the interview responses.
General Findings

Authentic and servant leadership were both explicitly mentioned in the interviews; though transformational leadership was not mentioned explicitly, that does not mean it is not important, as this may have been a byproduct of the way I fashioned the protocols. Additionally, it may not be a style that is immediately pertinent to the individual teacher-principal relationship. The styles could have been used as a tool for more specific question development for the surveys that may have prompted more informative responses. I could have crafted questions that specifically addressed the characteristics, behaviors, and traits tied to each leadership style, and I could have asked for participants to provide explicit details of their own experiences as they pertained to the leadership styles. To support participants in offering accurate responses, I could have defined each style and described their respective characteristics, traits, and behaviors.

Though teachers and principals have different perspectives of what leadership implications might be, both agree that the top leadership behaviors/traits are empathy, listening/communication, kindness, and transparency.

Empathy and Kindness

A core characteristic of authentic leadership is to do something with “heart,” and principals agreed that it all starts with love. Principals have to love what they do and the people they work with in order to lead them above and beyond, to lead them to do more than they thought they could do. Principals have to nurture the people that they work with and those who work for them. They have to serve their followers, care about them, and according to about 53% of survey participants, be kind to them. To teachers, a principal exhibiting these empathetic behaviors is a clear distinction that they are an excellent principal, as shown in Table 3. Principals have to be emotionally intelligent and rooted in their authentic values to understand
others and to be able to defend the decisions they make and lead teachers to meet the school visions and goals.

**Listening, Communication, and Transparency**

Listening is directly related to transparent communication because without active and engaged listening, it is not possible to communicate effectively. Teachers recognize a transparent communicator who listens actively as an excellent principal. Principals who are able to communicate transparently and effectively are likely doing an excellent job at listening actively and fully comprehending the questions, suggestions, concerns, and feedback of their community. Listening is a difficult task that requires heightened focus and the ability to make sense of what someone is saying. Similarly, communicating effectively requires a certain level of focus to communicate relevant and important information to people clearly and concisely. To teachers, these actions are valuable for principals to enact.

**Analysis of Frameworks**

I proposed that the three leadership styles were to be used as a basis for a theoretical framework; however, after conducting the study, I believe the three styles are more useful when considered as a developmental process, as opposed to standalone styles. When the three styles are compared, there are a number of similarities in characteristics, behavior, and traits aligned to each leadership style. The minor difference that sets the three styles apart is the leader’s focal point: authentic leadership involves staying true to one’s own beliefs, ethics, and values; servant leadership involves employee growth, development, and well-being; and transformational leadership involves the success and improvement of the organization. The three leadership styles are valuable on their own, but maybe more powerful when viewed as developmental stages.
All principals shared that empathy is an important piece of forging positive relationships with faculty. Empathy is heavily rooted in understanding another person and being able to feel what they are feeling. Without having their own set of beliefs and values, it is difficult for one to understand the magnitude of the situation the other person is facing. Knowing one’s self is the first step to interacting with and understanding others, as a certain level of authenticity and self-awareness is necessary to do so.

After a principal is able to articulate their values and beliefs, they can better understand, connect and communicate with their followers. Mr. Martinez mentioned that “the expectations [he] hold[s] for them, [he] hope[s] for [himself].” Understanding their followers provides a leader with the information necessary to strategize and develop plans to effect transformational change.

**Limitations and Generalizability of Findings**

This study collected data about positive teacher-principal relationships through surveys and observations, and this created a limitation of having a partial view. The negative relationships were not discussed, observed, or considered for this study, thus limiting the robustness of a well-rounded investigation of a teacher-principal relationship. Considering both the positive and negative relationships might have offered significant and valuable information about the characteristics, behaviors, and/or traits of a teacher-principal relationship. This information could have informed principal behaviors and motivated them to adopt new, positive behaviors that teachers found to be of value in a teacher-principal relationship. Similarly, having this information could have encouraged principals to abandon certain behaviors that were undesirable to teachers.
Another limitation of this study was that in the survey, I did not ask participants to share their level of teaching experience or socio-economic status and demographics of schools they worked in. This would have been helpful in determining whether those factors played a role in the relationships between teachers and principals because some findings may not be applicable to schools that do not have resources like those of the interview pairs. Four of the five interview pairs shared that they worked in schools that were well-resourced and in affluent neighborhoods. The socio-economic status of the families in those neighborhoods could have played a part in the principal’s ability to offer support and resources to the school. Low-income or high Title I schools are faced with more challenges and stressors involving low scores and a lack of resources that might impact the overall school culture. Levels of teaching experience of administrators might have been considered influential because it might have added to administrators’ credibility when they provide feedback to faculty or share their visions and missions. Knowing the teaching experience of teachers could offer insight into how new and veteran teachers might have different perceptions of principal duties/expectations as well as different support needs from their principal.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are important topics in the realm of modern day education, as the goal of every educator and educational leader should be to provide a diverse range of instruction that is inclusive of the many different people within our schools in order to ensure all students have equitable access to resources for learning. Diversity, equity, and inclusion were not explicitly investigated by the researcher or mentioned by participants in the study, so I was not able to detect the extent to which the teacher-principal relationship might be related to diversity, equity, and inclusion within the school. To address this explicitly, I would include questions about DEI in the survey and interview protocols. For example, a question like...
“How might the teacher-principal relationship impact diversity, inclusion, and equity on a school campus” might yield relevant and valuable information.

Socio-economic status and demographics of the interview participants’ schools might provide insight into the resources that were available to schools because resources might change the nature of the supports a principal can give. Schools with lower performance levels might experience more stressful conditions due to pressure from district personnel to achieve higher test scores. Perhaps the issue of fairness would become more prominent in low-resourced schools, as principals are limited on resources they can offer, thus causing feelings of competition among teachers to secure resources.

I analyzed the geographical reach of those who saw my posts on social media, and based on the data, I believe participants were heavily concentrated in Southern California. Additionally, the limited geographical range of the study may have yielded data that are not generalizable to the greater state or nation. Values, expectations, mindsets, and roles of a principal might be different in metropolitan areas when compared to more homogenous communities that have similar schools of thought and are not as diverse. A more heterogeneous community involves a number of individuals who come from different backgrounds, beliefs, cultures, and traditions. Many times, different cultures have varying mannerisms and might tolerate certain characteristics, traits, behaviors, and interactions more than another culture. Differences in teachers’ and principals’ cultures within a school could be a reason that staff members may not feel close to principals, and vice versa; these specifics were not considered in this study. For this reason, I would limit the generalization of these findings to Southern California schools because Southern California is a more diverse area when compared to other areas. I would encourage future studies to research the connection between the teacher-principal
relationship in more homogenous areas that may not have much variation in population and culture.

From the nine individuals that were interviewed, four shared that the schools they worked in were in affluent neighborhoods and this may have contributed to principals’ abilities for offering support and resources to teachers, whereas this may not have been the case with others participants. One pair reported that they worked in an inner-city school where resources were not necessarily ample. The greater geographical area in which interview participants were located is considered ethnically and socio-economically diverse. Within miles of each other, there are neighborhoods of predominantly impoverished families and neighborhoods with homes priced in the multi-million dollar ranges. The difference in resources comes not only from the district and state based on average daily attendance monies and other factors, but also from intangible resources that are supported from families and the community (education levels, stay-at-home parents, socio-economic status, extracurricular activities, etc.). To address this limitation, it would have been beneficial to include a specific question about the socio-economic status of the school (perhaps free and reduced meal or Title I percentage) in both the survey and the nomination form. With that information, I could have been strategic with my interview participant selections to have more variety of schools represented within the interviews.

When fairness was presented to survey respondents as an abstract concept, they agreed that it was an important characteristic of an excellent principal; however, when it came to thinking about their own experiences, it did not come up spontaneously among interviewees. Fairness is a concept that is difficult to gauge, as people do not necessarily have the information needed to compare and see how others are being treated based on their own needs. Though the absence of fairness is clearly felt by those who experience unfair actions, it is difficult for
teachers to make concrete conclusions about its absence or presence without having a baseline to compare to. This uncertainty may contribute to the lack of discussion and mention of fairness in teachers’ interviews. To better address this, I could have asked whether a teacher thought their principal was fair, and to support their statement, I could have asked teachers to provide specific evidence from their experiences.

Interpretation of language is noted as a limitation because survey participants responded to questions with no provided description or definition of words and academic language. This could have caused discrepancies in understanding of words like *coaching, evaluation, feedback*. Respondents’ interpretation of terms may have caused discrepancies and differing outcomes between surveys and interviews, as well as between teachers’ and principals’ interview responses.

Throughout the interviews, there were some off-the-record discussions that took place that yielded what was later determined to be valuable information, but because they were not on the record, I was unable to use that information as data. Thus, a limitation was that I did not ask participants if I could share, capture, or record the information they shared outside of the set interview protocol responses.

**Implications for Policy and Practice**

This study’s findings can effectively inform aspiring principal and administrator programs in Southern California by offering details of both teacher and principal perspectives of excellent relationship building. Educational leadership preparation programs can instill leadership behaviors that lead to positive and powerful change within schools. University programs can offer prospective or new principals different scenarios and grant them the opportunity to work through those scenarios by employing what they know or have learned about
the different styles of leadership. They can practice how to combine leadership styles and develop their own code of ethics to ground them in their decision making and use that information to practice how to deal with situations that might arise in the field.

Programs can prepare principals for how to be effective in their roles as school leaders by discussing their place within the school, as well as in the district as a whole. Because they are the representatives of a school site who lead the school and report back to the larger district, it is important to inform them that they are part of a system that requires their attention to detail and commitment to a greater vision. They must learn to navigate the mandates and policies of the district while remaining authentic, maintaining autonomy, and serving their communities’ respective and unique needs.

The framework of this study helps principals by informing principal training and preparation programs because it offers a concrete framework by which to operate. The world of education has a number of roles, and within a school site, the roles of instructional teachers, out-of-classroom teachers, and administrators vary greatly. A principal’s role is a very important yet vastly different role from that of teachers and other support staff. The principal is the leader of the organization, and oftentimes, I have heard principals refer to it as a “lonely job” because the final decisions (usually the toughest ones) are that of the principal’s. Thus, it is crucial for a principal to be grounded in a solid and informative framework that allows them to make good decisions and stand by them.

Considering the three leadership styles as a developmental process allows for new principals to follow a roadmap of how to develop and compound their skills to have a positive impact on themselves, their followers, and the community they serve. Principal preparation programs can guide principals to develop their own ethical code and to be reflective of their own
core values to become an authentic leader, learn how to leverage their authenticity to connect
with followers, and to effect transformational change after they fully understand the needs of
their community. This type of a linear developmental process can help program instructors
measure growth of principals by observing the way they respond to a variety of scenarios.
Though it might be challenging to quantify the learning, instructors can use rubrics to track
principals’ development based on how they say they would react to certain scenarios.

Making good decisions involves being in tune with the community that a leader serves by
having transparent, two-way lines of communication and listening empathetically. When a leader
listens to their members, they can act accordingly to meet their needs effectively. The three
leadership styles combined in this study offer principals a toolbox in which they can find
guidance on how to know and understand themselves, how they can use their own values to
inform their decision making process, how to build and construct their own ethical code to use as
an anchor when making difficult decisions, and more. A principal who demonstrates strong
leadership has to have a calibrated moral compass, and be authentic, comfortable with their own
beliefs and confident.

Recommendations for Future Research

I recommend that future studies encompass a larger geographical area that might include
national and international locations. Such studies might yield valuable insights including the
implications of varying demographics, differences in mentalities of a variety of cultures,
socioeconomic status, homogeneous vs. heterogeneous communities, and more.

I recommend studying the impact of the teacher-principal relationship on student learning
and achievement, as I did not include student achievement in this study; however, the ultimate
goal of educational research is to improve our systems to better serve our students and increase academic achievement and provide opportunities for achieving college and career readiness.

I recommend a study be done that selects certain schools that meet specific criteria within the nation (and/or in international locations) and conduct thorough research at those school sites. A variety of studies can be conducted, each focusing on a different set of criteria. For example, while one might list criteria as a school in a low-income neighborhood with low academic achievement, another could list criteria as a school in an affluent neighborhood with high academic achievement. Additional criteria might consider the number of years that the principal has served the school, student attendance and discipline data, and parent and community involvement/engagement. These studies should include observational data that consider teacher and principal interactions and in-person interviews with all faculty, staff, students, student learning outcomes, and principals. These studies should include both positives and negatives of the relationships and detail the different perspectives of different geographical locations in order to offer a robust and thorough examination of the excellent teacher-principal relationships and provide more insight into what specific communities consider valuable behaviors, characteristics, and traits.

Moreover, future research should consider the impact of the teacher-principal relationship on student diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in schools. In this day and age, one of the most prominent sets of educational topics that is broadly discussed and dissected is diversity, equity, and inclusion; however, DEI was not explicitly mentioned by any interview participants. Just because it was not a topic that came up naturally, it does not mean that diversity, equity, and inclusion are not crucial pieces to education. Instead, I believe it is the assumption of both teachers and principals that diversity, equity, and inclusion are at the core of their work and
everything they are doing in the name of serving all students. The broader understanding of
diversity, equity, and inclusion allow for a more welcoming school community, and this helps all
stakeholders build relationships and work toward the cultivation of a safe and welcoming
learning environment for all students to succeed. My recommendation is to add explicit questions
to the survey and interview protocols to draw respondents’ attention to diversity, equity, and
inclusion, and to encourage them to think critically about the larger impact of a teacher-principal
relationship as it pertains to DEI.

Conclusion

As I began to read and code survey and interview responses, it became evident that there
were specific characteristics, traits, and behaviors of a principal that were favored and
recognized by teachers. These characteristics were consistently aligned to those highlighted in
authentic, servant, and transformational leadership styles. This led me to believe that the three
leadership styles are not to be used individually or even combined, but they are a developmental
process that is best implemented in stages of growth: authentic, servant, and transformational.

Though a number of factors might impact the teacher-principal relationship, it is
important to note that teachers and principals were consistent in their responses that a positive
teacher-principal relationship is founded on trust and honesty and is cultivated through
empathetic, transparent, and supportive communication and interactions.

In conclusion, positive teacher-principal relationships are rooted in love and cultivated
through the dedication of both parties to the development of relationships. Within schools, the
teacher-principal relationship is crucial in setting the tone for a positive school climate that then
permeates throughout the school community. Being some of the most important and influential
members of the school community, the teacher and principal can work together to ensure a
positive environment for all stakeholders, starting with their own relationships with one another.

Forging that relationship starts with love, empathy, honesty, and communication.
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Appendix A

Survey

There is a consent form aligned to that of CSUN IRB.

Section 1:
1. List five characteristics, traits, or behaviors that you believe enable a principal to maintain positive relationships with their faculty.

Section 2: Rate the Characteristics
Below is a list of characteristics that principals might embody. Rate the characteristics of a principal in terms of the quality of your working relationship with a principal. You may include any characteristics that you feel are important but are not included in the list:

Likert Scale: 1-Not important 2- Less Important 3- Fairly Important 4- Critically Important

- Intelligent/knowledgeable
- Inspirational
- Open-minded
- Honest
- Supportive
- Visionary
- Empathetic
- Kind
- Fair/consistent
- Predictable
- Self-aware
- Committed to social justice
- Has teaching experience
- Has emotional intelligence

Section 3: Rate the Behaviors of a Principal
Below is a list of behaviors that principals might exhibit. Rate the behaviors of a principal in terms of the quality of your working relationship with a principal. You may include any behaviors that you feel are important but are not included in the list:

Likert Scale: 1-Not important 2- Less Important 3- Fairly Important 4- Critically Important

- Has an open-door policy
- Exhibits genuine interest/care about personal life/well-being of faculty
- Listens actively
- Is transparent with communications
- Treats teachers like educated professionals
- Solicits feedback and input from faculty
• Coaches faculty
• Exhibits a positive attitude
• Connects with faculty
• Inspires change

Section 4: Prioritize the roles of an excellent principal:
Rate the roles of a principal in terms of their importance to the success of a school. You may include any roles that you feel are important but are not included in the list:

Likert Scale: 1-Not important 2- Less Important 3- Fairly Important 4- Critically Important

Leads instruction
• Supports faculty professional growth/professional developer
• Evaluates faculty performance and/or programs
• Promotes program improvement and development
• Establishes community partnerships
• Manages crises
• Conducts day-to-day operations (hiring, grounds, budget, etc.)

Section 5: Hallmarks of a Positive Teacher-Principal Relationship
Below are possible hallmarks of a positive teacher-principal relationship. Rate the hallmarks in terms of their importance to you:

Likert Scale: 1-Not important 2- Less Important 3- Fairly Important 4- Critically Important

• Mutual trust
• Clear and effective two-way communication
• Transparency
• Sharing a vision
• Collaborative decision-making
• Presuming positive intentions from each other
• Other - Enter other options

Section 6: Nomination - I am interested in interviewing teacher-principal pairs who have excellent relationships. If you have an excellent relationship with your current or a prior principal and would be willing to be contacted about participating in a one-hour Zoom interview (conducted separately from an interview with your principal), please continue to the next section. If you do not wish to participate, continue to “Submit.”

The principal you nominate will be contacted to determine their interest in participating. If you and your principal are selected for interviews you will receive a $10 Amazon gift card as a token of appreciation for your time and participation.

Section 7: Nominee Contact Information
The purpose of this study is to delve into excellent teacher-principal relationships in an effort to glean information about possible characteristics, traits, and behaviors of principals that might cultivate positive relationships with faculty. With this information, my goal is to inform administrator preparation programs and help them develop training for potential principals that would prove valuable and effective. Teachers and principals are at the heart of every school, and their relationships play a grand role in the overall success of the institution. To help foster more positive relationships in schools, I encourage you to participate in an interview to offer your experiences and opinions about what makes your relationship with your principal an excellent one. From your experiences, we can gather information about how other teacher-principal pairs can have excellent relationships, too.

If you have an excellent relationship with your principal and are willing to participate in an interview (a one-hour interview via video conference platform), please provide the following information. This information will not be connected to your survey responses which will remain anonymous. I will interview you and your principal separately about your positive relationship with one another.

1. Your name
2. Your email address
3. Your gender
4. Your ethnicity
5. Your years of teaching experience
6. Nomination recipient (Principal) full name:
7. Nomination recipient (Principal) contact information:

Describe the characteristics of the school where you work(ed) with your principal nominee:
- School Level: MS/JH, HS/SH, K-8, K-12, 6-12, other
- School Type: Private, Traditional Public, Charter, other
- City, State of School:
Appendix B

Teacher Interview Protocol

Opening Statement

Thank you for taking the time to participate in my study. The purpose of this study is to dive into excellent teacher-principal relationships in an effort to glean information about possible characteristics, traits, and behaviors of principals that might cultivate positive relationships with faculty. Today, we will conduct a one-hour interview during which I will ask you a number of questions pertaining to your experiences and positive relationship with your principal. The interview will be video and audio recorded, and it will be transcribed verbatim using software called Otter. Your name or any identifying information, including your school name and your principal’s name will not be used in any reports from this study. Any names will be replaced with pseudonyms, and any identifying features of people or schools will be disguised.

General

- Describe your relationship with your principal
- What makes your relationship with your principal excellent?
- What sets your principal apart from other administrators?
- What has been your role in the positive relationship you have with your principal?
- Have you been in a situation where your principal has made a decision you disagreed with? If so, what did each of you do about it, if anything? [Then if not obvious] Does this story illustrate the good relationship you have with your principal, or is this an exception?
- Have you been in a situation where you made a decision that your principal disagreed with? If so, what did each of you do about it, if anything? [Then if not obvious] Does this story illustrate the good relationship you have with your principal, or is this an exception?
- How does your principal deliver criticism?
- Has your principal helped you grow and develop professionally, as an educator? If so, how?
- What do you see as the broader impact of your principal’s relationship with teachers on the school as a whole?
- Is there one story you could tell that would really illustrate the good relationship you have with your principal?
- How do you think a positive teacher-principal relationship impacts teaching and learning in the classroom?

Transformational

- Has your principal initiated or developed significant changes at your school? If so, please describe an example that you think they led especially well.

Servant

- How does your principal demonstrate their commitment to serve the teachers, students, and community?
- What has your principal done to show they value the school community?
- What partnerships has your principal forged with the community (businesses, organizations, sponsorships, etc.)?
**Authentic**
- How would you describe your principal’s values, code of ethics, and morals while leading the school?
- Describe your principal’s communication style.

**Closing**
- Is there anything you would like to add about your experiences or relationship with your principal that you have not had the opportunity to express?

**Closing Statement**

This marks the conclusion of our interview. I would like to express my gratitude for your time and sharing of experiences. I will email you an Amazon gift card that will be accessible through the e-mail address you have provided. While conducting analysis of the data collected here today, I may have some follow-up questions or requests for clarification regarding something you shared. Do I have your permission to contact you for follow-up, if necessary? Would you be willing to read a draft of your portion of the case study to ensure that information you shared was interpreted appropriately and correctly, as you had intended it to be understood when you shared your experience?

Again, thank you for your time and participation in my study. I hope the results from the study can be valuable additions to administrator training programs in the future.
Appendix C

Principal Interview Protocol

Opening Statement

Thank you for taking the time to participate in my study. The purpose of this study is to dive into excellent teacher-principal relationships in an effort to glean information about possible characteristics, traits, and behaviors of principals that might cultivate positive relationships with faculty. Today, we will conduct a one-hour interview during which I will ask you a number of questions pertaining to your experiences and positive relationship with your teacher. The interview will be video and audio recorded, and it will be transcribed verbatim using software called Otter. Your name or any identifying information, including your school name and your teacher’s name will not be used in any reports from this study. Any names will be replaced with pseudonyms, and any identifying features of people or schools will be disguised.

General
- How long have you been a principal?
- Why do you think you were nominated as a principal who had excellent relationships with a teacher?
- What three character traits (of your own) are most important to you in your professional relationships?
- Describe your leadership style and philosophy.
- Describe a time you were proud of the way you provided corrective feedback to a teacher. How does this resonate with your leadership style/philosophy?
- Have you been in a situation where you made a decision teachers disagreed with? If so, what did you each do about it, if anything? [Then if not obvious] Does this story illustrate the good relationship you have with your teacher, or is this an exception?
- Have you been in a situation where your teacher made a decision that you disagreed with? If so, what did each of you do about it, if anything? [Then if not obvious] Does this story illustrate the good relationship you have with your teacher, or is this an exception?
- How does your principal deliver criticism to teachers?
- What do you see as the broader impact of your relationship with teachers on the school as a whole?
- How do you think a positive teacher-principal relationship impacts teaching and learning in the classroom?

Transformational
- Have you initiated or developed significant changes at your school? If so, please describe an example that you think you led especially well. How do you feel it was received by teachers and the school community?
- What is your vision for the school? What goals have you mapped out for the short and long term future of the school?

Servant
- How have you nurtured and committed to faculty growth and development?
• How do you create opportunities for faculty to learn from mistakes?
• How have you demonstrated commitment to serving the teachers, students, and community?
• What have you done to show you value the school community?
• What partnerships have you forged with the community (businesses, organizations, sponsorships, etc.)?

Authentic
• How do you stay true to your personal values, code of ethics, and morals while leading the school?
• How have you developed transparent relationships and lines of communication with faculty?
• What is it about being a principal that gives you a sense of purpose?

Closing
• Is there anything you would like to add about your leadership style or philosophy that you have not had the opportunity to express?

Closing Statement

This marks the conclusion of our interview. I would like to express my gratitude for your time and sharing of experiences. I will email you an Amazon gift card that will be accessible through the e-mail address you have provided (verify email). While conducting analysis of the data collected here today, I may have some follow-up questions or requests for clarification regarding something you shared. Do I have your permission to contact you for follow-up, if necessary? Would you be willing to read a draft of your portion of the case study to ensure that information you shared was interpreted appropriately and correctly, as you had intended it to be understood when you shared your experience?

Again, thank you for your time and participation in my study. I hope the results from the study can be valuable additions to administrator training programs in the future.
Appendix D

California State University, Northridge
CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

Positive Teacher and Principal Relationships

You are being asked to participate in a research study, Positive Teacher and Principal Relationships, a study conducted by Tamar Atmajian as part of the requirements for the Doctorate of Education degree in the CSUN Educational Leadership and Policy Studies department. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand before deciding if you want to participate. A researcher listed below will be available to answer your questions.

RESEARCH TEAM

Researcher:
Tamar Atmajian
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
18111 Nordhoff St.
Northridge, CA 91330-8265
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Faculty Advisor:
Julie Gainsburg, Ph.D.
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
18111 Nordhoff St.
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PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to inform principal preparation and leadership development programs by determining the factors that impact teacher-principal relationships and the role those relationships play when fostering a positive and productive work environment.

SUBJECTS

Inclusion Requirements
You are eligible to participate in this study if you are a secondary teacher (grades 6-12) within the United States of America and believe you have a positive relationship with a current or former principal.
Exclusion Requirements

You are not eligible to participate in this study if you are an elementary school teacher, or if you teach in an early education program, adult education program, college/university programs, and if you teach secondary school outside of the United States of America.

Time Commitment

This study will involve approximately 15-20 of your time if you only respond to the survey. If you are interested in and selected to participate in the interview, the time commitment per interview will not exceed one hour.

PROCEDURES

The following procedures will occur:

1. You will complete the survey (15-20 minutes)
2. If you wish to be selected for the interview because you feel you have a positive relationship with a current or former principal, you will submit your information (~5 minutes)
3. If you are selected to participate in the interview, you will be sent details regarding the Zoom meeting.
4. I will conduct the interview over a Zoom meeting (not to exceed one hour)

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no known harms or discomforts associated with this study beyond those encountered in normal daily life.

BENEFITS

Subject Benefits

You may not directly benefit from participation in this study.

Benefits to Others or Society

This study hopes to inform administrator preparation programs by offering details about how to cultivate and maintain positive relationships between principals and teachers at a school site.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION

The only alternative to participation in this study is not to participate.

COMPENSATION, COSTS AND REIMBURSEMENT

Compensation for Participation

Survey respondents will not be paid for your participation in this research study. Interview participants will be compensated with a $10 Amazon Gift Card after interviews and member checks have been conducted.

Costs

There is no cost to you for participation in this study.
CONFIDENTIALITY

Subject Identifiable Data
All identifiable information that will be collected about you will be removed at the end of data collection.

All identifiable information that will be collected about you will be removed and replaced with a code. A list linking the code and your identifiable information will be kept separate from the research data.

Data Storage
All research data, including audio/video recordings including their transcriptions, will be stored electronically on a secure Google network maintained by CSUN with password protection and encryption. All data and recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

Data Access
The researcher(s) and faculty advisor named on the first page of this form will have access to your study records. Any information derived from this research project that personally identifies you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not include identifiable information about you.

Data Retention
The researchers intend to keep the research data until analysis of the information is completed and then it will be destroyed.

Mandated Reporting
Under California law, the researcher is required to report known or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse or neglect of a child, dependent adult or elder, including, but not limited to, physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse or neglect. If any researcher has or is given such information in the course of conducting this study, they may be required to report it to the authorities.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS
If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research please contact the research team listed on the first page of this form.
If you have concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research and Sponsored Programs office, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, by phone at (818) 677-2901 or email at irb@csun.edu.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION STATEMENT
You should not sign this form unless you have read it and been given a copy of it to keep. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question or discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. Your decision will not affect your relationship with California State University, Northridge. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this consent form and have had a chance to ask any questions that you have about the study.
CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY

___ I agree to participate in the study.

The interviews conducted for this study will be audio and video recorded. Please indicate your decision regarding being audio and video recorded.

CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING

___ I agree to be audio recorded  ___ I do not wish to be audio recorded

CONSENT FOR VIDEO RECORDING

___ I agree to be video recorded  ___ I do not wish to be video recorded

__________________________________________________________________________  __________
Participant Signature                                                                 Date

__________________________________________________________________________
Printed Name of Participant

__________________________________________________________________________  __________
Researcher Signature                                                                 Date

__________________________________________________________________________
Printed Name of Researcher