Authentic Leadership Behaviors Contributing to Job Satisfaction of Elementary School Principals and Elementary Special Education Teachers

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Authentic Leadership Behaviors Contributing to Job Satisfaction of Elementary School Principals and Elementary Special Education Teachers

A Dissertation by

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ABSTRACT

Authentic Leadership Behaviors Contributing to Job Satisfaction of Elementary School Principals and Elementary Special Education Teachers

by Penny Tharpe

**Purpose:** The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand what elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary special education teachers in the Desert/Mountain Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). A second purpose of the study was to understand what elements of authentic leadership contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary principals in the Desert/Mountain SELPA. A third purpose of the study was to identify the similarities and differences that exist among the elements of authentic leadership that contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary principals and special education teachers in the Desert/Mountain SELPA.

**Methodology:** No previously published studies have explored authentic leadership and job satisfaction in principals and elementary special education teachers. This qualitative study was specifically designed to fill this important gap in the literature by interviewing 12 elementary special education teachers and 12 elementary principals who supervised special education instruction in the Desert/Mountain SELPA in California.

**Findings:** Findings revealed that the authentic leadership elements of relationship, heart, and purpose contributed most to the job satisfaction of the elementary principals and elementary special education teachers.

**Conclusions:** The findings of this study supported that possessing all five authentic leadership elements was not considered important to either the principals or the special
education teachers in contributing to job satisfaction. Building strong relationships increases job satisfaction for principals and special education teachers.

**Recommendations:** Further research is recommended to conduct replication studies using principals, special education teachers, and general education teachers from all grade levels in the same county SELPA and in different county SELPAs to determine if there would be a difference in the findings regarding authentic leadership behaviors and job satisfaction.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Special education is important in fostering equal protection for children with disabilities and to provide a quality education for all. In the landmark 1954 case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, Chief Justice Earl Warren concluded,

> In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right that must be available to all on equal terms. (n.p.)

More recently, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) mandated that all school districts must employ highly qualified teaching personnel and held the districts accountable for the quality of achievement for all students. Further, the 1990 Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) required that special education teachers have disability-specific training. For these reasons, special education teachers play a crucial role both in adhering to federal law and in delivering quality education to children with disabilities.

However, because teaching special education students is challenging, job satisfaction is low, and the turnover rate is high. According to a study by the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2007), the turnover rate of special education teachers is significantly higher than the turnover rate of traditional (general) education teachers. Every year, more than one in eight special education teachers leave the profession, either to teach general education students or to quit teaching entirely (Plash & Piotrowski, 2006; Walker, 2010). Gordon and Maxey (2000) concluded that the most promising special education teachers are the most likely to quit. For these reasons,
it is not surprising that there is a shortage of qualified special education teachers (Boe, 2006; National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2007).

One key reason why special education teachers leave the profession is job dissatisfaction, often stemming from a lack of leadership and support from administration (Billingsley, 1993; Singh & Billingsley, 1996; Walker, 2010). Stempien and Loeb (2002) found that special education teachers had a higher burnout rate and lower job satisfaction than general education teachers. Empirical evidence indicates that administrative leadership and support play a key role in the high turnover rate and low job satisfaction among special education teachers (Liu & Meyer, 2005; Singh & Billingsley, 1996; Walker, 2010). In a study of primary and secondary issues related to teacher retention, Walker (2010) found that the strongest predictor of special education teacher retention was leadership in the form of administrative support, often from the school principal.

Principals play a significant role in job satisfaction among teachers (Boyd et al., 2011; K. M. Brown & Wynn, 2009; A. L. Hughes, 2013; Martin, 2011; Sinclair, 2010; Tomon, 2009). Sinclair (2010) found that authentic leadership in secondary school principals was associated with higher levels of job satisfaction among secondary school teachers, though the importance of authentic leadership behaviors (heart, values, purpose, building relationships, self-discipline) differed by the generational age grouping of the teachers. However, Sinclair did not assess authentic leadership of all levels of school principals or the job satisfaction of special education teachers. Therefore, understanding the relationship between authentic leadership in school principals and the job satisfaction of special education teachers was the focus of this study.
Background

The relationship between authentic leadership of principals and the job satisfaction of teachers is complex and nuanced. This section provides insight into the key issues of job satisfaction in teacher turnover, the role of principal leadership in teacher retention, and the unique challenges facing school principals. Lastly, an overview of special education and special education teachers is provided, leading to the research problem and the purpose of this study.

Job Satisfaction and Teacher Turnover

Overall attrition. Retaining teachers is a global challenge. Studies have found low job satisfaction and morale in teachers in South Africa (Mafora, 2013), turnover rates as high as 60% in South Asia (Mancuso, Roberts, & White, 2010), and turnover rates of 45% among Hong Kong secondary school teachers (Chung & Hung, 2001). Similarly, the United States faces an extreme challenge with attrition rates of 46% (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2003).

Teacher turnover is an expensive problem: The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2010) estimated that hiring new teachers costs $7.2 billion every year that it continues at this rate. The Texas Center for Educational Research (2000) estimated that it costs at least $8,000 per recruit who leaves in the first few years of teaching. New teachers are leaving before they have an opportunity to develop effective teaching techniques, and experienced teachers, many of whom are among the most accomplished educators, are retiring (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2010). This leaves a gap in the American public school system:
“Between 2004 and 2008, over 300,000 veteran teachers left the workforce for retirement” (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2010, p. 4).

One third of all new teachers leave the profession after just 3 years of teaching, and 46% will be gone within their first 5 years of teaching (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2010). This attrition rate has rapidly increased from reports of 10 years ago that revealed one third of new teachers leaving the profession within their first 5 years (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Within the past 15 years, attrition has grown by 50% due to teacher retirements and the high turnover among new teachers. Jacob, Vidyarthi, and Carroll (2012) studied 90,000 teachers to find that many teachers who leave the profession can be categorized as “the irreplaceables” (p. 2), because they are so effective at their job that they are difficult to replace.

When asked why they had left the profession, the top reason teachers in one study gave was poor working conditions (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2003). Teachers have experienced a lack of support and have reported feelings of isolation in the classrooms (Coggshall, 2006). While most of the research has indicated stress and workload as the primary factors influencing retention (Doney, 2013; Lasagna, 2009), G. D. Hughes’s (2012) and A. L. Hughes’s (2013) studies on teacher retention suggested that salaries also played a large role. Class-size-reduction incentive programs targeting the first three grades “brought thousands of underprepared teachers into the system and placed them in schools where students were most in need of expert teaching” (Lieberman & Miller, 2013, p. 394). In addition, the Public School Accountability Act of 1999 created mandated standards measured by state tests. This has resulted in rigid academic programs that allow limited teacher professional discretion “and devalue their
experience and expertise” (Lieberman & Miller, 2013, p. 394), resulting in a lack of job satisfaction and leading to the loss of qualified teachers in the classroom. Another reason for attrition is neglect from principals and administrative leaders (Jacob et al., 2012).

**Attrition among special education teachers.** According to the California Department of Education (CDE, 2015), there are approximately 26,600 special education teachers in California. Special education teachers are provided with the opportunity to work with students of a wide range of ages, grade levels, and abilities (Miller, 2004). However, teaching special education is a uniquely difficult job, which comes with many responsibilities and challenges. The attrition rate of special education teachers is higher than the attrition rate of general education teachers (CDE, 2015). Planty et al. (2008) noted that special education has become one of the largest expenditures across the nation as a result of the increasing number of eligible students receiving special education services and the demanding task of meeting their individual educational needs.

Special education teachers are trained and qualified to teach just as general education teachers, but they find themselves burdened with more noninstructional responsibilities. These added responsibilities often take away from classroom instructional time. For example, special education teachers are often required to attend individualized education plan (IEP) meetings during instructional time to accommodate the many different schedules of the students’ IEP team members. Lieberman and Miller (2013), Jacob et al. (2012), Doney (2013), and Lasagna (2009) found that the scheduling of the IEPs, the lack of support, dealing with multiple disabilities in the classroom, professional isolation, and the handling of discipline within their classrooms were also contributing factors to the high attrition rate of special education teachers. While
research has shown that special education teachers do spend more time with their principals (Billingsley, 2005; McLaughlin, 2009), their time spent together usually is for reasons other than training, collaborating with general education teachers, or providing support for classroom concerns and working with paraprofessionals in their classrooms.

Special education teachers interact more frequently and spend more time with their principals than general education teachers, due to the required IEP meetings for each special education student (Billingsley, 2005; McLaughlin, 2009). Due to these frequent interactions, it is unsurprising that principal leadership is crucial toward supporting and encouraging special education teachers (Billingsley, 2005; McLaughlin, 2009). However, there are no published studies to date regarding the effect of the principals’ relationships with special education teachers on their job satisfaction.

The Role of the Principal in Teacher Retention

A review of the literature identified principal leadership as crucial to job satisfaction and retention of teachers (Algera & Lips-Wiersma, 2012; Andersen, 2006; Yukl, 2010). Liu (2007, as cited in A. L. Hughes, 2013) discovered that such support from principals could increase teacher retention by up to 19%. Principal leadership is important for the effectiveness of schools (Conger, 1999; Lieberman & Miller, 2013; Nichols & Erakovich, 2013; Shapiro & Gross, 2008), but there are various theories on leadership styles, including trait theory, behavioral theories, participative leadership, ethical leadership, servant leadership, charismatic leadership, situational leadership, transactional leadership, and transformational leadership, among others (Bass, 1985; Bennis, 2003; M. E. Brown, Trevino, & Harrison, 2005; Greenleaf, 1977; Hersey & Blanchard, 1977; Hu & Liden, 2011; Kotlyar & Karakowsky, 2007; Rahim, 2002; Sun,
2013; Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008; Yukl, 2010; Zhu, Sosik, Riggio, & Yang, 2012). However, there is no agreement regarding which leadership style is optimal for fostering teacher satisfaction and retention. Some studies have examined the relationship between teacher retention and the specific leadership behaviors of principals, but the results have been mixed. K. M. Brown and Wynn (2009) interviewed 12 principals who led schools with low teacher attrition in order to discover their leadership traits. Elementary, middle, and high schools were all represented in the sample. They found that these principals sought teachers with shared values during the recruiting process (K. M. Brown & Wynn, 2009). Their leadership styles all seemed to fit a servant-leader model, and all 12 principals answered that their main role and responsibility was to be an “advocate,” “protector,” and “mentor” to new teachers (K. M. Brown & Wynn, 2009, p. 51). Each interviewee also referred to situational leadership and flexibility as some of the necessities for success (K. M. Brown & Wynn, 2009). Cross (2011) discovered that a high level of support demonstrated by the principal was the most successful method to retain new teachers. Urick (2012) found the relationship between the principal and teachers to be significant when predicting teacher attrition.

Denton (2009) revealed that teachers’ job satisfaction and retention rates can be increased when there are positive and respectful relationships between principals and teachers. A. L. Hughes (2013) found contradictory results in her study on four organizational characteristics that could affect teacher retention: (a) salary and workload, (b) facilities and resources, (c) parent and student cooperation, and (d) principal support. A. L. Hughes found that the principal support characteristic was not statistically significant, possibly due to the high level of satisfaction that the teachers in the sample
had with their principals. Indeed, 83.5% of participants intended to teach until retirement (A. L. Hughes, 2013). Cross (2011) interviewed new teachers in California with 3 or fewer years of teaching experience and discovered that a high level of support demonstrated by the principal was the most successful method to retain the teachers. Urick (2012) examined typologies of both principals and teachers and found the relationship between the principal and teachers to be significant when predicting teacher attrition. Greenlee and Brown’s (2009) survey of teachers found that principals’ leadership style played a key role in retaining teachers.

Charlotte Advocates for Education (2004) studied the traits and strategies of principals in schools that they found to be successful in retaining teachers and also continually improving student achievement. They observed that direct assistance to teachers was the greatest characteristic of principals who were successful in retaining teachers. These principals showed that they valued teachers as individuals and sincerely wanted them to succeed and grow. Continual feedback, provision of professional development opportunities, encouragement of collaboration, and actively involving teachers in meaningful decision making were all cited as characteristics of successful principals (Charlotte Advocates for Education, 2004). Similar studies have used questionnaires and interviews with teachers to identify the best support behaviors that principals can implement to retain new teachers (Dumler, 2010; Lazzaro, 2009; Mancuso et al., 2010).

Liu (2007) found that teachers who felt that they had more autonomy and influence over school policy, through their principals, were more likely to remain teaching at the school. Aiken (2013) surveyed 88 high school principals in Texas,
measuring their leadership behaviors with the Culturally Adapted Leadership for Inspired Business Excellence and Results Leadership Assessment scale to find there was “a strong negative relationship between overall leadership behaviors and teacher retention” (p. v). Harris (2009) studied the relationship between principals’ transformational leadership style and teacher retention but found no significant relationships. In contrast, Pogodzinski, Youngs, Frank, and Belman (2012) found that when teachers perceived the quality of their relationship with their principal and vice principal to be good, they were more likely to intend to remain teaching, regardless of whether they felt they had adequate resources or a manageable workload. While previous studies reviewed here provided mixed results regarding what characteristics and behaviors of principals and administrators might best foster job satisfaction and retention of teachers, one approach gaining popularity is authentic leadership.

**Authentic leadership.** Authentic leadership is said to be independent of leadership style (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Authentic leaders can be charismatic, directive, participative, transformational, or authoritarian (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). What differentiates authentic leaders is that their approach to leadership is aligned with their personal values and beliefs, and this builds credibility and trust among their followers (Avolio & Mhatre, 2012). Avolio and Gardner (2005) declared authentic leadership to be the “root construct underlying all positive forms of leadership” (p. 316).

The methodology in this study used George and Sims’s (2007) five dimensions of authentic leadership: (a) leading with the heart, (b) practicing solid values, (c) understanding the purpose of leadership, (d) establishing enduring relationships, and (e) developing self-discipline (see also George, 2003, 2007). Although the words are
different, this definition still outlines the key concepts of self-awareness, transparency, ethics, and relationships that were stressed in other influential authentic leadership scholars’ works (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

**Authentic leadership in principals.** Authentic leadership was defined by Walumbwa et al. (2008) as

a pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capabilities and a positive ethical climate to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development. (p. 94)

Authentic leadership has received much attention recently from all corners of the globe in the field of business management (Algera & Lips-Wiersma, 2012; Gardner, Cogliser, Davis, & Dickens, 2011; Searle & Barbuto, 2013; Valsania, Moriano León, Alonso, & Cantisano, 2012; D. Wang & Hsieh, 2013; H. Wang, Sui, Luthans, Wang, & Wu, 2014). Tests that have been created to measure authentic leadership include the Authentic Leadership Inventory (ALI; Neider & Schriesheim, 2011) and the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Sinclair (2010) identified the elements of authentic leadership as heart, values, purpose, building relationships, and self-discipline.

In *True North: Discover Your Authentic Leadership*, George and Sims (2007) suggested that authentic leaders lead with their hearts along with their heads to encourage loyalty and commitment from their teams. Multiple studies led by Bird and Wang found
that authentic leadership can aid in teacher retention (Bird, Wang, Watson, & Murray, 2009, 2012; C. Wang & Bird, 2011). Bird et al. (2009, 2012) and C. Wang and Bird (2011) surveyed principals and teachers and found that principals’ authenticity led to greater trust and engagement from their teaching staff, which in turn led to retention of teachers. Sinclair (2010) studied a multigenerational workforce of secondary school teachers and found that authentic leadership dimensions in secondary school principals contributed to job satisfaction among the teaching staff. However, the Sinclair study of general education secondary school teachers did not include an assessment of special education teachers or school principals, who face unique challenges.

**Unique Challenges Faced by Primary School Principals**

Although the job descriptions of elementary and high school principals are similar in some areas, primary school principals face unique challenges. A 10-year study on principal effectiveness by The Wallace Foundation (2013) found that elementary school principals have more interactions with their teachers than principals at the middle or high school level do, with teacher-principal interactions often occurring on a daily basis in primary schools. This is important, because Harris (2009) found that secondary school teachers are influenced by the organizational climate that the principal creates but not by specific interactions. In contrast, Halverson, Grigg, Prichett, and Thomas (2007) highlighted the importance of effective interactions between elementary school teachers and their principals.

Further, individual middle and high school teachers are usually responsible for specific course content in one subject-specific topic area (e.g., algebra, social studies, American history), while elementary school teachers are usually responsible for all
content areas for their grade level. This is important, because Halverson et al. (2007) found that primary school principals cannot interact effectively with their teachers if the principals do not have the specific content knowledge. In addition, middle and high schools usually have more teachers than elementary schools, so principals at middle and high schools have less time to provide supervision and support for individual teachers (Louis, Leithwood, Washlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). Primary school principals, therefore, interact more frequently with individual teachers than middle and high school principals, and these interactions can be more important in the job satisfaction of the teachers of primary school children. Strong leadership skills have always been required of elementary school principals, but in recent years, this necessity has increased (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2010).

**Background Summary**

Several studies have indicated that teacher turnover is a real and growing problem that is costly and has important consequences for student learning outcomes. Further, job satisfaction is crucial for teacher retention. Additionally, the school principal’s leadership plays a key role in teacher job satisfaction and retention. Principal leadership challenges are increasingly complex. Primary school principals have more frequent interactions with teachers than middle school or secondary school principals, and in particular, special education teachers have more interactions with their school principals than general education teachers do because of the mandates that require frequent meetings regarding IEPs for special education students. The quality and frequency of interactions impact teacher job satisfaction and the school principals’ capacity to demonstrate effective leadership.
Authentic leadership is a promising approach for increasing job satisfaction and teacher retention (Bird et al., 2009, 2012; C. Wang & Bird, 2011). Further, Sinclair (2010) demonstrated the importance of authentic leadership in a multigenerational secondary school environment. However, the Sinclair study of general education teachers did not include an assessment of school principals by special education teachers.

**Statement of the Research Problem**

The role of the 21st-century principal has become more complex in recent years (Lieberman & Miller, 2013). The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 has had a great impact on how principals lead (Bergent & Burnette, 2001; Brownell, Sindelar, Bishop, Langley, & Seo, 2002). Principals are now providing leadership to both regular and special education teachers. The problem is that principals have had little to no training in the area of special education (Billingsley, 2005; DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000). Within the past 15 years, teacher attrition has simultaneously grown by 50% due to teacher retirements and the high turnover of new teachers (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2010). Teacher turnover is an expensive problem: The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2010) estimated that it costs $7.2 billion every year that it continues at this rate. The U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) concluded that special education teachers continue to leave the field in increasing numbers as the number of students who qualify for special education services continues to rise.

Researchers have concluded that skilled leadership is indispensable for the effectiveness of all organizations (Algera & Lips-Wiersma, 2012; Andersen, 2006;
Bennis, 2003; George, 2003; Yukl, 2010). According to Gardner, Avolio, and Walumbwa (2005), authentic leaders demonstrate the personal traits of self-awareness, transparency, and ethics, all of which can be of real benefit to any organization. Sinclair (2010) researched the differences between groups of high school teachers regarding their job satisfaction and their perceptions of the authentic leadership of their school principals but did not investigate special education teachers.

Authentic leadership in high school principals has been associated with job satisfaction in traditional high school teachers (Sinclair, 2010), but little is known regarding the relationship between the authentic leadership skills of principals and the job satisfaction of special education teachers. There is limited published literature about the authentic leadership skills of elementary school principals and the job satisfaction and retention of special education teachers. Gaining knowledge of the leadership skills of principals related to the job satisfaction of special education teachers can lead to understanding how principals can improve working conditions to support teacher retention. This study, therefore, investigated the relationship between the authentic leadership skills and job satisfaction of principals and special education teachers. The intent of the study was to help fill an identified gap in the published literature.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand what elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary special education teachers in the Desert/Mountain Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). A second purpose of the study was to understand what elements of authentic leadership contribute to job
satisfaction as perceived by elementary principals in the Desert/Mountain SELPA. A third purpose of the study was to identify the similarities and differences that exist among the elements of authentic leadership that contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary principals and special education teachers in the Desert/Mountain SELPA.

**Research Questions**

This qualitative study was guided by the following questions:

1. What elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary special education teachers in the Desert/Mountain SELPA?

2. What elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary principals in the Desert/Mountain SELPA?

**Significance of the Problem**

This line of investigation is important toward solving the problem of high turnover among special education teachers. The calls for improving teacher retention have come from sources worldwide (Chung & Hung, 2001; Mafora, 2013; Mancuso et al., 2010; National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2003). There are also calls for overcoming the problem of special education teachers leaving the profession at alarmingly high rates, significantly higher than those of general education teachers (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2003; Plash & Piotrowski, 2006; Walker, 2010). This is particularly important because the most promising special education teachers are the most likely to quit (Gordon & Maxey, 2000). Teacher turnover costs billions of dollars every year (National Commission on
Teaching and America’s Future, 2007) and decreases the quality of instruction, which has a negative impact on student outcomes (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2010). Sinclair (2010) conducted a study of authentic leadership in principals and job satisfaction in secondary school teachers and recommended that the methodology be replicated with special education teachers.

The data on teacher retention demonstrate that presently there are no effective answers to the problem of turnover among special education teachers. While there are a multiplicity of possible factors that can potentially impact teacher retention (see Bore & Bore, 2009 for a review), job satisfaction is the common denominator across many studies (Aiken, 2013; Bird et al., 2009, 2012; Charlotte Advocates for Education, 2004; Liu, 2007; National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2010; Urick, 2012; C. Wang & Bird, 2011). That is, less satisfied teachers are more likely to quit, and more satisfied teachers are more likely to be retained. Therefore, the problem of high rates of turnover among special education teachers is directly linked to job satisfaction. If low job satisfaction persists, special education teachers will continue to have unacceptably high turnover rates.

However, a more fundamental problem is a lack of understanding regarding how principal leadership impacts job satisfaction, and therefore retention, in special education teachers. Authentic leadership in school principals holds promise toward fostering teacher satisfaction (Sinclair, 2010) and retention (Bird et al., 2009, 2012; C. Wang & Bird, 2011), but no studies to date have explored the potential for authentic leadership in school principals to foster job satisfaction in special education teachers. Solving this
fundamental leadership problem can potentially lead to increased job satisfaction and thereby solve the problem of high rates of turnover among special education teachers.

**Operational Definitions**

**Authentic leader.** Authentic leaders exhibit behaviors that build their credibility and trust among those they lead.

**Authentic leadership.** Authentic leadership qualities include heart, values, purpose, relationship building, and self-discipline (Sinclair, 2010).

**Heart.** Heart allows leaders to show sincere interest in others and respect for them.

**Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).** IDEA requires that special education teachers have disability-specific training.

**Meaning.** Meaning is the cause of the action taking place.

**Mission.** Mission is the objective used to reach the goals of the organization.

**Optimism.** Optimism is always expecting the best possible outcome of any situation.

**Population.** A population is a group that can consist of individuals conforming to specific criteria.

**Power.** Power is an outpouring of energy one uses to reach a specific goal.

**Primary school.** Also known as elementary school, primary school usually includes Grades 1-6, though some school districts may include only Grades 1-5. The terms *primary school* and *elementary school* are used interchangeably in this dissertation.

**Purpose.** Purpose requires leaders to obtain self-awareness.
**Relationships.** Relationships are the connections between leaders and employees. Relationships help in building trust and commitment between leaders and employees.

**Resources.** Resources are means used to assist with dealing with troublesome situations in order to obtain one’s goals.

**Resiliency.** Resiliency is the ability to recover from adversity.

**Self-discipline.** Self-discipline involves keeping healthy in order to combat stress and remaining consistent.

**Special education local plan area (SELPA).** Special education local plan area is a board of directors that is made up of the superintendent/CEO of each participating local education agency (LEA).

**Structure.** Structure is the technique used to accomplish the desired goals.

**Values.** Values are deeply held personal beliefs that guide one’s actions.

**Delimitation**

The delimitation in this study was intentionally defined toward examining an appropriate sample to answer the research questions. The delimitation of this study was that only interview data from elementary principals and special education teachers were collected from four school districts within the Desert/Mountain SELPA of California’s San Bernardino County.

**Organization of the Study**

This study is organized across five chapters. Chapter I included an introduction, purpose statement, research questions, the significance of the study, definitions of terms, and the delimitation. Chapter II provides a review of the current literature relating to authentic leadership and how it influences multigenerational workers. Chapter III
explains the methodology used in this study, including the population, sample, instrumentation, data collection, analysis, and the limitations of this study. Chapter IV presents the themes from the data that were collected during one-to-one, semistructured interviews and data analysis. Chapter V provides a summary of the research study related to authentic behaviors and job satisfaction of principals and elementary special education teachers.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter contains a review of the literature that provided the foundation for the study. The chapter begins with the history of special education. Next, the role and importance of the special education local plan area (SELPA) is examined. In-depth reviews of the role of the principal in special education, the special education teacher, definitions of leadership, and why leadership is needed in education, including the need to increase teacher satisfaction toward fostering teacher retention, are explored. Further, the chapter reviews theories of leadership, including authentic leadership. The elements of authentic leadership are detailed from the literature regarding what is known about authentic leadership. The chapter ends with a summary of conclusions from the literature. The synthesis matrices of literature reviewed in this chapter are provided in Appendix A.

The History of Special Education

Prior to legislation requiring public education for individuals with disabilities, there were not many options available. Having few available options, parents were often forced to educate their children at home or pay extremely high tuition for their children to receive a private education. It was not until the 1900s that public opinion began to change in favor of better treatment for individuals with disabilities. According to Yell (2006), Beyer and Johnson (2005), and DiPaola and Walther-Thomas (2003), it was the U.S. Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education that changed the way children with disabilities would be taught. Under the ruling of Brown v. Board of Education (1954), children with disabilities were allowed the opportunity to be taught by community-based programs.
In 1961, President John F. Kennedy created the President’s Panel on Mental Retardation (CDE, 2015). President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965. This act provided funding for primary education. However, most children with disabilities were still not educated in public schools. It was not until two federal laws were enacted in 1975 that more children with disabilities were taught in the public schools. These federal laws were the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) and the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). EHA provided the right to public education for all children regardless of disability. IDEA stated that all students with disabilities should receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment with access to the general curriculum as prescribed by their individualized education plan (IEP). The IEP is a legally binding document that addresses a child’s unique learning style and includes specific educational goals to address that child’s individual needs (CDE, 2015).

**Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA)**

In 1974, a simultaneous movement across the country resulted in the passage of important federal and state laws. The federal laws were the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and EHA (CDE, 2015). In 1987, Public Law 99-457 was passed, which expanded services to preschool children. In response to these laws, legislation was passed in California that provided the legal foundation for a comprehensive plan in special education, known as the Master Plan (CDE, 2015). The Master Plan required that all school districts and county offices of education, known as local education agencies (LEAs), develop a regional special education service delivery system. A region can be defined as a group of many small districts or a large single district, but each region must
be of sufficient size and scope to provide the full continuum of services for children within its boundaries (CDE, 2015).

There are 135 SELPAs in California (CDE, 2015). Of these 135 SELPAs, there are only a few that currently accept charter schools as LEA members. SELPAs accepting applications from charter schools for the 2016-2017 school year included the El Dorado County Office of Education Charter SELPA, the Los Angeles County Charter SELPA, the Sonoma County Charter SELPA, and the Desert/Mountain Charter SELPA (CDE, 2015).

**Principals and Special Education**

Effective school leadership is a key variable in school reform (Algozzine, Ysseldyke, & Campbell, 1994; Van Horn, Burello, & DeClue, 1992). Most school reform research has focused on general education reform rather than special education (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000). Yet, some educational proponents argue that in order for school districts to meet the challenges of special education, specifically related to compliance, legal provisions, and teacher retention, effective school leadership is crucial (Lasky & Karge, 2006; McLaughlin, 2009). While general and special education services may differ in some respects, successful school leaders have comparable responsibilities for both general and special education (Van Horn et al., 1992). As a consequence, in an effort to understand the alignment of the roles and responsibilities of school leaders particularly related to special education, it is important to examine briefly the special education teacher.
The Special Education Teacher

According to the California Department of Education (CDE, 2015), special education teachers are required to have a bachelor’s degree along with their state license to teach special education. Certification is subject to change by the subject taught and state in which the certification is obtained. Special education teachers are required to teach students with a variety of learning, mental, physical, and emotional disabilities.

Billingsley (2004) concluded that the duties placed on special education teachers under state and federal mandates like IDEA, which requires that special education teachers have disability-specific training, and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) do not consider the added paperwork involved in completing IEPs, the IEP meetings, the modifications needed to ensure the success of the children, or the day-to-day running of the special education classroom.

Special education teachers spend more time with their principals due to the required IEP meetings for their students. McLaughlin (2009) and Billingsley (2005) agreed that principal leadership is needed to support and encourage special education teachers.

Leadership

Leadership has many definitions. For example, Rost (1991) collected no fewer than 221 definitions of leadership. Ciulla (2002) of the University of Richmond’s School of Leadership Studies reviewed Rost’s (1991) list and reduced it to its simplest motivation: leadership involves “one person getting other people to do something” (p. 340). Marcinko (1996) provided another succinct definition of leadership: “Follow me!” (as cited in Marcinko & Weisman, 1999, p. 266). Barnett’s (2000) definition
expanded on these by adding a few criteria: “Leadership can be defined in broad terms as a process by which one individual intentionally exerts influence that causes others to engage in voluntary, goal-directed behavior” (p. 490). He emphasized that it is the voluntary nature that “separates leadership from other types of influence based on formal authority” (Barnett, 2000, p. 490).

Leadership involves influencing people and focusing that influence toward a tangible outcome, such as the completion of a task or a change in behavior (Gilmore, 2007). This can involve paid or volunteer efforts. This should not be confused with supervision, which is a formalized role where one person is designated to oversee others in the completion of their organizational goals (Gilmore, 2007). While supervisors are expected to lead, they may or may not successfully influence their employees. Leadership implies the ability of an individual to influence a group or organization by directing, structuring, and facilitating activities and relationships (Yukl, 2010). Regardless of the definition, leadership is needed in education.

**The Need for Leadership in Education**

Leadership is needed in education because educational administrators (e.g., school principals) face multiple challenges. In the United States, final decisions for complex ethical issues that directly affect the education and lives of students fall under the purview of public school principals, as outlined in NCLB (2002). Ethical decisions such as school “security vs. civil liberties, power vs. accommodation in curriculum, accountability vs. responsibility, community standards vs. individual rights, equality vs. equity, personal vision vs. authority, rules, regulations, and policies vs. individual needs”
are all responsibilities that a school principal must navigate during the course of his or her career (Shapiro & Gross, 2008, p. 53).

California K-12 teachers and administrators face specific problems, such as the loss of music, art, physical education, library, and summer programs, as well as outdated facilities in disrepair, resulting in heavy use of portable buildings or makeshift classrooms (Lieberman & Miller, 2013). Loss of revenue and loss of bilingual instruction have severely curtailed resources and services to students, particularly those most in need (Lieberman & Miller, 2013). In addition to these large critical issues, K-12 principals must also address leadership tasks such as managing communication; providing motivation and delegation; managing performance; working with and through teams; running meetings; managing time and stress; ensuring personal, professional, and institutional development; and developing an understanding of leadership among their staff.

Elementary school principals have been responsible for financial operations, maintenance, personnel, public relations, school policy regarding discipline, coordinating instructional programs, and other school matters. In addition to this, principals have been leaders in instructional design and reform, including evaluating instruction and helping teachers improve their teaching methods. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP, 2008) developed six professional standards related to the position and called for transformational leaders to implement these:

- Standard One: Lead Student and Adult Learning . . .
- Standard Two: Lead Diverse Communities . . .
With the task of leading school reforms to increase student achievement comes the need for principals to “create a shared vision within the school community” and “engage teachers in shared decision-making” (Buckner, n.d., para. 4). This requires leadership.

**Theories of Leadership**

Theories of leadership vary greatly. Whether focused on rational and cognitive processes, like Kurt Lewin’s three styles of leadership (i.e., autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire; Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939), or focused on emotions as a basis for influence (Yukl, 2010), a multitude of leadership theories and styles have been considered by scholars. Further, some scholars have focused on leader behavior, while others have focused on styles of leadership. This discussion on leadership begins by contrasting the belief that leadership is based on inherent traits with the belief that leadership is highly situational.

**Trait Theory Versus Situational Leadership**

The initial scientific study of leadership focused on the characteristics of effective leaders under the belief that leaders were born and not made. Empirical research examined not only mental and social traits, such as judgment and extroversion-introversion, but also physical traits, such as physique (Barnett, 2000; Stogdill, 1948). This research persisted up to the 1950s, even though Ralph Stogdill, after an extensive literature review of all trait theory, concluded in 1948 that existing research had not
shown that there were any universal traits that distinguished effective leaders from other individuals.

Rather, Stogdill (1948) believed that leadership was highly situational:

A person does not become a leader by virtue of the possession of some combination of traits, but the pattern of personal characteristics of the leader must bear some relevant relationship to the characteristics, activities, and goals of the followers. Thus, leadership must be conceived in terms of the interaction of variables which are in constant flux and change. (pp. 63-64)

Stogdill asserted, “Persons who are leaders in one situation may not necessarily be leaders in other situations” (p. 64). Leadership, in this assessment, was directly related to the perception of the leader by his or her followers. Whether they rejected or accepted the leadership determined whether the particular qualities that leader possessed were deemed to be successful leadership qualities. This, as pointed out by Newstetter, Feldstein, and Newcomb (1938, as cited in Stogdill, 1948), was related to the leader’s behaviors, but up to this point, researchers had been “completely unsuccessful in attempting to measure what these behaviors are” (p. 64).

Stogdill (1948) ultimately did reduce the traits he found in his literature review to these characteristics: “capacity, achievement, responsibility, participation, and status” (p. 63). The characteristics were defined as follows:

1. Capacity (intelligence, alertness, verbal facility, originality, judgment).
2. Achievement (scholarship, knowledge, athletic accomplishments).
3. Responsibility (dependability, initiative, persistence, aggressiveness, self-confidence, desire to excel).
4. Participation (activity, sociability, cooperation, adaptability, humor).

5. Status (socioeconomic position, popularity).

6. Situation (mental level, status, skills, needs and interests of followers, objectives to be achieved, etc.). (Stogdill, 1948, p. 63)

Stogdill included situation in this list, even though situation is not a character trait.

Stogdill continued on to express how each of these traits assisted the effective leader in different situations and how they related to perceptions of the leader by his or her followers:

These findings are not surprising. It is primarily by virtue of participating in group activities and demonstrating his capacity for expediting the work of the group that a person becomes endowed with leadership status. . . . Leadership implies activity, movement, getting work done. The leader is a person who occupies a position of responsibility in coordinating the activities of the members of the group in their task of attaining a common goal. A person does not become a leader by virtue of the possession of some combination of traits, but the pattern of personal characteristics of the leader must bear some relevant relationship to the characteristics, activities, and goals of the followers. (p. 63)

Stogdill (1948) posited that effective leadership is dependent on the situation, such that specific goals and the existing relationships within the group determine what leadership style, motivational behavior, and character traits will be most effective in influencing the group to achieve successful outcomes. The situation will determine whether an attempt to lead is welcome and necessary or perceived as intrusive micromanagement. Thus, one leadership style may be successful in one situation but not
another. An effective leader knows which one to utilize in any given situation or group environment. According to Stogdill,

The findings suggest that leadership is not a matter of passive status, or of the mere possession of some combination of traits. It appears rather to be a working relationship among members of a group, in which the leader acquires status through active participation and demonstration of his capacity for carrying cooperative tasks through to completion. Significant aspects of this capacity for organizing and expediting cooperative effort appear to be intelligence, alertness to the needs and motives of others, and insight into situations, further reinforced by such habits as responsibility, initiative, persistence, and self-confidence. (p. 65)

While the work of Stogdill (1948) highlighted the need for leaders to adapt to situations, an additional important aspect of situational leadership is the style of the leader. Leadership styles include authority-compliance leadership, country club management, impoverished management, middle-of-the-road management, and team management (Northouse, 2010). Lewin et al. (1939) described three leadership or control styles: authoritative, participative (democratic), or delegative (laissez-faire). Other leadership styles identified in the literature include paternalistic, affiliative, transactional, transformational, coaching, scientific management, process approach, Hawthorne effect, needs and motives, consensus, charismatic, innovative, servant, pace setter, exchange style, strategic, facilitative, visionary, Level 5 (Collins, 2001), primal (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002), and ethical (M. E. Brown et al., 2005), to name a few.

The situational approach to leadership suggests that any of these styles can be used by the same leader for different situations, with different personality combinations,
and to solve different challenges. Another theory of leadership, the contingency theory (Fiedler, 1964), stressed that effective leadership is contingent on the appropriate combination of leadership style and situation, which depends on leader-member relations, task structure, and the type of power the leader has over members of the group. Ciulla (2002) concluded, in her research on leadership that stretched back to Plato, that “the one thing all researchers implicitly or explicitly imply is that leadership is a specific kind of relationship between leaders and followers” (p. 339). This was the rationale behind Hersey and Blanchard’s (1977) situational leadership theory, which identified four development levels and suggested that leaders match their leadership style to the developmental level of the person or group being led. According to Hersey and Blanchard, (a) a low competence, high commitment individual or group requires a directing/telling leadership style; (b) an individual or group with some competence but low commitment requires a coaching/selling style; (c) a high competence, variable commitment group needs to be supported and encouraged; and (d) a high competence, high commitment group requires delegating and empowering support from their leaders.

Whereas the trait approach emphasized the personality characteristics of the leader, the style approach emphasized the behavior of the leader (Northouse, 2010). Researchers who have studied the behavior of leaders in a variety of situations have identified two primary leadership behaviors that influence associates (Gilmore, 2007): (a) initiating structure, in which leaders create project management structure, create assignments, delegate tasks, and set goals; and (b) consideration, in which leaders show concern for the opinions and welfare of their associates and build relationships with them. This has tended to result in high satisfaction among associates (Northouse, 2010). This
approach viewed leadership as a process that can change depending on the environment. It viewed leadership as interactive— influenced by the context of the situation, the specific group of people, and their relationships with one another—and not just the consequence of inherent characteristics of one person. Beyond the question of whether leadership is based on traits or on situations, leadership is also based on power dynamics.

**Power Dynamics**

Leadership theory has examined how leaders exert power over their associates—whether they offer rewards, threaten punishment, establish a rank through formal authority, engender admiration, or gain the confidence of associates through expert knowledge of a specific task or situation (Gilmore, 2007). Power dynamics should not be ignored. In their research on work engagement and authentic leadership, Alok and Israel (2012) implored future researchers to use organizational context variables such as position power in order to “offer deeper insights into how authentic leadership affects follower behaviors” (p. 508). One way to garner power is to have a charismatic personality.

**Charismatic Leadership**

Charismatic leaders inspire followers to achieve extraordinary accomplishments through risk taking, effective communication, and sheer charming personality (Conger & Kanungo, 1987). However, the very characteristics that make charismatic leaders successful in the short term are their undoing in the long term (Conger, 1989). Charismatic leaders are not necessarily authentic, are prone to exaggeration and errors in perception, and can use manipulation to influence followers instead of strengthening their followers’ sense of self-efficacy and creating meaning in their work (Conger, 1989). In
contrast to garnering power via charisma, it is also possible to lead by setting high ethical standards.

**Ethical Leadership**

Ethical leadership is concerned with the fair treatment of employees, high ethical standards and integrity, and holding employees accountable for ethical behavior (M. E. Brown et al., 2005). Honesty, fairness, integrity, and openness are modeled in the behaviors of ethical leaders and communicated in their vision (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Ethical leaders hold their employees to the same set of standards and therefore will reward or punish them for their ethical or unethical conduct, using a transactional approach (Walumbwa et al., 2008). One way to demonstrate ethical leadership is to be a servant to the followers.

**Servant Leadership**

In direct contrast to charismatic leadership and consistent with ethical leadership, servant leaders are modest servants to their followers (Greenleaf, 1977). To servant leaders, their purpose is to provide what the members of their organization need to succeed. Servant leaders seem to authentically believe in the servant leadership orientation. Sun (2013) identified four attributes to the servant identity—calling, humility, empathy, and agape love—all of which together are associated with the altruistic desire to serve others beyond oneself. It is therefore not surprising that empirical research has shown that servant leadership is effective in positively influencing team performance (Hu & Liden, 2011) and increasing job satisfaction of followers (D. M. Mayer, Bardes, & Piccolo, 2008). While servant leadership can be instrumental in living
by example, it is also important for leaders to share their vision toward transforming an organization.

**Transformational Leadership**

A transformational leader is able to achieve high performance from followers through an ability to unify them with a strong shared vision (Kotlyar & Karakowsky, 2007). The downside to this is that transformational leadership may reduce the tolerance for divergent viewpoints, such as those that may be prevalent in a multigenerational workplace. Regardless, transformational leaders are known for their ability to inspire followers to perform beyond expectations. Transformational leaders influence their followers’ self-concept and empower them to recognize the value of their work (Bass, 1985). Thus, transformational leaders can cause fundamental change in followers by raising their needs for achievement and self-actualization. Transformational leadership contains four components: (a) charisma or idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration (Bass, 1985). Specific follower needs for personal growth and achievement are at the forefront of the transformational leader’s mind, and a key tenet of the style is to continually stimulate and inspire followers to be innovative and think outside of the box (Zhu et al., 2012).

While this review of leadership demonstrated the wide range of theories, opinions, and styles, one shortcoming from the literature on leadership is the lack of a single theoretical framework that potential leaders can use to connect to a variety of situations or scenarios. Authentic leadership provides a framework that goes beyond theories of leadership style and includes factors connecting leaders and followers to build effective organizations. This is the role of authentic leadership theory.
Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership embraces the dimensions of purpose, values, and connected relationships. Authentic leadership is therefore independent of leadership style (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Authentic leaders can be charismatic, directive, participative, transformational, or authoritarian (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). What differentiates authentic leaders is that their approach to leadership is aligned with their personal values and beliefs, and this builds credibility and trust among their followers (Avolio & Mhatre, 2012). Avolio and Gardner (2005) declared authentic leadership to be the “root construct underlying all positive forms of leadership” (p. 316).

Authenticity describes “how people think of themselves and act in ways that are consistent with their idea of self” (Alok, 2014, p. 268; see also Gardner et al., 2011). Authentic leaders are leaders who consistently remain true to their values and clearly articulate those values and the reasoning behind them in their decision making. The values of authentic leadership include being positive and optimistic, which implies a flexibility that can be useful when working in an environment with multigenerational employees, each of whom is motivated by different leadership styles and techniques. Both inauthentic and authentic transformational leaders exist, as the theory of authentic leadership was discovered during research on the very issue of pseudo versus authentic transformational leaders (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). There are several competing definitions of authentic leadership. According to Gardner, Avolio, and Walumbwa (2005),

Authentic leaders are leaders who: (a) know who they are and what they believe in; (b) display transparency and consistency between their values, ethical
reasoning and actions; (c) focus on developing positive psychological states such as confidence, optimism, hope, and resilience within themselves and their associates; (d) are widely known and respected for their integrity. (p. xxiii)

Alok (2014) identified these elements of authentic leadership in simpler terms as four subconstructs, each of which lines up with the description of (a) “self-awareness, (b) relational transparency, (c) balanced processing of information, and (d) internalized moral perspective (Gardner et al., 2005; Kernis, 2003; Walumbwa et al., 2008)” (p. 268).

**Dimensions of Authentic Leadership**

George and Sims (2007) identified five dimensions of authentic leadership:

(a) leading with the heart, (b) practicing solid values, (c) understanding the purpose of leadership, (d) establishing enduring relationships, and (e) developing self-discipline (see also George, 2003, 2007). Although the words are different, this definition still outlines the key concepts of self-awareness, transparency, ethics, and relationships that were stressed in other influential authentic leadership scholars’ works (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio et al., 2004; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, et al., 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

**Heart.** George and Sims (2007) contended that to be an authentic leader, a person must lead with his or her heart as well as his or her head. This involves passion, both for the work and for the people the leader serves, empathy, and “the courage to make difficult decisions” (George & Sims, 2007, p. xxii). This extends to others as well. Authentic leaders are able to engage the hearts of their followers by showing sincere interest in them and displaying complete respect for them.
**Values.** Values are deeply held personal beliefs that guide one’s actions (George & Sims, 2007). Authentic leaders must develop clarity about their values, leadership principles, and ethical boundaries in order to lead by these values. They will be tested in how the leaders behave under pressure, so if they are not values that are authentic to the leaders, they will not guide their decisions in the end. George and Sims (2007) claimed that if leaders are not true to their values, then their followers will lose confidence in their leadership. Not only must leaders serve as role models for these values, but they must be able to unite their followers around a common set of values, “so people know precisely what is expected of them” (George & Sims, 2007, p. xxi).

**Purpose.** A leader “must align people around a common purpose that inspires them to peak performance” (George, 2007, p. xxi). This is the “cornerstone of authentic leadership development” (George, 2007, p. xxiii) and requires the leader to obtain self-awareness. Without purpose, leaders risk becoming bored and disenchanted with their work (George & Sims, 2007). A true purpose drives a leader, provides confidence and perspective, and guides decisions. Purpose is inspirational and enables leaders to motivate their followers.

**Relationship building.** One of the earliest known writings on the subject of leadership, Plato’s (380 B.C.E./1966) *Republic*, emphasized the necessity for a wise philosopher king who, above all else, relied on his ethics. However, decades after writing the *Republic*, Plato (360 B.C.E.) changed his view of leadership based on his observations in the field, which he wrote about in a letter: “As I observed these incidents and the men engaged in public affairs . . . the more difficult it seemed to me to handle public affairs aright . . . without friends and trustworthy supporters” (para. 5). Heart,
values, and purpose cannot take leaders far without strong relationships with the people around them. This has been shown in studies examining trust and leader-follower dynamics (Alok, 2014; Avolio & Mhatre, 2012; Bird et al., 2009, 2012; Clapp-Smith, Vogelgesang, & Avey, 2009; Erkutlu & Chafra, 2013; C. Wang & Bird, 2011; Wong & Cummings, 2009; Wong, Spence Laschinger, & Cummings, 2010). George and Sims (2007) believed that it is only through connected relationships with other people that leaders can build trust and commitment. Authentic leaders are able to “speak openly about their weaknesses, blind spots, and vulnerabilities,” and in so doing, they “permit others to do the same” (George & Sims, 2007, p. 53). When leaders are perceived as authentic, it creates deep levels of trust and commitment in their relationships with their followers.

**Self-discipline.** Self-discipline is important to leaders if they expect others to follow with the same level of commitment. Personal discipline involves keeping oneself healthy in order to combat stress, resisting the temptation to stray from the path of one’s values and purpose, and remaining consistent in one’s actions. Consistency in action is a quality for gaining and retaining the trust of followers, for they need to know that their leader will “stay the course in good times and bad” (Sinclair, 2010, p. 11). A leader’s self-discipline will allow him or her to commit to his or her beliefs and values, follow through, and accomplish the organizational purpose (George, 2003).

Authentic leadership is determined to be not a leadership style in itself but a “root construct” of all positive, effective forms of leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005) . . . that transcends other theories and helps
to inform them in terms of what is and is not “genuinely” good leadership.

(Gardner, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2005, p. xxii)

According to Avolio and Gardner (2005), it does not matter if leaders utilize a directive, team, or servant leadership style; as long as they are genuine and remain true to their beliefs and values, communicate these values in a transparent manner, and encourage positive growth in themselves and their employees, then they can be said to be authentic leaders. They are utilizing their true self instead of a public staged or curated self. They are not fake or inauthentic. An authentic leader is a leader who acts in such a transparent and consistently ethical manner so as to ensure trust by his or her followers (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio et al., 2005; Avolio et al., 2004; Gardner, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2005).

Authentic leadership theories followed the discovery in transformational leadership literature of a distinction between pseudo and authentic transformational leaders (Alok, 2014). Inauthentic leadership involves leaders who may appear to be ethical, authentic, and trustworthy, yet they display these qualities in order to manipulate their followers. Inauthentic leaders may be motivational, transformational, and inspirational, but they do so in order to serve their own interests rather than to serve the goals of their followers or their organization. Disheartened by such unethical leaders, leadership consultants such as George (2003), George and Sims (2007), and Cashman (1998), and research scholars such as Luthans and Avolio (2003) introduced the model of authentic leadership. This concept was further shaped through interdisciplinary summits in 2004 and 2006, hosted by the Gallup Leadership Institute (Gardner et al., 2011). Since its introduction, the definition of authentic leadership has become blurred. Multiple
scholarly examinations of authentic leadership have created “several competing conceptions of AL [authentic leadership] that have created confusion about the construct” (Gardner et al., 2011, p. 1120).

Authentic leadership combines parts of trait theory with components of situational and contingency theories to explain what makes a great leader. Resilience is a core trait in authentic leadership, as are confidence, optimism, and altruism. While the leadership trait theory was abandoned due to the enormous range of leadership characteristics that were collected by researchers (Gilmore, 2007), it appears that authentic leadership theory brought a few of those traits back. Stogdill (1948) listed self-confidence and adaptability as key traits of leaders, echoing the characteristics of authentic leaders. Willingness to accept consequences of decisions and actions (altruism) is a characteristic of an authentic leader. Readiness to absorb interpersonal stress and willingness to tolerate frustration and delay are embodied in the idea of resilience as a core characteristic of an authentic leader (Stogdill, 1948).

**Follower Outcomes**

Authentic leadership is a relatively new theory and has only recently been tested. Most literature on authentic leadership discusses concepts to further build on the theory. However, early measures of authentic leadership have shown it to be beneficial and relate positively to safety, trust, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviors, promotive psychological ownership, and work engagement.

Nielsen, Eid, Mearns, and Larsson (2013) related authentic leadership to risk perception in safety-critical organizations, such as military and fire service. The subjects of their study were mostly male employees of a petroleum company over the age of 50.
They found that the employees’ “ratings of authentic leadership were negatively related to risk perception and positively associated with ratings of safety climate” (Nielsen et al., 2013, p. 308), suggesting that authentic leadership was effective at fostering positive safety climates.

Erkutlu and Chafra (2013) surveyed the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational deviance and found that authentic leadership was significantly negatively correlated with organizational deviance. Authentic leadership increased the amount of employee trust, therefore reducing the amount of deviant behaviors and increasing the employees’ level of commitment, job satisfaction, and citizenship behaviors (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2013).

Alok (2014) studied 182 Indian professionals (with an average age of 31.76) working in various organizations to determine whether authentic leadership influenced psychological ownership, or the feeling that an organization belonged to the professionals, indicating a high sense of identity with the organization and its goals. The results showed that authentic leadership positively influenced promotive psychological ownership but did not influence preventive psychological ownership. This meant that authentic leadership influenced only the positive feelings of psychological ownership, those that involved belongingness, self-identity, and accountability. It did not influence the preventive psychological ownership, which comprises the negative aspects of possession, namely meeting obligations and avoiding punishments, which can result in overly possessive and territorial employees (Alok, 2014). Alok’s (2014) study found a significant relationship between leader self-awareness and follower self-efficacy, in that self-efficacy was diminished. This stood in contrast to other studies that showed
authentic leadership to result in the empowerment of associates (Alok & Israel, 2012; Walumbwa, Wang, Wang, Schaubroeck, & Avolio, 2010). Alok (2014) theorized that this finding was due to the nature of a high-trust relationship with the authentic leader: It caused associates to feel secure and therefore feel less inclined to take charge.

Previous to Alok’s 2014 study, Alok and Israel (2012) found authentic leadership to indirectly relate “to work engagement of employees through the full mediation of organization-based promotive psychological ownership” (p. 498). Work engagement has been related to employee productivity and retention, customer satisfaction, and profitability (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). It focuses on formal task performance (Saks, 2006) and has been found to be “simultaneously trait-like and state-like in being relatively enduring yet fluctuating over time (Christian et al., 2011)” (Alok & Israel, 2012, p. 502). Alok and Israel (2012) believed that authentic leadership would relate to promotive psychological ownership and that, in turn, would influence work engagement. They tested these hypotheses on 117 Indian professionals in different organizations; 68.10% of the respondents were managers, and 24.14% were technicians. The average age was 31.17; 82 respondents were males, and 35 were females. The researchers used the 16-item Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) developed by Walumbwa et al. (2008), along with the 16-item Psychological Ownership Questionnaire (Avey, Avolio, Crossley, & Luthans, 2009) and the nine-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). As in Alok’s 2014 study, authentic leadership correlated positively with promotive psychological ownership and negatively with preventive psychological ownership (Alok & Israel, 2012). The researchers’ hypothesis that authentic leadership indirectly affected work engagement through its positive
influence on promotive psychological ownership was supported by the data (Alok & Israel, 2012).

Walumbwa et al. (2010) directly linked authentic leadership to higher work engagement among employees. The researchers used the ALQ (Walumbwa et al., 2008), along with four additional measures: identification with supervisor, empowerment, work engagement, and organizational citizenship behavior (Walumbwa et al., 2010). They administered these questionnaires to 129 supervisors and 387 of their direct reports in two telecommunication firms located in China. Their findings showed that authentic leadership was significantly positively related to associates’ organizational citizenship behaviors, self-rated work engagement, identification with supervisors, and empowerment. The results demonstrated that the behaviors of an authentic leader—transparency, balanced processing, self-awareness, and high ethical standards—enhanced employees’ identification with their leaders, feelings of empowerment, and engagement in their work roles (Walumbwa et al., 2010).

Wong and Cummings (2009) surveyed 335 employees of a Canadian healthcare agency using the Leadership Practices Inventory, the Areas of Worklife Scale, and the Maslach Burnout Inventory General Survey. They wanted to examine the effect authentic leadership behaviors had on employee voice behavior (speaking up), job performance, and burnout. They found that relational transparency had an indirect effect on voice and that empowering behaviors had a direct effect on voice, which suggested that authentic leaders engendered trust in leadership among their followers. Leader supportiveness indirectly affected job performance, and ethical behavior directly affected performance. Finally, Wong and Cummings found that leader supportiveness and
“balanced processing by the leader, measured as ‘listening to diverse points of view,’ had a moderate negative effect on burnout . . . indicating that sensitivity to varying opinions and ideas may play a role in preventing or reducing burnout” (p. 20). This was significant to the workplace represented in the sample, because “nurses have reported some of the highest levels of burnout compared with other groups” (Wong & Cummings, 2009, p. 20). The researchers separated their data into two specific groups, clinical and nonclinical staff, and found that each interpreted leader behaviors differently (Wong & Cummings, 2009).

Giallonardo, Wong, and Iwasiw (2010) found that newly graduated nurses felt more engaged and satisfied when paired with authentic leaders and, therefore, were more likely to remain on the job. In the field of nursing, this is important because organizations experience difficulty in retaining new nursing staff (Giallonardo et al., 2010). The researchers surveyed 170 nurses with 3 years of nursing experience or less, randomly selected from the College of Nurses of Ontario list of registered nurse graduates. Most nurses included in their sample were female (91.8%), and the average age of respondents was 28. Giallonardo et al. used the ALQ, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, and Part B of the Index of Work Satisfaction scale. Authentic leadership was positively related to work engagement and job satisfaction (Giallonardo et al., 2010).

Wong et al. (2010) also studied nurses in Ontario, Canada, to determine whether authentic leadership was linked with their trust in their managers, work engagement, voice, and perceived unit care quality. Their sample included 280 registered nurses, 93.5% of whom were female, with an average age of 43.4. The measures they used
included Walumbwa et al.’s (2008) ALQ, a measure of personal identification with the leader, the Trust in Management Scale, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, the voice subscale of the Helping and Voice Behaviors Scale, and one item from the International Survey of Hospital Staffing and Organization of Patient Outcomes. The researchers found that authentic leadership significantly and positively influenced the nurses’ trust in their managers and work engagement. These factors, in turn, predicted voice and perceived quality of care (Wong et al., 2010).

Clapp-Smith et al. (2009) examined authentic leadership and its effects on the amount of sales in a large American retail clothing chain. They suggested that employees would have a greater amount of trust in authentic leaders, which would “lead to an increase in sales over the time period because the followers are more willing to invest time and resources toward some positive future outcome” (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009, p. 229). They further predicted that authentic leadership would influence employees’ positive psychological capital, which would in turn “have an effect on the positivity climate of each unit within the company, again increasing the amount of trust the unit will have in top management because of positive future expectations and again leading to an increase in sales” (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009, p. 229). To test these theories, they gathered unit sales data and surveyed 89 employees at 26 stores. Participants were 90% female and had an average age of 52. The instruments the researchers used included Walumbwa et al.’s (2008) ALQ, J. D. Mayer and Gavin’s (2005) trust in management instrument, the psychological capital scale, and the Propensity to Trust Scale (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009). They found that authentic leadership was related to both performance and trust in management and that trust in management influenced performance.
However, their theory on the increase in sales was inconclusive (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009).

**Leader Outcomes** Toor and Ofori (2009) examined what leaders themselves gained from being authentic. Using a snowball sampling approach, they interviewed leaders in the construction industry in Singapore, using George’s (2003, 2007) definition of an authentic leader (has a sense of purpose, practices solid values, leads with heart, and demonstrates self-discipline) to find their participants by peer referral. After interviewing leaders and receiving a list of 90 referrals to authentic leaders, Toor and Ofori (2009) sent questionnaires to each leader, receiving a response rate of 35%. Most participants were males (84.4%); all participants were over 30 years of age, with the mean age at 42.5. The researchers used the Authenticity Inventory (Kernis & Goldman, 2005, 2006), a 45-item scale with four subscales that include awareness, unbiased processing, behavior, and relational orientation. They also used Ryff’s (1989) psychological well-being scales and the Contingent Self-Esteem Scale (Paradise & Kernis, 1999).

Toor and Ofori’s (2009) results showed that authenticity was significantly related to and predicted psychological well-being and was negatively correlated with contingent self-esteem. While high self-esteem is related to positive leadership qualities, such as thoughtfulness, motivation, enthusiasm, and resiliency, contingent self-esteem refers to “the extent to which individuals’ self-worth depends upon meeting expectations, matching standards, or achieving specific outcomes or evaluations’ (Kernis et al., 2005b, p. 219)” (Toor & Ofori, 2009, p. 303). Not only do their followers benefit, but authentic leaders also have an advantage because they “have more self-esteem due to their well-
anchored feelings of self-worth, leading to healthy psychological functioning and positive work outcomes” (Toor & Ofori, 2009, p. 309).

**Perceptions of Authentic Leadership by Followers**

Nichols and Erakovich (2013) believed that followers were not satisfied with leaders who were not authentic. They explained that people generally have implicit ideas of what they expect from leaders. These have been called implicit leadership theories (ILT) and are unique to each person (Nichols & Erakovich, 2013). According to the authors, “When there is a fit between observed behavior and one’s personal theory of leadership, the individual exhibiting the behavior is recognized as a good leader” (Nichols & Erakovich, 2013, p. 183). Many sources can influence a person’s ILT, such as one’s personality, sex, demographic similarity to the leader, and generation.

Nichols and Erakovich (2013) hypothesized, however, that if authentic leadership is an ideal form of leadership, it should be seen as effective regardless of whether or not those behaviors explicitly lie within a follower’s ILT. A person may consciously disagree with those behaviors, but still rate such a leader as effective. (p. 186)

In a sense, they put authentic leadership to the test. Using an undergraduate student sample (72% were under the age of 25), the researchers used scenarios to survey participants’ opinions on “whether the follower’s ILT would change based on feedback” (Nichols & Erakovich, 2013, p. 187). The feedback in the scenarios included either negative or positive evaluations of the leader by another person. Using this research, the authors confirmed their hypotheses. They found that “authentic transformational leaders
are seen as more effective than transactional leaders, regardless of whether followers contain authentic transformational leader behaviors in their ILT” (Nichols & Erakovich, 2013, pp. 189-190).

Since most participants in Nichols and Erakovich’s (2013) study were under the age of 25, they may have represented similar ILT concepts as influenced by their generation (in this case, the millennials). The researchers concluded that they demonstrated that “a person’s ILT [can] change as a function of his or her experiences with leaders” and that this conclusion contradicted previous “research that suggested that ILT are stable (see Epitropaki & Martin, 2004)” (Nichols & Erakovich, 2013, p. 190).

Research has shown that 64.5% of leadership intervention studies were conducted in educational settings using student samples (Reichard & Avolio, 2005).

Nichols and Erakovich’s (2013) study was effective at determining that the millennial generation responded positively to what they perceived to be authentic leadership. Authentic leadership was defined by the researchers as “inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence” practiced by leaders who “know who they are and what they believe and are transparent and consistent in their values and actions, though not necessarily altruistic” (Nichols & Erakovich, 2013, p. 191).

**Authentic Leadership Measures**

Adrian Chan (2005) pointed out four different perspectives in the literature related to authentic leadership: intrapersonal, interpersonal, developmental, and pragmatic. The fact that there are multiple perspectives related to authentic leadership makes it difficult to measure (Chan, 2005). The key elements of the intrapersonal perspective of authentic
leadership define “authentic leadership as a system of internal processes” (Chan, 2005, p. 231), such as self-awareness, self-regulation, metacognition, and values, and this perspective was embodied in the research of Chan, Hannah, and Gardner (2005) and Michie and Gooty (2005). The interpersonal perspective of authentic leadership views “authentic leadership as a positive relational force,” where leaders develop “relational transparency, behavioral consistency, [and] relational orientation” (Chan, 2005, p. 231). This perspective was examined in the literature of Eagly (2005) and Ilies, Morgeson, and Nahrgang (2005). The developmental perspective views “authentic leadership as a personal journey of growth,” through “narratives, life-stories, insight, themes, [and] self-reflection” (Chan, 2005, p. 231). It was studied in this light by Sparrowe (2005) and Shamir and Eilam (2005). The pragmatic perspective approaches “authentic leadership as a means for veritable outcomes” and focuses on “performance beyond expectations, [and] veritable growth” (Chan, 2005, p. 231). This perspective was put forward by Luthans and Avolio (2003) and Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, et al. (2005). Each of these constructs can be measured differently. Authentic leadership is multidimensional, which therefore poses a challenge to measuring it for the purposes of research (Chan, 2005).

**Leader Authenticity Inventory.** In a precursor to the modern construct of authentic leadership, in 1983, Henderson and Hoy developed a 32-item scale, the Leader Authenticity Inventory (LAI). The measure was not widely used, and scholarly interest in the concept of authentic leadership dropped from the 1980s until its reemergence 20 years later. The measure was said to be context-specific and focused on inauthenticity (Toor & Ofori, 2009) and “perceived as opposed to felt leader authenticity” (Gardner et al., 2011, pp. 1133-1134). According to Gardner et al. (2011),
Using teachers and principals from elementary schools, limited support for the validity of the scale was provided by the positive correlations with the thrust and esprit scales of the OCDQ [Organizational Climate Descriptive Questionnaire], as predicted. Nevertheless, an examination of the scale’s items (e.g., “The principal is obsessed with rules”; “The principal never talks to teachers about personal concerns”; “The principal usually has teachers do things to make the principal look good”) raises concerns about its construct validity and generalizability. (p. 1133)

**Authenticity Inventory.** The Authenticity Inventory (Kernis & Goldman, 2005, 2006) is a measure of individual authenticity, not a measure for leadership, but it has been used to measure authentic leadership (Toor & Ofori, 2009). The third edition of the Authenticity Inventory consists of a 45-item scale that comprises four subscales: awareness (e.g., “I am in touch with my motives and desires”); unbiased processing (e.g., “I am very uncomfortable when objectively considering my limitations and shortcomings”); behavior (e.g., “I frequently pretend to enjoy something when I actually do not”); and relational orientation (e.g., “I want my closest associates to understand my weaknesses”). (Yagil & Medler-Liraz, 2013, p. 176)

In some studies, this scale showed fairly high values for internal reliability on the composite scale and all subscales; it has produced test-retest reliability (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Lakey, Campbell, Brown, & Goodie, 2007). However, in White’s (2011) evaluation, the scale was found to lack empirical support; the researcher called into question the construct validity of the scale.
The Sinclair survey. Sinclair (2010) developed an instrument for measuring authentic leadership that includes both quantitative and qualitative items. The Sinclair survey focuses on the five dimensions of authentic leadership identified by George and Sims (2007): (a) leading with the heart, (b) practicing solid values, (c) understanding the purpose of leadership, (d) establishing enduring relationships, and (e) developing self-discipline. For each of these authentic leadership dimensions, the Sinclair Survey has five items with a Likert-type response interface that ranges from 1 (agree very strongly) to 6 (very strongly disagree). Additionally, the Sinclair Survey provides open-ended items for each of the five dimensions so that respondents can provide comments, explain their responses, or provide examples to characterize their responses. The Sinclair Survey also asks participants to rank the five dimensions of authentic leadership in order of importance in contributing to job satisfaction. In this way, the Sinclair Survey is unique in directly tying authentic leadership to job satisfaction. The present study used a qualitative instrument of semistructured interviews, which allowed respondents to respond in detail to achieve the purpose of this study, as explained in the methodology chapter (Chapter III).

Authentic Leadership, Teacher Satisfaction, and Teacher Retention

Authentic leadership in school principals can play an important role in teacher retention. Empirical research has shown that principals play a crucial role in the formation of school climate (Gülşen & Gülenay, 2014; Tarbutton, 2013). Pogodzinski et al. (2012) tested this theory by examining the question of whether the quality of relationships between administrators and teachers could affect new teachers’ intent to stay and found that when teachers perceived the quality of their relationship with their
principal and vice principal to be good, they were more likely to remain teaching, regardless of whether they felt they had adequate resources or a manageable workload. Therefore, the way in which teachers perceive the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of their principals shapes their decisions on whether to stay on the job. Pogodzinski et al. concluded that more research needs to be done in order to understand how teachers perceive administrators’ influence on their working conditions.

Some researchers have studied how authentic leadership can impact teachers’ level of satisfaction with their principals, which is related to job satisfaction. The seminal works of Bird et al. (2009, 2012) and C. Wang and Bird (2011) explored authentic leadership in education, including how the authenticity of school principals influenced teacher trust, engagement levels, and retention.

C. Wang and Bird (2011) examined how teachers’ perceptions of authentic leadership related to their trust and engagement levels. They surveyed 60 school principals (nine from high schools, 14 from middle schools, and 37 from elementary schools) along with 917 teachers from 60 schools in a southeastern state of the United States. Their instruments included the ALQ, the Workplace Trust Survey, and the Q12 survey to measure employee engagement. Their results showed that “the more truthful and open the principals [were], the more their teachers trust[ed] their principals,” which resulted in a “stronger sense of belonging and engagement” for teachers (C. Wang & Bird, 2011, p. 136). This confirmed the findings of Bird et al.’s 2009 study. The authors concluded that principals with strong relational transparency patterns of behavior develop deep, open, and meaningful relationships with their staff members. These principals are concerned about the further professional development of their subordinates and are
supportive of their career advancement and future success. Teachers appreciate this notion of “we’re in this together” as it provides a sense of teamwork, and it portends to strengthen their levels of trust and engagement (C. Wang & Bird, 2011, p. 138).

In 2012, Bird et al. returned to the question, this time asking whether authentic leadership, trust, and engagement had any effect on the intent for teachers to continue teaching for their schools. Again, they surveyed school principals and their teaching staff, and again they found that trust and engagement were related to principal authenticity. However, this time, they found empirical evidence to support the hypothesis that trust and engagement resulted in teachers’ intention to return to teach at their schools the next year (Bird et al., 2012), thus showing that authentic leadership indirectly affected teacher retention.

While these works of Bird and colleagues were important in demonstrating the role of authentic leadership in fostering teacher retention, these studies did not assess authentic leadership as it pertains to elementary school principals and special education teachers. This current study sought to fill this gap.

**Synthesis Matrix**

According to Roberts (2010),

Synthesizing [of literature] involves comparing, contrasting, and merging disparate pieces of information into one coherent whole that provides a new perspective. . . . A high-quality literature review reflects careful analysis of all sources and a critical synthesis in which . . . previous studies and information are related to each other. (p. 100)
Three matrices were developed by the researcher (Appendix A) that merged all applicable information regarding authentic leadership behaviors contributing to job satisfaction of elementary school principals and elementary special education teachers.

The first matrix highlights different types of leadership theories. There are many different styles of leadership. Rost (1991) identified at least 221 definitions for leadership. According to Yukl (2010), leadership implies the ability of an individual to influence a group or organization by directing, structuring, and facilitating activities and relationships. However, clarity of definition can benefit the education system.

The second matrix highlights authentic leadership. George and Sims (2007) identified five dimensions of authentic leadership: heart, values, purpose, building relationships, and self-discipline. Authentic leaders have a different approach to leadership that is aligned with their personal values and belief (Avolio & Mhatre, 2012).

The third matrix highlights teacher job satisfaction and retention. Special education teachers encounter a number of factors that impact job satisfaction and retention. According to Urick (2012), teacher turnover is an expensive problem, as the number of special education students continues to increase year after year. Pogodzinski et al. (2012) found that if teachers viewed the quality of their relationship with their principal to be good, they were more likely to intend to remain teaching, regardless of whether they felt they had adequate resources or a manageable workload.

**Summary**

Leadership is important in education. The literature reviewed in this chapter demonstrated that leadership theories vary greatly, but authentic leadership transcends other theories of leadership and leadership style. Teachers appreciate principals who
demonstrate the dimensions of authentic leadership, use transparency in their decisions, seek out input and advice from staff members, and with whom they have developed strong relationships (Bird et al., 2012; Sinclair, 2010; C. Wang & Bird, 2011). Principals who demonstrate authentic leadership values and ethics “are appreciated by teachers who deal daily with conflicting demands from parents and students” (C. Wang & Bird, 2011, p. 139). Principals who remain true to their purpose by, for example, framing issues as what is best for the students “win the trust of their faculty members” (C. Wang & Bird, 2011, p. 139).

While the works of Bird et al. (2009, 2012) and C. Wang and Bird (2011) demonstrated the importance of authentic leadership in school principals to job satisfaction and teacher retention, and the work of Sinclair (2010) showed how authentic leadership in principals can impact job satisfaction in a multigenerational sample of secondary school teachers, no studies to date have been designed to determine authentic leadership behaviors that contribute to job satisfaction of elementary school principals and elementary special education teachers. The following chapter details the methodology of this study, which was specifically designed to fill this important gap in the literature.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter presents the research methodology and the procedures deployed to conduct the research in this study. The purpose statement and the research questions provided the rationale and foundational basis for the research on elementary school principals and elementary special education teachers regarding authentic leadership and job satisfaction. The chapter also includes a description of the research design, population, sample, instrumentation, reliability/validity, data collection/analysis, and limitations as they pertain to this study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand what elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary special education teachers in the Desert/Mountain Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). A second purpose of the study was to understand what elements of authentic leadership contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary principals in the Desert/Mountain SELPA. A third purpose of the study was to identify the similarities and differences that exist among the elements of authentic leadership that contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary principals and special education teachers in the Desert/Mountain SELPA.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:
1. What elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary special education teachers in the Desert/Mountain SELPA?

2. What elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary principals in the Desert/Mountain SELPA?

**Research Design**

The research method used for this study was a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is a systematic research design approach that reveals a target audience’s range of behaviors and perceptions within specific context issues (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Roberts (2010) described qualitative research as an umbrella term that relates to several research genres that share common characteristics: case study research, historical research, ethnography, grounded theory, narrative analysis, action research, and hermeneutics. Qualitative research was defined by Yilmaz (2013) as a method that aims to understand how social experiences are created and given meaning. Creswell (2009) stated, “Qualitative research design begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 37).

The research design selected for this study was a collective case study. A collective case study, as defined by Brantlinger et al. (2005), is research collected at multiple sites or a collection of personalized individual studies that are similar or distinctive. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) noted that the subject of a case study can
be an individual, group, activity, event, or process. Isaac and Michael (1995) described advantages of an individual interview. They include but are not limited to the following: Interviews are personalized, they allow for in-depth and free responses, they provide flexibility and adaptability, they allow the researcher to observe the respondents’ gestures, and so forth.

The study employed purposeful sampling using the interview process to gather the information necessary to answer the research questions. For this study, the data collection consisted of individual interviews with elementary school principals and elementary special education teachers in regard to their perceptions of authentic leadership and job satisfaction. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated that for “case studies data collection is extensive and varied, depending on the question and situation. They use multiple methods to collect data” (pp. 345-346).

The data collection for this study followed the five phases of qualitative data collection and analysis from McMillan and Schumacher (2010):

- **Phase 1: Planning.** Analyzing the problem statement and the initial research questions will suggest the type of setting or interviewees that would logically be informative. In Phase 1, the researcher locates and gains permission to use the site or network of persons.

- **Phase 2: Beginning Data Collection.** This phase includes the first days in the field, in which the researcher establishes rapport, trust, and reciprocal relations with the individuals and groups to be observed (Wax, 1971). Researchers obtain data primarily to become oriented and to gain a sense of
the totality for purposeful sampling. Researchers also adjust their interviewing and recording procedures to the site or persons involved.

- **Phase 3: Basic Data Collection.** The inquirer begins to hear and see what is occurring, which goes beyond just listening and looking. Choices of data collection strategies and informants continue to be made. Tentative data analysis begins as the researcher mentally processes ideas and facts while collecting data. Initial descriptions are summarized and identified for later corroborations.

- **Phase 4: Closing Data Collection.** The researcher conducts the last interview. Ending data collection is related to the research problem and the richness of the collected data. More attention is given to possible interpretations and verifications of the emergent findings with key informants, remaining interviews, and documents. The field may yield more data but does not yield more insights relevant to the research problem.

- **Phase 5: Completion.** Completion of active data collecting blends into formal data analysis and construction of meaningful ways to present the data. (pp. 353-354).

A sample of Desert/Mountain SELPA principals and special education teachers who fit the criteria of working in their school for a minimum of 5 years, had specialized training in special education, and were recommended by their director of special education or SELPA specialist were interviewed using semistructured interviews. These semistructured interviews allowed the researcher to conduct in-depth interviews, which
provided the researcher with insights into the participants’ perceptions of authentic leadership and job satisfaction.

**Population**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) defined a population as a group that can consist of individuals conforming to specific criteria and to which the researcher intends to generalize the results of the research. The population of this study included elementary school principals and elementary special education teachers in California. Both principals and elementary special education teachers are responsible for ensuring the safety, health, and educational development of each child with disabilities. Lasky and Karge (2006) and Billingsley (2004) agreed that there are some shared leadership responsibilities for both principals and elementary special education teachers, like the well-being of the students, the development of the individualized education plans (IEPs), and monitoring student progress. Lasky and Karge (2006) and Billingsley (2004) concluded that principals’ leadership role extends to the entire school staff and school structure. Both principals and teachers employ leadership characteristics that may or may not align with the elements of authentic leadership. The California Department of Education’s (CDE’s) 2014-2015 report stated that there were 717,981 students enrolled in K-12 special education (CDE, n.d.). The CDE (2016) reported that there were 295,025 teachers and 11,028 principals in California during the 2014-2015 school year.

San Bernardino County is the fifth largest county in California and the 12th most populous county in the nation, with over 2 million residents (The Community Foundation, 2014; U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). San Bernardino County is commonly divided into the East Valley Region, the West End Region, and the Desert/Mountain
Region. San Bernardino County residents are 50% Latino, 32% White, 8% Black, 7% Asian, and the remaining 3% are of mixed races (The Community Foundation, 2014; U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). According to the CDE’s (n.d.) K-12 public school report for the 2009-2010 school year, there were 544 schools within San Bernardino County. There are 328 elementary schools, 84 middle schools, 103 high schools, and 29 other types of schools, with 544 principals and 17,909 teachers in San Bernardino County (CDE, n.d.).

In 1974, the California State Board of Education approved the Master Plan for Special Education (Master Plan). The Master Plan required that all school districts and county offices of education work together to develop a regional special education delivery system (Legislative Analyst’s Office [LAO], 1986). The regional consortia formed are referred to in the authorizing legislation as SELPAs.

In 1977, all California school districts and county school offices were mandated to form consortia in geographical regions of sufficient size and scope to provide for all special education service needs of children residing within the region boundaries (CDE, 2015). Each region’s SELPA developed a local plan describing how it would provide special education services. There are approximately 135 SELPAs in California (CDE, 2015). There are three SELPAs in San Bernardino County. The East Valley SELPA serves special education students located in the eastern part of San Bernardino County, the West End SELPA serves special education students located in the western part of San Bernardino County, and the Desert/Mountain SELPA serves special education students located in the Desert and Mountain areas of San Bernardino County (San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, n.d.).
The Desert/Mountain SELPA of California’s San Bernardino County was the focus of this study. It is governed by a board of directors that is made up of the superintendent/CEO of each participating local education agency (LEA) within the SELPA region and is chaired by the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools. The Desert/Mountain SELPA is a support service office that provides trained staff members who work in partnership with schools, families, and the surrounding communities to assist with the educational success of all students (Desert/Mountain Special Education Local Plan Area [SELPA], n.d.).

The Desert/Mountain SELPA has 21 different LEAs that were considered for this study (see Table 1). The following four school districts were selected for the study: Apple Valley Unified School District, San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools Desert/Mountain Office of Education, Hesperia Unified School District, and Victor Elementary School District (see Table 2). These four LEAs were the largest districts within the county at the time of the study, with a combined 47.5% of total student enrollment and 58.6% of special education student enrollment (Desert/Mountain SELPA, n.d.). The population for this study was principals and special education teachers in the Desert/Mountain SELPA. There were 44 principals and 160 special education teachers (see Table 3).

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) described the target population as the survey population or sampling frame, which is different from the sample. The target population for this study was principals and special education teachers from the districts within the Desert/Mountain SELPA of California’s San Bernardino County. The target population
Table 1

*School Districts Within the Desert/Mountain SELPA*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Total number of students</th>
<th>Number of special education students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academy Academic Excellence Charter School K12</td>
<td>1,400 (K-12)</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apple Valley Unified School District</td>
<td>14,401 (K-12)</td>
<td>1,597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adelanto Elementary School District</td>
<td>10,388</td>
<td>1,152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baker Valley Unified School District</td>
<td>162 (K-12)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barstow Unified School District</td>
<td>5,920 (K-12)</td>
<td>698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bear Valley Unified School District</td>
<td>2,453 (K-12)</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desert Trails Preparatory Academy Charter</td>
<td>671</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encore Charter School</td>
<td>1,200 (K-12)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helendale Elementary School District</td>
<td>1,959</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hesperia Unified School District</td>
<td>23,735 (K-12)</td>
<td>2,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucerne Valley Unified School District</td>
<td>2,921 (K-12)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needles Unified School District</td>
<td>835 (K-12)</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Options for Youth Victor Valley Charter School</td>
<td>2,764 (6-12)</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oro Grande Elementary School District</td>
<td>3,857</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver Valley Unified School District</td>
<td>2,278 (K-12)</td>
<td>346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowline Joint Unified School District</td>
<td>7,826 (K-12)</td>
<td>948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools Desert/Mountain Office of Education</td>
<td>2,807 (K-12)</td>
<td>2,807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylion High Desert Academy Charter School</td>
<td>170 (K-12)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trona Joint Unified School District</td>
<td>250 (K-12)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor Elementary School District</td>
<td>12,181 (K-6)</td>
<td>1,126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor Union High School District</td>
<td>13,889 (7-12)</td>
<td>1,335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>112,067</td>
<td>13,212</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from “California Special Education Local Plan Areas,” by California Department of Education (CDE), 2015, retrieved June 12, 2016, from http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/as/caselpas.asp.
Table 2

**Student Enrollment at Four School Districts Selected for Study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Total number of students</th>
<th>Special education students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apple Valley Unified School District</td>
<td>14,401 (K-12)</td>
<td>1,597 (K-12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hesperia Unified School District</td>
<td>23,735 (K-12)</td>
<td>2,200 (K-12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools Desert/Mountain Office of Education</td>
<td>2,032 (K-12)</td>
<td>2,807 (K-12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor Elementary School District</td>
<td>12,181 (K-6)</td>
<td>1,126 (K-12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>53,349</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,730</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from “California Special Education Local Plan Areas,” by CDE, 2015, retrieved June 12, 2016, from [http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/as/caselpas.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/as/caselpas.asp).

Table 3

**Four Largest School Districts: Student Enrollment, Principals and Special Education Elementary Teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School district</th>
<th>Special education enrollment</th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Special education elementary teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apple Valley Unified School District</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools Desert/Mountain Office of Education</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hesperia Unified School District</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor Elementary School District</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,222</strong></td>
<td><strong>44</strong></td>
<td><strong>160</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from “California Special Education Local Plan Areas,” by CDE, 2015, retrieved June 12, 2016, from [http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/as/caselpas.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/as/caselpas.asp).

included 369 principals and special education teachers within the Desert/Mountain SELPA; 137 were principals and 232 were special education teachers. This target population was selected because it was the largest population of special education
teachers and principals located in the same geographical area within the SELPA, the SELPA program specialist believed that these individuals would be willing to participate in the study, and the population was accessible to the researcher. Table 3 displays the number of students, principals, and special education teachers within the four largest school districts in the Desert/Mountain SELPA.

**Sample**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) described a sample as a group of participants who may be selected from a larger group known as the target population. The sample for this study was selected from the target population of principals and special education teachers within the Desert/Mountain SELPA who worked within the Apple Valley Unified School District, Hesperia Unified School District, San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools Desert/Mountain Office of Education, and Victor Elementary School District. The sample selected met the following criteria:

1. had worked as a principal or as an elementary special education teacher for a minimum of 4 years,
2. had specialized training in special education, and
3. were recommended by their director of special education or SELPA specialist.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated that when a researcher is trying to determine a sample size from the chosen population, a modest percentage of the total population can approximate the characteristics of the population adequately. There were 369 principals and elementary special education teachers identified by the researcher. The sample size for this study was 12 principals and 12 elementary special education teachers within the Desert/Mountain SELPA of California’s San Bernardino County.
This sample size of 24 participants accounted for 7% of the target population of 369 principals and elementary special education teachers. According to Green and Thorogood (2009), interviewing more than 20 people in qualitative research usually does not provide any new information. Ritchie, Lewis, and Elam (2003) concluded that the size of qualitative samples is generally under 50. Patton (2002) stated that sample size depends on the purpose of the study. There were 369 principals and special education teachers invited to participate in this study. The researcher sent an e-mail to each of the potential participants describing the study and inviting him or her to be a part of the study (Appendix B). A 2-week time frame was allotted for the potential participants’ response to the initial letter requesting participation in the study. The researcher reviewed all of the participant responses to ensure they met the study criteria, and then the researcher used a random number table to assign numbers to the list of participants. The researcher then sent an e-mail to the first 12 principals and 12 teachers from the randomized list to inform them that they had been selected to be interviewed. The researcher asked that they respond by e-mail to confirm their willingness to participate in the study.

**Instrumentation**

According to Patton (2002), in qualitative research, semistructured interviews are the most common type of measure for collecting data. The instrumentation selected for this qualitative study was semistructured interviews. The participants were given the options of participating in the interview face-to-face, by telephone, or by video conference using Skype. The researcher provided flexible options to the participants to encourage their participation.
The interview questions were developed by the researcher using the factors that emerged from the synthesis matrices and directly related to the research questions. There were a set of questions developed for the principals and a set of questions developed for the teachers. The interview questions included open-ended questions that related to the research questions so that each participant could provide in-depth answers or examples that helped the researcher understand the authentic leadership behavior of the participants and how those behaviors affected the participants’ job satisfaction (Appendix C). A set of preinterview questions were developed for both the principals and teachers. The purpose of the preinterview questions was to assist the researcher in gaining a deeper understanding of the participants (Appendix D). The researcher sent the participants a one-page summary explaining authentic leadership before the interviews (Appendix E). On the day of the interviews, the researcher quickly reviewed and asked if the interviewees had any questions about the summary before the interviews started. The researcher asked follow-up questions to obtain deeper insight into the participants’ answers and to solicit examples. The researcher asked a total of seven interview questions, with interviews lasting approximately 30 minutes. Table 4 shows the alignment of the research questions, the interview questions, and the supporting literature from the synthesis matrices.

**Reliability and Validity**

Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) postulated that reliability leads to consistent results. Reliability measures include intercoder reliability and internal reliability, commonly assessed using Cronbach’s alpha (Nunnally, 1978; Pallant, 2007; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Patton (1990) concluded that a test is considered reliable if it yields consistent
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Interview questions</th>
<th>Supporting literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. What elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary special education teachers in the Desert/Mountain SELPA? | 1. In your experience, what factors impact your job satisfaction? Can you share an example?  
2. In your experience, how do the elements of authentic leadership contribute to your job satisfaction?  
3. What specific elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) do you perceive contribute to your job satisfaction?  
4. Of the five elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline), which one has a greater impact on your job satisfaction? Can you share an example?  
5. How important is job satisfaction in your leadership role?  
6. How does job satisfaction impact principals?  
7. Do you have any other comments that you would like to offer? | Chan (2005); Endrissat, Muller, and Kaudela-Baum (2007); Gardner, Avolio, and Walumbwa (2005) |
| 2. What elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary principals in the Desert/Mountain SELPA? | 1. In your experience, what factors impact your job satisfaction? Can you share an example?  
2. In your experience, how do the elements of authentic leadership contribute to your job satisfaction?  
3. What specific elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) do you perceive contribute to your job satisfaction?  
4. Of the five elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline), which one of these elements has a greater impact on your job satisfaction? Can you share an example?  
5. How important is job satisfaction in your leadership role?  
6. How does job satisfaction impact teachers?  
7. Do you have any other comments that you would like to offer? | Aiken (2013); Boyd et al. (2011); Darling-Hammond (2003); Zeinabadi (2010) |
1992). The reliability of this study was established in three ways. First, the synthesis matrices from the literature review were used to develop the interview questions. Second, a field test was conducted among principals and teachers within the Desert/Mountain SELPA to determine consistency of results. Third, the researcher used an informed expert in special education to code 10% of the interview data to provide interrater reliability to help ensure consistency of the data analysis.

Validity is “the degree to which your instrument truly measures what it purports to measure” (Roberts, 2010, p. 151). Roberts (2010) noted that an instrument must be field tested. Therefore, the interview protocol for this study was field tested with three principals and three special education teachers within the Desert/Mountain SELPA who were not included in the study. The participants of the field testing were given the interview questions and asked to provide feedback regarding questions they felt needed to be modified or removed (Appendix F). The data collected were transcribed, coded, and analyzed to determine if any of the interview questions needed to be adjusted in order for the researcher to obtain a more reliable/valid set of interview questions that effectively aligned to the previously stated research questions.

Data Collection

To obtain data about the perception of authentic leadership and job satisfaction of elementary special education teachers and principals within the Desert/Mountain SELPA, it was important for the researcher to be within close proximity of the participants. Data were collected from the four largest school districts within the Desert/Mountain SELPA. Permission to contact the special education teachers and principals and conduct the study was granted to the researcher by each of the four school district superintendents.
Data were collected from the 12 elementary school principals and 12 elementary special education teachers from the four selected school districts with the Desert/Mountain SELPA. A 2-week time frame for data collection was assigned for this study. The researcher sent an e-mail to the participants to provide them with information about the study, the interview process, and a one-page summary of the five elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline; Appendix E). The summary allowed the interviewees to gain a better understanding of the elements of authentic leadership and to provide the researcher with more in-depth answers to the interview questions. The researcher traveled to each participant’s location to conduct the interviews. To ensure privacy for each of the participants, each principal interview was held in the principal’s office, and each teacher interview was held in the teacher’s classroom. Before each interview began, the researcher introduced herself and asked the participant if he or she had any questions about the process or anything else. The researcher used a script to ensure that the same thing was said at each interview (Appendices G and H). The interview protocol consisted of written directions for conducting the interview as well as a standard set of predetermined questions to be asked of all participants (Patton, 2002; Appendix C). The participants were asked before the interview began to sign a letter of consent for permission to audio record the interview (Appendix I). Pattern (2012) concluded that recording interviews allows the researcher to examine the taped interviews at a later time. The average time for each interview was 30 minutes. All interviews were transcribed and coded to identify common themes and patterns within the data.
This study was approved by the Brandman University Institutional Review Board (BUIRB) before formal data collection began. Informed consent was acquired from each participant prior to participation in the interview. The informed consent form included the procedures of the study and the participants’ right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence (Appendix I). The participants had the option of having the informed consent form e-mailed to them or signing the informed consent form the day of the interview before the interview began. Participation was anonymous, and no names or uniquely identifying information were collected at any time during the study. The researcher explained that all information from the interviews would be kept strictly confidential and stored in a locked confidential file, and that codes rather than the participants’ names would be used during the analysis of the data to ensure confidentiality throughout the study. Participation was completely confidential, with no personal information stored in a confidential file. All files were destroyed after the completion of the study.

**Data Analysis**

The focus of this study was the perceptions of authentic leadership elements that lead to job satisfaction of principals and elementary special education teachers. Inductive analysis allows data collected to be compared to develop themes, common threads, and categories (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Merriam, 2002). The researcher used a color coding system to organize the data into categories. This allowed the researcher to acquire a deeper understanding of the data as the themes became more evident. The following describes the process used by the researcher for the collection of the data: First, data were collected and reviewed by the researcher. The demographic data were compared to
determine if there were any insights or findings regarding the participants. The researcher read each interview transcription and assigned colors to represent the themes and patterns that emerged. Next, the researcher was able to make connections as she continued to gather the data and obvious themes and patterns were emerging. The researcher developed a color coding chart to represent the categories, themes, and notes. Finally, data were grouped by themes and common threads for each research question. The semistructured interviews of the 12 elementary principals and 12 elementary special education teachers were transcribed and analyzed using coding techniques. After each interview was completed, the researcher transcribed and coded the audio recording of the interview by themes, repetitions, and similarities.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) concluded that data collection and data analysis are interactive and occur in an overlapping cycle. The researcher for this qualitative study depended on inductive analysis. The data collected described the categories that developed into common themes that emerged from the interview responses. Themes were identified when three or more similar responses were received from the study participants and were categorized based on the number of similar responses. The scale used to determine the level of agreement among the interviewees was as follows: very strongly agree—10-12 individuals cited the same element in response to a question, strongly agree—seven to nine individuals cited the same element in response to a question, and agree—four to six individuals cited the same element in response to a question. The researcher examined all of the themes that were identified for principals and teachers and determined if there were similarities and differences in the themes that emerged among the principals and teachers. Merriam (2002) and McMillan
and Schumacher (2010) described inductive analysis as a process used by qualitative researchers to incorporate and make meaning from collected data. The data and findings were continually checked for consistency among the different interviewees and compared with the literature during the analysis process. This helped to establish converging lines of evidence and to triangulate the data to establish findings.

**Limitations**

The population/sample comprised principals and elementary special education teachers in the Desert/Mountain SELPA. This population did not include any principals or middle and high school special education teachers within the Desert/Mountain SELPA. Moreover, charter school principals and special education teachers within the Desert/Mountain SELPA were not included in this population.

Principals and teachers were able to refuse to share information that made them feel uncomfortable. The small size of the sample limits the generalizability of the study, as it included a small portion of the principals and elementary special education teachers within the Desert/Mountain SELPA within San Bernardino County.
CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

A review of the literature identified principal leadership as crucial to job satisfaction and retention of teachers (Algera & Lips-Wiersma, 2012; Andersen, 2006; Yukl, 2010). The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 has had a great impact on how principals lead (Bergent & Burnette, 2001). Authentic leadership is a promising approach for increasing job satisfaction and teacher retention (Bird et al., 2009, 2012; C. Wang & Bird, 2011). What differentiates authentic leaders is that their approach to leadership is aligned with their personal values and beliefs, and this builds credibility and trust among their followers (Avolio & Mhatre, 2012). Avolio and Gardner (2005) declared authentic leadership to be the “root construct underlying all positive forms of leadership” (p. 316).

This chapter investigates the elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) that contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary principals and elementary special education teachers in the Desert/Mountain Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). This chapter also reviews the purpose statement, research questions, methodology, and data collection methods utilized. The population and sample are outlined, followed by the presentation of the themes and data analysis.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand what elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary special education teachers in the Desert/Mountain Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). A second purpose of the
study was to understand what elements of authentic leadership contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary principals in the Desert/Mountain SELPA. A third purpose of the study was to identify the similarities and differences that exist among the elements of authentic leadership that contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary principals and special education teachers in the Desert/Mountain SELPA.

**Research Questions**

This qualitative study was guided by the following questions:

1. What elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary special education teachers in the Desert/Mountain SELPA?

2. What elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary principals in the Desert/Mountain SELPA?

**Research Design, Methods, and Data Collection Procedures**

The research method used for this study was a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is a systematic research design approach that reveals a target audience’s range of behaviors and perceptions within specific context issues (Brantlinger et al., 2005; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Roberts (2010) described qualitative research as an umbrella term that relates to several research genres that share common characteristics: case study research, historical research, ethnography, grounded theory, narrative analysis, action research, and hermeneutics. Qualitative research was defined by Yilmaz (2013) as a method that aims to understand how social experiences are created and given meaning. Creswell (2009) stated, “Qualitative research design begins with assumptions, a
worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 37).

The research design selected for this study was a collective case study. A collective case study, as defined by Brantlinger et al. (2005), is research collected at multiple sites or a collection of personalized individual studies that are similar or distinctive. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) noted that the subject of a case study can be an individual, group, activity, event, or process. Isaac and Michael (1995) described advantages of an individual interview. They include but are not limited to the following: Interviews are personalized, they allow for in-depth and free responses, they provide flexibility and adaptability, they allow the researcher to observe the respondents’ gestures, and so forth.

The study employed purposeful sampling using the interview process to gather the information necessary to answer the research questions. For this study, the data collection consisted of individual interviews with elementary school principals and elementary special education teachers in regard to their perceptions of authentic leadership and job satisfaction. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated that for “case studies data collection is extensive and varied, depending on the question and situation. They use multiple methods to collect data” (pp. 345-346).

**Population**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) defined a population as a group that can consist of individuals conforming to specific criteria and to which the researcher intends to generalize the results of the research. Both principals and elementary special
education teachers are responsible for ensuring the safety, health, and educational development of each child with disabilities. Lasky and Karge (2006) and Billingsley (2004) agreed that there are some shared leadership responsibilities for both principals and elementary special education teachers, such as the well-being of the students, the development of the individualized education plans (IEPs), and monitoring student progress. Lasky and Karge (2006) and Billingsley (2004) concluded that principals’ leadership role extends to the entire school staff and school structure. Both principals and teachers employ leadership characteristics that may or may not align with the elements of authentic leadership. The California Department of Education’s (CDE’s) 2014-2015 report stated that there were 717,981 students enrolled in K-12 special education (CDE, n.d.). The CDE (2016) reported that there were 295,025 teachers and 11,028 principals in California during the 2014-2015 school year.

In 1974, the California State Board of Education approved the Master Plan for Special Education (Master Plan). The Master Plan required that all school districts and county offices of education work together to develop a regional special education delivery system (LAO, 1986). The regional consortia formed in response to the Master Plan are referred to in the authorizing legislation as SELPAs.

In 1977, all California school districts and county school offices were mandated to form consortia in geographical regions of sufficient size and scope to provide for all special education service needs of children residing within the region boundaries (CDE, 2015). Each region’s SELPA developed a local plan describing how it would provide special education services. There are approximately 135 SELPAs in California (CDE, 2015). There are three SELPAs in San Bernardino County. The East Valley SELPA
serves special education students located in the eastern part of San Bernardino County, the West End SELPA serves special education students located in the western part of San Bernardino County, and the Desert/Mountain SELPA serves special education students located in the Desert and Mountain areas of San Bernardino County (San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, n.d.).

The Desert/Mountain SELPA of California’s San Bernardino County was the focus of this study. It is governed by a board of directors that is made up of the superintendent/CEO of each participating local education agency (LEA) within the SELPA region and is chaired by the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools. The Desert/Mountain SELPA is a support service office that provides trained staff members who work in partnership with schools, families, and the surrounding communities to assist with the educational success of all students (Desert/Mountain SELPA, n.d.).

**Sample**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated that when a researcher is trying to determine a sample size from the chosen population, a modest percentage of the total population can approximate the characteristics of the population adequately. There were 369 principals and elementary special education teachers identified by the researcher for this study. The sample size for this study was 12 principals and 12 elementary special education teachers within the Desert/Mountain SELPA of California’s San Bernardino County. This sample size of 24 participants accounted for 7% of the target population of 369 principals and elementary special education teachers. Per Green and Thorogood (2009), interviewing more than 20 people in qualitative research usually does not provide
any new information. Ritchie et al. (2003) concluded that the size of qualitative samples is generally under 50. Patton (2002) stated that sample size depends on the purpose of the study. The researcher used a randomized list to select the 12 principals and 12 elementary special education teachers. The sample selected met the following criteria:

1. had worked as a principal or as an elementary special education teacher for a minimum of 4 years,
2. had specialized training in special education, and
3. were recommended by their director of special education or SELPA specialist.

**Presentation and Analysis of Demographic Data**

The 12 principals who participated in this study were asked to provide demographic details through a preinterview questionnaire that asked for the following information: (a) total length of time as a principal, (b) length of time as principal at current school, (c) previous experience as principal at any other sites, and (d) special education teaching experience (see Appendix D). Participants were informed that the demographic information would be used exclusively for statistical purposes and to provide context for the results of the dissertation study (see Table 5).

An analysis of the principals’ demographic data revealed that nine of the 12 principals were female, and three of the 12 principals were male. The median experience as a principal was 11 years. The median time that the principals had been at their current schools was 7 years. Fifty-eight percent of principals had held the position of principal at other schools. Seventy-five percent had taught special education.
### Table 5

**Principal Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years as a principal</th>
<th>Years at current school</th>
<th>Held position at different sites</th>
<th>Taught special education</th>
<th>School district</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Victor Elem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Female</td>
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<td>8</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>SBCSS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. SBCSS = San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools Desert/Mountain Office of Education.*

Seven of the 12 principals (58%) had more than 10 years’ experience as principals, while the other five principals (42%) had 4–8 years of experience. Seven of the 12 principals (58%) served at more than one site during their careers, whereas the other five principals (42%) had only served at one site. Nine of the principals (75%) also had experience teaching special education, while three principals (25%) had not taught special education. As a group and individually, the participants had accumulated a large amount of experience as principals and special education teachers. This provided them with a solid basis for responding to the interview questions.

Principals continue to face many challenges in their daily duties. Ethical decisions such as school “security vs. civil liberties, power vs. accommodation in curriculum, accountability vs. responsibility, community standards vs. individual rights, equality vs. equity, personal vision vs. authority, rules, regulations, and policies vs.
individual needs” are all responsibilities that a school principal must navigate during his or her career (Shapiro & Gross, 2008, p. 53). McLaughlin (2009) and Billingsley (2005) agreed that principal leadership is needed to support and encourage special education teachers. Of the 12 principals who participated in this study, four were from Apple Valley Unified School District, three from Hesperia Unified School District, three from the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools Desert/Mountain Office of Education, and two from Victor Elementary School District (Table 5).

The 12 elementary special education teachers who participated in this study were asked to provide demographic details through a preinterview questionnaire that asked for the following information: (a) total length of time as a special education teacher, (b) length of time as a teacher at current school, (c) regular education teaching experience, and (d) consideration of becoming a principal (see Appendix D). Participants were informed that the demographic information would be used exclusively for statistical purposes and to provide context for the results of the dissertation study (see Table 6).

An analysis of the teachers’ demographic data revealed that 10 of the 12 elementary special education teachers were female, and two of the 12 elementary special education teachers were male. The median experience teaching special education was 13 years. The median time teaching special education at current school site was 10.5 years. Twenty-five percent of teachers had taught regular education. Fifty percent of the special education teachers had considered becoming a principal.

Eight of the 12 special education teachers (67%) had more than 10 years’ experience as special education teachers, while the other four special education teachers (33%) had 4-9 years of experience. Seven of the 12 special education teachers (58%) had
Table 6

Special Education Teacher Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special education teacher</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years teaching special education</th>
<th>Years at current school</th>
<th>Taught regular education</th>
<th>Considered becoming a principal</th>
<th>School district</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Apple Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>SBCSS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Victor Elem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Hesperia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>Victor Elem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Victor Elem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Victor Elem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. SBCSS = San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools Desert/Mountain Office of Education.

taught at more than one site, whereas the other five special education teachers (42%) had only taught at their current school site. Three of the 12 special education teachers (25%) had taught regular education. Nine of the 12 special education teachers (75%) had not taught regular education before. Six of the 12 special education teachers (50%) had considered becoming a principal. Six of the 12 special education teachers (50%) had not considered becoming a principal. Individually and as a group, these participants had accumulated a large amount of experience as special education teachers. Their experience in special education had given them a knowledgeable background for responding to the interview questions. Special education teachers interact more frequently and spend more time with their principals than general education teachers, due to the required IEP meetings for each special education student (Billingsley, 2005; McLaughlin, 2009). Of the 12 elementary special education teachers, two were from
Apple Valley Unified School District, two from Hesperia Unified School District, four from the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools Desert/Mountain Office of Education, and four from Victor Elementary School District (Table 6).

**Presentation and Analysis of Interview Data**

Teacher interview data are presented first, followed by interview data from principals. Overall concepts are highlighted using direct quotes from interviews. Interview data for teachers and principals are presented for each interview question and then in the context of answering the research questions. Rankings for the five elements of authentic leadership are provided following the interview data.

**Teacher Interviews**

**Teachers’ Interview Question 1.** The first interview question posed to teachers was, “In your experience, what factors impact your job satisfaction? Can you share an example?” Table 7 summarizes the responses to teachers’ Interview Question 1. The most common response was support, followed by relationships and leadership.

Table 7

*Interview Question 1: Special Education Teacher Responses for Factors That Impact Job Satisfaction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Number of special education teacher responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authentic leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building relationships</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-discipline</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable staff</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff-to-student ratio</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Support was the most commonly listed factor that impacted job satisfaction. Of the 12 special education teachers, 11 indicated that support was a major factor that impacted their job satisfaction. Some focused on support from leadership. For example, one special education teacher stated, “The most important thing would be support. Building support from the principal has to be at the top” (Teacher 2). One teacher was more specific:

Support from administration. For example, if you should ask for a specific reading or math program that is research based that the principal will either provide you with the materials or will tell you how to get the funding to achieve those materials. (Teacher 7)

This sentiment was echoed by another teacher, who also pointed to support from peers: “The support that you get from your team and the support that you get from the administration” (Teacher 5). Others pointed to broader sources of support: “I think support is number one—support from everybody, from regular ed., special ed., my principal, and parents” (Teacher 11).

Some participants merged support with the concept of relationship building:

The relationships I have with those peer teachers on-site as well as support of the administrators or teachers who provide support from within the classroom. Access to networking with peers outside of my initial setting as well as admin, access to them. (Teacher 9)

Communication was also a theme that contributed to job satisfaction for the special education teachers. One participant said, “You have to have good communication. Good leadership, people skills, you [have] got to have good social skills
because you have to interact with other adults as well as parents and the children” (Teacher 1). Another teacher stated,

It’s such a blessing to work here, so that is a job satisfaction, and to be able to go up to any staff member and have a conversation, and they’re willing to share stuff about their classroom or even talk about reverse mainstreaming or mainstreaming the kids. That has really been part of it. It’s all about the relationships within this classroom setting, for the assistants and I and the other teacher to develop this as a family. So again, it’s all about the relationships, and it’s been a blessing. We all get along, and so that is really satisfying to me in a job. (Teacher 4)

Two teachers indicated that staff-to-student ratios and contact hours were important to their job satisfaction. One indicated that job satisfaction was contingent on “the numbers of kids that you have in your class” (Teacher 9), while another provided a more detailed answer:

Currently our peer educators are 5 hours, and they’re staggered. There’s times in the morning where you don’t have full staff and times in the afternoon where you don’t have full staff. I don’t experience a lot of drama with that, but there’s always potential for that. Right now, I have a lot of peer educators—I have four because I have one-to-ones—but when we have a serious behavior and I didn’t have one-to-ones, then it would just be myself and one other staff member. There wouldn’t be anybody to be with the other students if there’s a behavior serious enough that it took two people. (Teacher 10)
One teacher stressed that her job satisfaction was driven by good leadership and a principal who stressed self-discipline, while another pointed to the setting and work-life balance:

Liking the setting, ease of access to and from the school in terms of it being compatible with my personal family needs as well as being able to be at school in a time frame that’s easy and easily accessible. (Teacher 9)

Two teachers indicated that purpose was important for job satisfaction, deriving from seeing the long-term impact of being a special education teacher. One teacher said,

Sometimes when I run into kids that I’ve taught—recently, I ran into a student . . . she’s a very successful young lady right now. That was a big success story. I felt I was a big part of that, so I feel very proud. (Teacher 3)

Lastly, the intrinsic value of being a special education teacher was an important factor in job satisfaction. As one teacher stated, “I know I’m doing what I’m called to do” (Teacher 6).

**Teachers’ Interview Question 2.** The second interview question posed to teachers was, “In your experience, how do the elements of authentic leadership contribute to your job satisfaction?” Table 8 summarizes the responses to teachers’ Interview Question 2. The most common response was that all five elements contributed to job satisfaction; the other common responses were understanding of special education and relationships.

Six special education teachers indicated that all five elements of authentic leadership contributed to their job satisfaction. One suggested,
Table 8

Interview Question 2: Special Education Teacher Responses for Elements Contributing to Job Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Number of special education teacher responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authentic leadership</td>
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<td>Heart</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building relationships</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-discipline</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All five elements</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of special education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These are the driving core values. If you don’t have heart or passion—I’m just saying this kind of direct and bluntly—if you don’t have a heart or passion for people, especially kids, there are other jobs for you. (Teacher 6)

Teacher 3 went further:

I think they are all contributing at some point or another, each one of the elements. The ones that I take the hardest, the one about the heart, the values of heart. I think each element, a little bit of each element contributed to my job. I really didn’t realize that until I read the elements of the authentic leadership. I never even thought about it.

Teacher 9 explained,

I’m working with a leader who truly values these principles, then the work environment is laid out in a way where it is not just personally satisfying, but it is also professionally rewarding. You’re coupling my experience, my expectations, and sometimes there are things that I may not even know that would take me
beyond my setting or my framework. If you’re working with a leader who has that ability to work with you, it opens possibilities.

Two special education teachers praised their principal and administration for setting an example: “We have a great leader, so she sets a good example for all of us” (Teacher 1); “They display fairness, they display understanding. . . . They’re able to teach you how to be a better teacher. They’re able to . . . they’re leaders. They do that not only through their word but also through their actions” (Teacher 11).

Heart was a common element of authentic leadership that contributed to job satisfaction for the special education teachers. Teacher 1 noted, “We have a great principal here; she’s awesome. The assistant principals are just as awesome. They lead with their heart.” Another teacher explained,

I think they’re [the five elements are] very important. Heart, I think that we lead with love. We must use our heart. I think the children need to know that we love them, and so our decisions are based out of love, even if it may not sound like it. If you must use a firm voice, you do that, and you provide the structure because you do love them so much, and so I think to be authentic, you must also lead with heart. You must show . . . if you were a leader, show your colleagues that you value them, you love them. I think it’s very important to show that you do use your heart in a lot of areas of your job because that would go into values, then, right? (Teacher 4)

One teacher was empathetic toward the plight of leaders while highlighting the important role of discipline: “The leaders have to be discipline, and you have to have
self-control, as well. Keeping oneself healthy for stress, and I bet you they go through a lot of stress” (Teacher 1).

Purpose and relationships were emphasized by one teacher: “Again, purpose, understanding it. It’s not a job that’s a vocation. It’s not even a profession. It’s a vocation. Relationship is all about the people” (Teacher 6).

Three teachers emphasized that leaders must have a deep understanding that special education classrooms are indeed special. As Teacher 5 stated, “Whoever’s in the leadership position at that school has to really understand and know that your classroom is different than somebody else’s.” Table 8 lists the elements that contributed to job satisfaction for the 12 elementary special education teachers.

**Teachers’ Interview Question 3.** The third interview question posed to teachers was, “What specific elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) do you perceive contribute to your job satisfaction?” Table 9 summarizes the responses to teachers’ Interview Question 3. The most common response was heart, followed by relationships.

Most teachers had difficulty isolating specific elements of authentic leadership as being more important than other elements in contributing to job satisfaction. As one teacher stated, “Well, I think all of them” (Teacher 4). One went on to express a hierarchy of authentic leadership elements:

How can you make me pick one? But with the primary, if you were going to do . . . primary would be values, followed by heart. The purpose . . . if you’re talking about what the purpose . . . the ability to implement the values and your heart.
Table 9

*Interview Question 3: Special Education Teacher Responses for Specific Elements Leading to Job Satisfaction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Number of special education teacher responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authentic leadership</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Heart</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
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<td>Purpose</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building relationships</td>
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<td>Self-discipline</td>
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<tr>
<td>All five elements</td>
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<td>Fairness</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leading by example</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Then, of course, you must have relationship building, because if people do not feel [like] a member of the team, then none of this other stuff is going to happen. Then, of course, the self-discipline, which is to be able to stick to the plan and coordinate all this stuff. Yes. (Teacher 7)

Heart was the most specific common element expressed by six of the teachers. Teacher 8 stated, “For me, it has to be heart.” One teacher offered, “To me, heart is being a person, a human, and treating other humans the way you want to be treated” (Teacher 3). This teacher continued,

I perceive the heart is in this interview is that you must respect . . . in this case your paraeducators, to respect everyone that is involved in your class and your paraeducators because they will respect you in turn. If they don’t respect you, they’re not going to really do their job, I think, to the fullest if they don’t have any respect for you. If the compassion that you show that you care about them, that
way they build trust in the relationship with you without going overboard, without getting too personal. (Teacher 3)

Teacher 7 integrated heart with ethics and values:

And the reason . . . yes. Values. Ethics. To have an ethical leader increases my trust of the decisions that the leader will make, because the decisions will be ethical, which would then be followed . . . which is integral with the heart, because [it] is their heart with improving the quality of the education for the students. Which . . . a heart of, “Yes, I do care about the students,” without the values, you should have both. And then, of course . . . these are connected.

Teacher 8 integrated heart with purpose:

I think that special education is such a unique program, and if I walked into it with just a purpose for wanting to come to work kind of thing, then I would not be able to sustain the job emotionally. It would be too draining. I must choose heart because I must walk in there with a love for what I do and the love for the students. That’s why I do it.

Several teachers focused on purpose as a key element of authentic leadership that leads to job satisfaction. As one teacher explained,

Purpose is number one. If I did not believe in what I’m doing, I . . . that’s not the setting I think of. It’s not for me. If I did not see the values of the work that I do, contributing in a meaningful way even beyond the past and into the life, the livelihood or the lifestyles of my students and their families, that impact. I think that’s the right personal satisfaction. That ties in with my values, my purpose, and working with a leadership that has similar values towards making sure that
where I am, I have what’s needed, the resources that are needed, to fulfill that. That’s a good coupling. (Teacher 9)

Teacher 11 stated that “it’s a toss-up between purpose and self-discipline” and then reflected,

I like the self-discipline and the fact that it’s a whole person. Personal discipline involves keeping oneself healthy too. Yeah, they’re looking at their staff and they’re noticing things about them: “I noticed that you’re stressed out,” or they consider that the obligations that they’re putting on their teacher just might be stressful, so that one just really sticks out for me.

Self-discipline was a recurring theme for Teacher 10, who expressed, “Again, self-discipline. My principal is not under us constantly; we’re running our own site. Without self-discipline, your room will be in total chaos.”

Relationships and relationship building were emphasized by four teachers. One stated, “I think this relationship building is number one. It’s extremely important that you get along well with your parents, your kids, your principal, and your team that you work with” (Teacher 5). Another teacher indicated that all elements are important but that relationships lead the way, stating,

All of them, but relationships stand out. When I first started teaching, there was a principal that closed herself up in her office and didn’t have that open-door policy. We had another one that had the open-door policy, but it was, like, too open, if you know what I mean. Everything else, heart, purpose, and everything else is right in there. If you’re having good relationships, then your heart is in the right place. (Teacher 1)
Similarly, Teacher 4 echoed,

All of them contribute to job satisfaction. To be satisfied in this job, relationships would be number one because that is such an awesome thing I’m experiencing this year. My purpose could get confused at times. What is my actual purpose? That may not be number one. Values, that’s just a natural, so I really don’t even think about that. Job satisfying would be relationships and heart, I think. It’s the softer skills.

Teacher 9 focused on the building of relationships:

I would say, for my job satisfaction, relationship building. I feel like the relationship building umbrellas everything—your relationship with your students, your relationship with your principal, your relationship with your parents. Having all of those in good working relationships contributes to creating better work environments, classroom environments. We’re here for the kids. Building a relationship and communication with people is important and will contribute to how much I’m loving my job at the time. I think that it can affect how you feel about going to work and the workplace.

Teacher 10 went beyond the listed elements of authentic leadership to share that fairness and leading through example are important elements that lead to teacher job satisfaction. Referring to leaders, this teacher expressed, “They display fairness, they display understanding, they display . . . they’re able to teach you how to be a better teacher. They’re able to . . . they’re leaders. They do that not only through their word but also through their actions.”
Teachers’ Interview Question 4. The fourth interview question posed to teachers was, “Of the five elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline), which one of these elements has a greater impact on your job satisfaction?” Table 10 shows that heart was the most common element of authentic leadership that teachers indicated as having a greater impact than the others on their job satisfaction. Values, purpose, and relationships were also common.

Table 10

*Interview Question 4: Special Education Teacher Responses for Element With the Greatest Impact on Job Satisfaction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Number of special education teacher responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building relationships</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-discipline</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, teachers were frustrated by the task of isolating one element of authentic leadership as more important than others in contributing to job satisfaction. This frustration was best expressed by Teacher 6:

I can’t pick one. I can’t pick one. I think they work synergistically and symbiotically. They all work together. When I’ve experienced less satisfaction, it’s because I’m lacking in one of these areas. A lot of it would be self-discipline as it affects my personal life. Putting too much into the job and losing . . . not keeping a balance. That’s my personal struggle is I must sit and sharpen this off. I work hard, I play hard, but the work is very demanding time-wise. I must
discipline myself to say, “I can go home now. It’s dark.” I don’t think I could remove one of them or isolate one.

However, this teacher (and two others) eventually settled on relationships as the element that had the greatest impact on job satisfaction, stating,

I think probably relationship building because that goes outside of me. The heart, the values, the purpose, and the self-discipline, I’m truly at the center of control with all of those. Relationship building is when you realize it’s not about you. We have lots of little maxims around here, and one of them is, “None of us is as smart as all of us.” I say Einstein was a genius, but if I was with Einstein, we would be amazing, but I don’t know everything. That’s why we meet each other.

We have a staff and a parent motto. At the end of our little robo calls or whatever, you’ll hear it. They’re all over the place. It’s in the office. They’ll say, “Together we’re better. We need each other.” I can’t do it. It’s we, not me. Anytime you think it’s me, no. It’s we, it’s other, it’s not about you. If you’re in the center, you’re going to be off balance. It’s we, not me, but we always say, “Together we’re better. We need each other.” The kid’s motto is, “Today deciding tomorrow. The choices that we make today will dictate the choices we will have tomorrow.” (Teacher 6)

Five special education teachers indicated that heart was the authentic leadership element that had the greatest impact on their job satisfaction. As one teacher expressed, “Heart, because once you lose that, there’s a chance that you can become toxic, and that really bothers me. When adults lose their . . . anyone can burn out” (Teacher 2). Another stated,
I always think of the heart because as a team, if you show heart to your coworkers, then you’ll be successful in the classroom trying to get your job done teaching the kids. Everyone has their role to do, and if everyone’s happy and satisfied, it’s a well-run classroom. The bottom line is to make sure you meet the needs of the kids. If there is a lot of stress and bickering going on in the classroom, then you can’t run an effective classroom. (Teacher 3)

One teacher went further to explain the importance of heart:

I would say heart because the people that have mentored me, or the best mentors that I’ve had, the one I have most respect for, was principal. She was an assistant principal, took me under her wing, and showed me that she cared about me, not just what I was supposed to do. She’s awesome; we’re great friends now. I think that the leader needs to have that heart to be able to take you under their wing, to nurture you, especially if you’re a new teacher. Even if you’re not a new teacher; a lot of us are struggling with technology because we didn’t grow up with technology. A lot of us are struggling with the Common Core, and therefore we’re having to be trained. We’re being nurtured all over again, so I think that’s important that our leader had [a] good heart for that purpose, because they need to nurture us, too. We do need that nurturing. (Teacher 1)

Teacher 10 also explained why heart is so important:

Yes. I feel like the heart part will help you get over any issues that are going on with any relationship. It also helps with any behavioral things that you have going on with your students. If you’re there with the right heart and the right intentions, it’s not as dramatic as you’re dealing with different things.
Two teachers focused on values:

I think it [is] just back, again, to getting buy-in on the staff and letting your staff know that it’s for the betterment of everyone and it’s going to lead everybody involved into a better place. And believing that and not just giving lip service or saying something that the district or that their people want them to say and make us believe, but they really feel that way. Even if they don’t, that they are going to do everything they can to help you to attain that. (Teacher 4)

I must know that the children are going to be the priority, and that’s why I stay in it. To make sure that they aren’t just put into a special education . . . that there is somebody there with enough values to understand that the child is not necessarily a special needs case, but we can overcome their concerns and the academic concerns. (Teacher 8)

Teacher 11 focused on values and self-discipline, noting,

I would have to say probably values because besides self-discipline, values play a big part of whatever you do. I value what I do; I try to teach values to the students I teach. Values is something that’s guided me day by day throughout my life.

Purpose was identified by three of the 12 special education teachers as providing the greatest impact on their job satisfaction. As one teacher (Teacher 9) revealed,

“Without purpose, I wouldn’t be there.” This teacher continued to merge the importance of purpose and self-discipline:

Yeah. I think without my purpose, knowing that this is where I want to be, this is where I know I’m contributing, then my values, they’re already in place. It’s a
good alignment of both of those. Self-discipline will come along in the sense that, “Okay, now that I’m here, I’m decided about being here.” What needs to be done? Let’s get it done, and let’s figure out how to get our setting together. Then get all the support we need on the outside and the support we need up top so that we can do what’s needed. (Teacher 9)

**Teachers’ Interview Question 5.** The fifth interview question posed to teachers was, “How important is job satisfaction in your teacher classroom leadership role?”

Teacher responses to Interview Question 5 are summarized in Table 11. The most common response was that job satisfaction is very important to the classroom leadership role.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Number of special education teacher responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to be happy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission-driven universe</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something to wake up to every day</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative impact</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not that big of a deal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six of the 12 special education teachers agreed that job satisfaction was very important in their classroom leadership role. As stated by Teacher 3,

I think it’s very important. I think if you’re not happy in your job or whatever your job may be—in my case, of course, teaching—then I think if you’re not happy, then nobody’s going to be happy because you’re not going to perform to
your best. You won’t have your best performance if you’re not satisfied in your job.

Teacher 10 expressed,

It’s important. It’s important from the perspective that I . . . it’s internal going out rather than external. It’s like, I walk in, “Oh, they don’t like me; they don’t listen.” If I’m followed here, the others I can work with or I can work around until I’m able to build something that’s more conducive to what can then still get the task completed or to create that environment that I want.

Teacher 1 went further:

If you’re not happy, how can you lead a classroom? If you’re not happy, you wouldn’t care. They can talk all they want; they can do what they want. If you don’t care, and your heart’s not in it, then it’s going to have a huge impact because you yourself are the one that the kids are watching; you must set the example. You must be a good model. You [have] got to be satisfied, otherwise you can’t do your job right.

Teacher 11 expressed how frustration with leadership can reduce motivation:

Well, I don’t know if this . . . I’ve had situations where I was not happy with the leadership, and at first, I tried to be positive and get through, but then, the more that they nitpicked at me and showed that they didn’t understand what I was going through and made it worse. Then I just stopped trying, and I just gave up because it was like we got to a point where nothing was good, and they let you know that nothing that you were doing was good. Why should I bother?

Another teacher expressed how satisfaction can impact the mood of others:
Job satisfaction in my leadership role, that’s a tough one. I need to be happy where I am; I need to be happy working in the classroom that I am in, otherwise it’s not going to be good. If mamma’s not happy, then nobody’s happy. (Teacher 9)

In contrast, other teachers expressed that leadership may be independent of job satisfaction. For example, Teacher 2 shared the following:

Honestly, for me, my leadership role is not determined by job satisfaction very much. My dad was in military, as I was. A lot of times, we just do things. . . . It’s a mission-driven universe, if that makes sense to you. A lot of things you do because it must be done, just because, if that makes sense to you. It doesn’t have anything to do with how I’m doing or how the kids are or what kind of class I have; it just must be done. That drives what I’m going to be involved in. I tutored last year and did summer school, things like that. That’s the mission of a teacher. That’s what we do. It had nothing to do with whether the kids are bad or if my administrator likes me or hates me. It has nothing to do with that.

**Teachers’ Interview Question 6.** The sixth interview question posed to teachers was, “How does job satisfaction impact principals?” Table 12 summarizes the responses to teachers’ Interview Question 6. The most common responses were that satisfaction plays a major role and that the principals would feel the same as the teachers.

In general, teachers expressed that job satisfaction impacted principal leadership. As one teacher stated,

I think that a principal, if they’re not satisfied with their job, they cannot project their leadership on their teachers. If they’re not happy and if they’re walking
Table 12

Interview Question 6: Special Education Teacher Responses for How Job Satisfaction Impacts Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job satisfaction impact on principals</th>
<th>Number of special education teacher responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major role</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would feel the same</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sets the tone for teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff is not happy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of self-discipline</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest indicator that you are going to keep teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to be like my principal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less trouble for the principals</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

around not pleased with the way things are going, it’s just going to come back, and the teachers are going to feel that, and then it’s going to set a tone to them that, “Hey, my principal don’t care; why should I care?” (Teacher 10)

Another teacher was empathetic regarding the job satisfaction of principals:

I think it’s going to be the same thing because we’re all human. If she’s not happy in her place, then is she going to be open to . . . is the heart going to be there? Is she going to open to caring about what she needs to do? It’s the same thing. Just like me; if I’m not satisfied, then my heart’s not going to be in it. I think it’s going to be the same way with our leaders, because we’re all human.

(Teacher 1)

Teacher 1 continued,

If I’m not satisfied, I’m not going to have the heart to come to work to do the purpose. I need to be self-disciplined, and if I’m not happy, well, it’s going to be harder for me to get up out of bed and go to work. It’s going to be harder for me
to think about the lesson plans and what do I want to do next because I’m not satisfied.

Teachers’ Interview Question 7. The seventh interview question posed to teachers was, “Do you have any other comments that you would like to offer?” Eight special education teachers declined to offer additional comments. Table 13 indicates that the four remaining special education teachers had a total of five additional comments.

Table 13

Interview Question 7: Special Education Teacher Responses for Other Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Number of special education teacher responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All five elements work hand in hand</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal performance</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loving the job</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love the research on special education</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plight of the special education teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One teacher praised her principal:

We have one now that I’ve been working with for a while. It seems like all the bullets are fired at her; she just keeps coming. She’s sort of who I want to be if I became an administrator. That’s what I want to be like. Just drive. You just keep driving through. You see the best in everything. It’s a conscious way of life that she just keeps moving forward. She finds great people to surround herself with, and it’s just taking a lot of hits—just personally, professionally, loss of people, things like that. Loss of students. Different things, like any school does. She just keeps motoring. That’s my example of someone who just, regardless of what’s
going on, that’s who I look up to. That’s who I want to be when I grow up.

(Teacher 2)

Teacher 10 linked authentic leadership to principal performance, particularly in instilling self-discipline in teachers:

Authentic leadership, I think, is important, and especially if you’re going to be a leader, the word authentic speaks for itself. If you are not authentic in your leadership, people will pick up on that. I don’t care who you’re around and you’re trying to lead them, if you’re not practicing leadership off the five dimensions of authentic leadership, then the people that you’re so-called leading, they’re going to pick up on it, and then they’re going to know, and you’re basically not being the true leader that they need.

New teachers need guidance and especially in special education. We can’t just go around to our principal’s office and say, “Hey, I need help with this in my classroom,” or, “I need books for this; I need supplies for this.” A lot of teachers will tell you, “I get no support,” so that directly reflects on principals and their leadership.

Self-discipline, especially in the environment we work in, we’re given a classroom at a school site. The principal at that school site really doesn’t have an input with us. . . . They’re not in the room checking up on us all the time. With that self-discipline, the definition of self-discipline is doing the right thing [in the] absence of orders. You do the right thing even though no one is watching you. If you don’t have any self-discipline, especially the way that we’re set up with the county and especially the way it’s ran—like I said before, they’ve given us a
classroom, they put us out there—if we didn’t have any self-discipline, I can go into a classroom every day and have my kids sleep during the day.

If the principal has it and he sets that tone from the beginning even though the teacher doesn’t have it, they can work hand in hand because he could tell them. A good leader would know that teacher does not have any self-discipline. You can walk into a teacher’s classroom and you can see it.

One teacher (Teacher 6) praised the line of research of the current study:
I’d love to see what you find out, especially as it relates to special ed. I’m excited that you’re hitting the spectrum of special ed. It’s fun because you can take the teacher out of spin, but you can never take the spin lens out of a teacher. It’s fun.

I will say one thing: I think spin teachers in general, teachers who wanted to admin, you have a definite advantage if you had time as a special ed. teacher or even an aide coming through or any classified position before teaching. It really makes you a stronger instructor. Your classified team paints you the whole school, the whole picture. Teachers, god bless them. I’m still one too, but they’re very myopic; they see the classroom or their grade level, but they don’t see the whole picture. If you have someone that has this experience and this experience, and you throw SPED [special education] in, it just gives clarity to situations that sometimes are unclear. People are like, “No, that’s not how it works.” It’s caught; it’s not taught. Things that you catch along your way. Things that are caught, not taught. Those soft skills really help as far as being an administrator.

One teacher (Teacher 9) commented on the plight of the special education teacher as a subcontractor:
I’m looking at us as a subcontractor being on a campus with us working for them, only they fail to realize that. They don’t realize it because maybe the leadership doesn’t see the clear picture of what that relationship is. Because of that, having been on a few campuses where you’re embraced or you’re not embraced, the difference in leadership that I see, it’s the ones where we’re embraced; they know. It’s like, “Hey, these are my people.”

On the campus that we’re on right now, I say they have us. We’re out and about. If there’s an emergency, we’re the last to know. If they send out text messages . . . their means of communication, this is kind of, who knows, and they can call or send an e-mail, but we’re not on the e-mail roster. Not just me, but all of us. We’ve been asking about this for 5 years, our leadership asking their leadership. The mistake in leadership that I see, if this is my campus and I’m the principal, I don’t care who you are, I don’t care who you work for, you’re on my campus. Whatever happens I’m responsible for, and you have your reporting structure, great. If there’s an emergency, a major emergency on that campus, she cannot give an excuse on CNN, how they belong to the county. . . . She can talk around it and look bad because you’re trying to put blame on somebody, when it was ultimately, “You walk through that door, you’re mine. I don’t care what your reporting structure, you are mine. I will make sure I will care for you and keep you in the loop as much as possible so that you can still act autonomously.”

Finally, one teacher (Teacher 4) revealed her motivation for being a special education teacher: “I’m loving my job.”
Teacher’s Interview Question 8. The final interview question posed to teachers was, “How would you rate authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline)?” Five of the 12 elementary special education teachers (42%) ranked heart as the most important authentic leadership element. Three of the elementary special education teachers (25%) ranked purpose as the most important authentic leadership element. Values was ranked first by two of the elementary special education teachers (17%) as the most important authentic leadership element. Relationships were ranked as the most important authentic leadership element by two of the elementary special education teachers (17%). Overall, teachers ranked heart first, followed by purpose, values, relationships, and self-discipline (Table 14).

Table 14

Interview Question 8: Special Education Teacher Responses for the Rankings of the Five Elements of Authentic Leadership, Expressed as Frequencies and Percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Heart</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Relationships</th>
<th>Self-discipline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>5 (42%)</td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>5 (42%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>4 (33%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>4 (33%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
<td>4 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth</td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>4 (33%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 12.

Principal Interviews

Principals’ Interview Question 1. The first interview question posed to principals was, “In your experience, what factors impact your job satisfaction? Can you share an example?” The 12 principals gave a wide range of responses regarding factors that impacted their job satisfaction. Table 15 shows that the most common responses included purpose, parents, relationships, and human relations.
For Principal 1, the most important factor was the success of the students and staff:

My job satisfaction comes in the successes of the students and the staff. When I can support them to do the job that they do with their students and we have great outcomes, that’s huge for me.

Principal 2 pointed to student development:

As an educator and as a principal, the one thing that really impacts my job satisfaction is students. The whole purpose of working in this field is to see improvement in students. In special ed., the improvements may not be—but to any degree to see a student that at one point did not have the command mode of communications, they think they’ll miscommunication [sic].

Principal 4 indicated that relationship building was crucial for job satisfaction and cited the relationship with parent-teacher association (PTA) members:
One factor that comes to mind is relationship building. For example, as principal, I must have sound relationships with all members of my team to have my school functioning properly. As we say in the principal field, stakeholders.

The biggest comparison is my teachers. . . . They know that there must be some type of relationship, whether it be professional or otherwise, because they know I’m their supervisor, but as with the PTA, most of that is volunteer, so I must focus on building a relationship with them.

Principal 9 also pointed to relationship building, along with values, purpose, and self-discipline:

I believe relationship building is one of the more important ones. That’s the area where I could be successful in making progress over the years as a specialist. Those skills that I built are what I’m using here in the class and as an administrator.

My sense of purpose ultimately has expanded from just a classroom to a whole campus. When I was just in a classroom, I would think about, “How do I keep these students safe?” whereas now I think, “Okay, there’s so many more people that I’m concerned about their safety,” because safety is one of the first things we look at. Once I know we know that certain things are in place for safety, [I think] about other students learning: Do they have access to quality materials? Are the teachers having access to things that are going to help them? What is the need? Is it being met? How can I meet it better? That sense of purpose is . . . that would be my close second. Ultimately, I guess, I feel like I would be ranking . . . yet values for me, my personal values and my academic
values are very closely aligned; they’re very similar. Therefore, values are kind of pervasive throughout. It doesn’t matter if I’m at church, at home, or at school, I’m going to try to respect the child that’s standing in front of me. I’m going to try to respect the teacher that’s standing in front of me, the person who’s standing in front of me. . . .

Heart is relevant. A personal statement I’ve made, a conclusion of myself, I said, “When I stop caring about students, then I need to leave the position.” I did have a challenging year in which I was asking the question, “Have I stopped caring about students?” I recognized I didn’t stop caring about students; I was challenged by the circumstances in which I was taking care of students. . . .

Self-discipline. I think self-discipline is important, but I think I have a very colorful definition for self-discipline. To get things done, you work hard. You get it done. If you mess up, you own it, and you don’t complain. You get going. That’s just something that’s a hard work situation. For me, I guess, that’s my definition for self-discipline. Self-discipline involves keeping oneself healthy to combat stress.

Principal 6 indicated that job satisfaction can be impacted by parents:
I think the one thing that impacts my job satisfaction is when I must deal with parents who do not understand the educational process and understand why teachers do the things that they do. We have laws to follow. We have guidelines. We have Common Core. We have these items and subjects that we must do, and parents just do not understand that. They come up to the school, and they get very
Sometimes I spend so much time dealing with parents that I can’t really do the job that I need to do to help your children be successful.

According to Principal 5, satisfaction came from purpose, which involves faith and calling:

For me, job satisfaction is knowing I’m doing what I’m called to do. To be honest with you, I never wanted to be an administrator—never on my radar; never even considered it. God kind of went here and plucked me and moved me. I cried when I found out I got hired. I had a very politically incorrect interview, but I was very open and transparent, and I see this very much as my mission field because I’m doing what I know I’m supposed to do, even if my heart is still as a classroom teacher, but I know I’m doing what I’m called to do. And so that’s where I get my satisfaction, because I get to work with kids and teachers and parents and staff, and so I’m still a teacher, but its net has thrown out much farther, so the impact is different, but it’s more far reaching. That’s where I get my satisfaction; it’s very intrinsic.

Principal 7 found satisfaction in overcoming challenges:

Well stress levels impact my job satisfaction, but at the same time I love challenges. I’d say my number one stressor is probably personnel. You know, everyone has their own lives. There are many conflicts that people have outside of the school. Sometimes we even have some dynamics within employee-to-employee here at the school. I would say my biggest stressor would be having to have some tough conversations with those who I interact with and need to lead every day.
For Principal 8, job satisfaction was related to competence and a positive attitude: Things that impact job satisfaction—I mean, one thing is getting to the point where at least I somewhat feel like I know what I’m doing. First few years it was like, don’t know which side is up, which side is down. You’re getting bombarded with parent questions, staff situations, students that need extra special help. You don’t know which way you’re going on a given day. You finally think you’re kind of caught up, and then the phone rings, and a whole new set of problems presents themselves. There were many times those first probably 7, 8 years, before I really felt like I got my feet under me and kind of felt somewhat competent in what I’m doing.

I mean, even today, some days I feel like, “All right, yes, did good; we made it through; feel good about what I did.” Next day, there could be three or four situations that pop up, and you’re like, “Okay. Here we go again.” Now I feel like I at least have the experience competency that there’s not too many things that are going to come up that I haven’t faced before, that at least have a plan of how we can approach it and then work forward.

Principal 3 listed having a happy culture as the top factor in job satisfaction: I would say the factors that affect job satisfaction the most for me is having a happy culture. An example of that, just mainly if I have folks that come in, and they have a positive attitude, that’s going to reflect on each other, and that’s going to reflect on the kids. Kids who are happy learn better, and teachers who are happy are going to do more. They’re going to do a better job as well.
I’m the filter, so if there’s something that’s going on in the district or something that’s happening that would bring my folks down, it’s my job to bring them back up. It’s my job to kind of make them feel like everything is going to be okay. I have a little saying: “Hey, Disneyland is the happiest place on Earth, but this is the second happiest.” That’s our goal.

**Principal’s Interview Question 2.** The second interview question posed to principals was, “In your experience, how do the elements of authentic leadership contribute to your job satisfaction?” Principals were particularly forthcoming regarding this question, with the most common responses including purpose, heart, and the belief that all five elements of authentic leadership contribute to job satisfaction (Table 16).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Number of principal responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authentic leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building relationships</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-discipline</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All five elements</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading by example</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with staff</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Principal 7 revealed, “I do feel that these elements definitely encompass what I try to do as a leader.” Principal 1 shared, “The five dimensions make up who I am” and went further to describe education as a calling:
To me, I firmly believe education is a calling. As a teacher—I was a proctor—as a proctor, as an assistant in a classroom, as a teacher, as an administrator, these elements have never changed for me because I truly love what I do. Having the heart for children, having my own personal values that are aligned with being involved with staff and students, these are who I am—relationship building.

We are not John Wayne in this job. It is a team, and we may agree to disagree on certain things, but our relationship stays steadfast because we all agree this is a calling to help that next generation. And empathy is important, and yes, I’ve walked that walk, so I understand.

Principal 8 pointed to the interrelationship of the authentic leadership elements, beginning with relationships:

In two ways: One is how I use these dimensions in working with the people that are on my staff. Number two is how the people that are over me, whether they’re working underneath these sorts of dimensions. That can affect my job satisfaction as well. If they’re out of sync in any of these areas, I don’t know exactly where I stand, or I feel like maybe I’m not doing a good job or what have you, because of that. With heart, just kind of understand where people are. Everybody is at some point in their journey; some are more confident than others, some are new to the system and have a lot to learn.

Principal 6 also indicated that all five elements of authentic leadership contributed to job satisfaction:

I think they all contribute to my job satisfaction. You must want to be there, to do a good job. You must have that, that buy-in; you must love it. You must have all
the five dimensions of authentic leadership that are on here. You must have the heart to be able to be a good principal. You must have a values system because you must do what’s right. You must have a purpose; that’s important. I must have a purpose to come to work every day. I must have a relationship with my teachers, because if I don’t have a relationship with them, we’re not going to be a team. We must have a team to be successful. To be a leader, I must know that I must have the discipline for myself. These are essential skills that we must have and things that just must be part of who we are. Some of these things you just must have. You don’t always learn these from a book, but you must have them to be a successful principal.

Principal 5 termed elements of authentic leadership “core values”:

These, it’s interesting. Your core values . . . I think it’s important to know your personal core values because when you get into . . . admin. is a political position. When you get in . . . special ed. can be very political as well because what’s legal isn’t always what’s right or what’s best. There’s a letter in law and a spirit of law, but if you are very clear in your own core values first, that will drive you. If you’re asked to step outside of it, you can say, “I’m not the person for that.” As opposed to . . . it’s like we tell our kids, “If you have your goals and you know where you’re going, when people come and try to throw you off course, you can say, ‘Whoa, that’s not my path. That’s not where I’m going.’” The decision is made before the situation comes. It’s all about the people, which gets me in trouble a lot because I think my job is being on campus and in classrooms.
Principal 4 cited each element of authentic leadership, starting with heart:

The first one being your heart. I firmly believe your heart must be in your job. This is a position that you really cannot fake it to make it. Something inside of you must have your . . . keep your focus. This is not a position that you’re going to get rich at. This is one of those unappreciated positions. Values: Everything I do is based . . . I try to put my values in it, my deeply held personal belief that guides my actions. As a leader, I want to make sure my team members or my stakeholders have good clarity on my values. Purpose: When I became a principal, my whole purpose was to make my school better, make the students better. My purpose had to align with the people around me. As a principal, as a leader, you must have a common purpose. Relationship building—I think I talked about that earlier. Relationship building: I must be able to build a strong relationship and speak openly about the weaknesses, some of my blind spots, some of my vulnerabilities, and relationship building. In doing so, that will permit me to do the same, whatever.

Self-discipline, that’s a biggie. As a leader, unless you have self-discipline . . . even the definition of discipline is doing the right thing in the absence of orders. My self-discipline . . . I must set a certain example. If I don’t have self-discipline, I could not set that example, because in self-discipline, it involves keeping myself healthy to combat the stress that goes with this job. A lot of temptation to stray from the path on values and purpose and remain consistent. I need to have self-discipline.
Principal 12 also focused on heart:

It’s okay. I think you must have a heart for kids, and you must like what you do. I think people will see right through you if you’re not genuine—if you’re not genuine and you’re not concerned and you’re not a good listener. One of our habits, seek first to understand; I try to remember often when I make decisions to be a good role model as an administrator. I try to remember seek first to understand, and I guide my decisions based on a lot of the seven habits, and that’s one of them; that’s at the forefront.

Heart and self-discipline were important to Principal 11:

Heart: For me, heart must [go] with caring. If you don’t care about what you do . . . I always say you can walk into somebody’s classroom and know if that teacher cares about you within 5 minutes, truly cares. You can put up a front, and you can play a game, but the reality of it is that at the end of the day, if you truly don’t care, it comes through. It does; you can only fake it for so long. If you do not see those kids’ faces instead of just a name or a number, if you don’t hear their stories and know their struggle is something that weighs you down at night.

You know, it’s funny that you would say self-discipline because the reality is that if you’re not willing to do it yourself, why would you expect someone else to do it?

Principal 2 focused on vision and leading by example:

To have a job . . . at first, it needs to have a vision. You must know what is your purpose, what are you working towards, and having this vision, you need to build good rapport with whomever you’re working with. This could be families,
agencies, districts, and so forth. As I mentioned, you must have purpose of where do you want to take the next level with students or your staff. You must have your certain beliefs; your values are important when you’re incorporating your vision. Also, you must understand the population that you’re working with. You must understand what their needs are and do it from there. To be a good leader, you also must set examples and model what you want others to do. You must be a positive person with a positive model, and you must advocate [for] your students.

For Principal 3, integrity and leading by example contributed to job satisfaction:

Well, very much so. When I think of an authentic leader, I think of someone who just absolutely has that integrity, and if there is something that I’m looking for in my staff, then that’s something I want to be showing them. If I’m saying, “I’d like for you to work hard or to be that servant,” you know, then that’s something that I want to be for them, just to show them that example.

Principal 9 began with relationship building and then reflected on purpose, values, and self-discipline:

I believe relationship building is one of the more important ones. That’s the area where I could be successful in making progress over the years as a specialist. Those skills that I built are what I’m using here in the class and as an administrator.

My sense of purpose ultimately has expanded from just a classroom to a whole campus. When I was just in a classroom, I would think about, “How do I keep these students safe?” whereas now I think, “Okay, there’s so many more
people that I’m concerned about their safety,” because safety is one of the first things we look at. Once I know we know that certain things are in place for safety, [I think] about other students learning: Do they have access to quality materials? Are the teachers having access to things that are going to help them? What is the need? Is it being met? How can I meet it better? That sense of purpose is . . . that would be my close second. Ultimately, I guess, I feel like I would be ranking . . . yet values for me, my personal values and my academic values are very closely aligned; they’re very similar. Therefore, values are kind of pervasive throughout. It doesn’t matter if I’m at church, at home, or at school, I’m going to try to respect the child that’s standing in front of me. I’m going to try to respect the teacher that’s standing in front of me, the person who’s standing in front of me.

Values are your personal beliefs. . . . Those things are a part of my everyday communication. While I may disagree with what’s going on, I try to be respectful with the people [with] whom I communicate. Heart is relevant. A personal statement I’ve made, a conclusion of myself, I said, “When I stop caring about students, then I need to leave the position.” I did have a challenging year in which I was asking the question, “Have I stopped caring about students?” I recognized I didn’t stop caring about students; I was challenged by the circumstances in which I was taking care of students. Being able to care . . . I guess for me, heart and care are similar. It’s important to me. If you don’t have heart, if you don’t care, then you need to get out of education and do something else.
Self-discipline. I think self-discipline is important, but I think I have a very colorful definition for self-discipline. To get things done, you work hard. You get it done. If you mess up, you own it, and you don’t complain. You get going. That’s just something that’s a hard work situation. For me, I guess, that’s my definition for self-discipline. Self-discipline involves keeping oneself healthy to combat stress, resisting temptation. . . . I believe accountability and consistency are relevant in self-discipline.

Principal 10 pointed to purpose and problem solving:

Well, you know, I think if you don’t have a guide to guide you, whether it be, you know, your values or you just value the work or the purpose of why you come to work every morning. I mean, I have family, and I have kids and grandkids, and I love going home to them, but you know, and that’s why I have a job, so I can provide for them. You’ve got to have a job that gives you meaning, purpose, and that you get up in the morning, and are there mornings that you get up, and so, oh no, I’ve got that meeting today.

For the most part, that’s what we come for. I think even though you hate going to some of the meetings that we must go to, some of that big satisfaction comes from solving that hard problem or coming to agreement. Yeah. That’s really what brings that is having that purpose and desire and meaningful coming to work.

**Principals’ Interview Question 3.** The third interview question posed to principals was, “What specific elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) do you perceive contribute to your job satisfaction?”
Table 17 summarizes the responses to principals’ Interview Question 3. The most common responses included relationships, heart, and the belief that all elements of authentic leadership work together. Four principals had difficulty choosing one specific element of authentic leadership as more important than others in contributing to job satisfaction (Table 17).

Table 17

*Interview Question 3: Principal Responses for Specific Elements Contributing to Job Satisfaction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Number of principal responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authentic leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Relationships</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-discipline</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All five elements</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflect every night</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the principals who had difficulty choosing just one element, Principal 6 stated,

I think for me, I mean they’re all important. They all go together, but for me, I know I have the heart. I know I have the values, and I [have] purpose. I really feel if I especially . . . you know, I must have the values so I’m ethical, so I do what’s right. Regardless of what anybody else says, I must do what’s ethical and the right thing for my staff and for my students. If you don’t have the heart and the purpose, you’re not going to be successful. This just can’t be a job. You must have—you must want to be there. I think that’s something that’s just ingrained in
me. That’s what helps me be successful so I can work with my parents, with my
teachers, with outside administration, and with the students.

Principal 10 listed all five elements, and Principal 12 refused to isolate one element of
authentic leadership, instead detailing how each element contributed to job satisfaction:

I think all of them are important, to be honest with you. I think you must have a
heart for what you do, especially when you are impacting not just one student but
many students, in my position, when I went from teaching to administration, not
only looking at impacting 20. At that time, it was 20, 30, or what have you. I’m
impacting several kids in different areas, different subjects, so I think you must
have a heart.

Values: my beliefs. I want to be a good role model to my students and to
anybody that I encounter: the teachers, the secretaries in the staff, because they
are customer service, they are the first people that parents come and see. I think
we must have strong values as far as how we talk to people, how we deal with
misunderstandings, how we lead by example. I always think about the golden
rule: “Treat others how you would like to be treated.” I apply that as a parent. Do
I have good values as an employee here? Do people see those good values? As a
parent, I always say, would I be comfortable at the way I’m treating a student?
Would I be comfortable if my own children, who are here, would be treated the
way I’m treating a student? I follow that guideline.

Purpose: We all must have, I think, a common ground, a common purpose.
If we all are [on] the same page, and honestly, I always say, is it good for kids?
To me, that is our purpose: We’re educating kids. Not only academics, but also
we are their counselor, whether we want to be; we are sometimes their psychologist, we are sometimes a parent. A teacher, an administrator plays so many different roles; we wear so many different hats, and we take them off as we go depending on the situation. I think that we all must have a common purpose, and that is, “Is this good for kids?” In any decision that we make, “Is this good for kids?” I think that once we say that, we can all head in the same direction. Like I said, I [think] they’re [the elements are] all important, so I’m kind of just looking, going down the list.

Relationship building: I think to lead a staff and even to lead our students, we must get to know them. We must build those relationships; we must basically have them understand first why we’re here and that we also care for them, that we also respect their decisions, respect what they see as important. I think building that relationship with anybody—our students, our staff, people that meet the parents, even our parents—I think that’s huge. If we don’t have that relationship, we’re not going to get across to that person. We’re not going to change their beliefs if there’s been a misunderstanding. They’re going to shut us out, so that relationship is huge.

Self-discipline: I always tell the parents, and I always tell the teachers, “If we do not take care of ourselves, we are not good for anybody else.” If we are not healthy—our mind, our body—how can we be a positive person? If we’re hurting inside or if something’s going on and we’re stressed, we’re not eating right, how are we able to even help somebody else if we can’t help ourselves? I think that’s huge, and I think all of them [the elements] are equally important.
Principal 8 started by stating, “I hope there’s an element of each of them in what I do,” but eventually revealed, “For me, if I could only pick one and leave the rest, it’s relationship building.” Relationship building was also most important for Principal 4, Principal 7, Principal 11, and Principal 9, who stated,

The relationship building—that’s the foundation of how I’m successful as an educator. Moving quickly with it is important, but quickly but appropriately. Recognizing . . . I have a personal description. I know when we’re tight. I know when we have a connection. When we have a connection, you and me together, we can go to the stars or we can go wherever we want to go. Relationship building is being able to sense that and know when that connection is broken and understand why. Relationship building, for me, is one of the foundations, and being able to identify in that other person what it is that’s important for them for the relationship that you need.

I have to meditate on that and say, “Okay, it’s not possible to throw all relationships out unless you do something totally unwise. To maintain the relationship, I need to make sure that the choices that I’m making are supporting that.

Purpose was most important to Principal 2:

You’re looking at just one? Out of these things, all of here are very important, but I think the one that is the most important is the purpose. You must have a purpose. Once you have purpose and that sets the foundation that you’re building upon. The purpose is the beginning part of it, and all other characteristics will follow, but you [have] got to have a purpose, a mission, a goal.
**Principals’ Interview Question 4.** The fourth interview question posed to principals was, “Of the five elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline), which one of these elements has a greater impact on your job satisfaction?” Relationships was the most common element that had a great impact on the principals’ job satisfaction, cited by eight of the 12 principals (Table 18). Additionally, two cited purpose, and one each cited heart and self-discipline.

Table 18

*Interview Question 4: Principal Responses for Element With the Greatest Impact on Job Satisfaction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Number of principal responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building relationships</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-discipline</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relationship-building element was most important to principals. For example, the response from Principal 3 was typical:

I would probably say the relationship building. I know I’m a relater, and I just feel like when you have those connections with people, you’re just able to accomplish so much more. Then we’re just going to keep accomplishing more because we’ve taken the risk, and we’re comfortable taking those risks, and we can just go forward. If we fail, we learn from that. We pick each other back up, and we keep on going.
Principal 12 was emphatic in expressing,

Relationship building, I think, is huge. I can tell you that it’s huge, and I think it’s the one that has the greatest impact because if I’m not building those relationships, I’m not going to get my staff to move forward. They won’t listen; they won’t see anything that I want them to see. If I don’t get to know them, respect them and value them, and build that relationship—and that applies to kids and to parents—if I don’t have that relationship—and it must be a positive one—we’re not moving forward. . . . We have our vision. We’re not going to reach nowhere near where we want to go. I’d have to choose that one—relationship building.

Principal 9 expressed the importance of “building that relationship and finding a way to work with several unique personalities. Every teacher has a way that they run their class.”

Principal 1 was initially caught between relationships and heart but ultimately focused on the importance of relationships:

Greater impact. I’m vacillating between heart and relationship. Relationships are important in I wouldn’t guess in all jobs, but I would think in all jobs, relationships are critical because, again, we’re not going to John Wayne this. I need them [staff] maybe more times than they need me.

For Principal 8, all elements were important, but it started with heart:

Probably heart initially. I mean, you like for people to take an interest in you, not just be . . . so many people, principal went in the classroom, they didn’t say hello to me, and it offended me, so I must be aware of that. I take enough time to stop
and say, “Hello, how are you doing?” Making sure I know people’s names, address them by name, that’s an area that I really try to work on because I’m weak in that area. I’ll look at somebody I’ve known for years, and I’ll go blank on their name.

I can’t always just float in and float out and ignore everybody. I want to spend time, talk with the teachers, talk with staff, hang out in the class, make them aware that I’m here, I’m present. Try and communicate my values, what expectations and what I’d like to see in the classroom. We do have a purpose for this school year, so try to emphasize that purpose and follow through on that. Build relationships, take time to get to know people, where they come from, what they’re doing, and sometimes that kind of explains why they may do things the way they do.

Self-discipline is kind of what drives everything else. Understand heart and values, purpose and relationships, but are you going to take the time to work it out, flesh it out, your daily walk, what you do and how you say it?

Principal 4 pointed to self-discipline:

I would say self-discipline. Self-discipline is important to a leader. It shapes everything you do. For one, without self-discipline, I couldn’t have even got to the position I’m in. There was a lot of things I could have just said, “Hey, this is what I want to do instead of this.” I’m a career military guy. That self-discipline helped me get through that.

Three principals indicated that purpose had the greatest impact on their job satisfaction. Principal 6 stated,
I think for me the one that really makes a difference—kind of hard to distinguish between them—but I think that having a purpose is really, [has] been important for me. To be able to get up every day, even when it seems like everything is going wrong, and a parent files due process, and then there’s another parent that’s complaining, or a teacher isn’t getting along with another staff member. That I still must wake up in the morning and say, “I love my job; I love what I’m doing. I know I can make a difference.” That I have that purpose in my heart to want to make a difference with my whole educational community. That I’m able still to get up at night and get up in the morning to go to work, and go to bed at night knowing that I’m doing the best that I can do to make a difference around those people that I work with.

Purpose was also important to Principal 7, who said, “A great impact? I think purpose. . . . I take what I do truly seriously, and I love what I do.”

**Principals’ Interview Question 5.** The fifth interview question posed to principals was, “How important is job satisfaction in your leadership role?” Table 19 shows that principals generally believed that the importance of job satisfaction in their leadership role was high. For example, Principal 7 exclaimed, “Job satisfaction is huge!” And Principal 12 stated, “I think if I had to rate it 1 through 10, I think it has to be a 10.”

Principal 6 explained,

Oh, it’s 100%. You must be satisfied in your job. If you’re going to work and you’re in a bad mood every day and you hate what you’re doing, you’re not going to be able to be a leader. You’re not going to be able to help other people if it’s
Table 19

*Interview Question 5: Principal Responses for Importance of Job Satisfaction in Leadership Role*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Number of principal responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone wants to be satisfied</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends on the circumstances</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s what keeps me going</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing problem, reflective individual</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

that bad. You must be satisfied. You must be happy. Like I said, you must have that purpose of being there, or you’re not going to be successful.

Per Principal 9, “If I can’t be satisfied about what’s going on, then I can’t expect my staff to be happy about their jobs.” Principal 11 further explained the importance of being satisfied: “I don’t think it’s a job that if you’re going after accolades and you’re going after perfection, you’re not ever going to be happy in this job; this job’s going to drive you crazy.”

Principal 8 expressed that the relationship between job satisfaction and leadership is general and applies to many work environments:

 Everybody wants to be satisfied in the job they do. Emotions come and go, things change, and you can’t be, “This is a good day, this is a bad day, this is the worst day ever,” or whatever. You’ve just got to try and stay focused on “What is my purpose? What is my reason for being here? What am I doing?” Regardless of what happens today, I’ve got to keep an upbeat attitude, and I need to be a leader and not let the Clintons get to me, so to speak. Stuff will come around and kind of want to hang there, and you’ve got to deal with it, get it off, move forward, and not be emotional with what you do but be purposeful and self-disciplined.
Similarly, Principal 2 stated,

In any job, for a person to be effective and make a change, you must be satisfied and you must like what you’re doing. If you don’t like what you’re doing, you’re not going to give it 110%. You must be satisfied with your program. You must see that I’m going to make a difference, but for any job, whether on a leadership level or someone on any level, you must like what you do.

However, not all principals expressed a clear relationship between the importance of job satisfaction and their leadership role. For example, Principal 4 linked satisfaction with school success:

Because of my personality . . . I’m kind of a stickler guy for rules and things being done a certain way. That goes with my job satisfaction. I want to do a good job. I want my school to succeed. That’s part of my job satisfaction. If I’m not satisfied in my job and then I do believe it’s going to affect me in all other areas.

Principal 9 had difficulty expressing a clear relationship between the leadership role and job satisfaction, with an emphasis on accepting responsibility:

That [satisfaction] has shifted. That’s a very fluid concept now. When I was a teacher, I could give you a clear definition because there’s a certain level of autonomy that you have as a teacher. What I’ve learned in these 6 . . . I’m in my 7th week working. When you’re in this position, there are certain sacrifices that leaders make where your opinion must be set to the side. Me being satisfied is a very fluid concept. One of the strategies I have responded to is I asked for this responsibility. Based on my experience, because I’m only 7 weeks in, I said I can
handle this responsibility. I must figure out how to handle this responsibility.
The job satisfaction is in accepting the responsibility that I have taken on. I do have the responsibility and the ability to fulfill the requirements in my position.
I’m still working with students. I’m still working with parents. We’re still connecting; I’m still building relationships.
Principal 5 highlighted the ups and downs of daily interactions:
How important is job satisfaction in my leadership role? To be honest with you, sometimes being the leader is not very satisfying because you must have hard conversations with people. You must be brutally honest because faithful are the wounds of a friend or the kisses of an enemy. It’s hard. However, the flip side of that coin is 99% of the time, after you have those hard conversations, it’s not satisfying when you’re going through them, but later, coming back, it really deepens your relationship. It deepens the level of trust, because everything is built on trust. You can’t lead if your people don’t trust you. You can’t lead if you don’t trust them. We do expect . . . there are disagreements with staff, and they know if you have an issue with someone, you have a responsibility to go to them. Never on emotion but just like, “You know what, Penny? When you said that at a staff meeting—I want to talk about it. I kind of felt like it was personal, so I’m a little emotional right now, but can we talk about that later?” Either you live with it and let it go or you clarify it and you grow.
Principal 11 explained the challenges and the importance of being satisfied:
I think that it’s very difficult sometimes to take a step back. You get weighed down by . . . because at the end of the day, as an administrator, and it’s no
different than when you’re a teacher, it’s just that it’s so much bigger. Where as a teacher maybe I had to deal with 15 or 20 e-mails and keeping up with those, I get about 130-150 a day. Whereas I only needed to deal with my grade level, I deal with 52 teachers. We have 138 employees just on this site.

It’s just I don’t think it’s a job that if you’re going after accolades and you’re going after perfection, you’re not ever going to be happy in this job; this job’s going to drive you crazy.

Principal 1 conceptualized job satisfaction as an ebb and flow depending on circumstance:

I think with anything, we spend a lot of time on the job, we spend a lot of time together, we must be . . . have some sense of satisfaction on what we’re doing, but I think it’s circular. You do great things, you’re satisfied. Something falls apart, you’re bummed. You fix it, you’re satisfied. It’s never ending because if you’re not satisfied, you need to go do something else. I can’t imagine doing anything else.

**Principals’ Interview Question 6.** The sixth interview question posed to principals was, “How does job satisfaction impact teachers?” Principals strongly expressed that job satisfaction has a powerful impact on teachers. Table 20 shows that seven of the 12 principals indicated that job satisfaction has an important impact.

One of the principals who indicated that job satisfaction has an important impact, Principal 6, stated,

Teachers must be happy on their site. Teachers must be satisfied with what they’re doing, because if they aren’t happy, it’s going to affect how they have
Table 20

*Interview Question 6: Principal Responses for How Job Satisfaction Impacts Teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job satisfaction impact on teachers</th>
<th>Number of principal responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Important</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>If teachers are happy, they will perform</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on students</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring when satisfied</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive or negative</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impacts all employees</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The kids will read the teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal support</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

relationships with other teachers; how they have relationships with me, other administrators; how they have relationships with itinerant staff; how they have a relationship with their students. If the teachers are so unhappy coming to work, they’re not going to be able to successfully do their job. . . . If the principal isn’t happy, the teachers aren’t going to be happy. That’s going to go down to the teachers, and we can’t have that happening. Then the students aren’t going to be happy.

Similarly, Principal 12 shared,

I think that if teachers are happy, they will perform better. I think that they will love our kids more; I think that they will be patient when patience is needed. I think that [with] a happy employee, we get better results. They’re going to be excited to come to school or work, so therefore the impact that they have on another person is huge. If they’re happy, it’s huge.

Principal 4 echoed,

Job satisfaction is the number one . . . well, one of the highest indicators of whether you’re going to keep a good teacher. A lot of teachers, the turnaround
rate, especially here in California, is so low because of job satisfaction. It’s not anything like pay or other factors. Job satisfaction. Are they satisfied with the job? I think that most teachers that come into the field are in it because they really want to do what’s right with the kids. After a while, are you satisfied with your job? Is your job satisfactory? If you ask them what it’s based on or what they base their whole reason for staying, the first thing that’s going to come out of their mouth is job satisfaction. They don’t usually say pay or hours or vacation; they say, “Are you happy with your job?”

Principal 1 expressed that job satisfaction impacts all employees, including teachers:

Just as I mentioned earlier, for any job, you must know what your purpose is, and you must feel that you’re making a difference in the lives of students. If you don’t feel like you’re making a difference or you’re contributing to this job, moving to a different level, are they learning? Are they taking that information to move them on? If you don’t feel satisfied with what you’re doing, once again, you’re not going to give it your all in all.

Likewise, Principal 10 shared,

Yeah, I think satisfaction’s the number one thing in any profession, but especially teaching because then, once again, especially in special ed. You know this. The kids sense that. They know when you’re, somebody really feels good about them and [is] working hard, and they know the ones that just don’t care. I mean, everybody cares, but the ones that just want to come and do the job and go home.
Principal 7 linked the attitude and behaviors of the principal to the job satisfaction of teachers:

Oh, huge. Just like teachers and the staff can be me. Like I said, I was in the classroom for 10 years, and you better believe that those kids will read the teacher. The kids see that the teacher is in a bad mood. That really sets tone and creates a climate that might have some tension in it, might have some elevated levels of stress [for] our kids. Our kids are just like people. They have feelings too. They get stressed out as well. I think it’s extremely important that our teachers, our whole staff, everybody is excited to come to work . . . because I’m expecting them to set the tone in their classroom to get their kids excited to come to school.

We get this little paper weight when we get hired. It says, “I’m 100% responsible. I do whatever it takes.”

Principal 12 also stressed the importance of providing a satisfying work environment:

I think that if teachers are happy, they will perform better. I think that they will love our kids more; I think that they will be patient when patience is needed. I think that [with] a happy employee, we get better results. They’re going to be excited to come to school or work, so therefore the impact that they have on another person is huge. If they’re happy, it’s huge.

They feel valued. I think it’s huge that we know who they are, not only as an employee but also as a person, as a human being. I think caring and taking that
time to really get to know them, I think I’m going to put in that deposit; you’re going to get huge rewards.

Principal 8 pointed to the important role of principal support in promoting teacher satisfaction:

I think it affects them a lot. If you’re not happy with what you’re doing, you’re not going to do your best. If you’ve got people that are unhappy and dissatisfied, they’re going to be looking for some place else to go; they’re not going to be motivated to do their job. My job is to try and provide them with support and understand them, make sure they’ve got what they need to do the job, they’ve got the training they need to do their job. Give them some direction from time to time when they need that. I think that contributes a lot to them having job satisfaction—knowing somebody is there, got their back, and can help.

Principal 9 focused on caring and tending to individual differences in promoting a satisfying job environment for teachers:

If you stop caring, it’s difficult for you to be satisfied in your position. Teaching has a certain level of sacrifice as well. It’s a little bit different than the role of the principal. When teachers lose that connection . . . I’m referencing from a peer situation—it can be serious. If you don’t care to come to work and do what we do as educators, it can be exhausting, distressing. It can destroy your career path. Not that any career path can’t be destroyed, but as educators—I think they’ve adjusted the research with some of the research from a few years ago—teachers had the most stressful job in the top five stressful jobs in the United States. At one point, I know that teachers moved up to number three. There was another
study . . . the number one stressful job was the air traffic controllers. That’s probably out of the ’80s and ’90s. A significant amount of their jobs went into automation.

The most recent [study] I read on the most stressful job, teachers were still in the top 10 of the most stressful jobs. When that stress is not managed and you’re in a place of education, students’ lives are affected when you’re not able to give them the education that they deserve. If they’re not able to feel fulfilled, not able to be satisfied in their career aspects, we run the risk of them losing that drive that they originally came into education for.

Principal 2 linked teacher job satisfaction to the impact on students:

Again, I guess, I equal satisfaction to positive or negative . . . what is it the word I’m looking for? Kind of your aura. That’s what I would equal it to. You can’t walk around and be a negative Nelly and then have the staff go, “I’m there for you.” I can’t walk around and be negative with the kids and then have them do well. It doesn’t work. When it’s a calling, you truly believe it day in and day out, no matter what goes on.

No matter what happens in the day, you [have] got to keep coming back to, “I’m here for everybody. I’m here for me. I’m here for them. I’m here for the kids, for my stakeholders. I’m a representation of my district.” I’m going to have that good attitude because at night, I lay my head on my pillow and I can say, “I did everything I could to make a positive effect on others.”
Principal 5 emphasized the intrinsic motivation of teachers:

Most teachers are also intrinsically motivated. That little note or little post-it or something fills up those little crumbs that make us come to work every day. It’s very important to them. That’s something that I must be very mindful of. I must have knowledge of how much I value my team. I love my team. I love . . . every single one of them brings something different to the table. We have a couple who aren’t super strong instructionally, but they’re amazing human beings, and they do good things for kids, and they have the right motivation. I would take somebody with maybe a lower skill set but a great heart and passion and motivation and whose philosophy and values align than somebody who’s got a great skill set but isn’t good with people any day. Any day. I have made those iron decisions before and never been wrong as far as that goes. It’s hard to pass up that teacher with the amazing skill set instructionally, but you can teach someone to be a good teacher—maybe not great, but a good teacher. You can’t teach a great teacher who’s a mediocre person to love kids.

**Principals’ Interview Question 7.** The seventh interview question posed to principals was, “Do you have any other comments that you would like to offer?” Table 21 summarizes the responses to this interview question. Principals were generally grateful for the opportunity to participate and were enthusiastic about the interview content.

Principal 7 graciously offered, “No. I would like to say thank you for this [research study]. This is a wonderful little resource here,” and Principal 9 added, “No, thank you. I wish you much success in your intellectual endeavor.”
Table 21

*Interview Question 7: Principal Responses for Other Comments*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Number of principal responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, but thankful for the opportunity</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone is affected by my job satisfaction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love what you do</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is a job no matter what role you play in it</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caught not taught</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Principal 8 emphasized the novelty of the research:

Like I said before, I hadn’t seen this before, or at least if I have, I don’t remember.

I like the way it’s laid out. I think these are part and parcel to what you want to see in people that supervise you and what I want to exemplify in the people that I supervise.

Principal 2 stated,

I think that this project that you’re doing is very good because it’s looking at the leadership of those who are supposed to be caring or moving, or working with staff. To be a good leader, all these five characteristics are needed.

Principal 4 and Principal 6 reflected on the role of pay. Principal 4 said,

I could say pay, but how real is that? Our pay is kind of based on other factors that we do not control. Decision making at our level versus decision making at a higher level—I think that could play a factor. I think those areas need to be looked at. Basically, we’ve been mandated to rules from people who haven’t even worked in the field.

Principal 6 added,
I just think that these dimensions of leadership, that sometimes people just want to become a principal just to get a job—just to become an administrator, to make more money. Those are the people who aren’t successful, because they don’t have these five dimensions of leadership. That’s not part of who they are. If you’re doing it just for a paycheck, you’re not going to do a good job, and you’re not going to make a difference. You must have these elements to be successful.

**Principals’ Interview Question 8.** The final interview question posed to principals was, “How would you rate authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline)?” Table 22 shows the results of how the principals ranked each authentic leadership element. Five (42%) of the 12 principals ranked heart as the most important authentic leadership element. Two (17%) of the principals ranked values as the most important authentic leadership element. Purpose was ranked number one by three (25%) of the principals as the most important authentic leadership element. Relationships were ranked as the most important authentic leadership element by five (42%) of the principals. Self-discipline was chosen by one (8%) of the principals as the top authentic leadership element. Overall, principals ranked relationships and heart first, followed by purpose, values, and self-discipline.

Table 22

**Interview Question 8: Principal Responses for the Rankings of the Five Elements of Authentic Leadership, Expressed as Frequencies and Percentages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Heart</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Relationships</th>
<th>Self-discipline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>5 (42%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
<td>5 (42%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
<td>4 (33%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>6 (50%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>8 (67%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 12. One principal ranked each element as first (number one).*
Interview Data in the Context of the Research Questions

Research Question 1

What elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary special education teachers in the Desert/Mountain SELPA?

Research Question 1 was answered by summing the teachers’ responses for the authentic leadership elements across Interview Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7. In addition, the analysis addressed Interview Questions 5 and 6 regarding teacher perceptions of elements contributing to job satisfaction. The responses to Interview Question 8 were also included in the analysis, ranking the relative importance of the authentic leadership elements. These findings are summarized in Table 23.

Table 23

Summary of Results for Research Question 1: Teacher Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>Percentage of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building relationships</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-discipline</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. This table does not include counts from the 10 responses of “all five elements.”

Finding 1: Building relationships. Building relationships was the most important authentic leadership element identified in the teacher interviews, representing 36% (n = 18) of authentic leadership responses across Interview Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 (Table 23). Building relationships was ranked first or second among the elements of authentic leadership by 25% of teachers (Table 14). Three teachers (25%) indicated that
building relationships was the element of authentic leadership that had the greatest impact on their job satisfaction (Table 10).

Relationship building is needed to provide support and allow for open communication in the work environment (George & Sims 2007). Teachers appreciate principals who have developed strong relationships (Bird et al., 2012; Sinclair, 2010; C. Wang & Bird, 2011).

Finding 2: Heart. Heart was the second most important authentic leadership element that emerged in the teacher interviews, representing 24% \( (n = 12) \) of authentic leadership responses across Interview Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 (Table 23). Heart was ranked first or second among the elements of authentic leadership by 59% of teachers (Table 14). Five teachers (42%) indicated that heart was the element of authentic leadership that had the greatest impact on their job satisfaction (Table 10).

George and Sims (2007) concluded that an authentic leader must lead with his or her heart as well as his or her head. An authentic leader must engage the hearts of his or her followers by showing sincere interest in them and displaying complete respect for them.

Finding 3: Purpose. Purpose was the third most mentioned authentic leadership element in the teacher interviews, representing 20% \( (n = 10) \) of authentic leadership responses across Interview Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 (Table 23). Purpose was ranked first or second among the elements of authentic leadership by 42% of teachers (Table 14). Three teachers (25%) indicated that purpose was the element of authentic leadership that had the greatest impact on their job satisfaction (Table 10).
A leader “must align people around a common purpose that inspires them to peak performance” (George, 2007, p. xxi). Purpose is the “cornerstone of authentic leadership development” (George, 2007, p. xxiii). A true purpose drives a leader, provides confidence and perspective, and guides decisions. Purpose is inspirational and enables leaders to motivate their followers.

Finding 4: Values. Teachers were inconsistent in their responses related to values. Values were infrequently mentioned in teacher interviews, comprising 10% ($n = 5$) of the individual responses related to authentic leadership elements across Interview Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 (Table 23). On the other hand, the element of values was ranked first or second by 59% of teachers, and three teachers (25%) identified values as the element of authentic leadership that had the greatest impact on their job satisfaction (Table 10).

George and Sims (2007) claimed that if leaders are not true to their values, then their followers will lose confidence in their leadership. What differentiates authentic leaders is that their approach to leadership is aligned with their personal values and beliefs, and this builds credibility and trust among their followers (Avolio & Mhatre, 2012).

Finding 5: Self-discipline. Self-discipline was tied with values for the least commonly identified element of authentic leadership in the teacher interviews, comprising 10% ($n = 5$) of the individual responses across Interview Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 (Table 23). Self-discipline was ranked last among the elements of authentic leadership by teachers, with 66% ranking self-discipline last or next to last (Table 14). One teacher indicated that self-discipline had the greatest impact on job satisfaction. For
these reasons, self-discipline was less important than relationship building, purpose, heart, and values among the elements of authentic leadership for teachers.

**Finding 6: All five elements.** Teachers did not perceive possessing strength in all five elements as essential. Across Interview Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7, “all five elements” were mentioned 10 times by nine elementary special education teachers. Avolio and Gardner (2005) suggested that the key concepts of authentic leadership are important elements of leadership, while George and Sims (2007) stressed that all five elements of authentic leadership contribute to organizational effectiveness.

**Finding 7: Job satisfaction of teachers.** Two thirds of teachers indicated that job satisfaction was important to their role as classroom leaders. Half (50%, n = 6) of the elementary special education teachers felt that job satisfaction was very important, and two others (17%) indicated that they needed job satisfaction to be happy. Authentic leadership is a promising approach for increasing job satisfaction (Bird et al., 2009, 2012; C Wang & Bird, 2011). Denton (2009) revealed that teachers’ job satisfaction can be increased when there are positive and respectful relationships between principals and teachers.

**Finding 8: Job satisfaction of principals as perceived by teachers.** Ten of the 12 elementary special education teachers indicated that job satisfaction impacted their principals’ leadership. They believed that job satisfaction of principals is evident in their actions and the tone they set on campus. McLaughlin (2009) and Billingsley (2005) agreed that principal leadership is needed to support and encourage special education teachers.
Summary of findings for Research Question 1. Heart, purpose, building relationships, and values were the elements of authentic leadership that contributed the most to the job satisfaction of elementary special education teachers in the Desert/Mountain SELPA. Further, teacher interviews indicated that job satisfaction is important to teachers and to the leadership of their principals.

Research Question 2

What elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary principals in the Desert/Mountain SELPA?

Research Question 2 was answered by summing the principals’ responses for the authentic leadership elements across Interview Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7. In addition, the analysis addressed Interview Questions 5 and 6 regarding principal perceptions of elements contributing to job satisfaction. The responses to Interview Question 8 were also included in the analysis, ranking the relative importance of the authentic leadership elements. These findings are summarized in Table 24.

Table 24

Summary of Results for Research Question 2: Principal Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>Percentage of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building relationships</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-discipline</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. This table does not include counts from the seven responses of “all five elements.”
**Finding 9: Building relationships.** Building relationships was the most important authentic leadership element that emerged during the principal interviews, identified in 44% \( (n = 22) \) of the individual responses across Interview Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 (Table 24). Building relationships was the highest ranked element of authentic leadership by principals, with 75% ranking it first or second (Table 22). Eight principals indicated that building relationships was the element of authentic leadership that had the greatest impact on their job satisfaction (Table 18).

George and Sims (2007) suggested that heart, values, and purpose cannot take a leader far without strong relationships with the people around him or her. Authentic leaders can “speak openly about their weaknesses, blind spots, and vulnerabilities,” and in so doing, they “permit others to do the same” (George & Sims, 2007, p. 53). Per Yukl (2010), leadership implies the ability of an individual to influence a group or organization by directing, structuring, and facilitating activities and relationships.

**Finding 10: Purpose.** Purpose was the second most important authentic leadership element identified in the principal interviews, identified in 22% \( (n = 11) \) of the individual responses across Interview Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 (Table 24). Purpose was ranked first or second among authentic leadership elements by 50% of principals (Table 22). Two principals commented that purpose was the element of authentic leadership that had the greatest impact on their job satisfaction (Table 18).

Per George (2007), purpose is the “cornerstone of authentic leadership development” (p. xxiii), and a leader “must align people around a common purpose that inspires them to peak performance” (p. xxi). Purpose is inspirational and enables leaders to motivate their followers. Without purpose, leaders risk becoming bored and
disenchanted with their work (George & Sims, 2007). A true purpose drives a leader, provides confidence and perspective, and guides decisions. Principals who remain true to their purpose by, for example, framing issues as what is best for the students “win the trust of their faculty members” (C. Wang & Bird, 2011, p. 139).

**Finding 11: Heart.** Heart was the third most important authentic leadership element in the principal interviews, identified in 14% (n = 7) of the individual responses across Interview Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 (Table 24). Heart was ranked first or second among authentic leadership elements by 59% of principals (Table 22). One principal commented that heart was the element of authentic leadership that had the greatest impact on job satisfaction (Table 18).

George and Sims (2007) contended that to be an authentic leader, a person must lead with his or her heart as well as his or her head. An authentic leader is able to engage the hearts of his or her followers by showing sincere interest in them and displaying complete respect for them. This involves passion, both for the work and for the people the leader serves, empathy, and “the courage to make difficult decisions” (George & Sims, 2007, p. xxii).

**Finding 12: Values and self-discipline.** Values and self-discipline were the least important elements of authentic leadership mentioned in principal interviews, with each comprising 10% (n = 5) of the individual responses across Interview Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 (Table 24). The element of values was ranked second to last among elements of authentic leadership, with 34% of principals ranking it first or second, while self-discipline was ranked last, with 92% of principals ranking it last or next to last among elements of authentic leadership. One principal indicated that values impacted job
satisfaction, and one principal indicated that self-discipline impacted job satisfaction. For these reasons, values and self-discipline were less important than relationship building, purpose, and heart among the elements of authentic leadership for principals (Table 22).

**Finding 13: All five elements.** Principals did not perceive possessing strength in all five elements as essential. Having all five elements was only mentioned seven times during the interviews. Further, three of the 12 principals viewed all five elements of authentic leadership as important to job satisfaction. Avolio and Gardner (2005) contended that an authentic leader acts in a transparent and consistently ethical manner to ensure trust by his or her followers, and per George and Sims (2007), all five elements of authentic leadership contribute to organizational effectiveness.

**Finding 14: Job satisfaction.** Of the 12 principals interviewed, 75% indicated that job satisfaction was important in their leadership role, with 42% indicating that job satisfaction was very important and an additional 33% stating that everyone wants to be satisfied.

**Finding 15: Job satisfaction of teachers as perceived by principals.** Among the principals interviewed, 83% indicated that job satisfaction has an impact on teachers, with 58% explicitly indicating that job satisfaction is important and an additional 25% expressing that if teachers are happy, they will perform. One key reason why special education teachers leave the profession is job dissatisfaction, often stemming from a lack of leadership and support from administration (Billingsley, 1993; Singh & Billingsley, 1996; Walker, 2010).

**Summary of findings for Research Question 2.** Relationships, purpose, and heart were the elements of authentic leadership that contributed the most to the job
satisfaction of elementary principals in the Desert/Mountain SELPA. Further, principal interviews indicated that job satisfaction is important to principals and to the job performance of their teachers.

**Similarities and Differences**

The third purpose of this study was to identify the similarities and differences that exist among the elements of authentic leadership that contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary principals and special education teachers in the Desert/Mountain SELPA. Several similarities and differences were revealed during the data analysis. Table 25 provides the findings.

**Table 25**

*Similarities and Differences Among the Elements of Authentic Leadership That Contribute to Job Satisfaction for Special Education Teachers and Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Building relationships is the most important element, receiving 44% of responses from principals and 36% of responses for special education teachers.</td>
<td>• Principals were consistent in identifying relationship as the most important element during the interview process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Among the top three authentic leadership elements for both special education teachers and principals are relationships, heart, and purpose.</td>
<td>• Special education teachers identified heart as the authentic leadership element that contributed most to their job satisfaction when asked to place the elements in order of importance, followed by purpose and values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Job satisfaction is very important for both groups, with 75% of principals and 50% of special education teachers indicating the need to have job satisfaction.</td>
<td>• Principals identified relationships as the authentic leadership element that contributed most to their job satisfaction when asked to place the elements in order of importance, followed by heart and values.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An unanticipated finding emerged from the interview responses provided by the special education teachers. The special education teachers felt that having support from their principals played a key role in their job satisfaction. Even though support is not
listed as one of the five elements of authentic leadership, 11 of the 12 special education teachers identified support as an element that was perceived to contribute to job satisfaction. Support was not specified by any of the 12 principals as contributing to job satisfaction.

**Summary of Findings**

This chapter began with a review of the purpose and research questions, followed by a description of the population and the study sample demographics. Interview results demonstrated that job satisfaction was very important to both elementary special education teachers and elementary principals in the Desert/Mountain SELPA. For teachers, heart was the element of authentic leadership most commonly cited as having the greatest impact on their job satisfaction, while building relationships was the element of authentic leadership most commonly cited by principals as having the greatest impact on their job satisfaction.

When ranking the elements of authentic leadership, teachers gave the highest rankings to heart, purpose, and values, while principals gave the highest rankings to building relationships, heart, and purpose. A frequency analysis revealed that teachers mentioned building relationships most often, followed by heart and purpose, and principals also mentioned building relationships most often, followed by purpose and heart. It is important to note that across the interview questions, both teachers (10 times) and principals (seven times) cited “all five elements” as important. It is also important to note that support was indicated by 11 of the 12 teachers as contributing to job satisfaction.
Next, Chapter V provides a discussion of the results of the analysis in Chapter IV, followed by conclusions, implications for action, recommendations for further research, and concluding remarks and reflections of the researcher.
CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Per George and Sims (2007), there are five dimensions of authentic leadership: (a) leading with the heart, (b) practicing solid values, (c) understanding the purpose of leadership, (d) establishing enduring relationships, and (e) developing self-discipline (see also George, 2003, 2007). Authentic leadership embraces the dimensions of purpose, values, and connected relationships. Special education teachers spend more time with their principals due to the required individualized education plan (IEP) meetings for their students. McLaughlin (2009) and Billingsley (2005) agreed that principal leadership is needed to support and encourage special education teachers.

Chapter I of the study provided the educational context and introduction to the research study. Chapter II contained a review of literature that pertained to the purpose of this study. Chapter III presented the methodology and the procedural components used to conduct the research in this study. Chapter IV presented the themes from the data that were collected during one-to-one, semistructured interviews and data analysis.

Chapter V provides a summary of the research study related to authentic leadership behaviors and job satisfaction of principals and elementary special education teachers. Also, in this chapter, the purpose of the study is restated along with the research questions, research methodology, and data collection methods utilized. The major findings for each research question are summarized. The major findings are followed by the conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for further research. Lastly, the chapter concludes with remarks and reflections.
Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand what elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary special education teachers in the Desert/Mountain Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). A second purpose of the study was to understand what elements of authentic leadership contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary principals in the Desert/Mountain SELPA. A third purpose of the study was to identify the similarities and differences that exist among the elements of authentic leadership that contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary principals and special education teachers in the Desert/Mountain SELPA.

Research Questions

This qualitative study was guided by the following questions:

1. What elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary special education teachers in the Desert/Mountain SELPA?

2. What elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary principals in the Desert/Mountain SELPA?

Research Design, Methods, and Data Collection Procedures

The research method used for this study was a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is a systematic research design approach that reveals a target audience’s range of behaviors and perceptions within specific context issues (Brantlinger et al., 2005; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The instrumentation selected for this study was
Semistructured interviews. Semistructured interviews are by far the most widely used type of measure for collecting data for qualitative research (Patton, 1990). Semistructured interviews allow for the opportunity to probe for underlying factors or relationships that are too complex or elusive to encompass in more straightforward questions (Isaac & Michael, 1995). The semistructured interview questions were developed by the researcher after a review of the literature was conducted. To ensure the questions were meaningful, the semistructured interview questions were field tested by elementary special education teachers and principals within the Desert/Mountain SELPA who could have been identified as potential respondents. The interview questions were field tested to ensure reliability and validity.

Population

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) defined a population as a group that can consist of individuals conforming to specific criteria and to which the researcher intends to generalize the results of the research. Both principals and elementary special education teachers are responsible for ensuring the safety, health, and educational development of each child with disabilities. Lasky and Karge (2006) and Billingsley (2004) agreed that there are some shared leadership responsibilities for both principals and elementary special education teachers, such as the well-being of the students, the development of the IEPs, and monitoring student progress. Lasky and Karge (2006) and Billingsley (2004) concluded that principals’ leadership role extends to the entire school staff and school structure. Both principals and teachers employ leadership characteristics that may or may not align with the elements of authentic leadership. The California Department of Education’s (CDE’s) 2014-2015 report stated that there were 717,981
students enrolled in K-12 special education (CDE, n.d.). The CDE (2016) reported that there were 295,025 teachers and 11,028 principals in California during the 2014-2015 school year.

In 1974, the California State Board of Education approved the Master Plan for Special Education (Master Plan). The Master Plan required that all school districts and county offices of education work together to develop a regional special education delivery system (LAO, 1986). The regional consortia formed in response to the Master Plan are referred to in the authorizing legislation as SELPAs.

In 1977, all California school districts and county school offices were mandated to form consortia in geographical regions of sufficient size and scope to provide for all special education service needs of children residing within the region boundaries (CDE, 2015). Each region’s SELPA developed a local plan describing how it would provide special education services. There are approximately 135 SELPAs in California (CDE, 2015). There are three SELPAs in San Bernardino County. The East Valley SELPA serves special education students located in the eastern part of San Bernardino County, the West End SELPA serves special education students located in the western part of San Bernardino County, and the Desert/Mountain SELPA serves special education students located in the Desert and Mountain areas of San Bernardino County (San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, n.d.).

The Desert/Mountain SELPA of California’s San Bernardino County was the focus of this study. It is governed by a board of directors that is made up of the superintendent/CEO of each participating local education agency (LEA) within the SELPA region and is chaired by the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools.
The Desert/Mountain SELPA is a support service office that provides trained staff members who work in partnership with schools, families, and the surrounding communities to assist with the educational success of all students (Desert/Mountain SELPA, n.d.).

**Sample**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated that when a researcher is trying to determine a sample size from the chosen population, a modest percentage of the total population can approximate the characteristics of the population adequately. There were 369 principals and elementary special education teachers identified by the researcher for this study. The sample size for this study was 12 principals and 12 elementary special education teachers within the Desert/Mountain SELPA of California’s San Bernardino County. This sample size of 24 participants accounted for 7% of the target population of 369 principals and elementary special education teachers. Per Green and Thorogood (2009), interviewing more than 20 people in qualitative research usually does not provide any new information. Ritchie et al. (2003) concluded that the size of qualitative samples is generally under 50. Patton (2002) stated that sample size depends on the purpose of the study. The researcher used a randomized list to select the 12 principals and 12 elementary special education teachers.

**Major Findings**

A summary of the findings developed from the data analysis in Chapter IV is presented in the following sections. The findings resulted from the interview data and are organized by the two research questions.
**Interview Data**

**Research Question 1.** The first research question asked, “What elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary special education teachers in the Desert/Mountain SELPA?” Special education teachers in this study described the five elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) leading to job satisfaction:

1. **The authentic leadership element of building relationships:** Building relationships was the most important authentic leadership element identified in the teacher interviews, representing 36% \((n = 18)\) of authentic leadership responses. Building relationships was ranked first or second among the elements of authentic leadership by 25% of teachers. Three teachers (25%) indicated that building relationships was the element of authentic leadership that had the greatest impact on their job satisfaction.

2. **The authentic leadership element of heart:** Heart was the second most important authentic leadership element that emerged in the teacher interviews, representing 24% \((n = 12)\) of authentic leadership responses. Heart was ranked first or second among the elements of authentic leadership by 59% of teachers. Five teachers (42%) indicated that heart was the element of authentic leadership that had the greatest impact on their job satisfaction.

3. **The authentic leadership element of purpose:** Purpose was the third most mentioned authentic leadership element in the teacher interviews, representing 20% \((n = 10)\) of authentic leadership responses. Purpose was ranked first or second among the elements of authentic leadership by 42% of teachers. Three teachers (25%) indicated
that purpose was the element of authentic leadership that had the greatest impact on their job satisfaction.

4. *The authentic leadership element of values*: Teachers were inconsistent in their responses related to values. Values were infrequently mentioned in teacher interviews, comprising 10% \((n = 5)\) of the individual responses related to authentic leadership elements across the interview questions. On the other hand, the element of values was ranked first or second by 59% of teachers, and three teachers (25%) identified values as the element of authentic leadership that had the greatest impact on their job satisfaction.

5. *The authentic leadership element of self-discipline*: Self-discipline was tied with values for the least commonly identified element of authentic leadership in the teacher interviews, comprising 10% \((n = 5)\) of the individual responses across the interview questions. Self-discipline was ranked last among the elements of authentic leadership by teachers, with 66% ranking self-discipline last or next to last. One teacher indicated that self-discipline had the greatest impact on job satisfaction. For these reasons, self-discipline was less important than relationship building, purpose, heart, and values among the elements of authentic leadership for teachers.

6. *All five authentic leadership elements*: Teachers did not perceive possessing strength in all five elements as essential. Across the interview questions, “all five elements” were mentioned 10 times by teachers.

7. *Job satisfaction of teachers*: Two thirds of teachers indicated that job satisfaction was important to their role as classroom leaders. Half \((50\%, n = 6)\) of the teachers felt that
job satisfaction was very important, and two others (17%) indicated that they needed job satisfaction to be happy.

8. **Job satisfaction of principals as perceived by teachers:** Ten of the 12 elementary special education teachers indicated that job satisfaction impacted their principals’ leadership. They believed that job satisfaction of principals is evident in their actions and the tone they set on campus.

   **Research Question 2.** The second research question asked, “What elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary principals in the Desert/Mountain SELPA?” The elementary principals in this study described the five elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) leading to their job satisfaction:

1. **The authentic leadership element of building relationships:** Building relationships was the most important authentic leadership element that emerged during the principal interviews, identified in 44% (n = 22) of the individual responses across the interview questions. Building relationships was the highest ranked element of authentic leadership by principals, with 75% ranking it first or second. Eight principals indicated that building relationships was the element of authentic leadership that had the greatest impact on their job satisfaction.

2. **The authentic leadership element of purpose:** Purpose was the second most important authentic leadership element identified in the principal interviews, identified in 22% (n = 11) of the individual responses across the interview questions. Purpose was ranked first or second among authentic leadership elements by 50% of principals.
Two principals commented that purpose was the element of authentic leadership that had the greatest impact on their job satisfaction.

3. The authentic leadership element of heart: Heart was the third most important authentic leadership element in the principal interviews, identified in 14% ($n = 7$) of the individual responses across the interview questions. Heart was ranked first or second among authentic leadership elements by 59% of principals. One principal commented that heart was the element of authentic leadership that had the greatest impact on job satisfaction.

4. The authentic leadership elements of values and self-discipline: Values and self-discipline were the least important elements of authentic leadership mentioned in principal interviews, with each comprising 10% ($n = 5$) of the individual responses across the interview questions. The element of values was ranked second to last among elements of authentic leadership, with 34% of principals ranking it first or second, while self-discipline was ranked last, with 92% of principals ranking it last or next to last among the elements of authentic leadership. One principal indicated that values impacted job satisfaction, and one principal indicated that self-discipline impacted job satisfaction. For these reasons, values and self-discipline were less important than relationship building, purpose, and heart among the elements of authentic leadership for principals.

5. All five authentic leadership elements: Principals did not perceive possessing strength in all five elements as essential. Having all five elements was only mentioned seven times during the interviews. Further, three of the 12 principals viewed all five elements of authentic leadership as important to job satisfaction.
6. *Job satisfaction of principals:* Of the 12 principals interviewed, 75% indicated that job satisfaction was important in their leadership role. Forty-two percent of principals indicated that job satisfaction was very important, and an additional 33% stated that everyone wants to be satisfied.

7. *Job satisfaction of teachers as perceived by principals:* Among the principals interviewed, 83% indicated that job satisfaction has an impact on teachers, with 58% explicitly indicating that job satisfaction is important and an additional 25% expressing that if teachers are happy, they will perform better in their jobs.

**Similarities and differences.** The third purpose of this study was to identify the similarities and differences that exist among the elements of authentic leadership that contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary principals and special education teachers in the Desert/Mountain SELPA. Several similarities and differences were revealed during the data analysis.

Seeing similarities and differences is a fundamental cognitive process (Gentner & Markman, 1994; Medin, Goldstone, & Markman, 1995). Although the literature suggested that all five elements of authentic leadership are needed to improve job satisfaction of special education teachers and principals, the similarities in the results of this study exposed that building relationships is the single most important element for both special education teachers and principals. Relationships, heart, and purpose were the top three authentic leadership elements contributing to job satisfaction for both special education teachers and principals. The element of self-discipline was not considered important to special education teachers and principals in contributing to job
satisfaction. Job satisfaction was hugely important to both special education teachers and principals.

Differences relevant to this study included that throughout the interview process, the principals remained true in perceiving that the authentic leadership element of building relationships contributed most to their job satisfaction. When asked to identify the five elements of authentic leadership in an order that they perceived contributed most to their job satisfaction, the groups varied in their responses. Special education teachers selected heart as the element leading most to job satisfaction, followed by the element of purpose and then the element of values. The principals notably preferred the element of building relationships as the most important authentic leadership element leading to job satisfaction, followed by the element of heart and then the element of values.

An unanticipated finding emerged from the interview responses provided by the special education teachers. The special education teachers felt that having support from their principals played a key role in their job satisfaction. Even though support is not listed as one of the five elements of authentic leadership, 11 of the 12 special education teachers identified support as an element that was perceived to contribute to job satisfaction. Support was not specified by any of the 12 principals as contributing to job satisfaction.

**Demographic Data**

Demographic data were collected in this study for the participating elementary principals and elementary special education teachers. There were two male elementary special education teachers and 10 female elementary special education teachers who participated in this study. There were three male principals and nine female principals
who were a part of this study. There was no relationship discovered between the demographic information and the findings related to the research questions.

**Conclusions**

The following conclusions can be made regarding the findings of this study:

1. While special education teachers and their principals stressed that the individual elements of authentic leadership were important, few indicated that possessing all five elements was crucial to their job satisfaction as leaders. The literature review for this study revealed that it is essential that leaders develop all five elements to be truly authentic leaders. However, in this study, only a minority of the participants had internalized the need to acquire all five authentic leadership elements.

2. Building strong relationships can positively increase job satisfaction among principals and special education teachers. Relationships between principals and special education teachers were important to the 12 principals and 12 teachers who participated in this study. Heart, values, and purpose cannot take leaders far without strong relationships with the people around them. This has been shown in studies examining trust and leader-follower dynamics (Alok, 2014; Avolio & Mhatre, 2012; Bird et al., 2009, 2012; Erkutlu & Chafra, 2013; C. Wang & Bird, 2011; Wong & Cummings, 2009; Wong et al., 2010).

3. Self-discipline was not considered to be an essential element of authentic leadership contributing to job satisfaction among special education teachers and principals in this study; however, this does not align with the literature. For example, George (2003) argued that a leader’s self-discipline will allow him or her to commit to his or her beliefs and values, follow through, and accomplish the organizational purpose. When
principals and teachers fail to recognize and demonstrate the importance of the authentic leadership element of self-discipline, their leadership effectiveness and job satisfaction are diminished.

4. Because special education teachers view the authentic leadership element of heart as important to their job satisfaction, principals who do not consider it important will be less effective in their leadership role with teachers. If principals view heart as unimportant, it will limit their understanding of what helps teachers experience satisfaction in their teaching role. Heart was perceived to be more important to special education teachers than principals. George and Sims (2007) noted that authentic leaders need to lead with their heart as well as their head. Job satisfaction can improve for special education teachers and principals when the element of heart is displayed.

5. Purpose was viewed by the principals as more important to job satisfaction than it was for special education teachers. Per George (2007), purpose is the “cornerstone of authentic leadership development” (p. xxiii) and requires the leader to obtain self-awareness. Job satisfaction will increase for teachers and principals when the common purpose is clear and understood. When there is a difference between the perceived value of purpose among the principals and teachers, it can affect their communication and the commitment of teachers. Likewise, it can affect the influence principals have with their instructional staff. A cornerstone of job satisfaction is having a clear, shared sense of purpose among both the principals and their teachers.

6. The element of values was not voiced often by special education teachers or principals. The literature indicates that values help to guide one’s actions. Avolio and Mhatre (2012) concluded that what differentiates authentic leaders is that their
leadership approach is coordinated with personal values and beliefs. Job satisfaction of teachers and principals could increase when an understanding of their value system is achieved and used to lead others in a positive manner. If the authentic leadership element of values is missing from the consciousness and practices of principals and teachers, they will both struggle to understand each other, and their job satisfaction will be diminished. Having shared values that emanate from a common sense of purpose is fundamental to being a leader of a school or in a classroom.

7. Job satisfaction was observed to be meaningful to both special education teachers and principals. Job satisfaction will increase when principals and special education teachers understand all five authentic leadership elements and these elements are present in their daily leadership roles. Denton (2009) revealed that teachers’ job satisfaction and retention rates can be increased when there are positive and respectful relationships between principals and teachers.

8. Special education teachers in this study assumed a variety of unique responsibilities and important leadership roles including leading IEP meetings, developing learning and behavior plans customized to each student, assisting parents in providing follow-up services to their children, directing paraprofessionals in the classroom, coordinating with the SELPA leadership, and providing differentiated instruction. If special education teachers understand and incorporate the five authentic leadership elements, their leadership skills will be enhanced, and they will be more effective in assisting the SELPA, principals, parents, and students to succeed.
9. Support played a key role in job satisfaction for the special education teachers. Without close contact from principals, teachers’ job satisfaction will diminish, and this will potentially lead teachers to leave the profession.

**Implications for Action**

The following are implications for actions to increase the understanding of authentic leadership behaviors as they relate to elementary principals and elementary special education teachers and their job satisfaction. A positive working relationship is needed between principals and teachers to provide a school culture that assists with increasing job satisfaction. School districts’ commitment to the implementation of in-depth staff development and trainings on authentic leadership would contribute to decreasing teacher and principal dissatisfaction. The following are recommendations for action:

1. School districts must provide districtwide professional development on authentic leadership behaviors, using George and Sims’s (2007) five dimensions of authentic leadership to assist in providing deeper insight on authentic leadership behaviors and increasing job satisfaction among teachers and principals. The five elements of authentic leadership provide a framework for districts to adopt and infuse throughout the schools and classrooms. Doing so can increase the effectiveness of special education teachers and principals and likewise increase their job satisfaction.

2. School districts must offer administrators training to understand how their behaviors influence the job satisfaction of special education teachers, with more attention given to the authentic leadership elements of relationships and heart. Team-building
activities can be incorporated to allow administrators to gain an understanding of each other’s views in respect to the elements of authentic leadership.

3. School districts must develop professional development training for teachers to help them acquire a better understanding of how their behaviors influence the job satisfaction of principals, with more attention given to the authentic leadership elements of relationships and purpose. Team-building activities can be used to allow teachers to get to know each other and share their views relating to the elements of authentic leadership and job satisfaction.

4. School districts must provide coaching and mentoring programs for special education teachers and principals on the five elements of authentic leadership to improve their leadership effectiveness and help to increase their job satisfaction. Developing leadership skills takes time, but gaining an understanding of authentic leadership will enhance the effectiveness of leadership and improve job satisfaction for special education teachers and principals.

5. Upon hiring new special education teachers and principals, school districts should require that the new hires complete an assessment survey on authentic leadership behaviors. This assessment survey would provide valuable information to school districts regarding special education teachers’ and principals’ knowledge of authentic leadership behaviors. This would provide valuable information to supervisors on developing a growth plan for the new hires and could become a focus of ongoing coaching to improve their leadership skills.

6. Universities must incorporate the five elements of authentic leadership into teacher and administrator preparation programs. Integrating the five elements of authentic
leadership into these preparation programs will establish a base of understanding so that new teachers and administrators are prepared to integrate authentic leadership skills into their daily work, leading to an increase in job satisfaction.

7. Special education teachers and principals need to take personal responsibility for increasing their authentic leadership skills to improve their job satisfaction. Expecting the district or school to provide training is not enough. Educators who understand the elements of authentic leadership and who take personal responsibility for seeking knowledge and opportunities to develop their skills will find they experience increased job satisfaction.

8. The Desert/Mountain SELPA must work with school districts to develop trainings specifically designed for special education teachers and principals on the five elements of authentic leadership. These trainings can be provided during staff development days that are already written into the school-year calendar. This will ensure that special education teachers and principals are present at these trainings.

9. Desert/Mountain SELPA staff must provide additional sources of support to special education teachers and principals desiring help individually in developing authentic leadership behaviors. These sources of additional support could include funding for coaching, continuing education on authentic leadership, traveling to conferences on authentic leadership, and so forth. Promoting an environment that encourages growth in authentic leadership behaviors will increase leadership skills while increasing job satisfaction.
10. School districts must build an accountability system that is part of their evaluation for teachers and principals. This system will increase the knowledge level of authentic leadership in both teachers and principals.

11. Principals must show support to teachers by creating opportunities to have meaningful two-way communication. Principals can create focus groups, schedule individual meeting times, and conduct classroom visits to offer support. Special education teachers who feel supported and appreciated are more likely to stay in the teaching profession.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Findings from this study suggest the following recommendations to expand research:

1. Conduct a replication study using principals and elementary general education teachers to determine if the same sentiment is shared regarding authentic leadership behaviors and job satisfaction.

2. Conduct a replication study in the same county SELPA with principals, special education teachers, and general education teachers from all grade levels to determine if there would be a difference in the findings regarding authentic leadership behaviors and job satisfaction.

3. Conduct a replication study in a different county SELPA with principals, special education teachers, and general education teachers from all grade levels to determine if there would be a difference in the findings regarding authentic leadership behaviors.
4. Conduct a study to determine if the size of the school district affects the authentic leadership behaviors and job satisfaction of principals and teachers.

5. Conduct a study to determine if there would be a difference in findings from principals and teachers working in private schools in regard to authentic leadership behaviors and job satisfaction.

6. Conduct a study to determine if there would be a difference in findings from principals and teachers working in charter schools in regard to authentic leadership behaviors and job satisfaction.

7. Conduct a study to determine what types of professional development opportunities special education teachers would benefit from in regard to authentic leadership behaviors and job satisfaction.

8. Conduct a study to determine what types of professional development opportunities principals would benefit from in regard to authentic leadership behaviors and job satisfaction.

9. Conduct a study of male principals and male special education teachers to determine if there would be a difference in findings in regard to authentic leadership behaviors and job satisfaction.

10. Conduct a study of female principals and female special education teachers to determine if there would be a difference in findings in regard to authentic leadership behaviors and job satisfaction.

11. Conduct a case study at a school where there is high job satisfaction, to identify and describe the factors that create job satisfaction among teachers and principals.
Concluding Remarks and Reflections

What differentiates authentic leaders is that their approach to leadership is aligned with their personal values and beliefs. This builds credibility and trust among their followers (Avolio & Mhatre, 2012). This study brings to light the fact that teachers and principals need to further develop their skills in authentic leadership. It was revealed that the 24 teachers and principals in this study were familiar with the elements of authentic leadership, yet they did not perceive that possessing all five elements of authentic leadership was important to job satisfaction. It is my desire that this study delivers a greater awareness of the importance of the five elements of authentic leadership and job satisfaction among teachers and principals.

Although support is not considered an element of authentic leadership, it was very important to the 12 elementary special education teachers who were interviewed for this study. These teachers felt that having the support of their principal would increase their job satisfaction. Since support was mentioned by 11 of the 12 teachers interviewed, it should not be overlooked. It would be interesting to see, if this study was replicated, if support would be mentioned as frequently as it was in this study.

I do believe that principals make a conscious effort to support their teachers; however, this effort was not viewed as providing support by the 12 teachers interviewed. I genuinely desire that principals and teachers would take the time to reflect and work together to describe what support is for teachers and what it is for principals. This would definitively be beneficial for increasing job satisfaction for teachers.

I would like to thank the 12 elementary special education teachers and the 12 elementary principals who took time out of their busy schedules to participate in this
study. I am forever grateful for their support. I sincerely hope that the participants’ knowledge of authentic leadership and the associated benefits of increased job satisfaction has increased. The foundation of my research was dedicated to adding knowledge that will foster a deeper understanding of authentic leadership, which ultimately contributes to job satisfaction across the field of elementary special education, and will advance new practices to enhance the field of special education in years to come. This study provided findings and recommendations for authentic leadership behaviors contributing to job satisfaction for elementary special education teachers and elementary principals.
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doi:10.1080/13803610600797615


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doi:10.1080/01446190902729721


APPENDIX A

Synthesis Matrices
Table A1

*Leadership Theories Synthesis Matrix*

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Table A2

**Authentic Leadership Synthesis Matrix**

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APPENDIX B

Introduction Letter

Dear Participating Districts:

My name is Penny Tharpe and I am a Doctoral student in Organizational Leadership at Brandman University. This letter of Intent has been presented to obtain permission to sample your elementary principals and elementary special education teachers’ population. The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand what elements of authentic leadership (heart, value, purpose, relationships and self-discipline) contribute to job satisfaction as perceived by elementary principals and elementary special education teachers in the Desert Mountain Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). The process will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. It will require the principals and teachers to complete an interview. Each principal participant will be administered the same interview questions. Each special education teacher will be administered the same interview questions. The interviews will be recorded. The recordings will only be reviewed by the researcher. The names of the participants, the name of the school and the name of the school district will not be identified in my study. I will be using a numerical coding system to identify all participants to the data collected.

Participants may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also the investigator may stop the study at any time. No information that identifies the participant will be released without participant’s separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed the participant will be so informed and consent obtained by participant. If your agency/program or the participant has any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process you may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor Academic Affairs, Brandman University 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618 Telephone (949) 341-7641. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the Research participant’s Bill of Rights.

If you have any further questions, you may contact me at (760) 267-0722. Thank you for accepting this proposal.

Sincerely,

Penny M. Tharpe
Brandman University Ed.D. Doctoral Candidate
Dear Study Participant,

You have been selected to participate in the study. Please response by email to confirm that you are willing to be a part of this study.

If you have any further questions, you may contact me at (760) 267-0722. Thank you for participating in this field test.

Sincerely,

Penny M. Tharpe
Brandman University ED. D Doctoral Candidate
APPENDIX C

Interview Questions

Interview Questions for the Principals

1. In your experience, what factors impact your job satisfaction? Can you share an example?

2. In your experience, how do the elements of authentic leadership contribute to your job satisfaction?

3. What specific elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) do you perceive contribute to your job satisfaction?

4. Of the five elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline), which one of these elements has a greater impact on your job satisfaction? Can you share an example?

5. How important is job satisfaction in your leadership role?

6. How does job satisfaction impact teachers?

7. Do you have any other comments that you would like to offer?

8. How would you rate authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline)?

Interview Questions for the Special Education Teachers

1. In your experience, what factors impact your job satisfaction? Can you share an example?

2. In your experience, how do the elements of authentic leadership contribute to your job satisfaction?
3. What specific elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline) do you perceive contribute to your job satisfaction?

4. Of the five elements of authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline), which one of these elements has a greater impact on your job satisfaction? Can you share an example?

5. How important is job satisfaction in your teacher classroom leadership role?

6. How does job satisfaction impact principals?

7. Do you have any other comments that you would like to offer?

8. How would you rate authentic leadership (heart, values, purpose, relationships, and self-discipline)?
APPENDIX D

Preinterview Questions

Preinterview Questions for Principals

Please fill out the pre-interview questionnaire below. Any questions or concerns feel free to ask before the interview begins.

Pre-Interview Questionnaire

1. How long have you been a principal?
2. How long have you been the principal at this school?
3. Have you been a principal at any other school?
4. Have you taught special education before?

Preinterview Questions for Special Education Teachers

Please fill out the pre-interview questionnaire below. Any questions or concerns feel free to ask before the interview begins.

Pre-Interview Questionnaire

1. How long have you been a special education teacher?
2. How long have you taught at this school?
3. Have you taught regular education before?
4. Have you ever considered becoming a principal?
APPENDIX E

Summary of the Five Dimensions of Authentic Leadership

Heart

George and Sims (2007) contended that to be an authentic leader, a person must lead with his or her heart as well as his or her head. An authentic leader is able to engage the hearts of his or her followers by showing sincere interest in them and displaying complete respect for them.

Values

Values are deeply held personal beliefs that guide one’s actions (George & Sims, 2007). An authentic leader must develop clarity about his or her values, leadership principles, and ethical boundaries in order to lead by these values.

Purpose

A leader “must align people around a common purpose that inspires them to peak performance” (George, 2007, p. xxi). This is the “cornerstone of authentic leadership development” (George, 2007, p. xxiii) and requires the leader to obtain self-awareness.

Relationship Building

Heart, values, and purpose cannot take a leader far without strong relationships with the people around him or her. An authentic leader is able to “speak openly about their weaknesses, blind spots, and vulnerabilities,” and in so doing, the leader “permit[s] others to do the same” (George & Sims, 2007, p. 53).

Self-Discipline

Self-discipline is important to a leader if he or she expects others to follow with the same level of commitment. Personal discipline involves keeping oneself healthy in
order to combat stress, resisting the temptation to stray from the path of one’s values and purpose, and remaining consistent.
APPENDIX F

Field Test Participant Letter

Dear Field Test Participant,

Thank you for taking the time to review these interview questions. I have attached a copy of the questions for you to provide feedback on any question(s) that you feel needs to be modified or removed.

If you have any further questions, you may contact me at (760) 267-0722. Thank you for participating in this field test.

Sincerely,

Penny M. Tharpe
Brandman University ED. D Doctoral Candidate
Hi! I would like to thank you for giving up part of your day to be a part of this study. There may be additional questions asked of the participants for follow up for clarity.

**Interviewer**: Penny Tharpe

**Interview time**: Approximately 30 minutes

**Interview place**: Participant’s Venue of Choice

**Recording**: Digital voice and video recorder

**Written**: Field and Observational Notes

**Opening Remarks**: Based upon the information provided by the email you received, you understand that this study is to explore the perspective of principals and elementary special education teachers and their perception of authentic leadership behaviors contributing to job satisfaction. Information collected from this pre-interview and the one to one interview will be included in my dissertation. To protect your privacy, your identity will remain confidential. You may choose to not participate in this study at anything although you have already signed the consent form. Do you have any other questions or concerns at this time before we begin?
Hi! I would like to thank you for giving up part of your day to be a part of this study. There may be additional questions asked of the participants for follow up for clarity.

**Interviewer:** Penny Tharpe

**Interview time:** Approximately 30 minutes

**Interview place:** Participant’s Venue of Choice

**Recording:** Digital voice and video recorder

**Written:** Field and Observational Notes

**Opening Remarks:** Based upon the information provided by the email you received, you understand that this study is to explore the perspective of principals and elementary special education teachers and their perception of authentic leadership behaviors contributing to job satisfaction. Information collected from this pre-interview and the one to one interview will be included in my dissertation. To protect your privacy, your identity will remain confidential. You may choose to not participate in this study at anything although you have already signed the consent form. Do you have any other questions or concerns at this time before we begin?
APPENDIX I

Informed Consent Form

Purpose

Organizational Leadership Ed.D. Program, Brandman University interview consent form for a principal or elementary special education teacher regarding the perception of authentic leadership behaviors contributing to job satisfaction

Dear Participant:

As a doctoral student at Brandman University, I am currently involved in the data collection portion of my dissertation. The purpose of this study is to identify and describe principals and elementary special education teacher’s perception of Authentic Leadership Behaviors contributing to job satisfaction, within the five dimensions of authentic leadership (heart, value, purpose, relationships and self-discipline). This study will use a qualitative case study approach to explore this population. All participant’s responses will be kept confidential, and the participants will not be identified by name. A code will be used to reference each participant. Only members of my dissertation committee and I will have access to the information obtained. The benefit from participating in this study will be to gain a deeper understanding of the authentic leadership behaviors contributing to job satisfaction of principals and elementary special education teachers. The study presented has minimal risks to the principals and elementary special education teacher’s participants involved, they will not experience any harm or discomfort and no interruption of their daily routine.

I understand that I may refuse to participate in or I may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the investigator may stop the study at any time. I also understand that no information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed I will be so informed and my consent obtained. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process you should ask the researcher to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the Research participant’s Bill of Rights.
Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.
4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

The one on one interviews will also be documented using audio and video recording devices and field/observational notes. These recordings will only be reviewed by the researcher. Signing below you have read and understand the above and that you agree to participate in this study. Thank you volunteering to participate in this study.

I, ___________________________________ consent to participate in the research study conducted by Penny Tharpe

Participant’s Signature ______________________________      Date_____________

I hereby agree to abide by the participants’ instructions

Researcher’s signature ______________________________       Date_____________
APPENDIX J

NIH Certificate

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that Penny Tharpe successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 07/12/2013

Certification Number: 1212484