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Conversational Leadership: A Phenomenological Study of Exemplary High School Principals and the Behaviors They Practice in Leading Their Organizations

Robert Harris
Brandman University, harri260@mail.brandman.edu

Conversational Leadership: A Phenomenological Study of Exemplary High School

Principals and the Behaviors They Practice in Leading Their Organizations

A Dissertation by

Robert Harris

Brandman University

Irvine, California

School of Education

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Committee in charge:

Cindy Petersen, EdD, Committee Chair

Keith Larick, EdD

Jody Graf, EdD

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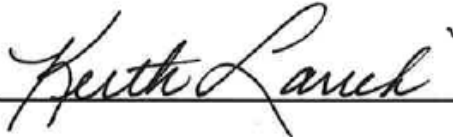
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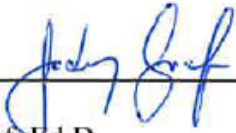
The dissertation of Robert Harris is approved.

_____, Dissertation Chair

Cindy Petersen, Ed.D.

_____, Committee Member

Keith Larick, Ed.D.

_____, Committee Member

Jody Graf, Ed.D.

_____, Associate Dean

Patricia Clark-White, Ed.D.

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love you endlessly. Thank you for the blessings you have been. I spent a lot of time away from you and missed many opportunities these past few years, but I look forward to being an integral part of your development as you grow into student-athletes and active contributors to society.

To the Superintendent of the Antelope Valley Union High School District, Dr. David Vierra, and my mentor, Greg Nehen, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, thank you for your support throughout this process, for your insight, and for believing in my capabilities as a leader. It was truly a blessing to work with you toward the advancement of our organization. To Dr. Larry Friese, my cohort mentor, thank you for your guidance and support throughout this course of study. It was amazing to have the opportunity to work with an authentic transformational leader and an individual with such amazing perspective and knowledge base. To the rest of my Brandman University family, thank you so much for this amazing and invaluable learning opportunity!

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ABSTRACT

Conversational Leadership: A Phenomenological Study of Exemplary High School

Principals and the Behaviors They Practice in Leading Their Organizations

by Robert Harris

Purpose: The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe

behaviors exemplary high school principals practiced to lead their organization through

conversation using Groysberg and Slind's (2012c) four elements of conversational

leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality.

Methodology: This qualitative phenomenological study described the lived experiences

of exemplary high school principals. A sample of 10 participants was selected from the

target population that was narrowed to high school principals in Los Angeles County.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in accordance to a protocol developed by a

team of 12 peer researchers with the guidance of faculty. In addition, data from

observations and artifacts were utilized for triangulation.

Findings: The analysis of data resulted in 21 themes and 644 frequencies across the four

elements of conversational leadership. These 21 emergent themes revealed 9 key

findings.

Conclusions: The research study identified the behaviors exemplary high school

principals practiced to lead their organizations through intimacy, interactivity, inclusion,

and intentionality. Exemplary high school principals created personal connections

through storytelling and flattened hierarchical structures to promote interactivity.

Additionally, they listened actively to demonstrate servant leadership and incorporated

clear and consistent communication to articulate direction and purpose.

Recommendations: Further research in conversational leadership is advised. This research study should be replicated on a larger scale to incorporate broader geographical boundaries. Additionally, further studies should focus on other aspects including gender and socio-economic factors. Another recommendation is a meta-analysis of the studies conducted by the 12 peer researchers on conversational leadership.

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PREFACE

Following discussions and considerations regarding the opportunity to study

Groysberg and Slind's (2012) conversational leadership in multiple types of

organizations, 4 faculty researchers and 12 doctoral students discovered a common

interest in exploring the ways exemplary leaders practice conversational leadership using

the four elements of intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. This resulted in

a thematic study conducted by a research team of 12 doctoral students.

This phenomenological research was designed with a focus on the behaviors that

exemplary leaders used to guide their organizations through conversations. Exemplary

leaders were selected by the team from various public, for-profit, and non-profit

organizations to examine the behaviors these professionals used. Each researcher

interviewed 10 exemplary professionals to describe how they led their organizations

through conversations using each of the four elements by Groysberg and Slind (2012).

To ensure thematic consistency, the team co-created the purpose statement, research

questions, definitions, interview questions, and study procedures. It was agreed upon by

the team that for increased validity, data collection would involve method triangulation

using interviews, observations, and artifacts.

Throughout the study, the term *peer researchers* is used to refer to the other

researchers who conducted this thematic study. These were: Nikki Salas, city managers;

Jacqueline Cardenas, unified school district superintendents; Chris Powell, elementary

school principals; Lisa Paisley, educational services assistant superintendents in southern

California; Kristen Brogan-Baranski, elementary superintendents in southern California;

Jennifer LaBounty, community college presidents; John Ashby, middle school principals;

Tammie Castillo Shiffer, regional directors of migrant education; Cladonda Lamela, chief

nursing officers; Vincent Plair, municipal police chiefs and sheriffs; and Qiana O'Leary,

nonprofit executive directors.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Conversational leadership rapidly became an essential component of effective organizations as they evolved to meet the demands of the 21ˢᵗ century global economy. The evolution necessitated a shift away from the top-down approach to organizational leadership. According to Groysberg and Slind (2012b), the hierarchical command-and-control model of organizational leadership grew obsolete as a result of unpredictability caused by economic, organizational, global, and generational changes. Technological advancements, including the emergence of social media, placed most of the planet within reach, significantly impacting how communication occurs within organizations. Due to these changes and advancements, leaders must consistently evaluate and assess their practices as they seek alternative methodologies to maintain organizational power (Groysberg & Slind, 2012a; Svennevig, 2008).

Groysberg and Slind (2012c) asserted organizational conversation was a new source of cohesion within an organization as it broke down barriers that often existed between leaders and employees. Organizational conversation involved a shift from corporate communication, in which directives and formal controls were communicated from the top down to stakeholders, to a framework that promoted direct interpersonal engagement between leaders and their workforce (Bowman, 2014; Groysberg & Slind, 2012c). Organizational conversation was an effective method of acquiring and retaining a positive culture when it incorporated four essential elements, all of which centered on direct interpersonal engagement: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c). Each of which were viewed as integral to the shift away from hierarchical leadership models. Groysberg and Slind (2012c) stated when

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implemented effectively, these four elements became infused, forming a singular process for continual growth. These elements were critical to leaders within the field of education, as schools actively sought new systems to produce students able to compete within the 21st century global economy.

Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) identified leadership theories that presented conceptual links to the elements of organizational conversation and their connections to the school setting. These theories included instructional leadership and transformational leadership, both of which placed intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality at the forefront. Additionally, these elements were reflected in the core set of behaviors linked to principal leadership, which Marzano et al. (2005) referred to as 21 responsibilities of the school leader. These included communication, relationships, culture, input, stakeholder involvement, and flexibility. These responsibilities connected to the overarching elements of organizational conversation identified by Groysberg and Slind (2012c), and correlated to student achievement and efficacious leadership in the 21st century.

Conversational capacity, effective communication, and flexibility were essential characteristics of the successful school principal. Research on effective 21st century schools and instructional leadership conducted by Marzano et al. (2005) highlighted the essential behaviors exhibited by exemplary school principals as they developed a positive, safe, and nurturing learning community. The successful school principal served as a motivator to all stakeholders within the learning community, promoted active engagement, and developed high-quality, student-centered academic exposures. Formal and informal performance evaluations served as tools when assessing the quality of

academic exposures and could be administered through a variety of methods, including faculty meetings, classroom observations, and one-on-one meetings. These assessments required the incorporation of effective communication and played a key role when considering the strategic planning necessary for an academic community to continually progress toward desired outcomes (Marzano et al., 2005). Principals must then incorporate Groysberg and Slind's elements of conversational leadership as they provide critical feedback through direct, interpersonal engagement with stakeholders.

Background

Communication within any organization was considered a critical component of functionality, and therefore a major area of focus. Communication was representative of an organization's nucleus as the hub through which all vital tasks were completed and desired outcomes were actualized (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c; Svennevig, 2008). According to Marzano et al. (2005), there was a direct correlation between the effectiveness of communication within an organization and the level of success it achieved (Endacott & Goering, 2014; Marzano et al., 2005). Within the context of globalization in the 21st century and unrestricted international trade, organizations must employ strategies that allow them to communicate effectively across geographic, social, cultural, and political borders.

Groysberg and Slind (2012a) purported within a global context, leaders were required to develop new processes and embrace new paradigms as they sought to maintain alignment with the 21st century economy. According to Glaser and Tartell (2014), the top-down managerial style was being replaced by one requiring individuals to employ finesse and lead through effective communication (Glaser & Tartell, 2014).

Communication was an essential component when considering the development of strong interpersonal relationships (Groysberg & Slind, 2012a). The overarching concept revealed a shift from corporate communication to organizational conversation, and the long-term changes had a direct impact on the way members of organizations communicated (Groysberg & Slind, 2012a).

Technological Change

Digital networks impacted multiple facets of everyday life through their ability to make both instantaneous and continuous interpersonal connections. Social media continued to develop at a rapid pace in terms of functionality and reach. Through this medium, stakeholders across an organization could engage in conversation in a manner that was dynamic, inclusive, and interactive (Kane, Alavi, Labianca, & Borgatti, 2014). This development resulted in a gradual decline in the implementation of more traditional means of organizational communication (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c). Social media included a variety of websites and internet-based collaborative applications, which allowed users to develop, exchange, and share information on a large, yet controlled scale. Some of the most popular social media platforms included Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, each offering users the opportunity to contribute to real-time conversations with others across the globe (Pham, 2014).

Generational Change

Millennials and younger generations often played integral roles in the success of their organizations as they now occupied critical positions. Organizational leaders must now adjust to the methodology behind communication as these generations maintained an expectation exchanges were interactive and dynamic as opposed to based on hierarchical

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structures (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c). According to Emeagwali (2011), Millennials, those born between 1982 to 2004, wanted organizations to establish systems designed to evaluate their protocols and norms. This was so organizations would make a concerted effort to accommodate the proficiencies of what was known as the first digital generation. Emeagwali (2011) stated Millennials were deeply passionate about technological applications, including social networking, and maintained a positive mindset centered on critical thinking and collaboration. The lived experiences of intergenerational stakeholders typically varied significantly and determined their world view, along with how they interacted within an organization (Strom & Strom, 2015).

Economic Change

The evolution of organizations within the 21st century global economy called for progression toward more sophisticated methods of sharing and processing information. This was necessitated as service-oriented industries became more significant than manufacturing industries from an economic standpoint (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c). Virtual collaboration became an integral component of the transformation, occurring in a wide range of sectors including business, health, and education. Through this practice, organizations included experts in a variety of areas from around the globe as they processed and shared information. According to Lepsinger (2010), Virtual Integrated Practice (VIP) was another example of the evolution of communication. This delivery model involved the development of collaborative teams across geographic and organizational lines, addressing the logistical obstacles connected to in-person meetings (Lepsinger, 2010). Virtual workplaces continued to grow in popularity as the economy

transitioned from being centered on manufacturing to focusing on knowledge and information (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c).

Organizational Change

The structure and landscape of the 21st century organization was consistently becoming less hierarchal as members with a variety of positions become involved in the critical work and created value within the organization (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c). This necessitated the establishment of structures that stressed the importance of multi-directional communication, viewing bottom-up communication equal to top-down communication. Bryk and Schneider (2003) and Barrett (2002) asserted these conversations required a culture and interpersonal relationships based on trust and the understanding all perspectives were viewed equally. Leaders must now eliminate or significantly reduce command-and-control relationships, promoting those more casual and intimate in nature (Barrett, 2002; Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Additionally, the structure and landscape of the 21st century organization called for leaders to engage stakeholders in conversations centered on transparency and active listening, with all perspectives receiving equal consideration (Elving, 2005).

Theoretical Background

Leadership theory. According to Marzano et al. (2005), leadership theories were addressed widely throughout the field of education. This was largely attributed to the fact current leadership theories had an impact that transcended industry lines. Transformational leadership, total quality management (TQM), and servant leadership connected to educational leadership (Marzano et al., 2005). Transformational leadership centered on four principles: individual consideration, intellectual stimulation,

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inspirational motivation, and idealized influence (Marzano et al., 2005). These four principles were viewed as critical when considering the ability of a leader to efficaciously address the organizational challenges of the 21st century. According to Groysberg and Slind (2012c), intimacy involved close and authentic conversation between leaders and stakeholders, which aligned with the concept of individual consideration.

TQM incorporated a foundational assumption that all individuals desired to operate at peak performance. It was then the responsibility of managers to create a path to success. Farooq, Akhtar, Ullah, and Memon (2007) stated "TQM is an art of organizing the whole to achieve excellence" (p. 1). Conceptually, TQM was not a mere philosophy, but a collection of guidelines and regulations highlighting ongoing improvement. According to Marzano et al. (2005), TQM incorporated five basic factors: trust building, change agency, teamwork, continuous improvement, and the eradication of short-term desired outcomes. Groysberg and Slind (2012c) suggested intimacy involved removing any perception of hidden agendas and building relationships based on trust. Additionally, interactivity and inclusion involved the establishment of collaborative relationships with stakeholders, which aligned with the factors of trust building, change agency, and teamwork mentioned by Marzano et al. (2005).

Similar to TQM, servant leadership focused on the best interests of stakeholders. Greenleaf (2002) asserted servant leadership began with a natural propensity and desire to serve. This was followed by a decision-making process and a series of choices that inspired an individual to lead. The servant leader aspired to demonstrate leadership capacity by placing the needs of members within the organization at the forefront, making them the highest priority. Servant leadership was multi-dimensional and

connected to a set of desired outcomes based on the development, growth, and improvement of human capital. Desired outcomes included an in improvement in health, wisdom, and level of autonomy. Additionally, servant leaders sought to promote equity and access to resources for all stakeholders, bridge any existent gaps when considering the availability of resources, and provide opportunities for advancement (Greenleaf, 2002; Spain, 2014; Spears, 2005).

Theoretical framework of conversational leadership. Groysberg and Slind (2012b) stated individuals who demonstrate a high level of intelligence as leaders were those who interacted with employees through informal conversations. Additionally, intuitive leaders placed a great deal of focus on the cultural aspects within the organization and established norms for collegial and productive discourse. Leaders must engage in communication that solicits high levels of stakeholder engagement while synchronously maintaining strategic alignment and operational flexibility (Glaser & Tartell, 2014; Groysberg & Slind, 2012b). Thus, conversational leadership became a possibility when organizations were viewed as having interconnecting, multi-directional lines of communication (Hurley & Brown, 2009). Conceptually, conversational leadership required a belief that collective intelligence among stakeholders was a possibility. The conversational leader recognized through the associated practices, collaborative efforts resulted in higher levels of creativity and efficacy (Hurley & Brown, 2009).

Transformational leadership, TQM, and servant leadership focused on the strategies employed by efficacious leaders. However, Groysberg and Slind's (2012c) theory of conversational leadership centered on four overarching elements that, when

incorporated successfully, led to sustainable organizational change and the realization of continual improvement (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c).

Four Elements of Conversational Leadership

Conversation was considered vital for organizations to manage change and engage employees. Groysberg and Slind (2012c) asserted exemplary leaders promoted employee engagement and optimal performance through the incorporation of intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality into their everyday conversations with staff.

Intimacy. Groysberg and Slind (2012c) stated distance could negatively impact authentic conversation; however, physical proximity was not essential. Instead, "What is essential to the conduct of interpersonal conversation is mental or emotional proximity" (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c, p. 14). Crowley (2011) stated conversational intimacy was only possible when a trust-based relationship was established. It was a critical element within the model because fluid interaction between stakeholders at all levels was key. According to Groysberg and Slind (2012c), conversation within 21st century organizations was less hierarchical in nature, transitioning to a practice that placed focus on interpersonal relationships between leaders and stakeholders at all levels.

Interactivity. Fundamentally, interactivity involved the intentional promotion of dialogue. According to Groysberg and Slind (2012c), this also applied to organizational conversation. Interactivity involved verbal communication that was fluid and flexible in nature, rather than structured and regimented. This became possible when leaders made a concerted effort to engage in constructive dialogue with stakeholders, averting the propensity to provide directives. According to Marzano et al. (2005), two-way, back-

and-forth conversation was essential to any endeavor in which stakeholders must work collaboratively toward the accomplishment of a common desired outcome.

Inclusion. According to Groysberg and Slind (2012c), inclusion provided an opportunity for all individuals participating in the conversation to contribute substantively. This promoted a sense of ownership and the construction of stronger connections to the content addressed. Marzano et al. (2005) noted this concept in an academic organization stating, "Input refers to the extent to which the school leader involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies (p. 51). White, Harvey, and Kemper (2007) asserted collaborative entities within an organization must include both supporters and resisters because they may also present perspectives that lead to success. Inclusion was important regardless of the industry.

Intentionality. Groysberg and Slind (2012a) stated, "A personal conversation, if it's truly rich and rewarding, will be open but not aimless; the participants will have some sense of what they hope to achieve" (p. 82). According to Marzano et al. (2005), it was of great importance to establish and maintain concrete goals for general functioning within an academic community. Additionally, progress toward the desired outcomes must be assessed and evaluated on a continual basis (Marzano et al., 2005). Hurley and Brown (2009) purported conversational leaders fabricated effective structures for engagement through various strategies, including the clear communication of purpose and a focus on strategic intent.

Role of the High School Principal

Principals played a critical role within the 21st century learning community to establish trust, transparency, and authentic collaboration. In this regard, the professional

capacity of the principal had a direct impact on the level of success achieved by students and other stakeholders within the organization (Terziu, Hasani, & Osmani, 2016). To accomplish this, high school principals must demonstrate an ability to communicate effectively. Groysberg and Slind (2012c) suggested the four overarching elements of conversational leadership to strengthen communication. In connection with these four elements, high school principals promoted shared leadership as they reduced isolation among educators, creating a collective body that worked toward the accomplishment of the mission (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c). Additionally, effective high school principals focused on student achievement and effective instruction, which was one of the most critical roles of an instructional leader (Blase & Blase, 1999).

Statement of the Research Problem

The role of the school principal as a facilitator of organizational conversation and communication evolved significantly throughout the course of the 21st century. This evolution was necessitated by the changing demands imposed upon school leaders and the ongoing shifts that accompany next generation education reform. According to Leithwood and Riehl (2003), research studies indicated the achievement of desired student outcomes was significantly impacted by the influence of successful school leaders. Educational leaders must demonstrate the ability to inspire and motivate through conversation as they work toward building upon the capacity of all stakeholders. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) identified personnel development, direction setting, and self-evaluation as the core leadership principles practiced by exemplary school principals as they spearheaded the process of education reform and promoted paradigm shifts.

Groysberg and Slind (2012c) identified transparent, purpose-driven conversation as another essential leadership characteristic. According to Jacobson, Johnson, Ylimaki, and Giles (2005), the process of transformational change within the 21st century academic institution was compounded by several factors, including an ever-evolving collection of expectations and demands. In many cases, school principals encountered a steadily intensifying challenge as they attempted to address ever-changing organizational demands while synchronously closing the achievement gap and implementing reform models (Jacobson et al., 2005). According to Groysberg and Slind (2012a), the challenges faced by principals leading high schools in the 21st century required a plethora of leadership strategies and the successful integration of organizational conversation. Groysberg and Slind (2012c) asserted organizational conversation was a component of addressing these 21st century challenges as it involved a shift from a top-down, hierarchy-driven approach to one centered on the elements of inclusion, interactivity, intimacy, and intentionality.

Although multiple authors added to the body of work on the four elements, there was a prominent gap in the research when considering organizational conversation and behaviors exemplary high school principals practiced to lead their organizations through the implementation of these elements. This qualitative phenomenological study added to the body of knowledge and contributed toward bridging the research gap by exploring the lived experiences of exemplary high school principals as they led through Groysberg and Slind's elements of organizational conversation. Current research in this area included the 21 responsibilities of the school leader described by Marzano et al. (2005), which focused primarily on methodology. This research study contributed toward narrowing

the gap by looking at the behaviors of exemplary high school principals as they led their organizations. The findings provided insight into the specific behaviors practiced by exemplary high school principals as they overcame the obstacles and meet the changing demands presented by a 21st century organization.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe the behaviors exemplary high school principals practiced to lead their organizations through conversation using Groysberg and Slind's (2012c) four elements of conversational leadership (intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality).

Research Questions

Central Research Question

What are the behaviors exemplary high school principals practice to lead their organizations through conversation using Groysberg and Slind's four elements of conversational leadership (intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality)?

Sub-Questions

1. How do exemplary high school principals lead through the conversational element of intimacy?

2. How do exemplary high school principals lead through the conversational element of interactivity?

3. How do exemplary high school principals lead through the conversational element of inclusion?

4. How do exemplary high school principals lead through the conversational element of intentionality?

Significance of the Problem

Research conducted by Groysberg and Slind (2012c) indicated traditional leadership models centered on hierarchy and a top-down, one-way approaches to communication were ineffective within 21st century organizations. Leaders must now implement new methodologies and strategies, including organizational conversation, to acquire and successfully accomplish the goals and objectives of the organization (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c). This leadership transition was also present within 21st century academic institutions as leaders encounter the systemic changes (Frechtling, 2000). According to Nadelson, Pluska, Moorcroft, Jeffrey, and Woodard (2014), the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the *Blueprint for Reform* were driving educational reform movements. However, the effectiveness of such reform efforts heavily depended upon perceptions and knowledge of the educators responsible for implementing the standards (Nadelson et al., 2014).

Groysberg and Slind (2012b) noted organizational conversation embodied a mindset and a collection of elements and behaviors essential to the 21st century leader. Groysberg and Slind (2012c) found the four overarching elements of organizational conversation were intimacy, inclusion, interactivity, and intentionality. Based on the research of Marzano et al. (2005), the elements of organizational conversation were directly applicable to the 21st century academic community. Correlations to Groysberg and Slind's elements of organizational conversation were found within the 21 responsibilities of the school leader and leadership theories described by Marzano et al., 2005.

Nadelson et al. (2014) stated, "Educational reform efforts such as CCSS present teachers and districts with many challenges, including the realignment of their knowledge, beliefs, and practices to ensure that these new standards enhance student achievement" (p. 53). The magnitude of the pedagogical changes necessitated by these challenges required teachers transform their practices, and this could only occur through the support and guidance of educational leaders (Borko, 2004). The effective high school principal could only facilitate the growth of educators through the establishment of a culture that promoted interpersonal relationships based on intimacy, inclusion, interactivity, and intentionality (Marzano et al., 2005).

When considering the behaviors practiced by exemplary school principals to lead through Slind and Groysberg's elements of organizational conversation, several studies and sources addressed the *what*. However, a gap in the research existed regarding a phenomenological view of the *how*. Organizational reform became a global issue in the 21st century and had a significant impact across industry lines. Leaders must face the challenges associated with accomplishing desired outcomes while maximizing the productivity of all stakeholders, and to accomplish this, an in-depth knowledge of organizational conversation is critical.

This study added to the body of knowledge by providing critical insight into the lived experiences of exemplary leaders as they steered organizations through the obstacles that accompanied organizational reform in the 21st century. Beneficiaries could include high school principals, district-level administrators, and leadership associations such as the International Leadership Association (ILA), and the Association of California

School Administrators (ACSA). This research study could also benefit the academic institutions that offer professional development and certification.

Definitions

The following definitions are presented as they are pertinent to the study. They are offered to ensure alignment and clarity during data collection and data analysis.

Behavior. An action, activity, or process that can be observed or measured (Dainton & Zelley, 2005; Griffin, 2012; West & Turner, 2010).

Exemplary. Someone set apart from peers in a supreme manner, suitable behavior, principles, or intentions that can be copied (Goodwin, Piazza, & Rozin, 2014).

Inclusion. The commitment to engaging stakeholders to share ideas and participate in the development of the organization (Groysberg & Slind, 2012b; Hurley & Brown, 2009).

Intentionality. Ensuring clarity of purpose that includes goals and direction to create order and meaning (Barge, 1986; Barge, 1985; Groysberg & Slind, 2012b; Men, 2013) .

Interactivity. Bilateral or multilateral exchange of comments and ideas, a back-and-forth process (Groysberg & Slind, 2012b).

Intimacy. The closeness, trust, and familiarity created between people through shared experiences, meaningful exchanges, and shared knowledge (Glaser, 2016; Groysberg & Slind, 2012b).

Delimitations

The delimitations of this study narrowed the scope and set defined boundaries for the research. This research study was delimited to exemplary high school principals

currently assigned to school sites within the geographic boundaries of Los Angeles County. A comprehensive list of high schools meeting was identified through the California Department of Education (CDE).

Organization of the Study

This study is comprised of five chapters followed by references and appendices. Chapter I introduced the various components of the research study, addressing technological, generational, economic, and organizational changes in communication. The theoretical background was also addressed, which includes a review of various leadership theories. Chapter II presents an expanded view of the content and literature relevant to this study. In includes an in-depth view of current and future changes in communication, conversational leadership theory, the four elements of conversational leadership, and the role of the high school principal. Chapter III presents the research design to the study, the methodology and the limitations impacting the study. Chapter IV offers a comprehensive analysis and synthesis of the data collected, and a discussion of the findings. Chapter V presents the findings, conclusions, and recommendations, which reflect a synthesis of components of the research study.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The world changed drastically within recent years, which impacted the strategies and perspectives of organizational leaders compelled to seek new ways to meet the needs of stakeholders. Groysberg and Slind (2012c) asserted globalization, technological advancements, adjustments to the methods employed by companies to control and improve their overall quality, and a new outlook on external communication resulted in the phasing out of models connected to a command-and-control or top-down leadership approach. Economic, organizational, global, generational, and technological changes were identified as five long-term business trends prompting leaders to facilitate a shift from corporate communication based on hierarchy to organizational conversation that allows all members of the organization to contribute and assume ownership of the mission, vision, and overarching goals and objectives (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c).

Lambert (2003) stated this type of meaningful participation was a critically important component of all professional communities; however, it was often overlooked as organizations strived to expedite their progress and development. Leaders of 21st century organizations must create a culture based on strong interpersonal relationships where trust and transparency are foundational building blocks. Through these relationships, the leader empowers, motivates, and inspires followers to offer authentic input even when presenting misaligned perspectives or belief systems (Lambert, 2003). The 21st century organizational leader must also utilize creativity and critical thinking as they conduct research and implement cutting edge strategies to actualize ongoing communication with stakeholders across organizational, hierarchical, cultural, and global lines. Several organizations focused on the integration of social media and used its many

applications to improve how information was shared (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Saville, 2013).

Additionally, virtual conferencing became a common practice which, similar to social media, added to the capabilities and capacity of leaders in terms of their ability to create and distribute information readily and continually (Derosa, 2010). Through these back-and-forth interactions and the implementation of next generation communication methodologies, the conversational leader gained valuable insights and viewpoints from a wide variety of members across the hierarchal structure. This was of critical importance as organizations strived to acquire the most updated information, engage in cutting-edge practices, and retain the services of the most qualified workforce (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c; Reeves, 2009).

Chapter II provides an in-depth, yet concise synopsis of the body of work connected to these changes, and the paradigm shift next generation leaders must experience to lead their organizations through conversation. Technological, generational, economic, and organizational changes are addressed as they were identified as having significant impact on 21st century organizations. A theoretical background of leadership outlines the concepts of total quality management (TQM), transformational leadership, and servant leadership. Following this background, the body of work related to Groysberg and Slind's four elements of conversational leadership is presented. Chapter II closes with an overview of the role of the high school principal and a summary crafted to review the resonating concepts and ideas.

Our Changing World

Groysberg and Slind (2012a) found the world consistently underwent changes that had widespread impact on the global economy. These changes necessitated a paradigm shift in leadership styles and the methodology behind conversations, moving away from hierarchical frameworks to those more inclusive, intentional, interactive, and intimate (Groysberg & Slind, 2012a). The perspectives and commentary of all stakeholders should be validated, respected, and included in working toward accomplishing big picture goals and objectives. Top executives must embrace this new format and mindset, taking responsibility for engaging in dynamic back-and-forth exchanges as they flatten the hierarchical landscape (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Groysberg & Slind, 2012c).

Technological Change

Digital networks are now an integral component of everyday life, with a multi-faceted and multi-dimensional impact. Through the technological resources available, members within of an organization can make interpersonal connections with multiple stakeholders, even those across geographic and organizational lines, in a continuous and instantaneous manner (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c). Social media contributed to the development of these connections and remains an integral component of both informal and professional interpersonal communications. These resources presented organizational leaders and managers the opportunities to interact with stakeholders in a manner difficult to accomplish within the parameters of traditional methods (Kane et al., 2014). These connections could be individualized or made within a group context, in environments that promote a dynamic experience for all parties. Social media is now at the forefront, as many widely accessible applications and websites integrated a variety of

functions to aide in the collaborative and creative process. Through social media, stakeholders can efficiently exchange and share information in a virtual space that is both user friendly, controlled, and readily accessible (Kane et al., 2014).

Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are among the most popular platforms with hundreds of millions users. Borgatti and Foster (2003) and Kane et al. (2014) projected social media platforms would continue to develop in terms of functionality and capacity, increasing the economic impact. The impact remains unknown due to several factors, including the rapid pace technology evolves. According to the research, Social Network Analysis (SNA) served as one method through which the impact of technological change on an organization was assessed and evaluated. Through SNA, practitioners identified four key features of social media networks, and these are part of the framework for evaluating the implications on the process of organizational development and improvement. These findings were integrated within a theoretical framework applicable across a wide variety of organizations and disciplines, and appeared in the social sciences for the greater part of a century (Borgatti & Foster, 2003; Kane et al., 2014).

SNA was reviewed by Kane et al. (2014) and Maroulis and Gomez (2008), who focused on the various components of interactivity through the utilization of social media technologies. SNA proposed social interactions comprised of a collection of nodes linked by a series of dyadic, independent connections that form pathways allowing each node to interact in a manner both unpredictable and indirect. Within this context, a node was described as any participating entity or group, including stakeholders, organizations, and even entire nations (Kane et al., 2014; Maroulis & Gomez, 2008). The four key features of social media networks identified through research were:

1. **Environmental shaping**: The predictable impact and influence of the digital environment on participating members.

2. **Contagion**: The process through which resources are carried, shared, and exchanged through a network and the various nodes.

3. **Structural capital**: The varied roles and relationships of individuals within the network, and the resultant constraints or benefits.

4. **Resource access**: The resources available within the digital environment and the process by which various nodes gain access and benefit from them (Ellison, 2007; Kane et al., 2014).

Borgatti and Foster (2003) organized these features into a matrix to bring organizations under two overarching areas, the first of which was explanatory goals. This aspect addressed social homogeneity, which referred to the tendency of network characteristics to have a comparable impact on individuals or groups within the same network. Attached to the area of explanatory goals within this structure was performance variation, which described the variation in performance of nodes depending on their position in the network. The second overarching component of this 2 x 2 matrix was explanatory mechanisms, which referred to network structures and the content addressed within the network. This information is represented in Figure 1.

Explanatory Goals	Explanatory Mechanisms	
	Structure	Content
Social Homogeneity	Environmental shaping	Contagion
Performance Variation	Structural capital	Resource access

Figure 1. Canonical Social Network Research. Source: Kane et al., 2014.

Conceptually, this 2 x 2 matrix connected to some key features of social media applications and their impact on the ability of members within an organization to effectively and instantaneously share and exchange information. Social networking sites rapidly grew more robust in terms of functionality and platforms became readily accessible and user-friendly (Ellison, 2007). Through these applications, members within an organization could connect collaboratively with stakeholders across geographic and organizational lines through the development of virtual teams (Smith & Marx, 1996). Innovative technological resources for virtual conferencing allowed organizations competing within the global economy to contravene a wide array of limiting factors. The linkage to a diverse collection of websites and resources resulted in increased levels of flexibility, allowing organizational leaders to meet the communicative needs of stakeholders in an efficient manner as they led through Groysberg and Slind's elements of conversational leadership (Derosa, 2010; Groysberg & Slind, 2012c).

Generational Change

Generations typically represented groups of individuals who experienced a similar set of exposures, including political landscapes, popular culture, natural disasters, and global events (Bourne, 2015). These commonly experienced events inherently contributed toward the ideologies, perspectives, ethical standpoints, and values maintained by each generational group. According to Hansen and Leuty (2012) and Wiedmer (2015), organizations were faced with a unique situation in which four generations of professionals must work together to accomplish a common set of desired outcomes. Although such diversity presented some advantages, organizational leaders had to make determinations on the most effective strategies to synchronously meet the

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personal and professional needs of each generation. This involved the development of

workplaces deemed suitable and enjoyable by each generation to promote retention and

recruitment strategies centered on acquiring top candidates across generational lines.

Leaders in business and organizations within all professional fields must engage in the

continual process of motivating, recognizing, and rewarding employees belonging to all

generational groups (Hansen & Leuty, 2012; Rivers, 2012; Wiedmer, 2015)

In chronological order, collective designations include the Silent Generation or

Traditionalists, the Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y (often referred to as

Millennials), and the youngest, Generation Z (Emeagwali, 2011; Hansen & Leuty, 2012;

Ruddick, 2009; Wiedmer, 2015). The Silent Generation typically included individuals

born in or before 1945. They are typically introverts and demonstrate high levels of

caution, which is reflected in their decision-making processes and interpersonal

relationships. Professionally, this generation is loyal to their organizations and as a result

they typically remained for extensive periods of time and maintained stringent moral

standards (Fogg, 2009; Hansen & Leuty, 2012; Wiedmer, 2015). Members of the Silent

Generation thrive within traditional learning environments that are instructor-centered by

respected organizational leaders. In return for their loyalty, they preferred tangible

rewards including plaques, certificates, and trophies, in addition to a sense of support,

value and respect from supervisors, employers, and managers (Buahene & Kovary, 2003;

Hansen & Leuty, 2012; Wiedmer, 2015).

According to Fingerman, Pillemer, Silverstein, and Suitor (2012), individuals

with birthdates between 1946 and 1964 represent the Baby Boomer generation, and are

collectively viewed as the largest and most competitive group when considering their

pursuit of employment opportunities and resources. This generation is the result of a

spike in births as the American economy recovered from the impact of World War II and

the Great Depression. Due to the size of their cohort, Baby Boomers inherently

developed a culture of competitiveness geared toward the acquisition and retention of

resources and opportunities (Fingerman et al., 2012; Rivers, 2012). They strive for

success and view material achievements as indicators due to their experiences during a

prosperous timeframe. In addition to their materialistic mindset, Baby Boomers are

individualistic, seeking autonomy and opportunities to exhibit their unique characteristics

and capabilities in their personal and professional lives (Wiedmer, 2015). This cohort

maintains a high level of optimism and as a result, were significant contributors to some

of the large-scale social accomplishments and movements in America's history. Similar

to Traditionalists, Baby Boomers are often workaholics, maintaining a sense of duty and

purpose as they rely on organizations and their professional lives to add meaning to their

existence (Fingerman et al., 2012).

Generation X (birthdates from 1961-1979) exhibit a set of characteristics and

mindset significantly different when compared to those of Traditionalists and Baby

Boomers. Whereas the Silent Generation was viewed as loyal and dedicated and Baby

Boomers optimistic and motivated, members of Generation X were typically

contemptuous and incredulous (Hansen & Leuty, 2012; Wiedmer, 2015). This was

because they were impacted by a multitude of negative global events throughout

childhood, including the Persian Gulf War and the HIV and AIDS epidemics.

Additionally, statistical indicators were often unfavorable, including an escalation in

divorce and crime rates. Exposure to media and television also amplified during the

onset of this generation, allowing them to view worldwide events from a closer vantage point. An additional byproduct of this exposure was the increased impact and influence of popular culture (Hansen & Leuty, 2012; Wiedmer, 2015). According to Hansen and Leuty (2012) and Fogg (2009), Generation X was the first to experience an upbringing in which both parents participated in the workforce, inspiring independence, autonomy, resilience, and adaptability because this often resulted in them having to take care of themselves and possibly siblings on a daily basis for extended periods of time. Although the research showed members of this generation are generally cynics and skeptics, they are also noted for being intrinsically motivated and able to maximize the use of resources available to them. Generation X is also noted as lacking the loyalty exhibited by Traditionalists; however, they offer their best effort to each organization to which they transition (Fogg, 2009; Hansen & Leuty, 2012). Unlike Baby Boomers who are primarily motivated by material gains, Generation X finds motivation in challenges, feedback, and opportunities to experience development and growth within an organization.

Generation Y, also referred to as Millennials, represents individuals born from 1980 through the 1990s. With approximately 71 million people, it constitutes the largest generational cohort since the Baby Boomers (Buahene & Kovary, 2003). Some of the lived experiences of this generation included the World Trade Center terrorist attacks, the onset of the war in Iraq, and two major natural disasters, the Asian Ocean tsunami and Hurricane Katrina. This generation is often referred to as the Internet Generation and Connect 24/7 due to their prevalent web savvy and high levels of connectivity through social media outlets. Millennials experienced an upbringing in which they were constantly the recipients of information regarding world events through technological

mediums and interfaces, including cellular devices, computers, and the Worldwide Web (Hoffman, 2017; McGlynn, 2010). When juxtaposed against other generational cohorts, Generation Y has a propensity to be more socially confident, valuing inclusion within a community as they actively pursue a sense of meaning. This pursuit fuels their desire to engage in the experimental process of devising new and creative solutions to problems within an organization and as a reward for such contributions to the organization, their preference lies in items or gestures that indicate they are valued and supported by leaders. Finally, this generation is driven by technology and gravitates toward organizations that demonstrate a focus of remaining on the cutting edge of technological advancements (Hassing, 2016).

Generation Z (born in 2000 and after), is the most recent and still developing cohort with a current membership of approximately 23 million. Due to a lack of longevity and experience, there are limitations in what is known about the impact of lived experiences on this generation's ability to function and engage in meaningful communication within an organization (Igel & Urquhart, 2012; Jacoby, 2015). According to Geck (2006), similar to the Millennials, Generation Z is constantly connected through technology and engage virtually on a regular basis with individuals in different locations. This type of communication is utilized to maintain interpersonal connections with friends and family, and may include video conferencing, text messaging, and a plethora of applications and devices that allow them to receive and broadcast updates in real-time (Geck, 2006). The earliest members of Generation Z are currently entering the workforce, and it is already evident they are socially connected to their counterparts. Additionally, they enter as competitors within the global economy

who require less direction and support since they have access to the digital tools and resources that allow them to accomplish a wide range of tasks (Fogg, 2009; Wiedmer, 2015).

Research studies identified multiple distinctions between generations when evaluating their work values and what they bring to an organization. According to Fingerman et al. (2012), Baby Boomers place the most value on opportunities to learn and the ability to maintain high levels of autonomy in their personal and professional lives. However, Generation X places more value on being free from direct supervision and oversight, finding certain work environments reduce their ability to maximize production (Fingerman et al., 2012). Research on work values rendered varying results due to multiple factors, including age and the lived experiences of the various generations; however, altruism within the workplace showed a steady decline as progress was made from the Silent Generation to Generations X and Y. Due to these differences, it became critically important for managers to closely evaluate the needs presented by each generation (Brotheim, 2014; Hansen & Leuty, 2012). According to Groysberg and Slind (2012c), " As millennials and other younger workers gain a foothold in organizations, they bring an expectation that peers and authority figures alike will communicate with them in a dynamic, two-way fashion" (p. 7). Therefore, leaders must place a great deal of focus on promoting interactivity within the organization, engaging workers in conversation that involves an authentic back-and-forth exchange of ideas, commentary, and perspectives. This need became more critical with the younger generations because they hold a strong desire to discover their purpose and maintain a sense of belonging within meaningful communities (Wiedmer, 2015).

Due to these factors, leaders must maintain flexibility and adaptability as they employ strategies necessary to address the varied values, motivations, and attitudes of each generational group (Fogg, 2009; Hansen & Leuty, 2012). Ultimately, effective leadership of a multigenerational workforce requires leaders to communicate in a unique manner with each group, exhibit respect for all stakeholders, and create a workplace that presents options whenever possible. Exemplary leaders of multigenerational workforces built cohesion among all cohorts by placing focus on shared understandings and the value each generation added to the overall functionality of the organization (Buahene & Kovary, 2003).

Economic Change

Knowledge management was considered a key concept for economic change within a 21st century organization. New and cutting-edge methods including virtual integrated practice (VIP) and the integration of virtual teams helped organizations strive to excel in this area. According to Groysberg and Slind (2012c), the evolution of organizations within the 21st century global economy called for the gradual progression toward more sophisticated methods of sharing and processing information. This was necessitated as service oriented industries became more significant than manufacturing industries from an economic standpoint (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c). Virtual collaboration became an integral component of the transformation occurring in a wide range of business sectors. Through this practice, organizations within a variety of fields included experts from around the globe as they processed and shared information. VIP was therefore another example of the evolution of communication in sectors including business, education, and healthcare (Derosa, 2010).

VIP involved developing collaborative teams across geographic and organizational lines, addressing the logistical obstacles connected to in-person meetings. Virtual workplaces continued to grow in popularity as the economy transitioned from focusing on manufacturing to knowledge and information (Harvey & Drolet, 2006). Raisiene and Jonusauskas (2011) asserted with the development of virtual teams, direct interpersonal communication became an optional component to the realization of organizational objectives. This had a positive impact on efficiency and programmatic efficacy, but it was imperative leaders consistently engaged in efforts to maintain updated technology to ensure sustainability.

According to Servaes and Lie (2013), several communication models and theories emerged as the needs of the 21st century organization called for implementation of sophisticated methods to share and process information. These models included the dependency approach, modernization and growth theory, and the multiplicity or participatory model. This shift became necessary due to increased interdependency of communities, regions, and nations in the globalized world. Organizations attempting to improve upon their competitiveness and realize success within the 21st century global economy must find ways to acquire and share the right knowledge in the most effective formats and contexts (Servaes & Lie, 2013). Current research regarding knowledge management practices showed organizations placed a significant level of focus on management; however, there were limitations to such communication with non-managerial stakeholders (Han & Anantatmula, 2007).

The implementation of any knowledge management program requires authentic buy-in from all employees and managers must assume responsibility for identifying

motivational factors. According to Glazer, Hannafin, and Song (2005), technological

resources and advancements were critical to effective information sharing and

communication within an organization; however, appropriate implementation and

strategic planning were of equal importance. A prevalent limiting factor for managers

was their misconception that investments in technology inherently resulted in vast

improvements in the transfer of information (Glazer et al., 2005). However, an action

plan must accompany such change initiatives, which should include professional

development opportunities for employees across departments (Schrum, Galizio, &

Ledesma, 2011). Eylon and Allison (2002) purported another limiting factor experienced

by organizations as they evolved and become more complex was an increased level of

ambiguity with causation typically linked to the interpretation of stakeholders as opposed

to a lack of data or distortions. According to Marin (2013), 21st century organizations

utilized social networks consistently as they played a significant role in the dissemination

of information. Some of the primary functions included employee recruitment by

organizations and job searching by prospective employees (Marin, 2013).

The information flow involved a three-stage process during which organizational

leaders identified an opportunity, made determinations on the most suitable applicants,

and disseminated information. This process was entirely improved and expedited due to

the direct impact of social media and other advancements in technology and

organizational functionality (Marin, 2013). Organizations competing in the global

economy were in constant pursuit of the best candidates and engaged in the ongoing

pursuit of methods to employ such talent without regard for geographical locations.

Derosa (2010) stated through the implementation of virtual collaboration, several

business sectors and industries experienced transformational change, allowing for creative recruitment and employment procedures. Additionally, practitioners worldwide could collectively work toward the accomplishment of a desired outcome (Derosa, 2010). Ultimately, the success of the 21st century organization relied heavily upon the ability of leaders to manage the multi-directional flow of information. The traditional corporate communication methodologies must be eliminated and more complex processes implemented (Derosa, 2010; Groysberg & Slind, 2012a).

Organizational Change

Groysberg and Slind (2012b) asserted as companies became less hierarchical and transitioned to being more lateral and flat in nature, more frontline stakeholders contributed to the conversations and completion of tasks critical to the success of the organization. This shift resulted in organizations placing more value on lateral and bottom-up conversations, understanding they were of equal or greater importance than top-down approaches (Groysberg & Slind, 2012b). Effective conversational leaders engaged stakeholders in multidirectional webs of conversation and viewed conversation as a core component of the strategic process involved in realizing positive systematic change within an organization. Within these conversations, clarity was a focal point and hierarchal structures were placed in the background (Glaser & Tartell, 2014; Hurley & Brown, 2009).

The minimization of top-down communicative structures was critical to the actualization of organizational change due to several factors including reduced ambiguity and improved understanding of purpose. Appelbaum, Habashy, Malo, and Shafiq (2012) asserted lateral communication reduced the negative impact of stressors within the

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professional environment and promoted well-being and a sense of empowerment among stakeholders. This occurred when leaders included stakeholders in interactive conversations that addressed concepts and initiatives critical to organizational functionality. In this capacity, effective leaders clearly communicated the mission and vision, and led with transparency (Appelbaum et al., 2012). Conversations within an organization had the potential of serving as building blocks of a culture centered on greatness; however, success in this capacity depended upon the quality of the conversations and was highly reliant upon the level of trust established between participants. Conversational intelligence was a key concept when evaluating the efficacy of leaders in engaging stakeholders in meaningful and authentic conversation (Gambetti & Biraghi, 2015; Glaser & Tartell, 2014).

According to Nelissen and van Selm (2008), multiple factors contributed to success in this area, including creating a safe space for conversations to occur, establishing a clear focus, and differentiating support. A sense of safety was created when leaders demonstrated genuine receptivity to the ideas and perspectives presented by stakeholders. Additionally, effective leaders skillfully engaged in conversations that contributed to the removal of the physical and metaphorical barriers that often had a negative impact on the level of intimacy. This was accomplished through the implementation of various strategies, including the utilization of cordial intonation, active listening, appropriate eye contact, clarification, exploratory commentary, and the use of a variety of verbal and non-verbal acknowledgements (Nelissen & van Selm, 2008). Globalization, changes to the methods employed by companies to create value, and technological developments significantly reduced the effectiveness of top-down

leadership models. Efficacious leaders in today's organizations found ways to develop relationships with employees and engage them in conversations that were organic and interactive as opposed to authoritative and command driven (Glaser & Tartell, 2014).

Global Change

Groysberg and Slind (2012c) noted the 21st century global economy comprised of diversified and widespread workforces with immense reach and scope. This posed a challenge in navigating a landscape that traversed geographic and cultural boundaries, calling leaders to devise creative and innovative methodologies to interact (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c). Goods, services, finances, and human capital reached a level of movement within the 21st century global economy previously unimaginable. Global flows were a contributing factor regarding economic growth for centuries and were now more influential in establishing connectivity among various economies. Current projections indicated the global flow of resources was on a trajectory to increase from $25 trillion in 2012 to $85 trillion in 2025, with an estimated increase of $250 billion to $450 billion annually (Manyika et al., 2014; Manyika et al., 2016).

These authors asserted greatly increased utilization of the internet and other technological resources resulted in the evolution of communication flows and the development of new, dynamic movements of resources across physical and digital infrastructures (Manyika et al., 2014; Manyika et al., 2016). The 21st century global economy saw a transition from global flows that were more labor-intensive, incorporating the inexpensive services of organizations in foreign countries, to a place where approximately half the existent global flows were knowledge-intensive, with digitization having an increased impact. Within the context of these global changes, conversational

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leadership involved the implementation of core processes to promote the changes

necessary for organizations to make the necessary adjustments and adaptations (Manyika

et al., 2014; Manyika et al., 2016).

The global movement of resources necessitated a focus on strong conversational

leadership as organizations shifted from traditional paradigms centered on business

improvement to those that integrated social process improvement. In connection,

organizational leaders needed to find new, innovative ways to harness the power of

collaboration and collective decision-making by incorporating the perspectives of diverse

stakeholders through a variety of strategies, including face-to-face meetings and web-

based conferencing. It was through these methods conversations were interconnected in

a way that created possibilities for systemic change in a steadily transforming global

environment (Harvey & Drolet, 2006; Marzano et al., 2005).

Theoretical Background

Conversations were lifelines providing essential nourishment to the workplace;

however, the perspectives stakeholders maintained regarding this aspect of the

organization often varied when considering the purpose. Individuals often maintained the

misconception conversation was a tool utilized to convince others to take a desired belief

system or deliver commands instead of a means to navigate through the landscape of

interpersonal relationships. According to Groysberg and Slind (2012c), conversational

leadership was established when conversation was viewed as a core component of the

strategies employed to positively impact change throughout the organization. Leaders

viewed their organizations as dynamic, interconnected webs of conversation linked to a

flattened hierarchical framework. This strategic approach may benefit an organization in

many ways as it promoted growth in the area of social capital and the capacity of

stakeholders to engage in collaborative efforts within the organization and on a global

scale (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c).

Hurley and Brown (2009) proposed a relatively simplistic model, Figure 2, that

outlined the practice of conversational leadership. This framework applied at a variety of

levels within an organization, including initiatives strategically developed to promote

accomplishment of big picture goals and objectives. Within this model, conversational

leadership was represented by six essential processes to build structures centered on

engagement (Hurley & Brown, 2009).

Figure 2. Conversational Leadership: Creating Architectures for Engagement. Adapted

from *Conversational Leadership: Thinking Together for a Change* (p. 3), by Pegasus

Communications, The Systems Thinker, Brown and Hurley, 2009.

These six essential processes connected directly to Groysberg and Slind's

elements of conversational leadership (intimacy, inclusion, interactivity, and

intentionality). They involved the utilization of effective conversation to promote critical aspects of organizational functionality, such as a focus on purpose, engagement of key stakeholders, and actions resulting from collective thinking and collaboration.

Leadership Theory

Leadership is a robust and complex concept present in the research for several decades, making an appearance in the work of philosophers including Plato and Plutarch. Leadership exists inherently among all people, serving as a component of society since the onset of ancient civilization and critical when evaluating the success of an organization (Lambert, 2003). Learning and leadership were integrated and viewed as a community-based, reciprocal process centered on relationships and interactivity. Dynamic leadership involved flattening hierarchical schematics, promoting back-and-forth exchanges, and minimizing top-down methodologies. Conceptually, leadership and leadership capacity were closely connected and interwoven throughout the existing body of work (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Lambert, 2003).

Leadership capacity was considered a multifaceted concept involving two primary factors when considering the work of stakeholders; the first was participation (Bacha, 2014). Within a school setting, the principal was a key player; however, they must acquire buy-in and get active participation from teachers and other stakeholders for the institution to be considered high-performing in the area of leadership capacity (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982). Secondly, skillful involvement was necessary. Without such intentionality, collaborative efforts lacked focus and productivity was not maximized. Figure 3 demonstrates the leadership capacity matrix developed by Lambert (2003), which illustrates these factors and the manner in which varying degrees impact outcomes.

	Low Degree Participation	High Degree of Participation
Low Degree of Skill	Principal as autocratic manager.	Principal as "laissez faire" manager; many teachers develop unrelated programs.
	One-way flow of information; no shared vision.	Fragmented information lacks coherence; programs that lack shared purpose.
	Codependent, paternal/maternal relationships.	Norms of individualism; no collective responsibility.
	Norms of compliance and blame; technical and superficial program coherence.	Undefined roles and responsibilities.
	Little innovation in teaching and learning.	"Spotty" innovation; some classrooms are excellent while others are poor.
	Poor student achievement or only short-term improvements on standardized tests.	Static overall student achievement.
High Degree of Skill	Principal and key teachers as purposeful leadership team.	Principal, teachers, parents, and students as skillful leaders.
	Limited use of schoolwide data; information flow within designated leadership groups.	Shared vision resulting in program coherence.
	Polarized staff with pockets of strong resistance.	Inquiry-based use of data to inform decisions and practice.
	Efficient designated leaders; others serve in traditional roles.	Broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility reflected in roles and actions.
	Strong innovation, reflection skills, and teaching excellence; weak program coherence.	Reflective practice that leads consistently to innovation.

Figure 3. Leadership Capacity Matrix. Adapted from *Leadership Capacity for Lasting School Improvement*, by Linda Lambert, 2003.

Leadership theories connected to academic institutions and several were influential in guiding successful principals. Some of the prominent leadership theories impacting the field of education and other sectors were total quality management (TQM), transformational leadership, and servant leadership. Each presented distinct concepts and elements with some similarities such as a focus on interpersonal, intrapersonal, and organizational components effective leader must consider (Marzano et al., 2005).

Total Quality Management (TQM)

Edward Deming was widely viewed as the founder of TQM, presenting the framework as Japan attempted to restore its capacity to manufacture various products immediately following World War II. Companies within the United States benefitted from TQM in their efforts to continually improve upon the quality of their products and services provided to customers (Mawhinney, 1992). Based on the work of Waldman (1993), this theory was based on the premise all members of an organization genuinely desired to perform at an optimal level and it was the leader's responsibility for this to become the reality. TQM presented a distinct collection of guidelines and regulations focused on continuous improvement of products and services offered by an organization. It involved integration of flexible and fluid processes and functions specifically targeting stakeholder satisfaction (Johannsen, 2000).

Deming (as cite by Sosik & Dionne, 1997) proposed conceptually, TQM was summarized by 14 principles universal to all organizations:

1. Generate reliability of function for perfection of merchandise and service.

2. Implement innovative ideas.

3. Stop dependence on mass inspection.

4. End grading practice

5. Develop persistent and everlasting system of production and service

6. Institute training

7. Develop leadership

8. Drive out fear

9. Maximize the effort of team work

10. Remove slogans and catchphrases

11. Eradicate numerical quotas for staff

12. Eliminate barriers to satisfaction and pleasure of workmanship

13. Encourage education and self-improvement

14. Accomplish change

TQO centered on the business sector, but these factors directly connected to leadership within the field of education (Farooq et al., 2007; Terry, 1996). Figure 4 illustrates the perspective of David Waldman, who suggested Deming's 14 principles of TQM could be organized into five basic factors bringing specificity when considering the behaviors demonstrated by efficacious leaders (Sosik & Dionne, 1997)

Change Agency
The ability of a leader to inspire change within the organization

Continuous Improvement
A leader must solicit continous improvement by constantly maintaining a high level of focus on the desired outcomes

Eradication of Short-Term Goals
Short-term, quantitative goals are eliminated, and leaders participate in the accomplishment of long-term desired outcomes.

Teamwork
The ability to establish a cohesive group of individuals who are focused on the achievement of desired outcomes.

Trust Building
Leaders promote intimacy and a culture of trust-based relationships through consistency.

Figure 4. Five Basic Factors Defining the Actions of an Effective Leader. Source: *School Leadership that Works: From Research to Results* (p. 15), by Marzano et al., 2005.

Transformational Leadership

　　According to Marzano et al. (2005), transformational leadership centered on change and involved relationships in which all parties were stimulated in various capacities. Additionally, transformational leaders found ways to elevate stakeholders from followers to leaders, and those within leadership roles to moral agents (Marzano et al., 2005). As such, transformational leadership was preferred in education because it typically led to the realization of desired outcomes beyond those initially established. Transformational leadership was characterized by a wide array of traits and attributes, encapsulated by four overarching factors: individual consideration, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation. These Four I's of transformational leadership addressed the needs of stakeholders to promote empowerment, inclusion, performance, and strength of character.

　　Intellectual stimulation involved critical thinking and creativity, as leaders facilitated the process of devising new methodologies to solve old problems (Marzano et al., 2005). Leaders within successful organizations communicated high expectations for all members, which characterized inspirational motivation. Individual consideration involved an intimacy component as leaders sought a deeper understanding of the personal needs of stakeholders, especially those seemingly neglected (Marks & Printy, 2003). Additionally, Stalinski (2004) stated leaders must model desired behavior within the organization by demonstrating their engagement in the constant pursuit of excellence and ongoing personal and professional growth and development.

　　Transformational leadership placed stakeholder motivation at the forefront. It involved the development and presentation of a clear, concise organizational mission and

vision, along with conversations, leadership behaviors, and other sources of inspiration to promote the work of employees toward desired outcomes (Fitzgerald & Schutte, 2010). Conceptually, transformational leadership connected to conversational leadership. Intimacy was a key component as leaders developed strong interpersonal relationships to understand their individual needs and maximize their potential as assets to the organization. Transformational leaders must be emotionally intelligent and demonstrate self-efficacy consistently as they engage with stakeholders (Shatzer, Caldarella, Hallam, & Brown, 2014). Fitzgerald and Schutte (2010) viewed emotional intelligence and self-efficacy as critical elements because they improved upon the receptivity of followers as they were led to accomplish organizational goals and often eased the transformational change process. Transformational leaders worked toward raising awareness of employees and connecting their input to the mission and vision of the organization, causing it to be viewed as integral to the work.

Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990) identified six key characteristics demostrated by transformational leaders:

1. Identifying and articulating a vision

2. Providing an appropriate model

3. Fostering the acceptance of group goals

4. Communicating high performance expectations

5. Providing individualized support

6. High levels of charisma.

These characteristics were relatively standard, although leaders engaged in the tranformative process with varied levels of awareness, which was a major factor when

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considering the level to which the leader was capable of bringing the desired changes to fruition. Transformational change was multi-faceted and highly complex due the numerous factors and variables that must be considered by leaders (Podsakoff et al., 1990; Wong & Laschinger, 2013) . Anderson and Ackerman-Anderson (2010) stated "Transformation is a radical shift of strategy, structure, systems, processes or technology, so significant that it requires a shift of culture, behavior, and mindset to implement successfully and sustain over time" (p. 60). Organizations focused on transformational leadership were typically more productive and able adjust to realize change (Shatzer et al., 2014).

Servant Leadership

Leadership behavior must evolve to meet the many changes impacting organizations in today's global economy. Ethical behavior and a genuine desire to meet the needs of stakeholders are now at the at the epicenter when considering the attributes that must be exhibited by leaders on a consistent basis. Avolio and Gardner (2005) asserted leadership studies transitioned from focusing on transformational leadership to focusing on leadership with a relational, shared, or global perspective. These leadership theories focused on interactions between leaders and followers as key elements and indicators of behaviors that were trust-inspiring and pro-organizational. Servant leadership theory, originally established by Robert Greenleaf in 1970, incorporates social responsibility and emphasizes a style placing a high level of consideration on the needs of followers (Furrow, 2015; Sendjaya, Sarros, & Santora, 2008). According to Greenleaf (2002), "It begins with a natural feeling that one wants to serve first…That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assauge an

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unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions" (p. 27). This also placed going

beyond self-interest as a primary characteristic of servant leadership, asserting the

servant-leader was dedicated to creating opportunities to help other members of the

organization realize growth (Greenleaf, 2002).

This differentiated servant leadership from other leadership theories that placed

the well-being and advancement of the organization at the forefront. This orientation set

the stage for development of strong interpersonal relationships within the organization,

minimizing the impact of hierarchal structures (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016). The true

servant leader viewed themself as *primus interpares,* or first among equals, meaning

power was not utilized to mobilize stakeholders (van Dierendonck, 2011). Instead, the

capital gained through the development and nurturance of strong interpersonal

relationships was utilized to persuade individuals to buy into the mission, vision, and

completion of action items. Leaders aligned with this theoretical concept were not

motivated by the traditional concept of power (McMahone, 2012). According to van

Dierendonck (2011), power was viewed as the opportunity to serve others in an improved

and increased capacity, as opposed to a tool used to provoke a desired response. Servant

leadership was viewed and interpreted differently by multiple researchers in pursuit of a

concrete definition. Spears (1995) distingushed 10 essential elements of servant

leadership. Spears (1995) previously served as the director at the Greenleaf Center for

Servant Leadership, and utilized his extensive knowledge of Greenleaf's work as he

extracted these elements:

1. Listening, emphasizing the importance of communication and seeking to
   identify the will of people

2. Empathy, understanding others and accepting them

3. Healing, helping make others whole

4. Awareness, being awake and present

5. Persuasion, influencing others by arguments not positional power

6. Conceptualization, thinking beyond present-day need and stretching into a possible future

7. Foresight, forseeing outcomes of situations and working with intuition

8. Stewardship, holding something in trust and serving the needs of others

9. Commitment to growth, nurturing the personal, professional, and spiritual growth of others

10. Community, emphasizing local communities are essential in a persons' life

van Dierendonck (2011) and Jorge Correia de Sousa and van Dierendonck (2014) proposed all models of servant leadership presented a set of unique strengths and weaknesses when closely evaluated, considering behavior, antecedents, and desired outcomes. Through such synthesis, six key characteristics of servant leadership resonated across conceptual frameworks providing an overarching view of what followers experienced as they engage with an authentic servant leader (Dierendonck, 2011; Jorge Correia de Sousa & van Dierendonck, 2014). Servant leaders demonstrated authenticity, humility, and acceptance of all individuals regardless of their idiosyncracies. They served as a compass to stakeholders across the organization, providing direction on a continuous basis, and placed a great deal of focus on the development and execution of action plans centered on the benefit of all stakeholders (Dierendonck, 2011).

The Four I's of transformational leadership, emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and servant leadership all represented critical components when considering the skill set and perspective a leader must maintain to lead an organizations through Groysberg and Slind's elements of conversational leadership. An in-depth review of these elements is included in the next section.

<center>**Elements of Conversational Leadership**</center>

According to Paull and McGrevin (1996), organizational conversation was a critical component when considering the development of authentic, collaborative, and trust-based relationships between members of an organization and those in positions of leadership. This encompassed all the methods, protocols, and strategies utilized to transmit information throughout the organization, and varied significantly from corporate conversation based on hierarchy and delivery of commands (Glaser & Tartell, 2014). This top-down, command-and-control model of leadership minimalized the need for human conversation and focused only on task management. The work of Groysberg and Slind (2012c) supported the stance leaders within a 21st century organization must adapt a skillset allowing them to acquire stakeholder buy-in amidst ongoing shifts and changes in a variety of areas including technology, economy, and the intergenerational workforce. The authors asserted these principles were embodied by organizational conversation and delimitated four conversational leadership elements: intimacy, inclusion, interactivity and intentionality (Bowman, 2014; Groysberg & Slind, 2012b).

Intimacy

According to Groysberg and Slind (2012c), literal and figurative closeness was a key component of developing trust-based relationships, and it was only after trust was

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established that authentic conversations occurred. Within the context of the organizational framework, leaders must employ a distinct collection of strategies to reduce the hierarchical, spatial, and interpersonal distance that serves as a significant barrier to the development of a trust-based, collaborative culture. Intimacy served as the foundation on which the other three elements were built (Groysberg & Slind, 2012b, 2012c). Effective organizational leaders made a concerted and ongoing effort to reduce the distance between themselves and lower-level members of the organization. In the absence of such strategic planning and effort, the organization never truly unearthed its full potential (Svennevig, 2008). Effective leaders also learned about the intricacies connected to each stakeholder, listened actively during conversations, and communicated in a way that was authentic, transparent, personal, and humanistic. Through conversational intimacy, leaders gained the ability to serve as change agents within their organization and secure stakeholder buy-in necessary to bring desired outcomes to fruition (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c)

Closeness, trust, and familiarity. The quality of employee communication was not measured in terms of the quantity of time spent engaging with stakeholders. Chapman and White (2011) purported closeness, trust, and familiarity were established, promoted, and nurtured through ongoing interpersonal interactions that mirrored those occurring between friends (Chapman & White, 2011). Openness, honesty, mutual respect, and interactivity were at the forefront of such interactions, and they were lively and filled with authenticity and the true personalities of the parties involved (Brazer & Bauer, 2013). For leaders to accomplish this, they reduced their focus on hierarchy and flattened the topography across the organization. This was accomplished through a focus

on back-and-forth interactions that allowed top-down and bottom-up conversations to be viewed as equally valuable throughout the system. Organizational leaders could accomplish this dynamic by reducing the physical space and engaging in meetings to close distances. Logistically, it was often more efficient to meet with stakeholders in a large group setting where information was disseminated and tasks distributed (Bacha, 2014; Crowley, 2011).

According to Han and Anantatmula (2007), technological advances and organizational change with the 21st century opened the door to alternative options, including virtual meetings that improve stakeholder availability and in many instances, the quality of the information shared (Han & Anantatmula, 2007). Groysberg and Slind (2012c) proposed physical closeness was not critical to the development of intimacy; however, face-to-face meetings were an invaluable part of the process and a highly effective strategy. Through direct, interpersonal interactions, leaders gained the ability to clearly demonstrate the behaviors conducive to the development of strong, trust-based, personal and professional relationships (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c). Organizational leaders could develop a culture of trust through the characteristics and actions exhibited daily. Understanding of the needs of all members within the organization was needed and connected personal motivators to place each stakeholder in a position to maximize his or her personal and professional potential (Kwan, 2016). Trust was only built when leaders established themselves as worthy of faith, confidence, and respect of followers. Additionally, stakeholders viewed their relationship with a leader, and the overall climate of the organization, as beneficial and centered on productivity, sustained growth, and inclusion (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c; Lambert, 2003).

Trust-based relationships were typically the most sustainable because they were based on personal connectivity and were therefore valuable and authentic. With trust at the forefront, conversations could occur on a wide array of subjects with a back-and-forth engagement void of measurement and politics. In these situations, the goals and objectives remained at the forefront. According to Wahlstrom and Louis (2008), trust in the decision-making capabilities of leadership was a better predictor of overall job satisfaction than their ability to actively participate in the process of making choices impacting the organization. Within the context of education, trust had a direct impact on the effectiveness of a school site as it connected to several aspects of functionality, including stakeholder engagement. Principals could build trust through the demonstration of supportive behavior and practices; however, the exhibition of leadership capacity was also of critical importance (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Based on the findings of Bryk and Schneider (2003), competence in primary leadership responsibilities, personal integrity, and investment in personal interests of educators led to relationships with principals centered on trust and respect.

Relationships flatten the hierarchical landscape. According to Král and Králová (2016) and Murshed, Uddin, and Hossain (2015), the development of strong interpersonal relationships was a key component in the establishment of a culture centered on trust, openness, and authenticity. Interpersonal relationships allowed leaders to effectively develop capacities of stakeholders and enhance their ability to make decisions and act. In the absence of such relationships, the effectiveness of leadership conversations were minimized (Král & Králová, 2016; Murshed et al., 2015). Leaders who continually engaged in the process of strengthening existing relationships, building

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new relationships, and expanding relationship networks were likely to experience high levels of success with stakeholders as they pursued accomplishment of various goals and objectives (Sarikaya & Erdogan, 2016).

Effective leaders did not view the process of relationship building as merely another task to complete, but instead as an ongoing process essential to functionality and a responsibility, which required an optimal effort and critical thought. Interpersonal interactions with stakeholders across the organizational hierarchy were critical to the success and overall functionality of the organization. Marzano et al. (2005) addressed some of the behaviors educational leaders must demonstrate to be successful in this capacity. The 21st century global economy presented a plethora of variables and factors that resulted in a paradigm shift when considering the rules leaders follow as they pursue positive working relationships. This shifted from the framework of the industrial age, a timeframe focused on determination, education, and intelligence as success indicators for organizational leaders (Marzano et al., 2005).

The continual evolution in demographics, technology, and the economic marketplace magnified the importance of understanding leadership rules for relationship building (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013). According to the authors, this was due to factors directly connected to the new roles leaders must fulfill with fidelity, including development of trust-based connections with a wide range of peers in various areas of the world. Additionally, leaders must inspire and catalyze creativity, and maintain a high level of knowledge and perspective on the social impacts of their organization as they work toward building capacities of stakeholders (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013). Due to these factors, the leadership rules outlined by Berson and Stieglitz (2013) were critically

important. Leaders who failed to adjust their approach often failed to maximize their potential and placed great limitations upon themselves in developing human capital.

These rules accompanied several virtues and characteristics demonstrated by leaders when sustainable relationships were developed (Marzano et al., 2005). Affirmation was defined as the strategies employed by the leader to acknowledge and celebrate accomplishments of the school, individual members of the organization, or stakeholder groups (Marzano et al., 2005). Cottrell (2002) presented another perspective stating in the interest of authenticity and transparency, leaders must address all aspects of stakeholder performance, both positive and negative, to motivate and inspire members of the organization to strive for continual improvement (Cottrell, 2002).

Lashway (2001) indicated leaders needed to maintain a balanced approach in this regard, communicating in a clear, concise, and considerate manner the intricacies connected to those they supervise. Effective leaders demonstrated an appropriate level of flexibility through a willingness to adjust their approach based upon variables and factors connected to each situation. It was imperative leaders allowed and encouraged stakeholders to express their diverse opinions and demonstrate they were highly valued (Deering, Dilts, & Russell, 2003; Lashway, 2001).

Interactivity

Groysberg and Slind (2012c) and Uhl-Bien (2006) suggested in any given scenario, talk required a two-way, back-and-forth exchange of ideas, knowledge, and concepts. In alignment with this perspective, instances involving one person talking toward another did not constitute conversation. As corporate communication was replaced with organizational conversation, leaders and other stakeholders within the

organization engaged in a dynamic processes centered on flattening the hierarchical structure, allowing stakeholders to contribute to the accomplishment desired outcomes (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c; Uhl-Bien, 2006). The central purpose of organizational conversation was to provide two-way lines of communication through which leaders talked with other members of the organization, and not at them.

The continual evolution of technology supported this shift in communication and toward the transition of cultural norms that prefer dialogue over monologue (Jorgensen, 2010). The emergence of this culture was attributed to multiple factors, including generational, economic, and organizational changes requiring leaders to closely evaluate their communication with stakeholders and develop dynamic two-way processes (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c).

Dynamic exchange of comments and ideas. Skillful conversational leaders understood the critical importance of interactivity with employees within the organization and the resultant types of communication. Interactivity connected to the relational aspects of leadership as it built upon and scaffolded the level of intimacy between leaders followers. In the absence of opportunities to engage in authentic two-way exchanges, a leader may be unable to develop and sustain trust-based interpersonal relationships with other stakeholders. Organizational conversation involved a multilateral or bilateral exchange, void of hierarchical influences (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013).

These interactions benefited the organization because they allowed all parties to bring their best comments and ideas into consideration. Interactivity within organizational conversations allowed leaders to remove barriers because they had capacity to align and motivate followers (Rajbhandari, Loock, Du Plessis, & Rajbhandari,

2014). This was accomplished through incorporation of three conversation perspectives

centered on maximizing stakeholder input (Table 1).

Table 1

Three Conversation Perspectives

Perspective	Description
Perspective I: Idea Exchange	Each person conveys his ideas to the others. The criteria for success in idea exchanges are that each person states his position and intentions clearly and presents new ideas and pertinent facts for others to consider.
Perspective II: Understanding What Others Say	Each person seeks to understand the points that others are making, as well as the context and emotions behind their words. Operating in this perspective, people ask probing questions of each other. When done well, everyone feels heard and understood.
Perspective III: Exploring Possibilities	Participants explore the what-else or what-is-missing aspects of the topic by looking at a bigger picture. Conversations held in this perspective frequently combine ideas from several individuals in bold, innovative, and strategically valuable ways.

Note. Source: Berson and Stieglitz, 2013.

Through the integration of these perspectives, all organization members were

granted opportunity to convey their ideas and engage in conversations that placed mutual

understanding, exploration, and critical thinking at the forefront (Berson & Stieglitz,

2013). These authors also stated conversations typically did not include all three

perspectives; however, as more of were integrated, organizational communication

became more powerful (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013). According to Jones and Bearley

(2001), the methodology behind recognition of ideas had a significant impact on the

culture within an organization. Even ideas not aligned with the trajectory of the

organization mission and vision should receive respect and acknowledgement as adding

quality to the work completed (Jones & Bearley, 2001). Additionally, the perspectives of

resistance stakeholders should be embraced and validated. In these situations, the leader

developed an understanding of the rationale behind the dissention and ultimately gained

from support these individuals. When influenced in a positive manner, a leader could

gain support from resistors who in turn assist other stakeholders to make the desired

adjustments (Harvey & Drolet, 2006; Rafoth & Foriska, 2006).

Inclusion

In an optimal scenario, interpersonal conversation offered all participating parties

an authentic chance to express their perspectives, ideas, and thought processes. Truly

inclusive conversations relied on trust-based relationships with all stakeholders offering

authentic contributions in an interconnected, back-and-forth web of commentary

(Groysberg & Slind, 2012c). Organizational conversation mirrored this by calling

members to engage and create content demonstrative of the mission, vision, and

overarching beliefs. According to Gambetti and Biraghi (2015), inclusive organizations

allowed employees across the hierarchy add value to the work in a collaborative manner

focused on respect for all perspectives and beliefs (Gambetti & Biraghi, 2015). Through

this system, Hurley and Brown (2009) stated employees developed feelings of

empowerment. Conversational inclusion positively impacted creativity, innovation,

engagement, and how the organization was viewed both internally and externally.

Commitment to engaging stakeholders. Human nature desired opportunities to

offer input in both professional and personal scenarios. Frahm and Brown (2007) noted

inclusive leaders allowed other members to contribute to the decision-making process

and add value to the organization. Through this methodology, leaders established

connections between stakeholders and the mission and vision, promoting a sense of

ownership and accountability (Frahm & Brown, 2007). Previously, resisters were often

overlooked or avoided by leaders as they strived to make progress on their agendas, primarily due to the misalignment in perspectives and potential impact on progress toward achieving goals and objectives (Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, & Switzler, 2012).

Inclusive leaders embraced the perspectives of such individuals, understanding the rationale connected to dissent and finding ways to actively involve resisters toward progress (Fevre & Robinson, 2015). For employees to generate organizational content through an authentic and highly effective process, leaders relinquished control related to management of the commentary and its presentation by stakeholders. This type of conversational democracy and lack of filtration presented a level of uncertainty leaders were often uncomfortable with; however, through appropriate and strategic implementation, this strategy aided in the development of a culture of inclusiveness and a compelling and viable organizational story (Moua, 2011).

Establishing a culture of inclusion. The climate of an organization was based largely on the perspectives of its members regarding the systems in place and established norms. Shaw (2002) supported the notion authentic leaders played an integral role in the fabrication of an inclusive work climate because this aspect of the organization was largely based on their beliefs and values. Fundamentally authentic leaders modelled and thereby highlighted the behaviors expected from others across the organization. Reward systems involving compensation for inclusive behaviors served as catalysts to the learning process as they develop the desired mannerisms (Boekhorst, 2014). Large and diverse stakeholder groups offered more opportunities for followers to develop the skillset and perspective necessary to effectively engage in desired inclusive behaviors (Deering et al., 2003).

Intentionality

Groysberg and Slind (2012a) asserted every conversation needed a trajectory and direction. Even the most casual conversations involved some form of direction as the parties involved made determinations on the path to follow (Groysberg & Slind, 2012a). Rewarding and impactful conversation was never void of purpose and within the realm of organizational conversation, it was important to maintain alignment with an agenda directly connected to the mission, vision, and goals of the organization. Intentionality involved the convergence of perspectives and what was communicated by members of the organization as they collaboratively and collectively worked toward accomplishing a shared vision (Marzano et al., 2005; Reeves, 2009).

Groysberg and Slind (2012c) indicated the elements of inclusion, interactivity, and intimacy were all vital components of quality organizational conversation as they set the stage for success; however, intentionality brought closure, solidifying the purpose (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c). Many positive outcomes resulted from appropriate implementation of conversational intentionality, including an intensified focus on purpose- and value-driven work, and improvements in the approach to strategic alignment. Although leaders did not always integrate all four elements of conversational leadership, research indicated each element was inherently built into and reinforced the others, and in many circumstances there was significant overlap (Hurley & Brown, 2009; Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011).

Clarity of purpose. Any conversation could transition between topics and diverge from the outcomes sought. Throughout the course of a natural and fluid conversational process, stakeholders participated in a shift or heightened level of focus

between a variety of ideas and topics (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c). However, quality

conversation involved a unified sense of forward movement, understanding talk was

purpose-driven and leading toward an outcome regardless of its windy and undefined

path. Conversely, leaders also made determinations on the topics they decided to

address, understanding addressing a topic less frequently did not constitute a lack of

communication or less engagement. Effective leaders did not delve into a topic simply

due to their ability to engage in the conversation (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c; Rajbhandari

et al., 2014).

Knowledge and appropriate skillsets were vital to organizational leaders;

however, they should not dictate the initiatives and opportunities undertaken.

Conversational leaders were purposeful as they made selections on what to discuss and

pursue, evaluating the alignment with their purpose as they served the organization.

Additionally, they consistently engaged in an analytical and evaluative process as they

decided if a potential conversation fit into the framework of key priorities. According to

Hurley and Brown (2009), clarifying purpose and strategic intent was the initial action

item when developing methods to engage organization members (Hurley & Brown,

2009). Purpose was important because it led to determinations on issues and impactful

experiences necessary for an inquiry-based process. Additionally, purpose allowed

leaders to determine the level at which stakeholders were relevant and which social

technologies were adequate to meet organizational needs for collaboration and collective

decision-making (Hurley & Brown, 2009; Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

Desired outcomes and direction. For organizational conversation to remain

effective and sustainable, it must be connected to a sense of direction maintained by all

involved stakeholders. In this context, the phrase *sense of direction* had two clearly

distinct definitions. First, it involved an individual or group who assumed the

responsibility of facilitating the conversation and providing direction regarding the

overall progression and flow of organizational communication. Additionally, it meant

intentionality was a key factor in discussions and a clearly defined path was travelled. A

sense of direction was important because communication became a value-add factor and

a strategic element to the endeavors pursued by the organization. Groysberg and Slind

(2012c) offered five points geared toward helping intentional conversational leaders

maintain their sense of direction.

1. **Take Stock**: Leaders must demonstrate a willingness to be introspective,

    which involves an ongoing process of analyzing communication practices to

    promote improvement

2. **Create a Bucket List**: Create categories under which various forms of

    communication efforts and topics fit, which allows leaders and stakeholders to

    evaluate and assess progress made in defined areas

3. **Go Wide Go Deep**: Leaders need to provide opportunities for employees to

    broaden their perspective of the organization, gaining knowledge on the big-

    picture and work completed across departmental lines

4. **Make a Mark**: Similar to branding to serve the needs of external

    contributors, leaders must strategically plan the development of a clear and

    coherent sense of identity, and generate general a strong internal message

    communicating the mission, vision, culture, and values of the organization.

5. **Talk Together, Work Together**: Smart, intentional leaders promoted a

    culture in which employees in different departments communicated; the

    leaders' role was to create the opportunities for this type of communication

    and cross-collaboration to take place (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c)

Role of the High School Principal

Principals played an integral role in promoting the initiatives and practices to support student achievement. Their role was multi-faceted and differentiated to meet the needs of various stakeholder groups (May & Supovitz, 2011; Neumerski, 2013). According to Ishimaru (2013), high school principals played a critical role in sustaining first and second order changes. They facilitated change efforts through strategic planning and the careful assessment and evaluation of stakeholder-, site-, and district-level needs. Beyond the logical and strategic aspects of high school leadership, principals developed authentic, trust-based relationships with all stakeholders because these connections directly correlated to the achievement of desired student outcomes (Ishimaru, 2013).

According to Terziu et al. (2016), the success of students depended upon multiple professional factors, including a principal's ability to communicate effectively and serve as a support within the learning community. Marzano et al. (2005) described 21 responsibilities of the school leader, which included communication, relationships, flexibility, input, and focus as professional factors connected to the principles of organizational conversation. According to Glover (2007), "In a climate thick with education mandates, many teachers fear that their chances to influence decisions about their profession are eroding" (p. 60). This author also asserted it was the responsibility of principals to learn how to strategically alter this mindset and suggested practices included

open discussion, debate, and dialogue. Marzano et al. (2005) suggested developing a strong leadership team, distributing responsibilities, and facilitating the process of change were vital components when considering the role of high school principals. According to Fullan (2014), the role of the high school principal included three keys components to maximize impact: leading learning, being a system player, and becoming a change agent.

Encourage collaboration. Shared leadership was a recommended reform concepts for over three decades, suggesting expansion of teacher participation in organizational leadership and the decision-making process could positively impact student achievement. Through this leadership method, educators became less isolated and more active toward accomplishing the mission and vision of the school and district (Halawah, 2005). Principals who practiced shared leadership accepted their actions and perspectives even when they were unpredictable and misaligned. Relinquishing control over critically important decisions became a risky proposition since ultimately, the responsibility for outcomes connected to those decisions belonged to the principal (Klar, 2013). To maximize impact, high school principals sough opportunities to collaborate and share ideas with similar schools that experienced success. Through these types of collaborative partnerships, high school principals expanded their network of support and became change agents beyond site-based or organizational borders (Fullan, 2014).

Schools remained hierarchical in terms of overarching structures because members of leadership were on the frontline for accountability for student performance; however, leadership roles needed to be fulfilled by a wider collection of individuals to maximize site potential. According to DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008), professional learning communities (PLC) were a major part of establishing a culture of collaboration and

intentionality. In this regard, principals played a vital role in ensuring necessary

resources were in place and time was allocated for collaboration. PLCs connected to

shared leadership because this strategy required teachers learn how to interact in a truly

collaborative manner. Additionally, PLCs required implementation of initiatives from

both principals and certificated staff, which set the stage for authentic back-and-forth

conversation about improvement. These authors defined PLCs as a group of educators

dedicated to collective inquiry and the continual process involving action research geared

toward actualizing student achievement and academic advancement (DuFour et al.,

2008). "Professional learning communities operate under the assumption that the key to

improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators

(DuFour et al., 2008 p. 14). Connecting to this statement, the authors also identified six

characteristics of PLCs:

1.   Shared mission, vision, and values

2. A collaborative culture with a focus on learning

3. Collective inquiry into best practice and current reality

4. Action orientation; learning by doing

5. Commitment to continuous improvement

6. Results orientation (DuFour et al., 2008)

Focus on student achievement and effective instruction. According to Blase

and Blase (1999), principals were managers, problem solvers, politicians, and

instructional leaders. They were expected to maintain a working knowledge of updated

practice pertaining to effective, quality instruction and content delivered to students. In

the absence of such knowledge, it was impossible for a principal to actively engage in the

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process of improving student academics. This was primarily because they were unable to

provide quality constructive feedback (Blase & Blase, 1999). Additionally, a principal

lacking knowledge in the realm of quality instruction was unable to design systems

placing others in positions to provide necessary supports to teachers pursuing excellence

in their craft. Principals played a vital role in the design of coherent academic program

tailored to the needs of students. Principals needed to develop programs that increased

visibility of educators within the learning community through ongoing classroom visits.

This often resulted in improvements to various aspects, including self-efficacy, attitudes

toward professional development, and instruction (Lambert, 2003; Terziu et al., 2016).

Research studies indicated principals had a positive impact on the learning

community when they actively visited classrooms and built capacity through in-depth

feedback (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). This methodology, however, was not sustainable

because it required principals to spend large amounts of time in classrooms, especially in

a large school. According to Fullan (2014), high school principals often spent a

significant amount of time working internally on improving instruction. This level of

internal focus had a negative impact on the strength of leadership because it limited the

time and effort placed on building relationships with critical stakeholders, including

community members, school-system leaders, and parents. High-performing schools were

led by principals who developed teams and delegated work, creating time to work

externally to bring academic goals and objectives to fruition (Fullan, 2014). Wahlstrom

and Louis (2008) provided a research-based framework to view the experiences of

teachers as they related to the impact of a principal on instruction (Figure 5).
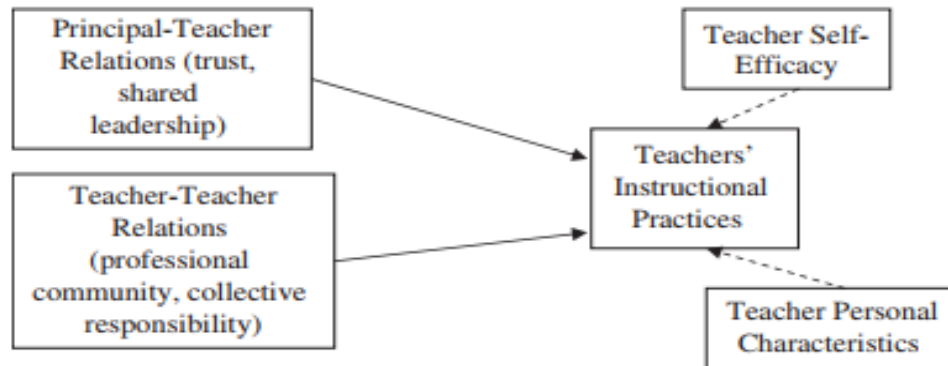
Figure 5. Framework for principal-teacher relationship analysis. Taken from *How Teachers Experience Principal Leadership: The Roles of Professional Community, Trust, Efficacy and Shared Responsibility* (p. 468), by Wahlstrom & Lous, 2008.

Summary

The world constantly evolves as organizations and society adjust to meet the demands of the 21st century global economy. Due to significant impact of these changes, organizational leaders must now implement methodologies that promote a culture in which all stakeholders contribute to developing and realizing continual progress toward desired outcomes. Groysberg and Slind (2012c) proposed this could be accomplished through effective implementation of organizational conversation that refers to the processes and cycles through which information forms an interconnected, multi-directional web between employees and leaders. The authors proposed organizational conversation was most effective when it incorporated elements of intimacy, inclusion, interactivity, and intentionality, all of which were vital during quality interpersonal conversations (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c).

Through the effective incorporation of these elements, leaders built relationships based on trust and transparency, and empowered stakeholders by including them in work adding value to the organization (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c; Podsakoff et al., 1990).

Additionally, conversational leaders engaged in dynamic back-and-forth exchanges with employees across the hierarchical framework and ensured all conversations remained on a path leading toward a meaningful outcome (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c). The concept of conversational leadership was addressed by several authors who made connections to the four elements; however, there were limitations in the current body of work as it pertained to the process by which high school principals led their organizations through the incorporation of the elements of organizational conversation. The goal of chapter III is to provide an in-depth view of the methodology used in this qualitative research, including the population, study sample, instrumentation, and data collection process.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Chapter III presents the methodology used to conduct the study. This study used a qualitative phenomenological study. This chapter reiterates the purpose statement and research questions, then describes the design, population, target population, sample, instrumentation, data collection, analysis, and limitations. Throughout the study, the term *peer researchers* was used to refer to the 12 Brandman University doctoral students who worked on this thematic dissertation under the guidance of four faculty.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe the behaviors exemplary high school principals practiced to lead their organizations through conversation using Groysberg and Slind's (2012c) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality.

Research Questions

Central Research Question

What are the behaviors exemplary high school principals practice to lead their organizations through conversation using Groysberg and Slind's four elements of conversational leadership (intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality)?

Sub-Questions

1. How do exemplary high school principals lead through the conversational element of intimacy?

2. How do exemplary high school principals lead through the conversational element of interactivity?

3. How do exemplary high school principals lead through the conversational

    element of inclusion?

4. How do exemplary high school principals lead through the conversational

    element of intentionality?

Research Design

According to Patton (2002) and McMillan and Schumacher (2009), the data

collected throughout the course of a qualitative study primarily came from fieldwork.

This qualitative phenomenological study incorporated direct observations, in-depth

interviews, and review of artifacts. Following the fieldwork component, themes were

extracted from the data as the information was synthesized to establish findings.

McMillan and Schumacher (2009) and Patton (2002) purported qualitative

research involved a significant level of flexibility, allowing a researcher to employ

strategies that reduced the impact of reflexivity, thereby improving the validity of the

resultant findings. This type of research study was often utilized as a component of an

evaluative process because it created a connection between the story of the program and

the participants. McMillan and Schumacher (2009) asserted multiple interactive research

approaches impacted the decision-making process connected to qualitative studies.

Qualitative researchers typically approached findings through the collection of

three types of data: written documents or artifacts, direct observation, and in-depth

interviews. Interviews consisted of open-ended and probing questions to yield

information regarding the lived experiences and perspectives of the selected individuals

and connected to the knowledge base they possessed. These data were presented to the

researcher in the form of direct quotations that must be analyzed and synthesized through various methods (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009).

McMillan and Schumacher (2009) and Patton (2002) stated the purpose of conducting interviews was to gain a deep level of access to the true perspective maintained by an individual or group. Considering this, the qualitative interviewer must hold the fundamental belief the thought process, opinion, and perspective of the interviewee was authentic and of high value. The interviewer faced the challenge of setting the stage to ensure responses provided were authentic and truly reflected the knowledge and mindset of the participant. The quality of the interview process and data collected were contingent upon the skillset possessed by the interviewer as he or she solicited high-quality responses through the infusion of qualitative questions, probes, and transitions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009; Patton, 2002).

In phenomenological studies, the researcher's goal was to develop an understanding of the lived experiences of an individual as it pertained to particular aspects (Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark, & Morales, 2007). Phenomenological interviews were in-depth as they sought a well-defined understanding of what participants experienced and how they experienced it. These studies focused on the personal experiences of the researcher in combination with those of interviewees (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009; Patton, 2002)

According to Patton (2002), qualitative research methods allowed for in-depth studies on areas of interest. A contributing factor to the level of depth, openness, and detail involved was the absence of restricting factors such as predetermined categories of analysis (Patton, 2002). Qualitative methodology was used in both research studies and

evaluative processes. "Qualitative methods are often used in evaluations because they tell the *program's story* by capturing and communicating the *participants' stories*" (Patton, 2002, p. 10). When utilized in research, qualitative methodology was an exceptional theory source based on the themes that emerged from real-world measures, including in-depth interviews, written documents, and direct observation as opposed to measures implemented within restrictive parameters (Creswell et al., 2007; Patton, 2002).

Phenomenology maintained connections to a variety of traditions, including philosophy, psychotherapy, and social science, and focused on lived experiences and exposures with the goal of gaining a deeper meaning (Creswell et al., 2007; McMillan & Schumacher, 2009). This study sought to evaluate the lived experiences of a sample of exemplary high school principals in California regarding their use of the elements of conversational leadership. The interviews were conducted face-to-face or virtually using Adobe Connect. Ten exemplary high school principals served as participants, offering accounts of their experiences, perspectives, and belief systems. Additionally, artifacts were collected and observations of participants were conducted to improve upon the overall quality and validity of the data collected.

Method Rationale

The 12 peer researchers and 4 faculty members selected the qualitative phenomenological design collaboratively as it was deemed most appropriate for gathering data regarding the lived experiences of exemplary leaders across various organizations. The team of peer researchers and faculty members assessed multiple approaches after it was determined a qualitative study was most appropriate. Included in those considerations were ethnography, narrative, case study, and grounded theory; however, it

was ultimately decided phenomenology would be most appropriate as it addressed the

elements necessary to describe the lived experiences of exemplary leaders as they lead

their organizations through Groysberg and Slind's elements of conversational leadership.

According to Lester (1999), phenomenological studies were powerful in their ability to

promote an understanding of the subjective experiences and perceptions of individuals.

Additionally, they allowed the researcher to gain insights into the actions, thought

processes, and motivations of the participants. Lester (1999) indicated in

phenomenological research, the studies sought to tell the stories of a small number of

participants in depth to gain the essence of their experience.

Population

McMillan and Schumacher (2009) defined a population as a group of elements or

particular cases that conformed to researcher-defined criteria and represent the elements

or cases to which the results of the research would be generalized. A sample utilized in

research was a subset of participants from the population from whom data were collected.

This information allowed the researcher to develop inferences regarding the population,

assuming the characteristics of the population mirror those of the sample (Patten, 2013).

The population in this research study was high school principals within the United

States. According to the United States Department of Education, 24,280 public high

schools operated nationwide during the 2012-13 school year. The California Department

of Education reported 1,339 high schools statewide during the 2015-16 school year.

Although it was unknown whether these schools were under the leadership of a

superintendent or principal, for the sake of this study, the researcher defined the

population of high school principals in California as 1,339 in alignment with the number

of high schools. However, because a population of 1,339 was not feasible to study due to accessibility, time and geography, a target population was defined.

Target Population

According to Creswell (2008), a target population is defined as a group that presents similar characteristics and traits that set them apart from other collectives. The target population was narrowed to high school principals in Los Angeles County to improve upon the quality of data collected from the study. In the 2016-17 school year, 318 public high schools operated in Los Angeles County, excluding alternative, continuation, and K-12 schools (Ed-Data).

Study Sample

Based on the nature and purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study, nonprobability sampling was the selected practice. McMillian and Schumacher (2009) asserts that this is the most commonly utilized sampling procedure in educational research, and does not include selections which are made due to convenience, and the demonstration of a set of desired criteria. Three overarching types of nonprobability sampling procedures are convenience sampling, purposeful sampling, and quota sampling.

Convenience or available sampling involves selections that are made based on their high level of accessibility, allowing the researcher to readily gain the data needed. One disadvantage of this method is the limitations that exist when considering the generalizability from the sample to the population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009). Purposeful sampling, also referred to as purposive, judgement, or judgmental sampling, involved a researcher making selections from the population projected to be informative

or connected to the topic studied. This type of sampling was heavily reliant on the

knowledge of the researcher and his or her ability to make selections to generate

necessary information. According to Patton (2002), the purpose of criterion sampling

was to improve the quality of the study through the review and evaluation of all cases

who meet a predetermined set of criteria. Finally, quota sampling was utilized when the

researcher was unable to use probability sampling but instead made selections linked to

prevalent characteristics demonstrated by the population (McMillan & Schumacher,

2009; Patton, 2002). This study used purposeful and criterion-based sampling to select

10 exemplary high school principals from schools within Los Angeles County.
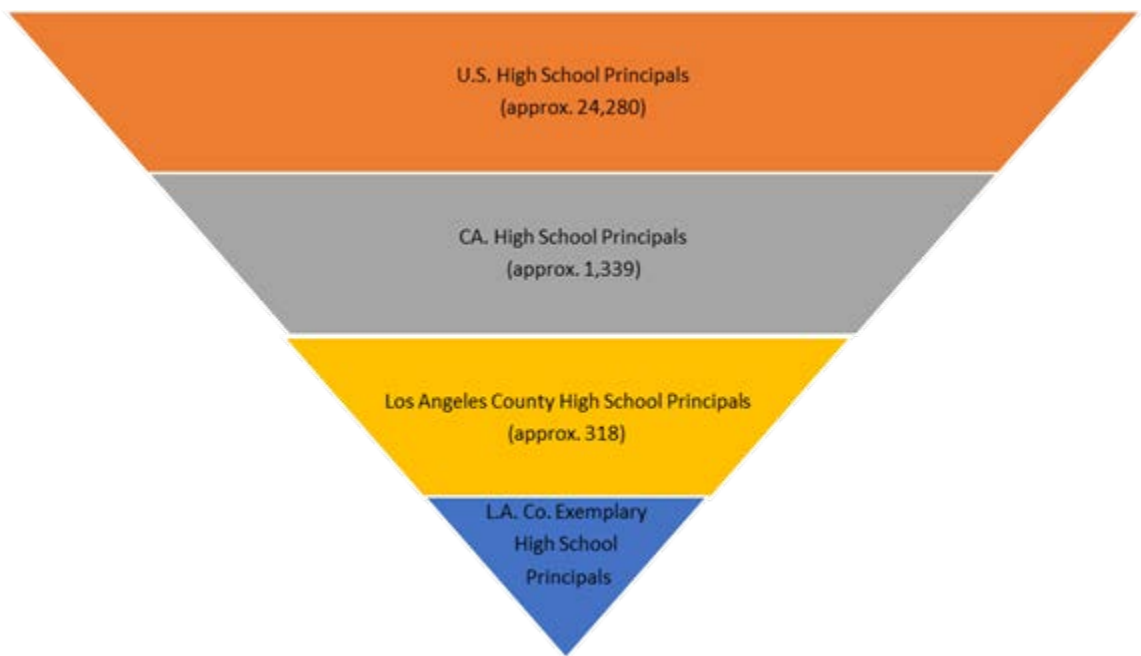
Figure 6. Process of sample selection

Criterion-based sampling was used to identify participants specific to the purpose and research questions, and the operational definition of exemplary. Principals were considered exemplary if they met a minimum of four of the following characteristics:

- Evidence of successful relationships with followers

- Evidence of leading a successful organization

- A minimum of 5 years of experience in the profession

- Articles, papers, or materials written, published, or presented at conferences or association meetings

- Recognition by peers

- Membership in professional associations in their field

McMillan and Schumacher (2009) stated qualitative researchers view sampling procedures as a dynamic and flexible process dependent on a wide array of variables and factors, including the research problem, study purpose , data collection strategies, and sources of information. Other considerations included redundancy of data, availability of information, and minimum size deemed appropriate. The process of determining the size of a purposeful sample was connected to a set of guidelines as opposed to any set structure; qualitative studies typically had 1 to 40 participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009). Patton (2002), asserted there were no rules for determining the sample size of a qualitative research study as decisions were based on the efforts of the researcher to maximize quality.

The selection of participants for this qualitative phenomenological research study involved multiple steps centered on developing a sample that would render useful and credible data. These steps were:

1. Access a list of all high school principals within Los Angeles County from the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) website

2. Superintendents of school districts were contacted via electronic mail (Appendix F). This message included a criteria of exemplary, and a request for recommendations on exemplary high school principals to serve as participants in the research study.

3. Based on the established definition of the term exemplary, research was conducted on individuals identified on the list. Sources included professional networking websites such as LinkedIn, the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) website, and various district and school resources

4. Contact each exemplary high school principal identified via email or telephone call to solicit participation (Appendix G), and select the first 10 who responded indicating a willingness to participate

5. Schedule interviews and observations in alignment with the availability of participants and researcher, with the goal of completing the interview, observation, and artifact collection within the same timeframe

Instrumentation

Approaches to in-depth qualitative interviews include: informal conversational interviews, interview guides, and standardized open-ended interviews. The variations in these forms hold implications on the strategic planning needed and the level of

compatibility in data collected (Chenail, 2011; McMillan & Schumacher, 2009; Patton, 2002). McMillan and Schumacher (2009) stated, "A phenomenological interview is a specific type of in-depth interview used to study the meanings or essence of a lived experience among selected participants" (p. 352). This qualitative phenomenological research design called for an open-ended interview process maintaining a structural framework allowing for appropriate flexibility.

Interview Protocol Development

Chenail (2011) asserted the content and overall formatting of interview questions varied and depended upon factors such as study purpose, theoretical framework, and participants selected. Qualitative interview questions could focus on phenomenological aspects such as experiences and sensory perceptions in addition to behaviors, opinions, values, feelings, knowledge, and demographics (Chenail, 2011). The qualitative interviews conducted in this study were semi-structured and in-depth. McMillan and Schumacher (2009) purported this was the most widely incorporated form of interviews in qualitative research studies and allowed the interviewer to deeply explore personal and social matters. McMillan and Schumacher (2009) listed multiple forms of qualitative interviews, each applying to specific types of research studies:

1. **Informal conversation interviews**: Questions were asked based on the immediate context; questions and phrasing was not predetermined and the conversation remained fluid and organic in nature.

2. **Interview guide approach**: The topics to be addressed were determined prior to the interview; however, the researcher made adjustments to the sequence and verbiage of the questions.

3. **Standard open-ended interview**: The questions and order were pre-determined with no flexibility so all participants were asked the same questions in an exact order. The entire process was standardized, including the wording of each questions without divergence.

4. **Key informant interviews**: These were interviews of individuals with a unique perspective, knowledge base, or skill willing to share information with the researcher. These individuals were carefully selected and meet specific criteria not common among all informants.

5. **Career and life history interviews**: Anthropologists utilized this format to acquire information about a culture; questions were intended to draw out the lived experiences of participants.

6. **Phenomenological interviews**: A specific type of in-depth interview used to study the lived experiences of participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009).

Interview questions. Groysberg and Slind's elements of conversational leadership served as the conceptual foundation for this research study. based upon this work, a set of open-ended questions were developed collaboratively by the peer researchers under the guidance of faculty. Each of the four elements of conversational leadership were assigned to a team of researchers tasked developing 12 questions pertaining to Groysberg and Slind's elements, which became the basis for the interview protocol (Appendix A). Teams were guided and assisted by the four faculty members who evaluated the quality of the proposed questions. These questions were then assessed and evaluated by student researchers and faculty during collaborative sessions which occurred virtually. Reiterative collaborative sessions were used to revise and finalize the

interview questions in preparation for field testing. Additionally, these sessions were utilized to create a collection of probing questions for researchers to use as they conducted the semi-structured interviews.

Field testing of interview questions. To ensure reliability and validity, peer researchers were each responsible to conduct a field test of the interview questions and protocol. Interview participants were individuals who met the criteria of an exemplary leader and were willing to contribute to the research study in this capacity. An expert observer was also present throughout the course of the field test, and along with the participant, offered feedback on the quality of the interview questions, probing questions, and overall process. The expert had recent experience completing a qualitative study and was deeply involved in the process of data collection and analysis as a leader within a high school setting. The participant and observer utilized an evaluative protocol allowing the observer and participant to document feedback for the researcher (Appendix D). Small groups of peer researchers reviewed this feedback and a designee was selected to present the emergent themes from the discussion to members of the faculty team. The four-member faculty team advised the peer researchers on revisions to the interview guide based on field testing feedback. Following the completion of this process, the questions were deemed appropriate for use in the research study and approved by faculty.

Interview Protocol and Process

Three documents were included in the interview process, which were provided to each participant prior to the interview:

1. Open-ended interview questions developed by peer researchers and faculty members (Appendix A)

2. The Brandman University Institution Review Board (IRB) *Research Participant's Bill of Rights* (Appendix B)

3. The *Informed Consent and Audio Recording Release* (Appendix C)

The thematic team comprised of 12 peer researchers collectively conducted a total of 120 interviews on exemplary leaders within various fields and industries. Every semi-structured interview was framed by a common interview protocol (Appendix A) that included an introduction, a reminder about appropriate documentation, and the purpose of the study. These incorporated the interview questions based on Groysberg and Slind's four elements of conversational leadership. Every interview was recorded, transcriptions of audio files were coded, and emergent themes were extracted. In addition, interviewees were provided copies of the transcription of their interview to check for accuracy.

Researcher as an Instrument of the Study

In qualitative studies, the researcher served as a key component in the process by soliciting the necessary data from participants. It was through their interaction and facilitation rich information regarding the lived experiences of respondents was shared (Chenail, 2011). Patton (2002) stated data collection could be unintentionally influenced by researchers unique backgrounds, experiences, personalities, and other influencing factors. The background of the researcher included 12 years of experience as a special education teacher in urban schools, serving various school districts including Boston Public Schools and Los Angeles Unified School District. The researcher was employed as a high school principal in Los Angeles County throughout the timeframe during which this qualitative study was conducted. As such, the field test was an integral component of the interview process because it preemptively addressed potential researcher biases.

Focus was placed on variables including eye contact, body language, intonation, facial expressions, proximity, and active listening, all of which could impact responses. The feedback from the field test allowed the researcher to improve upon the process prior to conducting interviews that would be included in the study.

Validity

Validity refers to whether the research study measured what it was designed to measure and the level at which the results and findings portrayed the truth (Golafshani, 2003). The research design incorporated multiple elements geared toward enhancing validity, including the utilization of multiple researchers, ongoing collaboration with members of faculty, participant language and verbatim accounts, and participant review (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009).

Multiple Researchers

This qualitative phenomenological study was conducted by a team of 12 peer researchers who collaborated on developing research questions and decision-making on other aspects of the research design, including the field test process, methodology, and instrumentation. Additionally, collective decisions were made regarding common verbiage and definitions, including Groysberg and Slind's (2012c) four elements of conversational leadership (inclusion, intimacy, interactivity, and intentionality). Feedback and input was offered on a continual basis by a team of faculty members who validated various components, including the methodologies and instrumentation. McMillan and Schumacher (2009) asserted the use of multiple researchers improved validity, although research designs including a large group of researchers were not common.

Multimethod Strategies

According to Patton (2002), quality qualitative research studies often incorporated multiple forms of data that collectively led to the findings and answered the research questions. The primary methodology utilized in this study was in-depth, semi-structured interviews. According to Flick (2004), "Triangulation of data combines data drawn from different sources and at different times, in different places or from different people" (p. 178). In this study, the information acquired from interviews was triangulated with the emergent themes from observations and a review of the artifacts collected from participants.
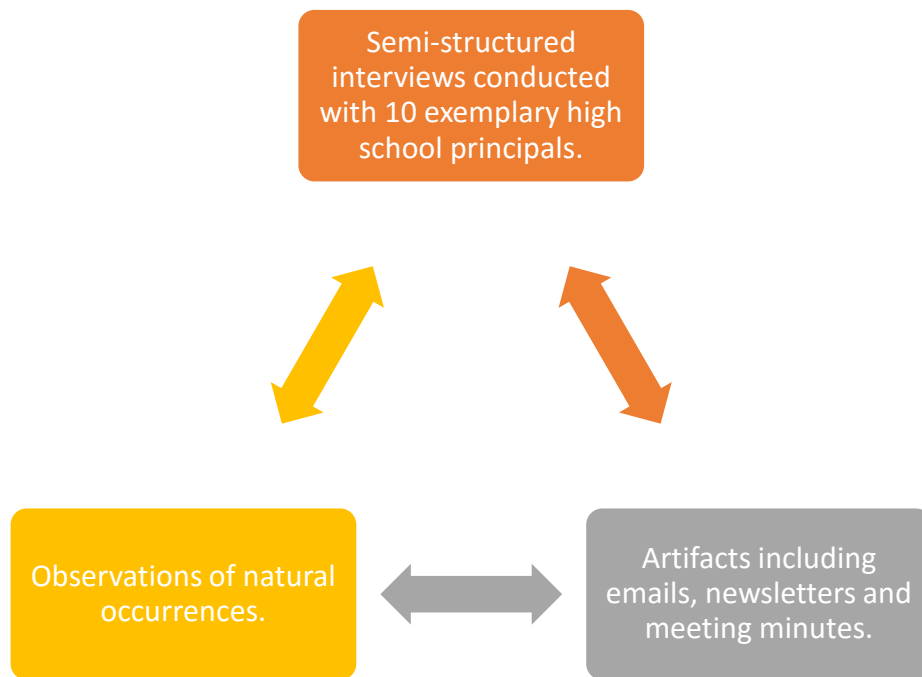
Figure 7. Data collection and triangulation

Participant Review

Prior to each interview, a review of the entire process was conducted and documentation was provided for review and completion. Upon completion of the interview process, audio files were submitted to a confidential transcriptionist. Copies of

these transcripts were then submitted electronically to each participant for review. It was requested participants provide any feedback or corrections within seven days. At the end of this timeframe, all transcripts were coded using NVivo and emergent themes were extracted.

Reliability

Golafshani (2003) stated reliability referred to the consistency of results rendered over time. Also addressed by this concept was accuracy in terms of how the results represented the population being studied and replicability. Instruments that produced the same results repeatedly when similar methodology was incorporated were considered reliable. Golafshani (2003) identified three factors that impact reliability: similarity of instruments within a given period, stability of a measurement over time, and the degree to which a measurement, when repeated, was constant.

Internal Reliability

A peer research team comprised of 12 individuals focused on the same overarching topic and developed various aspects of the study, including the research questions, in-depth interview questions, and purpose of the research study. Each peer researcher conducted 10 interviews, resulting in 120 completed interviews with exemplary leaders. In alignment with the interview protocol, all participants were asked a universal set of core questions presented in the same sequence. This process resulted in the reduction of bias in data collection and analysis. Through maintaining fidelity to the interview protocol, the reliability of the data collected was improved. The group of 12 peer researchers worked collaboratively to establish the research design and instrumentation for this qualitative study. Through the incorporation of multiple

researchers, triangulation was infused into the analytical process as data and findings were evaluated. Flick (2004) stated this methodology improved the level of validity as it reduced the impact of researcher bias.

Pilot Test

Pilot tests were a typical method used to assess the quality and effectiveness of an interview protocol when considering limiting factors such as researcher bias. In these studies, researchers assessed the proposed procedures to determine if they would render the results desired and anticipated (Chenail, 2011). The following process was used by all 12 researchers prior to finalize the interview instrument:

1. Each researcher conducted a field test with a participant and an expert observer. The field test participant had to meet four of the six criteria of an exemplary leader and the expert observer was present to observe the researcher for study bias and interviewing skills. The field test was audio recorded for additional review of the pace and probing questions used by the researcher.

2. Both the field test study participant and the expert observer provided feedback using a feedback response template (Appendix D).

3. Based on feedback from all 12 field tests, the peer researchers discussed the outcome of interview question response and the alignment of these responses to the study research questions. Recommended changes to the interview instrument were then collectively completed by the 12 researchers under the supervision of the faculty team.

External Reliability

External reliability assesses the replicability of a research study. Zohrabi (2013) documented five aspects that must be considered by researchers to increase external reliability: status of the researcher, social situations and conditions, analytic constructs and premises, methods of data collection and analysis, and choice of the informants. This qualitative phenomenological study described behaviors practiced by exemplary high school principals as they led their organizations through Groysberg and Slind's elements of conversational leadership. The researcher generalized based on the analysis of the responses collected from the exemplary leaders who served as participants.

Intercoder Reliability

According to Kurasaki (2000), "Intercoder reliability is a measure of agreement between multiple coders about how they apply codes to the data" (p. 179). This research design allowed a collective group of 12 peer researchers to incorporate common study elements, including instrumentation, methodology, research questions, and definitions of the elements of conversational leadership. Research reliability was improved through a process involving 12 peer researchers, each analyzing data collected from 10 interviews. Additionally, 1 of the 10 interviews was coded by both the researcher and a peer, and the results were reviewed for agreement at a threshold of 80% or higher (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2004). This process of review and reflection of coding ensured the reliability of the codes.

Data Collection

Data collection involved audio files and transcripts from in-depth interviews. These semi-structured interviews were conducted virtually through Adobe Connect, a web-based video conferencing application, or face-to-face based upon the availability of the participant. Additionally, artifacts were collected and observations were conducted as possible. Field notes were documented to capture the lived experiences of exemplary high school principals within their natural work environment. All collected data were placed in a secure location throughout the course of the research study. The researcher completed the National Institute of Health (NIH) certification for the protection of human research participants, and the researcher received approval from the Brandman University Institutional Review Board (BUIRB) prior to the start of the data collection process.

Semi-Structured Interview Process

Three documents were given to participants for review before each interview: the open-ended interview questions developed by peer researchers and faculty (Appendix A), the BUIRB *Research Participant's Bill of Rights* (Appendix B), and the *Informed Consent and Audio Recording Release* (Appendix C). The interview guide (Appendix A) ensured the process was consistent to promote a comparable experience for all participants. Similar to the open-ended interview questions, this was created through the collaborative efforts of peer researchers and faculty members. Probing questions were also developed for use as deemed necessary by the researcher to improve the clarity and depth of responses. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2009), probing questions should be utilized carefully as they could impact responses. In-depth interviews were

conducted with 10 exemplary leaders either face-to-face or virtually using video conferencing software. Audio from all interviews were recorded to files for submission to a professional transcription service. The researcher also documented notes of any resonating observations or commentary given as responses were provided.

Observations

Part of the initial phase of the research study was an in-depth review of the literature. Through this component, each peer researchers developed a deeper understanding of Groysberg and Slind's elements of conversational leadership and the behaviors demonstrated. With this knowledge base, the peer researchers had a foundational perspective as they documented field notes and collected artifacts. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2009), field work gave the researcher an opportunity to directly observe and record the behaviors and interactions of a participant or group of participants in an unobtrusive manner. This form of observation was utilized to situations in which researchers placed themselves in or around a particular setting with the intention of conducting a qualitative analysis (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009).

According to Patterson et al. (2012) and Patton (2002), there are many benefits to direct, in-person contact with an observed setting as a researcher attempts to develop an understanding of a participant's lived experiences. This methodology gave an observer insight on the contextual factors affecting the environment, which was critical to allow the researcher to see the whole picture. Also, direct exposure of the setting allowed the researcher to divert from any thoughts regarding the environment prior to the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009; Patton, 2002). This reduced the impact of researcher

bias and opened the door to a discovery-oriented process that was inquiry-based and inductive.

McMillan and Schumacher (2009) also stated through observations, the researcher viewed the setting from a different vantage point than participants, and as a result, became aware of factors or events participants routinely missed. This enriched and enhanced the data collected during the study since it filled in these types of gaps, which were often developed as participants were immersed in social systems and routines over time. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2009) and Patton (2002), this view also resulted in the discovery of elements or factors previously unidentified and revealed things participants avoided discussing during an interview. Finally, direct observations allowed introspection and reflection to be part of the field research. This improved the quality of the data collected because it incorporated the feelings and impressions of the researcher, improving and enhancing the findings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009; Patton, 2002).

Artifacts

Artifact collection was a method of gaining qualitative data from participants in a non-interactive manner and required a negligible amount of reciprocity. This strategy was less reactive than strategies that required higher levels of interaction because the researcher was not responsible for the extraction of evidence. The researcher could also find it necessary to apply creative and critical thinking skills during the fieldwork component to ascertain where the most relevant data were located. "Artifact collections are tangible manifestations that describe people's experience, knowledge, actions, and values" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009, p. 356). Three types of artifacts were identified:

1. Objects: Created elements revealing social processes, meanings, and values such as symbols and other observable items.

2. Personal Documents: Items including anecdotal records, diaries, and personal letters describing participant experiences, actions, and beliefs.

3. Official Documents: Minutes of meetings, proposal drafts, memorandums, and working papers all fall into this category of artifact. These define the organization in terms of overall functionality, internal perspective, and values held by stakeholders (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009).

Data Analysis

"Qualitative analysis is a relatively systematic are process of coding, categorizing, and interpreting data to provide explanations of a single phenomenon of interest" (McMillian & Schumacher, p. 364). This type of data analysis generally consisted of four interwoven phases and required deep involvement by the researchers who must engage in an ongoing process of evaluation and assessment to maintain an appropriate level of intellectual rigor and open-mindedness (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009). The data analyzed in this qualitative research study were collected from 10 in-depth interview sessions, which included the structured questions developed by peer researchers and members of faculty as well as possible probing questions. Additionally, notes taken during observations were analyzed carefully and emergent themes were extracted. There were multiple overarching steps utilized by the researchers as they engaged in this process following the completion of all interviews and observations:

1. Audio files from interviews were submitted to a professional transcription service

2. Every transcript was reviewed carefully the researcher and each participant received an electronic copy to review content for accuracy

3. A secondary review of transcripts was conducted to ensure quality and accuracy., which also allowed the researcher to begin the process of identifying emergent themes in the data

4. Transcripts from in-depth interviews were uploaded to NVivo, a web-based analytical software program

5. Emergent themes from the qualitative data generated through interviews, observations, and artifact analysis were evaluated and coded, which allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the behaviors practiced by exemplary high school principals as they led their organizations through Groysberg and Slind's elements of conversational leadership

Limitations

Limitations of this qualitative phenomenological research study included the sample size (which affected generalizability and other factors), time restraints, the location of participants, and participant accessibility. This study's limitations also included geography, time, researcher as a study instrument, impact on the observed environment, and sample size. According to Patton (2002),

Limitations of observations included the possibility that the observer may affect the situation being observed in unknown ways, program staff and participants may behave in some atypical fashion when they know they are being observed, and the selective perception of the observer may distort the data. (p. 306)

Geography

According to the United States Department of Education, there are approximately 24,280 public high schools nationwide. The California Department of Education reported 1,339 high schools in the state. Due to proximity considerations, the high schools from which participants were selected were limited to boundaries of Los Angeles County. This included a wide variety of high schools and increased the potential both the researcher and participants would be available for face-to-face interviews, artifact collection, and observations, but also limited generalizability.

Time

High school principals constantly encounter a wide array of challenges, barriers, timelines, expectations, and unexpected occurrences as they serve their staff, faculty, students, and surrounding community. As interview sessions were up to 60 minutes, the researcher utilized the field testing process to ensure the timeframe was appropriate. This time limitation affected the researcher's ability to engage in a process that was in-depth, reflective, and flexible. Additionally, the researcher had a set number of days to complete data collection, which was also a consideration in choosing the sample size of 10. The researcher minimized the impact of this factor by including participants in the review of interview transcripts, giving them an opportunity to suggest corrections, and provide clarification.

Researcher as Study Instrument

Qualitative research designs relied heavily on the researchers as they made determinations on the action items and methodologies to enrich and enhance the study. The researcher as instrument could negatively impact study validity if components such

as peer evaluation were absent (Chenail, 2011). To address the limitation of researcher as an instrument of the study, the researcher's background was disclosed noting his potential bias. Also, the field test process was utilized to reduce the potential impact of researcher bias.

Sample Size

The sample size used in qualitative research designs was typically smaller than in quantitative studies because qualitative methods centered on gaining an in-depth knowledge of a phenomenon. Qualitative studies focused on the meaning of a lived experience and did not place generalizability at the forefront (Dworkin, 2012). The research design incorporated a sample size limited to 10 exemplary high school principals located within the boundaries of Los Angeles County. Through the collective work of peer researchers, using the same instrumentation and methodology, in-depth interviews were conducted with a combined total of 120 exemplary leaders.

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Summary

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This phenomenological research study focused on behaviors exemplary high school principals practiced as they led their organization through conversations emphasizing intimacy, intentionality, inclusion, and interactivity. The primary goal of this chapter was to provide a synopsis of methodology, including the sample, instruments, and data collection process. This chapter concluded with limitations that affected the research study and outcomes. Chapter IV addresses the findings resulting from the research study, and Chapter V provides a summary of the research findings, prospective action items, and recommendations for additions to the current body of work.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative research study was to describe the behaviors exemplary high school principals practiced to lead their organizations through conversation. The foundation of this study was Groysberg and Slind's (2012c) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. Their book, *Talk, Inc: How Trusted Leaders Use Conversation to Power Their Organizations* offered an in-depth analysis of each element and the impact of effective implementation. The qualitative phenomenological research design was selected by a group of 12 peer researchers and four advising faculty members.

The four faculty members provided guidance and insight as the 12 peer researchers collaboratively developed operational definitions for each element of conversation, the criteria associated with the term exemplary, and the semi-structured interview questions. Chapter IV begins with a reiteration of the purpose statement, research questions, methodology, data collection procedures, population, and study sample. Following these components, an analysis of the data and a detailed report of the key findings of the research study are presented.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe the behaviors exemplary high school principals practiced to lead their organizations through conversation using Groysberg and Slind's (2012c) four elements of conversational leadership (intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality).

Research Questions

What are the behaviors exemplary high school principals practice to lead their organizations through conversation using Groysberg and Slind's four elements of conversational leadership (intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality)?

Sub-Questions

1. How do exemplary high school principals lead through the conversational element of intimacy?

2. How do exemplary high school principals lead through the conversational element of interactivity?

3. How do exemplary high school principals lead through the conversational element of inclusion?

4. How do exemplary high school principals lead through the conversational element of intentionality?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

The qualitative phenomenological research design was selected to describe the behaviors exemplary high school principals practiced to lead their organizations through conversation. A qualitative phenomenological research study was most appropriate for gathering data regarding the lived experiences of exemplary leaders across the various organizations studied. The four faculty members provided guidance and insight as the 12 peer researchers collaboratively developed operational definitions for each element of conversation and the criteria associated with the term exemplary. Additionally, a thematic interview protocol (Appendix A) was developed incorporating three primary questions and optional probing questions for each of Groysberg and Slind's elements of

conversational leadership. Ten interviews were conducted with exemplary high school principals. An audio recording device was utilized to create audio files of each interview, and these were all transcribed confidentially through a digital transcription service. The interview data were triangulated with observations and collected artifacts. These included newsletters, bulletins, written messages to stakeholders, and presentations from various sources including webpages, social media sites, electronic databases, and participant submissions. All data were assessed, and uploaded to NVivo, a web-based analytical software program.

Population

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2009), a population was a group of elements or particular cases which conform to criteria defined by the researcher, and was representative of the elements or cases to which the results of the research would be generalized (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009). The sample selected for a research study was a collection of participants or subjects to engage with the selected instrumentation and methodology implemented by the researcher. The data collected during this process allowed the researcher to develop inferences regarding the population, assuming that the characteristics of the population mirrored those of the sample (Patten, 2013).

The population for this research study was high school principals within the United States. According to the United States Department of Education (2016), there were 24,280 public high schools nationwide during the 2012-13 school year, and the California Department of Education (2016) reported 1,339 high schools statewide during the 2015-16 school year. Although it was unknown whether any of these schools were under the leadership of a superintendent or someone other than a principal, for this study

it was assumed the population of high school principals in California was 1,339 in alignment with the number of high schools. The target population was narrowed to consist of the 318 high school principals within Los Angeles County.

Sample

This study utilized purposeful and criterion-based sampling to select 10 exemplary high school principals from schools within Los Angeles County. Criterion-based sampling was used to identify participants specific to the study purpose and research questions, and the operational definition of exemplary. Principals were considered exemplary if they met a minimum of four of the following characteristics:

- Evidence of successful relationships with followers;

- Evidence of leading a successful organization;

- A minimum of 5 years of experience in the profession;

- Articles, papers, or materials written, published, or presented at conferences or association meetings;

- Recognition by their peers; and

- Membership in professional associations in their field.

The 12 peer researchers and the panel of expert faculty members determined that a sample size of 10 was sufficient, and would render the necessary data. Patton (2002) asserts that there is no set of rules connected to sample size in qualitative inquiry. The author states that sample size is dependent upon the researcher and the information they are seeking. Additionally, it is dependent upon other factors such the purpose of the study, whether the cases selected are information rich.

Demographic Data

All names of individuals and organizations were omitted and each participant was assigned a numeric identifier. Specific demographic data were not shared to protect the anonymity of participants. The age of participants ranged from 30 to 60. The participant group consisted of two female leaders and eight male leaders. Table 2 illustrates the criteria and how each participant met the criteria.

Table 2

Participants met the Criteria for Exemplary High School Principal

Study Participant	Successful Relationship with Followers	Leads a Successful Organization	Minimum 5 Years in the Profession	Articles, Papers, or Presentations	Recognition by Peers	Membership in a Professional Organization
1	x	x	x		x	x
2	x	x	x			x
3	x	x	x	x		x
4	x	x			x	x
5	x	x	x		x	x
6	x	x	x		x	x
7	x	x	x		x	x
8	x	x	x	x		x
9	x	x	x		x	x
10	x	x	x		x	x

Presentation and Analysis of Data

The data analyzed in this study were collected from 10 interviews with exemplary high school principals serving districts within Los Angeles County. Responses described the behaviors practiced as they led their organizations through conversation using Groysberg and Slind's (2012c) four elements of conversational leadership (intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality).

Data Analysis

In addition to semi-structured interviews, the data collected included artifacts and notes from observations. Transcripts from interviews, notes from observations, and the collected artifacts were closely evaluated and themes that emerged related to each element of conversational leadership were extracted. The number of times the theme was referenced across data sources was assessed. Additionally, each emergent theme was evaluated in terms of its percentage representation of the data coded for each element of conversational leadership.

Validity

The research design incorporated multiple elements geared toward enhancing validity including the utilization of multiple researchers, ongoing collaboration with members of faculty, participant language and verbatim accounts, and participant review. This qualitative phenomenological research study was conducted by a team of twelve peer researchers who were guided by a panel of expert members of faculty. This group engaged collaboratively on the primary components of research design including the development the questions and protocol for semi-structured interviews. In addition, with the guidance of expert members of faculty, the 12-member research team made decisions on common verbiage, the definitions of elements, and the criteria for identifying exemplary leaders.

Reliability

The 12-member peer research team focused on the same overarching topic, and with the guidance of an expert panel of faculty, developed various components of the research study including research questions, in-depth questions for the semi-structured

interviews, and the purpose of the research study. Every member of the thematic

research team conducted ten semi-structured interviews, and as a result, data was

collected from 120 exemplary leaders. To reduce the impact of researcher bias on the

process of data collection and analysis, an interview protocol was developed with the

support of expert faculty. Through this structure, all participants were asked a universal

set of core questions that were presented in the same order. Triangulation was also a

factor, as data from semi-structured interviews, observations and artifacts was carefully

analyzed. Finally, 10% of the data collected from semi-structured interviews was coded

by both the researcher and a peer, and the results were reviewed for agreement at a

threshold of 80% of higher. The result was an approximate agreement of 83% and this

represented an appropriate level of calibration.

Central Research Question and Sub Question Findings

What are the behaviors that exemplary high school principals practice to lead their

organizations through conversation using Groysberg and Slind's four elements of

conversational leadership (intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality)?

Sub-Questions

5. How do exemplary high school principals lead through the conversational
    element of intimacy?

6. How do exemplary high school principals lead through the conversational
    element of interactivity?

7. How do exemplary high school principals lead through the conversational
    element of inclusion?

8. How do exemplary high school principals lead through the conversational element of intentionality?

Twenty-one emergent themes were identified from the semi-structured interviews, artifacts, and observations, which were referenced 644 times across the data sources. The number of themes generated by each element of conversational leadership is illustrated below in Figure 8. As shown, intimacy generated five themes, interactivity generated 6 themes, inclusion generated 5 themes, and intentionality generated 5 themes.
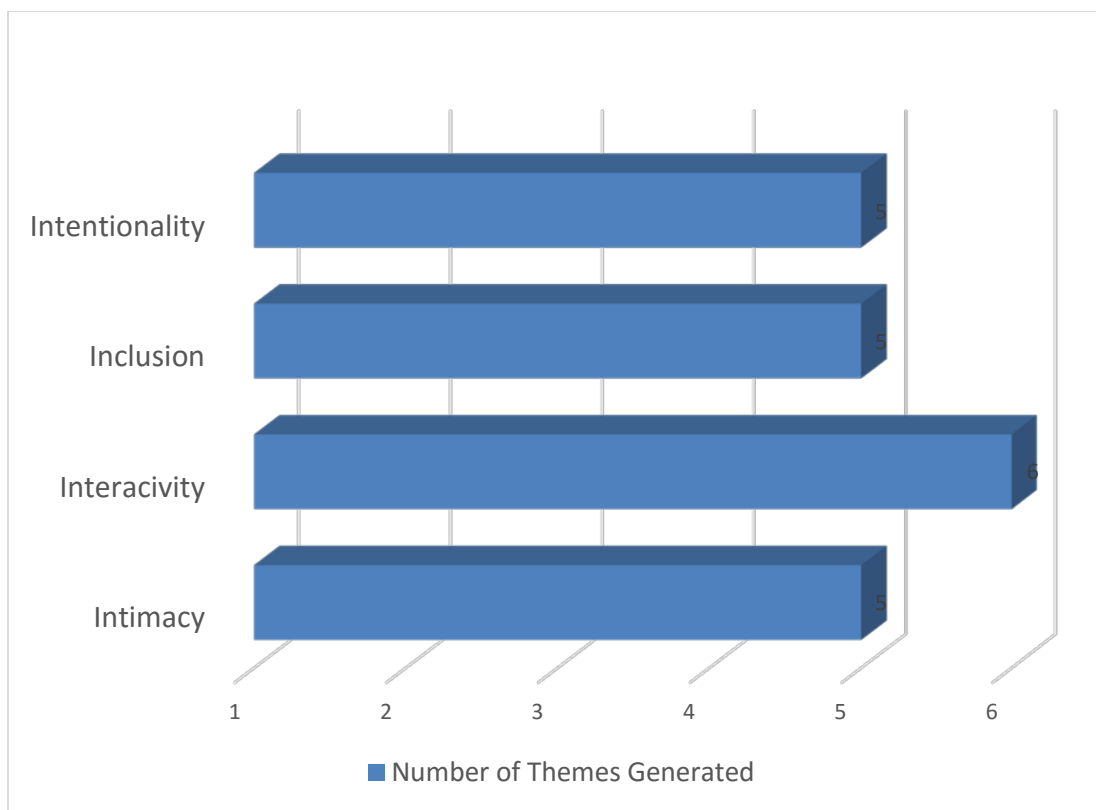
Figure 8. Number of themes generated by elements of conversational leadership.

Figure 9 illustrates the number of frequencies rendered by each element of conversational leadership. Intimacy rendered the highest number at 193 frequencies, representing 30.0% of the data collected. Interactivity rendered 174 frequencies, representing 27.0% of the data collected. Inclusion rendered the lowest number at 125

frequencies, representing 19.4% of the data collected. Finally, intentionality rendered

152 frequencies, a representation of 23.6% of the data collected.
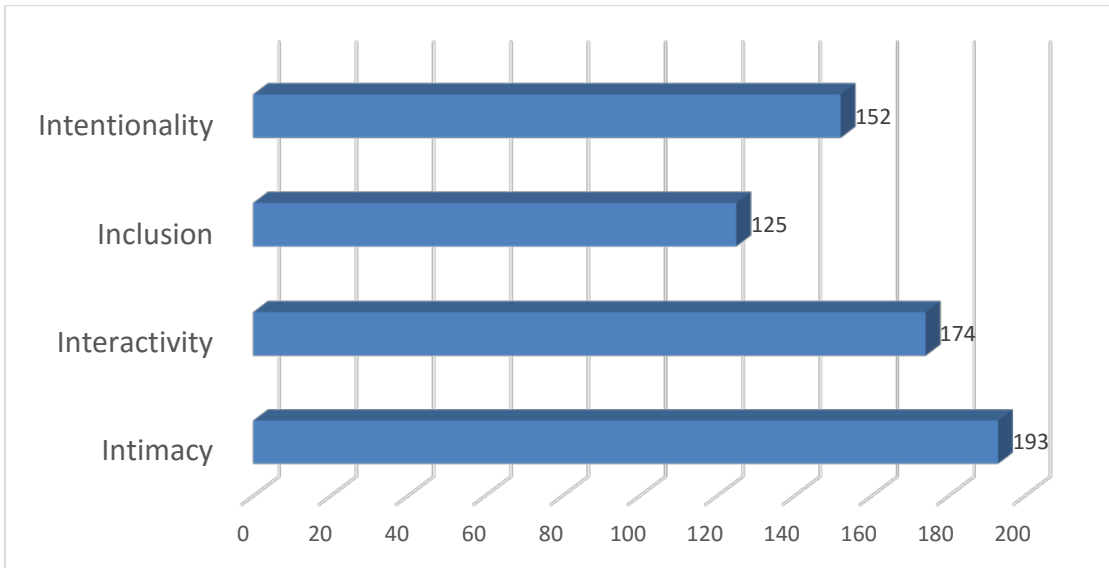
Figure 9: Number of frequencies generated by elements of conversational leadership.

The percentages of the data collected represented by each element of

conversational leadership when considering frequencies are illustrated in Figure 10.
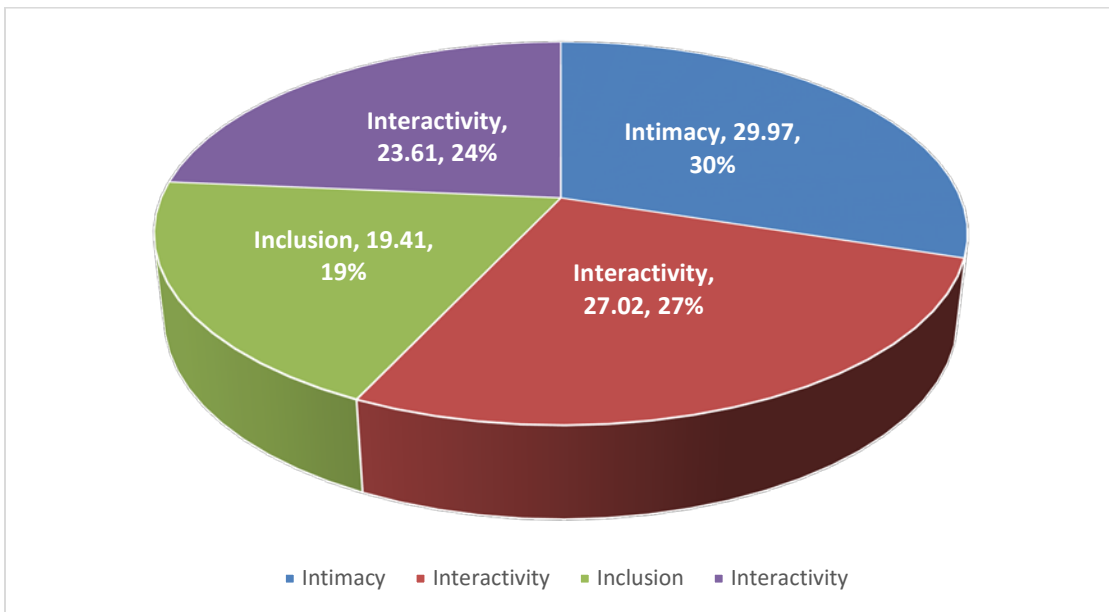
Figure 10. Percentages of data represented by elements of conversational leadership.

Intimacy

Intimacy in this research study was defined as the closeness, trust, and familiarity created between people through shared experiences, meaningful exchanges, and shared knowledge (Glaser, 2014; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Schwarz, 2011). This element of conversational leadership rendered five themes. Table 3 outlines the emergent themes of the conversational element of intimacy along with their sources and frequencies.

Table 3

Intimacy Themes

Themes	Interview Sources	Observation Sources	Artifact Sources	Total Sources	Frequency
Building trust-based relationships	9	6	5	20	52
Storytelling to create connections	8	5	4	17	36
Listening to stakeholders	7	1	4	12	26
Integrating informal conversations	4	2	9	15	33
Demonstrating authenticity	7	5	3	15	46

Note. Sources came from transcribed interviews, observations, and artifacts.

Building trust-based relationships. This theme was referenced by 20 sources 52 times. This represented 26.9% of the data coded for the conversational element of intimacy. Leaders must develop strong, trust-based personal and professional relationships with stakeholders, and this was possible through direct interpersonal interactions. Additionally, leaders must develop an understanding of the needs of stakeholders and demonstrate an ongoing effort to maximize their personal and professional potential (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c; Kwan, 2016). One leader, when speaking about trust-based relationships stated:

It's pretty much with honest conversations and authentic conversations,

it's not even something I think we think that much about because we're

just pretty real and people feel they and come into my office or my

assistant principal's office. We have a really good rapport, and we joke.

Trust-based relationships were typically sustainable because they allowed

stakeholders to interact on the premise of personal connectivity. This allowed for

meaningful conversations because stakeholders could be open and transparent.

According to Groysberg and Slind (2012c) and Lambert (2003), trust-based relationships

only became possible when leaders earned the respect, confidence, and faith of

stakeholders within the organization. These relationships were created through

transparency. Berson and Stieglitz (2013) asserted, "Transparency enables people to feel

trusted and connected in an organization. It also allows leaders to be open and honest

about their objectives, motives, and capabilities" (p. 78). Additionally, transparency was

often about ownership and responsibility, as stated by one leader:

I'll take chances that a lot of people think I am insane for doing, just

because I need people to see that I'm willing to do it. So, if I'm asking

you to do something, I'll do it too. I'll make the mistakes, I'll fail, and I'll

show you those failures as I'm doing it. I'll own those as I am going

through the process.

This theme emerged in six artifacts, and five observations. In multiple artifacts,

primarily electronic messages, participants were open and honest with stakeholders

regarding errors they made, taking accountability, and addressing the course of action

they would implement as they moved forward. Additionally, one participant was

observed building trust-based relationships as they communicated openly with stakeholders about a dilemma they were experiencing.

Storytelling to create connections. This theme surfaced across 17 sources with 36 references. This represented 18.7% of the data coded for the conversational element of intimacy. Leaders indicated they utilized storytelling to develop interpersonal connections with stakeholders. These stories were often connected to their lived experiences and involve various topics including family, successes, failures, and personal backgrounds. One participant shared an example of this art in practice stating:

> I've definitely shared my why, like why you do what you do. Like what makes you come back every year and it goes back to being a woman of color, and having my parent move us to the States when I was 10 years old and I think that story of my educational path. I work in inner cities, and I went to an intercity middle school when I first got to America, and understanding what helped me get through some of the tougher times in my life and the people with whom I interacted with that helped me at the end of the day besides my family were definitely educators. And so, being vulnerable about some of my own struggles, being an EL, coming to a country where I didn't speak English, but also just to focus on my mother, what she had to do, and what she had to go through.

The value of storytelling within organizations was expressed by Berry (2001) who noted, "Stories are a fundamental way through which we understand the world… By understanding the stories of organizations, we can claim partial understanding of the reasons behind visible behavior" (p. 59). Utilizing storytelling to create personal

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connections and meaning emerged in nine of the interviews conducted with exemplary high school principals, and this behavior was applied to various situations on a regular basis. Svennevig (2008) purported organizational leaders must be intentional about reducing the distance between themselves and the lower-level stakeholders of the organization. It was through these efforts stakeholders and the organization maximized potential (Svennevig, 2008). These efforts were reflected as a leader provided an example of a personal story shared with stakeholders to build connections:

> I can remember as a new teacher being completely out of my element and having a difficult couple of weeks with really an assignment that I wasn't credentialed for or prepared for. It goes back to the 90s, but then talking about how I got mentorship… found the answers I needed. Staff, I think, likes to hear that.

Crowley (2011) also addressed the importance of a leader minimizing distance from stakeholders stating, "If you want exceptional results from the people who work for you, you need to make a personal connection with them" (p. 80). Through the exchange of stories, stakeholder made meaning by capturing the journey of the organization. Storytelling also provided opportunities for leaders to impact perspectives and offer tangible reference points that aided in the adoption of systems and strategies (Boal & Schultz, 2007).

This theme was referenced in five artifacts and four observations. In a web log written by one participant, they provided an account of their upbringing in Guatemala, and the transition made to the United States at the age of 14 to live with a brother in an effort to pursue a better life. In another web log, a participant demonstrated vulnerability

and transparency through storytelling as they provided an account of their experiences as a student. The participant indicated that they were not particularly engaged as a student and lacked a sense of direction. They went on to write that one day as they were seated at a bus stop, a car ran through a deep puddle of water and drenched them from head to toe. This was a sobering experience that served as motivation to become focused, and eventually led to a career in the field of education.

Listening to stakeholders. This theme was cited by 12 sources with 26 references. This represented 13.5% of the data coded for the conversational element of intimacy. It was important for leaders to learn about each stakeholder within the organization. Additionally, effective leaders practiced active listening during conversations and engaged in personal and transparent communication (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c). With this assertion, one leader shared an example of how this behavior was incorporated, stating:

> I heard some murmurings. There were people who were accusing me, actually of being uncommunicative. I called a meeting and invited anyone in the entire school on one of our short Wednesdays to come down to the library and have a conversation about overall campus climate and found out some pretty interesting things. It was actually really tough to hear because, of course, even though they tell you that it's not you, when you're the number one leader of the organization, you are indirectly responsible for everything that occurs.

Active listening was also observed as one participant monitored the campus during a planned event. During this time, the leader maintained eye contact and maintained positive body language and intonation as she addressed the concerns of

multiple stakeholders. Berson and Stieglitz (2013) confirmed leaders must listen attentively to the statements of stakeholders, actively reflect on the information provided, and ask directly connected questions. A common thread when evaluating the responses of leaders was an intentional, concerted effort to listen first, receive all information coming from stakeholders, and then formulate a response based on the information.

Leaders indicated the critical importance of maintaining eye contact and body language, which communicated active listening. An example came from a leader who remarked:

> You've got to treat every individual with respect, professionalism, and confidentiality. Again, you've got to listen well. You've got to make eye contact. You've got to not look at your computer or answer your phone when somebody is there with you. Those little things make a big difference to people who want your attention and want to know you're actually listening and taking them seriously or taking them personally.

Integrating informal conversations. This theme was mentioned across 15 sources of data with 33 references. This represented 17.1% of the data coded for the conversational element of intimacy. Interpersonal relationships placed leaders in a position allowing them to build the capacity of other members within the organization. Through the ongoing work of improving existing relationships and developing new ones, leaders improved upon their ability to accomplish desired outcomes (Murshed et al., 2015; Sarikaya & Erdogan, 2016). In support of interpersonal relationships, leaders were observed engaging in positive, informal conversations with stakeholders.

Commonly utilized informal conversation strategies included humor, physical contact (e.g., hugs, handshakes), conversations about the interests of others, and regular affirmations. Additionally, leaders tried to demonstrate high levels of support, often seeking to understand and meet the needs of stakeholders. Chapman and White (2011), agreed these strategies were effective, asserting closeness, trust, and familiarity were established, promoted, and nurtured through ongoing interpersonal interactions reflect of a friendship. Leaders also focused on the intentional pursuit of face-to-face interactions, as opposed to relying on other means such as electronic messages or telephone calls. An example of this was indicated by a participant who stated:

> I learn more from casual conversations, I think, maybe than anything.
> From just walking the school to talking to teachers. That's when they'll
> tell me standing up, "Hey, this is really bothering me" or "I felt bad when
> I sent that kid to the office and admin sent them right back to my class,
> what was that about?" Those kinds of things.

Through direct, interpersonal interactions, leaders gained the ability to clearly demonstrate behaviors conducive to the development of strong, trust-based personal and professional relationships (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c). Informal conversations were noted in the artifacts collected from multiple participants, often with the incorporation of humor. In an email to the entire staff, one participant addressed his weekly schedule by stating humorously, "off campus this morning for a sex education meeting. You'd think that after four kids I would be excused… apparently not."

Demonstrating authenticity through servant leadership. This theme was

noted by 15 sources with 46 references. This represented 23.8% of the data coded for the

conversational element of intimacy. Servant leadership was a key concept, which

resulted in this theme having the second highest number of references when considering

all coded data for the conversational element of intimacy. According to Greenleaf

(2002), servant leadership began with "a natural feeling that one wants to serve first.

Then a conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead" (p. 27). This connected to

statements of one leader as he reflected on recent interactions with stakeholders: "It's

about relationships and you have to create time and space and opportunities where you

can check in with people and then influence them." Servant leadership involved the

development of other stakeholders and this was reflected by one participant:

> I acknowledge their struggles, so when they're struggling with something
>
> I try to work through that and I try to coach rather than just manage. My
>
> job here is to just coach you and help you get through. I'm going to be
>
> your evaluator at the end of the year; up until that point I'm just your
>
> coach and I'm trying to help you do the best that you possibly can.

The true servant leader maintained a perspective of themselves as "primus

interpares" or "first among equals." These leaders viewed the power they maintained due

to the hierarchical framework of the organization merely as the opportunity to serve

others at an elevated capacity (Dierendonck, 2011). This theme emerged in five artifacts

and three observations during the data collection process. In an electronic presentation

from one participant, they demonstrated their efforts to assess the needs of each

stakeholder, and devise an overarching plan to build upon their capacities. This artifact

directly addressed the desires of the participant to serve other stakeholders in an effort to

move the organization toward the achievement of the mission and vision. The

presentation utilized the concept of "finding the why", as the foundation, as the leader

encouraged other members of the organization to engage in a collaborative conversation.

Interactivity

Interactivity was defined as the bilateral or multilateral exchange of comments

and ideas; a back-and-forth process (Groysberg & Slind, 2012c). This element of

conversational leadership rendered six themes. Table 4 outlines the emergent themes of

the conversational element of interactivity along with their sources and frequencies.

Table 4

Interactivity Themes

Themes	Interview Sources	Observation Sources	Artifact Sources	Total Sources	Frequency
Encouraging authentic stakeholder input	9	4	3	16	39
Ensuring stakeholders feel valued	8	5	1	14	22
Creating a safe space for transparency	9	1	1	11	52
Building communication structures	10	0	2	12	26
Demonstrating active listening	7	3	6	16	23
Remaining available to stakeholders	7	1	2	10	12

Note. Sources came from transcribed interviews, observations, and artifacts.

Encouraging authentic stakeholder input. This theme was cited by 16 sources

with 39 references. This represented 22.4% of the data coded for the conversational

element of interactivity. The data collected revealed exemplary leaders actively pursued

opportunities to engage in bilateral and multilateral exchanges in which all stakeholders

had opportunities to provide input. Components connected to this theme included transparency, trust-based relationships, collaboration, and avoidance of command-and-control decision-making.

Exemplary leaders welcomed open discussion and other perspectives that varied significantly from their own. Additionally, they maintained the belief all stakeholders had a valuable perspective and could contribute to the accomplishment of desired outcomes. Jones and Bearley (2001) concurred with these findings as they asserted all ideas were to be treated with an appropriate level of respect and acknowledgement. This theme was found in observations as one participant readily incorporated the perspectives of two other stakeholders in her decision-making process in a traffic pattern adjustment necessary during school dismissal. Additionally, a leader addressed this as they reflected on a challenging topic spoken about with other members of the organization:

When you're going to have a dialogue, you come to the agreement. For example, we have a common interest in the fact that we do what is best for kids no matter what. We have an agreement that if we're going to reach it, and we may have our disagreements on how to get there, but if we have a common agreement that we're going to do what's best for kids we're going to listen to each other's opinions, and that's how we're going to get there.

Ensuring stakeholders feel valued. This theme emerged across 14 sources 22 times. This represented 12.6% of the data coded for the conversational element of interactivity. The data collected revealed exemplary leaders were intentional about promoting feelings of value and appreciation among stakeholders. This typically

involved a multi-faceted approach incorporating positive interactions, critical thinking, transparency, accessibility, regular communication, and stakeholder participation in value-adding work. Additionally, participants referred to other strategies including making team decisions and verbalizing that feedback was essential to the development of the organization. Frahm and Brown (2007) presented inclusive leaders offered opportunities for stakeholders to offer input in personal and professional scenarios by engaging them in the decision-making process. One participant described a practice relating to this theme, stating:

> My reaction will either make or break that group. If I react positively and say, "Great, what do you think? What would be better? How can we make this? How can we turn it? What can we do?" The minute I say that, it starts a chain reaction. People start to talk.

Another leader spoke of the critically important topics addressed during staff meetings and the need to include stakeholders in the work of the organization:

> Our meetings are all about issues and substantial things. We don't give a list of what's happening at school next week… For instance, I just did it in leadership team; we talked about the importance of welcoming African American parents, and we all talked about that and we read an article about it. People had different viewpoints because we have a really racially diverse staff, so everybody looked at it from a different viewpoint.

This theme was referenced in five artifacts and one observation. An example was found in a card that one participant sent to a stakeholder thanking them for their assistance in facilitating a professional development opportunity.

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In this artifact, the participant identified the stakeholder as the resident expert, and verbalized their appreciation for the hard work of the teacher-leader.

Creating a safe space for transparency. This theme was noted across 11 with 52 references. This represented 29.9% of the data coded for the conversational element of interactivity. According to the data, exemplary leaders utilized various methodologies to create safe spaces to promote transparency. These include engaging in critical or uncomfortable conversations, encouraging those who did not readily participate, encouraging diverse perspectives, thinking through processes, allowing the time necessary, developing rules and norms, and encouraging stakeholders to maintain an open mindset. Additionally, participants indicated they chose emotionally safe spaces to engage in conversations, including classrooms or any location that minimized perceptions of negativity. This theme was addressed on several occasions throughout the data collection process; one example involved a leader describing the strategies used to engage stakeholders in coaching conversations:

> I always try to remove myself from any environment where it could be a
> negative thing or where I might have an evaluation, or I might have a
> whatever. We try to go to some other place or I'll go up into the teachers'
> area. We created room in those areas.

Another participant spoke to the creation of the structures and protocols utilized to create a safe space that promoted transparency, stating:

> One of the norms I require is you need to agree to disagree respectfully. I
> do try to get people to have some parameters, but please converse. Note it
> did not start out very strongly. People were really on guard and

everything, but the more people started talking, the more people were willing to be participants. It takes time. It's not going to happen overnight. It takes a couple of people and you can't do it without good department leadership.

Neilssen and van Selm (2008) presented an aligned perspective, sharing multiple factors contributed to success in establishing a safe space for conversations. A sense of safety was created when leaders demonstrated they were receptive to ideas and perspectives presented by stakeholders. In addition, effective leaders skillfully engaged in conversation contributing to the removal of the metaphorical or physical barriers that negatively impact transparency (Neilssen & van Selm, 2008). This theme was referenced in one artifact and one observation. An example was a visual representation of a model utilized for conversation with various stakeholder groups. This artifact clearly and concisely outlined the key components for consideration when engaging with parents, students and staff members.

Building communication structures. This theme emerged from 12 sources and was referenced 26 times. This represented 14.9% of the data coded for the conversational element of interactivity. The impact of hierarchy was minimized through a multi-directional exchange of ideas, engaging stakeholders in a collective effort, allowing stakeholders to speak openly, building partnerships and trust-based relationships, directing engagement, finding common ground, and promoting public accountability. In agreement with these strategies, Marzano (2005) purported interpersonal interactions with stakeholders at various levels of the organizational were critical to success and overall functionality. Additionally, Berson and Stieglitz (2013) stated organizational

conversation involved a multilateral or bilateral exchange, and a mindset each perspective was of equal value. One participant expressed a strategy used to minimize the impact of hierarchical structures through direct engagement with stakeholders, stating:

> I think laying the groundwork where you're rolling up your sleeves as an administrator and participating in the actual where the rubber meets the road in the classroom is key to that. That builds trust. It allows your staff to work with you and build those intimate relationships where they understand that you're on the same page as they are and you want the same results.

Another leader indicated the development of partnerships and trust-based relationships was one of the primary strategies implemented:

> It's all about trust. In any organization, it doesn't matter what you're doing, if there is not trust, you're not going to get open dialogue, because they're going to tell you what they think you want to hear.

This theme emerged in two observations, and an example was a conversation between a participant and a member of their clerical staff. During this exchange, the leader asked a series of questions in an effort to solicit feedback regarding the approach utilized while addressing a student who presented a unique set of challenges. In return, the secretary offered feedback that was candid, stating that the participant did a great job with the student in their last encounter; however, a private setting may have been more appropriate.

Demonstrating active listening. This theme was noted by 16 sources with 20 references. This represented 11.5% of the data coded for the conversational element of interactivity. Several participants utilized multiple tools for engagement, such as maintaining eye contact, asking clarifying questions, assuming positive intonation, offering affirmations, and participating two-way conversations and individualized meetings with stakeholders.

Groysberg and Slind (2012b) stated, "Leaders who take organizational conversation seriously know when to stop talking and start listening" (p. 2). These authors asserted, "True attentiveness signals respect for people of all ranks and roles, a sense of curiosity, and even a degree of humility" (p. 2). They also spoke to the importance of active engagement, indicating conversation involved a back-and-forth exchange of questions and commentary between two or more individuals; one person speaking did not constitute a conversation (Groysberg & Slind, 2012b). Leaders presented multiple accounts demonstrating active listening and engagement with stakeholders. As an example, one participant stated:

> Because at the end of the day, like we're not machines and we need to be
> able to engage with each other in a positive way, and you can't do that if
> you're just within the four walls of your classroom all day. I would
> definitely say being intentional on my professional development, scoping
> sequence, and including those moments in which you're engaging with
> each other.

This emergent theme was evident in three artifacts and six observations during the data collection process. Multiple participants exhibited active listening

through direct two-way engagement with stakeholders. Other methods included

positive body language, maintaining eye contact, and attentiveness. The role of

the high school principal is multi-faceted, and often requires attention to several

aspects at the same time. Fundamentally, participants demonstrated active

listening by offering their undivided attention to stakeholders even though other

issues and situations required their input.

Remaining consistently available to stakeholders. This theme was mentioned

by 10 sources with 12 references. This represented 6.9% of the data coded for the

conversational element of interactivity. Based on the data, exemplary leaders used

various methods to remain available to stakeholders. Leaders accomplish this through

maintaining an open-door policy, remaining highly visible, distributing personal contact

information, remaining connected through various platforms, removing barriers, and

actively seeking stakeholder interactions.

Marzano et al. (2005) presented a connection between this theme and servant

leadership through the assertion servant leaders did not place themselves at the top of the

hierarchy. Instead, individuals fitting this criterion remained at the center of the

organization, engaging in direct interactions with all aspects and stakeholders at all levels

of the hierarchy (Marzano et al., 2005). This theme emerged on several occasions

throughout the course of the data collection process. One participant provided an account

of the efforts used to embed this mindset into the organizational culture:

They know I will drop anything if it's something that they feel is really

important. You know, I am busy too, and as much as they try to be

respectful of that, I also try to be respectful of their time as well. So really

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making sure that the space is available to them, and so all of them have my

personal phone number, they know how to use it, they have used it.

This theme was referenced in one artifact and two observations during the

process of data collection, and example was a memorandum from one participant

to their staff. In this artifact, the leader presented some important pieces of

information, but also reminded other members of the organization that there was

an open door policy. One observation was the high level of visibility, and

openness to interpersonal engagement by another participant as they monitored

the campus.

Inclusion

Inclusion was defined as the commitment to the process of engaging stakeholders

to share ideas and participate in the development of the organization (Groysberg & Slind,

2012c; Hurley & Brown, 2009). This element of conversational leadership produced five

emergent themes. Table 5 outlines the emergent themes of inclusion, along with their

sources and frequencies.

Table 5

Inclusion Themes

Themes	Interview Sources	Observation Sources	Artifact Sources	Total Sources	Frequency
Empowering stakeholders to expand roles	7	7	2	16	25
Building relationships	7	3	2	12	33
Using multiple methods for sharing ideas	9	6	4	19	36
Allowing stakeholders to contribute	6	6	2	14	16
Posing questions to promote sharing	5	5	2	12	15

Note. Sources came from transcribed interviews, observations, and artifacts.

Empowering stakeholders expanded roles. This theme was captured in 16 sources and referenced 25 times. This represented 20.0% of the data coded for the conversational element of inclusion. Based on the data, exemplary leaders utilized various methods to empower stakeholders. Some strategies included providing leadership opportunities, nurturing new and expansive thinking patterns, offering freedom of voice and choice, and viewing all stakeholders as leaders.

Additionally, participants indicated they acknowledged when others presented high-quality ideas, delegated tasks, and encouraged other members of the organization to present opposing ideas and thoughts. Fevre and Robinson (2015) agreed with this outlook on opposition stating inclusive leaders embraced these perspectives with the goal of establishing the rationale connected to the dissent and finding ways to get all individuals involved as the organization made progress. Engagement and openness to new ways of thinking, along with the concept of voice and choice, were addressed by multiple participants, one of which stated:

> It's about knowing people and part of encouraging is coming along side of people and encouraging but also putting them in positions at times that make them uncomfortable so that then they can break through those hesitations, those anxieties, those things that they don't want to do.

This emergent theme was evident in seven artifacts and two observations. Examples were found in memorandums crafted by multiple participants. These highlighted the work of stakeholders as they assumed roles and responsibilities outside of their job descriptions, and offered opportunities to other

members of the organization. Additionally, these participants offered affirmation and expressed gratitude for the ongoing efforts of stakeholders.

Building relationships. This theme emerged across 12 sources with 33 references. This represented 26.4% of data coded for the conversational element of inclusion. The data revealed exemplary leaders incorporated several strategies as they built relationships on trust and transparency. Some of the methods utilized included accepting authentic feedback, engaging in open and honest critical conversations, and offering feedback to stakeholders.

Leaders supported the interests of others and conducted individual meetings with frustrated stakeholders. During the interview process, multiple participants indicated relationships built on trust and transparency were critical to the development of the organization. Wahlstrom and Lous (2008) agreed with these strategies, stating within the context of education, stakeholder engagement and the overarching effectiveness of an organization were directly impacted by trust. These strategies were addressed as one participant described ongoing conversations held with stakeholders:

> I think just transparency and just being up front about the lens in which you're taking every conversation, and then just having like a really clear next step because it also helps with accountability and trust building. It's like if we're committed to something we're going to loop back and we're going to follow up on it.

Another exemplary high school principal spoke to the course of action used to build relationships stating:

I think laying groundwork where you're rolling up your sleeves as an

administrator and participating in the actual where the rubber meets the

road in the classroom is key to that. That builds trust. It allows your staff

to work with you and build those intimate relationships where they

understand that you're on the same page as they are, and you want the

same results.

This emergent theme was referenced in three artifacts and two

observations, and an example was an electronic message sent to all members of

faculty and staff by one participant. This communication included information

about an upcoming initiative, and a reflection on the logistics behind an event that

recently occurred. The participant contributed by the development of

relationships by exhibiting transparency regarding an error made, and their plan to

address it.

Using multiple methods for sharing of ideas. This theme was noted by 19

sources with 36 references. This represented 28.8% of data coded for the conversational

element of inclusion. According to the data, exemplary leaders promoted the sharing of

ideas by providing time to collaborate in varied settings, offer opportunities, and

monitoring the dominance of more vocal stakeholders.

To ensure conversations were substantive, participants also mentioned they

pushed others to think critically and engage on a deeper level. Shaw (2002) asserted

inclusive work climates were developed by authentic leaders who maintained values and

a belief system aligned with a commitment to engage stakeholders in the development of

the organization. Based on the data, leaders indicated the importance of stakeholder

input noting all stakeholders had something to contribute. This idea was communicated

as one participant describe efforts to engage stakeholders in sharing ideas:

You've got to have the systems and structures in place where people are

getting to provide feedback to the goals and direction. Directions got to be

clear, in this case, we know what we're about, we want to use critical

thinking to develop problem solvers.

Another exemplary high school principal spoke to the strategies used to

encourage the sharing of ideas, stating:

Feedback can be informal, formal feedback; we have a lot of surveys

going out to teachers… We work very close with the union to make sure

that teachers' voices are being heard. We have grade level leaders,

structural leadership leaders. We have like lots of different committees

that people can either be voted into, selected into of volunteer.

This was an evident theme in six artifacts and four observations. Examples

included newsletters, electronic messages, and memorandums from multiple

participants. Strategies used in alignment with this theme included surveys,

meetings with various stakeholder groups and electronic communication.

Additionally, participants utilized a variety of meeting places in an effort to

encourage stakeholder engagement in the process of sharing ideas.

Allowing stakeholders to contribute. This theme emerged in 14 sources with 16

references. This represented 12.8% of the data coded for the conversational element of

inclusion. An analysis of the data revealed exemplary leaders implemented a variety of

strategies to allow stakeholders to contribute to the meaningful, value-adding work of the

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organization. To accomplish this, exemplary high school principals included other

stakeholders in decision-making processes, providing autonomy and becoming

prescriptive when necessary. Among the many methods mentioned, leaders also

indicated they promoted innovative thinking, incorporated flexibility, and released

control. In agreement with this perspective, Gambetti and Biraghi (2015) stated inclusive

organizations allowed stakeholders across hierarchical lines to offer contributions to the

organization in a truly collaborative manner. Within inclusive professional settings, all

perspectives, thoughts, and beliefs were met with respect (Gambetti & Biraghi, 2015).

One leader described an experience with stakeholders while working collaboratively on

the meaningful work of the organization, saying, "people are more willing to do

something that they feel they invested in and that they feel like they had some sort of

impact on."

Another leader spoke about the mindset they worked to instill in members of the

organization as they added value to the organization through their work:

> As long as they know that no one has all the right answers, and everyone
>
> is a valuable member of the team, they can feel free to share. Not
>
> everyone wants to do it publicly, but I've definitely made it very clear to
>
> literally all stakeholder groups, I have an open-door policy.

This theme emerged in six artifacts and two observations. An example of

this was a video of an interview conducted by a local news media outlet in which

a participant addressed the decision-making process around a program supported

by their organization. In their commentary, the leader stated that the decision

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would be based on the needs of the students, and that all members of the learning

community would directly contribute to the final determination.

Posing questions to promote the purposeful sharing of ideas. This theme was

evident in 12 sources and referenced 15 times. This represented 12.0% of the data coded

for the conversational element of inclusion. An analysis of the data revealed exemplary

leaders utilized numerous strategies as they posed questions to promote purposeful

sharing of ideas. Such methods included posing goal-related questions, presenting

clarifying questions to leadership teams, and developing structured questions to guide

collaborative meetings. Another method referenced was developing a collective *why* to

promote a higher level of focus on the organizations purpose. Groysberg and Slind

(2012c) agreed quality conversation involved a unified sense of forward movement in

which stakeholders understood work was done with a purpose and outcome in mind. In

describing the work to promote the purposeful sharing of ideas, one participant stated: "I

want them to develop their own personal *why* as well, so we do a personal why statement

for each person." Another exemplary high school principal provided information

regarding the ongoing efforts in this area:

> Helping them to understand their purpose, as best as possible, providing
>
> opportunities for autonomy, and from my chair, really ensuring that I am
>
> communicating a well-articulated vision over and over again and
>
> clarifying where possible or when needed.

This theme was referenced in five artifacts and two observations. In

multiple electronic messages, participants presented questions to stakeholders

that were directly connected to the forward movement of the organization, and the

achievement of the mission and vision. Questions of this nature were also

observed in other sources including slides from presentations, and notes from

leadership team meetings.

Intentionality

Intentionality was defined as ensuring clarity of purpose that included goals and

direction to create order and meaning (Barge, 1985; Groysberg and Slind, 2012; Men,

2012). This element of conversational leadership produced five themes and rendered 152

references. Table 6 outlines the intentionality themes along with their sources and

frequencies.

Table 6

Intentionality Themes

Themes	Interview Sources	Observation Sources	Artifact Sources	Total Sources	Frequency
Providing clarity of purpose	6	7	4	17	41
Engaging in ongoing communication	8	6	1	15	29
Ensuring desired outcomes are defined	8	3	1	12	15
Using clear and consistent communication	8	3	2	13	28
Elicit stakeholder input	8	3	3	14	39

Note. Sources came from transcribed interviews, observations, and artifacts.

Providing clarity of purpose. This theme emerged across 17 data sources with

41 references. This represented 27.0% of data coded for the conversational element of

intentionality. An analysis of the data revealed exemplary high school principals

presented data, engaged in group conversations, and addressed goals and objectives as

they provided clarity of focus to other members of the organization, including constant

communication regarding the big picture and connections to the vision. Additionally, the

mission, vision, and purpose were placed at the center of every decision and action plans

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were developed with a defined purpose as the foundation. Purpose was critically important because it guided the decisions of stakeholder groups as they addressed issues faced by the organization. Purpose was also a driver of the ongoing inquiry-based process that resulted in continual forward movement and development of an organization (Hurley & Brown, 2009; Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Multiple participants addressed this theme. One leader spoke about communication with stakeholders around the importance of remaining student focused, sharing:

> I think the clarity around what our mission is and what our purpose is for all students regardless of where they come in has been times in which I've very much had to put away my frustration and reminded them that we're here for all students, even if they're not quite ready to be here for us."
> This participant continued on to state, "So anytime a teacher comes to me asking like why someone is still here, I'm like okay, let me clarify to you. Let me clarify to you what it is that we're trying to do here, like big picture wise.

Engaging in ongoing communication. This theme emerged across 15 sources with 29 references. This represented 19.1% of data coded for the conversational element of intentionality. An in-depth review of the data revealed exemplary high school principals engaged in ongoing electronic communications and regular face-to-face meetings with stakeholders as they demonstrated intentionality in communicating with stakeholders about the mission and vision of the organization. The responses of participants included narrowing the focus of group meetings, revisiting the vision, and connecting the mission and vision to follow-up communications with stakeholders.

Additionally, participants described the importance of developing systems that incorporate stakeholder input and connect to the mission and vision. In agreement with the importance of narrowing focus, Groysberg and Slind (2012a) stated even the most casual and informal conversations must in some capacity present alignment with the overarching trajectory of the organization because effective communication was never completely void of purpose (Groysberg & Slind, 2012a). One participant commented about ongoing efforts to narrow the focus across the organization through *why* statements:

> I think it's just constantly reiterating the why statement. I'm always focusing on that in everything we do. Everyone knows if they can't repeat that why statement to me, they have a problem because everything they bring to me, anything that is… whether it's cost, if it's a trip, if it's technology, if it's books, I'm always going to ask them, "Does this fit our why? If it does, how does it fit our why? How is it going to help you meet that objective?"

Another participant addressed ongoing efforts to narrow focus through communication regarding the mission and vision, stating:

> Well, I've been consistent. I haven't changed. My message has been clear. We're here to serve all students. We have a motto. 'Diversity is our strength, community is our goal. All kids can learn.' Those mantras are shared every month. They're shared everywhere we go and you're expected to differentiate. You're expected to help kids at all levels. It just keeps us going in one direction.

This emergent theme was referenced in six artifacts and one observation during the data collection process. One participant included a schedule of meetings and ongoing opportunities for stakeholder groups to engage in the value-adding work of their organization a weekly newsletter, and on the agenda for faculty meetings. Additionally, this theme was evident as another participant submitted examples of automated messages that were sent to various stakeholder groups, and statistics which showed a high level of attention and responsivity.

Ensuring desired outcomes are defined. This theme emerged across 12 sources with 15 references. This represented 9.9% of data coded for the conversational element of intentionality. Leaders clarified desired outcomes by engaging in ongoing communication about the outcomes, reflecting and critical thinking, promoting open dialogue, and revisiting of goals and campaigns. Data analysis was also a commonly mentioned component and leaders described this as an integral part of presenting clearly defined desired outcomes.

Groysberg and Slind (2012c) agreed about the importance of these practices, stating organizational conversation needed to be supported by a sense of direction; for this to occur, a culture of ownership and clearly defined path needed to be in place. Multiple participants addressed this theme. One leader provided an artifact exhibiting efforts to ensure goals were clearly defined. In an electronic message to staff, data from several classroom visits were summarized. The checklist utilized as part of the process included the components of effective learning environments and the leader compared the current data to the long-term goals for progress.

During a semi-structured interview one participant spoke to their communication with stakeholders stating:

Well, I have been consistent. I haven't changed. My message has been clear. We're here to serve all students. We have a motto. "Diversity is our strength, community is our goal. All kids can learn." Those mantras are shared every month. They're shared everywhere we go and you're expected to differentiate. You're expected to help all kids at all levels. It just keeps us going in one direction. I haven't budged. I think the worst thing for me to do is have a flavor of the month. For my people, I've been here 10 years. This is my message. I've never changed this. I never will. Now how we go about that, let's talk about those. The message is, we will reach all of our kids, serve all of our kids, and all kids can learn. I think holding firm and sticking to one clear direction helps me do the other little things like strategies or if you want to try something different.

Using clear and consistent communication. This theme emerged from 13 sources with 28 references. This represented 18.4% of data coded for the conversational element of intentionality. An analysis of the data revealed exemplary high school principals engaged in casual conversations, promoted open dialogue, engaged in collaborative data analysis, and reviewed the mission and vision to articulate expectations and direction of the organization. Additionally, leaders remained consistent with all established goals, belief systems, and expectations. One participant described the practices used to articulate expectations and direction:

I think writing things down and having clear expectations so everyone

already knows that I'm a perfectionist and I expect 100% of anything but

then I also give people specific goals and objectives and timelines to meet

those things…I think that the best strategy is to be specific. The focus is

starting with an end in mind, so if I know this is where I want to be by the

end of the school year, then I do backwards planning.

In agreement with the findings, Groysberg and Slind (2012c) stated one goal of

organizational conversation was to focus, guide, and direct what could easily become a

set of random communication activities. This involved strategic conversation, which was

a process leaders utilized to align stakeholders with the expectations and direction of the

organization. This theme was referenced in three artifacts and two observations.

Examples were found in meeting agendas submitted by multiple participants. In these

artifacts, leaders outlined their expectations, and made direct connections to the mission

and vision of the organization. Additionally, it was noted that these agendas all presented

opportunities for stakeholders to present questions or concerns regarding the messages

conveyed.

Elicit stakeholder input. This theme emerged from 14 sources with 39

references. This represented 25.7% of data coded for the conversational element of

intentionality. An analysis of the data revealed exemplary high school principals

requested authentic feedback from stakeholders, modeled desired behaviors, focused on

priorities, and sought balance as they elicited stakeholder input. Additionally, leaders

portrayed a sense of direction, valued contributions, and created a pleasant environment

that encouraged other members of the organization to offer input. Multiple participants

referenced this theme, as it was widely understood stakeholder input was of high importance to a productive organization. In agreement, Frahm and Brown (2007) stated through engaging stakeholders, leaders established lines of communication promoting a sense of ownership and accountability. In relation to this concept, one exemplary high school principal stated:

I think the first thing is just letting people know that you value their feedback, and I think you have to say it. "You know guys, obviously I'm the principal, and I could make any decision that I want to, but that's not how I want this school to be. I want you all to know that your opinions are important, so when I ask your opinion, I do want you to let me know what it is.

Another participant provided a statement regarding the open and honest conversations conducted as they elicited input from stakeholders:

Well I'll say, "I need some feedback. Can you give us some feedback?" Or with my assistant principal, I'll tell him, "Can you give me some feedback on how I address that at the faculty meeting? Did that seem harsh? What do you think?"

This theme was referenced in three artifacts and three observations as data was collected from participants. A few examples of this came from one participant who submitted a series of newsletters and electronic messages that spoke to their ongoing efforts to elicit stakeholder input. This work of this participant was noted due to their incorporation of various methodologies, and their use of different group sizes and meeting locations.

<center>**Key Findings**</center>

This qualitative phenomenological research study involved a data collection

process with semi-structured interviews, artifacts, and observations. This data were

coded for themes, each of which were assessed closely in connection to pre-determined

criteria. Key findings were determined to be those which were referenced by 70% or

more of all participants and represented 20% of more of the data coded for the respective

element of conversation.

Key Findings: Intimacy

1. *Building trust-based relationships* was referenced by 90% of the exemplary

   high school principals. This theme yielded the highest number of references

   for intimacy and represented 26.9% of data coded. This was a recurring

   theme in this study, presenting connections to multiple elements.

2. *Demonstrating authenticity through servant leadership* was mentioned by

   70% of the exemplary high school principals. This theme yielded the second

   highest number of references for intimacy and represented 23.8% of coded

   data.

Key Findings: Interactivity

3. *Creating a safe space to promote transparency* was referenced by 90% of the

   exemplary high school principals. This theme yielded the highest number of

   references and represented 29.9% of the data coded for the conversational

   element of interactivity.

4. *Encouraging the exchange of authentic stakeholder input* was referenced by

   90% of the exemplary high school principals. This theme yielded the second

<center>129</center>

highest number of references and represented 22.4% of coded data for the conversational element of interactivity. This was a recurring theme as there were connections to multiple elements.

Key Findings: Inclusion

5. *Using multiple diverse methods to promote the sharing of ideas* was referenced by 90% of the exemplary high school principals. This theme yielded the highest number of references for the conversational element of inclusion and represented 28.8% of the data coded.

6. *Building relationships on trust and transparency to impact stakeholder input* was referenced by 70% of the exemplary high school principals. This theme yielded the second highest number of references for the conversational element of intimacy and represented 26.4% of the data coded.

7. *Empowering stakeholders to take on expanded roles* was referenced by 70% of the participants and represented exactly 20.0% of the data coded for the conversational element of inclusion.

Key Findings: Intentionality

8. *Providing clarity of purpose* was referenced by 70% of the exemplary high school principals. This theme yielded the highest number of frequencies for the conversational element of intentionality and represented 27.0% of the data coded.

9. *Elicit stakeholder input* was referenced by 80% of the participants and yielded the second highest number of references. This theme represented 25.7% of the data coded for the conversational element of intentionality.

Summary

Chapter IV included a presentation of the purpose and methodology connected to the research study. Additionally, the data collected and an analysis of the data were included. The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe the behaviors exemplary high school principals practiced to lead their organizations through conversation using Groysberg and Slind's (2012c) four elements of conversational leadership (intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality). Chapter IV also incorporated a summary of the data analysis, identifying 21 themes that rendered a total of 644 references. Chapter V provides a summary of the findings, including a closer look at key findings, and presents conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for further research on the topic. The final components of Chapter V are closing remarks and reflections of the researcher.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

This phenomenological research study described the everyday lived experiences of exemplary high school principals as they lead their organizations through conversation using Groysberg and Slind's (2012c) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. The data collection process involved a series of 10 semi-structured interviews with exemplary high school principals serving districts throughout Los Angeles County, artifact collection, and observations. From the data, 21 themes emerged with 644 frequencies, and 9 major findings were derived. Based on these results, conclusions were formed and recommendations for future research were developed.

Chapter V begins with an overview of the phenomenological research study, including the purpose statement, central research question and sub questions, methodology, population, and sample. Additionally, this chapter includes the major findings of the study, unexpected findings, conclusions, implications for actions, and recommendations for research. Finally, Chapter V presented the researcher's concluding remarks and reflections.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe behaviors exemplary high school principals practiced to lead their organization through conversation using Groysberg and Slind's (2012c) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality.

Research Questions

The central research question guiding this study was: What are the behaviors exemplary high school principals practiced to lead their organizations through conversation using Groysberg and Slind's four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality? The sub-questions were:

1. How do exemplary high school principals lead their organizations through the conversational element of intimacy?

2. How do exemplary high school principals lead their organizations through the conversational element of interactivity?

3. How do exemplary high school principals lead their organizations through the conversational element of inclusion?

4. How do exemplary high school principals lead their organizations through the conversational element of intentionality?

Methodology

To describe the behaviors exemplary high school principals practiced to lead their organization through conversation, three methods of data collection were utilized. The 12-member research team, with the guidance of faculty members, developed interview questions and a protocol (Appendix A). These items were directly connected to the Groysberg and Slind's elements of conversational leadership, and other scholarly works, as research-based definitions of each element were also developed and closely considered throughout the course of the research study.

Ten participants were selected from the target population of high school principals in Los Angeles County. The research team determined the six criteria

connected to the term exemplary and decided participants needed to meet a minimum of four of the following criteria:

- Evidence of successful relationships with followers

- Evidence of leading a successful organization

- A minimum of 5 years of experience in the profession

- Articles, papers, or materials written, published, or presented at conferences or association meetings

- Recognition by their peers

- Membership in professional associations in their field

Major Findings

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe behaviors exemplary high school principals practiced to lead their organization through conversation using Groysberg and Slind's (2012c) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. The process of data collection and analysis involved the extraction of emergent themes in accordance to each element of conversational leadership, coding, and the identification of the frequencies associated with each theme. The purpose of this process was to identify the research-based key findings as indicated in Chapter IV, which led to the development of answers to the central research question and sub questions.

Intimacy

1. **Building trust-based relationships was important for a leader to create intimacy.** This theme was referenced by 90% of the exemplary high school principals. Building trust-based relationships yielded the highest number of

frequencies for intimacy and represented 26.9% of the coded data. This was a

recurring theme in this study, presenting connections to multiple elements.

Exemplary high school principals build trust-based relationships with

stakeholders by communicating openly about their own strengths, weaknesses,

successes, and failures. Additionally, they expressed their genuine feelings

regarding the topics and issues that impacted the organization. Groysberg and

Slind (2012c) and Lambert (2003) noted trust-based relationships only

became possible when leaders earned the respect, confidence, and faith of

stakeholders within the organization.

2. **Exemplary high school principals practiced servant leadership.**

Demonstrating authenticity through servant leadership was mentioned by 70%

of the exemplary high school principals. This theme yielded the second

highest number of frequencies for intimacy and represented 23.8% of the data

coded. Servant leaders placed the needs of the organization and its'

stakeholders before their own and viewed power, titles, and positions held as

opportunities to serve others. Greenleaf (2002) concurred stating at the

foundation of servant leadership was a natural desire to serve first.

Interactivity

3. **Interactivity was promoted through the creation of safe spaces.** To create

safe spaces within their organizations, exemplary high school principals

encourage diverse perspectives, implement norms and protocols, and choose

emotionally safe spaces to engage in conversations. Neilssen and van Selm

(2008) supported this finding stating leaders could create safe conversational

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spaces by demonstrating receptivity to stakeholder input and through the removal of barriers to transparency. This identified theme was referenced by 90% of the exemplary high school principals who participated in the research study. Additionally, it yielded the highest number of frequencies and represented 29.9% of the data coded for the conversational element of interactivity.

4. **Exemplary high school principals built interactivity into their organizations, promoting organic and transparent back-and-forth conversations.** This was accomplished through a wide array of methodologies including continual efforts to engage various stakeholder groups in purposeful conversation, and demonstrating that input was valued. Encouraging the exchange of authentic stakeholder input was referenced by 90% of the exemplary high school principals. This theme yielded the second highest number of frequencies and represented 22.4% of data coded for the conversational element of interactivity. This was a recurring theme with connections to multiple elements. Leaders in the research study welcomed open discussions with other members of the organization and believed all stakeholders had valuable input to offer. In agreement with this finding, Jones and Bearley (2001) emphasizes the importance of a leader encouraging stakeholder input even when opposing perspectives were presented.

Inclusion

5. **The exchange of ideas between stakeholders was a key factor when considering continual organizational development.** Using multiple diverse methods to promote the sharing of ideas was referenced by 90% of the exemplary high school principals. This theme yielded the highest number of references for the conversational element of inclusion and represented 28.8% of data coded. Exemplary leaders offered opportunities for all stakeholders to provide input and monitored those stakeholders typically dominant in conversation. Additionally, they encouraged stakeholders to think on a deep and critical level as they worked toward the development of the organization. Congruent with this finding, Shaw (2012) stated inclusive organizational climates were developed by leaders who were truly committed to engaging stakeholders to promote continual growth.

6. **Interpersonal relationships were at the forefront for inclusive conversational leaders.** Building relationships on trust and transparency to impact stakeholder input was referenced by 70% of the exemplary high school principals. This theme yielded the second highest number of frequencies for the conversational element of intimacy, representing 26.4% of data coded. To gain stakeholder input, participants engaged in open and honest critical conversations. Additionally, these leaders supported the interests of other members of the organizations and conducted individualized meetings. This finding was congruent with Wahlstrom and Louis (2008), who stated trust was

a major factor when considering stakeholder engagement and the overall level of functionality of an organization.

7. **Exemplary leaders built stakeholder capacity and promoted a sense of value through conversation.** Empowering stakeholders to take on expanded roles was referenced by 70% of participants and represented exactly 20.0% of the coded data for the conversational element of inclusion. Exemplary high school principals provided leadership opportunities to members of the organization, nurtured new and expansive thinking, and encouraged others to present opposing ideas and thoughts. This finding coincided with Fevre and Robinson (2015) who asserted conversational leaders valued all stakeholders and found ways to align perspectives to promote organizational development.

Intentionality

8. **Principals were purpose driven and utilized clear, concise communication regarding aspects such as the desired outcomes and overall direction of the organization.** Providing clarity of purpose was referenced by 70% of exemplary high school principals. This theme yielded the highest number of references for the conversational element of intentionality and represented 27.0% of data coded. Strategies incorporated by leaders as they provided clarity of purpose included constant communication regarding the mission, vision, and organizational goals. These became the foundational components of all action plans and created a purpose-driven mindset as stakeholders completed the valuable work of the organization. A common understanding of purpose among stakeholders was critical to the decision-making process

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addressing issues faced by the organization. Additionally, members of the

organization must understand the purpose of their work to remain driven for

continual forward progress (Hurley & Brown, 2009; Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

9. **Leaders promoted intentionality through their active pursuit of**

   contributions from other members of the organization. The strategy of

   eliciting stakeholder input was referenced by 80% of the participants and

   yielded the second highest number of references. This theme represented

   25.7% of the data coded for the conversational element of intentionality.

   Exemplary high school principals focused on priorities, portrayed a sense of

   direction, modeled desired behaviors, and valued contributions as they elicited

   stakeholder input. In agreement with this finding, Frahm and Brown (2007)

   stated through engaging stakeholders, leaders established lines of

   communication that promoted a sense of ownership and accountability.

Unexpected Findings

The first unexpected finding was the importance of storytelling to create personal

connections and meaning. This theme related to the conversational element of intimacy

and was observed as having a significant impact on the development of an organization.

Berry (2001) purported through storytelling, an understanding of the world and the

visible behavior of stakeholders within an organization was developed. Exemplary high

school principals participated in bilateral and multilateral storytelling to share their

personal, lived experiences with other members of the organization to build relationships

based on trust and transparency. Storytelling included accounts of family life, childhood,

humorous situations, challenges, failures, and successes. This practice allowed leaders to

remove the barriers and distance created by the hierarchal structures of the organization as they demonstrated vulnerability and a high level of interest in the stories of other stakeholders through active listening.

Inclusion was the conversational element that presented the lowest number of references with 125, which was 68 less than the element of intimacy and 27 less than intentionality. Inclusion accounted for 19.4% of all data coded for this study, a value 4.19 percentage points lower than intentionality and 10.56 percentage points lower than the element of intimacy. This was an unexpected finding because an extensive body of work addresses this element of conversational leadership. Authors offering contributions included Groysberg and Slind (2012c), Marzano et al. (2005), White et al. (2007), Gambetti and Biraghi (2005) and Hurley and Brown (2009). Considering the research conducted by these authors and their findings, it was expected themes of inclusion would emerge with a higher level of prevalence.

Another unexpected finding was the importance of creating safe spaces to promote transparency. This theme was connected to the conversational element of interactivity and was noted as critical to organizational development. Exemplary high school principals indicated safe spaces were created through various methods, including the development of norms for collaborative meetings and the establishment of a culture centered on respect for all stakeholders. Interactive leaders treated every idea with respect and expressed value even when perspectives were diverse or presented opposition (Jones & Bearley, 2001). Additionally, members of the organization needed to feel as though their input was valuable and included in the decision-making process. Leaders

also consider physical locations and conduct meetings in locations preferred by other stakeholders in an effort maximize their comfort level.

The final unexpected finding was the limited reference to affirmation as a behavior practiced by exemplary high school principals. Conceptually, affirmation connected to the conversational element of intimacy and involved recognition, encouragement, and emotional support in acknowledgement of outcomes achieved by members of the organization. An extensive body of work exists on this topic, including Marzano et al. (2005), Chapman and White (2012), Crowley (2011), Anderson and Ackerman-Anderson (2010), and Berson and Stieglitz (2013). These sources were all evaluated as part of the literature review and the information provided led to the assumption affirmation would be a prevalent finding.

Conclusions

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe behaviors that exemplary high school principals practice to lead their organization through conversation using Groysberg and Slind's (2012) four elements of conversational leadership; intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. Through the process of data collection and analysis outlined in Chapter IV, conclusions were developed regarding the lived experiences of exemplary high school principals as they lead their organization through the elements of conversational leadership.

Conclusion 1: *High school principals need to utilize storytelling to create personal connections and promote purpose-driven work toward the achievement of the desired outcomes.*

Based on the findings of this research study, it was concluded storytelling was a significant aspect of conversational leadership. Exemplary leaders incorporated this practice to share their lived experiences or integrate casual conversation as they built trust-based relationships with stakeholders and developed a collective understanding of the mission, vision, and trajectory of the organization. Exemplary high school principals integrated stories to remove the barriers that often existed between leaders and other members of the organization.

This was accomplished as leaders demonstrated vulnerability and showed transparency by sharing information regarding personal and professional aspects, such as their childhood, background, interactions with spouses, failures, and successes. Through these multidirectional exchanges, stakeholders built interpersonal connections and a deeper understanding of the purpose behind the mission and vision of the organization. Through storytelling, members of the organization also gained a deeper understanding when considering the value of their contributions to the meaningful work of the organization as it developed and continually moved in a forward direction. In agreement, Berry (2001) purports that through storytelling, members of an organization may gain insight into the rationale behind the visible behavior they encounter.

Conclusion 2: *High school principals must flatten hierarchical structures to promote interactivity and the exchange of authentic stakeholder input.*

Interactivity in its purest form was achieved when leaders developed communication structures that minimized the impact of hierarchy. Groysberg and Slind (2012c) makes the connection by stating that leaders within 21st century organizations must engage stakeholders in dynamic two-way exchanges that are not impacted by titles

or roles. High school principals continuously engaged in conversations with various stakeholder groups about the meaningful, value-adding work of the organization, and ensured they were included in the decision-making process. In relation to the decision-making process, leaders must communicate transparently about how the input received will be integrated, and when a unilateral decision will be made.

High school principals must also accept opposing perspectives and demonstrate feelings of value toward misaligned ideas when considering the mission, vision, and direction of the organization. The impact of hierarchical structures on stakeholder input was minimized when members felt truly valued and a culture of honesty, respect, and transparency was established. As a component of this culture, leaders must also create safe intellectual spaces where stakeholders feel free to offer authentic input truly reflective of their perspectives and ideas.

Conclusion 3: *High school principals must listen actively and remain accessible to stakeholders within their organization in order to demonstrate servant leadership and build intimacy*.

Based on the findings from this research study, it was concluded active listening and accessibility were critical as leaders built intimacy with other members of the organization. Leaders incorporated multiple methods to demonstrate active listening, including sustaining eye contact, listening without speaking or interrupting, and incorporating aspects of the content presented as they respond. Additionally, leaders who practiced active listening scheduled time to speak with stakeholder to ensure there were no distractions. Berson and Stieglitz (2015) agreed with this conclusion, stating that

leaders must practice active listening, reflect on the information presented by stakeholders and ask questions that are directly connected as part of the conversation.

High school principals also remained accessible to other members of their organization as demonstrated through maintaining a high level of visibility and readily responding to all forms of communication. Leaders also remained accessible as they kept an open-door policy to all stakeholders regardless of their title or position in the hierarchy. As exemplary leaders practiced active listening and consistent accessibility, they removed barriers to create a sense of safety and reduced interpersonal distance.

Conclusion 4: *High school principals need to incorporate clear and consistent communication to articulate the desired outcomes, direction, and purpose of the organization.*

The findings from this study revealed exemplary leaders communicated consistently with other stakeholders regarding key components of organizational development. Additionally, a sense of ownership and purpose was promoted through transparent conversations and ongoing feedback on the progress made due to collaborative and collective efforts. Leaders must be clear and consistent with their expectations for stakeholders to understand the trajectory of the organization and the value offered through their contributions. In agreement with the importance of these practices, Groysberg and Slind (2012c) stated organizational conversation needed to be supported by a sense of direction and a culture of ownership with a clearly defined path.

Implications for Action

Exemplary high school principals fostered organizational climates that optimized forward movement and development of stakeholder capacity through consistent integration of the four elements of conversational leadership. The findings and conclusions resulting from this research study connected with the elements of conversational leadership, and this section identifies the implications for action pertaining to leaders serving organizations and offices within the field of education. These include school sites, school district offices, county offices of education, state departments of education, and the United States Department of Education.

Implication 1

Based on the findings of this research study, leaders within the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) should construct a recommendation to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC). This should address a requirement for the state of California to embed an organizational communication strand as a component of credentialing programs for administrators. This would require all colleges and universities offering administrative credentialing programs to incorporate coursework connected to Groysberg and Slind's (2012) elements of conversational leadership and the findings of the thematic research team. This recommendation would apply to both preliminary and clear credentialing programs in the state of California. Several credentialing programs include a mentorship component, and the elements of conversational leadership should also be incorporated into this component.

Implication 2

County offices of education should collaborate with districts to offer a leadership academy to incorporate the four elements of conversational leadership, and the findings of the thematic research team. This should be accomplished through an ongoing series of professional development offerings, conferences and seminars for current and aspiring administrators. Leadership academies should ensure that the elements of conversational leadership are incorporated universally across districts by administration teams. Additionally, they should ascertain that aspiring administrators are aware of the strategies utilized to lead through conversation.

Implication 3

Based on the findings of this research study, it is recommended that the core faculty of academic of Brandman University, develop coursework which includes Groysberg and Slind's (2012) elements of conversational leadership. These elements and the findings from this research study should also be incorporated into presentations and seminars facilitated by members of faculty as they contribute toward the development of conversational leaders.

Implication 4

It is recommended that leaders within the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) construct a recommendation to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC). This should involve a plan to incorporate Groysberg and Slind's (2012) four elements of conversational leadership into the frameworks utilized to perform annual evaluations on administrators. An example of this is the California Administrator Performance Expectations (CAPE), which already includes

communication as standard under the category of visionary leadership. Additionally, this is a component on documentation for administrator evaluations but does not specifically address intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality as critical components.

Recommendations for Further Research

The completion of this research study based on Groysberg and Slind's (2012c) elements of conversational leadership resulted in the establishment of findings and conclusions; however, recommendations for further research were also identified:

- In this research study, the target population was limited to high school principals within Los Angeles County. The recommendation is for a future mixed-method study to examine conversational leadership practices through a broader geographic lens.

- It is recommended a future qualitative phenomenological research study examine the gender-specific variations in conversational leadership practices. This research study did not identify participants by gender, and therefore, potential differences between the approaches of males and females were not considered.

- A meta-analysis of the studies conducted by the 12 peer researchers should take place. The thematic research study involved the triangulation of data collected from 120 participants, and the combination of the data collected would lead to the extraction of emergent themes across multiple samples. Therefore, this meta-analysis would render powerful findings with connections across a wide variety of professional fields and sectors.

- A survey based on Groysberg and Slind's elements of conversational leadership and the phenomenological research of the thematic team should be created. This survey should be utilized toward a quantitative research study to examine the success and development of organizations led by individuals who incorporate the four elements of conversational leadership into their everyday practice.

- Three members of the thematic research team conducted research studies on exemplary principals, evaluating those serving elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. The recommendation is for a meta-analysis of these studies to assess the similarities and variances in the findings. This would offer additional contributions to the body of work by taking an in-depth and comprehensive look at the conversational leadership practices of exemplary principals serving students ranging from kindergarten to grade 12.

- The insights, perspectives, and practices of stakeholders across the hierarchical structure in the organizations evaluated were not included in this thematic research study. In terms of future research, a mixed-method constructivist research study that evaluates each of these areas in connection with the conversational practices of exemplary leaders is recommended.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

> The greatest legacy one can pass on to one's children and grandchildren is not money or other material things accumulated in one's life, but rather a legacy of character and faith.
>
> \- Billy Graham

Life presents a path full of twists and turns, and it is just overall unpredictable. I have come to the realization that hard work, grit and resilience are the three characteristics that can place any individual at an advantage. As a boy growing up in Belize, Central America, a third-world country, I recall spending countless hours dreaming of having a life in the United States. To me, this country presented a window of opportunity to achieve the kind of greatness I was hungry for, and all I needed was a chance. This mindset was engrained into every aspect of my being from a very young age, living in a household of educators. My mother was the principal of the middle school I attended and her daily teaching was that with an education, any dream I had could become a reality. I have not stopped dreaming, and I certainly have no plans to conclude my pursuit of greatness. The completion of this program is only the beginning and I look forward to applying the knowledge and perspective I have gained as I move toward the next challenge. God is, has been, and will always be in control.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

"My name is Robert Harris, and I am the Principal at Palmdale High School, located in the Antelope Valley area. I'm a doctoral candidate at Brandman University in the area of Organizational Leadership. I'm a part of a team conducting research to determine what strategies are used by exemplary leaders to lead their organization through conversation. The four elements of conversation used in this study are depicted by Groysberg and Slind's framework of conversational leadership, intimacy, interactivity, inclusion and intentionality. Conversation as used in this research applies to the full range of patterns and processes by which information circulates through an organization. It is all the ideas, images, and other forms of organizational content that passes between leaders and all members of the organization including personal, interpersonal, group and organization. This study is about what behaviors you use to lead the organization through conversation.

Our team is conducting approximately 120 interviews with leaders like yourself. The information you give, along with the others, hopefully will provide a clear picture of the thoughts and behaviors that exemplary leaders use conversation to create quality in their organizations and will add to the body of research currently available.

Incidentally, even though it appears a bit awkward, I will be reading most of what I say. The reason for this to guarantee, as much as possible, that my interviews with all participating exemplary leaders will be conducted pretty much in the same manner.

Informed Consent (required for Dissertation Research)

I would like to remind you any information that is obtained in connection to this study will remain confidential. All of the data will be reported without reference to any individual(s) or any institution(s). After I record and transcribe the data, I will send it to you via electronic mail so that you can check to make sure that I have accurately captured your thoughts and ideas.

Did you receive the Informed Consent and Brandman Bill of Rights I sent you via email? Do you have any questions or need clarification about either document?

We have scheduled an hour for the interview. At any point during the interview you may ask that I skip a particular question or stop the interview altogether. For ease of our discussion and accuracy I will record our conversation as indicated in the Informed Consent.

Do you have any questions before we begin? Okay, let's get started, and thanks so much for your time.

Interview Questions:

Intimacy. The closeness, trust and familiarity created between people through shared experiences, meaningful exchanges, and shared knowledge (Schwarz, 2011; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Glaser, 2014).

1. How do you create conversations that promote trust between you and the members of your organization?
   Optional probe: What would you identify as the most important factor in establishing trust with your team members?
2. Research indicates that a leader can use personal stories that show vulnerability to build trust and authenticity with members of their organization. Please share with me an example of a time when you disclosed a personal story that showed your vulnerability in an effort to build trust and authenticity with members of your organization.
   Optional probe: Tell me about the outcome from that disclosure.
3. Tell me about a time when you listened attentively to members of your organization to engage them in honest and authentic conversations.
   Optional probe: Tell me about the impact of that conversation on the members of your organization.

Interactivity. Bilateral or multilateral exchange of comments and ideas; a back-and-forth process (Groysberg & Slind, 2012).

1. How do you engage members of your organization in conversations that are two way exchanges of ideas and information about your organization?
   Optional probe: What tools and institutional supports do you utilize to encourage the process of this back-and-forth conversation?

2. How would you describe the strategies you use to cultivate a culture of open dialogue?
   Optional probe: What role does social technology (such as blogs, wikis, online communities, twitter, social networks, web-enabled video chat, video sharing etc.) play in supporting this culture of dialogue?
   Optional probe: How do you deal with the unpredictable nature of conversation within your organization?
3. Tell me about a time in which you effectively promoted conversation with members of your organization that incorporated an exchange of ideas around a difficult issue or topic.
   Optional probe: How do you provide the risk free space that encourages people to participate in the exchange of ideas?

Inclusion. The commitment to the process of engaging stakeholders to share ideas and participate in the development of the organization (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Hurley, T. & Brown, J. 2009).

1. What conversational strategies do you find effective to ensure members of the organization remain committed to and included in the organization's goals and or mission?

   Optional probe: Why do you feel that these strategies encourage more commitment to organizational goals?

2. What strategies do you use to encourage all members to become active contributors and spokespersons for the organization?

   Optional probe: What are the ways that you gauge the impact of members' contributions?

3. Please share a story about a time when you allowed the members of your organization to generate the content for an important message.

   Optional probe: How did that work out for you and what was the impact?

Intentionality. Ensuring clarity of purpose that includes goals and direction to create order and meaning (Barge, 1985; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Men, 2012).

1. Can you share some examples of when you used conversation to create clarity around your organization's purpose?

   Optional probe: What do you think you did that created that clarity?

2. How do you use conversation to elicit feedback on the goals and direction of your organization?

   Optional probe: How have others responded to that?

3. What strategies do you use to give focus and direction to the organizations' communication activities?

   Optional probe: Why do you think that the strategies you use help to provide focus?

"Thank you very much for your time. If you like, when the results of our research are known, we will send you a copy of our findings."

General Probes

May be used during the interview when you want to get more info and/or expand the conversation with them.

1. "What did you mean by …….."
2. "Do you have more to add?"
3. "Would you expand upon that a bit?"
4. "Why do think that was the case?"
5. "Could you please tell me more about…. "
6. "Can you give me an example of ….."
7. "How did you feel about that?"

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
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 in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers 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 of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

INFORMATION ABOUT: The behaviors that exemplary leaders practice to lead their organizations through conversation using the four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion and intentionality.

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: _____

PURPOSE OF STUDY:
You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by _____, a doctoral student from the School of Education at Brandman University. The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe behaviors that exemplary elementary Superintendents practice to lead their organizations through conversation using Groysberg and Slind's (2012) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion and intentionality.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and will include an interview with the identified student investigator. The one-to-one interview will take approximately 60 minutes to complete, in-person or electronically using a web-based collaboration software and will be scheduled at a time and location of your convenience. The interview questions will pertain to your perceptions and your responses will be confidential. Each participant will have an identifying code and names will not be used in data analysis. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only.

I understand that:
   a) The researcher will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying codes and research materials safe-guarded in a locked file drawer or password protected digital file to which the researcher will have sole access.
   b) My participation in this research study is voluntary. I may decide not to participate in the study and I can withdraw at any time. I can also decide not to answer particular questions during the interview if I so choose. Also, the Investigator may stop the study at any time.
   c) I understand that the interview will be audio recorded. The recordings will be available only to the researcher and the professional transcriptionist. The audio recordings will be used to capture the interview dialogue and to ensure the accuracy of the information collected during the interview. All information will be identifier-redacted and my confidentiality will be maintained. Upon completion of the study all recordings, transcripts and notes taken by the researcher and transcriptionist from the interview will be destroyed.
   d) If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact.

e) No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and 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 consent re-obtained. There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research.

f) If I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the "Research Participant's Bill of Rights." I have read the above and understand it and hereby consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

_____   Date: _____
Signature of Participant or Responsible Party

_____   Date: _____
Signature of Principal Investigator

APPENDIX D – FIELD TEST FEEDBACK QUESTIONS

While conducting the interview you should take notes of their clarification request or comments about not being clear about the question. After you complete the interview ask your field test interviewee the following clarifying questions. **Try not to make it another interview; just have a friendly conversation**. Either script or record their feedback so you can compare with the other two members of your team to develop your feedback report on how to improve the interview questions.

1. How did you feel about the interview? Do you think you had ample opportunities to describe what you do as a leader when working with your team or staff?

2. Did you feel the amount of time for the interview was ok?

3. Were the questions by and large clear or were there places where you were uncertain what was being asked? *If the interview indicates some uncertainty, be sure to find out where in the interview it occurred.*

4. Can you recall any words or terms being asked about during the interview that were confusing?

5. And finally, did I appear comfortable during the interview… (I'm pretty new at this)?

Remember, the key is to use common, conversational language and very user friendly approach. Put that EI to work☺

Contact Information:

Interviewer**:** Robert Harris   Dissertation Chairperson: Dr. Cindy Petersen

Email: harri260@mail.brandman.edu   Email: Cindy.Petersen@gcccharters.org

APPENDIX E – NIH CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

Certificate of Completion

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

Date of completion: 05/19/2016.

Certification Number: 2078349.

APPENDIX F – ELECTRONIC MESSAGE TO SUPERINTENDENTS

Dear Superintendent,

My name is Robert Harris, and I am currently serving as Principal at Palmdale High School located in the Antelope Valley area. I am also currently a doctoral candidate at Brandman University, and working on a dissertation about the conversational leadership practices of exemplary high school principals. I am contacting you today hoping you can refer me to some exemplary principals within your school district or other Los Angeles County school districts. Below I have listed the criteria connected to the term "exemplary" within the context of the research study, and principals selected should meet at least four of these.

- Evidence of successful relationships with followers;

- Evidence of leading a successful organization;

- A minimum of 5 years of experience in the profession;

- Articles, papers or materials written, published, or presented at conferences of association meetings;

- Recognition by their peers; and

- Membership in professional associations in their field.

Any assistance you could offer would be sincerely appreciated. The results of this study will enable school districts and county offices of education to better understand the behaviors that exemplary high school principals practice as they lead their organizations. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

Robert Harris

Principal, Palmdale High School
Brandman University Doctoral Candidate

Dear Principal,

My name is Robert Harris. I am current the principal at Palmdale High School in the Antelope Valley area, and a doctoral student at Brandman University. I am conducting a research study on the conversational leadership practices of high school principals, and the results of the study will aid in understanding how high school principals lead through conversation using Groysberg and Slind's (2012) four principles of conversational leadership (intimacy, interactivity, inclusion and intentionality).

You, along with other high school principals within Los Angeles County, have been selected to participate in this research study. The findings will add to high school leadership development by understanding the perceptions of successful high school principals who use conversational leadership practices to transform and improve their 21st century organizations. Your participation in this study will render data to help guide future research on the topic.

During the study, the researcher and confidential transcription services may have access to audio recordings of interviews. To protect confidentiality, each participant in the sample will be assigned a unique identifying number. Data, including audio recordings, will be stored in a password protected folder on a password protected computer. After the research is completed, signed consent and other documents that may identify participants will be shredded and disposed of. Audio recordings will be deleted and digital audio recording device will be wiped clean. All backup files and data will be permanently deleted from hard drives.

If you are interested in supporting these research efforts, please reply to this initial email. Once your email is received, I will send an additional email message including detailed information outlining the interview process, and additional correspondence will follow to answer any clarifying questions you may have.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Robert Harris

Principal, Palmdale High School

Doctoral Candidate, Brandman University

Cell: (323) 491-9094