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TRUST IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF CRISIS: THE SUPERINTENDENT-TEACHER UNION LEADER TRUST DYNAMIC

Dissertation in Practice by

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Trust in Educational Leadership in Times of Crisis:

The Superintendent-Teacher Union Leader Trust Dynamic

by

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Abstract

This qualitative case study explores the role that trust plays between the superintendent and the teacher union leader of a public school district in the Northeast United States during the COVID-19 pandemic using the framework of interpersonal trust-building (Zand, 1972). Further, it uses the five facets of trust (Tschannen-Moran, 2001) to identify the leadership practices that have the greatest impact on perceptions of trust in this relationship. Specifically, this study addresses the following research question: *How, if at all, does trust influence the relationships and practices of educational stakeholders during times of crisis?* Based on semi-structured interviews, document reviews, and observations, findings support previous research indicating that trust develops only with the benefit of time and, once established, allows for more direct communication and more efficient and collaborative problem-solving. Data also indicate that the facet of benevolence exerts the greatest impact on perceptions of trust in the superintendent's and teacher union leader's working relationship. Finally, the accumulation of shared experiences over time help develop a shared sense of identity between the superintendent and teacher union leader, resulting in stronger perceptions of trust and a greater sense of shared purpose. This shared sense of identity may also serve as a proxy for time, allowing parties to make assumptions about the other's future behavior based on perceived group memberships, thereby jump-starting the development of trust in the relationship. Recommendations include purposefully demonstrating benevolent behaviors in order to more effectively develop trust in a relationship and, whenever possible, communicating a shared sense of identity based on common values and beliefs. These findings have implications for district and school leaders who want to more intentionally establish trusting relationships and can inform the preparation, induction, and learning of district leaders.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER ONE[1]

DISSERTATION DESCRIPTION & LITERATURE REVIEW

In a complex system of education, improvement is an ongoing pursuit requiring educational leaders to have trusting relationships across stakeholders. The pursuit of improvement typically involves disrupting the status quo, which can often elicit both resistance (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002) and grief (Hearney & Hyle, 2003) from members of the changing organization. Resistance and grief can be a reaction to change that often results in vulnerability to risks, some of which may not be within an individual's control (Mayer et al., 1995). Change requires new practices, which leads to some level of vulnerability on behalf of the people involved. Such vulnerability requires trust.

In addition, society expects school districts to serve many functions for children, requiring collaboration among different groups. This collective work is most effective with relational trust as a foundation, as a variety of stakeholder groups must work interdependently to achieve goals. Forsyth and colleagues (2011) define interdependence as "the condition wherein the organization's success hinges on the efforts of two or more groups" (p. 106). Such interdependence requires effective relationships. Forsyth et al. (2011) assert that, once trust is established, stakeholders feel more confident and demonstrate a greater willingness to take risks. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) note that "Interdependence means that trust must be present to some degree in order to facilitate the constant, innumerable interactions that occur among people in a school" (p. 68). Furthermore, research suggests that trust is also important

[1] This chapter reflects the team approach of this project and was jointly written by Ruth Evee, Katherine Grassa, Kelly Hung, Karen McCarthy, and Gregory Myers.

when developing district-level initiatives and implementing buy-in across stakeholders (Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010).

Moments of crisis in particular require an abundance of trust; if common beliefs are shared, those working through the crisis may be more likely to trust each other's actions, allowing systems to operate more effectively. Rosenthal and Hart (1991) characterize a crisis as a disruptive situation initiated by a triggering event and evolving over a long period of time. Mishra (1996) identifies four components that define a crisis: a significant threat where survival is at question, limited time to respond, challenges in response structures, and limited resources for coping. Mishra explains that crises are characterized by urgency of decision, significant uncertainty, system restructuring, and stress.

The impact of a crisis adds another layer of vulnerability and deepens the importance of trust in leadership. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic has jolted school systems into a time of intense difficulty, rapid change, and ongoing vulnerability, requiring essential decisions to be made. Reopening schools at this time posed a variety of risks to teachers, from changed routines and instructional practices to an increased risk to teacher health, each of which creates vulnerability and the potential for loss (Gaffney et al., 2020). We believe that the ability for districts to work interdependently and respond effectively to community needs during a crisis may be influenced by trust at varying levels. While COVID-19 has been a clear crisis since 2020, we expect that various types and severities of crises, from Hurricane Katrina to systemic racism, have and will continue to impact school systems. The literature suggests that established trust can make the response to change, and transitions during a crisis, more manageable,

thereby allowing schools to maintain effective school communities and remove barriers to continue the pursuit of achieving student academic success and a positive learning and working environment (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Daly, 2009; Louis, 2007; Olsen & Sexton, 2009).

Importantly, school districts serve an outsized function in society (Trujillo, 2016; Honig, 2017). They are expected to align curriculum, instruction, resources, social-emotional learning, physical health needs for students, and implement government policies. To implement these initiatives, educators must prioritize relationships and work together effectively. Trust is a factor in school districts, especially during times of crisis because, when a crisis occurs, swift actions and changes must be enacted. Social trust among teachers, parents, and school leaders is a key resource for change (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). One must trust in the systems, leaders, and one another to move through a crisis collectively. A deeper examination into various aspects of trust may further expose its relevance during a time of crisis, provide additional focus for leadership development, and support leadership during the implementation of change initiatives, particularly those implemented during a crisis. In addition, our study hopes to draw attention to the levels of trust within a school district that may create barriers or open doors to informing practices that create high-achieving, equitable schools.

Current research contains a wealth of theorizing and empirical research around the trust between teachers and principals (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999, 2003; Louis, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015; Tschannen-Moran et al., 2015; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). This research has discovered links between

trust, job satisfaction, and positive school climate, as well as increased academic success. While trust has been widely studied, trust research beyond identifying the qualities or behaviors which engender the trust of teachers in their principals is limited. Through a qualitative case study of a school district in the northeast of the United States, we sought to understand trust among multiple educational stakeholders: teachers, principals, central office staff, union leaders, and the superintendent. This area of research is important because organizational improvement toward student success frequently depends on how much people in an organization trust one another, with that trust built through relationships (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Benna & Hambacher, 2020). Additionally, there is a gap in the research regarding how educational stakeholders build relationships and enact practices during times of crisis. To our knowledge, this study is the first to examine trust-building perceptions and practices across multiple educational stakeholders in one district during the COVID-19 crisis.

Our collective study examines relationships and practices across a school district during a crisis to understand how trust plays a role in this work. Specifically, this study addresses the following research question: *How, if at all, does trust influence the relationships and practices of educational stakeholders during times of crisis?* Using a qualitative case study method, we explore the relationships and practices among the following stakeholders during a time of crisis: principals; teachers; central office members; union leadership; diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) leaders; and the superintendent.

Schools play a sizable role in society as they prepare generations by teaching them skills needed for adulthood. In addition, as places of connection and centers of activity, they may provide structure and stability for entire communities, especially during a crisis. Our study identifies the role relationships and trust play across various levels of schools during times of crisis, specifically the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to aid the development of more productive and effective districts.

Individual Studies and Conceptual Framework

In this qualitative case study, we grounded our conceptual framework in relational trust theory. Mayer et. al (1995) define relational trust as "...the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party" (p. 712). Building upon this definition, we relied on Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's (1999) "five facets of trust" (benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness) to operationalize the presence of trust within the relationships and practices of educators across the district. The facets refer to characteristics research has shown help to foster trust-formation. People may demonstrate these characteristics through their behaviors, which help them to be perceived as trustworthy. Using this framework, we note when a trust-forming characteristic, or a behavior associated with it, is present in our data. Lastly, we integrate Rosenthal and Hart's (1991) definition of crisis to frame the context in which agents perceive a change initiative. Rosenthal and Hart characterize a crisis as a disruptive situation initiated by a triggering event and evolving over a long period of time. Crises are characterized by urgency of decision, significant uncertainty, system restructuring, and stress (Mishra, 1996). Together, the concept of

relational trust, five facets of trust, and crisis definition serve as the conceptual framework through which we designed our study and analyzed our data.

The Five Facets of Trustworthiness

Below, we define Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's (1999) five facets of trustworthiness: benevolence, reliability, competence, openness, and honesty. In our research, we identify where these five facets exist, or do not exist, within various relationships throughout a single school district during a time of crisis. There are many actions that can conceptually overlap across the five facets. For example, a leader's action may demonstrate openness by sharing a vulnerability, while also demonstrating honesty with their community, or demonstrating care and support (benevolence) for others who may share a similar vulnerability. Figure 1 visually represents how each of the five facets of trust influences relationships among key stakeholders during times of crisis. It also shows how each of these facets can stand alone or be connected within the actions of a person and the perceptions of the receiver.

Figure 1

Five Facets of Trust in Times of Crisis

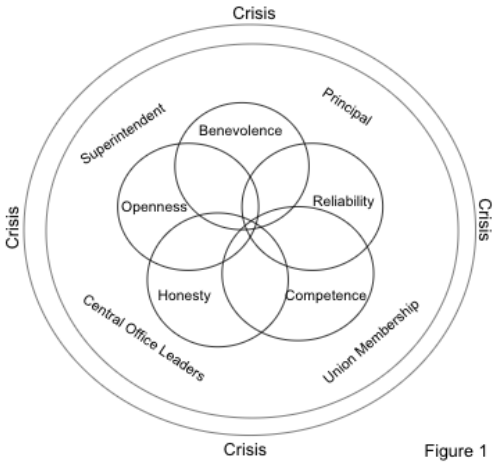

Figure 1

Benevolence. In the context of trust, benevolence is one's demonstration of goodwill toward another. Mayer et al. (1995) describe the benevolent person as one who "...[places] others' interests above his or her own interests" (p. 300). At the very least, the benevolent trustee does not knowingly or willingly do harm to another (Currall, 1992; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). In relationships where trust exists, benevolence manifests in the form of genuine care and respect. Some may say that this is the most important facet of trust (Benna & Hambacher, 2020) and the foundation on which the remaining facets build. A benevolent trustee will waive personal gain if it brings possible harm to the trusting party (Benna & Hambacher, 2020). Benevolent leaders demonstrate care, concern, and respect for others, showing that they value the needs of others over their own personal gain (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Benevolence has been linked to greater job satisfaction and longevity (Chapman, 2012; Hatchel, 2012), both of which are factors in building a trusting relationship.

Reliability. Acting reliably means that the trustee is consistent in their behavior and follows through on commitments (Bhattacharya et al., 1998; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). Reliability is the consistent and predictable nature of a person's response. One must trust that a person takes the steps necessary. "Reliability in following through on decisions and promises...contributes in substantive ways to… trust [between agents]" (Tschannen-Moran, 2014, p. 60). Educational stakeholders want to know they can rely on one another for support and for seeing tasks through to fruition. Reliability within a relationship will further develop trust between parties.

Competence. The knowledge and skill needed for success in a particular domain is considered competence (Benna & Hambacher, 2020). Trustors continually check to see

whether the trustee's behavior indicates that he or she is competent to perform according to expectations in a particular context (Six, 2007). This facet is particularly important when building trust with a supervisor; one must believe that their leader is competent enough to do the actual job in order to be willing to follow and work alongside them toward a common goal.

Honesty. Trustees demonstrate honesty not only by telling the truth, but also by acting in accordance with expressed values and with authenticity (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). Honesty is the act of believing someone's word and trusting they have integrity of character (Benna & Hambacher, 2020). One must believe that an individual is telling the truth when they make a promise or share the state of a situation. Humans "require truths to negotiate their way effectively through thickets of hazards and opportunities that all people invariably confront in going about their daily lives" (Frankfurt, 2006, pp. 34–35). These truths are especially important during times of crisis. Leaders must know that dishonesty can destroy or erode a trusting relationship.

Openness. The characteristic of openness manifests itself through information-sharing, considering the ideas of others, and sharing influence over decision-making (Bijlsma & Koopman, 2003; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). Openness is the willingness to show vulnerability to others as a way to extend trust to another person first. This can be shown by the leader modeling and sharing their own vulnerabilities. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2003) describe openness as the "….extent to which relevant information is shared; a process by which individuals make themselves vulnerable to others" (p.185). Sharing your vulnerabilities creates an environment where it is safe to share and learn collaboratively. Another way to be open is through communication.

Information should be transparent, truthful, and set out in a timely manner. Tschannen-Moran (2014) notes that a "….collegial leadership style, in which a leader is perceived to be approachable and open to the ideas of others, has been linked to greater...trust in the [leader]" (p. 59). When a leader extends openness, it creates an environment where others want to share ideas and vulnerabilities, and where people understand the purpose behind decisions being made.

As the five facets of trust are foundational to building trust in relationships, each individual researcher in our group study used relational trust and Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's (1999) five facets of trust in their conceptual framework. This conceptual framework helped us explore various relationships within a school district during times of crisis to see if trust was a factor within these relationships, as well as to explore the practices that contributed to trust-building. While some team members integrated additional concepts and/or theories to frame their individual studies, all frameworks connected back to the relational connections between educational stakeholders. Table 1.1 breaks down the research questions for each individual study, as well as the conceptual frameworks that each employed.

Table 1.1
Five Studies of the Influence of Trust on the Relationships and Practices of Educational Stakeholders During Times of Crisis

Researcher	Conceptual Framework	Research Question(s):
Evee	Relational Trust (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999) & Social Justice Leadership (Theoharis, 2007)	How do leadership practices and perspectives support DEI? How, if at all, does the role of trust impact the implementation of DEI work and during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Grassa	Relational Trust (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999) & Collective Trust (Forsyth et al., 2011)	How do principals view their relationship with the superintendent and their schools during a crisis? What practices influence the role of trust in this relationship?
Hung	Relational Trust (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999) & Inclusive Leadership Behaviors (Edmondson, 2012)	What central office leadership practices, if any, support inclusion and collective trust on teams during times of crisis? How do these practices support teaming across boundaries? What role, if any, does trust play in those leadership practices?
McCarthy	Relational Trust (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999)	How do teachers and their principal experience and build trust with each other? What influences their perceptions of the trustworthiness of each other?
Myers	Relational Trust (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999) & Interpersonal Trust Building Theory (Six, 2007).	How, if at all, does trust influence relationships between superintendents and teacher union leaders during times of crisis? Which, if any, leadership practices of the superintendent impact perceptions of trust during times of crisis?

To answer the research questions, we collected data through interviews, observations, document reviews, and a survey. Notably, because trust is derived from ongoing interactions between two or more agents over time (Six, 2007), we also relied on relational trust to connect our individual chapters and guide our thinking about how trust between school district agents either strengthens or erodes.

Literature Review

Conceptualizing Trust

Trusting behaviors are characterized by the conscious decision to place oneself in a position of vulnerability to another party (Mayer et al., 1995; Zand, 1972), or, as Currall and Judge (1995) explain, trust is "an individual's behavioral reliance on another person

under a condition of risk" (p. 153). Perceived risk is central to the concept of trust since, without the existence of risk, there is no need for trust (Bhattacharya et al., 1998; Kramer, 1999; Mayer et al., 1995; Zand, 1972). For example, in environments with clearly defined expectations and accompanying consequences, the presence of trust is far less salient. In their review of 105 empirical studies spanning 40 years, Dirks and Ferrin (2002) describe such environments as "strong situations," since clear direction and incentives/deterrents mitigate risk and, therefore, the likelihood of one's trust being betrayed. Environments governed by precise management-labor contracts, for example, that clearly outline working conditions, responsibilities, and similar expectations, reduce the need for trust between parties (Forsyth et al., 2011). By removing risk, these strong situations not only reduce the need for trust between parties but can also limit the development of trust. "Weak situations," on the other hand, provide much less structure, abound with ambiguity, and lack clear incentives/deterrents to moderate behavior. This uncertainty creates risk for the parties involved, especially when interdependence is required of individuals and teams in order to achieve organizational objectives (Bijlsma & Koopman, 2003; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002;). Organizations undergoing crisis, for example, may lack the clear information, direction, and structure necessary to maintain strong, interdependent relationships between working groups, instead relying on trusting relationships to achieve outcomes.

Further, trust is neither static nor stable. Rather, it is a fluid and reinforcing loop that strengthens incrementally over time based on observed behaviors, third-party information, and positive interactions (Benna & Hambacher, 2020; Bijlsma & Koopman 2003; Luhmann, 1979; Zand, 1972). While trust requires time to develop gradually, it can

be destroyed relatively quickly since negative experiences are more noticeable and impactful than positive ones (Kramer, 1999; Slovic, 1993). While trust may be repaired, it can be "difficult and time-consuming" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p. 578). Hurley (2012) explains that repairing trust is more difficult than building it, as it requires overcoming more negative emotions and the commitment from both sides to repair the relationship. While literature suggests that the level of betrayal affects the level of work needed to repair trust, the same four steps may be used: admit the violation, apologize, ask for forgiveness, and publicly change the behavior that caused the harm (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). This process of trust-development and trust-erosion based on experience, outlined first by Zand (1972) and later refined by Six (2007), is the hallmark of relational trust.

Lastly, one's willingness to trust is based on certain perceived characteristics of the trustee, which are constantly assessed, often simultaneously, as the trustor makes judgements about the trustee (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Six, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). While researchers use a variety of terms to describe these characteristics, the characteristics themselves are remarkably consistent across the literature, generally categorized to include benevolence, honesty, competence, openness, and reliability, otherwise known as the five facets of trust (Mayer et al., 1995; Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Six, 2007).

Organizational/Collective Trust

Interdependent relationships exist not only between agents, but also across organizations. Like individuals, organizations require interdependence from their members in order to achieve desired outcomes, and therefore a climate of trust is

necessary for the organization's success (Forsyth, et al., 2011; Mayer et al., 1995). In their 1989 book, *Getting Together: Building Relationships as We Negotiate*, Fisher and Brown contend that trust might be "the single most important element of a good working relationship" (p. 107). This is due, in part, to the influence trust has in reducing competitive behaviors and increasing collaborative ones (Butler, 1999). Organizational trust manifests itself through increased cooperation, improved performance, and a greater willingness to accept managerial decisions (Kramer, 1999).

Trust is especially important in organizations where direct supervision and control of behaviors is either impossible or inefficient (Forsyth et al., 2011; Mayer et al., 1995). For example, the shift from in-person task completion to working remotely in response to the COVID-19 pandemic presents managers with far fewer opportunities to directly supervise employees. In these cases, managers must trust that individuals and teams are fulfilling their responsibilities to the organization without management's ability to monitor or control team behaviors.

Power Asymmetry and Trust

Trust between two or more agents is stronger and more reciprocal when perceived risks are shared relatively equally (Butler, 1999), with both parties inclined to show vulnerability since they both have just as much to lose if trust is violated. However, when perceived risks are not equally shared, the trusting relationship can become unbalanced. Agents who hold an advantage, such as positional authority, may be insulated from some risks in relations with a subordinate (Currall & Judge, 1995). On the other hand, an agent with fewer advantages, such as a workplace subordinate, will avoid vulnerability from risk-taking when interacting with someone of greater authority (Currall & Judge, 1995).

These dynamics may come to play in school districts, which are typically organized in hierarchical structures complicated by multiple internal and external stakeholders often vying for influence. The inclination to avoid vulnerability has organizational consequences, typically manifesting in low information-sharing, limited cooperation, and fewer extra-role behaviors, all of which affect the organization's performance (Kramer, 1999).

What Influences the Willingness to Trust?

Hurley's 2012 book, *The Decision to Trust,* synthesizes over 20 years of research across the fields of economics, psychology, and sociology, along with his own experience working with teams, to explain what influences a person's decision to trust. His work resulted in the creation of a 10-factor "Decision to Trust" model. Seven of the factors in this model are "situational" (situational security, similarities, interests, benevolent concern, capability, predictability/integrity, and communication). Situational factors are most easily controlled by the leader of the organization. Three of the factors are dispositional; Hurley labels these "trustor factors." They include risk tolerance, adjustment, and power, which in Hurley's model means the perception of one's ability to control a situation. Trustor factors are more difficult for the leader to influence as they are unique to a person's background, experiences, and personality. However, Hurley explains that when a leader understands the 10 factors, he or she may be able to influence them in ways that may offset another's low propensity to trust.

Why is Trust Important?

The role of education in our society has increasingly been linked as a determinant of life outcomes for our children. If we return to the grounding theory that John Dewey

espoused in the 20th century, education was viewed as a means for social reform, such that if we fairly distribute the knowledge and social intelligence among the people, it will serve toward the common good for society as a whole, ultimately providing for the betterment of our democracy (Sikandar, 2016). In the 21st century, many school districts and educators are charged with mitigating the effects of hundreds of years of institutionalized and systemic oppression, while reducing the effects of the resulting economic disparities now present in many communities across the United States. When faced with this overwhelming charge, distrust in our schools and school systems results from public concern that schools are not enacting change on behalf of students with the sense of urgency required to produce different life outcomes for students (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). This begs the question: Why is trust important in achieving that goal?

There are examples cited in the literature where the concept of trust has been linked to positive outcomes for students and schools. For example, Bryk and Schneider illustrate in their book *Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for Improvement* (2003), and summarize in a shorter article (2003), their 10-year longitudinal study conducted on 12 Chicago elementary schools, representing mixed student and community characteristics and demographics, through intensive case studies, with each case study spanning approximately four years. Using interviews, focus groups and observations, they found that the students in schools with higher levels of relational trust, as measured by respect, personal regard, competence, and integrity, demonstrated a higher rate of improvement when it came to reading and mathematics performance. As such, they defined trust as a "core resource" for improvement in schools.

Daly (2009) examined trust and school improvement through a study of over

400 teachers and 53 administrators in 14 schools in California, eight of which were labeled “program improvement” (PI) schools because they failed to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) for two consecutive years under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). He examined the predictive nature of trust and the concept of threat-rigidity through surveys in all schools, as well as focus groups and interviews at two of the schools. Threat-rigidity occurs among educators when schools are under intense pressure and accountability to improve. Educators under these circumstances can experience a perceived threat condition which can impact their ability to be open to change, complicate collaboration, disrupt clear communication, and impact decision-making. Daly found that higher levels of trust were associated with lower levels of a threat-rigidity response. One can make the argument that the circumstances and reactions described in this study are similar to those experienced in times of crisis. To this end, educational policy on both federal and local levels has framed the current state of education in the United States as “failing.” Researchers Olsen and Sexton (2009) have called this framing “the crisis of education” (p. 16).

When districts attempt to enact systems in order to support change efforts, the success of those efforts is also impacted by the level of trusting relationships at the school level. Louis (2007) conducted a study of five high schools in five different rural and urban districts with populations ranging from 2,000 to 17,000 students. Each district had implemented quality management (QM) principles as part of school improvement efforts. Schools that were characterized by high trust were those where teachers cited the QM principle of “doing the right thing” as applied to the district's capacity to be fair. Through interviews and focus groups, Louis found that in those schools with high trust, QM

principles were more easily introduced and implemented, as opposed to those schools with low trust, where implementation was more difficult. Further it appeared that relational trust was the key mitigating factor as to whether teachers had a positive association with the change initiative.

Trust is a feature in both the success of technical and adaptive leadership, as well as in the capacity-building of school leaders. Adaptive and technical leadership skills are necessary for managing day-to-day change in a school district and are even more necessary during a time of crisis. Daly and Chrispeels (2008) examined leadership for change and the role trust plays in the effectiveness of those efforts. In their study they define technical leadership as those leadership problems that are more easily resolved and addressed, whereas adaptive leadership changes are more deeply embedded, typically requiring a shift in an organization's values and norms. They surveyed 292 site and district administrators across four school districts in California asking respondents to examine their own school site leadership and trust behaviors, as well as those of other members of the organization. Gathering data on both internal and external perceptions of technical and adaptive leadership dimensions as they connect to trust, they found that three core aspects of trust (respect, risk, and competence) have the highest predictive relationships with both technical and adaptive leadership change.

As districts seek to build the capacity of principals, Cosner (2009) found that collegial trust was a central feature of the capacity-building work. This study was undertaken with 11 high school principals in Wisconsin with three or more years of experience, who were nominated by professional leadership organizations as successfully building capacity in their schools. Through interviews linking principals' leadership

perceptions about their school reform efforts and questions specific to trust, Cosner (2009) examined the concept of collegial trust in trying to understand what made principals strong in the area of capacity building. Collegial trust is similar in definition to collective trust, which is often critical in complex task environments where cooperation and coordination are key. Cosner (2009) describes collegial trust as interactions between individuals and group or team members, seeing collegial trust as laying the foundation for increased cooperation, team satisfaction, and commitment.

The literature around the role of trust at the central office level is far less extensive. In reality, the success of district goals relies heavily on the success of individual schools. Therefore, it makes sense that the role of trust in the success of schools, and as a central feature of school leadership, has been the primary focus of much research. However, trust is also an essential aspect for the effectiveness of central office administrators and the ability to establish trust with schools. In a study of a small district north of Los Angeles consisting of 12 elementary schools, four middle schools, an alternative school, and a community day school, Chhuon et al. (2008) set out to observe how central office administrators enhanced trust with its school site leaders. Through three rounds of qualitative interviews, the authors found explicit trust-building efforts, such as shifting the content of management meeting activities to focus on trust building, incorporating central office visits to school sites, and implementing districtwide summits. As a result, school leaders and their leadership teams reported that the district increased aspects of trust, specifically, openness, risk, and communication. Although trust was not the only factor to be studied, nor the only factor at play, across these studies, it is clear

that trust remains critically important for educational leaders as they undertake school reform efforts.

Trust in Leadership Practices

Educational leaders are charged with understanding the importance of trust in relationships and practices to accomplish necessary school reform and improve learning opportunities for all students. Bryk and Schneider (2003) captured the powerful influence of social trust in meaningful school improvement, with their findings indicating that the absence of trust provokes sustained controversy around resolving even relatively simple problems, making larger tasks, such as school reform, nearly impossible. Such a study supports the need for leaders, including superintendents, DEI directors, principals, supervisors, teachers, and union officers to understand how trust can be built and lost within their communities (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Tschannen-Moran (2014) notes that "school leaders bear the largest responsibility for setting a tone of trust….it is time for school leaders to become knowledgeable about cultivating trust because trustworthy leadership is at the heart of successful schools" (pp. 13-14).

For the purpose of this study, we draw on Leithwood and Riehl's (2003) definition of leadership as "those persons who provide direction and exert influence in order to achieve the district and/or school goals" (p. 9). Leaders have high levels of dependency as many of the functions they encompass are performed by other people in different roles throughout the district. This interpersonal dependency and vulnerability help us understand that leadership is more a function than a role of formal authority (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Due to their position, leaders play a critical role in the culture of their organizations. Dirks and Ferrin (2002) found that trust in leadership

appears to have a significant relationship with each of their studied outcomes, such as work behaviors, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and, most strongly, correlated satisfaction with the leader. As such, leaders have power and influence on trust-formation.

While the research literature on trust cuts across multiple relationships within schools, including those between teachers and parents, the principal and parents, and within groups of teachers (Forsyth et al., 2011; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999), it places a heavy focus on the role of the principal in fostering trust. Much of the work is limited in its focus on the perceptions of teachers and its omission of the principal's experience of trust-building. Furthermore, the majority of trust research focuses on quantitative methods that do not examine how teachers and principals make sense of their interactions with each other, or what experiences, "schemas, cognitions, and emotions" (Daly et al., 2015) affect their perceptions of each other or their propensity to trust. In addition, the principal-teacher ecosystem is not the entirety of a school district. Schools function with many interdependent players (Benna & Hambacher, 2020) who engage in various types of trust formation, much of which remains unexamined in the literature.

In her book, *A Matter of Trust*, Tschannen-Moran (2014) introduces leaders who were negligent in demonstrating care, competence, balanced responsibility, and reliability to build trust within their schools. Damaged trust ultimately resulted in their inability to effectively lead, and further negatively affected trust in various relationships within the community. In contrast, the leader who performed well showed high levels of competence through demonstration, care through listening well, and consistency through active visibility within their school community. That leader also "understood that the

work of the school happens primarily through relationships, so she invested time and resources in maturing those relationships" through traditional events that built good rapport (Tschannen-Moran, 2014, p. 7). Such effective leadership was rewarded with the common goal of high performance on measures of student achievement. Through these examples, educational leaders may learn the importance of earning the trust of stakeholders in their community to achieve success. Understanding the role of trust and how it moves through relationships and practices is essential for a school community's effective day-to-day functioning as well as for leading through a crisis.

Trust in Leadership During a Time of Crisis

The importance of trust becomes intensified during a time of crisis. As Tschannen-Moran (2014) noted: "These days, trust in our society does indeed seem to have been damaged and is in scarce supply" (p. 9). From the continued unfair treatment and murder of unarmed Black and Brown people at the hands of law enforcement to the ongoing inequities within healthcare for People of Color during the COVID-19 pandemic, trust is essential to finding justice and making necessary changes during such societal crises. Those societal crises directly affect the educational experience of all students, especially those who are marginalized. In practice, we see this revealed through lack of fair access to remote learning, limited support for student achievement, inconsistent attendance, and a decline in students' mental and physical health. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Asian, Latinx, and Black children were far more likely than White children to be exposed to school closures and distance learning, potentially worsening the opportunity gap found along racial lines (Parolin, 2021). The strength of trust within school systems becomes essential as society looks to education to

respond in a way that not only protects our children but impacts their future educational and economic potential (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). It is the responsibility of educational leaders to create a culture of trust before a crisis occurs, in order to minimize possible destruction.

Considering that trust is needed during times of risk and vulnerability (Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999), it follows that times of change or crisis especially require trusting relationships. As change is a constant in schools, there is always a need for trust. However, during periods of rapid change due to a crisis, educators are generally expected to adopt new practices or systems quickly, and as a result one of the key trust-forming characteristics, reliability, will be disrupted. Louis (2007) explains that "planned change decreases institutional trust because it disrupts the 'taken for granted' aspects of the organization's functioning" (p. 4). Louis explains that increased uncertainty during times of rapid change, which may occur as staff build common understandings over multiple aspects of their work, may contribute to the breakdown of trust. Further, Louis suggests that the demands of rapid change may undermine institutional expectations and challenge "the traditional ecology of the administrator-teacher relationship" (p. 2). As a result, trust appears to be emerging as a clear factor for school improvement, with the body of literature suggesting that principals must address situations of low trust if systemic change is to occur successfully (Louis, 2007). Less is known, however, about the levels of trust needed for broader systemic change across a district.

Overall, this literature highlights the need to better understand the relationships and practices of educational stakeholders who build trust across a K-12 school district.

This study provides an opportunity to contribute towards filling this gap. By examining trust among various educators in one district, we better understand the dynamics and characteristics needed in leadership practices in order to redress systemic inequities and live up to societal expectations of schools. Overall, leaders must not only acknowledge but enter into school reform with the mindset that change creates risk—and risk requires trust (Handford & Leithwood, 2013).

CHAPTER TWO

Methods

Our collective study examines how trust influenced interdependent relationships across one school district in the northeast of the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the importance of schools in society, the expectation for multiple stakeholders to work interdependently across them, and the need for trust during times of risk and vulnerability (Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999), the study helped us better understand the influence of trust on relationships and practices during times of crisis. The pandemic required stakeholders to adapt and change practices quickly, providing a unique opportunity to study the role of trust in relationships during crises, which may have implications for other high-stress school situations. The following section provides an overview of the processes and protocols used across our five studies, including the study design, site selection, participant selection, data collection, and analysis.

Study Design

Our collective study is a bounded case study of one district in the northeast region of the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic. Given that our research is exploratory, qualitative methods were best suited to our collective question (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019): *How, if at all, does trust influence the relationships and practices of educational stakeholders during times of crisis?*

As we studied one school district, in depth, and with multiple levels of stakeholders, a case study method was used for our group project (Merriam &Tisdell, 2016). We gathered evidence through the use of interviews, document review, observations, and a survey. Throughout our process, we worked collaboratively, collecting data in pairs, when necessary, and sharing all individually collected data with the research team for secondary coding and reliability checks. As explained in Chapter 1, we analyzed our group findings through the shared conceptual framework of relational trust and the five facets of trust (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999).

Site Selection

As our team studied multiple leadership levels in a district, we sought a unionized public school district in the Northeast region of the United States, made up of several schools with at least 5,000 students. The size of the district helped to ensure a sufficient number of staff, both at the school and the central office level, who could participate in the study. We purposefully selected a district whose superintendent had a tenure of more than three years and a union leadership that had been relatively stable throughout that tenure. This longevity helped to ensure that the superintendent and the district's union leaders had sufficient opportunity to interact in ways that either develop or erode trust. In

addition, we also selected a racially diverse district which was currently conducting DEI work, as one of our sub-studies focused on DEI work during times of crisis.

Participant Selection

Participant selection was in accordance with Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements, including the use of informed consent and honoring participant privacy and confidentiality. We used purposeful sampling across our five studies to identify subjects for interviews. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explain that purposeful sampling is appropriate when a researcher "wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 96). We were interested in how trust functions in specific settings and between specific groups. As a result, purposeful sampling was needed.

In addition, two of our studies used snowball sampling. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) explain that, "In certain research situations, you may not know the best people to study because of the unfamiliarity of the topic or the complexity of the event" (p. 209). We used snowball sampling to identify individuals experienced with the phenomena we are studying, such as individuals serving on central office-initiated and/or supported teams. Table 2.1 lists interview subjects. These include the superintendent and key central office leaders, principals and teacher leaders, members of the teachers' union executive board, and leaders of DEI initiatives. We contacted all participants by email (see Appendix A), and they provided consent to participate in an interview (see Appendix B).

Table 2.1 *Interview Subjects*

Educational Stakeholder	Number of Participants
Superintendent of Schools	1
Teacher Union Leader	1
Central Office Leaders	6
Principals	5
Teachers	4
Leaders of DEI Initiatives *includes 5 from similarly-situated districts	6
Total Participants	23

Data Collection

Case study research has the goal of expanding or generalizing theories (Yin, 2018). Our study intent was to expand the current theories on trust by examining the role trust plays throughout a school district, including its influence on various leadership roles during times of crisis. Yin (2018) explains that case studies rely "on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion" (p. 17). To understand the role trust may play for educational leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic, we collected data in the form of semi-structured interviews, observations, document reviews, and a survey. We collected data between August 2021 and January of 2022. We created systems to organize and label our data, removed identifiers, and maintained password-protected files, all in accordance with IRB.

Interviews

Interviews are common in qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) because they help to draw out participant experiences. Semi-structured interviews were a primary source of our data. Trust, as explained in our prior chapter, is complex. It involves relationships, vulnerability, feelings, and interpretation (Daly et al., 2015; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Hurley, 2012). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explain that "interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them" (p. 108). Our research set out to learn how participants experience and understand trust across their school and district-based relationships, and its impact on those relationships and their practice.

In order to understand the influence of trust on the relationships and practices across and among various leaders and staff within a district, we completed several semi-structured interviews, grounded in a guiding tool based on Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's (1999) five facets of trust, with the following participants: superintendent, central district office staff and leaders, principals, district union leaders, and teachers. Our team determined who was best suited to interview our participants based on professional positionality, and, if needed, two researchers were present for an interview to support accuracy in data collection. As we conducted exploratory research, we remained open to our participants' "perspectives and understandings" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 109). Therefore, we used a semi-structured format. This enabled us to work from a set group of interview questions central to our studies, while maintaining the flexibility to be responsive to our participants. We recorded and transcribed each session via Otter.ai,

Inc., an audio recording and transcription software, to turn our recordings into text. Questions sought to operationalize aspects of trust through asking about concrete experiences. Our interview protocols may be found in Appendix C.

Observations

Our team gathered data via observations, which serve many purposes. For example, they may reveal information about the dynamics of team members, which may not be revealed in an interview (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Our research team observed a school committee meeting as well as a district level meeting using a structured protocol. We reviewed and finalized our observational notes soon after the meetings, recording and transcribing the notes via Otter.ai, Inc. See Appendix D for our observation protocol.

Document Review

We conducted a document review to gain an initial understanding of the context of the district. We reviewed the district's current strategic plan, the most recent accountability plan, which was available on the district website, for the school where we conducted research, and school climate data aggregated by level (elementary, middle, high school). Documents revealed district and school goals and priorities, and teachers' perception of their school's climate, which served as a proxy for trust. Documents added a layer of complexity to our data by providing context for observations and interviews, which helped to triangulate our findings.

Survey

We sent an anonymous web-based survey to all teachers in one school via the Qualtrics® XM survey platform, which allows the user to create surveys and generate reports. The complete survey questions are found in Appendix E. We adapted the

questions from the Omnibus T-Scale (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003), and used a 7-point Likert scale survey based on the five-facets of trust (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Questions solicited each teacher's opinion of the trustworthiness of their principal, as well as the general climate of trust in the principal among the school's teachers. Approximately 56% of the teaching body of the school completed the survey. We used this data to gain a sense of the school climate at a single site and to triangulate the teacher interviews with the larger body of teachers in the school.

Data Analysis

All data was password-protected, with individual identifiers removed. Interviews were recorded with signed consent (Appendix B) and transcribed via Otter.ai, Inc. We organized our data by type: interview, observations, document review, and survey. We used the software program Dedoose*,* a cross-platform application for analyzing qualitative and mixed methods research to organize our data as we coded it. We coded our data multiple times in an iterative process, noting patterns and themes. When we had questions about the analysis and meaning of the data collected, we used peer-coding, examining pieces of data together for the purposes of enlarging our analytical lens on the data gathered (Saldaña, 2021).

We conducted our first round of coding using an *a priori* codebook derived from Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's (1999) five facets of trust: benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness (Appendix F). Through another round of coding, we labeled our data with words or phrases that reflected aspects of our conceptual framework, key themes from our literature, and connections to our research questions. We used a third coding iteration to label phrases and ideas that stood out repeatedly. To

reduce bias and support the integrity of our research, we shared data from across all five studies among team members.

To build the trustworthiness of our findings, we met weekly to discuss our data and share preliminary findings. At times, we co-coded and cross-checked each other's interpretations and continued to use the *a priori* codebook to support if there were discrepancies (Appendix F). We coalesced the codes around categories, identifying trends across our categories and codes. We also identified trends across the five sub-studies. This further helped us see connections between the studies, which led to our collective group findings discussed in Chapter 4.

Each researcher maintained a detailed process memo documenting the researcher's work, including action steps, observations, and items for further study throughout all aspects of data collection and analysis. This allowed each of us to remember which data or findings led us in various directions or pushed us to narrow, widen, or adjust our focus along the process. In addition, these process memos will allow our study to be more easily replicated by subsequent researchers, thereby increasing its reliability and strengthening its potential impact to the field.

Positionality

Trust is a sensitive topic with which we all have experience. Qualitative researchers believe that personal views can never be kept separate from interpretations, which are based on hunches, insights, and intuition (Creswell and Guetterman, 2019). As a research team, all five members are currently educational leaders. Within our leadership roles, we acknowledge that each member has developed beliefs regarding the importance of trust and how it affects our daily work with stakeholders. To support the integrity of

our research, we disclosed our professional positions and districts to each participant and came to a consensus about how to apply the codes we established in our *a priori* codebook. See Appendix F.

Further, we acknowledge that our team composition, which includes four members who identify as female, one who identifies as male, and a single person of color, might have added assumptions and differing sensitivities while collecting and analyzing data. Finally, because trust is a word that might produce a guarded response, we started by asking participants to define and share examples of trust in their own work. We intentionally selected team members to lead interviews who shared similar professional roles, as well as racial and gender backgrounds, with the interviewees. Ultimately, we believe that the composition and passion of our research team added valuable experiences and perspectives to enrich our research, which is grounded in our commitment to enhance the practices of educational leadership and creation of equitable schools for students.

Conclusion

Schools play a sizable role in society. They prepare generations by teaching them skills needed for adulthood. In addition, as places of connection and centers of activity, they may provide structure and stability for entire communities. Due to their importance in society, schools must be able to function effectively through times of calm and crisis. Our study identified the role relationships and trust may play across various levels of a school district during times of crisis, specifically the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through our study, we worked to make sense of levels of trust and how those levels may aid the development of more productive and effective school districts. We

sought what may be universal about trust formation as well as the nuances of how trust may function differently given the varying positional roles and responsibilities across a school district. In addition, our study adds to the understanding of how trust may influence the relationships and practices of educational leaders during a crisis. Our findings expand upon the body of trust research on schools beyond the teacher's view of the principals to delve deeply into the experiences of those who work in and across school districts, furthering our understanding of how a crisis may impact the way in which trust is formed, practiced, and used—and its implications for leadership practice during times of rapid change. Findings may inform the practice of how we train, coach, and mentor school leaders; how school districts respond to crises; and even how leaders effectively work in high-change environments such as turnaround schools. Furthermore, we believe that organizations which foster trusting relationships are healthier workplaces. As such, we hope that the findings of our study contribute to the well-being and resilience of leaders across school districts.

CHAPTER THREE[2]
Statement of the Research Problem

Little research exists exploring the dynamics of trust between superintendents and teachers' union leaders. This gap in the research is concerning considering the prominent influence this relationship has on the school environment. The school superintendent and the teacher union leaderare, according to Currall (1992), “critical group representatives” (p. 296), whose working relationship directly affects the experiences of students and teachers alike. Indeed, many of the decisions affecting a teacher’s compensation, working conditions, and performance expectations are directly influenced by superintendents and union leaders. In turn, these conditions affect student learning experiences, both directly and indirectly.

The research that does exist examines the superintendent and union leader relationship almost entirely through the lens of collective bargaining, with researchers finding that trust plays a significant role in these formal negotiations. Specifically, a history of trusting behavior, perceptions of benevolence and competence between parties, and each party’s existing propensity to trust correlates with positive bargaining outcomes, including increased information-sharing, cooperative problem-solving, and future positive working relationships (Currall & Judge, 1995; Swain, 2007). This research is helpful in understanding the superintendent and union leadership relationship and how that relationship is affected by trust. Better understanding this relationship, and the degree to which it is affected by varying levels of trust, has important implications for how superintendents and teacher union leaders might engage more successfully. This may be

[2] This chapter and study present the individual intellectual contributions of the author, Gregory Myers.

especially true in states where collective bargaining is required, teacher unions are relatively strong, and the scope of issues that can be bargained is fairly wide (Winkler et al., 2012).

While trust between superintendents and union leaders plays an important role in the collective bargaining process, there are frequent opportunities outside of formal bargaining for superintendents and union leaders to negotiate factors that affect the daily experiences of teachers and students. Implementing the day-to-day aspects of the collective bargaining agreement, for example, requires a strong working relationship between superintendents and union leaders, one in which trust is pivotal (Swain, 2007). In addition, addressing unique circumstances about which the contract language is silent or ambiguous is a common activity for superintendents and union leaders, one that need not or cannot wait for a formal bargaining process. Research examining the superintendent-union leader relationship and the role of trust more broadly is limited.

My study contributes towards filling this gap, examining the role of trust in this critical relationship. Moreover, I do so in the context of a crisis, COVID-19. While crises tend to significantly impact schools and school leadership relationships (Louis, 2007), there are no published studies examining how the superintendent-teacher union leader dynamic is affected by significant crisis events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This study seeks to examine the perceived levels of trust between superintendents and teacher union leaders within this context. The research was guided by the following questions:

Q1: How, if at all, does trust influence relationships between superintendents and teacher union leaders during times of crisis?

Q2: Which, if any, leadership practices of the superintendent impact perceptions of trust during times of crisis?

Conceptual Framework

My study draws on the conceptual framework of relational trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002), the same conceptual framework shared by each member of my Dissertation in Practice group. Specifically, I study the influence of relational trust between superintendents and teacher union leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic. Within the overarching framework of relational trust, I used interpersonal trust-building theory as a way to conceptualize how trust develops between the superintendent and union leader. I also used Tschannen-Moran's five facets of trust to identify and categorize the specific behaviors that lead one party to conclude that the other party is trustworthy.

Relational trust, as noted in Chapter 2, can be defined as "...the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party" (Mayer & Schoorman, 1995, p. 712). The trustor's "willingness to be vulnerable," which is the essential and defining element of trust, is not typically present at the start of any relationship. Rather, it emerges gradually over time as two or more people learn about each other's trustworthiness.

At some point, the trustor develops sufficient experience with the trustee to know that their vulnerability will likely not be abused. This process, known as interpersonal trust-building, was originally conceived by Zand (1972) and later refined by Six (2007) and is represented in Figure 2. Interpersonal trust-building, as noted above, depends on two or more people assessing one another's trustworthiness over time. These assessments

are made continuously as one party observes certain behaviors of the other party. Researchers generally agree that these behaviors are indicators of trustworthiness and can be sorted into roughly five categories, which Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2001) describe as the five facets of trust: benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness. The degree to which the trustor perceives that the trustee demonstrates these characteristics is an indicator of the existence and quality of trust in the relationship.

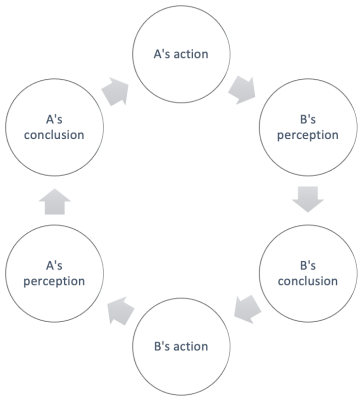

Fig. 2 Interactive trust-building as described by Six (2007).

For example, if a trustee demonstrates that he or she has the best interests of the trustor at heart (a form of benevolence), the risk associated with the trustor becoming vulnerable is reduced. Over time, the continued demonstration of benevolence increases the trustor's willingness to be vulnerable and, by definition, his or her trust in the trustee. Conversely, if the trustee demonstrates that they do not have the best interests of the trustor at heart, the trustor will be unlikely to willingly become vulnerable to the trustee, thereby eroding trust. This framework guided my examination of the specific practices that strengthen or harm relational trust between superintendents and teacher union leaders during times of crisis.

Literature Review

A great deal of research on matters of trust between and among a school's stakeholders is available. For example, many researchers have studied the role of trust between teachers and their principals, noting strong correlations between high levels of trust and job satisfaction (Sarikaya et al., 2020), professional collaboration (Reiss & Hoy, 1998; Tschannen-Moran, 2001), and successful school improvement initiatives (Hoy, 2015; Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Louis, 2007). Researchers have also examined the role that trust plays between teachers and their colleagues (Reiss & Hoy, 1998; Leis et al., 2017), teachers and their students (Forsyth et al., 2011; Tschannen-Moran, 2014), and teachers and families (Mayrowetz & Price, 2005). To a lesser extent, researchers have also studied trust between central office leaders and principals (Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010; Benna & Hambacher, 2020), finding that trust in this context depends heavily on perceived competence and shared values.

Little research, however, exists exploring the dynamics of trust between superintendents and teacher union leaders. The school superintendent and the teacher union leader are, according to Currall (1992), "critical group representatives" (p. 296), whose working relationship affects the experiences of students and teachers alike. This relationship is not only important during the formal collective bargaining process (Currall & Judge, 1995), but also during the less formal, day-to-day implementation of the collective bargaining agreement (Swain, 2007). While limited, existing research highlights the important and positive role that trust plays in both of these activities. For example, Currall and Judge (1995) examined survey responses from 305 superintendents and 293 teacher union presidents from districts in a single state in the northeastern United

States. The 19-item survey was designed to measure superintendents' and union presidents' willingness to trust their counterpart. They found that the presence of trust between superintendents and teacher union leaders correlates with a host of positive practices, including collaborative problem-solving, open communication, and the inclination to pursue cooperative rather than combative negotiation strategies. Further, the degree to which a superintendent and union leadermaintain a trusting relationship plays a significant role in creating a positive workplace climate and in determining the success of reform initiatives (Currall & Judge, 1995). Swain's (2007) collective case study of trust between superintendents and teacher union leaders in school districts in Montana and Wyoming found that high levels of trust correlated with increased communication, collaboration, and the willingness to compromise.

How Trust Develops and Erodes

In the past 60 years, scholars in fields ranging from psychology to economics have examined trust and its impact on everything from interpersonal interactions to multinational negotiations. While no common definition of trust has emerged from this literature, some aspects of trust are constant across disciplines and contexts. Trust is generally understood to mean a person's willingness to be vulnerable to another whose behavior is beyond one's control (Zand, 1972). Inherent in this definition is the notion of both interdependence and risk, for without the need to risk reliance on another's actions, trust would not be needed (Mayer et al., 1995; Bijlsma & Koopman, 2003).

Beyond this general definition, a set of common characteristics that make up trust has emerged from the research. While researchers use different terminology to describe each of these characteristics, they are remarkably similar across the literature and include

reliability, competence, honesty, openness, and benevolence (Mayer & Schoorman, 1995; Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Bena & Hambacher, 2020).

As previously stated, trust is necessary only when one chooses to become vulnerable to another party. The decision to enter into such an arrangement is complex and dependent upon a number of variables. One's decision to trust is derived from ongoing interactions with another party over time, an interactive process in which parties reach conclusions about the other's trustworthiness by observing behaviors (Zand, 1973; Six, 2007). Trust can also erode, often precipitously, based on negative experiences and behavior, since negative experiences are more noticeable and impactful than positive ones (Slovic, 1993; Kramer, 1999).

As a result, trust is neither static nor stable; rather, it is a fluid and reinforcing loop that changes incrementally over time based on observed behaviors (Zand, 1972; Bijlsma & Koopman 2003). This process of trust-development and trust-erosion based on experience, outlined first by Zand (1972) and later refined by Six (2007), is the hallmark of relational trust.

School Superintendents and Trust

A great deal of research about the role that trust plays in the superintendency is available, although it primarily focuses on either the superintendent's relationship with the school committee or the superintendent's ability to garner community support for the district's budget. For example, the ability to build trust with the school committee through effective communication is cited as a key skill required to effectively manage the superintendency (Basom et al., 1999; Smith, 2012; Foersch, 2012). Further, superintendents who solicit public engagement in the budget-building process are viewed

as more trustworthy and, as a result, more likely to win support for their budgets (Bird et al., 2009; Poynton et al., 2018).

Research exploring the role of trust between superintendents and building principals also exists, albeit to a lesser degree. In their semi-structured interviews of five New Hampshire elementary principals, Benna and Hambacker (2020) explored how principals make sense of superintendent trustworthiness, finding that superintendents who demonstrate competence, reliability, and benevolence were more likely to earn the trust of principals over time.

The Role of Trust in Negotiations

Constant formal and informal negotiations are at the core of the superintendent and teacher union leader relationships, with trust foundational in these negotiations. While little research exists on the role of trust between superintendents and teacher union leaders, many researchers have studied the impact of trust on labor-management relations in other contexts, especially when it comes to negotiations. Based on their 2013 analysis of 47 studies spanning 40 years, Lewicki and Polin noted that "trust, distrust, interdependence, and information sharing are integral to the negotiation process itself and to its ultimate success or failure" (p. 161), describing four types of trust that may emerge during negotiations. The most primitive of these is deterrence-based trust, which ensures that the trustor's vulnerability will not be abused because the trustee has too much to lose in doing so. As negotiators become more experienced with one another, they may rely on calculus-based trust, in which the trustor makes a calculated choice to trust in return for desirable outcomes. A third form of trust present in negotiations is knowledge-based trust: both parties know each other so well that they can anticipate the other party's

objectives and how they will achieve them. Finally, the fourth and most advanced form of trust is identification-based trust, which occurs when parties willingly become vulnerable based on the rational desire to achieve mutually positive outcomes.

The degree and type of trust between negotiators directly affects both the negotiation process and the negotiated outcomes. Trusting negotiators are more likely to share important information, thereby increasing the chances of reaching favorable solutions relatively quickly (Butler, 1999; Lewicki & Stevenson, 1997). Withholding important information, on the other hand, inhibits problem-solving and lengthens the time it takes to reach solutions. Negotiated outcomes also tend to be simpler when negotiators trust each other; complex monitoring measures and detailed contracts are less necessary when parties trust each other to fulfill their obligations (Butler, 1999). This literature demonstrates the critical role that trust plays in negotiations, both in terms of efficiency and outcomes. However, existing literature has yet to examine this dynamic in the context of crisis, pointing to the need for more research on the effect of trust on formal and informal negotiations in crisis situations. My study contributes to closing this gap in the literature by examining the role of trust in the superintendent-teacher union leader relationship and its impact on formal and informal negotiations during the COVID-19 pandemic. I describe my study next.

Methodology

Study Design

This study is part of a larger, bounded qualitative case study examining the role that trust plays in various relationships in a single school district in the Northeastern

United States during the COVID-19 pandemic. This larger study examines trust between central office teams (Hung, 2022), the role of trust when implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives (Evee, 2022), trust between the superintendent and building principals (Grassa, 2022), and trust between building principals and teachers (McCarthy, 2022). A detailed description of this larger study, along with its overarching research questions and methodology, is provided in Chapter 2.

My research focuses on trust between two critical stakeholder group representatives—the school district's superintendent and the teacher union leader—using general qualitative methods to answer two questions: How, if at all, does trust influence relationships between superintendents and teacher union leaders during times of crisis; and which, if any, leadership practices of the superintendent impact perceptions of trust during times of crisis? I gathered evidence through interviews, observations, document reviews, and field notes. I analyzed findings through the conceptual framework of relational trust and interpersonal trust-building (Six, 2007).

Site and Participant Selection

This study took place in a school district in the Northeast United States led by a superintendent with a tenure of more than three years and a union leadership that has been stable throughout that tenure. This longevity helped to ensure that the superintendent and union leader had sufficient opportunity to interact in ways that either developed or eroded trust. Participant selection and interviews accorded with my university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements, including the use of informed consent and honoring the confidentiality of all participants. Consent was

obtained from participants after they were provided with information about the study, including its purpose, the amount of time it would likely require from them, and how the data would be gathered. Doing so allowed prospective participants to better understand what the study would entail and how their contributions would be used (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

I used purposeful sampling, defined as the process of selecting a sample from which the most can be learned (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), to identify participants for interviews based on what they might be able to contribute to the study. I considered participants' current roles in the district and the length of their tenure in those roles, including the superintendent and teacher union leader. Since research establishes that trust between parties cannot emerge without the benefit of time (Zand, 1973; Six, 2007), participants' tenure in their positions was an important factor to consider in the sampling process. In addition, I employed snowball sampling by asking participants to identify other eligible participants who might have contributions to the research topic and focus (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019), thus allowing me to increase the sample with participants who could share additional perspectives. In total, I interviewed the superintendent and a union leader. This small sample allowed me to dive deeper into the critical relationship between these two leaders, whose relationship has significant implications for the entire district (Currall, 1992).

Data Collection

I collected data to address my research questions through interviews, observations, document reviews, and field notes. Interviewing the superintendent and

teacher union leader allowed me to examine the relationship from both perspectives, each source adding depth to my findings. I created systems to organize and label the data I collected, carefully removing identifiers in all of my notes and maintaining password-protected files at all times. Considering the relatively small sample size of the study (i.e., the superintendent and a union leader), maintaining strict confidentiality was both more important and more difficult than might be typical. Original transcripts were scrubbed of identifiers immediately after transcription, with all field notes and memos carefully and consistently reviewed to ensure confidentiality. All documents were saved digitally with password-protected access and files named according to codes (i.e., "Interview Transcript 1.4," etc.).

Interviews

From October 2021 through December 2021, I collected data in the form of one-on-one, semi-structured interviews guided by a set of largely open-ended questions. The conceptual framework informed the design of the interview protocol. Using one-on-one interviews with open-ended questions is especially helpful when participants are both articulate and willing to provide information (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019), which was true of both the superintendent and the teacher union leader. Since no other participants are present, one-on-one interviews also provide a greater sense of confidentiality so that participants might be more willing to share information, especially when the topic of research may be sensitive in nature, as is research on trust. Using semi-structured interviews, which are guided by a set of questions or issues and the order of questioning is not fixed ahead of time (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), enabled me to work from a list of prepared questions central to my study while maintaining the flexibility to be responsive

to each participant's answers. These questions were grounded in Tschannen-Moran's (2001) five facets of trust, which not only informed the wording of each question, but also allowed for more straightforward organization and analysis of data afterwards. My questions were designed to elicit specific experiences with each aspect of trust and identify the degree to which each aspect exists in the relationship (See Appendices B and C). I recorded audio from each and utilized the transcription service Dedoose to convert recordings into transcripts. Further, I conducted the interview with the superintendent in partnership with a research team colleague, which allowed for another researcher to consider the superintendent's responses and compare her data with mine, further strengthening the trustworthiness of my findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Observations

In August 2021, I gathered data by observing video recordings of school committee meetings focusing on the superintendent's plans for returning to school amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, I reviewed meetings held between late March 2020 and December 2021, allowing me to observe the superintendent's communication abilities and style, which were also revealed in a one-on-one interview. The opportunity to use multiple methods of data collection served to triangulate and validate the data I collected, as well as to validate my findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My observations followed a set protocol, wherein I reviewed and finalized my notes after each observation, transcribing them into documents I could reference later (See Appendix E).

Document Review

I reviewed applicable documents shortly after my research site was identified in August of 2021, including the district's website and linked information, in order to gain

an initial understanding of the context of the district. I also reviewed internal documents, including the current collective bargaining agreement with the teachers union, district and school-level COVID-19 reopening plans from the fall of 2020 and 2021, and school committee meeting minutes from late March 2020 through December of 2021, all of which were available on the district's website. Such documents not only provided insight into the district's approach to the complex task of maintaining the health and safety of students and staff while reopening schools, but also provided context for the ongoing negotiations with the teachers union regarding working conditions amid the pandemic. Reviewing each of these documents helped me better understand future observations and interviews, allowing me to validate data through multiple methods of collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Conducting a document review also guided me to topics that impacted labor-management relationships in the district during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Field Notes

I made field notes throughout my research to create a written accounting of my process and provide additional context to interview transcripts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I also recorded field notes in an effort to weave together salient data from my document reviews, interviews and observations, and to create a larger narrative (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019) about conditions in the district and the role trust might play between management and labor. I used these notes to document each aspect of data collection and analysis, noting details and observations about participants' verbal and non-verbal communications during interviews and observations, my reflections during the process, and any issues or ideas I wanted to pursue as a result of interviews and observations. This was especially helpful as I initially tried to make sense of a very large

amount of information, make meaning of my data, and clarify and add context to interviews during analysis (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Data Analysis

Data was organized by type: interview, observation, document review, and field notes. All data was password-protected, with all identifying information removed. Interviews were recorded and transcribed only after gaining permission from participants. I coded data multiple times in an iterative process, noting patterns and themes as I systematically identified them. During my first coding cycle, I relied on an open coding method to broadly identify data that impressed me as noteworthy and possibly useful to my research questions and focus (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This included lists of codes that reflected patterns salient in the data, which I labeled with words or phrases that reflected aspects of my conceptual framework, key themes from literature, connections to research questions, and phrases and ideas that stood out repeatedly. During a second round of coding, I employed *a priori* codes derived from the literature review, including the five facets of trust (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2001): benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness. This cycle focused on sorting data into categories, namely, organizing data according to its relevance to each of the five facets. I then returned to an open coding method during a third coding cycle to identify trends by category. Coding began as soon as I began reviewing publicly available documents, most frequently in the form of annotations using an open coding method (Booth et al., 2016).

To track my research process throughout data collection and analysis, and record my thinking about emerging trends in the data, I maintained a detailed process memo (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Memoeing helped me to identify and organize data in a

way that allowed me to recall why I might have widened or adjusted my focus throughout the research process. In addition, memo writing allowed me to record details of my experience so that my colleagues could compare their perspectives with mine. This allowed me to triangulate my sensemaking of the data with others and determine the validity and trustworthiness of my emerging theories. In addition, keeping a detailed process memo will allow others to replicate my study more accurately, thereby increasing its reliability and strengthening its potential impact in the field (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Positionality

I am a school superintendent with eight years of experience in the Northeastern United States. I have negotiated three collective bargaining agreements with my district's teacher union and have engaged in formal bargaining over the return to school from the COVID-19 school closure. Further, I communicate with my district's teacher union leader at least weekly to address issues and resolve concerns.

In my leadership role, I acknowledge having developed certain beliefs about how trust has affected my relationships with union leaders. In order to maintain the integrity of my research, therefore, I fully disclosed my role and school district to each participant and kept detailed notes about how my positionality as a superintendent and my beliefs about unions may have affected the data-gathering and analysis process.

Findings

In the following four sections, I discuss how the presence of trust impacts the working relationship between school superintendents and teacher union leaders during times of crisis. In the first section, I address my first research question by examining how

trust influences the superintendent- teacher union leader relationship, finding that the presence of trust allowed for more direct communication and more efficient and collaborative problem-solving. In the second section, I address my second research question by identifying which leadership practices of the superintendent impact perceptions of trust during times of crisis, noting that benevolent behaviors had the greatest positive impact on perceptions of trust. Through my inductive analysis, I also identify two themes that cut across both of my research questions. I present these two themes in the third and fourth section. In the third section, I examine the strong sense of shared identity in the superintendent-teacher union leader relationship and show that this shared identity provided a shortcut to trust that would otherwise require more time to develop. Finally, in the fourth section, I consider the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the superintendent-teacher union leader relationship, concluding that the pandemic had no effect on the level of trust between the two parties.

The Influence of Trust in Superintendent-Union Leader Relationships

First, the presence of trust between superintendents and teacher union leaders influenced the process by which they resolved problems. Specifically, the presence of two facets of trust in particular—reliability and honesty—allow parties to perceive the other as an honest actor whose "word is good," a phrase used by both the superintendent and the teacher union leader to describe the other. As a result, problems are resolved more efficiently and without interpersonal conflict. For example, the local union leader cited the development of trust over the time he has worked with the superintendent as the key reason for why they are able to resolve problems so well:

> …we've both been here for five years, we're in our sixth year, and I think we're able to discuss [issues] amongst ourselves. And then I go to my team, she goes to her team…and we can kind of work things out so that it's not so messy and get a good resolution, instead of getting from point A to point B by zig-zagging all over…

The existence of trust in the relationship makes it possible for them to share information and address challenging matters directly with each other rather than relying on others to weigh in or mediate, not only expediting the resolution process, but resulting in outcomes favorable to both sides. During times of crisis, when the best way forward can be ambiguous and fraught with unanticipated challenges, the presence of trust allows parties to more openly and directly collaborate to resolve problems.

Further, the presence of trust allows parties to resolve issues more efficiently because they can speak candidly without the risk of damaging the relationship. Communicating candidly also eliminates the need to interpret the other party's intentions, greatly reducing confusion and misunderstanding. Specifically, the facets of benevolence, reliability, and openness, each demonstrated consistently over time, allow the superintendent and the local union leader to address issues quite frankly. The local union leader explained that this feature of their relationship was due to "the understanding that she's doing her job, I'm doing my job. It's nothing personal, and we're just looking out for the best interests of everybody. The best interests of kids in the community." Similarly, the superintendent cited the many shared experiences that she and the local union leader have had in the district as the reason for their trusting relationship and the reason why they can always be direct and frank with each other. As an example, both the

superintendent and the local union leader cited an instance when the union leader was rumored to be targeting certain administrators. The superintendent immediately confronted the leader, asking why he was "going after principals." The union leader denied this, expressing surprise that the superintendent would think him capable of saying such a thing: "'I never said any such thing, and I'm kind of insulted that you would think I would,' and she said, 'I'm sorry I should have known better.'" Because trust exists in the relationship, both parties not only collaborated openly and more efficiently, but they did so without creating unnecessary confusion and false assumptions.

Conversely, when trust is absent, the process of resolving issues can be more difficult. For the 2020-2021 school year, the local teacher union leader was not the lead negotiator in the development of a memorandum of agreement (MOA) that would return teachers and students to the classroom amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather, a state-level union representative served as the lead negotiator. The superintendent and the state-level representative did not know each other when negotiations began, and, as a result, neither had enough information to determine whether the other was honest or reliable. To make things worse, the superintendent perceived the state's union representative as unnecessarily combative. Their relationship was at times contentious, with negotiations lasting the entire year.

> Last year's MOA was never signed until the last day of school. …the [state teachers' union representative] liked to tip everything upside down. They actually came from [another urban district], and I understand that they didn't do that there.

> They were out for, you know, blood here. …So, [the local union leader] was being zeroed out by those people, canceled out by the [state teachers' union].

As a result of the state's union representative's involvement, the district's typically efficient process for resolving problems progressed much more slowly, marked by low information-sharing and an unwillingness to compromise. The following year, the local union leader took the lead in negotiating an updated memorandum of agreement; as a result, the superintendent believes negotiations progressed much better, describing them as a "pretty tight process" because "that [state teacher union representative] is gone, [and the local union leader] has more voice in it now."

Third, the facet of benevolence allows both parties to perceive the other's behavior in favorable terms. Benevolence, one of the five facets of trust, can be understood as any action that leads one to believe that another party has their best interests at heart (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). The demonstration of benevolent behaviors strengthens trust in a relationship by reinforcing the sense that one party will do no wrong to the other. While both the teacher union leader and the superintendent cited examples of the other's benevolent behavior, this phenomenon was most evident in the teacher union leader's perception of the superintendent. The teacher union leader identified several examples, but cited three particular instances that had a significant impact on his perception of the superintendent, one having to do with a union member, a second having to do with high school students, and a third involving him directly. In the first example, a union employee suddenly and tragically lost her life one evening. The next morning, the superintendent invited the teacher union leader to her office to discuss

how they might collaborate to support the employee's family during such a difficult time, including how they could work together to help pay for the funeral:

> "So, we had an employee who passed away one weekend. I didn't even know it. … [the superintendent] brought me in on that so we could work together, trying to see…who could help them out, mostly with funeral expenses and all that. They didn't have much, the family. I have some experience with the funeral directors in the [community]. That was a telling time for me. That meant a lot. We came together to support [the employee's] family."

While the teacher union leader found it remarkable that the superintendent would so quickly involve him in efforts to support an employee's family, he noted that it was not out of character for the superintendent, saying, "…[T]hat's typically what she does, you know. She really cares about people."

In the second example, the teacher union leader cited the superintendent's willingness to financially support graduating students who could not afford college application fees or, at times, even tuition. "I've heard from other people about the money that she's spent, the checks she's written to get kids into college over the years. It must be in the tens of thousands of dollars over time, out of her own pocket. All of it out of her own pocket." The teacher union leader found the superintendent's contributions to be remarkable not only for their generosity, but also because the superintendent never mentioned them to anyone or tried to take credit for supporting so many students. Therefore, in the teacher union leader's opinion, the superintendent's benevolence was authentic and selfless.

A third example of the superintendent's benevolence cited by the teacher union leader was the superintendent's regular communications with him regarding his well-being. The teacher union leader explained that he and the superintendent both hold very public roles in the community, and both are often the subject of "heightened scrutiny," which at times has been very critical. He described the superintendent taking time to call him with words of encouragement, telling him to "hang in there," and showing concern for him personally.

The teacher union leader's perception of the superintendent was shaped by her repeated demonstration of benevolent behaviors, leading him to believe that she held the best interests of both the district's students and employees as a priority. As a result, rather than being adversarial, they both referenced feeling like they are "in it together" and have the best interests of the district and the community in mind. While they do not always agree on issues, they understand and respect the other's perspective and why they do what they do, ultimately engaging in candid discussions. This was the case when the superintendent had to address a difficult personnel issue and also when the union took a strong public stance against a principal. In both cases, the superintendent and the teacher union leader each wished the other did not do what they did, but understood the rationale and agreed that the other was acting in good faith and ultimately in the best interests of the district.

Behaviors that Promote Trust in Superintendent-Union Leader Relationships

While developing trust requires sufficient time for each party to observe the presence or lack of each of the five facets (Mayer, et al., 1995), superintendents and teacher union leaders may be able to expedite this process by focusing on the specific

behaviors that lead to trusting relationships. In the following section, I discuss the facets that most profoundly influence the superintendent/teacher union leader relationship.

Benevolent behaviors were most often cited by the teacher union leader as contributing to the development of trust with the superintendent. While both parties cited examples of how the other demonstrated genuine care for and about the other, and for the employees and students in the district, the superintendent's benevolence seemed to have a much stronger impact on the teacher union leader's perceptions of trust. He described his perception of the superintendent as being directly influenced by the superintendent's generous and thoughtful actions. Most notably, he cited the superintendent's long-standing reputation for supporting students, including providing her personal financial support to help with college application fees. He also noted several instances when the superintendent called him at home after a particularly difficult situation to check in, provide encouragement, and offer support. "Yeah, I think that's just how she is, she cares about people. She's all about people. And she makes people feel like they're in it together." The teacher union leader perceived the superintendent to be genuinely caring about others. It was important to the teacher union leader that the superintendent's behavior was not designed to elicit any benefit to herself; she acted with generosity and care with no expectation of personal gain, a key component of the facet of benevolence (Mayer & Schoorman, 1995; Tschannen-Moran, 2001) that directly supports trust development in the relationship (Benna & Hambacher, 2020).

The behavior that most influenced the superintendent's trust in the union leader was honesty. She placed a high value on knowing that she could depend on the union leader's word, which allowed her to speak frankly with the union leader, sharing

information without fear of it being repeated or used against her. It also allowed her to ignore the confrontational state union-level rhetoric because she knew that the local union leader would take a more collaborative tack. The superintendent described several instances when she was able to hold "private conversations to talk about tough issues" with the teacher union leader, knowing that confidentiality would be honored because of their trusting relationship.

For example, when an employee was accused of inappropriate behavior during a virtual classroom lesson, the teacher union leader and the superintendent were able to quickly review the facts of the matter and determine the most appropriate course of action:

> ...It was more complicated than you might first think, you know? But people were calling for blood. There was no harm intended, none at all. It was a genuine mistake, and honestly, I think any one of us could have done the same thing. So I called up [the superintendent] and said, 'Let's talk this one through. What can we do together on this? What's the right way to go here?' [The superintendent] heard my side of the situation, and she understood where I was coming from; and I understood her perspective. Despite what some people were telling her about what happened, she heard me out. And you know what? We both saw it the same way. It was a mistake. No harm done and we agreed on how to take care of it reasonably for everyone. That's how we tend to handle things, you know, just pick up the phone and talk it out. We don't listen to the angry elements out there and 99 percent of the time we find a solution that's fair for both sides. Fair for everyone.

In turn, the superintendent reported that the teacher union leader can call her any time, knowing that he can speak directly and frankly. This communication allows them to resolve issues efficiently.

Shared Experiences and Trust in Superintendent-Union Leader Relationships

While the facets of benevolence and honesty were most often cited as contributing to trust between the superintendent and the teacher union leader, the findings indicate that the single most powerful and positive influencer of trust in the relationship was the number of shared experiences the two parties had over time. Shared experiences allow each person to witness a pattern of behaviors, make judgements about that behavior, and develop assumptions about future behaviors. Research highlights the importance of time when it comes to developing trust, but I found that, in this case, the accumulation of shared experiences also resulted in a sense of shared identities. A sense of shared identity seemed to produce a quality of trust that went beyond the typically-accepted definition, generally understood as "...the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party" (Mayer, et al., 1995, p. 712). A shared identity not only strengthens the trustor's willingness to be vulnerable, it creates a shared sense of purpose and loyalty.

For example, the superintendent and the teacher union leader both proudly identify as life-long residents of the community, spending their entire careers in the district. The teacher union leader graduated from the high school where the superintendent once taught. They were both special education teachers at the same school, though not at the same time. Furthermore, their daughters attended the same school, playing on the same sports teams. The superintendent cited these shared experiences as being especially important to their relationship:

> So, we have a common view on a lot of things. Because we've shared so many experiences together, whether it be the union negotiation process or, more importantly, the personal experiences outside of that, that we've shared together, that continues to build our relationship. Those types of things make a difference.

The accumulation of shared experiences has allowed the superintendent and the teacher union leader to identify closely with one another, giving each the sense that they understand the other and are understood by the other. The superintendent even cited her lifetime membership in the state's teacher union as one of many experiences contributing to her shared identity with the teacher union leader. This familiarity not only lends itself to deeper levels of trust, but also creates a sense that they share the same mission, are on the same team, and are working together for the same ends.

The teacher union leader placed special importance on the fact that the superintendent was once a teacher at the same school where he once taught. He also noted that most superintendents are either promoted from a central office position or are recruited from another community or state altogether. He voiced concern that the next superintendent might not be from the community and therefore will not understand its people. The fact that the superintendent came from the same community—and the same high school as the teacher union leader—bestows a special status upon the superintendent, which the teacher union leader summed up by saying, "She is one of us."

Trust in Superintendent/Union Leader Relationships During Crisis

A crisis event is generally understood as any significant disruption based on a triggering event and accompanied by a sense of urgency, a lack of clarity, and the need to restructure the status quo in order to respond to crisis pressures (Rosenthal & Hart, 1991).

For this study, the COVID-19 pandemic provides a useful lens through which to examine trust between superintendents and union leaders during times of crisis. In this case, however, neither the superintendent nor the teacher union leader could articulate how the COVID-19 pandemic affected their relationship. Instead, both parties referenced the impact of the pandemic on instructional practices, their relationships with staff members, and the district's families. Negotiations about how and when to return students and teachers safely to the classroom after nearly 18 months of remote learning were strained at least in part because the teacher union leader was not the lead negotiator. Had he been allowed to be more directly involved, the process would likely have gone better, as evidenced by the superintendent's relief that an updated MOA involving the teacher union leader was negotiated much more efficiently and effectively. What was evident, however, was that the superintendent and teacher union leader had built a trusting relationship that carried into the context of the pandemic. The absence of any negative impact on the relationship from the COVID-19 pandemic is noteworthy in that it indicates the strength of their relationship pre-crisis; had the pandemic negatively affected their relationship, it would likely have been through the exposure of weaknesses in their relationship that predated the pandemic.

Discussion

Because of their roles as "critical group representatives" (p. 296), the school superintendent's and the teacher union leader's working relationship affects the working conditions of the district's employees and the learning experiences of students in ways both direct and indirect (Currall, 1992). Considering this influence, it is important to better understand the dynamics of this relationship and the factors that impact its quality.

Accordingly, the focus of this study is the role that trust plays in superintendent/teacher union leader relationships. Two research questions were used to guide the study and to better understand the effect that trust (or the absence of trust) has on this relationship. Using Tschannen-Moran's five facets of trust (2001) in the context of interpersonal trust building, first theorized by Zand (1972) and later refined by Six (2007), data and analysis showed that benevolence, more than any other facet, directly contributed to the formation and maintenance of trust between the superintendent and the teacher union leader. Further, the length of time the superintendent and teacher union leader have known each other strongly contributes to interpersonal trust, as established in previous research (Six, 2007; Zand, 1972). However, data also shows that one's tenure of membership in specific identity groups serves as a proxy for time, allowing other parties to make assumptions about a person's beliefs and future behaviors.

Impact of Trust

Mayer (1995) defines relational trust as "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party" (p. 712). A willingness to be vulnerable yields a number of positive outcomes, including increased cooperation, improved performance, and greater information-sharing (Kramer, 1999). This study's findings strongly support this point, indicating that the existence of trust between the superintendent and the teacher union leader resulted in each of these outcomes. Both parties reported a collaborative, open, and non-adversarial relationship in which direct information-sharing improves each party's ability to effectively resolve issues. As a result, there is little need for either party to

posture or withhold information to gain an advantage in any particular situation, behaviors that typically accompany traditional negotiations (Butler, 1999; Lewicki & Stevenson, 1997). Instead, the superintendent and the teacher union leader freely share information and opinions about topics without fear of reprisal and are often able to find mutually beneficial resolutions to problems. In those situations where resolutions may not have been favorable to one side or the other, the superintendent and teacher union leader both expressed an appreciation and understanding of the other party's point of view and acknowledged efforts to arrive at good-faith solutions.

Benevolence and Honesty

Hoy and Tschannen-Moran define trust in terms of its most salient characteristics, which they describe as the five facets: benevolence, reliability, competence, openness, and honesty (1999). A party can observe the presence and quality of these facets in others, they posit, and reach conclusions about the other's trustworthiness. While Hoy and Tschannen-Moran give equal importance to all five of the facets, findings suggest that the superintendent's benevolence has the most prominent and striking impact on the teacher union leader's willingness to trust. Indeed, while the teacher union leader initially defined trust in terms of how reliable another party might be, the many examples he provided for why the superintendent was trustworthy focused almost exclusively on her acts of benevolence. This finding supports Benna and Hambacher's (2020) conclusion that benevolence is perhaps the most important facet of trust, serving as the foundation on which the other four facets exist. A benevolent trustee, which Mayer et al. define as one who places others' interests above their own (1995), causes trustors to believe that they will not knowingly or willingly do them harm (Curral, 1992; Tschannen-Moran, 2001),

forgoing personal gain if it means possible harm to the trustor (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). As a result, it is possible to imagine a benevolent trustee failing to demonstrate openness, honesty, reliability, or competence but still eliciting a degree of trust from others since, all deficits aside, they always have the best interests of others in mind.

The importance that the teacher union leader placed on the superintendent's benevolent behavior may have been influenced by the relative power imbalance between the two. Butler (1999) found that trust between parties is stronger and more reciprocal when perceived risks are shared relatively equally. Conversely, when perceived risks are not equally shared, the trusting relationship can become unbalanced. School superintendents wield a great deal of influence over teacher working conditions, so evidence that the superintendent has the best interests of others at heart allows for much higher levels of trust. A malevolent superintendent, on the other hand, poses a formidable risk to the teacher union leader's interests, perhaps more so than one who is simply incompetent, dishonest, or unreliable, but manifestly benevolent. Making oneself vulnerable to a trustee who places their own interests above others, and who may abuse one's vulnerability for personal gain, is an unattractive proposition for any party.

The teacher union leader may also have placed great emphasis on the superintendent's benevolence because of her consistent demonstration of benevolent behaviors over a long period of time in the district. The superintendent is fairly well known for her generous and thoughtful treatment of others, which is viewed by the teacher union leader as authentic and selfless. Because this trait was so obviously evident to the teacher union leader, it likely held greater importance in his mind. The importance of benevolence in the creation of trusting relationships is evident in this study and

consistent with prior research (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Indeed, some researchers consider benevolence to be the most important facet of trust (Benna & Hambacher, 2020), which certainly holds true in this study's data. Bryk and Schneider (2003) found that benevolence is foundational to high levels of relational trust in a school community, which creates an environment where people feel supported and open to taking risks to improve the educational experience of students. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which represented a crisis event in the district, the benefits of trust are especially important in the superintendent-teacher union leader relationship. Marked by high levels of uncertainty and risk, crisis events leave parties especially vulnerable (Rosenthal & Hart, 1991). The superintendent's well-known and longstanding reputation for benevolence made this vulnerability less risky for the teacher union leader, who cited the many times the superintendent made him feel supported and cared for.

As previously noted, the superintendent cited honesty as the preeminent factor influencing her trust in others, including the teacher union leader. Her focus on honesty may have also been influenced by the relationship's power imbalance, but for reasons altogether different than the teacher union leader's. First, interactions between superintendents and teacher union leaders typically involve negotiations of some kind, both formal bargaining and informal problem-solving. If parties can rely on each other to be honest, they can more successfully navigate the give-and-take of negotiating while protecting their interests (Butler, 1999). Second, it is conceivable that the superintendent values honesty above benevolence because she does not necessarily need the teacher union leader—or anyone else—to show her benevolence in order to prosper; she need not depend on subordinates to protect her interests. In general, research supports the fact that

agents who hold an advantage, such as positional authority, can be insulated from some risks in relations with a subordinate (Currall & Judge, 1995). On the other hand, the superintendent's position makes her benevolence valuable to subordinates, who depend on her to treat them fairly since an agent with fewer advantages, such as a workplace subordinate, experiences greater vulnerability when interacting with someone of greater authority (Currall & Judge, 1995).

Shared Experiences

One's decision to trust is derived from ongoing interactions with another party over time, an interactive process in which parties reach conclusions about the other's trustworthiness by observing behaviors (Zand, 1973; Six, 2007). Findings strongly support the role that time plays in developing trust. The superintendent and the teacher union leader have occupied their positions for six years, a relatively long tenure considering the average district replaces its superintendent every 3.2 years (Will, 2014). Further, the superintendent and teacher union leader have known each other for quite some time, which significantly increases each party's opportunities to assess the other's trustworthiness. Had they not known each other for as long, it is unlikely they would have developed the same level of trust. This has concerning implications for school districts of any size; the rate of superintendent turnover effectively prevents superintendents and teacher union leaders from accumulating enough shared experiences to develop the kind of trust necessary to affect their working relationship in any appreciable way.

Shared Identity

The relationship between the superintendent and the teacher union leader in this study is notable not only for its longevity and many shared experiences, but also for the shared sense of identity that emerged over time. Both parties take pride in being lifelong residents of the community and note that they both have spent their careers in the same district and, for a period of time, at the same school. Interestingly, they both identify with the school's mascot, referring to each other as "Eagles." As a result, there exists in their relationship a palpable sense of what the teacher union leader referred to as "being on the same team" and "being in it together," a highly usual characteristic in typical superintendent/teacher union leader relationships, which can often be adversarial. When defining what it means to "be on the same team," the teacher union leader and superintendent cite their shared commitment to the best interests of students, the district, and the community.

Their shared identities also derive from their personal lives, where their daughters, who are the same age and are friends, attended the same high school and played on the same sports teams. On more than one occasion, each party commented on the importance of these commonalities, stating that the other "gets it," in large part because they are so similar in many ways.

This shared identity, perhaps more than any other factor, allows each party to assume certain positive characteristics about the other. Research shows that having a sense of shared identity within a social group helps to define who one is and how one should behave (Hogg, 2014). As a result, a shared identity allows one to make assumptions about the other's future behavior based on membership in the same group

(Hogg, 2001; Reid & Hogg, 2005). While research highlights the important role that time plays in allowing trust to emerge (Zand, 1972; Six, 2007), this study shows that time may not always be a prerequisite for developing trusting relationships. Instead, a sense of shared identity may serve as a proxy for time, providing a shortcut to assessing another's behaviors and establishing trust. Both the superintendent and the teacher union leader identify as members of the same in-group, which produces a level of certainty about who the other is. The importance that both the superintendent and the teacher union leader place on being lifelong residents of the community and lifelong employees of the district, for example, allows each to make assumptions about who the other is and how they will behave; namely, that the other has the best interests of the community's children and the district at heart.

Just as in-group affiliation can produce positive perceptions between members, membership in an out-group can generate negative perceptions (Hogg, 2001), evidence of which I found in this study. In this context, the superintendent and the teacher union leader credited each other for being members of the same in-group. However, their references to out-group members were less positive, with the superintendent negatively categorizing the state-level teacher union representative as coming from a different community, and the teacher union leader lamenting the possibility that the new superintendent search committee might recruit candidates "from across the country" who likely will not understand or appreciate the history and nuances of the community.

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis

The inability of the superintendent and the teacher union leader to describe the impact of the pandemic on their relationship leads one to believe that their trust in each

other was not negatively impacted by this crisis. Rather, it may be the case that they were able to withstand crisis pressures without impacting the quality of trust because that trust had been developed and strengthened long before the COVID-19 pandemic. Their sense of shared identity and in-group membership also likely helped them weather the crisis. Their understanding of what it means to be part of the in-group in terms of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors reduced each party's uncertainty about the other (Hogg, 2001), a dynamic that certainly made navigating the complexities of the COVID-19 pandemic less difficult.

Limitations

This study—which examines the role that trust plays in the relationships between school district superintendents and teacher union leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic—contains several limitations. The scope of my study focuses on a single school district in the Northeast United States amid the specific and unique circumstances of a pandemic. The sample size of this study consists of only two people within this district: the superintendent of schools and a teacher union leader. Because of this small sample size, it is difficult to reach any general conclusions about the superintendent-teacher union leader relationship that would necessarily apply elsewhere.

While other potential participants with knowledge of the superintendent-teacher teacher union leader relationship were invited to participate, I perceived a general reluctance to engage with the study, perhaps due to the sensitivity of the topic. Further, because school districts vary widely across the region in terms of culture, history, and political dynamics, it is likely that some of my findings may be unique to this district. However, they do have the potential to inform similarly positioned leadership

relationships. The time allowed for gathering data was relatively brief, so my findings represent only a snapshot of trust in an ever-evolving relationship. Examining this relationship over a greater period of time would have likely allowed for a deeper analysis of how trust ebbs and flows between the two parties. Finally, the superintendent and the teacher union leader shared many significant professional and personal experiences accumulated over time. Adding depth and strength to their relationship in ways that may not exist in the average school district, these shared experiences are authentic and cannot be easily replicated in every relationship.

Conclusion

As "critical group representatives" (Currall, 1993, p. 296) in school districts, the school superintendent and the teacher union leader exert significant influence over school environments, directly and indirectly affecting students and teachers alike. This is especially true during times of crisis, when members of an organization look to leaders to guide them through uncertainty (Rosenthal & Hart, 1991). My study sought to identify the impact that trust plays in relationships between superintendents and teacher union leaders during times of crisis, specifically the COVID-19 pandemic.

My study contributes to the existing body of research by examining the following research questions:

Q1: How, if at all, does trust influence relationships between superintendents and teacher union leaders during times of crisis?

Q2: Which, if any, leadership practices of the superintendent impact perceptions of trust during times of crisis?

I addressed my first research question by examining how trust influences the superintendent-teacher union leader relationship, concluding that the presence of trust allows for more direct communication and more efficient and collaborative problem-solving. This finding has implications for leaders who wish to improve the process by which they address problems in an organization. To address my second research question, I identified which leadership practices of the superintendent impact perceptions of trust during times of crisis, finding that benevolent behaviors have the greatest positive impact on perceptions of trust. This finding will have significance for leaders who wish to more purposefully cultivate trusting relationships.

Perhaps most significantly, my findings show that a shared sense of identity may serve as a proxy for time, allowing parties to jump-start the development of trust in their relationship. This finding may have limited implications for leaders who hold no memberships in existing in-groups. However, the importance of a shared identity for fostering trusting relationships places importance on the idea that leaders should look for opportunities to create new group identities that will not only include themselves, but perhaps bring members of the organization's out-groups into the fold. These findings will likely benefit superintendents and teacher union leaders alike by allowing parties to intentionally focus on behaviors that contribute to trusting relationships, an essential prerequisite for effective communication and collaboration (Finnigan & Daly, 2017). These findings can also inform new superintendent induction and coaching programs, negotiations training, and preparations for how school districts might best respond to crises.

CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to explore the various ways that trust may be important for schools and districts by examining the relationships and practices of educational leaders. We collectively address one overarching research question: *How, if at all, does trust influence the relationships and practices of educational stakeholders during times of crisis?* Specifically, our intent was to examine trust between educational stakeholders across a school district during COVID-19 to understand what role, if any, trust played in these relationships. We sought to determine if trust, when present, functioned differently across roles, as well as if aspects of trust influenced the quality of relationships between educators. To do so, we examined the degree to which trust influenced the relationships and practices of principals and teachers (McCarthy, 2022); central office team leaders (Hung, 2022); union leaders and the superintendent (Myers, 2022); diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) leaders (Evee, 2022); and the superintendent and principals (Grassa, 2022). While studies have explored trust within schools (Benna & Hambacher, 2020; Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010; Reiss & Hoy, 1998; Sarikaya et al., 2020; Tschannen-Moran, 2001), this study may be one of the few, if any, to determine how trust impacts the work across an entire school district. Through our study, we aim to further clarify the nature of trust formation among various levels of leadership in the context of a K-12 district.

Our methodology consisted of a qualitative case study of one school district of over 5000 students in the northeast region of the United States. As described in detail in Chapter 2, we used purposeful sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to include teachers,

principals, central office leaders, the district superintendent, the teachers' union leader, and DEI leaders. For data collection, we employed semi-structured interviews, document reviews, an online survey, and observations. We used the coding software Dedoose to identify patterns and themes. Relational trust, defined as the willingness of one party to be vulnerable to the action of another (Mayer et al., 1995) is the analytic lens tying our work together. Each study was further framed by five facets of trust (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999): benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness. We used the five facets to determine the degree to which they were present, or most valued, in a relationship and to analyze their impact on educational leader practices. In addition, we conducted our research during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. We define crisis as a disruptive situation initiated by a triggering event, characterized by a great deal of uncertainty, and evolving over a long period of time (Rosenthal & Hart, 1991).

In response to our overarching research question, we collectively found that trust was present within each of the relationships and practices we studied. More specifically, benevolence was a consistent and important facet of trust formation across all relationships. In addition, we found that having a shared purpose, which the data and analyses suggest starts with shared values, made trust less risky, while the absence of shared purpose negatively affected relationships. Also, we found that the increase of time within a relationship increased the amount of trust with our participants at all levels. Finally, the collective data and analyses suggest a sense of shared identity accelerates the trust-building process among educational leaders. The following sections present our synthesized findings, discussion of these findings in relation to the literature, and recommendations for future research and practice.

Benevolence

Some researchers consider benevolence to be the most important facet of trust (Benna & Hambacher, 2020), and that holds true in the data from this study. All participants across each sub-study described benevolence numerous times as an essential facet for building trusting relationships with stakeholders during the COVID-19 pandemic. As described in previous chapters, benevolence may be defined as the demonstration of good will toward others with no gain to self; the trustee desires to do good on behalf of the trustor (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis 2015). Guided by this definition, we found participants displaying many examples of benevolent behaviors. Across studies, those behaviors included listening and supporting, as well as treating others with dignity and showing concern for others beyond the job. Benevolence was also described by participants as caring for others and being able to interact and relate to everyone. The act of deep listening was another example of benevolence and a way to successfully bring in diverse voices as needed to implement the work of educational leaders. The research reveals that benevolence is a trust-forming characteristic essential to the work of education, and that leaders must be comfortable demonstrating benevolence to further build trust during a time of crisis.

The established importance of benevolence to build relationships and create a trusting environment is evident in our study and consistent with prior research. For instance, Bryk and Schneider (2003) found benevolence foundational for high levels of relational trust in a school community, which creates an environment where people felt supported enough to take risks to improve the educational experience of students. We found that nearly all stakeholders expressed deep appreciation for leaders' benevolent

behaviors, which led to a feeling of support and contributed to perceptions of trust. The end goal for every academic institution is a positive academic experience that leads to student achievement; meeting that goal in an ever-evolving society means revisiting procedures, which can result in frequent reform. Reform includes risk and risk is more easily applied when trust is present (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Leading with benevolence may create an atmosphere of trust, which can then generate high levels of buy-in towards new initiatives or institutional change present during reform. When school professionals trust one another and sense support from stakeholders, they feel safer to experiment with new practices (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). New practices are often results of reform, and ongoing reform is necessary in the pursuit of the best educational experience for all students. Overall, leading with benevolence is beneficial not just for the professionals to do their best but for students to be their best.

Further, specifically during a time of crisis when society is plagued with the COVID-19 pandemic, it is likely that people are in an emotional state and desire benevolence from those with whom they are most vulnerable. Groysberg and Seligson, in their research arguing that good leadership is an act of kindness, state: "The pandemic has challenged managers as never before, but one powerful leadership strategy is being overlooked: Be kind" (2020). With leadership implementing rapid change in response to COVID-19 to keep students focused on learning, acts of benevolence can help build the relational trust needed to swiftly gain community buy-in (Kwatubana & Molaodi, 2021). This study suggests that, during this COVID-19 crisis, educational leaders tended to focus more on caring for others by authentically asking about the health and well-being of those they support before discussing professional issues and tasks. This act of

kindness, showing care for the whole person, can help employees feel seen, valued, and supported, all of which were referenced by stakeholders throughout this study as components of trust they desired from their leaders.

Shared Purpose

A shared sense of purpose is defined as having a clear sense of direction, noting that this is one of the nine conditions that increase educator efficacy toward improved student learning (Seashore et al., 2010). It is important to note that a shared sense of purpose is a critical first step in realizing a vision; to achieve that shared vision, leaders must also effectively communicate and create organizational alignment in service of that shared vision (Kantabutra, 2010). In this district, we found a sense of shared purpose established in pockets, between the superintendent and teacher union leader (Myers, 2022), for example, and between some teachers and their principal (McCarthy, 2022), as well as between some district leaders and their teams (Evee, 2022; Grassa, 2022; Hung, 2022). Findings, however, do not indicate the existence of a shared sense of purpose across the majority of the district. While a sense of shared purpose appears to have positively influenced the formation of trust within some groups, the absence of shared purpose limited trust-formation in many others.

Educational stakeholders across all levels of the district we studied articulated a need for a shared sense of purpose in their work, with the stakeholders expressing shared purpose in various ways. Proxy phrases included shared values, mission, vision, and goals. The superintendent and teacher union leader spoke of shared values which were connected to their personal backgrounds and work experiences, the foundation of which led them to believe they were part of the same mission in the work (Myers, 2022).

Teachers also spoke about shared values while referencing trust with the principal (McCarthy, 2022). Meanwhile, both district leaders and principals articulated the challenges present when a shared understanding of vision and goals is missing in relationships (Evee, 2022; Grassa, 2022; Hung, 2022). Below, we discuss the ways that the common thread of shared purpose influenced the formation of trust across relationships in this district.

A shared sense of purpose impacts the facilitation of knowledge transfer within an organization (Li, 2005). Li explains that, as relationships become longer term and more cooperative, there is an increasing need to coordinate communication, build trust and a shared understanding. A shared sense of purpose impacts the ability of educational stakeholders to enact and carry out the work as defined by the district leadership. Therefore, an organization's success rests in part on the ability of leadership to facilitate this knowledge transfer for stakeholders, by defining a shared purpose and providing clarity around key decisions within an organization.

For example, in one interview a principal stated that a shared sense of purpose influenced the principal's judgement around the superintendent's decision-making (Grassa, 2022). In this case, a shared purpose was referred to as having the same vision and goals. The importance of shared vision and goals was also brought up several times as a means for the principal to more deeply understand why the superintendent made certain decisions. Having a deeper understanding of the superintendent's decisions allowed the principal to maintain a good relationship with the district's most senior leader because the principal felt that the decisions made represented alignment with the vision and goals set forth. As such, even in cases where the principal may have disagreed with

the particular decision being made, there was an understanding and sense of trust that the superintendent was making the decisions in a consistent and predictable manner, both hallmarks of trusting behavior.

At its best, a shared sense of purpose creates a strong bond between key stakeholders in the district, resulting in greater collaboration and open communication, behaviors dependent upon trust. This was especially true in the relationship between the teacher union leader and the superintendent, where a sense of shared purpose was articulated in terms of a shared mission (Myers, 2022). The union leader stated that he and the superintendent were "on the same team," working toward the same interests: "We're just looking out for the best interests of everybody, the best interests of the kids in the community." Thus, rather than being adversarial, the union leader and the superintendent felt like they were "in it together" and had the interests of the district in mind, even when they might disagree over a particular issue. Their positive relational dynamic, marked by trust, allowed the superintendent and union leader to address problems directly and collaboratively, often resulting in more efficient and effective resolutions, including during the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the heart of shared purpose, educational stakeholders in the district spoke about shared values and the ability to form trusting bonds if they believed another party shared those same values (McCarthy, 2022; Myers, 2022). Again, examining the relationship between the superintendent and the teacher union leader, their positive working relationship was bolstered by a sense of shared values, due in part to similar teaching roles in the past. For example, they both worked as special educators and, for the superintendent, special educators have unique values when it comes to caring for

students; namely, the belief that all children can be successful if given the opportunity. This fostered an assumption between the superintendent and the teacher union leader that both parties were acting in the best interest of all students (Myers, 2022).

A teacher at one elementary school in the district also spoke about the importance of shared values, making a connection between shared values and a tangible feeling of inclusion within the school community (McCarthy, 2022). While the presence of shared values can influence a person's disposition to trust (Tschannen-Moran, 2014), this teacher noted that holding explicitly different values can also create animosity and feelings of being ostracized within a school community. She explained how her principal chose to display her values directly with teachers, allowing this teacher to feel trusted and supported. Underscored in our study's findings is that one's values must be explicitly communicated and known for others to feel their values are in alignment.

Absent a shared purpose, educational stakeholders in this district articulated feelings of misalignment, misunderstanding, and distrust. As district leaders spoke of the presence of shared purpose, they acknowledged that departments within the central office were functioning from different perspectives, with each department navigating the work a little bit differently (Hung, 2022). This meant that, while a single department or school might have a clearly articulated purpose, that purpose was not necessarily aligned to a district mission, vision, or goals. As a result, the work was not as strong in their alignment of collective outcomes.

The challenge of creating alignment with a shared purpose was recognized, but left unaddressed. One district leader reflected that unaddressed differences in the way different departments approach the work led to "working around the problem[s] and not

addressing them directly." Such misalignment, when allowed to persist at the district level, impacts schools' ability to directly align their work in the service of district goals, undermining collaboration and creating confusion (Hung, 2022). Aligned people and support systems is a critical component to realizing a shared purpose or vision (Kantabutra, 2010). For principals experiencing this disconnect between central office departments and schools, one principal interpreted the disconnect as "distrust" resulting from misunderstandings about the direction in which to go as a district (Grassa, 2022). Implied here is a lack of clear and unifying mission and vision coming from district leaders. Principals also articulated a lack of coherence and purpose during monthly principal meetings, resulting in missed opportunities for deeper collaboration and learning.

In this district, we experienced pockets of shared purpose and areas with misalignment. While the pockets of shared purpose were defined by stronger relationships and deeper understanding of the work, where there was misalignment, educational leaders struggled to both define the purpose of the work themselves and see a clear purpose in the work of others. Any time districts are misaligned around purpose, opportunity exists for educational leaders to define their own, which may or may not align with the district's goals.

Furthermore, Fullan et al., (2009) argue that not only should districts have a clearly defined shared purpose, but that a shared purpose should be grounded in a moral imperative. Fullan explains that it is not enough to simply understand a shared purpose in terms of work-related goals, but rather, as a moral purpose. Educational leaders should deeply understand that what we do each day is either accelerating or hampering our goal

of improving society by improving educational systems and the learning outcomes of all citizens. As established, K-12 districts are places of high complexity (Cosner, 2009) and ambiguity (Hung, 2022), requiring individuals and groups to work interdependently (Forsyth et al., 2011). For K-12 districts to successfully navigate the complex work of educating all students, they must unite individuals and teams toward common goals. This may be done through a shared purpose, grounded in a moral imperative. In doing so, the conditions for trusting relationships may improve.

Trust and Time

Research establishes that trust between parties cannot develop without the benefit of time. Indeed, one's decision to trust requires sufficient and ongoing interactions in order to observe another party's behavior and reach conclusions about their trustworthiness (Zand, 1972; Six, 2007). Our findings strongly support the role that time plays in developing trusting relationships.

In Pre-K-12 school organizations, trust is developed over time and is based on the actions and interactions among multiple relationships including superintendent/principal relationships and principal/teacher relationships (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Nearly all of the study's participants cited the role that time played in their decision to trust others. In fact, both Chapman (2012) and Hatchel (2012) determined that the length of time principals and superintendents collaborate has the greatest impact on their trust development. In addition, many of the district's principals had working relationships with the superintendent for five or more years, with some knowing the superintendent far longer, including from her years as a principal in the district. As a result, they had had ample opportunity throughout the years to witness her behaviors and make conclusions

about her trustworthiness. Based on those observations, they trusted the superintendent because they knew who she was and what she stood for (Grassa, 2022). More than one principal cited their long history of working with the superintendent as one of the reasons why they trust her: “I think based on our previous experience, I trust that she cares about kids, and I know that she's a very hard worker and she'll do the legwork to produce positive outcomes for kids.” They also felt that this length of time promoted the superintendent's trust in their work as principals, as evidenced by the strong support she showed them over personnel decisions or difficult parental interactions.

Principals’ perceptions of teachers’ trustworthiness were based almost exclusively on their history of past experiences, a phenomenon requiring time (McCarthy, 2022). One principal referred to a teacher’s “established pattern of behavior” as a determining factor in whether they will generally perceive their behaviors as trustworthy. The reference to observing a “pattern of behavior” reflects almost exactly the definition of relational trust in the literature. For example, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000), citing Zucker (1986), explain that “knowledge-based trust emerges on the basis of the quality of the social exchanges in recurring interactions between trustor and trustee over time” (p. 562). Likewise, Bryk and Schneider (2003) explain that trust is formed over time in a series of social exchanges characterized by the expectations and obligations of one’s role in relationship to each other. As people have experiences together over time, their behavior becomes more predictable, hence lessening risk. Therefore, while one cannot replace the factor of time, a leader can intentionally create experiences to maximize interactions and demonstrate trustworthiness.

The teacher union leader also cited time as an important factor in his decision to trust the superintendent, noting that they had been in their roles together for nearly six years, during which they have developed a strong working relationship (Myers, 2022):

> …we've both been here for five years, we're in our sixth year, and I think we're able to discuss [issues] amongst ourselves. And then I go to my team, she goes to her team…and we can kind of work things out so that it's not so messy and get a good resolution…

The superintendent also noted the tenure of her relationship with the teacher union leader as a reason for trusting him, pointing out that because they have known each other for quite some time, they discuss issues openly and frankly. They also both trust the other's decisions, even if they disagree, because they perceive the other as having the best interests of students in mind. Their ability to trust is important because, as Hurley (2012) explains, without trust you lose cooperation. In many ways, the functioning of the district depends on these two leaders' cooperation; the school superintendent and the teacher union leader are, according to Currall (1992), "critical group representatives" (p. 296), whose working relationship most directly affects the overall experiences of students and teachers alike.

The district's DEI work was also affected by the role that time plays in developing trust between key relationships (Evee, 2022). The sensitive nature of DEI work requires participants to genuinely reflect on their own beliefs and biases, causing them to be vulnerable, and demanding a great deal of trust. To this end, participants specifically cited the length of time that DEI leaders had been in the district as significantly impacting others' willingness to trust them and engage in the work. DEI

leaders needed time to build trusting relationships to demonstrate their trustworthiness with oftentimes sensitive issues. Consequently, findings suggest that retaining people in these important roles is essential for their success.

However, while time is required for trust to emerge in a relationship, the mere presence of time does not necessarily result in trust formation. Indeed, participants referenced some longstanding relationships in the district lacking trust. Relationship history between employees, which largely resulted in higher levels of trust for many participants, was also seen as potentially negatively impacting trust for some. This finding supports prior research showing that, while time can aid the formation of trust, it is the actions and behaviors within relationships that create a trusting dynamic (Six, 2007; Zand, 1972).

In short, the collective findings supported what other studies have found: time is critically important to allow for the kinds of interactions that may build trust. In addition to the necessity of time, findings also show that the quality of each party's interactions and behaviors during that time ultimately determine whether trust forms. This evolving relational dynamic raises questions about how school districts can retain leaders over time so that it allows for trust formation, a pressing issue given that the current tenure for superintendents is only 3.2 years on average (Will, 2014), while principal tenure is just four years (Learning Policy Institute, n.d.). In light of our collective findings, it is especially important to foster opportunities and create time for educational leaders to engage in quality interactions that can build trust. In high stakes contexts and times of crises, this may prove a greater challenge.

Identity and Trust

Several participants in this study not only referenced the length of their relationship as a reason for trusting, but also cited one or more characteristics of another party as a reason for their trust. These characteristics had little to do with the five facets of trust, instead aligning with the attributes of group membership. For example, principals referenced the superintendent's long tenure as a principal in the district, an identity that made her a member (albeit a former member) of their group, leading them to assume she understands the importance and difficulty of their work (Grassa, 2022). This assumption directly reinforces the trust they have in her leadership because, as a member of their identity group, they believe she understands and supports them.

Leaders of the district's DEI efforts also cited identity as a key element in trust formation (Evee, 2022), with one participant pointing to their shared ethnicity as one reason stakeholders trusted them, since "they believe I understand them so they trust me enough to voice their issues." Because the DEI leader and the stakeholder group shared an important identity characteristic, they assumed a joint understanding of the other's experience and a trust that they had the other's interests at heart. Another leader in the district's DEI work stressed the importance of hiring employees who reflect not only the racial demographics of the district, but the students' experiences as well. This participant stated, "... not everyone comes from the same background….so we have to be careful about making a blanket statement and stereotyping our colleagues or our children…because they don't all come from the same experiences." This nuanced understanding of diversity acknowledges a layer of identity that both includes and reaches beyond race, possibly engendering greater levels of trust. While this participant

believes the adult community needs to be more diverse and that hiring a more diverse workforce should be a priority, approaching it from a purely racial angle might not be the only path.

Perhaps the strongest example arising from this study is the shared identities of the superintendent and the teacher union leader (Myers, 2022). This relationship is notable not only for its longevity and many shared experiences, but also for the shared sense of identity that emerged over time. Both the superintendent and the teacher union leader take pride in being lifelong residents of the community, noting they both have spent their careers in the same district and, for a period of time, at the same school. As a result, there exists in their relationship a palpable sense of what the teacher union leader referred to as "being on the same team" and "being in it together." When defining what it means to "be on the same team," the union leader and superintendent cited their shared commitment to the best interests of students and of the district. Their shared identities also extend into their personal lives, where their daughters, who are the same age and are friends, attended the same high school and played on the same sports teams. On more than one occasion, each party commented on the importance of these commonalities, stating that the other "gets it," in large part because they are so similar in many ways.

This shared identity emerged as an important factor allowing each party to assume certain positive characteristics about the other. Research shows that having a sense of shared identity within a social group helps to define who one is and how one should behave (Hogg, 2014). As a result, a shared identity allows one to make assumptions about the other's future behavior based on membership in the same group (Hogg, 2001; Reid & Hogg, 2005). However, while research highlights the important role that time

plays in allowing trust to emerge (Six, 2007; Zand, 1972), our study shows that time may not always be the most important factor for developing trusting relationships. Instead, a sense of shared identity can serve as a proxy for time, providing a shortcut to assessing another's behaviors and establishing trust. Both the superintendent and the teacher union leader, for example, strongly identify as members of the same in-group, producing a level of certainty about who the other is. The importance that both the superintendent and the teacher union leader place on being lifelong residents of the community and lifelong employees of the district, for example, allows each to make assumptions about who the other is and how they will behave; namely, that the other has the best interests of the district's children at heart. Leaders in the district's DEI work also noted the importance of hiring employees who reflect both the racial and cultural experience of the district's students, since sharing identities with students and their families would engender trust more quickly (Evee, 2022).

Just as having a shared identity can produce positive perceptions between members and further trust formation in the relationship, members with different identities may generate negative perceptions (Hogg, 2001). In this context, the superintendent and the teacher union leader viewed each other favorably for being members of the same identity group (Myers, 2022). However, their references to out-group members were less positive. The superintendent negatively categorized the state-level teacher union representative as coming from a different community and therefore not understanding the district. The teacher union leader lamented the possibility that the new superintendent search committee would recruit candidates "from across the country" who likely won't understand or appreciate the history and nuances of the community. Such perspectives

present a clear barrier to trust-formation by assuming a lack of the newcomer's competence, a key trust-forming facet, due to their lack of history with the district, its people, and its values.

Some participants viewed membership outside their identity group as hindering the trust-development process. Specifically, participants holding supervisory responsibilities for teachers—namely principals—were not necessarily viewed as trustworthy by teachers (McCarthy, 2022). In this case, principals appeared to be categorized by teachers as members of a separate identity group and therefore less likely to understand and support teachers. One principal acknowledged a tension in her dynamic with teachers, explaining that being seen as a principal was a barrier to trust. This barrier was so significant, in fact, that she trains fellow principals to prepare for their relationships to change as a result of their role change. Furthermore, teachers remarked strikingly as to how strongly they perceive their principal as different from them. In the eyes of teachers, the role of principal takes away some of the leader's humanity. One teacher shared her surprise at seeing her principal feel nervous during a district walkthrough: "Wow, you are human and you feel like all the classroom teachers do when they are being observed." Another spoke about her fear of her principal, adding, "If I think of my principal as a human, I'm not scared of [her]." In this case, group identity serves to delay or derail the development of trust; a person's identity as a principal has a chilling effect on a teacher's propensity to trust, likely because of the teacher's negative assumptions about members of the principal's "group."

Our findings reflect existing research, which indicates both negative and positive impacts of identity grouping for trust-formation (Reid & Hogg, 2005). For example, as

stated above, among our participants, a sense of shared identity enabled trust between the superintendent and teacher union leader, while its absence hindered trust between the principal and her teachers. The conflicting ways in which perceiving a shared identity impacted participants speaks to the complexity of this phenomena and raises the need for further study. For instance, if leaders become aware of this dynamic, they might intentionally work to foster a sense of shared identity, which could then build stronger trust and impact loyalty, retention, and dedication to the organization. Researchers may want to examine if such dynamics are at play in other groups who build a sense of shared identity from diverse members, such as sports teams, while also applying these dynamics to school staff, or teams within central office or entire districts. Leaders must also be aware, however, of a potential for unearned distrust within their organizations due to in-group biases, since the simple fact of sharing or not sharing identity might lead members of organizations to mistrust people they should not, creating an array of negative consequences, including limiting collaboration on teams or failing to hire the strongest candidates. Ultimately, as schools both consist of and serve diverse populations, educators must build strong relationships across groups. While the concept of shared identity on trust-formation is not widely examined in the literature on trust in schools, our study findings suggest it has a strong potential to impact the work in school districts, thereby warranting further examination.

Recommendations

Findings suggest that to build a high-functioning organization, school districts should use the five facets of trust as a framework for building relational trust within their organization. This should start at the central office and principal level, with leaders

reflecting on and learning about benevolence, reliability, competence, openness and honesty, while identifying which systems and behaviors may best foster those facets of trust. Creating collective trust across the school district must start from the top and be modeled, practiced, and tracked, possibly through the use of climate surveys.

Given our finding that the facet of benevolence is highly valued across all district leadership levels, we recommend starting with this foundational facet. District leaders should spend time learning how to recognize and practice benevolence, including how to foster relationship-building between and among staff members, teams, schools, and the greater community. Benevolent actions may include taking time to get to know the people in the organization on a personal level, listening actively, validating the thinking of others, and leading with compassion. Our recommendation to focus on relationship development may be achieved with the use of professionally-trained speakers, shared readings, and/or structured workshops— or by simply making space for district leaders to ask the same questions we did of the people they directly support, such as: "How do you define trust?" and "Can you share an example of what trust looks like in your work?" Learning about the importance of benevolence, and the facets, at the district level can contribute to improved relational trust within the community, leaving employees feeling supported (ExploElevate, 2021). Key to that recommendation is to increase district leader understanding of the need for benevolence and the other facets of trust (reliability, competence, openness, and honesty). Further, district leaders should consider these facets in terms of how they show up in their management style, as well as how they can incorporate the facets into daily interactions.

Given the importance of shared purpose as a cornerstone to trust-building, we also recommend that districts increase trust by clearly defining and reinforcing a shared purpose across institutional roles. Defining a shared purpose may begin with a review of the district's mission and vision, identifying how each educational stakeholder in the district is working toward that shared purpose. While defining a shared purpose is the first step, in order to realize a vision, additional, critical steps must be taken to communicate and align this vision across the organization, while also empowering and motivating educators charged with carrying out the shared purpose (Kantabutra, 2010). Achieving a shared purpose can also deepen trust within a school district by ensuring that staff can rely on how and why decisions are made.

With a clear shared purpose, a district can then shape a shared identity for those who work within it by explicitly defining what it means to work for the district. What does it mean to be a member of this district? What are we about? Why are we here? What are we doing and why is it important? Creating an overarching group identity based on district mission and values may transcend other identity-based memberships and support trust-formation. This shared identity could further reinforce a sense of shared purpose and provide clear guidelines for what it means to work for a particular school district, creating a cohesiveness among staff and facilitating a stronger sense of belonging. This can lead to better recruitment of staff and more streamlined hiring practices. A sense of belonging or shared identity can also contribute to longer tenures for teachers and administrators alike.

Limitations

In examining trust across an entire district, our study expands upon the previous research on trust that is more narrowly tailored by contributing to the understanding of trust among educational stakeholders across an entire school district. However, it has several limitations. Trust is a complex phenomenon that develops and changes over time. Given that trust is a sensitive topic, participants may have withheld information if we, ironically, did not gain their trust as researchers. Additionally, the short time frame of our project may have limited our ability to gain sufficient data to provide richer conclusions. Furthermore, we recognize that working in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges not typical in prior qualitative research, since all our work was completed over Zoom, a video-call platform. Observations of Zoom meetings, in contrast to in-person observations, removed access to meaningful data such as participant body language, seating choice, or side interactions. Despite these challenges, our study is likely the first of its kind to look at relational trust during the COVID-19 pandemic through the perceptions of teachers, teacher union leaders, principals, central office staff, DEI leaders, and the superintendent, and therefore helps build an understanding of how trust functions within larger educational organizations.

Conclusion

Trust plays a critical role in relationships, allowing educational stakeholders to effectively collaborate and take risks, all of which is necessary for achieving goals, and perhaps more so during times of crisis. COVID-19 forced a variety of hardships upon all schools in March of 2020. Districts had to manage the impacts of a global health crisis on their schools amid significant uncertainty, and implement wholesale changes to how K-12 educators could best meet student needs. Such change required new and unfamiliar

practices, which led to a degree of vulnerability on behalf of everyone involved. Amid this context of change and uncertainty, trust became even more imperative. Prior research suggests that established trust can make the response to change and unexpected transitions during a crisis more manageable, allowing schools to maintain effective school communities and remove new barriers in the pursuit of student well-being and academic success (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Daly, 2009; Louis, 2007; Olsen & Sexton, 2009). Our study sought to better understand this dynamic across multiple roles and relationships within a single district.

This study extended our understanding of trust by revealing how trust functions across a district. To successfully respond to change initiatives (both voluntary and involuntary), educators must prioritize relationships and effective collaboration. In this study, trust played a significant role in a K-12 school district, especially during times of crisis. Specifically, our data analysis concluded that benevolence is a consistent and important facet of trust formation across all relationships. In addition, we found that having a shared purpose, which we suggest starts with shared values, makes trust less risky, while the absence of shared purpose negatively affects relationships. Further, we found that the increase of time within a relationship increases the amount of trust with our participants at all levels. Finally, the collective data suggests that having a sense of shared identity serves to accelerate the trust-building process. These findings will be useful for district and school leaders who want to more intentionally establish trusting relationships and may also inform the preparation, induction, and learning of district leaders.

Pre-K-12 school organizations play a sizable role in society. They prepare generations of children with an array of skills needed for adulthood, college, career, and beyond. Due to their importance, schools must function effectively through times of both calm and crisis. History has proven that school districts will continue to experience crises that impact staff, students, and families and, therefore, it is essential that trust serves as the foundational element for success.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Email

Dear X,

My name is Greg Myers and I am a student researcher in Lynch School of Education and Human Development at Boston College. I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study regarding how trust may aid the development of more productive and effective school districts. Specifically, I seek to learn what may be universal about trust formation as well as the nuances of how trust may function differently in varying positional roles and responsibilities across a school district. I also seek to understand how trust may influence the relationships and practices of educational leaders during a crisis.

Participants will be interviewed during a mutually agreed upon 60-minute time block. In order to be eligible to participate, you must be over 18 years old and a current employee of the XXXX Public Schools. Participating in this study is completely voluntary and you will always be free to stop your participation at any time. There is no compensation for participating in the study.

We hope to use our findings to better understand specific leadership behaviors for building and maintaining trusting relationships in schools and practices for supporting healthy school and district climates.. If you are interested in participating, please respond to this email so we can schedule an interview time. For more information, you can contact me at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

Sincerely,

Gregory Myers

Appendix B: Informed Consent

Informed Consent
Boston College, Lynch School of Education Informed Consent

Principal Investigator: Gregory Myers, Ed.D. Student, Boston College, Lynch School of Education. Email: xxxx@bc.edu

Introduction and Purpose: You are being asked to take part in a research study to explore the role of trust during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey seeks to capture practice and professional changes related to the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on the health system in the Northeast. You are invited to participate in the survey because you are a principal in a school. We hope to interview the superintendent as well as the principal. If you agree to participate and you are eligible, we will ask you to complete 1 interview of up to 60 minutes. You may be invited to participate in a follow-up interview as well.

Benefits and Risks: There are no expected benefits from taking part in this interview. You may feel gratified knowing that you helped further the scholarly work in this research area that may provide insight into how to create strong, trusting relationships across diverse groups of teachers and principals and foster strong collaborative relationships and healthy school climates. There are no known risks to taking part in this interview but participation might entail risks that are not known at this time. There could be questions that might cause discomfort or to which you would simply prefer to not respond. You may skip any questions.

Compensation: There is no compensation for participation.

Confidentiality: This Principal Investigator will exert all reasonable efforts to keep your responses and your identity confidential. We will not ask for your name and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password-protected file. In any sort of report we may publish or present, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Although interview questions will not prompt you directly to identify yourself, responses to certain demographic questions, such as your years of experience, the counties in which you practice and your race and ethnicity, could suggest your identity in some circumstances. Regardless, please know that the researchers will make no purposeful effort to discern your identity based on such information. The Institutional Review Board at Boston College and internal Boston College auditors may review the research records. State or federal laws or court orders may also require that information from research study records be released. Otherwise, the researchers will not release to others any information that could indicate your identity unless you give your permission, or unless they are legally required to do so.

Consent: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you choose not to take part in the study, it will not affect your relationships with the researchers or with Boston

College. Anyone can discontinue the survey at any time without any negative consequences and everyone has the option to withhold information if they so choose.

Questions: If you have any questions or concerns or would like to seek more information regarding the interview process or this research study you may contact Gregory Myers at xxxx@bc.edu. If you have any concerns about your treatment and rights as a person in this research study, you may contact: Director, Office for Research Protections, Boston College at (xxx) xxx-xxxx, or xxxx@bc.edu.

The Boston College Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved this study in August 2021.

If you agree to the statements above and agree to participate in this study, please press the "Consent Given" button (if virtual) or sign the paper form (if in-person). You may print or save a copy of this consent form to your computer or receive a copy of a paper consent (if in-person).

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

1. Please tell me about yourself; what is your current role and how long have you been in your role?

2. Can you tell me how you define trust?

    a. Can you share an example of what trust looks like in your work with [your principal...a teacher/teachers]?

3. Tell me about how, if at all, the pandemic crisis impacted your relationship with [your principal...a teacher/teachers] over the course of this past year?

    a. What has contributed to this change?
    b. As a result, how have your practices changed?

4. Consider particular behaviors that you think build strong relationships and how they play out in your workplace.

    a. Can you provide an example of an interaction that strengthened your relationship with [your principal...a teacher/teachers]?

5. Can you provide an example of an interaction that has challenged your relationship with [your principal...a teacher/teachers]?

6. Are there particular behaviors that you think build strong relationships more than others?

7. What's your role and how long have you been working with [the superintendent / teacher union leadership]?

8. How would you describe your working relationship with [the superintendent / teacher union leadership]?

    a. Tell me more / tell me what that looks like.

9. The focus of my work is about the role of trust in relationships and I'm curious about which aspects of trust matter to people.

    a. Can you tell me what trust means to you?

    b. Can you share an example of what trust looks like in your work with [the superintendent / teacher union leadership]?

10. Thinking about the kinds of behaviors or characteristics that you think build strong relationships…

    a. Can you think of an example of interactions that strengthened your relationship with [the superintendent / teacher union leadership]?

11. Sooner or later, every relationship has an interaction or interactions that challenge the relationship.

    a. What interactions have there been that have challenged the relationship? Please explain/describe.

12. What are the things that you've noticed [the superintendent / teacher union leadership] do that help in resolving issues?

13. The pandemic has been an incredible challenge for everyone in so many ways…

    a. Do you think the unique challenges of the pandemic have impacted your relationship with [the superintendent / teacher union leadership] over the course of this past year?
    b. How and/or why?
    c. Tell me what that change looks like. Have behaviors changed?

14. Describe the return-to-school MOA negotiation process.

    a. What was good about it?
    b. Where did you hit roadblocks? Why?

15. Is there anything else that you would like to add about anything we've talked about or possibly something we missed?

16. Is there anyone else who was involved in negotiating the return to school who might have thoughts to share on this topic?

17. After I go through my notes, may I follow up with a phone call if I have a question about something we've talked about?

Appendix D: Observation Protocol

Observation Protocol

Time		Setting	
Place		Observers Role	

Descriptive Notes	Reflections

Appendix F: *a priori* Codebook

A Priori Codebook

Facet	CODE	Definition	Examples from Empirical Research	Example Behaviors by Trustee **Trustee: A person who exhibits the behaviors to engender trust**
BENEVOLENCE	BEN	The demonstration of good will toward others with no gain to self; the trustee desires to do good on behalf of the trustor. (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999)	• Benevolent leaders demonstrate care, concern, and respect for others (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999); • They value the care of others over their own personal gain (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999); • A benevolent trustee will waive personal gain if it brings possible harm to the trusting party (Benna & Hambacher, 2020); • Mayer et al. (1995) describe the benevolent person as one who "...[places] others' interests above his or her own interests" (p. 300); • At the very least, the benevolent trustee does not knowingly or willingly do harm to another (Currall, 1992; Tschannen-Moran, 2004).	Demonstrates care by checking in to see how people are doing, asking about family members, etc. Accommodates others / grants requests whenever possible and with no gain to self; Treats others with dignity, never disrespectfully. Demonstrates positive intentions; Supports others; Fair; Expresses appreciation; Guards confidential information.

OPENNESS	OPEN	The willingness to show vulnerability to others by sharing information and influence. (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999)	• The characteristic of openness manifests itself through information-sharing, considering the ideas of others, and sharing influence over decision-making (Bijlsma & Koopman, 2003; Tschannen-Moran, 2015); • Tschannen-Moran (2014) notes that a "….collegial leadership style, in which a leader is perceived to be approachable and open to the ideas of others, has been linked to greater...trust in the [leader]" (p. 59); • Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2003) describe openness as the "….extent to which relevant information is shared; a process by which individuals make themselves vulnerable to others" (p.185).	Is approachable; Solicits and values the perspective of others; Engages others in collective problem-finding and problem-solving; Shares the purpose behind the trustee's decisions; Communicates consistently with others, sharing accurate, relevant, and complete information whenever possible; Engages in non-task related communication; Delegates important work to others; Shares authority;
RELIABILITY	REL	The consistent and predictable nature of a person's behavior. (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999)	• the trustee is consistent in their behavior and follows through on commitments (Bhattacharya et al., 1998; Tschannen-Moran, 2015); • "Reliability in following through on	Is dependable; Demonstrates commitment; Is diligent;

			decisions and promises...contributes in substantive ways to… trust [between agents]" (Tschannen-Moran, 2014 p. 60);
			• Behaving with consistency (aka in a predictable manner)
			  o Regarding staff feedback
			  o Regarding student discipline	

COMPETENCE	COMP	The appropriate skill set in a given context. (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999)	• Performing expected behaviors for the role such as
			  o Observing teachers
			  o Engaging in meetings about instruction
			  o Demonstrating strong knowledge about what was happening in classrooms across the school
			• The knowledge and skill needed for success in a particular domain is considered competence (Benna & Hambacher, 2020);
			• Trustors continually check to see whether the trustee's behavior indicates that he or she is competent to perform according to expectations in a
				Demonstrates expertise;
				
				Fosters a compelling collective vision, modeling desired and appropriate behaviors, coaching faculty to align their skills with the school vision,
				
				Manages organizational resources fairly and skillfully,
				
				Standing ready to mediate the inevitable conflicts that emerge as educators engage in the complex work of schooling

			particular context (Six, 2007).	
HONESTY	HON	Telling the truth, and acting in accordance with expressed values and with authenticity (Tschannen - Moran, 2015)	• Trustees demonstrate honesty not only by telling the truth, but by acting in accordance with expressed values and with authenticity (Tschannen -Moran, 2015); • Acting in accordance with expressed values • Willing to admit their own mistakes and not hiding behind formal authority	Accepts responsibility; admits mistakes; Tells the truth; Avoids manipulation; True to core values.