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PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK:
HOW STRUCTURE, CULTURE, AND AGENCY AFFECTS FEEDBACK

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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TITLE OF DISSERTATION: PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK: HOW STRUCTURE, CULTURE, AND AGENCY AFFECTS FEEDBACK

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ABSTRACT

Federal and state mandates have placed an added pressure on teachers to demonstrate "effective" instructional practices. These mandates also affect the role of a principal, as an evaluator of "effective" instructional strategies, and as an instructional leader who continuously needs to build teacher capacity to satisfy these mandates. Accountability mandates promise to improve students' academic performance but they have lacked professional development that would provide the support teachers and principals need to achieve success. Feedback is arguably a valuable mechanism to build teacher capacity and respond to accountability pressures, however, the implementation of feedback and its consequences for teacher's professional growth is not well understood.

In general, research on efforts to improve educational outcomes show that structural, cultural and agentive factors, *in interaction*, influence educational outcomes. Using this theoretical frame, this study examines the factors that support or challenge the feedback that occurs between principals and teachers in an educational context.

To understand feedback processes, a qualitative comparative case study was conducted at two school sites in a southern Californian district. To gather multiple perspectives on the implementation of feedback at each school, two principals and eight teachers were interviewed. The findings of this study suggest that principals' beliefs regarding feedback, prioritization and strategies used by the principal increase teachers' willingness to use feedback to improve their teaching. Teachers see the perceived benefits when: they have trust in their principal, feedback is tied to a planned goal, there is a clear understanding of the feedback process, and teachers have a growth mindset. Additionally, the findings suggest that context has an influence on feedback.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that when teachers and principals do not define feedback as professional development, there are implications for practice, although more research is warranted in this area.

This study deepens our understanding of what makes and does not make the implementation of feedback at a school site successful and exposes the factors that influence teachers' willingness to receive feedback from their principals. It offers significant implications for principals and policy makers who seek to enact strategies that can build teacher capacity.

DEDICATION

To my parents, Ruben and Angelica, without your unconditional love, support, and

guidance I would not be where I am today. I owe everything to you both. This is for you.

To my husband, Pierre, my inspiration for life's journey. I could not have made it without

you.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Feedback is not a new concept; in fact, much research has been done on feedback for several decades in a variety of organizational settings such as corporations, small businesses, nonprofit groups and in the field of education (Kim, 1984). In these organizational settings, the process of discussing and evaluating the performance of managers and employees alike is often referred to as feedback. This process generally involves a discussion of the individual's strengths and weaknesses, with the goal of helping the individual improve his or her overall performance (Harms & Roebuck, 2010).

Approximately 65 to 70 percent of organizations around the world utilize feedback either alone or in combination with some other intervention component (e.g., setting a performance goal, having an informal discussion), making performance feedback one of the most common intervention tools used by organizations to guide employee growth and development (Johnson, 2013). Overall, feedback has many different purposes in structural settings, and its overall purpose is contingent on the context that the feedback is provided in, such as in education, business, sports, etc. However, the overall purpose of feedback is consistent across all these different contexts - to align with the overall objectives, goals, and vision of an organization (Harms & Roebuck, 2010).

Feedback should encourage and inspire individuals to continue to perfect their craft by capitalizing on their strengths and addressing their weaknesses; this, in turn, produces high-performance teams and organizations. Feedback is what helps shape and guide an employee's understanding of what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior

within an organization (Harms & Roebuck, 2010). Overall, managers and leaders should value feedback because ultimately it is the employee's actions and behaviors that determine the culture of the organization. Without feedback, employees might not know if their actions or behaviors are meeting the company or organization's expectations or vision.

For the purposes of this study, feedback will be defined as information given by one individual to another about past behavior or, more specifically, information about the accuracy, adequacy, or correctness of decisions and actions (Cianci, Schaubroeck, & McGill, 2010). In the world of education (the contextual focus of this study), feedback, is provided often by lead teachers to classroom teachers, resource teachers to classroom teachers, teachers to other classroom teachers, and administrators to classroom teachers. This particular study will focus on feedback given from an administrator to a teacher, more specifically from a principal to a teacher.

Providing feedback can be helpful in improving accountability, increasing performance goals, etc., but research suggests that providing feedback is fraught with problems (Lizzio, Wilson, & MacKay, 2008). Some research attempting to account for the problems indicate that teachers resist or are unwilling to receive feedback because they do not want to be observed, and feel threatened and fearful that they will lose their job (Hubbard, Mehan, & Stein, 2006). Other research has pointed out that often educators who are charged with providing feedback are unwilling or uncertain as to how to provide feedback because they lack guidance in how best to offer appropriate support (Sleiman, 2015; Sleiman, 2015).

To date, the issues impacting feedback are not well understood. Given its importance, particularly in an educational context of increased accountability as illustrated by the increase in federal and state mandates, there is a demand for further research. This study takes up an examination of feedback and the factors that challenge and/or support its effectiveness.

Background to the Study

Federal and State Mandates

Federal and state mandates have placed an added pressure on teachers to demonstrate "effective" instructional practices. These mandates also affect the role of a principal, as an evaluator of "effective" instructional strategies, and as an instructional leader who continuously needs to build teacher capacity to satisfy these mandates. For the last several decades, education has seen an increase in both federal and state mandates. Each mandate (i.e. No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and Common Core State Standard Initiative) has come with the promise of increasing school and teacher accountability that in turn will improve student academic achievement nationwide but has been lacking in providing professional development support for implementation. In 2001, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, which promised to focus on increasing the academic achievement of all students in the United States. This act also promised to hold all schools accountable to the standards and expectations of the Annual Yearly Progress requirement (AYP) (U.S. Department of Education, 2002), which introduced, a percent proficiency goal on a state's standardized exams that was required to increase every year, with the ultimate goal of reaching 100% proficiency by 2014. The act set a clear expectation that all schools would identify,

adapt, adopt and implement effective practices to maximize academic achievement for all students, yet it did so without any additional financial support from the federal or state government systems (Colvin, Flannery, Sugai, & Monegan, 2008). The NCLB Act also failed to specify what "effective" instructional practices looked like, or what "effective" instructional strategies administrators needed to look for in the evaluation of school teachers. Without clear guidelines, school administrators find themselves in a difficult position, often unable to provide feedback that will be supportive of teacher's professional growth.

President Obama initiated Race to the Top in 2009 which was created to spark innovation in schools. Race to the Top grants offered additional federal funds to those whose plans qualified based on federal requirements. Districts who were awarded these funds were required to implement challenging learning standards and adopt a new evaluation system for principals and teachers, among other state qualification criteria (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). This new initiative, while arguably fiscally helpful, also imposed demands on educators without providing any additional knowledge as to how to meet those demands.

Also in 2009, several states adopted new rigorous standards to qualify for Race to the Top, because they realized that the nation was losing much ground to our international peers in both math and science (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012). With the U.S. performing poorly on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), coupled with encouragement from the federal government to adopt new rigorous standards, a new set of standards was created to replace antiquated ones in many states. The Common Core State Standards were

developed to give students college *and* career skills to prepare them for 21st century jobs (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2015). How these standards were responded to is left however to the interpretation of teachers and administrators, creating much instructional variation both in pedagogy and in the curriculum that is created to address them. These new mandates do not present clear best practices or even strategies for implementing these new standards in an effective way, leaving educators in a context of ambiguity and confusion.

It is critical during this period of great educational reform, that administrators and teachers both provide and receive actionable, meaningful, and effective feedback (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2014). Arguably, feedback could be valuable now as one mechanism to build teacher capacity and consequently impact students' academic achievement, but exactly how to provide feedback has arguably become even more complicated given this new legislation.

Building Teacher Capacity Through Feedback

Using feedback in an educational setting not only serves the purpose of addressing new federal and state mandates, but it also provides the opportunity for administrators to build teacher capacity. A school leader, or administrator, could be faced with a staff of varying academic backgrounds and levels of experience (Range, Scherz, Holt, & Young, 2011). Therefore, feedback enables school administrators to ensure all teachers are following the same guidelines. Feedback provides the opportunity to address marginal teaching (Range, Scherz, Holt, & Young, 2011) that can plague many schools and classrooms. It has the ability to transform schools into professional learning

communities that can improve teacher effectiveness and student performance (Range, Scherz, Holt, & Young, 2011).

Federal and state mandates have both called for quality teaching and teachers; however, educators, administrators, parents, and other stakeholders in the K-12 academic community have expressed concern regarding teacher effectiveness. Their concern stems from low student test scores on state standardized tests, schools across the nation not meeting the expectations of the Annual Yearly Progress requirement, and initial baseline data from standardized assessments on the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics (Brown Center on Education Policy at Brookings, 2015). In fact, teacher preparation programs have come under scrutiny partially because students are failing, due to inadequately prepared teachers (Greenwood & Maheady, 1997). According to research, 80 percent of schools and colleges that have teacher preparation programs fail only one percent or fewer of their teacher candidates, 15 percent of schools never fail any of their teacher candidates (Scheeler, Ruhl, & McAfee, 2004) raising concerns regarding the preparedness of teachers.

One commonly observed problem in the quality of teaching among new teachers is the lack of transfer of research-based effective teaching methods taught in credential programs into classroom practice. Inconsistent implementation of effective teaching practices could be accounted for if supervisors at school sites fail to provide professional development and feedback to teachers.

New teachers entering the field however are not the only ones who are struggling to keep up with the most progressive pedagogy, veteran teachers struggle as well. They too would benefit from feedback. In fact, any teacher attempting to try new teaching

methods could benefit from receiving regular feedback from supervisors or peers about how these new practices can support student learning (Scheeler, Ruhl, & McAfee, 2004). Performance feedback informs teachers of their progress and increases the accurate and sustained use of effective instructional strategies (Colvin, Flannery, Sugai, & Monegan, 2008). For the purposes of this study, veteran teachers will be defined as teachers who have tenured status within the district and new teachers will be defined as teachers who do not have tenured status, are probationary or year-to-year contract teachers.

In summary, with the ever-changing state and federal mandates, in particular, with the new set of standards such as the Common Core, it is essential now more than ever that feedback systems be studied and implemented in schools nationwide. Feedback could serve as a way of providing professional development and as an instrument to build teacher quality across a school.

Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study

Even though feedback is not a new concept, in organizational structures, or in the realm of the public or private education system, feedback should be an integral component in K-12 private and public education, but often it is not. And, although feedback has been studied in business management and education, there are still components of feedback that have not been addressed in the literature and thus are not well understood. Sociological concepts to describe the social construction of a phenomena, specifically, structure, culture, and agency (Hubbard, 1995; Bourdieu, 1977), could help us understand the way feedback is or is not implemented, used, and perceived at a school site. Several researchers have looked at these sociological concepts and their impact on educational phenomena, however, studies have never been conducted on

feedback through the lens of this theoretical frame. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to begin to address the gap in the literature on feedback that currently exists by using the theoretical frame of structure, culture, and, agency, *in interaction*, to understand the factors that support or challenge feedback in an educational context. This study focused on the interactions that occur between teachers and principals, within and across two schools in the same district. By comparing two schools with opposing demographic makeup, this allowed a more in depth look at the sociological factors that affect the feedback that is provided to teachers.

The study will address the following research questions:

1) What, if any feedback opportunities exist for teachers?

2) What are teacher's responses to feedback?

3) What structural, cultural, and agentive factors influence teachers' willingness to receive feedback?

   a. Structurally, are there policies and practices that influence that process?

   b. Culturally, are there specific contextual explanations?

   c. How do teacher's individual practices, behaviors or dispositions influence the feedback process?

4) From the perspective of teachers and principals, what are the implications of teacher's responses to feedback for the teacher's professional growth?

Study Overview

In the following chapters, I discuss the outcomes of this qualitative study. In chapter two, I review the literature on feedback through the lens of structure, culture, and

agency; more specifically what the influence of each sociological factor is in regards to teachers' willingness to take up or to not take up feedback. The literature also reviews what makes feedback more effective and what are the challenges for administrators that provide feedback.

In chapter three, I describe the study's methodology. I describe this qualitative comparative case study that employed interviews of eight teachers and two principals from two different school sites in the same district in a southern Californian city. Each school site is described in terms of the population of students that it serves. I also discuss how the data I collected was analyzed, and present the limitations to the study.

In chapter four, the profile of the school, the teachers and the principal are presented. I also share the findings of the study, organized by each research question. At the conclusion of each section, the two sites findings are compared. In total five themes emerged from the data: a) principals that believe in feedback prioritize it and provide feedback to their staff b) teachers are more willing to take up feedback when the feedback that teachers receive and teachers perception of what is their ideal way to receive feedback aligns, when the teacher trust in their principal, when the teachers have clarity around the feedback process at the school site, when the feedback is tied to a professional plan or goal, and if the teacher has a growth mindset c) context plays a role in the feedback received d) teachers and principals do not see feedback as professional development e) teachers saw feedback as beneficial and something that contributes to their growth.

The final chapter summarizes the findings of the study, presents a discussion on each finding, presents implications for practice, shares recommendations for future research and concludes with the overall limitations of the study.

Key Terms

Throughout the study, the reader may encounter terms with which they be unfamiliar with. Below you will find a list of key terms, organized alphabetically, with their definitions:

- Certificated Employees: school employees (full-time, part-time, temporary teachers, administrators) who are required by the state to hold a specific credential to be able to assume the roles and responsibilities of their title.

- English Learners: students who are learning English as a second language and have *not* demonstrated mastery of the English language as evident on their English proficiency exam.

- Feedback: information given by one individual to another about past behavior, or, more specifically, information about the accuracy, adequacy, or correctness of decisions and actions (Cianci, Schaubroeck, & McGill, 2010).

- Gifted and Talented Education (GATE): A label used to identify students that need supplemental, differentiated, challenging curriculum and instruction for students who are intellectually gifted or talented.

- Growth Mindset: a term coined by Carol Dweck, the growth mindset is borne of strong self-efficacy, which a belief in one's ability to grown, learn and succeed.

- Individualized Education Program (IEP): a legal written plan to meet the unique educational needs of a child with a disability who requires special education services from the general education program.

- Probationary Status: is a status that essentially explains that as a teacher you are on a trail run where you will be evaluated and if necessary terminated if you are not a fit for the school or profession.

- Standards: the standards define what students should know and be able to do in core academic subjects at each grade level. They can be used as a guiding form for teachers in planning instruction and assessment. Currently the standards adopted by California are the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

- Tenure Status: a career status which provides job security for teachers who have successfully completed a probationary period.

- Union: a teachers union is an organization of teaching professionals who work to protect their rights and interests. Unions engage in an activity called collective bargaining, which is a negotiation between employers and the union over a contract that determines working conditions, compensation as well as benefits.

Significance

This study has significance for administrators and teachers that are currently employed in a K-6 school or district. With the ever-changing state and federal mandates and a new set of standards, it is critical now more than ever that feedback systems are studied and implemented in schools across the nation. This study offers some practical implications for administrators and teachers alike, as to the sociological factors that challenge or support feedback at a school site. Being in a time, such as now, of great

educational reform, feedback needs to serve as a way of providing professional development and as instrument to build teacher quality across a school. The study offers key findings in relation to what supports feedback and what challenges at a school site. The findings of this study could assist administrators implement feedback systems at their school site.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Feedback Through the Lens of Structure, Culture, and Agency

Although the purpose of feedback may be clear to an organization or school, its implementation or use could be affected by various factors. In education, as in other fields, there are forces in a system that can construct a particular outcome. Research has shown that structural, cultural and agentive factors, each independently helped shape education and reproduce educational outcomes (Hubbard L. A., 1995). However, Hubbard (1995), argues that it is in fact, structural, cultural, and agentive factors, *in interaction,* that reproduce educational outcomes; it is impossible to isolate each factor and all elements; thus, their interrelatedness needs to be examined in order to understand the dynamics at play that contribute to an outcome.

In this chapter, I consider how the implementation or use of performance feedback in education could be affected by *the interaction* of macro and microstructures, the culture of a school, and the agency of a teacher and administrator. It is important to note that although this chapter is divided into the different factors that affect educational outcomes, it is critical for readers to understand that each component is influenced by the others, and that the formatting of this chapter does not suggest they are remote elements. Figure 1 demonstrates the relationship between these factors.

Figure 1. *The Relationship of Culture, Structure, and Agency to Feedback*
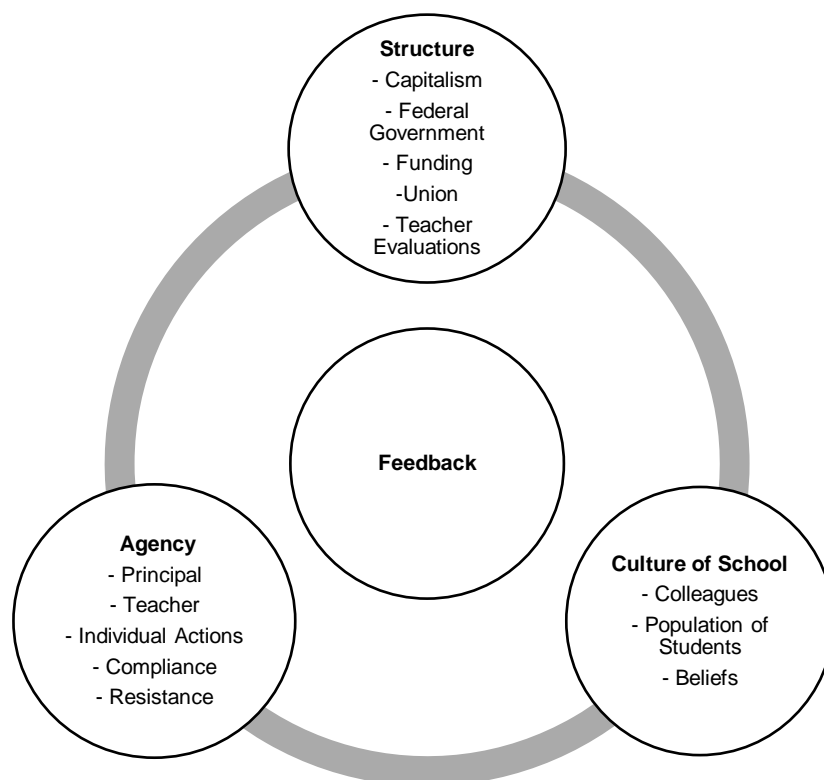
Figure 1. This figure shows the sociological concepts of structure, culture, and agency within the context of K-12 education, their interrelatedness, and their influence on feedback.

Structure

Structures are organizational arrangements in society that are determinant and emerge from the action of individuals. On the macro side, social structure is the system of socioeconomic stratification, social institutions, or, other patterned relations between large social groups (i.e. capitalism, educational requirements imposed by the government). On the micro side, social structure are the arrangements that shape the behavior of individuals within the social system (i.e. organizational arrangements within schools such as tracking and opportunities for feedback) (Marx, Engels, Harvey, & Moore, 2008). Macro and micro-structures are not dichotomies, as they continuously interact with one another and influence each other (Mehan, 1992). In the world of

education, there are many structures that confine and affect it, particularly capitalistic demands and economic incentives (Marx, Engels, Harvey, & Moore, 2008). For example, schools in the United States get more federal funding if they perform higher on a state's standardized test (Colvin, Flannery, Sugai, & Monegan, 2008). These organizational arrangements affect the financial resources a school has at its disposal. Additionally, it is a known fact that many private companies make significant profits by creating standardized tests to align with or respond to the demands of the Common Core State Standards, such as the company Smarter Balanced in California. These formal arrangements construct outcomes.

Although macrostructures have a big impact, microstructures also could affect individuals and or groups (Mehan, 1992; Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehan, 2002). Micro structures, such as scheduled feedback opportunities, could trigger different individual and group actions and responses depending on context and the individual agency of those involved.

The Structure of Feedback. Feedback, like other structures, can take on many different forms. If left to an individual or groups' interpretation, the structure can be viewed and acted upon in many different ways. It is important that school leaders are transparent about the process and effectively communicate the following about the structure: who is going to provide feedback and to whom, what is the purpose of feedback, how many times could an individual expect to receive it, how and when it will be delivered, and what goal it ultimately ties to (for a teacher). In this sense, administrators could reduce variations of responses, but this, of course, depends on the administrator's agency and beliefs regarding the importance of the process.

In most schools, feedback is often given from an administrator to a teacher during teacher evaluations; however, it could occur after any of these events: after classroom observations, after classroom walk-throughs or brief and frequent classroom visits (Range, Scherz, Holt, & Young, 2011), during peer reviews, and sometimes within the context of teaching (Roussin & Zimmerman, 2014).

Typically, feedback can be delivered through five main means: verbal, email, graphical, checklists, and guided self-reflection (Scheeler, Ruhl, & McAfee, 2004). Each school leader could adapt the method of delivery based on the technological and logistical needs of their teachers. Nevertheless, by communicating when feedback could occur and how it will be delivered, teachers have more clarity about the overall structure, and then possibly be more receptive to it.

School leaders also need to be conscientious as to of how clearly the purpose of feedback is communicated to staff, or to those individuals who are receiving feedback. Feedback is just one of many mechanisms that can be used for building teacher capacity. It is an opportunity for administrators to become instructional leaders to improve the skill set of a teacher, regardless of a teacher's level of experience (Range, Scherz, Holt, & Young, 2011). The ultimate goal or purpose of feedback is to contribute to the development of the school in different areas such as: improved pupil performances, improved educational processes (e.g., better methods and the improvement in pupil care and guidance) and an improved school functioning (e.g., an increase in collaboration or strengthening the cohesion in the school) (Vanhoof, Verhaeghe, Petegem, & Valcke, 2012). In essence, if the purpose of feedback is clearly defined, teachers, as well as staff members, will have a greater understanding of the reasoning behind the arrangement and

its purpose for being implemented, which could possibly lead to a higher level of receptiveness. However, it is important that a structure not be looked at in isolation, but rather how it is affected by the culture that exists in the school and the agency of the individuals involved.

Culture

Structures do not act independently to influence outcomes; it is the interaction with a school culture and the culture of the individuals involved that produce educational outcomes. For example, beliefs play a significant role in what is heard and what is taken up when individuals receive feedback. In other words, culture and structure each have influence over the other; it can be said that structure is the framework or the foundation for culture to be implemented, while culture can command how a structure operates.

According to Mehan (1992), culture is a system of meaning that mediates structure and human action. Culture could be seen on a macro-scale, such as the country's predominant beliefs, ideologies, language, religion, cuisine, art, dress, music, norms and other social meanings. Or on a micro-scale such as the culture of a school or the norms and customs of a population of staff and students of a particular school, specifically in this case their beliefs about the importance of giving and receiving feedback.

Culture is acquired through socialization; it is in this process that we learn our role in a particular structure and acquire the norms or expected behavior of the other members of society or of our group (Persell, 1990). Through different socialization techniques, we acquire a *habitus* (collective conscious), or the formal and informal customs or rules of a society (Nash, 1990). This *habitus*, that is culturally constructed,

typically reflects the dispositions of central structural elements (Nash, 1990), and

therefore members of a social group behave in ways that mirror those structural elements.

This is not to say that people who were exposed to similar social institutions have a

similar *habitus*, or act or think in a similar matter; in fact, according to Moore (2014),

habitus can explain intra-group variance. In general, culture is important to think about

when considering the structure of feedback, because the culture of a school and the

habitus of each individual can have a major impact on the way feedback is perceived and

thus have an effect on the implementation or use of feedback by the school. In fact,

research states that the culture of a school affects how teachers view professional

development and supervision of a school (Waldron & McLeskey, 2010).

     The Culture of a School. The culture of the school is in a sense dependent on the

agency of the administrator and of the staff or teachers. Everyone plays a significant role

in developing the culture in terms of its norms, beliefs, accepted behavior and values.

The way a particular structure such as feedback is received is contingent on the way the

structure has been implemented and how its purpose was defined. When principals

communicate that instructional supervision or feedback is necessary to the school, it

fosters the idea that learning is central to the organization (Range, Scherz, Holt, &

Young, 2011); it also could potentially communicate to the collective conscious that this

structure is meaningful. Therefore, both structural and cultural factors interact to

determine how individuals will respond to feedback.

     In order for the acceptance of feedback to be embedded into the culture of the

school, it is also dependent on the relationship between the teachers and the administrator

(Bryk & Schneider, 2003). It is important that feedback be perceived as authentic and

that the relationship of the principal and teachers be built on trust, openness, involvement and collaboration (Vanhoof, Verhaeghe, Petegem, & Valcke, 2012). Trust is an essential component in developing fruitful feedback because a teacher's perception of the feedback can be influenced by the person who is giving the feedback. If there is trust among the person giving the feedback and the person who is receiving it, the feedback tends to be viewed more positively. On the other hand, if there is little or no trust between the person giving the feedback and the individual receiving the feedback, it can be viewed negatively or can be ignored (Stone & Heen, 2014; à Campo, 1993; Bryk & Schneider, 2003).

Some research has pointed to the value of administrators and educators in building a collaborative structure of feedback, where multiple personnel at the school site offer feedback and the responsibility is not exclusive to the principal (Range, Scherz, Holt, & Young, 2011). School personnel who could be involved in this process could include instructional coaches, peer coaches, peer reviewers or even other colleagues. Research has shown that involving multiple staff members in this process increases the effectiveness of this supervision model (i.e., feedback) because it involves multiple people (Range, Scherz, Holt, & Young, 2011; Mahar & Strobert, 2010), and these individuals gain a similar understanding and appreciation of the mechanism. When there is a correlation between a collaborative culture and higher levels of trust and respect among colleagues, the result is improved professional satisfaction, improved collaboration among staff and administration, improved instructional practices and most importantly improved learning for all students (Waldron & McLeskey, 2010; Strahan, 2003; à Campo, 1993).

Individual Beliefs. In general, research has shown that teachers' beliefs play a key role in the success of efforts to improve education (Datnow & Hubbard, 2015). A teacher's belief or mindset also plays a role in the way he or she is going to internalize the feedback and whether he or she will put it into practice. Teachers who view feedback more fruitfully see themselves as ever evolving or ever growing. They value hard work and they attribute challenges and failures as ways to keep improving and growing. Thus, teachers who have this mindset, otherwise known as a "growth mindset" see feedback as valuable information on where they stand now and steps on what to work on next (Stone & Heen, 2014; Dweck, 2006). Additionally, teachers need to see feedback as an opportunity for reflective inquiry (Range, Scherz, Holt, & Young, 2011) so that this structure gains wider acceptance and deepens the learning. Furthermore, feedback can only be viewed positively by team members when teachers themselves are convinced of the possibilities it provides for improvement. Until then, genuine progress towards using this mechanism in a productive and worthwhile manner is limited (Vanhoof, Verhaeghe, Petegem, & Valcke, 2012).

In conclusion, when a school leader considers how the culture of a school (both the environment that is created and the beliefs of individuals) affects the way feedback is perceived, he or she could be more successful with implementing the feedback by productively building the kind of structures and organizational arrangements that would best support staff. However, leaders must also keep in mind that individual agency has a large influence or role in shaping the culture of the school and its organizational arrangements, or structures.

Agency

Although structural and cultural factors (including a group's *habitus)* may impose constraints on change, or theoretically support change, individuals are not by any means passive role players. We are active sense-makers who actively make choices in life (Mehan, 1992; Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehan, 2002; Park & Datnow, 2017) based on our aspirations, attitudes, ideologies, actions, and resistance (Hubbard L. A., 1995). According to Hewson (2010), agency could be defined as "the condition of activity rather than passivity. It refers to the experience of acting, doing things, making things happen, exerting power, being a subject of events, or controlling things" (p. 12).

Agency, or the actions taken by the individuals involved in the feedback process is critical to look at when trying to understand how feedback is given and how it is taken up. The individual actions of a principal and teacher can shape not only the way the structure of feedback has been arranged in a school, but how messages are received. The following two sections will look at principal agency and teacher agency and the role that both play in the use and implementation of feedback.

Principal Agency. Principals are important school leaders that impact student achievement (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2013). They have a variety of tools at their disposal that allow them to evaluate and impact teacher effectiveness. Among these tools are formative supervision and evaluation. Each of these tools serve very specific functions: teacher supervision is concerned with improving a teachers' instructional practice, while evaluation is simply rating teachers' job performance to determine their employment status (Range, Young, & Hvidston, 2013). When principals focus solely on evaluations based on student test scores or one-time

classroom observations they create a one-dimensional approach in rating teacher effectiveness. Consequently, this has shown to have limited impact on improving classroom instruction (Range, Scherz, Holt, & Young, 2011). Instead, I believe that principals need to exercise their agency in using formative supervision in conjunction with summative evaluation techniques in order to have an influence on teacher effectiveness.

Having a structure for feedback in place is not sufficient to propel teacher capacity forward. School leaders need to "foster a school culture that supports emotional resourcefulness and transparency so that cognitive capital (i.e., inner resources of a teacher) increases, and teachers are more willing to receive, interpret, and apply feedback to improve professional practice" (Roussin & Zimmerman, 2014). It is imperative that principal feedback not only acknowledge teacher strengths and identify areas for future growth, but that principals take it upon themselves to praise teachers for on-going continuous improvement efforts (Range, Young, & Hvidston, 2013). Equally as important to constructive feedback is the ability and willingness of principals to "ask questions which cause teachers to reflect on their own practice, with the intent of creating self-directed learners" (Range, Young, & Hvidston, 2013; Range, Finch, Young, & Hvidston, 2014). The recipient of the feedback must be given quality time to interpret, make meaning of the feedback and put the feedback into practice (Roussin & Zimmerman, 2014). Creating an environment that emphasizes reflection on feedback is contingent upon the principal's willingness to spend time establishing it. The actions a principal takes is critical in whether or not feedback is seen as a mechanism for reflection on one's practice or simply viewed as observational data; it is up to the principal to help

recipients of feedback to recognize the difference between the two and lead them to reflect on how their own practices could lead to growth.

Principals also need to differentiate feedback for each teacher. For example, some school districts assume that instructional "effectiveness" is the same from teacher to teacher (Range, Scherz, Holt, & Young, 2011). However, effectiveness can look different depending on the experience and skill level of a teacher. Feedback can be differentiated for teachers based on their level of experience and tailored to the unique needs of the teacher (Range, Finch, Young, & Hvidston, 2014) as well as the characteristics of the students they teach. Principals need to recognize novice, or beginning teachers as individuals who are mostly concerned with survival, yet could exhibit a strong sense of enthusiasm and seek affirmation from their principals (Range, Young, & Hvidston, 2013). Experienced teachers, on the other hand, need to be acknowledged as past the initial survival stage and now focused on impacting not only student learning, but also their own self-growth (Range, Young, & Hvidston, 2013). Successful principals understand that a one-size-fits-all approach to formative supervision does not consider individual learning styles and teacher skill levels in terms of pedagogy and content knowledge (Range, Finch, Young, & Hvidston, 2014). Principals need to understand that by identifying the skill sets of their teachers and the needs of the students in their teachers' classrooms, they will be better equipped to provide appropriate feedback based on teachers' background and levels of skills.

Supervision can take on many forms depending on its purpose, and some forms are more appropriate than others depending on the context. For example, developmental supervision or contextual supervision relies on the principal's ability to diagnose the

developmental levels of teachers and apply appropriate supervisory techniques to assist the specific needs of those teachers (Glickman, 1980). In other words, developmental supervision allows principals to differentiate feedback to their teaching staff based on the experience and level of skill of each teacher. According to Glickman (1980), initial contract teachers tend to require more direct principal supervision, whereas experienced teachers require more of a collaborative or non-directive approach so that these teachers have more autonomy in choosing and reaching their own classroom and personal goals. When feedback is differentially given to teachers, high-performing tenure teachers, as well as novice teachers, teachers feel challenged in their goals (Range, Finch, Young, & Hvidston, 2014). Although it may take time for principals to provide differentiated feedback (Range, Scherz, Holt, & Young, 2011), differentiation is critical because it responds to the developmental level of all teachers and elicits instructional change (Range, Finch, Young, & Hvidston, 2014).

In conclusion, principal agency – the actions that principals take to provide feedback - is critical in employing formative supervision rather than merely providing evaluative supervision. The agency of a principal seems crucial in providing opportunities for reflection of teachers around instructional practices and in differentiating to best meet the needs of each teacher at a particular school site.

Lack of Subject-Matter Knowledge and Financial Resources. Like teachers, there are varying levels of experience that administrators have within each district and school site. Each administrator's knowledge of subject and content knowledge differs significantly, and thus, each administrator is positioned differently in terms of his or her effectiveness in leading the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of

strong curricular programs that could lead to high levels of student learning (Carver, 2012). The school leaders of today must be prepared to do more than just manage schools, they must also lead instruction (Brazer & Bauer, 2013; Fink & Resnick, 2001). In a time of educational reform, where new state standards are being implemented, instructional leaders are needed now more than ever who have the knowledge, skill and disposition to be leaders of schools (Carver, 2012).

Displaying instructional leadership does not demand that school leaders are masters of every content or skill, rather it is "the effort to improve teaching and learning for PK-12 students by managing effectively, addressing the challenges of diversity, guiding teachers learning, and fostering organizational learning" (Brazer & Bauer, 2013). An administrator does not need to have absolute subject-matter knowledge across ever content, but rather rely on a model of distributive leadership in which school leaders could partner with department chairs, master teachers or instructional coaches to provide their staff with the resources and feedback necessary to propel them in their development.

Distributive leadership is the concept in which leadership does not stem from one authority and does not necessarily emanate from one leader but rather is dispersed in between and among staff within a school (Naicker & Mestry, 2011). Distributive leadership is dependent on the trust of the school leader to involve teacher leaders in a type of leadership that is emergent and fluid and not fixed and that is related to collaboratively working to problem solve (Naicker & Mestry, 2011). It is a model where principals are able to redistribute their authority and power in order to provide support to others. For example, a distributive model approach could work within schools where a leader might not have much experience in a particular grade or in his or her position;

thus, the leader would rely on other leaders within his or her team and their strengths and skills. Distributive leadership promotes interdependency, or a shared leadership responsibility (Naicker & Mestry, 2011); it depends on administrative agency in fostering the necessary organizational conditions and climate for it to flourish.

Another component which might hinder new administrators or administrators who lack experience or training in providing feedback to implement this structure is the financial capital needed to train and educate staff in providing feedback. One possible solution for this would be for administrators to prioritize their budget for the school year. In a time where there are decentralized school districts, administrators have the flexibility to assign what their budget could be used for. Although there are many areas that a school leader could allocate funds, it is important to note that administrators have the capability to prioritize professional development in the areas of implementing feedback, if they choose to do so for the betterment of their staff.

All in all, there are many determinants to consider in implementing a structure such as feedback within a school site. However, with every obstacle are possible strategies that administrators could take up, including but not limited to: implementing a distributive leadership model within the school and prioritizing professional development within a school budget.

Teacher Agency. According to a growing body of research, classroom teachers have the greatest impact on increasing student achievement and making a significant difference in closing the achievement gap between low and high performing students (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2003; Darling Hammond, 2006). Teachers have the ability to create classroom environments where all students are actively engaged and are

involved in critical thinking skills. However, not all teachers initially come into the classroom knowing how to engage students or with the skills necessary to effectively teach. Teachers need to rely on colleagues, specifically administrators, to help improve their instructional skills. Yet, this means that teachers must seek out help and/or be willing to be receptive when colleagues, administrators or other school personnel offer feedback.

In order for feedback to be effective, teachers will need to view feedback as an opportunity for reflection. Feedback on its own, without the willingness of a teacher to engage in systematic reflection, is likely to not have much of an impact (Stone & Heen, 2014). Teachers need to be open to the possibility of growth (Vanhoof, Verhaeghe, Petegem, & Valcke, 2012), and understand that teaching is a skill that can be continuously developed. Educators must be willing to open their inner resources (e.g., creativity, intelligence, confidence, courage, or passion), when reflecting before, during and after their instructional practice (Roussin & Zimmerman, 2014). Teachers must use their individual agency to set aside time for reflection, as reflection is not automatically built into the school day. Individuals, groups, and organizations are only able to learn if they are prepared to reflect on their own functioning within the organization (Vanhoof, Verhaeghe, Petegem, & Valcke, 2012). If teachers do not see the correlation between feedback and reflection on their own practice, feedback will not be implemented in an effective way, and thus its use will be ineffective.

In brief, teachers must take up their own individual agency to seek out feedback and take action to reflect on it in order to improve their instructional practice. They must

also be open and willing to engage in reflective practices in order to develop their own craft and overall instructional practices.

Influential Factors Outside the School

Although the employment of feedback in schools would be beneficial, there are many factors outside the school itself that could deter and affect its implementation. As one of the most powerful voices in education politics, teacher unions typically have not supported feedback or different teacher evaluation systems for a multitude of reasons (Pham & Heinemann, 2014; Simon, 2012). They argue that administrators, particularly building-level administrators and administrators with minimal experience in administrative roles, may lack subject matter knowledge in order to adequately provide teachers the feedback that would help their professional growth. Furthermore, district resources available for professional development opportunities often hinder principals from offering much needed support to their staff. More recently several school districts have worked with teacher unions to overcome the challenges (i.e., lack of training, lack of subject matter knowledge) that districts face in implementing feedback at their school sites.

For many years, teacher evaluation systems have both been criticized and lauded by teacher unions. In many schools and districts alike, it is not a common practice for teachers to provide their input in the creation of teacher evaluation systems, including the use of feedback; thus, these structures have suffered resistance and pushback (Pham & Heinemann, 2014). Teacher evaluation systems have also not been widely embraced due to their ties to student standardized assessments (Simon, 2012), and the lack of constructive feedback given in evaluation meetings (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Hubbard,

Mehan, & Stein, 2006; Fink & Resnick, 2001). However, two case studies demonstrate how a partnership between school administrators and teacher unions could provide a possible solution to the pushback that is typically experienced. These partnerships have collaboratively created teacher evaluation systems that both teachers, administrators, and districts could value and potentially foster a culture of growth within their schools (Pham & Heinemann, 2014; Simon, 2012).

Montgomery County, a county in Maryland, designed and adopted a teacher evaluation system through the collaboration of its teacher's union and district administrators. The main philosophy of the newly created evaluation system was centered around that belief that teaching is an incredibly complex profession that is multifaceted. Thus, the focus of teacher evaluation was centered around "professional growth – the nurturing of good teaching and not the sorting and ranking of the teacher workforce" (Simon, 2012). The district built a culture focused on teaching and learning, where teachers in the district would receive feedback from multiple personnel including department chairs, knowledgeable teachers, and trained administrators. It built its model around the concept that the evaluation process should be differentiated on the basis of what each teacher needs, not a one-size-fits-all process that wasted time and added unnecessary expenses (Simon, 2012).

Similarly, Miami-Dade County, in Florida, built a collaboration between its teacher union and administrators to change its teacher evaluation systems. The new evaluation system calls for a focus on student achievement and teacher reflection through professional growth (Pham & Heinemann, 2014). Like Montgomery County, Miami-Dade County implemented an evaluation system that provided feedback from multiple

individuals, such as administrators and peer reviewers. Feedback was provided around a particular focus or goal the teacher selected with the help of a peer reviewer, and informal coaching was provided to the teacher to propel his or her area of growth (Pham & Heinemann, 2014).

Although these two cases are unique in the collaboration between a district and a teacher union, they demonstrate that there are possible solutions to the pushback often seen by districts and administrators when it comes to implementing feedback in schools by teacher unions. Each of the two counties established a culture in which feedback and evaluation systems were valued because they were tied to professional growth. It took administrative and teacher agency to help foster this culture in which feedback was widely accepted and celebrated.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

The implementation or use of feedback is not as simple as it may seem. Its use and implementation could be potentially affected through the *interaction* of cultural, structural and agentive factors. If the structure of feedback is clearly defined and its purpose is laid out, principals could theoretically expect fewer variations in responses to feedback and higher levels of reception. However, school leaders should not only rely on defining the structure of feedback for the school in order for it to be effective, they also need to be cognizant of the culture of a school, and the cultural beliefs of teachers. School leaders also need to be aware that teacher and principal agency play a role in how feedback is received and perceived amongst staff. How principals use formative rather than evaluative supervision, and the actions they take to prove opportunities for reflection and how they differentiate feedback based on the needs of the teachers will also play a

role. Teacher agency also determines how well feedback is received; teachers need to see feedback as a mechanism for professional growth. They also need to be willing to reflect on instructional practices in order for feedback to be more effective. Overall, establishing feedback as a mechanism for building teacher capacity at a school is not enough; school leaders and teachers alike need to take a closer look at how agency, culture and structure, *in interaction*, have a role in the way this instructional improvement-oriented strategy is received. By looking at these factors in relation to feedback, feedback could be more fruitful in advancing institutional priorities, such as student achievement.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodology used to study the supports and challenges in teacher's willingness to take up feedback. This next chapter will also include a detailed look into how each site and participant was selected, a detailed look into coding, and the limitations to the study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter will describe the research methods that were used to address the research questions of this study and the rationale behind their use. It will describe how the research site and participants were selected, as well as the criteria that was used to select each principal and teacher participant. In addition, this chapter will explain how the data that came out of the study was collected and analyzed. Finally, the limitations and delimitations of the study will be discussed and the significance of this study will be examined.

Overview and Rationale

This research study was a qualitative comparative case study that involved two schools in an elementary district in southern California. According to Patton (2002), qualitative methods facilitate the study of issues in depth and in detail; they typically produce a wealth of detailed information about a much smaller number of people and cases, which is true of this study that employed two schools, or cases, in total. In addition, qualitative designs are naturalistic to the extent that the research takes place in real world settings and the researcher does not try to manipulate "the phenomena of interest" (Patton, 2002, p. 39). The study was naturalistic since the research was conducted at the participants' primary place of work and no intervention was ever introduced.

Qualitative case studies are a type of qualitative research design that "investigate a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (Merriam &

Tisdell, 2016, pp. 37-38). Case study is a design particularly suited to situations in which it is impossible to separate the phenomenon's variables from their context. In this study, I used a comparative case study in order to understand the effects that demographics, and/or context, has on facilitating or challenging teachers' professional growth as it relates to the feedback that teachers receive (Yin, 2010), since I compared two schools (or cases) that have opposing demographics and different school contexts, I describe these differences below.

Research Questions. As described previously, this study addressed the following research questions:

1) What, if any feedback opportunities exist for teachers?

2) What are teacher's responses to feedback?

3) What structural, cultural, and agentive factors influence teachers' willingness to receive feedback?

   a. Structurally, are there policies and practices that influence that process?

   b. Culturally, are there specific contextual explanations?

   c. How do teacher's individual practices, behaviors or dispositions influence the feedback process?

4) From the perspective of teachers and principals, what are the implications of teacher's responses to feedback for the teacher's professional growth?

Sample

Research Sites. This study was conducted at two different school sites in an elementary district in southern California (the district in which I am currently employed).

This district currently serves 46 schools. Twenty-two of those schools are located west of a major freeway, and the other 24 schools are located east of that major freeway. This interstate divides the boundaries of the district into west and east. Schools that are east of the major freeway serve predominantly more affluent neighborhoods, while schools west of the freeway serve low-socio economic areas. For example, schools on the east side typically are newer schools (most built from 1990 and on) that serve students in the neighborhood whose family would be considered middle to upper middle class, they typically have a higher percentage of veteran teachers, and less diversity among students. Schools on the west side are older schools (most built from 1950-1989) and serve students in the neighborhood whose students typically qualify to receive free and reduced lunch (who would be considered low socioeconomic), typically have a higher percentage of newer teachers, and serve a widely diverse student population.

I employed purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002; Glesne, 2006) as I selected one school that is east of the freeway and one school that is west of the freeway. Selecting one school on the east and on the west, allowed me to look at the sociological factors that affect school feedback, such as the length of time teachers have taught (veteran versus new teachers), demographic differences (more affluent versus poor student population), and the cultural structural, and agentive conditions that exist within each school's context.

This district and its schools were *purposively* selected as they are outliers, in the sense that it is a district in which all the administrators within the district are expected by the superintendent to provide feedback to their teachers, thus attempting to acquire "information rich" cases (Merriam, 2009, pp. 77-79; Patton, 2002). Selecting an outlier,

such as this district provided more of a chance to examine feedback opportunities at the two school sites that were selected. These school sites were also selected partially on the bases of convenience, as I work full time and the best option would be to conveniently seek out participants from my own district via email request; however, "such a selection process is not unusual as time and money constraints often limit research design" (Merriam, 2009, p. 79).

Access to each school site was not an issue, as I am currently an administrator working in the same district and know most of the administrators. Obtaining access to the teachers was also not an issue on multiple ends, for starters, administrators in our district are expected to grant access to researchers as many of the administrators within the district are in the process of completing their doctoral degrees and therefore understand the importance of gaining access to a school site in order to conduct research. Secondly, access to teachers was not a problem as I have the flexibility in my schedule to leave my campus to go to other campuses within the district at any time.

Participant Selection. To understand how feedback is taken up at each of the participant's schools, I focused my research on the interaction between principals and teachers. I included the principal from each school site as one of my participants. The teacher participants were selected by employing purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002; Glesne, 2006) to select one veteran teacher and one new teacher at each site. These teachers were randomly selected from a seniority list that I have access to because I am an administrator within the district. In addition, I used maximum variation sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) so that I could "pick a wide range of cases to get variation on dimensions of interest" (Patton, 2015, p 109), such as selecting teachers who do and do

not take up feedback. Teachers who do take up feedback are those teachers who take the feedback that is provided to them and use it to change or modify their instructional practices. Teachers who do not take up the feedback are those teachers who do not make changes or modifications in their instructional practices based on the feedback that they receive. In order to best capture the school's intentions for the implementation of feedback, I sought the recommendations of the principal at each site in helping me select: 3-5 teachers who, from the perspective of the principal, do not take up feedback and 3-5 teachers, who from the perspective of the principal, do take up feedback. Each of the principals were able to provide me a list with 3-5 teacher's names that were categorized in either category. From there I randomly selected one teacher that does not take up feedback and one that does take up feedback (from each site), for a total of 4 teacher participants (from each school site). In total I had 10 participants, 2 principals (one from each school site), 8 teachers (four from each school site). By interviewing principals and teachers, I gathered multiple perspectives (Yin, 2010), which supports gathering "information rich" cases. Figure 2, summarizes the total number of participants that were included in this study.

Figure 2. *Participant Selection*
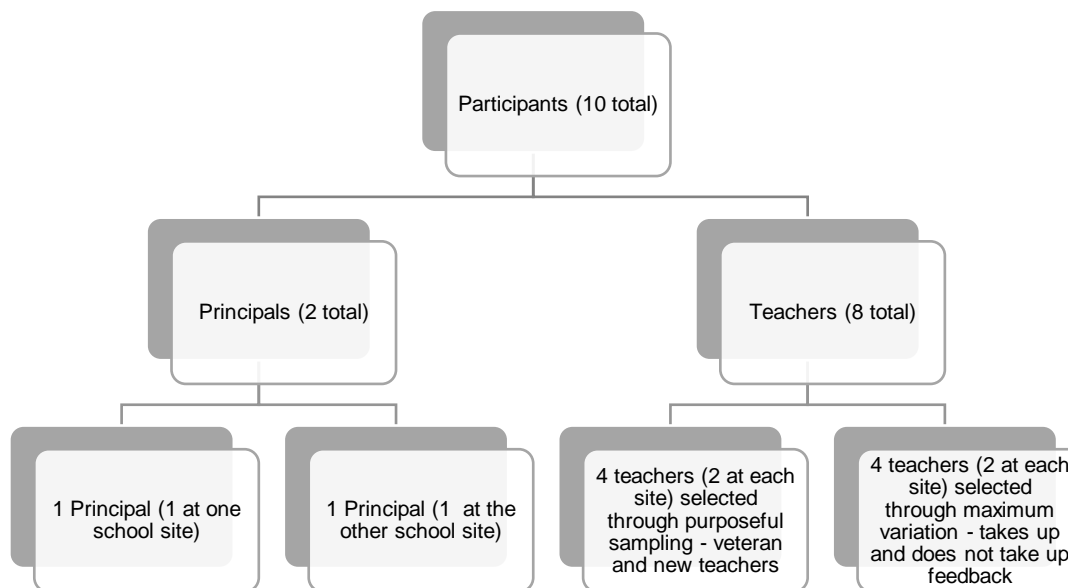
Figure 2. In this figure you could see how the ten participants were selected for this study. Two principals were selected, one from each school site and a total of eight teachers were selected, four from each school site.

Since I was interested in exploring what factors have an influence on teacher's receptivity to feedback from principals, each of the teacher participants met the following criteria:

- Currently a certificated teacher

- Does not work at my school site

- Is not a substitute

- Is employed full time

- Is assigned one classroom in grades K-6

Each of the principal participants met the following criteria:

- Currently a certificated administrator

- Does not work at my school site

- Is not an interim principal

- Is employed full time

- Is assigned to one school site

The participants and sites were kept confidential and protected through the use of pseudonyms. Each participant was given a Research Participant Consent Form (See Appendix C) that he/she signed prior to beginning the study. The Research Participant Consent Form detailed the purpose the research study, what the participant was asked to do, any foreseeable risks or discomforts, benefits, confidentiality, compensation, voluntary nature of the research and the researchers contact information.

International Review Board. Prior to beginning the study, I sought the approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of San Diego. Institutional Review Boards are charged with the duty to make sure research participants are aware of both potential risks as well as benefits from taking part in the study (Glesne, 2006, p.42). Seeking the approval of the IRB will be instrumental in making sure that the study minimizes any harm to participants. Approval for the study was granted within a week of the original submission.

Data Collection

The research methodology that was used was qualitative and the primary research method that was used was in depth interviews. Qualitative interviewing was the primary data collection procedure that was employed throughout the study because the purpose of interviewing is to allow researchers to enter into the other person's perspective or in other words, to find out things that cannot be directly observed (Patton, 2002). I employed the standardized open-ended interview approach in which a set of interview questions was predetermined (See Appendix A and B for Interview Guides). I selected this type of

interview because variation among interviewers can be minimized, the interview would be highly focused, the responses of interviewees would be easy to compare, and the exact instrument used would be available for inspection (Patton, 2002, p. 346). However, because of the open-ended nature of the questions, individual variation and support for the serendipitous nature of qualitative research (Patton, 2002) would permit the respondent to help construct their own meaning of the issues affecting feedback – issues that may not have been taken into account in my original guide. Open-ended questions enabled me to understand and capture the points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of questionnaire categories, as much quantitative research is conducted (Patton, 2002).

It should be noted that the interview questions were piloted with a group of colleagues to assist me with this method of investigation. Prior to the interview, a pre-interview was conducted with each participant to review and answer any questions that the participant had regarding the research project. These pre-interviews lasted approximately 5-10 minutes each and were conducted in person, for the convenience of the participant and the researcher.

One in-depth interview was conducted with each participant that lasted approximately 60 minutes. Each of these interviews were conducted in person at the school site of each participant for all participants, but two (who choose to meet at a coffee shop instead), for the convenience of the participant and because conducting the research at the school site aids with participants feeling more at ease since they are in a setting that is known to them (Glesne, 2006).

Finally, a post-interview was scheduled to debrief with the participant and share the data collected, so that the researcher and the subjects had an opportunity to check the accuracy of the data, or member check (Glesne, 2006), and make any corrections to the data that might be needed. The post interview lasted approximately 10 minutes per participant, and was conducted over the phone, for the convenience of the participant and the researcher.

I used my iPad to record all interview responses via Notability, a software program that allowed me to text, draw, write, insert images and record sound through the same program. As each interview took place, I made notes of the times of the recording to be able to go back and facilitate coding and additional analysis. Originally, I was going to transcribe all of the interviews, however, demands at work increased and did not have the time, as I thought I would to transcribe the interviews myself. Therefore, I sent the recordings to Rev.com to be transcribed as soon as each interview was completed. I selected Rev.com based on the recommendations of colleagues and reviews I had read online citing their high level of accuracy. As soon as each interviews transcription was emailed back to me, I set aside 1-2 hours to check the accuracy of the transcription by listening back to the audio and comparing the words that were typed out to the original recording.

Data Analysis

Reflective analytic memos helped with my analysis (Patton, 2002). After each interview, I set approximately 1-2 hours aside to listen back to each interview and make any analytic notes that were appropriate and helpful during the review process. Patton (2002) points out that one should immerse oneself in the data without any distractions

and truly try to see the bigger picture in the midst of all the data, and begin to see any major themes that could begin to emerge. The purposes of analytic memo writing is to document and reflect on the data being gathered, coding processes and code choices; how the process of inquiry is taking shape and any emergent patterns that could possibly lead to a theme (Saldaña, 2013).

Before the study, I created preliminary codes based on my conceptual frame (structure, culture, agency), the interview questions and the literature that has been reviewed on the topic (Glesne, 2006, p. 150). However, I found that the preliminary codes did not assist in developing a more specific focused look through the gathered data, as I had originally planned. In fact, some of the codes that I had thought would be used, such as "punitive feedback," did not align with any of the interviews. During the analysis, it was important that I put like-minded pieces together into data clumps, or to create an organizational framework. In my first-cycle coding (Saldaña, 2013), I used what Saldana terms "eclectic coding" which met the methodological needs of my study. I also used In Vivo and descriptive coding as well (Saldaña, 2013), in order to keep the authentic language and perspectives of my participants.   During my second-cycle coding, I used axial coding, to group my open codes (Saldaña, 2013). I also put together a code book (Saldaña, 2013, p. 25) to define each code that emerged and also for the purposes of synthesize codes, as needed. I created a "think display" as described by Miles & Huberman (1994) to help me map the codes and understand the relationships between different codes and categories. In fact, three separate "think displays" were created, one for each school site, and another when comparing the school sites. I experimented with different ways to display the data and finally selected several tables to help me see the

data in a more condensed manner (Glesne, 2006, p. 156). I employed content analysis, or thematic analysis, to review core consistencies and meanings, such as themes or patterns that emerged from the overall data (Patton, 2002; Glesne, 2006), once the data was categorized and appropriately coded.

Once connections or bigger themes began to emerge, I scheduled my post-interview with each participant in order to member check (Glesne, 2006), and make sure that I conveyed my themes appropriately based on the interview data that I gathered. I also scheduled time ahead to call or visit my participants if in case there was something that the iPad did not pick up while recording in order to increase the accuracy of my data, however, this ended up not being needed at all, since the iPad was able to pick up all of the audio from the interviews, and I was able to hear the full audio of each interview, prior to submitting it to be transcribed to Rev.com.

Throughout my study, I made it a point to debrief with colleagues to check the validity of my study, and to ensure that I was truly examining the accuracy of my conclusions (Wolcott, 1994). I also relied on peer debriefing to challenge my subjectivity or bias that could have possibly skewed, shaped, or transformed the conclusions of my data (Peshkin, 1988).

My case analysis had two distinct stages – the within-case analysis and the cross-case analysis. For the within-case analysis, each case was first treated as a comprehensive case in and of itself that was organized and guided by the research questions of this study. Once the analysis of each case was completed, cross-case analysis began where I sought to build abstractions across the cases (Merriam & Tisdell,

2016), identifying similar themes and also differences. The cross-case analysis was organized and guided by the research questions of the study.

Positionality. I am aware that I am an "indigenous-insider" (Banks, 2006) to the participants of this study; I have been in the education sector with over nine years of experience working in the district in which the participants are also employed in. Being in this district has allowed me to get to know many of the other administrators and teachers of this district, which can bring potential limitations to this study. Therefore, in order to help mitigate this potential limitation to this study, I made sure to introduce myself as a researcher at the University of San Diego to all of the participants, and did not bring up my association with the district or made any mention to working within in any school site within the district.

I also understand that I my current leadership role, where I provide feedback to other teachers at my school and so the position I hold, and the duties I perform in my everyday job had an influence in selecting and studying the research questions in this qualitative comparative case study. However, my positionality can be viewed as a strength as I know this district well and thus my questions were well-informed, including knowing what questions to ask and not to ask. This could be an advantage over others who might not know the ins and outs of the district in respect to feedback.

As an indigenous-insider, I am aware that I could unintentionally have glanced over critical pieces in the data and the interviews. I am immersed in the culture of my district, in feedback protocols, and the overall field of education thus, I constantly had to interrogate my data to challenge my own subjectivity. It was important that throughout the study I was not only cognizant of my positionality, but that I took time to debrief with

my colleagues along the way to make sure I was addressing my biases, and to ensure that I was not missing key details from my data.

Limitations

Given my professional background, as well as the nature of this study itself, this research study has its limitations. Since I examined the data through the eyes of a former teacher and current administrator, I know it was difficult for me to be completely objective in the collection of my data, its analysis, and interpretation. However, it was important, as stated before that I was cognizant of my positionality and biases throughout the study (Peshkin, 1998; Glesne, 2006; Patton, 2002).

This study, of course, was in the end, a study of *eight* teachers, *two* principals, in *two* schools, in *one* district in *one* state and *one* city. Thus, the study's findings will, in no way be generalizable in the traditional scientific sense. The generalizability problem is aggravated further by the fact that the school district, schools, teachers and principals are very much used to giving and receiving feedback, making them, in a sense, an outlier in comparison to many school districts across the country. However, outliers can frequently tell us much about a phenomenon being studied, and thus this is what makes this study potentially important (Donmoyer, 2008).

This study – and, in fact, most qualitative studies with small samples – can never answer the question, "What is typical?" or "What can be applied in general?" In fact, Donmoyer (2008), states that few social scientists would disagree with the proposition that social phenomenon are too complex for social science to provide definitive answers to practical problems in fields such as education; thus, all research findings are only tentative.

However, transferability is an important component to this study as the findings from this setting could be generalized to another setting, if similar (Donmoyer, 2008). Thus, this study represents an important first step in identifying the sociological factors (i.e. structure, culture, agency) that affect school feedback.

Delimitations

Unavoidably, delimitations exist in this study. As stated above, this study was delimited to eight teachers and two principals in one district, in one city and one state of one country. Although the district has 46 total schools, only two were selected for this study, leaving out the other 44 schools. Within the district, administrators are not the only individuals that provide feedback to teachers, instructional coaches and other teachers provide feedback as well. However, for this study they were not interviewed, as the study is focusing on gaining the perspective of principals and teachers, since most districts and schools across the country do not have instructional coaches, and most schools also do not have associate principals. The study was also delimited to credentialed teachers who have been assigned one classroom, and does not include student teachers, substitute teachers, teachers who are not employed full time, or teachers on special assignment. This was done because often teachers who are not employed full time or are on special assignment do not receive feedback from their principals. Furthermore, this study was delimited to credentialed administrators, and principals who are employed full time and were not interim principals, district building administrators, executive directors, principals in residence, or principals assigned to more than one school. This was done because principals who are assigned to more than one school or

are not assigned to one site do not provide feedback to teachers, as it often is not one of their roles and responsibilities.

Significance

Despite the limitations and the delimitations mentioned above, it is important to note that investigating how sociological factors (i.e. structure, culture, agency) have an influence on teachers' willingness to receive feedback could potentially lead to fruitful outcomes. We know that currently our education system is in a time of great educational reform, where federal and state mandates have placed an added pressure on teachers to demonstrate "effective" instructional practices and for principals to not only build teacher capacity to satisfy these mandates but to evaluate "effective" instructional strategies (U.S. Department of Education, 2002; U.S. Department of Education, 2015). We also know that nationwide, our students are losing much ground to our international peers in both math and science (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012), and that the achievement gap between white and African American students only continues to grow (Murphy, 2010). Furthermore, there are new standards (Common Core Standards Initiative, 2015) that have been adopted by most states that are left to the interpretation of teachers and administrators that creates much variation in the way they are taught.

Additionally, we know that using feedback in an educational setting not only serves the purpose of addressing new federal and state mandates, but it also provides the opportunity for administrators to build teacher capacity (Range, Scherz, Holt, & Young, 2011). New teachers entering the field are not the only ones who would benefit from feedback. In fact, any teacher attempting to try new teaching methods must receive regular feedback from supervisors or peers about how these new practices are affecting

student learning (Scheeler, Ruhl, & McAfee, 2004). Performance feedback informs teachers of their progress and increases the accurate and sustained use of effective instructional strategies (Colvin, Flannery, Sugai, & Monegan, 2008).

In summary, with the ever-changing state and federal mandates, in particular, with the new set of standards such as the Common Core, it is essential now more than ever that feedback systems be studied and implemented in schools nationwide. Feedback could serve as a way of providing professional development and as an instrument to build teacher quality across a school and arguably, across a district.

While feedback has been systematically studied in organizational structures, sociological concepts or factors such as structure, culture and agency, have not been studied in relation to their influence in the way that teachers' implement, use and perceive feedback at a school site. This study then has the potential to help us better understand what makes feedback more effective. Furthermore, this study could add to a growing body of literature around feedback in educational settings. Lastly, this study may also influence statewide and local administrative decision-making within K-6 public schools.

In the following chapter, I present the profile of the school district, each school site, and the profiles of the participants of the study. Pseudonyms will be used throughout chapter four for the school district, each of the two school sites, and the research participants (both principals and the eight teachers). The chapter will conclude with the findings of the study. The findings will be presented and organized around the four research questions of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that support or challenge feedback given to teachers by administrators, in an educational context to support their professional growth. By using the theoretical frame of structure, culture and agency, and examining *their interaction and their effects*, this study provides new insights into how critical it is for teachers to view feedback as professional development. This study specifically looked at the interactions that occur between teachers and principals, within and across two schools in the same district. The first three chapters of this dissertation offer an introduction to the problem of providing feedback to teachers in education, a review of the literature on the subject of feedback through the lens of structure, culture, and agency, and the methodological design that was utilized for this study. This chapter will now present the findings that emerged from an analysis of the data collected.

A qualitative comparative case study was conducted with data collected from interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Pseudonyms for the school district, school sites, principals, and teachers were created to ensure that all participants' identities were kept private. There were a total of 10 participants in this study, 8 teachers and 2 principals. Maximum variation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) was used to select 4 teachers, 2 who from the perspective of the principal do not take feedback well (1 from each school site), and 2 who from the perspective of the principal that does take feedback well (1 from each school site). The other 4 teachers were selected purposively, 2 veteran teachers were randomly selected (1 from each school site), and 2 new teachers were randomly selected

(1 from each school site). The findings for each case study, or in other words each school site, will be presented separate from one another within this chapter. First, the background of each case will be presented, followed by the case study's findings in relation to the research question (Yin, 2016). Finally, a cross-case analysis will be presented following the presentation of the findings for each case study. All findings presented served to answer the following research questions for this study:

1) What if any, feedback opportunities exist for teachers?

2) What are teacher's responses to feedback?

3) What structural, cultural, and agentive factors influence teachers' willingness to receive feedback?

    a. Structurally, are there policies and practices that influence that process?

    b. Culturally, are there specific contextual explanations?

    c. How do teacher's individual practices, behaviors or dispositions influence the feedback process?

4) From the perspective of teachers and principals, what are the implications of teacher's responses to feedback for the teacher's professional growth?

Sample Description

Purposive samples were selected from Modesto Union School District, a K-6 public school district in which all the administrators are expected by the superintendent to provide feedback to their teachers. The school district is considered an outlier when considering other districts because of the primary attention it gives to the importance of feedback. Thus, this district was selected to improve the opportunities to examine

feedback. This section describes the district, each case (each school), its principal, and teachers.

Modesto Union School District Profile

Modesto Union School District is a K-6 district located in Southern California. The district currently serves 46 schools: out of those 46 schools 22 of those schools are located west of a major freeway, and the other 24 schools are located east of the major freeway. This interstate divides this large county into east and west. Schools that are east of the major freeway serve predominantly more affluent neighborhoods, while schools west of the freeway serve low-socio economic areas. Schools east of the major interstate typically are newer schools (most built from 1990 and on). They serve students in the neighborhood whose families would be considered middle class, typically have a higher percentage of veteran teachers teaching in the schools, and there is less diversity among students. Schools on the west side of the interstate are typically older schools (most built from 1950-1989) and serve students in the neighborhood whose students typically qualify to receive free and reduced lunch[1]. These schools also typically have a higher percentage of newer teachers and serve a widely diverse student population. Each school selected for this study is one of the 46 schools in the Modesto Union School District. One school is one the west (Monroe Elementary) and one is on the east side of the district (Castle Rock Elementary).

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[1] To qualify for free and reduced lunch you have to meet income eligibility guidelines. To qualify, for example, a household size of 3 needs to make less than $26,208 according to the California Department of Education.

Castle Rock Elementary Profile

Castle Rock Elementary is a K-6 school that operates within the Modesto Union School District. The school is located in a relatively affluent neighborhood of this southern Californian city on the east side of the freeway, where home values are on average valued at $500,000 or more, as evident from the signs of the up and coming houses being built around the area. The student population consists of approximately 900 students of which approximately 30% are Filipino, 30% are Hispanic or Latino, 15% are White, 10% are Black or African American, 5% are Asian, and 10% are of two or more races. Approximately 20% of the student population is classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged, approximately 20% of the students enrolled are English Language Learners and about 10% are students with disabilities. According to the California School Dashboard, for the 2016-2017 school year, the school has a status of Very High, or Blue for all students in the English Language Arts (ELA) assessment, or the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and a status of High, or Green for all students in the Mathematics assessment, or the SBAC.

Castle Rock Elementary was built in the last decade, and thus is considered one of the newest schools in the Modesto Union School District. When you arrive at the school you are immediately in awe at how pristine the grounds of the school are kept. Everywhere you turn there are freshly manicured trees, plants, and flowers. The school looks at it could have opened its doors just yesterday; there are no traces of gum on the sidewalks, no trash anywhere in the vicinity and the walls of all the buildings still look freshly painted. As you walk through the school grounds, you see student's art work and

writing exemplars posted on the windows of each classroom, looking out for anyone to see.

If you arrive within the first 10-15 minutes of the school day, you will find all of the students lined up on the playground with their parents waiting for their principal to come out and provide their morning announcements. As you look out, you will find parents, grandparents, teachers, students all talking with one another. Then suddenly, the principal or associate principal comes on the microphone to greet the students and all talking immediately stops and attention is right away directed to the middle of the playground, where the microphone is handed over to a student who then begins the pledge of allegiance.

Castle Rock Elementary is a school where all of the classrooms are outside, all connected by different "wings", to provide shade from the sun and shelter on the few days it rains during the year. Different sections or "wings" of the school are dedicated to different grade levels. There are approximately 4-5 classrooms per grade level, and each "wing" has a built-in workspace in the middle of the classrooms, where you can easily access one room to the next through this center workspace area. The front office is home to the offices of the principal, associate principal, nurse, psychologist and attendance clerk. As soon as you walk into the front office, you are greeted with a collection of sports trophies, and speech trophies that line the back filing cabinets. There are images of their mascot, the wolf, lined throughout each corner of the front office and in the principal's office, and you can spot their motto hanging along the wall "Responding to the Call of Excellence for All."

Castle rock elementary principals' profile. The principal of Castle Rock Elementary has been described by many of her teachers as a "force," someone that is respected, has integrity, and who "knows what she is doing." Diane MacGaffey has been the principal of Castle Rock Elementary since the school first opened its doors in 2008; the school has known no other principal. She has been a principal for 15 years and has been a part of the Modesto Unified School District since 1992, or the equivalent of 26 years, 15 of which she has been an administrator. She classifies herself as an African American, a female, and is in her late 50s. Diane did not always dream of being in the education realm, but rather was a talented opera singer, who later switched careers in her life, became a teacher and later became an administrator, because she wanted to "inspire the young minds out there."

Castle rock elementary teachers' profiles. Castle Rock Elementary on average has more veteran teachers, in fact, according to the principal, she only has 2 new teachers, out of a total of 28 teachers. The other 26 teachers have tenured status within the district and average about 10+ years of experience. Out of the 28 teachers that currently work at the school, 25 of the teachers are female and only 3 are males. The following table summarizes the demographics of the participants that were selected for this study, including the principal's perception of their receptivity toward feedback:

Table 1

Castle Rock Elementary - Teacher Participation Summary

	Brian	Jennifer	Kate	Sarah
Age	47	43	44	54
Years of Experience	7 years	18 years	10 years	20 years
Status	Probationary	Tenure	Tenure	Tenure
Ethnicity	White	Hispanic	White	Indian
Gender	Male	Female	Female	Female
Selection Category	"New Teacher"	"Veteran Teacher"	"Does not take up feedback well"	"Takes feedback well"

Monroe Elementary School Profile

Monroe Elementary School is a K-6 school that operates within the Modesto Unified School District. The student population consists of approximately 650 students, of which approximately 90% are Hispanic or Latino, 6% are White, 2% are Filipino, and 2% are Asian. Approximately 90% of the student population is classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged (or those students who receive free and reduced lunch), approximately 55% of the population are English Learners and about 11% are students with disabilities. According to the California School Dashboard, for the 2016-2017 school year, the school has a status of Low, or Yellow for all students in the English Language Arts (ELA) assessment, or the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

(SBAC) and a status of Low, or Yellow for all students in the Mathematica assessment, or the SBAC. The school is located in a relatively low socioeconomic neighborhood of this southern Californian city, where the majority of the homes surrounding the school are apartments, trailer parks and homes that range from $100,000 to $250,000, according to the principal of the school.

Monroe Elementary, located on the west side of the freeway, was built in the 1940s, and thus is considered one of the oldest schools in the Modesto Union School District. It was recently modernized within the last three years, where some of the buildings were gutted out and repaired, televisions were placed in every classroom, and new furniture was purchased for the school, however, the originally infrastructure remained. When you arrive at the school, you see the orange and beige building that serves as the front office, with a giant blue gate that encloses the school grounds. As you walk into the office, you hear the secretaries on the phone talking in Spanish, another secretary assisting parents in Spanish and students and staff entering in and out of the front office. There are few if any pictures of décor that line the inside of the office walls, except for a sample of uniforms pinned to the walls, and a shout out board where the staff could write on post-it "shout-outs" or appreciations to other staff members.

Monroe Elementary is a school where all of the classrooms are outside, and most of the classrooms surround an outdoor quad area. Most of the classrooms are connected by an awning, that provides shelter in case of rain or on hot sunny days. It is evident that as the school has grown, the district has had to lay out classroom portables throughout the school grounds, and so different classrooms are no longer facing the original quad area or have awnings for shelter. There are approximately 3 classrooms per grade level, and

most grade levels are right next to each other, with the exception of some combination classes. The front office is home to the offices of the principal, associate principal, nurse, and attendance clerk. The school also has two other spaces, one that is currently used for the part-time counselors and another space that serves as a conference room. In common spaces, such as the conference room, and in the lounge, there are large Viking ships that line the walls, as this is their school mascot.

Monroe elementary principals' profile. The principal of Monroe Elementary has been described by many of her teachers as "supportive," "personable," and "genuinely listens to our concerns." Monica Allworth has been the principal of Monroe Elementary for the last four years. This is the only school in which she has been a principal. She has been a part of the Modesto Unified School District since 2003, or the equivalent of 15 years, 4 years of which she has been an administrator, and 11 of which she was a teacher. She classifies herself as Hispanic, a female, and is in her late 40s. Monica, similarly to Diane did not always dream of being in the education profession; she started her career in finance, worked at multiple banks and eventually realized she was meant to be in education and pursued her career a few years into her career in finance.

Monroe elementary teachers' profiles. Monroe Elementary on average has more new teachers, in fact, according to the principal, she only has 10 veteran teachers, out of a total of 35 teachers. The other 25 teachers have either temporary or probationary status within the district. According to the principal, the average years of experience teachers have is around 5 years. Out of the 35 teachers that currently work at the school,

25 of the teachers are female and only 3 are males. The following table summarizes the

participants that were selected for this study:

Table 2

Monroe Elementary - Teacher Participation Summary

	Lauren	Regina	Reina	Sharon
Age	45	30	56	41
Years of Experience	10 years	2 years	30 years	4 years
Status	Tenure	Probationary	Tenure	Probationary
Ethnicity	Hispanic	Middle Eastern	Latina	White
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female
Selection Category	"Takes Feedback Well"	"Does not take up feedback well"	"Tenure teacher"	"New Teacher"

Data Analysis

The following section will serve to illustrate the findings for each case study.

This section will be organized around the four research questions and sub questions

presented previously. Findings will be provided from each case, or school site, followed

by a cross-case analysis of the two cases, or two school sites, per research question. A

summary of the findings will conclude this section.

Research Question #1: What, if any feedback opportunities exist for teachers?

Castle rock elementary. At Castle Rock Elementary, feedback is not a foreign term, in fact it is part of the culture of the school, part of teacher's everyday life, and something that the principal prioritizes day in and day out. There are multiple opportunities within a month for teachers to receive feedback, both informally and formally from their principal. Feedback, however, is not exclusively found in interactions between an administrator to a teacher. Teachers have also received professional development on how to give feedback to their students based on the work that they turn in. Feedback is viewed as an important process at all levels of the system.

Principal of castle rock elementary. The principal of Castle Rock elementary puts feedback at the top of her priority list. In fact, Ms. MacGaffey states:

> Feedback is up there really high on the priority list. Everybody needs some feedback in order to improve, period, so feedback's up there in the top of the list of things that I believe are important for me to do every day. It's also one of the things I enjoy doing. (Diane MacGaffey, personal communication, February 2, 2018)

She not only prioritizes feedback within her roles and responsibilities but also expressed that she prioritized it because she believes strongly in being an instructional leader for her teachers. Therefore, in order to ensure that she will have enough time for feedback, she blocks out a portion of her day to devote exclusively to being in classrooms:

> My secretaries know its sacred time from 9:00-10:30am. I do not give up sacred time for anything. I do not hold IEPs [Individualized Education Plan Meetings]. I don't do anything. That's my time. I don't have meetings during that time. Unless it's an emergency, that's my time to be in my classrooms, to make sure that what I see is going to set the foundation for everything else they're doing. (Diane MacGaffey, personal communication, February 2, 2018)

Ms. MacGaffey not only prioritizes feedback, she has a system in place to make sure she is getting to all classrooms within a week. During the interview she shared a clipboard that had a table on it. On the left-hand side were the names of all the teachers organized by grade level. To the right of the names were several columns, where the date of her last visit was written, how much time she was in the room, and what type of feedback was provided: whether it was a note, whether no note was left, whether she had an informal conversation, a coaching conference, or provided a formal written summary. Ms. MacGaffey stated that she keeps a copy of any feedback she provides to teachers, so she can reference it before coming back into that classroom. She shared that this was her way of being fair in terms of the amount of times she visited teachers, and it was a way to keep track of her own trends in giving feedback throughout the course of each quarter and school year.

It is evident that she places a premium on being in classrooms, as evidenced by the dates she has on her table accompanied with a code as to what type of feedback was given, the way it was given, and the time she has blocked out on her schedule each day which she has dedicated to being in classrooms. When asked whether she provides feedback in the same amount to everyone, she instantly replied:

> No, of course I do not provide the same feedback to everybody. That wouldn't be equitable. A brand new teacher needs a lot more feedback and more direction than somebody who's been teaching for 30 years. (Diane MacGaffey, personal communication, February 2, 2018)

This was also clearly evident from viewing her chart, that had more dates written down for some teachers over others. All in all, the principal of Castle Rock is proud of how much she is in classrooms and in her belief in providing feedback to everyone:

> They're [teachers] really used to feedback. Mostly everybody. A couple of people who have difficulty with feedback, they still get it whether they like it or not. I am the principal in the district that every time we have the Hanover survey[2], [this school] is above the district average and at the top for how much feedback I give. I am always there. (Diane MacGaffey, personal communication, February 2, 2018)

It is clear that the principal of Castle Rock Elementary values feedback for multiple reasons. She has protected time in her schedule to go out and visit rooms every single day, she has a method in place for keeping track of the feedback that she provides to teachers and how much she is providing to each individual teacher, and she continuously articulated her belief in feedback throughout the interview.

Teachers of Castle Rock Elementary. The four teachers that were interviewed from Castle Rock Elementary shared very similar sentiments regarding the amount of opportunities for feedback that teachers are provided by their principal. Each of the teachers that were interviewed shared that the principal is constantly in all the classrooms, including their own. Table 3 summarizes the frequency of feedback that is received by each teacher that was interviewed and the method of delivery of the feedback that is received throughout the course of the year by these teachers:

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[2] The Hanover survey is a climate and satisfaction survey given to 4-6th grade students, all parents, and all staff members at each school throughout the district

Table 3

Castle Rock Elementary – Frequency of Feedback and Delivery

	Brian	Jennifer	Kate	Sarah
Age	47	43	44	54
Years of Experience	7 years	18 years	10 years	20 years
Status	Probationary	Tenure	Tenure	Tenure
Selection Category	"New Teacher"	"Veteran Teacher"	"Does not take up feedback well"	"Takes feedback well"
Frequency of Feedback from Principal	Once or twice a month	Once a week to Bi-monthly	Once a week to multiple times a week	Once a month
Has Frequency Changed from Principal in School Year	Yes	Yes	No	No
Delivery of Feedback Received	Feedback form Sticky notes Conversations	Feedback form Sticky notes Conversations On the spot	Feedback form Sticky notes Conversations On the spot	Feedback form Sticky Notes

The feedback that is usually provided to teachers comes in a written form. The principal provides a copy of the form to the teacher's mailbox located inside of the front office. Typically, the form is provided at the conclusion of the observation. Below is a description on what the form contains, according to one teacher:

> There is a form… she pretty much writes out what you did exactly, verbatim, "You do this, this, this, this, and this." Then at the end if there's anything that she wants to clarify she'll write a little something. She may give some kind of positive, a little verbiage at the end, what she feels about it, or a question, like a wondering that she may have. (Jennifer, personal communication, December 8, 2017)

In addition to providing feedback on a written form, which is the main method of delivery of feedback (according to the principal and the teachers), she has also provided on the spot feedback to teachers. This is a description of that type of feedback that one teacher received. The teacher explained:

> I had her interject in the middle of the lesson, where she just whispered in my ear in the middle of me doing something with the students, telling me what I needed to do differently, while the students were there. On another occasion she took over a lesson to show me what she wanted to see. (Jennifer, personal communication, December 8, 2017)

The principal for the most part depends on her feedback form to provide more formal feedback, or what the teachers perceive to be more formal feedback and will resort to writing on sticky notes, as an informal method of providing feedback. Although sticky notes are not common for teachers to receive, each teacher that was interviewed acknowledged that they tend to receive them more at the beginning of the year, and they usually tend to be positive notes.

Although the delivery of the feedback is pretty consistent from teacher to teacher, the frequency of the feedback has not always remained the same for each teacher. In fact,

it has varied. From the perception of teachers, they believe it is attributed to earning the

principals trust or doing things the way she wants them done. Below are some quotes

from the interviews with teachers:

> As I've gotten to know Diane, in that first year that I was here, I'd be meeting with her almost weekly. Actually going into her room, into her office and speaking with her. Learning the ways of the school and what she wanted. And now that I've… adapted to… or she feels that I have met her expectations, I think there's less need for her to come in and really, she's observing to check on what we're doing, so there are probably other… more pressing issues in other classrooms, perhaps, that she's needing to check on and she's… so, I guess personally, I'm taking that she's comfortable with what I'm doing. (Brian, personal communication, January 2, 2018)

> It seems to be like if there's something that she focuses on that she doesn't think you're doing the right way or well that's when it becomes an issue, she hones in on something and provides you more feedback until she sees that it has changed. (Kate, personal communication, January 25, 2018)

> I think newer teachers get more feedback because she had to build the trust issues with the teachers, for instance, you know how they work, you know what they do, you see the results in their classroom, so there's a certain amount of trust. They know what they're doing, and they will do what they know they're supposed to be doing. I would think if I was in her position, I would think newer teachers, I may have to visit their classrooms more until I learn to build that trust and to observe how the teachers, what they teach, the results that they produce at the end of the school year too. (Sarah, personal communication, December 12, 2017).

One concern that was shared in regard to the feedback opportunities that were

provided to teachers was the lack of feedback that the principal was able to give outside

of the school's focus of improving literacy skills for students:

> She's very good at language arts and that's her thing, and reading, and I think she does have good insight in that area, but then that's it, because she can't really… She's told us, she can't really give feedback in math and science and social studies, you now she doesn't know enough in those areas. That's a little weird for me, especially the math part. (Kate, personal communication, January 25, 2018).

Each teacher that was interviewed referenced receiving feedback while providing

instruction to students in the area of literacy. They each spoke of the principal

specifically coming in from 9:00-10:30am, which is the same time the principal called

out during my interview with her as her protected time for instructional support. The

teachers clarified that this time was when their literacy block, or more specifically when

guided reading groups are occurring. It is interesting to note that none of the teachers

made reference to receiving in feedback in another subject area other than reading. The

feedback stories they offered, all referenced literacy, which aligns to the school's

instructional focus for the 2017-2018 school year and was confirmed by the principal

during my interview with her.

When comparing the interview of the principal to the interviews of the teachers,

there are several things that align: the principal is clearly in classrooms providing

feedback to teachers every day, each of the teachers receives the same feedback form,

although some teachers have had other feedback provided (which seems consistent across

the school). There were also several components that did not align: the teachers believed

that getting less feedback was attributed to gaining the trust of the principal, when in fact

the principal stated that she provides more feedback if the teacher is new, but that

everyone should be getting feedback no matter what. She did not make any reference to

providing less feedback if she trusted the teacher more. Also, from the perception of

teachers, they believed that their principal only provides feedback in language arts or the

school's focus, however, in the interview with the principal she made several references

to feedback she had provided in other subject areas, such as math, social studies and

science.

Monroe elementary. Similar to Castle Rock Elementary, feedback is part of

everyday life. The principal recognizes the need to be in classrooms much more than she

was in previous years, in fact, she hired an Associate Principal this school year so that he could help split administrative responsibilities with her so she could be in classrooms more often. Teachers also expect that during "walkthroughs" or classroom visits, they could expect to receive feedback on their instruction. The principal, however, is not the only person providing feedback. Teachers are regularly asked to provide feedback to the principal on different topics through anonymous online surveys that she provides throughout the school year. These anonymous online surveys are usually uploaded on Survey Monkey and contain 1-4 questions on them. For example, she has sent out surveys to her teachers asking about trainings she will conduct for her teachers on early dismissal days, to surveying teachers about a new policy she has implemented such as students going out to recess first and then eating, etc.

Principal of Monroe elementary. The principal of Monroe Elementary recognizes that being an instructional leader, someone that helps coach teachers and provide them feedback is important; so much so, that she proposed the idea to the superintendent at the conclusion of the 2016-2017 school year. She currently is splitting the salary cost between the district and her school site because she recognized the need for someone to assist her in getting into classrooms. This is what she had to say in relation to the topic:

> I'm supposed to be an instructional leader and I would say that I'm more leaning on the side towards being an administrator than an instructional leader only because of time constraints. But this year, because I have an AP [Associate Principal] we've been able to focus more on instruction, on that part of our leadership… So, this year we've been more focused on giving that feedback and doing more walkthroughs. I know they're feeling it because they're [teachers] are complaining that we're in classrooms now more often than in the past. (Monica Allworth, personal communication, January 30, 2018).

Even though she is receiving the support of an associate principal, she still does not believe that she is in classrooms as often as she should be, and does not know what

teachers think of her being in rooms so much. They seem to vacillate from concerns that

they need more feedback to complaining they are getting too much. The principal

explained:

> Am I in the classrooms providing feedback as often as I think I should be, even
> now, no. I think I should be in there more often and I really wish I knew how the
> teachers felt if I'm in the room or not. I know that on Hanover they say that we're
> never in there and they want more feedback, yet when you start doing it they start
> complaining. So, I kind of wish that they really, really would be honest and just
> say what they really wanted. (Monica Allworth, personal communication, January
> 30, 2018)

Although Ms. Allworth does not have a form to provide feedback she has a clear

structure she follows when providing feedback. She primarily provides her feedback

through emails and tries to use objective language:

> So, it will start off with what I saw, students were… and I'm very objective.
> Students were engaged in the lesson using a worksheet and teacher was… either
> directing the conversation or providing feedback to the students or circulating the
> room. This is what the teacher was doing. And then I go in to whatever I am
> focusing on during that walkthrough. If I'm focusing on learning intentions and
> success criteria, I give them feedback on that. If it's a teacher on an E1[3], then I am
> focused on the E1 goals. Then at the bottom I'll put these are some things that
> you might want to consider. (Monica Allworth, personal communication, January
> 30, 2018)

Ms. Allworth uses the same structure with all of her teachers, however the frequency of

her feedback is not as uniform as the structure she follows in providing feedback:

> I provide more feedback to the ones [teachers] that are struggling and to the ones
> [teachers] who have E1s because I know I need to provide documentation. So, for
> compliance I provide more feedback to those and also those that just need more
> growth and support. (Monica Allworth, personal communication, January 30,
> 2018)

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[3] The E1 form is titled "Interim Evaluation Report." An E1 form is typically used in the
district for those teachers who are currently on an assistance plan.

Being an administrator is often a juggling act with all of the roles and responsibilities that the job comes with. Fitting feedback into your day is something that all administrators have to evaluate specifically, where it falls on their priority list. For Ms. Allworth, feedback is a priority, and she often relies on her Associate Principal holding her accountable to make sure she makes the times to be in classrooms, and is providing feedback:

> The accountability piece with my AP [Associate Principal] in talking and kind of debriefing, I've been in this classroom, I've been in this classroom, this is what I saw. That keeps me on my toes because I'm having a talk about it and if I know he's going to come in and say, "who did you visit?" And I'm gonna be like nobody. That kind of keeps me accountable. So, in a good way, it's not a bad way, but I need that accountability too. And if he wasn't here I wouldn't really have it. (Monica Allworth, personal communication, January 30, 2018).

The principal of Monroe Elementary clearly believes in feedback. In her interview she referenced her reflection on the Hanover survey results that showed that teachers had marked that she was rarely in their classrooms and wanted more feedback. At the end of the previous school year she hired an additional staff member, an associate principal, to split administrative responsibilities so she could get into classrooms more often. By hiring an associate principal, she put a new structure in place that supports feedback. Although she referenced being in classrooms more often this school year than last school year and providing more feedback to teachers, her interviews seem to suggest that she is focused on providing quantity of feedback rather than substance of feedback. This is evident from her comment on providing feedback more often to teachers in E1s and newer teachers for the sake of compliance or documentation, and also in her comment on her associate principal holding her accountable to the number of rooms she visited in that day.

Teachers of Monroe Elementary. The four teachers that were interviewed from Monroe Elementary shared very similar opportunities that teachers are provided to receive feedback from their principal. They each shared that the administrators on campus are constantly walking through the rooms, including their own, in what they refer to as "walkthroughs". Table 4 summarizes the frequency of feedback that is received by each teacher that was interviewed and the method of delivery of the feedback that is received throughout the course of the year by these teachers:

Table 4

Monroe Elementary - Frequency of Feedback and Delivery

	Lauren	Regina	Reina	Sharon
Age	45	30	56	41
Years of Experience	10 years	2 years	30 years	4 years
Status	Veteran	Probationary	Tenure	Probationary
Selection Category	"Takes Feedback Well"	"Does not take up feedback well"	"Tenured Teacher"	"New Teacher"
Frequency of Feedback from Principal	Once a month	Once a week to once every two weeks	Once a week	Once a week
Has Frequency Changed from Principal in School Year	No	Yes	No	Yes
Delivery of Feedback Received	Email Meeting E3 Form (Pilot Feedback Program)	Email Meeting	Email Reflection Meetings (Evaluation Year)	Email Reflection Meetings (Evaluation Year)

The feedback that is usually provided to teachers usually comes in the form of an email. The principal typically will write her notes in the classroom and send the email to the teachers either when she walks out of the room or later that night, once she has had some time to read through it. Below is a description of what the email contains, according to one teacher:

> Generally, the email is very neutral, so they try to speak factually. I observed this, and I observed this. They also provide things that we could try or suggestions. Or sometimes there are wonderings at the end of the email, something for you to reflect on, and then you have to respond to the question. (Regina, personal communication, January 25, 2018).

However, not all feedback is provided through email, there are staff members that are in their evaluation year and so they have reflection meetings with their principal once a month centered around the goal they crafted together at the beginning of the year. Each teacher is responsible for writing a reflection once a month and sending it to the principal before meeting with her at a scheduled time.

The principal keeps the delivery of her feedback consistent among all staff members in that she emails her feedback. However, the frequency of the feedback to some staff members has not been the same. According to the perceptions of teachers this is due to ability and who needs more support. Below are some quotes from the interviews from two teachers, one who is a veteran teacher and one who is a newer teacher:

> It's equal according to ability and according to cooperation. Fair is everybody getting what they need, not everybody getting the same. (Lauren, personal communication, January 26, 2018)

> I used to get feedback two or three times a week because they felt like that was supporting. They'd come in my classroom and all that, but also notice what I had said earlier that you get feedback when they see something that needs work, that needs to be work done. I used to get feedback two or three times a week. Now I

don't get any feedback because I've done everything they've asked me to, so yeah. (Regina, personal communication, January 25, 2018)

Even though feedback is being provided across the board to all teachers, one of the concerns that teachers shared is the ambiguity that comes from not knowing if they will receive an email that day. There are times where the teachers do, and other times where they do not, and sometimes the teachers think they will not receive anything for that day, and then they will receive an email late at night. Below are some excerpts of the interviews showcasing the anxiety around the delivery of feedback:

> So with their [principal or associate principal] feedback, we [teachers] don't hear anything if it's good. We hear nothing. Basically, if they [principal or associate principal] walk in our classrooms and they leave and we don't get an email by the end of the day. The end of the day can be like 10 p.m., because I've gotten like 10 p.m. emails. If we don't hear anything by the end, like midnight, then we think like okay, I must have done an okay job, but if we hear something anywhere from two, actually we've had immediate emails, not me, but others have literally had someone walk out, go to the office and type and email or all the way, I've gotten mine at 10:30p.m., so if you wait until it's…. it's uncomfortable honestly. You're waiting to the midnight mark. You're like did I do well, did I not do well? I feel like it's a lottery system. (Regina, personal communication, January 25, 2018).

> Immediate feedback would be nice. I'm a worry wart so I wait for that email when they come in my classroom to be like, oh my gosh because I also worked at a school where we didn't get very much praise. And we got a lot of negative. I guess that's just my PTSD. (Sharon, personal communication, January 26, 2018).

In comparing the interview of the principal to the interviews of the teachers, there were many similarities that were shared. The principal and the teachers each spoke to the increase of classroom observations conducted by the principal and the feedback that followed those observations in comparison to previous school years. Both the teachers and the principal spoke of the feedback emails they receive from the observations the principal conducts of their classrooms, although others spoke of meeting with her for their reflection meetings (only for those being evaluated that school year). Another

similarity between the teacher and principal interviews was that teachers perceived that feedback varied in quantity based on ability and the support teachers needed, which aligned with what the principal stated in her interview. Finally, teachers shared their concern of not knowing when their principal would provide feedback or not, and this aligns with the interview from the principal, where she shared that she had not communicated with teachers how feedback would be provided, when it would be given or not given and how often teachers could expect it. The ambiguity teachers disclosed could be a cause of the lack of communication from their principal.

   Comparison of feedback opportunities from the two school sites. Castle Rock Elementary and Monroe Elementary are very similar in terms of the opportunities for feedback that they provide to their teachers. Both principals place feedback as one of their top priorities and therefore visit classrooms often. Both administrators provide their teachers with feedback at the conclusion of their visit, with some exceptions. The only difference comes in the delivery of the feedback. At Castle Park Elementary, teachers receive a feedback form as the predominate way they receive feedback, while at Monroe Elementary, teachers receive an email. The format or structure of their feedback is very similar at both sites: both principals start with stating what they observed in very factual, objective language and conclude their feedback with either some suggestions or "wonderings," in other words a question(s) meant for the teacher to reflect on.

   At both sites, principals and teachers both stated that the frequency of feedback is not the same for everyone. At both sites, principals and teachers confirmed that teachers who are newer, or do not have tenure yet, tend to receive more feedback, or support from their administrators. Likewise, at both sites, teachers perceived that another reason for

certain teachers receiving less feedback from their administrators is because these teachers have earned the trust of the principal in being an "effective" teacher and one that is doing what the principal expects.

Each site had their own concerns in regard to the opportunities provided for teachers to receive feedback. Castle Park Elementary teachers only receive feedback in the area of literacy, while teachers are Monroe Elementary shared their concerns around the ambiguity of when they will and will not receive feedback, as teachers expressed concern over waiting for emails that may or may not come at all.

Research Questions #2: What are teacher's responses to feedback?

At Castle Rock Elementary and Monroe Elementary, there were three themes that were uncovered that directly respond to this research question: what teachers consider to be ideal feedback (and therefore what they like to receive), what teachers perceive as feedback that is negative (and what they do not want to receive), and that feedback overall is beneficial and helps contribute to a teacher's growth and teachers want more of it. The next sections provide more direct evidence from the interviews.

Ideal Feedback. Teachers at both Castle Rock Elementary and Monroe Elementary both have an ideal way that they would like to receive feedback from their administrators. Teachers at both sites expressed the need to receive positive feedback, so that it could provide the validation that as one interviewee put it, "all human beings need" (Brian, personal communication, January 2, 2018). Table 5 summarizes what teachers at both sites consider to be ideal feedback.

Table 5

Summary of Ideal Feedback

Castle Rock Elementary	Monroe Elementary
• 3/4 teachers would like to receive feedback in writing (either through a form or email)	• 3/4 teachers want to receive feedback in writing (either through a form or email)
• 4/4 teachers would like feedback to contain suggestions for how to improve the practice, not just reflective questions	• 3/4 teachers would like feedback to contain suggestions for how to improve the practice, not just reflective questions
• 2/4 teachers would like to have the option of a quick meeting to be able to address wonderings or discuss the feedback further in person - 2	• 2/4 teachers would like to have the option of a quick meeting to be able to address wonderings or discuss the feedback further in person
• 4/4/ teachers want positive feedback – validating the good things principals see	• 4/4 teachers want positive feedback – validating the good things principals see

One excerpt from an interview that encompassed the sentiment of the other teacher

interviews is below:

The positive messages or feedback keeps me motivated to continue to do well, and gosh, on very basic levels, seek out more approval by keep doing the things that were recognized as being good. So yes, I need those positive messages. (Brian, personal communication, January 2, 2018)

Not Ideal Feedback. Teachers at both Castle Rock Elementary and Monroe Elementary also expressed what are ways that they do not want to receive feedback. Overwhelmingly at both schools, teachers stated that they do not want to receive feedback with list after list of what they need to change, or in their terms negative feedback. They want to feel that administrators are in their classrooms to encourage and support, not only to provide punitive feedback. Table 6 summarizes what teachers at both sites consider to be not ideal feedback.

Table 6

Summary of Not Ideal Feedback

Castle Rock Elementary	Monroe Elementary
• 4/4 teachers do not want only negative feedback, things you need to fix are only pointed out	• 3/4 teachers do not want only negative feedback, things you need to fix are only pointed out
• 2/4 teachers do not want to receive feedback only verbally	• 1/4 teachers do not want to receive feedback only verbally
• 2/4 teachers do not want on the spot feedback (where principal addresses the feedback in the room with students present)	• 1/4 teachers do not want to receive feedback on sticky notes

One excerpt from an interview that encompassed the sentiment of the other teacher interviews is below:

> When feedback is generally negative, some people feel kind of being down on it, and it's just that sense that they are coming in and just looking for what you are not doing or what you are doing wrong. I don't think anyone wants to feel that way. (Jennifer, personal communication, December 8, 2017)

Feedback is Beneficial. Teachers at both school sites see the benefits in the feedback that is being provided to them. There was not one teacher, out of the total eight that were interviewed that expressed something to the contrary. In fact, most teachers alluded, if not explicitly stated that they wanted more feedback from their administrators.

Below is one excerpt from a new teacher that highlights this theme:

> I don't care how I get it [feedback]. I don't care if it's verbal. I don't care if it's a post-it, I don't care if it's an email, a text message, whatever it might be. I just want it. I just want validation that they saw the same thing that I thought I was delivering. (Sharon, personal communication, January 26, 2018)

Another teacher discussed how he benefited from feedback even though getting negative feedback is not always easy to take:

> I welcome the feedback, even though you don't want to see anything where you might be deemed as negative, it's still taken as constructive feedback where it's going to help me, because as long as the intent is there to help me become a better teacher, I can accept that and grow from that. I know I am doing a better job with my students from the feedback that I received so I welcome it. It has helped the school operate at a high level. (Brian, personal communication, January 2, 2018)

The obvious goal of feedback is to push learning and these teachers felt that was the real benefit.

> I think about where I was before and rarely anybody came into my room, and you get kind of get comfortable, and you feel like well "If nobody is going to come in, and maybe today I just kind of do this." You can get complacent. It definitely keeps you on your toes. Because when someone comes in, I want them to know my kids are on fire and that I am doing a good job. (Jennifer, personal communication, December 8, 2017)

I think feedback is definitely important and we all need to grow and learn, and we're always learning. I tell my kids all the time that I am still learning. So, I see the benefit in it and I want it. It's made me a better teacher (Kate, personal communication, January 25, 2018)

Although there were some differences in regards to the opportunities that teachers have for feedback at the different school sites, the two school sites were very similar in the responses that teachers had towards feedback. Each site spoke to what they believe are ideal ways to receive feedback, what are not ideal ways to receive feedback and the benefit that they see in the feedback they receive.

Research Question #3: What structural, cultural, and agentive factors influence teachers' willingness to receive feedback?

Over the years, research has shown that structural, cultural, and agentive factors, each independently and in interaction help shape education and reproduce educational outcomes (Hubbard, 1995; Datnow, A., Hubbard, L. & Mehan, H., 2002). This section will summarize the findings in relation to each of these three sociological factors and their influence on teacher's willingness to receive feedback. The section will begin with Table 7 that summarizes the cross-case categorization that emerged from each case study, followed by the findings to each of the sub questions to research question three and a comparative analysis of each school site in relation to the sub question.

Table 7

Cross-Case Categorization Emerging from Case Studies for Castle Rock Elementary and Monroe Elementary

	Castle Rock Elementary	Similarities between two sites	Monroe Elementary
Structure	• Principal communicated how feedback was going to look at school site • Feedback form is used with all teachers, where evidence and wonderings/suggestions are provided • Principal and Associate Principal use the same feedback form to provide feedback – feedback looks the same • Feedback is all tied to a goal established at the beginning of the year with teachers • Feedback is not provided on every observation • Union did not influence amount or type of feedback given		• Principal <u>did not</u> communicate how feedback was going to look like at school site • Email is used for feedback where evidence and wonderings/suggestions are provided • Principal and Associate Principal have not calibrated on the feedback given to teachers – feedback looks different • Feedback is tied to the goal of the week for walkthroughs • Feedback is not provided on every observation • Union did influence amount and type of feedback given
Culture	• School is located on the "east side" where school serves a more affluent neighborhood, where students are college-bound • Principal has built a culture around the school's motto: Responding to the call excellence for ALL	• Teachers who have earned the trust of the principal are provided less feedback • Teachers trust the principal of their school site • Both principals have built a culture of professional learning communities	• School is located on the "west side" where school serves a needier neighborhood, where most students are not college-bound • Principal has built a culture of professional development at the school site, giving teachers ample opportunities to participate in PDs and get paid
Agency		• Teachers that have a growth mindset ask for feedback and are more willing to take up feedback • Teachers that have a growth mindset are more open to different strategies • Teachers take it upon themselves to reflect about their practices through feedback they receive	

Sub Question #1: Structurally, are there policies and practices that influence that process?

Castle Rock Elementary. One of the unquestionable themes at Castle Rock Elementary was the communication from the principal to the teachers in all aspects of what she does. She communicates what she rolls out to staff, what she rolls out to the parents, and this communication transcends to all of her stakeholders. Diane MacGaffey believes in over communicating. Each week she comes in and has a weekly bulletin that she provides to all of her stakeholders in order to communicate the latest events at the site. Additionally, she does a weekly phone blast to all parents to communicate through another medium: the telephone, and finally she provides daily announcements to her students, staff, and parents present at the beginning of the day salute.

Each of her teachers spoke of how she explicitly communicated how feedback would be provided to the staff, the method of delivery that she would use, and the frequency staff members could expect. She also communicated what her expectation would be in regard to her wonderings or suggestions. Teachers expressed that they were aware of when she expected them to meet with her and when the wondering would just serve as something to reflect on. Teachers did not express any confusion, or ambiguity in regards to the process. Each member was clear about her expectations and the timing of her observations. Teachers who were being evaluated during that school year, knew that they needed to set up formal observations for the principal to come in and observe.

When the teachers were questioned about the union, and its role within the district in regard to limiting feedback from administrators to teachers, each of the teachers

responded that the union really did not play much of a role at the school. In fact, one

teacher had the following to say:

> I think we just got a union representative, but in the past, we have not even had one at this school. I mean if people were dissatisfied at the school, we would have had one a long time before. I mean the union hasn't really been here, it's been absent for so long that I don't think it could pull strings any way. We trust her [principal]. (Sharon, personal communication, December 12, 2017).

As clear as things may seem for the staff, the principal does at times question the

way she communicates things to her teachers, especially when it comes to feedback.

Below she reflects on this challenge:

> Probably the greatest challenge is making sure I say things in a clear way, that people understand what I'm asking them to do or what I'm telling them I see without them feeling there's harm involved. I have to word things correctly, but I don't want to make it so flowery that you don't get what I'm saying, so there's a balance. (Diane MacGaffey, personal communication, February 2, 2018)

In order to make sure she is properly communicating, she has stated that she will

meet with teachers who she feels are not understanding the feedback she has provided. If

the meeting does not work she will instruct her Associate Principal to provide feedback,

so the teacher could have someone else, who has a different style from her own to

provide that individual with feedback. She recognizes that her style might not match

with everyone on campus.

At Castle Rock Elementary, there are many policies and practices that influence

teacher's willingness to receive feedback. The principal has clearly communicated the

purpose of feedback and the logistics of feedback at the school site, leaving teachers with

a sense of clarity. The absence of the structural influence of the union also plays a big

role in teacher's willingness to receive feedback. This could possibly be attributed to the

clear communication she has laid out, that teachers are clear when her feedback is meant

to be evaluative versus formative and therefore do not need to involve the union, or an advocate on their behalf.

Monroe Elementary. During the teacher and principal interviews at Monroe elementary, it was apparent that feedback had not been properly communicated to all teachers. There was much ambiguity around when teachers could expect to receive feedback, when they should reply to the wonderings or suggestions that were provided and if the feedback was evaluative or simply to help coach them to use better instructional practices. During the interview with the principal, there were plenty of times that as she was answering a question she would conclude with "maybe I should have told them [teachers] that," and she would jot down some bullet points for herself on a notepad she had right next to her. Below are some examples:

> So at the end of my observations, where I try to be as objective as possible, I put some things that I want them to consider. They usually don't respond because I am not usually asking a direct question, just some things to consider, but I want them to respond, but I've never told them that. (Monica Allworth, personal communication, January 30, 2018)

> No, I haven't communicated how I am going to provide feedback. I've just changed it every year. So, for example, in one year I might've used one app and the next year I used another app. This year it's emails. So, it's been different, and I've never explained how I'm gonna give it. That's pretty bad. (Monica Allworth, personal communication, January 30, 2018)

Furthermore, in interviews with the teachers, it is apparent that the lack of communication from the principal provided a sense of ambiguity in regard to feedback. Below is one example that mirrors the responses from the other three teachers at Monroe Elementary:

> There's been a lot of walkthroughs so a lot of staff were like, what were they looking for? Are we gonna hear back? I guess we're all always on edge, like are we going to have to do something else in regard to it? It's nice if they do come in or they see something that they comment on it, if that makes sense. Right away.

> Like nice work or like hey I like how you did this. Maybe next time try
> something like this. But we do not know what to do or when it is happening.
> (Sharon, personal communication, January 26, 2018)

Besides the fact that the principal has not been as clear in her communication of

how and when she would be providing feedback, there have been other policies that have

impacted teacher's willingness to receive feedback at Monroe Elementary. There is an

understanding from the district and the union that teachers who are being evaluated can

receive as much feedback as the principal wants to provide, however, teachers who are

not being evaluated that year and are tenured do not need to receive as much feedback as

those in their evaluation year. It is not black and white in terms of how much feedback

could be provided; it is a very gray area, and thus principals interpret the understanding in

their own way. Although this agreement has not affected all schools in the district, it

seems to have had its effect at Monroe Elementary:

> I would say every time I walk into a classroom I try and provide feedback. There
> might be one or two employees that I'm not providing feedback in writing as often
> as I do [to others], like every time I do a walkthrough [in some teachers'
> classrooms] I provide feedback in writing. There's only one or two employees on
> campus that I'm not doing that with and that's more of a contractual union issue
> because that person was taking my feedback and it was looking like they were
> gonna use it to protect themselves through the union. So it was more of union
> issue. So, I kind of stopped putting it in writing. (Monica Allworth, personal
> communication, January 30, 2018)

On that same note, the principal of Monroe Elementary expressed that she feels

that the feedback she has been told to provide, from her superiors at the district, is for the

purposes of documentation, to either re-hire a teacher or get rid of a teacher. Below is

her comment:

> I think the district is punitive with feedback. It's all evaluative. The reason that
> we're told to provide feedback is so that we can eventually either elect or non-re-
> elect teachers. It seems as a way [of evaluating] as [whether] they're either

effective or ineffective as a teacher. (Monica Allworth, personal communication, January 30, 2018)

There are many policies and practices that influence teacher's willingness to receive feedback at Monroe Elementary. The principal has not clearly communicated the purpose of feedback and the logistics of feedback at the school site, leaving teachers with a sense of ambiguity around it and of frustration. Additionally, the structure of the union has impeded the feedback process at the school site, as the principal has had to limit herself in providing written feedback to some teachers because they have tried to use it to file a grievance against her at the district. Although the union does not have an active role at all school sites in the district, three possible factors that could contribute to its influence at Monroe Elementary are: the lack of clarity around the purpose and logistics of feedback at this school site from the principal, whether the feedback is meant to be evaluative versus formative, and the lack of specificity from the district in regard to the expectation of principals providing feedback to their teachers.

Comparing structural factors at the two school sites. Structurally, there are practices at both sites that have an influence on teacher's willingness to receive feedback, as well as policies at the district level that potentially have an influence. The communication from the principal to the teachers in terms of what to expect in regards to feedback at the site differed greatly at each site. The principal of Castle Rock Elementary was very clear on what teachers could expect, while at Monroe Elementary the principal was not as clear and caused some ambiguity around feedback. Without clearly articulated expectations teachers expressed frustration in regards to feedback, became fearful that their feedback was evaluative, and some may have possibly involved the union at the school site to have an advocate on their side.

The understanding between the district and the union in regard to feedback did not play much of a role in one school, but it did in the other. The principal of Castle Rock Elementary did not seem affected by the teacher's union and felt free to provide feedback to all of her teachers "whether they wanted it or not" (Diane MacGaffey, personal communication, February 2, 2018). On the other hand, the principal of Monroe Elementary did not want to provide written feedback to two teachers because of concerns that the teacher would use the union to file a grievance against her and use the union to "protect themselves" (Monica Allworth, personal communication, January 30, 2018).

In general, structural factors influenced the feedback process at both school sites. At one site there was a clear instructional arrangement that the principal created in order to provide feedback, and her clear communication of the feedback structure provided a sense of clarity for her teachers and therefore minimal to zero push back. The lack of communication at the other site may have created fear, frustration and push back against the structure of feedback. Without clear communication, there was minimal alignment or agreement as to what the structure of feedback should look like from the perspective of teachers and the principal, and therefore, naturally teachers pushed back.

Sub Question #2: Culturally, are there specific contextual explanations?

Castle Rock Elementary. As described previously, Modesto Unified School District has 46 schools, which are split across a major freeway. Castle Rock Elementary sits on the east side of the major freeway, where the school serves a predominately more affluent neighborhood. Teachers and the principal alike describe the parents of their school as being highly involved in their student's learning, they come in and volunteer extensively. For example, the principal described that parents come in and take classes

on how to become reading tutors to students and then serve as instructional assistants in the classrooms. Parents have on average a college education, for the most part most homes have dual-incomes and most of the parents are considered to be middle class. Parents often provide donations to the classroom and school throughout the year, such as fulfilling amazon registries for makerspaces to buying out the contract for a software reading license for the school. Teachers also described the parents as the types of parents that immediately go out and seek tutors, such as Kumon, if their students fell behind in school. One important thing to note is that the school currently has the highest percentage of families that are in the military within the district, and this was described by both principals and teachers when asked about the demographics of the school.

The principal and the teachers alike describe the students as very eager to learn and students who are college-bound. When teachers were asked why they would describe the students as college-bound many of them linked it to family expectations; their parents went to college, therefore the students needed to go to college as well. Teachers also overwhelmingly described their students as coming in ready at grade level, as opposed to being behind grade level. Teachers made reference to having a very minor percentage of English Language Learners in their class, if anything they mentioned the higher number of Gifted and Talented Students they currently have in their classrooms.

As described previously, at the beginning of the chapter, Castle Rock Elementary is mostly comprised of teachers with experience or veteran teachers, approximately 92% of the teachers have tenured status, averaging around 10+ years of experience. Only 2 of their teachers have temporary or probationary status within the district. Thus, the school on average has an experienced staff.

Given the context of the school, from the perception of teachers they believed that the context in which they teach in plays a role in the feedback that they receive. All of the teachers had an opinion to offer regarding the matter. These were two statements from a new and a veteran teacher at the school that encompassed the theme:

> I would say there's definitely, perhaps different focuses from east side to west side because you have different… the students have different needs. Extreme wise [east side vs. west side], as far as socioeconomic needs, and if it's single parents versus dual income, or a stay at home mom, I would say on the east side [where his school is located], I mentioned we have a lot of support of the parents, and so the feedback that might come to us based upon our location is going to be, I guess, can be affected by the community that we teach in. (Brian, personal communication, January 2, 2018)

> I think the demands of this demographics, since it's a higher educational demographic of population, the standards are higher. I can see, I don't know how to put this, the expectations of… It's not the expectation, but it's a way of being accountable to our principal, and when you do that, then she gets to know you, so she can defend you with parents if she needs to. (Sarah, personal communication, December 12, 2017)

Overall, from the perceptions of teachers, context does play a role in the feedback that teachers receive from their principal. Teachers shared that the focus of their feedback could be different from schools on the west side due to the opposing student demographics from the east to the west side of the district. For example, students at Castle Rock Elementary come in on average at grade level and so the feedback that teachers receive tends to focus on maintaining the students at grade level and pushing the students to the next level. Parents also play a pivotal role in schools on the east side, according to the principal and teachers, and they are heavily involved. According to the teachers, the parents have a high level of expectation in terms of what the teachers should be doing for their students, and could potentially question the teacher's instructional practices. This could be a contributing factor in the amount of feedback that the principal

provides to the teachers, and possibly be a factor in teacher's acceptance of the feedback given at the site, since the principal is in and out of classrooms providing instructional support and could vouch for what the teachers are doing.

Monroe Elementary. Monroe Elementary sits on the west side of the major freeway, where the school serves a low socioeconomic neighborhood. Teachers and the principal alike describe the parents of their school as being minimally involved in their student's learning, some teachers even described the difficulty in having parents come in for their parent teacher conferences. Parents were described often as first-generation immigrants, who for the most part held blue collar jobs; often each parent had two or more jobs throughout the day. Most students lived with families where the parents were divorced, and one or more of the parents had been incarcerated at one point in their lives or were living with a parent who was currently incarcerated. The parents were described on average as having minimal English proficiency, and some of the parents did not have citizenship within the country. Teachers and the principal attributed the low percentage of parent volunteers and parent donations to parents having to work two jobs during the day and/or to the language barrier that exists for many of the parents. The principal described the families as being highly transient, meaning that they moved around a lot, and therefore her school was constantly enrolling and dropping students from their enrollment throughout the year.

The principal and the teachers describe the students as eager to learn but students who are not college bound. When asked why the students would not be considered college bound, the principal and teachers alluded to the families and students just operating on survival and not thinking about the future. They also explained that parents

and families lacked the knowledge in how they could get their students to college, since the family members had not attended a university or community college. The teachers and principal described the students as having high needs for several reasons: a large percentage of the population had been exposed to high levels of trauma, had low self-esteem when it came to school, a large percentage of the students particularly in the upper grades were not at grade level standards and therefore underperforming by their standards, and a high percentage of the student population were English Language Learners and students with low socioeconomic backgrounds.

As described at the beginning of this chapter, Monroe Elementary is mostly comprised of teachers with minimal experience or teachers who are considered temporary or have probationary status at the district. Approximately 26% of the teachers are considered new teachers, according to the principal, and the average experience at the school is between 5-7 years. Ms. Allworth has tried to hire teachers with more experience, but she encounters difficulty. She made the following statement during the interview:

> When I put postings up, the pool is very limited. I don't have veteran teachers applying for positions at my school site. They're all brand new and I might have one or two applicants. So when I pick, their level [of proficiency] is minimal. I have slim pickens. And that's huge [problem] having to have new staff on campus. Really [it] is a disservice to the kids cause they're on that huge learning curve in a short period of time. It takes a lot of my energy. (Monica Allworth, personal communication, January 30, 2018)

From the perception of teachers, they believed that the context of the school in which they teach in plays a role in the feedback that they receive. All of the teachers had an opinion to offer, however, below is an excerpt from a teacher who came from a school

on the east side of the district as she offers her comparison of the feedback she received

at both schools:

> You know, I came from the east side, and I know my feedback there was different. There, parents were constantly chirping, and here there isn't that many parents that get involved, so it's less chirping, so less feedback I feel in some ways. (Sharon, personal communication, January 26, 2018)

Another teacher shared that the focus of the feedback also changes based on the context

that the school is located in:

> I would say that it probably does influence the feedback that we receive, like what it is about. The feedback is probably more focused on what we're doing for our English Language Learners in class. Like do we have sentence frames and things like that. (Regina, personal communication, January 25, 2018)

In summary, at Monroe Elementary, it is evident from the perceptions of teachers

that the focus of the feedback they receive and possibly the quantity of the feedback

could be driven by the context in which they teach in. On average, at west side schools,

parents are not as heavily involved as they are on east side schools. This could be a

contributing factor in the amount and the focus of the feedback that teachers receive from

their principal, since parents typically would not complain about the instructional

practices of a teacher. Context also seems to play a role in terms of the hiring pool that

the principal has access to when looking to hire a teacher. Having, on average, newer

teachers to pick from, could potentially exhaust her time in providing support to those

teachers, leaving more experienced teachers with less instructional support in the form of

feedback.

Cultural comparisons influencing feedback. When looking at the two sites, there

is a great disparity between each of the two sites in terms of the population in which they

serve, one of the school (Castle Rock Elementary) sites serves a more affluent

neighborhood and the other school (Monroe Elementary) serves a needier population. However, the theme that each of the teachers shared was, from their perception, context does play a role in the feedback that they receive, whether it be in quantity or the topic of their feedback. One contributing factor to this theme, could be the role that parents play (their high levels of involvement at east side schools) or do not play (their lack of involvement at west side schools) at each school. Another contributing factor to the feedback that teachers receive is the lack of diversity in the hiring pool at west side schools. Schools like Monroe Elementary typically have inexperienced teachers apply to their schools; rarely do more experienced or veteran teachers apply to teach at a school on the west side, according to the principal. Access to only these applicants could contribute to the variation in quantity of feedback to teachers, as the principal is overwhelmed with the support she needs to provide to newer teachers, and due to time constraints, provides less feedback to veteran teachers.

Sub Question #3: How do teacher's individual practices, behaviors or dispositions influence the feedback process? At Castle Rock Elementary and Monroe Elementary there were two main themes that emerged in response to this sub research question: whether teachers had a growth mindset or whether they did not and how this affected how receptive they were to the feedback that was provided to them. Teachers who had a growth mindset took up the feedback that was provided to them over those who did not take up the feedback. Teachers who had a growth mindset tended to go out of their way to ask for feedback, to research the suggestions that the principals were providing them and to request meetings with their principals to clarify the feedback. Teachers who also had more of a growth mindset were more reflective on their practices

than those who did not. Comments from the interviews highlight the influence of having

a growth mindset on receiving instructional feedback. One teacher from Castle Rock

Elementary explained:

> I never feel that as a teacher you're never at the top because there's always
> something more that you can be doing, which is why I want the feedback, to
> know what else I could be doing, or improving on. I will even ask for a meeting
> or for more feedback if I am not getting it. (Jennifer, personal communication,
> December 8, 2017)

Similarly, another teacher with a growth mindset said:

> I welcome the feedback, because for me personally, I want to get better and better
> at what I do. I can see someone taking the feedback as criticism, but I don't. To
> me, it's making me better for my students. If there is something that is suggested,
> I implement it, I then research it to, if it's something I need to add a little bit more
> into, I will go and search the internet for what I can do. (Sarah, personal
> communication, December 12, 2017)

Another teacher recognized how her attitude was different from others. She directly

related it to "mindset:"

> Absolutely. I tend to take, or I perceive, but I tend to take feedback a lot better
> than a lot of people. I think maybe how I was raised. My parents always told me
> you're not perfect. There's room to grow. People are going to try to help you.
> Accept it. Don't have too much of an ego. It'll help you in the long. Maybe they're
> seeing something that you're not seeing that will help you. So, I think it's in the
> mindset, because if not then you feel it might be an attack on you. (Regina,
> personal communication, January 25, 2018)

On the other hand, teachers who did not have a growth mindset, tended to *not* take

up the feedback from their principal. They found it more difficult to accept that they

needed to change something within their classrooms and were more closed off to

different strategies being offered to them. Teachers who did not have a growth mindset

did not seek additional feedback, nor request meetings with their principal. Several

teachers explained resistance towards feedback who were "stuck in their ways" or not

"comfortable with change." Below are some excerpts from the interview that encapsulate

this point, from teachers at Castle Rock Elementary and Monroe Elementary:

> I think for the teachers that do not take up feedback, from the ones I have spoken to, I think it's a fear of the unknown, they are insecure and not comfortable with change. They are stuck to their ways. I think that is why they resist the feedback. (Lauren, personal communication, January 26, 2018).

> There are times when I know my teammates are not open to hearing feedback and how it could help them, because they are set in their ways, I'm doing it this way, because it's the way I feel. It could be fear, it could just be that they are closed off and are not open to change. (Brian, personal communication, January 2, 2018)

Overall, fear of the unknown, fear of change, and using traditional ways of

teaching, where teachers are unwilling to do things differently than in past years, seemed

to correlate more to teachers not having a growth mindset. There seemed to be examples

of this at both schools and examples were not more rampant at one school than at the

other. Teachers open to change, open to suggestions, open to feedback (in any form of

delivery) seemed to correlate to teachers who had a growth mindset. There were

examples of teachers displaying a growth mindset at each of the two school sites, and was

not more predominate at one school site over the other. One important note to make was

that the teachers who from the perception of the principals, did not take feedback well, all

made comments in their interviews suggesting that they were open to feedback and open

to change (characteristics of having a growth mindset). There of course is the question of

how honest one would be (when being interviewed) to admit to being closed off from

suggestions?

Research Question #4: From the perspective of teachers and principals, what are the implications of teacher's responses to feedback for the teacher's professional growth?

In the interviews at the two school sites, there were two main themes that emerged from the teachers and principals in response to this question: what will contribute to teacher's professional growth in response to the feedback that they receive and what will not contribute to teachers' professional growth in regard to feedback. The following sections describe these findings in more detail.

Contributing to professional growth. Teachers and principals at both sites agreed that in order for feedback to contribute to teacher's professional growth it needs to be tied to a goal that teachers are currently working on, something that is explicitly stated and is known to both the teacher and the principal, and feedback needs to contain suggestions or be linked to a training or professional development that the teacher can attend. Below is an excerpt from the perspective of one principal:

> I think that feedback alone does not build capacity, it comes from the professional development (PD) you provide after the feedback. So, if you're providing the PD based on the needs of the feedback then you're building capacity in your teachers. Feedback alone isn't enough, there needs to be suggestions, allowing teachers to observe others, go to trainings, etc., there needs to be that next step tied to the original goal you are working on. (Monica Allworth, personal communication January 30, 2018)

The teachers shared similar statements in their interviews. They seemed to echo the idea that feedback ought to be built on clearly defined professional goals stated early in the year. Another teacher stated:

> At the beginning of the year we write our professional goals. And throughout the year we receive feedback on those goals, I am not sure if other schools do that, but I appreciate it because I know what I need to work on that year, that she is

going to be focused on what I am or am not doing to grow in the area, but it goes back to the goals. (Sarah, personal communication, December 12, 2017)

Similarly, this teacher from Monroe Elementary felt feedback should be connected to her professional plan for growth:

> I believe I have a mentorship [relationship] with my principal. She provides me directly with a goal not just an overall end goal but goals along the way. She gives me steps and ways to get there. I like the feedback I receive because I personally want a plan, this is what we noticed, this is how we will improve it with whatever we are working on. Doesn't everyone? I guess there are some teachers who do not know their own goal, does that make sense? That can't be good. (Regina, personal communication, January 25, 2018)

In addition, teachers believe that having trust in the principal who is providing feedback is critical for receptivity to feedback. For the feedback to be helpful for their professional growth, teachers need to trust is essential. There are several aspects to trust that teachers and principals referenced, among them are: the teachers need to know that the principal sees value in the feedback, teachers need to perceive that the principal is fair among all staff members, and the principal is there to support teachers, allow for them to make mistakes, and not judge them. Below is one excerpt from the interviews, from one principal highlighting this point:

> I realized when I started giving feedback to teachers in the beginning, I just thought I could come in, and bam, and just do it. I realized that was wrong, that I had to build trust and time to be able to do it. I think they trust me because it really comes down to time. It's the things that you don't do. For instance, I'm not writing up something, and putting it in a file, because you didn't do this, or you did do that…They're really watching to see how I behave in terms of when they do something they shouldn't do and how I deal with it. You build trust by not punishing people every time they do something they shouldn't do, and the more they see that you're not just looking for chances to punish, that you're punishment happy, the more they see that, the more they trust you and they're willing to take the chance. (Diane MacGaffey, personal communication, February 2, 2018)

Teachers also shared similar perspectives in regard to how trust affects the way they take up feedback. One teacher at Castle Rock Elementary shares how it is important for him to know his principal believes in feedback:

> I think that she [principal] believes in it [feedback] and is using it the way that she expects us to use it. Which is good for building community and trust as far as she's saying this is what she wants to see, and she's sharing with us and showing us how it should be used [the professional development training teachers received on how to give feedback to their students]. (Brian, personal communication, January 2, 2018)

Another teacher shares how it is important for her that the principal treats all staff in a fair manner:

> I trust my principal, I feel like I can go to her and confide in her and speak freely with her. I feel that she has confidence in me and who I am as a teacher, I feel like her intentions are for all the students. I feel she has integrity and she is very professional, and I think she takes pride in what she does, has a high level of expectation from herself, and I appreciate that. I appreciate the way she runs Castle Rock Elementary, in everything. I appreciate that she is fair with the staff, she does not treat everyone different, she just has a high expectation for all. (Jennifer, personal communication, December 8, 2017)

A teacher at Monroe Elementary shared that it is important to not feel judged by her principal:

> I trust her [principal] because when I say something or have weak moments she is not going to hold it against me. I do not think she is judging me and be like I need to follow up with Mrs. So and so. I do not feel like it's [feedback] always evaluative, I think she genuinely wants to help and if she herself can't help she will direct you on a path to take. So I trust the input she provides. (Sharon, personal communication, January 26, 2018)

For teachers at both schools, feedback tied to their professional goals was imperative in how the teacher's responded to the feedback for their professional growth. Teachers at both sites reference their need for feedback to tie to an overall goal that they were aware of. However, in the interviews only one of the two principals made reference to developing goals with each teacher at the start of the school year. The principal of

Castle Rock Elementary had shared in her interview that each teacher sits down at the beginning of the year with her, whether they are being evaluated that school year or not to create and discuss each teachers professional goal(s) for the year. She also explained that she has a mid-year check in with teachers on these goals, and quarterly check ins with teachers on the goals of their students. On the other hand, the principal of Monroe Elementary shared that goals were created with the teachers being evaluated that school year but made no reference to goals being created for teachers who were not being evaluated that school year. From her comment that she shared (of feedback needing to tie to a goal in order to build capacity), it could be that she has a goal for each teacher, but only the teachers who are being evaluated know specifically what the goal is, since they have monthly reflections regarding that goal. Which would further add to the ambiguity around the feedback her teacher receive.

Teachers at both sites stated that trust in their principal was key in the way that they responded to the feedback that was provided to them for their professional growth. Trust is built when teachers respect the character of the individual, that teachers see that the individual treats others fairly, holds herself to a high standard, and has a high expectation of the teachers. Trust also comes when teachers feel that they are allowed to make mistakes and will not be judged. Finally, trust comes from teachers seeing that the principal values feedback and makes student centered decisions. It is interesting to note that, in the interviews with teachers at each site, all 8 of the teachers characterized the relationship that they have with their principal as a trusting relationship. One teacher at Monroe Elementary at first said the relationship was professional, but later said she trusted her principal. Out of the 8 teachers being interviewed, only one had been at the

school site with that principal for less than 2 years. Time could also play a role in

characterizing the relationship as trusting, as the principal from Castle Rock Elementary

mentioned in her interview "trust takes time."

Not contributing to professional growth. From the perspective of both

principals, one of the concerns they have in regard to the feedback that they provide, and

the ability of the feedback to contribute to the teachers' professional growth is the sense

of compliance rather than commitment (Hubbard et al., 2006) they get when teachers

respond to their feedback, either through actions or in emails. Both were aware that there

are teachers who will change an instructional practice or modify something in their room

for the purposes of compliance and not for the commitment that they wanted out of the

teachers. They both acknowledge that as administrators, people are going to want to

naturally appease them because they are the ones who evaluate the teachers at the end of

the year. This poses a challenge for both principals. One principal explained how some

teachers are defensive and thus merely comply:

> And those [teachers] that do respond [to the wonderings or suggestions] feel like
> they have to defend themselves. Or they respond in a very formal way like as
> though they think that that email that I sent them is a part of their evaluation. So,
> they'll respond, at this time I was doing that. Like they respond almost as though
> they're an administrator back [using objective, factual language]. I'm like dude
> that's not what I want, I wanna see you being reflective about your practice! Not
> for you to simply comply or feel like you need to defend yourself. (Monica
> Allworth, personal communication, January 30, 2018)

The other principal also indicated that responses to the feedback were often superficial

and merely to make the principal happy. She stated:

> I have a lot of staff members, and this is typically human nature, but they want to
> please me, and I wish I could change that because I don't want it to be about
> pleasing me. I want it to be about serving the kids, but I can't. That's human
> nature. They want to please me, and I have to just accept that and go with it. If it

benefits the kids by accepting the fact that they want to please me, then so be it. (Diane MacGaffey, personal communication, February 2, 2018)

One teacher showcased the point of making the changes in her room so she could be recommended for tenure since she currently has probationary status within the district:

I see them in my class three times a week and because I'm on probe [probationary] status, I know I need to change so hopefully I'll get my tenure. They pop in a lot more, so I know there is more push back, but it is part of their job. (Regina, personal communication, January 25, 2018)

From the perspective of principals, when teachers change their instructional practices or strategies in response to the feedback due to compliance rather than commitment they feel that the feedback did not contribute to a teacher's professional growth. There are several reasons that this could happen, for example, the teacher quoted above knows that in order to be recommended for tenure status at the district she needs the recommendation of her principal. Not changing a practice or open to suggestions could mean that she will not be recommended to move from her probationary status. Teachers could also choose to comply to a suggestion made by the principal in feedback because it is their evaluation year, and they do not want their actions to go against their evaluation. A principal is the supervisor at a school site, like Mrs. MacGaffey stated, "it is human nature" that teachers change a practice for the approval of their supervisor. After all, most employees livelihoods depend on the approval of their work from their supervisor.

Feedback not seen as professional development. Something important to note, from the perspective of principals and teachers alike is that feedback is not seen as professional development. Throughout the interviews when asked about professional development opportunities that were offered to teachers, both principals and teachers

referenced trainings that were offered at the district or conferences that were provided throughout the year. When teachers were asked about how their principal supported their professional growth, teachers would reference trainings they were given permission to attend, or professional development that was offered at the site. Everything teachers referenced was in regard to seeing a presenter speak about a topic, however, there was no reference to viewing feedback as professional development from either the principal interviews or from the teacher interviews.

The purpose of professional development at any school site is to build teacher capacity across a school. Feedback, arguably, could be seen as one form of professional development that could be provided at a school, as a mechanism to improve teacher quality. The danger in teachers and principals not seeing feedback as a form of professional development is that they will not give it the importance, the value, as they do trainings or conferences, and thus it could lead to them not internalizing the feedback. In the interviews with teachers, several teachers referenced the conferences that their principals allowed them to go to or the trainings that were offered at the district as a way that their principal supported their professional development. When referencing the conferences or the trainings, teachers said they valued that time or the ability to attend because of all of the different concepts or strategies that they could bring back to their school and classroom. Any type of professional development, it is all in how it is framed, how the purpose is communicated. In the Modesto Union School District, there is a premium put on conferences, on trainings. Teachers and principals each know the purpose of attending a conference, and the expectation (to bring back the material to the school site and put it in practice or train others on the information you received). This

same framing is not apparent when it comes to feedback. Feedback needs to be viewed as one form of professional development, as a mechanism to build teacher capacity, it needs to be given the same value, so that teachers could internalize it.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide the findings to the four research questions of this study through both cases, Castle Rock Elementary and Monroe Elementary in the Modesto Union School District. For each of the research questions there were many similarities as well as differences across schools. Below you will find a brief summary to each research question:

In response to the first research question, what if any feedback opportunities exist for teachers? There were a significant number of opportunities for feedback at both sites. Both school principals valued the importance of feedback and therefore they provided substantial feedback to their teachers, although all teachers at each site did not receive the same amount of feedback. At both sites the principals acknowledged that they provided varying amounts of feedback to their staff depending on the support that they felt they needed. On average, non-veteran teachers received more feedback than veteran teachers because the principals felt they needed more support and guidance. Feedback was also delivered differently across the two school sites. At Castle Rock Elementary the principal preferred to deliver her feedback through a feedback form, while the principal of Monroe Elementary preferred to delivery her feedback through email.

In response to the second research question, what are the teacher's responses to feedback? Teachers identified ideal and not ideal ways to receive feedback. Teachers felt that they would like to receive feedback that was in writing, that contained suggestions or

next steps to the feedback that was provided, and for the principal to provide validation of the positive things they saw around the classroom. Finally, they wanted opportunities to meet with the principal after the feedback was provided, if in case they needed to clarify any wonderings and as opportunity to ask further questions. Teachers at both sites identified non-ideal ways to receive feedback which included: only receiving negative feedback from their principals, only receiving feedback verbally and not written, and receiving feedback on the spot while teaching in front of the students. Additionally, each of the teachers at the two sites recognized some benefits in receiving feedback and saw it as beneficial to their professional growth.

In response to the third research question: what structural, cultural, and agentive factors influence teachers willingness to receive feedback? Structure, culture and agentive factors each played a role in teacher's willingness to receive feedback. The communication in how feedback would be used at each school site was critical in the way that teachers perceived feedback. At Castle Rock Elementary, the principal was very clear about how and when she would be providing feedback and therefore there was no ambiguity amongst staff in regard to the feedback they received. At Monroe Elementary, the principal was not clear in regard to feedback and therefore there was much ambiguity and frustration amongst staff to the feedback that they received. Additionally, the structure of the union played a role in the way that feedback was delivered at one site, while at the other, the absence of this structure did not impede the feedback process for that principal. Culture also played a big role in the way that feedback was received by the teachers. The two schools that were a part of this study have opposing demographics, one servicing an affluent neighborhood and the other servicing a needier population.

From the perspective of teachers, they believed that the context in which they teach in plays a role in the feedback that they received from their administrators. This could be seen in the quantity of the feedback that they receive and in the focus of the feedback that they receive. Finally, it was evident that teachers who had a growth mindset had a significant effect on how teachers perceived and took up feedback. Those with a growth mindset were more open to suggestions and to the feedback that they received than those that did not have a growth mindset and were more "stuck in their ways." Thus, teachers' actions or agency in interaction with the structural and cultural factors present in their school influenced teacher's willingness to receive feedback.

In response to the fourth research question, from the perspective of teachers and principals, what are the implications of teachers responses to feedback for the teachers professional growth? Teachers and principals alike shared their beliefs around what they felt contributed and what did not contribute to their professional growth. In order for feedback to contribute to a teachers' professional growth, principals needed to tie the feedback that they gave to their professional plan or goal, and that goal needed to be articulated to the teacher early on. The feedback should contain next steps or suggestions for how to improve, possibly tied to a training. Teachers also acknowledged that trust in their principal was critical in taking up the feedback for their professional growth. For teachers, trust came in the respect of the principal's character, whether they were fair to all staff members and had integrity, it also came with teachers perceiving from their principals that they were allowed to make mistakes and not be judged in doing so. Finally, trust came in teachers seeing their principal valued the feedback that she was providing. Having trust went a long way in the way they perceived the feedback that

they received. There were also factors that did not contribute to growth, from the perceptions of the principal. Instructional strategies, or classroom supports often changed out of compliance rather than commitment. In addition, the principals felt that teachers often made changes to please the principal. Something important to note that came out of this research question was the disconnect between seeing feedback as a form of professional development for teachers and principals alike and its possible implications.

In the following chapter, I will present the discussion of these findings and how they link to the literature in chapter two, the implications for the teaching profession, and address future research that is needed as a result of the findings from this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This final chapter will converge on the comprehensive lessons learned as a result

of this study. This chapter will provide a summary of the study including a restatement

of the problem of the study, the purpose of the study, the research questions and a brief

description of the methodology. It will summarize the study's findings and offer a

discussion emerging from the findings, address the implications for the educational

community, as well as offer recommendations for further study to conclude this chapter.

Summary of the Study

Background of the Study and Statement of the Problem

Over the last several decades, there have been many federal and state mandates

that have changed the landscape of education. The No Child Left Behind Act, the Race

to the Top Initiative, and the adoption of the Common Core State Standards by most

states, have placed an added pressure on teachers to demonstrate "effective" instructional

practices. These mandates also affect the role of a principal, as an evaluator of

"effective" instructional strategies, and as an instructional leader who continuously needs

to build teacher capacity to satisfy these mandates.

Currently, feedback is used in approximately 65 to 70 percent of organizations

around the world as an intervention tool to guide employee growth and development

(Johnson, 2013). Using feedback in an educational setting not only would serve the

purpose of addressing new state and federal mandates, but it also provides the

opportunity for administrators to build teachers capacity. Providing feedback could be

helpful in improving accountability, increasing performance goals, etc., within an

organization but research suggests that providing feedback is fraught with problems (Lizzio, Wilson, & MacKay, 2008).

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

Although feedback is not a new concept, in organizational structures, or in the realm of the public or private education system, feedback should be an integral component in K-12 private and public education, but often it is not. And, even though feedback has been studied in business management and education, there are still components of feedback that have not been addressed in the literature and thus are not well understood. Sociological concepts to describe the social construction of phenomena, specifically, structure, culture, and agency (Hubbard, 1995; Bourdieu, 1977), could help understand the way feedback is or is not implemented, used, and perceived at a school site. Several researchers have looked at these sociological concepts and their impact on educational phenomena, however, studies have never been conducted on feedback through the lens of this theoretical frame. Therefore, this study was designed to address the gap in the literature on feedback that currently exists by using the theoretical frame of structure, culture, and agency, *in interaction*, to understand the factors that support or challenge feedback in an educational context. This study focused on the interactions that occur between principals and teachers, within and across two schools in the same district.

The study addressed the following research questions:

1) What if any feedback opportunities exist for teachers?

2) What are teacher's responses to feedback?

3) What structural, cultural, and agentive factors, influence teacher's willingness to receive feedback?

a. Structurally, are there policies and practices that influence that process?

b. Culturally, are there specific contextual explanations?

c. How do teacher's individual practices, behaviors or dispositions influence the feedback process?

4) From the perspective of teachers and principals, what are the implications of teachers responses to feedback for the teachers professional growth?

Summary of the Methodology

The research study is a qualitative comparative case study that involved two schools in an elementary school district in southern California. The district was purposively selected in that it is an outlier in the sense that all administrators are asked by the superintendent to provide feedback to their teachers. This district context was selected to improve the opportunities to examine feedback. The district has a total of 46 schools in the district. A major freeway runs through the middle of the district's boundaries. Out of the 46 schools that the district serves, 22 of those schools are located west of the major freeway. The other 24 schools are located east of the major freeway. Schools east of the major freeway typically serve a more affluent population, and schools west of the major freeway serve a low socioeconomic population. Purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002; Glesne, 2006) was employed to select one school that is east of the major freeway and one school west of the major freeway in order to look at the sociological factors that affect school feedback, such as the length that teachers have taught (veteran versus new teachers), demographic differences (more affluent versus poor student population) and cultural, structural and agentive conditions that exist within each school.

There were a total of 10 participants in this study, 8 teachers (4 from each school site) and 2 principals (1 from each school site). Maximum variation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) was used to select 4 teachers, 2 whom from the perspective of the principal do not take feedback well (1 from each school site), and 2 whom from the perspective of the principal does take feedback well (1 from each school site). The other 4 teachers were selected purposively, 2 veteran teachers were randomly selected (1 from each school site), and 2 new teachers were randomly selected (1 from each school site).

The primary research method that was used was in depth interviews using a standardized open-ended interview approach. Each of the interviews were recorded using an iPad and were transcribed at the conclusion of the interview. The main methods of analysis were reflective memos, eclectic coding, In Vivo and description coding, and finally axial coding. A "think display" was used to map the codes and themes once the date was coded and categorized.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from this comparative case study are based on the research questions stated above. In chapter four, the presentation of the findings were organized by each research question; for the purposes of this chapter the findings have been condensed into five major themes:

1) Principals that believe in feedback prioritize it in their day and provide feedback to their teachers, although the structure of the union could impede the feedback process.

2) Teachers willingness to receive feedback from their principal is affected by many factors:

a. The alignment between the feedback that teachers receive and teachers perception of what is their ideal way to receive feedback

b. If the teacher trusts in their principal

c. If teachers have clarity around the feedback process at the school site

d. If the feedback is tied to a professional plan or goal, that is known to the teacher ahead of time

e. If the teacher has a growth mindset

3) Context plays a role in the feedback that teachers receive

4) Principals and teachers do not view feedback as professional development

5) Teachers view feedback as beneficial and that it contributes to their growth

Each of the themes is discussed in the sections that follow.

Principals Provide Feedback If They Believe in It

It is human nature to prioritize a task if it is important to you, therefore it was not a surprise that for feedback to exist at a school site, the principal needs to believe that it is important. From the two principals who participated in this study it was evident that their belief in feedback as a mechanism for teacher development was manifested in prioritizing feedback in their schedules and providing it to their teachers. Even though both principals believed in providing feedback, at one school site, the structure of the teachers union impeded the feedback process. This was consistent with what Pham and Heinemann (2014) and Simon (2012) referenced in their studies, that teacher unions typically do not support feedback, and they could potentially delay or block principals from providing feedback to their teachers. Even though the teacher union had influence at one school site, there were other factors that could have caused the teacher union to

become involved, such as the lack of communication on behalf of the principal in regard to the feedback process at the school site; leaving teachers to look for an advocate in a process they had no clarity in. Overall, the purpose of feedback at a school site and its benefits is well understood (Vanhoof, Verhaeghe, Petegem, & Valcke, 2012), however, for feedback to not only exist at a school but for it to thrive, the principal needs to believe in its benefits so that its implementation could be seen at a school site. If a principal does not believe in the benefits of feedback, it is likely that it will not be used at a school, given priority or time, or it could be provided by the principal to teachers strictly out of compliance.

Teachers Willingness to Receive Feedback Depends on Many Factors

The willingness of a teacher to receive feedback depends on many different factors, among them: the alignment between the feedback that teachers receive and teachers perception of what is their ideal way to receive feedback, for the teacher to have trust in the principal, for the teacher to have clarity around the feedback process at the school site, for the feedback to be tied to a professional goal that the teacher knows of ahead of time, and for the teacher to have a growth mindset.

Ideal way to receive feedback. Any individual is more receptive to advise, suggestions, or feedback when it aligns with what we believe is the ideal way to receive that piece of advice, suggestion or feedback. Therefore, it is not a surprise that the teachers of this study were much more receptive to the feedback that their principal provided when it aligned with what they had in mind was ideal for them. This of course presents challenges to the principal or administrator providing feedback to teachers, as the range of what is ideal for teachers could be vast and numerous. What is preferred for

a teacher could change in terms of the delivery of the feedback, the quantity of the

feedback, the structure or the content of the feedback (Sleiman, 2015; Sleiman 2015).

Although this does present a unique challenge to the principal, research has called out the

importance of differentiating feedback for teachers (Range, Finch, Young, & Hvidston,

2014; Glickman, 1980) in order to increase receptivity.

      Trust in principal. Teachers were much more willing to take up the feedback

that was provided to them by their principal when they trusted in that individual. Our

perception of the feedback that we receive is inevitably influenced and at times tainted by

who is giving it to us, the way we perceive that person, and the relationship we have with

that person (Stone & Heen, 2014). When principals cultivate nonthreatening principal-

teacher relationships that are characterized by trust, openness, and freedom to make

mistakes (Cangelosi, 1991), it assists in increasing the willingness of teachers to receive

feedback from that principal (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). On the other hand, if there is

little or no trust between the person providing the feedback and the individual receiving

it, it can be viewed negatively or can be ignored altogether (Stone & Heen, 2014; à

Campo, 1993; Bryk & Schneider, 2003). This finding is critical for principals to consider

as they implement feedback systems at their schools; teachers, like students, do not want

to learn from someone they do not trust. Investing the time in developing trust can go a

long way in influencing teacher's willingness to receive feedback.

      Clarity in feedback process. When we do not have clarity on a task, a process, or

a structure that is being put in place, we lack the commitment towards it. It is not a

surprise that the teachers in this study craved clarity in the feedback process at their

school sites. Without a clear sense of purpose of the structure of feedback at the school

site, teachers were left to their interpretation of why it existed and why they needed to be a part of it. Often, like in other aspects of life, when there is no clarity, it can lead to miscommunications and misinterpretations, as was seen at one of the school sites in this study. If the purpose of feedback is clearly defined, teachers will have a greater understanding of the reasoning behind the arrangement and its purpose for being implemented, which could possibly lead to a higher level of receptiveness.

Feedback tied to a goal. Similarly, when we feel unclear about a goal, we have difficulty achieving it, and if you do not know why you should be doing something, you may lack commitment to take action. According to research, the most effective forms of feedback are those tied to a goal(s) (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). When feedback is tied to a goal, we are more likely to increase effort, if the intended goal is clear (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Teachers receptivity to feedback rose when their principals communicated their goal early on and provided feedback in response to this goal. There was a sense of clarity that teachers derived from knowing what they were working towards and that the feedback was a step in reaching that goal. Feedback needs to have a clear purpose; tying feedback to a goal would allow teachers and principals alike to align their efforts towards a common objective.

Having a growth mindset. A teacher's belief or mindset plays a role in the way he or she is going to internalize the feedback they receive and whether he or she will put it into practice. Teachers who view feedback more fruitfully see themselves as ever evolving or ever growing, thus, teachers who have this mindset, otherwise known as a "growth mindset" see feedback as valuable information on where they stand now, and the steps needed to work on next (Stone & Heen, 2014; Dweck, 2006). This of course poses

numerous challenges for a principal who may encounter teachers who do not have a "growth mindset" at his or her school campus. Stone and Heen (2014), state that there are steps that could help mitigate the problem towards promoting a culture of learners: providing lessons to the teachers on the differences between a growth mindset and a fixed mindset is seen as a possible step, highlighting learning stories, and providing training to teachers on how to recognize their "defensive triggers" are other steps. One could argue that the time needed to invest in these steps is not feasible, however, investing time in developing a culture of learners could potentially assist teachers to change their mindset to see feedback as valuable information that could assist in their growth and development rather than provide only a critique of their instructional practices.

Context Plays a Role in Feedback That Teachers Receive

A key finding from this study is the relationship between the context of the school (servicing more affluent students versus low socioeconomic students) and feedback. Teachers experienced a difference in the feedback that they received on two ends: in the quantity of feedback that they received, and the focus or the content of their feedback. This finding aligns with the literature in that principals behave differently in different school contexts, whether that can be seen in their focus for the school year, their day to day focus, or in their level of observations of classrooms (Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010). This of course could be attributed to principals placing a priority on a certain activity because from their perception that activity or task leads to more fruitful outcomes for their school over others. Similarly, in other research, Donaldson (2013) points out that principals of schools with higher concentrations of students in poverty encountered more obstacles in providing professional development, or in this case feedback to their teachers

and so consequently, the feedback teachers received or did not receive was influenced by the context of the school. This was evident at Monroe Elementary, where the principal said the majority of her time was spent in other areas and not enough time was spent in the classrooms, providing the feedback her teachers needed. Overall, more research is needed to tease out the factors within the school's context that impact the feedback process at the school site.

Principals and Teachers Do Not View Feedback as Professional Development

To most administrators or teachers, the purpose of professional development is meant to provide a variety of specialized training or professional learning in order to improve a teachers (or administrator's) professional understanding, aptitude, skill and effectiveness within the classroom. Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins (2008) state that successful leaders understand and develop people, among other things. Developing people involves providing professional development by providing "individualized support and consideration" (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008, p. 30). Studies have shown time and time again that professional development is a key way in which principals could facilitate improved instructional practices (Louis, et al., 2010). Thus, it came as a surprise that in this study principals and teachers did not view feedback as a form of professional development when the very definition of feedback aligns with the overall purpose of professional development.

In reflecting on the interviews with the teachers and the principal, there seems to be a disconnect in what they view to be professional development and feedback. In fact, in one study, principals tended to rely on hiring external professional development consultants as the primary way of influencing teacher effectiveness (Donaldson, 2013).

This could potentially be the cause of the disconnect since the principals at both sites relied on consultants and/or trainers for the professional development needs of their school sites. Their communication that trainings or conferences are professional development could have also played a role in why teachers schema of professional development is much narrower. These are however only assumptions, as there is very little data or research in this area, and more conclusive studies are needed to expand on this finding.

Teachers View Feedback as Beneficial

The final finding for this study is that teachers view feedback as beneficial and as something that contributes to their professional growth. This finding is consistent with the research on teacher career development that reveals that teachers have a strong need for growth, whether that comes through feedback, engaging in continuous collaboration, reflection, and or engaging in critical thinking. (Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Brookfield, 1986; Mezirow, 1990; Zemke & Zemke, 1995). This finding, really brings the purpose of feedback full circle; feedback can serve as a way of providing professional development as an instrument to build teacher capacity across a school.

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Implications for School and Classroom Leaders

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This study has practical implications for anyone that gives feedback, that operates within the field of education. This particular study has more practical implications for superintendents, administrators, curriculum or resource teachers, classroom teachers and anyone actively involved in receiving and giving feedback. This study provides those in education a lens on what factors affect the implementation and use of feedback in a K-6 school setting.

School leaders, as well as classroom teachers, need to consider the benefits of feedback and how a teacher's and an administrator's agency could affect the way feedback is perceived and received within a school. Likewise, those in the field of education need to understand the role that culture has in a school and on any structure. Establishing feedback as a mechanism for building teacher capacity at a school is simply not enough. School leaders and teachers need to take a look at how the interaction of factors related to agency, culture and structure have a role in the way any effort to build capacity is received. These factors need to be at the forefront when considering how educational outcomes manifests at a school site.

Recommendation for Further Study

This dissertation served as modest first step in addressing the gap in the literature that currently exists by using the theoretical frame of structure, culture, and agency, *in interaction*, to understand the factors that support or challenge feedback in an educational context. The findings provide a door of opportunity to conduct future studies in two areas: the first is to investigate further what factors within a school's context impacts the feedback process at the site, and secondly, to try to uncover why principals and teachers do not view feedback as professional development and therefore may not take it seriously. Furthermore, much of the focus of this study was placed upon feedback being provided to teachers from principals. Future studies would benefit from exploring the factors that support or challenge feedback from others that also provide feedback to teachers, such as associate principals, instructional coaches, other teachers. Considering the lack of literature that currently exists on the relationship between feedback and professional development, and what factors within the school context influence the

feedback process at the school site, the research community could now be charged with the task of conducting future studies in these areas. Doing so would enable principals and the school communities in which they serve to operate at a higher functioning level. This study was based on a modestly sized, purposive sample in one district with two district school sites, in one southern California city. Future qualitative studies could be conducted to represent the experiences of principals and teachers in other types of schools, such as charter school or magnet schools. In addition, future studies could also be conducted in a different geographic location represent the experiences of principals and teachers in other parts of the United States, such as the east, the south, etc. Additional studies in this area of inquiry would help confirm the ideas presented here in order to substantiate conclusive or more generalizable findings. These qualitative studies could potentially then lead to quantitative studies that could test the generalizability of these findings by increasing the number of participants in the studies.

Limitations and Conclusion

As with all research there are clear limitations to this study. This study was based on the perceptions of teachers and the perceptions of principals. Perceptions of the principal were checked against the perceptions of the teachers at the same site, but ultimately these findings rely heavily on principal and teacher self-report. It could be possible that some of the findings could be more perceived than real. It is also important to note that the degree of honesty and candor of the participants could be a factor that could potentially skew the data. However, comparing the responses of the teachers and of the principal helped to provide a more holistic picture of each school site.

Additional, given my professional background (having spent 9 years as an instructional assistant, teacher and administrator within the district), Banks (2006) would categorize me as an "indigenous-insider" to the participants of the study. I understand that as an indigenous-insider I could glance over critical pieces in the data and the interviews. Being immersed in the districts culture, in feedback protocols, and the overall field of education, I had to constantly interrogate my data to challenge my subjectivity. I also debriefed with colleagues along the way to make sure I was addressing my biases and to make sure I was not missing any key details from my data.

Another key limitation is proving a causal relationship between principals belief in feedback and the prioritization of feedback at a site, the relationship between the schools context and the feedback received from an administrator to a teacher, the relationship between teachers willingness to receive feedback and the factors stated above, and lastly the relationship between feedback and professional development. As qualitative research, this study does not support causal inferences, but highlights potential relationships that could be further explored in subsequent qualitative studies and later tested through large-scale quantitative research.

Ultimately, schools that produce greater gains in student achievement, hire, assign, develop and retain teachers differently than schools with lower student achievement gains (Loeb, Kalogrides, & Béteille, 2012). Given the role that teachers and principals play in student learning, it is important to interrogate the barriers to providing feedback within the classroom. If the goal of education is that *all* students receive a high-quality education, we must create the conditions so that principals or school leaders do

not encounter obstacles in their efforts to increase teacher capacity so that effective

teaching becomes the standard across the nation.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Guide for Teachers

The following is a list of questions designed to provide information relating to a teacher's perception of feedback related to how it is used in education.

Background of the Teacher

- How many years have you been working as a teacher?

- Have you worked in another district other than this district? If so, which district(s)?

- How many different school(s) have you worked in?

- How many different administrators have you worked for?

- Are you a tenured teacher or have probationary status within the district?

- How long have you worked in the district?

- What would you classify as your race/ethnicity?

- What is your gender?

- What is your age?

Context and Culture of the School

- How would you describe your current school site in regards to:

  o Students (probe: demographics, academic outcomes, etc.)

  o Families (probe: Socioeconomic status, involvement, level of education, etc.)

  o The availability of resources

- Can you describe the expectations you have of:

  o Students

  o Families

- How would describe the culture of the school?

Logistics of Feedback

- At your school site (now), who predominately gives you feedback?

- Approximately how many times a week would you say you receive feedback from that person?

- Is there a specific time, arrangement, etc. (probe: get at structures, formal and informal)

  - Additional Probes: What are the structures currently in place?

  - Additional Probes: Are they formal? Are they informal? What does it look like?

- When you receive feedback, how is it delivered to you? What does a typical interaction look like?

- What does the feedback you receive look like?

- Do your colleagues across the school receive feedback differently than you do?

Response to Feedback and Why

- In some schools' people hate feedback, in others they love it and can't wait for more because it seems to push their practice, where would you fall in that continuum? Where would this school fall in that continuum?

- How would you describe the culture that exists in this school in regards to feedback (support for, resistance, ambiguity, etc.)

  - Additional probes: What factors play a role in this? How do people feel about it? Are people on board with the feedback given? Does it feel oppressive? Does it feel helpful? What kind of conversations are happening at the school around feedback?

- How do you feel about the way feedback is delivered to you?

- Do you respond to feedback differently at this school site than at your previous school site?

    o What factors played a role in this?

- What is your ideal way of receiving feedback? Why?

- What is not an ideal way of receiving feedback? Why?

- Do you feel that the context you teach in has a role in the feedback you receive?

- Do you feel that you receive less or more feedback because of your status (veteran teacher, new teacher) within the district?

- What do teachers at your site say about feedback?

- How do you personally take up feedback?

- From your perspective, what is the attitude of the person providing feedback to you, towards feedback?

- What is the follow up to feedback that is provided?

- Do people at your school see feedback differently than you? And why would that be?

    o Additional probes: Do you all feel positive? Why is it?

Outcomes of Feedback

- How was feedback helped for your own professional growth? For your students? What evidence do you have of this?

- What impact has it made on your students? What evidence is there of that?

- What do you do differently? How do you know?

- Is feedback building capacity at your site? How do you know?

- What have been the results of feedback given for you? For your school site? Do you see any outcome change because of it?

Other Thoughts

- Is there anything else you would like to add?

If necessary the researcher will ask a following up question to any of these questions such as, "Can you give me an example of what you just told me?" to probe for concrete examples to gather rich data.

APPENDIX B

Interview Guide for Principals

The following is a list of questions designed to provide information relating to a

principal's perception of feedback related to how it is used in education.

Background of the Principal

- How many years have you been working as a principal?

- Have you worked in another district other than this district? If so, which

  district(s)?

- How many different school(s) have you worked in?

- How long have you worked in the district?

- What would you classify as your race/ethnicity?

- What is your gender?

- What is your age?

Context and Culture of the School

- How would you describe your current school site in regards to:

  o Students (probe: demographics, academic outcomes, etc.)

  o Families (probe: Socioeconomic status, involvement, level of education,

    etc.)

  o The availability of resources

- Can you describe the expectations you have of:

  o Students

  o Families

- How would describe the culture of the school?

Logistics of Feedback

- How do you provide feedback? (Probes: method of delivery)

- Do you provide the same amount of feedback to everyone? Why?

- Is there variation in the way you provide feedback? Why?

- How do you negotiate all the demands that you have? Where does feedback fit on your priority list? How do you fit it into your day?

- How do you do it? When do you do it? Is it too much time? Is it too little of time?

- You just provided feedback, what are your next steps in the process?

- Do you ever provide joint feedback? Pair individuals based on needs?

- How is providing feedback working for you? How is it playing out?

- What are the challenges involved with feedback?

- What are the things that best support providing feedback?

- What support has the district given you in terms of:

    o Building your own capacity when it comes to feedback

    o Time to provide feedback

    o Resources

Beliefs Around Feedback

- In some schools, people hate feedback, in others they love it and can't wait for more because it seems to push their practice, where would you say the school falls in that continuum?

- How would you describe the culture that exists in this school in regards to feedback? (support for, resistance, ambiguity, etc.)

    o Additional probes: What factors play a role in this? How do people feel about it? Are people on board with the feedback given? What kind of conversations are happening at the school around feedback?

- Do you feel that feedback will help all teachers change, improve?

- What are your beliefs about feedback?

- Do you believe that providing feedback is a good process to go through? Why?

- Why do you believe the district is supportive of feedback? What is the evidence that has been provided to you?

- Is there variation in the way your teachers have taken up feedback? What do you attribute these variations to?

- What's the culture of the school regarding feedback? What do most teachers think about it?

- Do you think that feedback builds teacher capacity? Is it building capacity at your school site?

- What impact has feedback had on students? What evidence is there of that?

If necessary the researcher will ask a following up question to any of these questions such as, "Can you give me an example of what you just told me?" to probe for concrete examples to gather rich data.

APPENDIX C

Research Participant Consent Form

For the research study entitled:
Performance Feedback: How Structure, Culture and Agency Affects Feedback

I. Purpose of the research study
Researcher, Angelica Sleiman is a student in the School of Leadership and Educational Sciences at the University of San Diego. You are invited to participate in a study that she is doing. The purpose of this research study is to understand the factors that support or challenge feedback in an educational context, specifically between principals or teachers.

II. What you will be asked to do
If you decide to be part of this study, you will be asked to:
Participate in 3 interviews: a pre-interview lasting approximately 10 minutes to discuss the study, an interview for approximately 60 minutes, and a post interview lasting approximately 20 minutes to debrief the study's findings.

The total time it will take to complete this study will be approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes.

III. Foreseeable risks or discomforts
Sometimes when people are asked to think about their feelings, they feel sad or anxious. If you would like to talk to someone about your feelings at any time, you can call toll-free, 24 hours a day: San Diego Mental Health Hotline at 1-800-479-3339

IV. Benefits
By participating in this study you will help researchers, like Mrs. Sleiman, to understand the effects that feedback could have in education.

V. Confidentiality
Any information that the researcher collects will be kept in a safe place. Any information taken will not have any of your real names, but a fake name. Your real name will never be used. The results of this study might be presented publically, but your name will never be shown to anyone.

VI. Compensation
You will not receive anything from this study.

VII. Voluntary Nature of this Research
You do not have to do this study if you do not want to, it is entirely up to you.
Choosing not to participate in this will not affect you at all. If you choose to be part of this study and then change your mind, you are free to no longer be part of the study if you wish to do so and there will not be any consequences in doing this.

VIII. Contact Information
If you have any questions about this research, you may contact:

Angelica Sleiman
Email: **xxxxxxx@sandiego.edu**
Phone: **xxx-xxx-xxxx**

I have read and understand this form and wish to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this form for me to keep.

Signature of Participant   Date

Name of Participant (**Printed**)

Signature of Investigator   Date

Name of Investigator (**Printed**)

University of San Diego®

Oct 18, 2017 11:10 AM PDT

Angelica Sleiman
Sch of Leadership & Ed Science

Re: Expedited - Initial - IRB-2018-48, Performance Feedback: How structure, culture and agency affects feedback

Dear Angelica Sleiman:

The Institutional Review Board has rendered the decision below for IRB-2018-48, Performance Feedback: How structure, culture and agency affects feedback.

Decision: Approved

Selected Category: 7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Findings: None

Research Notes:

Internal Notes:

Note: We send IRB correspondence regarding student research to the faculty advisor, who bears the ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the research. We request that the faculty advisor share this correspondence with the student researcher.

The next deadline for submitting project proposals to the Provost's Office for full review is N/A. You may submit a project proposal for expedited or exempt review at any time.

Sincerely,

Dr. Thomas R. Herrinton
Administrator, Institutional Review Board

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