Leader Self-Renewal: Mind, Body, Spirit Connection Inherent in Sustainable Leadership

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Leader Self-Renewal: Mind, Body, Spirit Connection Inherent in Sustainable Leadership

by

LaSonja Roberts

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Department of Leadership, Counseling, Adult, Career, and Higher Education
College of Education
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Keywords: Principal Preparation, Retention, Well-being, Stress Management

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Abstract

This dissertation builds upon stress and burnout research on school leaders by exploring the beliefs and practices regarding well-being and self-renewal of principals identified as successful. This study utilized a 3-fold framework that consisted of mind, body, and spirit, falling under the all-encompassing umbrella of thriving, asserting the three domains work together to support the optimal well-being of the leader. The research questions were as follows:

1) In what ways are principals’ well-being and self-renewal supported by principals’ personal beliefs and practices, district policies and practices, and educational programs and organizations?

2) To what extent does attentiveness to well-being and practices of self-renewal impact professional success and work satisfaction, and well-being and flourishing?

This study included a diverse group of six principals, all identified as successful and all with three or more years of experience as administrators. The case study consisted of mostly interviews with some survey inquiry. The primary method of analysis was holistic descriptive and in vivo coding with loose applications of formal protocols provided by Saldaña (2009). In my final analysis the participant responses were organized into categories and layered into my pre-existing framework of mind, body, and spirit. The findings from the study revealed the current successes and challenges in the personal and professional renewal of principals. The findings yielded implications for research and practice specific to principals, school districts, and principal preparation programs.
Chapter One

Introduction

While the origins of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) date back to Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987), my introduction came by way of Barrett and Fry’s (2008) *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Approach to Building Cooperative Capacity*. They presented their text with the premise that the world of public and private enterprise was immersed in a deficit discourse. This discourse prevented members of these enterprises from seeing the possibilities. They posited society not only searches for deficiency in organizations, but also in human beings. Barrett and Fry (2008) noted this deficit approach is actually promoted in the field of psychology, a field entrusted to study and establish the foundational principles of human behavior and the mind. They referenced the work of Martin Seligman. Seligman is not only the former President of the American Psychological Association, but he is also known by many as the father of Positive Psychology. In 1998 Seligman formally addressed his professional peers and noted the past thirty years of the psychology profession had been spent focused on depression. He quoted over 45,000 articles were published in psychological journals about depression while only about 400 (less than one percent) focused on joy. Seligman remarked, “Social science has believed negative things were authentic and human strengths were coping mechanisms,” (Barrett & Fry, p. 29). Since then, we have seen an upshot of practitioners within the field of psychology who have shifted to studying “subjective well-being,” otherwise known as positive psychology (Suldo, 2016).
While Seligman may be the father of positive psychology, the notion of subjective well-being got its origins earlier on with the works of William James’ “healthy mindedness,” humanistic psychology, and Maslow’s studies in self-actualization and the study of healthy individuals (Linley, Joseph, Harrington, & Wood, 2006). Seligman’s revival of these themes has allowed for new conversations in arenas with the greatest need for counters to a deficit model.

As stated by Barrett and Fry (2008) this transformational counter deficit thinking is limited in the corporate and social arenas that “most need renewal and transformation” (p. 23). Seligman’s work in positive psychology has extended to a movement in positive schooling with a focus on well-being. Appreciative Inquiry has threaded its way into the framework of corporate organizations over the last ten years, but it has been slow to breach the walls of United States public schools. Most recently, appreciative inquiry has breached the surface in the field of higher education as professors promote AI in higher education management and counseling (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008; Bloom, Hutson, He, & Konkle, 2014), and in the field of K-12 education as Burrello, Beitz, and Mann (2016) use appreciative inquiry as the building block for appreciative organizing in schools.

The discussion of well-being and strengths as core school values may be beneficial to concerns with principal stress and burnout. Principals are currently in need of training and support that extends beyond their way of work, to their way of life (Cushing, Kerrins, & Johnstone, 2003; DeJong, Grundmeyer, & Yankey, 2017; Drago-Severson, 2012; Eckman & Kelber, 2010). The deficit discourse in education is not limited to schools, but those who inhabit the schools (Finkel, 2012; McCullers & Bozeman, 2010; Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008). While there is an abundance of literature to advocate for the well-being of students and teachers, principals and other leaders are often left out of the equation. Thus, this dissertation attempts to advocate
for a body of research that counters the current deficit lens and instead redefines the professional identity of the principal by highlighting successful models, and the holistic being of the leader that requires acknowledgement of the mind, body, and spirit.

**Purpose of the Study**

Principal stress and burnout impacts principal well-being and principal recruitment and retention (DeJong et al., 2017; Eckman & Kelber, 2010; Friedman, 2002; Wong, Cheuk, & Rosen, 2000). This study builds upon stress and burnout research by providing possible solutions to common causes of stress and burnout. This study specifically assessed the mind, body, and spirit connection inherent in the individuals in principal roles in a large and diverse metropolitan school district. Success is not simply connected to the skill-set of the principal often associated with their mental intellect, but it is also a reflection of their connection to their spirit or core beliefs and the ability to manifest those beliefs in their leadership. Additionally, it is connected to their care of self that keeps them psychologically and physically prepared to do the work of the principal. While this study includes an analysis of the contribution of district and educational programs and organizations to principal well-being and self-renewal, the emphasis is on principals’ personal beliefs and practices and how they influence well-being and self-renewal.

**Research Questions**

*Question One*: In what ways are principals’ well-being and self-renewal supported by principals’ personal beliefs and practices, district policies and practices, and educational programs and organizations?

*Question Two*: To what extent does attentiveness to well-being and practices of self-renewal impact professional success and work satisfaction, and well-being and flourishing?
Rationale of the Study

In order to understand the challenges of the principalship, it is useful to understand contemporary contexts that have contributed to principal stress and burnout. Since the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA) education has transitioned from a time of self-regulation and little government interference, to a tidal wave of legislation that pushes federal government involvement and regulation of schooling, all in the name of equality or equity. Over the course of a week it is expected that the media will present some commentary regarding the state of America’s schools. Usually this commentary follows a script established decades earlier with the introduction of the A Nation at Risk report in 1983. The report asserted, “the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens the very future of our Nation” (Loss & McGuinn, 2016, p. 3). The framing of the U.S.’s educational system as mediocre continued over the next few decades with the adoption of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) of 2002 and currently the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 (Henig & Stone, 2008; Lewis, 2009; Rogers-Chapman, 2015).

Embedded in this discourse of school failure is educator failure. The popular discourse has become one that challenges the effectiveness and professionalism of educators, creating at times a partition between them and the communities they serve. This schism is not limited to educators and the community of students and parents but exists within the wall of the school as one looks at the relationship between administrators and teachers. Historically, the position of the principal has been one of isolation (Eckman & Kelber, 2010; Hallinger, 1992; Rousmaniere, 2013). Due to the dynamics that shape school reform, with the labeling of schools as low and
high performing and the displacement of principals and teachers, the void has grown. Therefore, the administrator is an especially vulnerable and complex position.

Historically, “the educator” stems from altruistic origins, emphasizing a selfless concern with the well-being of others (Arias, 2016; Cushing et al., 2003; Gunzenhauser, 2008). It was actually spoken of in similar ways as one would the religious order. Educators were called to the profession. They were called to serve the children and families of society. Embedded in this “service” one finds a discourse of sacrifice that displays itself in long work hours, dedication to students and families, and low pay. This service often extends beyond the classroom and reflects in expectations for the personal lives of educators, as evidenced in the morality clauses found in most public school contracts. Educators are held to a higher standard but are not always at the top of the list for rewards, or even reflected in the most positive light by the media (Finkel, 2012; McCullers & Bozeman, 2010; Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008).

The administrator is challenged with being all things to all people. Administrators and teachers are not viewed in the same light. The principal’s office is not the safe haven that one might find in the classroom, nor is the principal always viewed as the nurturer, but more often the tyrant or warden. Rousmaniere (2013) highlights the history of the principal’s office and acknowledges in Goffman’s (1986) language a stage surrounded by rituals of discipline and punish, hierarchy and evaluation. It is neither endearing to the teacher or student. These character roles may not be the desire of the principal, but discipline and evaluation are parts of the role. Media and policy have at times promoted them as the dominant roles (Rousmaniere, 2013).

Today’s accountability policies have continued the image of the principal as warden (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Easton, & Luppescu, 2010; Kafka, 2009; Malen, 2011; Northouse, 2018). Today’s principal must perform an excessive amount of evaluation, and if he/she manages
to maintain a collegial relationship with the teachers at the school, this principal may face multiple re-assignments over the course of a decade as evidenced in increased principal mobility associated with accountability policies. Evaluation is maximized and relationships are minimized. In addition, policies designed to improve performance have strained the relationship that exists between educators and parents and the community (Gordon & Louis, 2009; Schutz, 2006). Teacher unions have had to assert themselves in ways that break the mold of the selfless educator in order to advocate for necessary protections. This has in turn caused a division in many communities where teacher rights are assumed to come at the price of student rights. Similarly, policies have been implemented, often known as trigger laws, that allow parents and community members to challenge the effectiveness of administrators by voting out principals (Kelly, 2012; Muller, Dodd, & Fiala, 2014). Trigger laws and other similar policies impact the conversations, power dynamics, and alliances that could be fostered if education reform were not framed as a zero-sum game where somebody loses, and some person or group is to blame, and instead a collaborative effort of all stakeholders to work together for the bettering of the school.

While Appreciative Organizing allows a leader to reframe the past and current challenges of the way of work for a principal, there also have to be the additional supports that promote an appreciative way of life. To date, few national educational or district programs focus on the wellness aspects of leadership (Murphy, 2016; Wells, 2013; Wells, Mayfield, & Klocko, 2011). Harvard offered its first Mindfulness for Educators program this past school year to assist educators in “balance[ing] inner needs with outer responsibilities while reducing uncertainty, stress, and feelings of being overwhelmed” (https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ppe/new-professional-ed-program-mindful-practices). Attentiveness to psychological and physical well-being can combat job stress (Jennings, Brown, Frank, Doyle, Oh, Davis & Greenberg, 2017; Reiser,
Murphy & McCarthy, 2016; Sharp & Jennings, 2016). Additionally, positive emotions, emphasized in positive psychology, can impact both the personal and professional lives of leaders by strengthening relationships, productivity, social connections, and commitment to the leader and the work (Bakker, 2011; Dutton, Roberts & Bednar, 2010; Lilius, Worline, Maitlis, Kanov, Dutton, & Frost, 2011). Thus, the emphasis on well-being and strengths may be a piece of the puzzle to promoting an appreciative way of life for leaders.

**Background of the Researcher**

My background as a teacher and administrator gave me insider status to the challenges of educators and administrators, specifically when it comes to attentiveness to well-being and practices of self-renewal. I had my own experiences of trying to balance personal and professional responsibilities within the confines of a 24-hour day. While I can name multiple sources of support for my professional preparation as a teacher and a leader, there was very little offered to address work-life balance. As teachers, we were told not to overextend ourselves, but we were never given specific strategies for stress prevention or reduction. The same was true for managing the workload. When I started teaching in 2000 the teacher to student ratio was 1:18. When I resigned from the same school ten years later in 2010 my teacher to student ratio was 1:36. I was a high school English teacher with five sections of English. In 2000 my student load averaged 90, while in 2010 my student load averaged 180. It had doubled. Over the course of those ten years professional development addressed multiple aspects of teaching, but there was nothing on well-being or managing teacher workload. Similarly, as I entered administration there was a myriad of professional development on visioning, teacher evaluation, unpacking standards, aligning curriculum to standards, and successful implementation of behavior interventions, but nothing to address principal well-being or even staff well-being. I was a successful principal of a
turnaround school, but I chose to leave because I could not balance the demands of maintaining the success of my school with the demands of raising my child and caring for myself. I did not think that I was alone in this struggle, so I started to research the push and pull factors of principal retention. I learned other administrators balanced the tensions between the personal and professional by remaining in assistant principal positions, taking district level positions, or returning to the classroom (Cushing et al., 2003). I was not alone. There were definite concerns with the maintenance of personal and professional well-being for educators, but especially educational leaders.

Once arriving at the university, I spent three years as a co-facilitator of a principal preparation program, consistently assessing and accommodating the needs of aspiring principals. Year after year aspiring principals were expressing concern and asking for sessions to address work-life balance. District directors also expressed interest and concern in the topic. Whenever we tried to pull candidates for panels on principal well-being or work-life balance we were limited. The program served six districts, and while the directors could point to multiple examples of successful principals, they could not point to multiple examples of successful principals who were balancing their personal and professional lives. These successful principals were working extended hours and under excessive stress. They were surviving but not thriving. These two experiences pointed to limited explicit support of principal well-being at the district level as well as at the leader preparation level. I compared this experience to my experience in dance. As a dance major we were required to take nutrition, kinesiology, and a semester of sports therapy. None of these classes were about dancing, they were instead about self-care. They were attached to our dance curriculum as a proactive attempt to prevent eating disorders and prevent injuries or assist in the treatment of injuries, all psychological and physical conditions common
to the profession. While administration is not a performing art, there is a research-based premise for providing stress management supports to improve the work satisfaction and retention of principals (Carr, 1994; Cushing et al., 2003; DeJong et al., 2017; Friedman, 2002). I hope my research provides evidence and resources to support the investment in and maintenance of principal well-being.

**Significance of the Study**

This case study has implications for principals in need of models to promote higher levels of personal and professional well-being and overall thriving. It explores the role of the principal, school district, and educational organizations in supporting principal well-being. It creates a frame for further exploration into supporting the mind, body, and spirit of principals, which entails considerations beyond educational theory to mental and physical practices of wellness. Inquiries explore the socio-emotional health of educators as well as the impact of incentivized health initiatives on school personnel. These principals and their practices of self-renewal will serve as guidance for individuals, districts, and professional programs in their attempts to identify strategies and dispositions that foster well-being and ultimately impact training, recruitment, and retention of principals.

Inherent in the study of principal well-being is the extension of well-being to faculty and students. Therefore, this study offers the additional benefit of providing information about how some principals build capacity with their teachers, how they support teacher and student well-being, and how they positively impact school culture to improve well-being for all stakeholders.

**Structure and Summary of Study**

This dissertation follows the traditional five-chapter format. Chapter one is an introduction to the purpose, rationale, and organization of the study. Chapter two provides a
literature review on the context of the principalship in public education, summation of stress and burn-out literature, as well as the little that is known regarding the promotion of principal well-being and self-renewal. Chapter three highlights the research design and methods. Chapter four introduces the findings and chapter five provides discussion and implications for the findings of the study. The chapters are summarized in the following paragraphs.

This study builds upon stress and burnout research on school leaders by providing possible solutions to the current challenges in the field. The study specifically reflected upon the mind, body, and spirit relationship inherent in the principalship. While many studies chronicle successful leadership practices, few discuss successful well-being and self-renewal practices. Success is not simply connected to the skill-set of the principal often associated with their mental intellect, but also a state of well-being and provisions for self-renewal that are connected to the body and spirit of the individual which allow the mind to be at its best. While this study included an analysis of the contribution of district and educational programs and organizations to principal well-being and self-renewal, the emphasis was on principal’s personal beliefs and practices and how they influenced well-being and self-renewal.

The framework that informs this study relies on theories in the field of education and psychology. These theories create a lens that offer multiple perspectives for exploring the well-being and self-renewal of principals. It is a 3-fold framework that consists of mind, body, and spirit falling under the all-encompassing umbrella of thriving. Thriving is described by Bundick, Yeager, King & Damon, (2010) as “the functioning of the integrated, whole person across all life domains; thus, the term implies personal balance, such that one is not considered thriving if he or she is functioning and developing positively in one aspect or area of his or her life but having serious developmental problems in others” (891). This dissertation explored the journey of
leaders identified as successful striving to thrive across all life domains of mind, body, and spirit, asserting that the three domains work together to support the optimal well-being of the leader. The framework is represented in Table 1 with subcategories for each domain.

**Table 1: Mind, Body, Spirit Framework**

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<td>• Knowledge, Traits, Dispositions</td>
<td>• Positive Emotions/Disposition</td>
<td>• Frame Analysis/The Mask of Professional Identity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Preparation and Practices</td>
<td>• Health: Diet, Exercise, Sleep</td>
<td>• Active/Ethical Professional</td>
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<td>• Relationships and Engagement</td>
<td>• Stress Management</td>
<td>• Critical Spirituality</td>
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<td>• Resiliency, Renewal, and Reflection</td>
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<td>• Meaning</td>
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<td>• Accomplishment</td>
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This qualitative study aligned with the essential characteristics of qualitative research as outlined by Grbich (2013), specifically those that speak to subjectivity, power, and a holistic view. The research paradigm was interpretivist/constructionist which explores people’s interpretation and sense-making of personal experiences, as well as the impact context has on constructed understandings. This case study (Stake, 1995) was bound by time: the interviews occurred within a one-month period in the school year, location: all participants were employed by the same school district, and a specific participant criteria: successful principals with more than three years of experience and varied levels of attentiveness to well-being. The sources of data collection for this study consisted primarily of interview accounts, supplemented by survey inquiry and document analysis. These various sources created a triangulation of data to draw a richer picture of the district and the participants. Holistic coding was the primary method of
analysis used for the interviews, loose applications of formal protocols provided by Saldaña (2009). I enlisted descriptive and in vivo coding to assist in inductive and deductive analysis of the participant accounts. In my final analysis the participant responses were organized into categories and layered into my pre-existing framework of mind, body, and spirit.

The findings from the study revealed the current successes and challenges in the personal and professional renewal of principals. The personal successes included attention to sleep, attention to diet, and time spent with family and friends. However, attention to exercise was sometimes a struggle for the participants due to the time necessary to maintain a specific exercise regimen. A shared success for the principals was the utilization of a positive disposition to counter the stressors of the job. In addition to these psychological and physical preparations, the principals discussed professional supports such as early career mentors, peer support groups, and diverse experiences in internships and as leaders at various schools. They also spoke to promising district supports and practices in the form of principal mentors, training programs for turnaround principals, and incentivized health initiatives. While all principals expressed feelings of satisfaction and success, they still noted areas for improvement in personal and professional practices of self-renewal.

After reviewing the findings from the study, there was evidence of professional support for principal well-being and renewal, but less support of principal personal well-being and renewal. Overall the participant accounts pointed to implications for research in the following areas: leadership models with well-being and strengths as core principles, i.e. positive schooling and appreciative education models; considerations that counter the negative impacts of high stakes accountability, i.e. consideration of principal “fit” and work with “external operators”; models that support the socio-emotional and physical health of educators; and the role of gender,
race, and religion as essential components of principal identity that may impact well-being.

Similarly, recommendations for practice spanned the categories of university, district, and principal as follows: university – stress management for leaders, the benefits of appreciative inquiry and organizing with emphasis on strengths, and relevant internships; district – systemic refinement to improve principal workload, preparation and support of principals throughout their tenure, and additional supports for educator well-being; and finally, principal personal and professional practices.

**Definition of Key Terms**

**burnout:** “the feelings of failure and being worn or wrung out, resulting from an overload of claims on energy, on personal resources, or on the spiritual strength of the worker” 
(Freudenberger, 1974, p. 159)

**critical spirituality:** the individual ability to know oneself and act in accordance with what defines the self (Dantley, 2003, 2010)

**external operator:** in Beach City, external operators are the consultants who come in to support a change effort in a school when the school has failed to improve academic performance within the designated time frame

**mindfulness:** a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, without judgment or striving (Wells, 2013).

**PERMAH (Seligman, 2011; Kern, 2014):** the framework that cultivates wellbeing consisting of the domains of positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishments, and health:

*positive emotion* - the right balance of heartfelt positivity to boost our resilience
engagement - the regular development of our strengths

relationship - the creation of authentic, energizing connections

meaning - a sense of connection to something bigger than ourselves

accomplishment - the belief and ability to do the things that matter most to us

health - eating well, moving regularly, and sleeping deeply

positive psychology: the study of the power of happiness, or positive emotion, and its ability to positively impact personal and professional lives (Seligman, 2011)

spirit: “the human spirit is more than a set of fixed traits and characteristics; it is an animating impulse- a vital, motivating force that is directed to realizing higher order goals, dreams, and aspirations that grow out of the essential self… The human spirit organizes people’s lives and propels people forward” (Sweeney, 2011, p. 58)

spirituality: “the continuous journey people take to discover and realize their spirit, that is, their essential selves… Spirituality is the process of searching for the sacred in one’s life” (Sweeney, 2011, p. 59)

stress: “a pressure or strain upon the organism that may be physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual. It may ultimately produce inner conflict, anxiety, and reactions of defense” (Becker, 1976, p. 139)

thriving: “the functioning of the integrated, whole person across all life domains; thus, the term implies personal balance, such that one is not considered thriving if he or she is functioning and developing positively in one aspect or area of his or her life but having serious developmental problems in others” (Bundick et al., 2010, p. 891)
well-being: emotional, psychological, and social flourishing, which can include positive relationships, meaningfulness in life and work, together with sense of mastery and personal growth, as well as autonomy or achievement (Cherkowski & Walker, 2016)
Chapter Two

Literature Review

In this review of literature, I first provide the context for the current state of the principalship that is a focus of this study. I then traverse the literature that addresses the mind, or evolution of thought regarding the desired knowledge and skill set of principals. This section is followed by an exploration of the literature related to body, or stress and renewal factors of principals. I then review literature on the notion of spirit, framing spirit through the research specific to how values and personal beliefs shape principals and manifest in leadership acts. Finally, this chapter concludes by revisiting the research questions and expanding the explanation of the conceptual framework briefly introduced in Chapter One.

School Reform and the Principalship

A single person, in a single professional role, acts on a daily basis as the connecting link between a large bureaucratic system and the individual daily experiences of a large number of children and adults.

Rousmanaire, 2013, p.3

A brief and selective history of the policies and practices that govern the climate and conditions of public schools is helpful as an introduction to the complexity of the multiple dimensions of school leadership explored in this study. While principals are the designated leaders of their individual sites, their behavior is often influenced and constrained by external entities, both local and federal (DeJong et al., 2017; Friedman, 2002; Somech & Miassy-Maljak,
Thus, local and federal policies and the practices they endorse often shape the norms by which principals usually abide.

While disdain and disappointment for American public schools were never as vividly articulated as in the 1983 Nation at Risk report, attempts to influence school leadership behaviors surfaced much earlier. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 is one such attempt. One goal of ESEA was to eradicate poverty by providing necessary services for low-income students. It was a seminal example of federal involvement in compliance. Bill Clinton’s promotion of Goals 2000 along with a 1994 revision to ESEA emphasized standards, testing, and accountability systems (DeBray-Pelot & McGuin, 2009). However, some historians say Clinton’s attempts at high stakes compliance were too soon. Instead, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) federal legislation of 2002, a bipartisan initiative, represented the next round of high stakes accountability. Manna (2006) discusses how the evolution in education reform has required an excessive amount of control and persuasion on the part of the federal government, especially in the case of NCLB. Manna (2006) references Sandy Kress, George W. Bush’s top education advisor, as he reflects on the challenge in executing NCLB, “What makes this tough is designing something that will work in 50 very different states, and then figuring out how you can leverage change when you’re only paying 7 percent of the bill,” (p. 472). No attempts were made by the federal government to deny their desire to influence the quality of education. NCLB funding came with rules and regulations. The Obama Administration’s Race to the Top initiative, promoted by his Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, also stressed performance accountability. It offered substantial funding to states willing to promote performance-based evaluations, charter schools, and common standards. The Obama policy was simply an extension of the Bush
mandate with more money to encourage the efforts locally. These performance accountability models changed the role of the principal and increased the level of stress attached to the role.

**Leadership theory.**

During the transition from ESEA to NCLB we also see leadership theory shifting from managerial, to instructional, and to some degree transformational (Hallinger, 1992; Kafka 2009; Northhouse, 2016). Beyond policy prescriptions, researchers argued that principals are servant leaders with social justice agendas. They are authentic and introspective, public intellectuals, and activists (Theoharis, 2007; Marshall & Oliva, 2010). These social justice leaders are addressing the needs of faculty and the needs of students who both at times suffer at the hands of performance accountability initiatives. The most recent attempt at reform manifests as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. Darling-Hammond, Bae, Cook-Harvey, Lam, Mercer, Podolsky, & Stosich (2016) discuss the promise of more balanced systems of support with ESSA. It offers greater autonomy regarding crafting of supports and measurements of effectiveness. However, Malen would argue ESSA’s autonomy comes with a price. Malen (2011) explores some of the most recent changes in this decade of education policy and explicates the complexity attached to the new balance of power. As all levels of government, federal and state, attempt to influence education policy and practice through results-based initiatives. This limits the power of school boards, district officials, and side educators who now play “subservient role[s] in that they are required to meet the goals developed elsewhere with the resource allocations determined elsewhere or experience the sanctions set elsewhere” (Malen, 2011, p. 38). Malen highlights the challenges faced over multiple decades when policies are crafted far from the sites where they are implemented. While principals have little to no say, they become the faces of policies and practices implemented at their site. If the policies and practices
are unsuccessful or rejected by the faculty and community, principals receive reproof from all stakeholders.

Malen (2011) argues that many federal and state performance accountability systems are one’s where decentralization equals autonomy with greater accountability. Greater accountability can add to the principal workload, especially if it means site leaders will bear the burden of additional paperwork and building capacity in teachers and students to meet the new expectations of the particular performance accountability measure. Malen (2011) continues, noting that while many high performing schools are often exempt from federal and state policies, the new model of school accountability shifts the balance of power for all. School systems are targeted, and local leaders are disadvantaged, “They are not powerless, but they are forced to maneuver within the relatively narrow and narrowing parameters set at the federal and state levels of the system. (p.38). Where you lead matters, if you are not in the small percentage of affluent and/or high performing schools, then it is often impossible to insulate yourself from policy overload. This leads to principals feeling a loss of “controllability” and “increased accountability with insufficient support” which are both identified as sources of principal stress (Boylan, 2011; Carr, 1994; Cushing et al., 2003; DeJong et al., 2017; Eckman & Kelber, 2010; Friedman, 2002; Somech & Miassy-Maljak, 2003). The imbalance of power and accountability at schools depending on academic performance level can be seen as an issue of social justice. While all schools are impacted by some form of school accountability, some are more disadvantaged by accountability policies than others.

**Five essential supports of school reform.**

In new performance accountability environments, researchers have begun to examine supports and leadership behaviors needed for reform. Bryk et al. (2010) documented the “5
Essential Supports” necessary for school reform. The very first support serves as a catalyst for the other four. Leadership, or “deft” leadership requires leaders who are in tune with the strengths and struggles of their faculty, students, and community. These leaders then develop the other four supports: parent-community ties, professional capacity of the faculty and staff, a student-centered learning climate, and ambitious instruction. Without the deft leader, Bryk et al. questions the evolution of the additional supports. Apply this research to Malen’s explanation of the new balance of power that lies away from the school with federal and local government and one sees leaders are more often managers and monitors instead of motivators, and if they desire something different, of greater substance, they must become policy experts exhibiting various levels of creative defiance as they look for wiggle room or loopholes in implementation (Gunzenhauser, 2007; Levinson, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009; Mette & Scribner, 2014).

Having explored some salient moments in the evolution of educational policies and practices that have significant impact on the lives of principals, it is not a lofty task to connect the challenges of principals to the external demands of policy. It also takes little effort to understand the impact of state driven performance accountability policies on the past and present role of the principal. Over 90% of United States citizens are products of a public school education and thus the impact of education policy on society is massive. It is understandable that federal and state leaders would want to oversee the quality of learning in public schools. However, it is also inherent in the role of the principal to wield real power in the every day decisions that impact student success. This contributes to principal personal purpose and professional fulfillment (Drago-Severson, 2013; Somech & Miassy-Maljak, 2003). The discussion of purpose and fulfillment leads into further exploration of the mind, body, and spirit framework that addresses the principal as a whole.
Mind: The Knowledge and Skills of Successful Principals

Northouse (2015) highlights the transitions in research approaches or understandings of leadership. He chronicles the various traits and characteristics that have been used to frame leadership. These studies date back to Stogdill’s 1948 list that included: intelligence, alertness, insight, responsibility, initiative, persistence, self-confidence, and sociability, to his revised list of 1974 that replaces intelligence and alertness with achievement, cooperativeness, tolerance, and influence. Two decades later Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) created a short list of traits: drive, motivation, integrity, confidence, cognitive ability, and task knowledge. As these lists progressed over time Northouse (2015) notes the traits that endure: intelligence, integrity, self-confidence, determination, and sociability. Similarly, as Northouse recognizes the transition from traits to skills, technical, human, and conceptual skills emerge. Closely connected to the previously identified traits are skills, skills are understood as attributes that can be learned.

Similarities to attributes, skills and traits can be found in the philosophies of most principal preparation programs as research shifts from tracking traits to practices. Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, and Orr (2007) participated in an evaluation of principal preparation programs with the desire to understand how many programs engaged in the identified principal practices for successful schools, and whether or not academic exposure to these practices manifested in higher rates of success. The identified practices were: cultivating a shared vision and practices, leading instructional improvement, developing organizational capacity, and managing change. Whether one studies traits, skills, or practices, the mind and mindset of principals is imperative to their success as leaders and their school’s success. In this section of the literature review, challenges inherent in the principalship specific to knowledge and skills, as well as the successful application of knowledge and skills to benefit the school are
explored. No matter how well prepared the principal, they are often faced with conditions, both internal and external that challenge their ability and desire to lead successfully.

**Role conflict and ambiguity.**

Role conflict and ambiguity speaks to the principal’s desire to be a successful leader, while being stymied by the lack of communication or lack of clarity from the central office regarding the role of the successful principal (DeJong et al., 2017). On a broader scale it also speaks to the expectations from various stakeholders that may not align with the role of principal and the expectations of federal and state policies that may not fit the context of the principal’s site. In multiple studies principals reported incidents when superintendents or school boards were not supportive of principals. District representatives did not effectively communicate to parents and community about the role of the principal, what it does and does not include, and how they can all work together (DeJong, Grundmeyer, & Yankey, 2017; Drago-Severson, 2012; Federici & Skaalvik, 2012; Giles, 2007;). In addition, DeJong et al. (2017) spoke to the unforgiving media that highlights the challenges of public schools, maintaining the narrative of failed government schools minus the successes.

**Isolation.**

Isolation or loneliness is a major concern among principals (Drago-Severson, 2012; Stephenson & Bauer, 2010). Stress and burnout literature addressed a prevailing desire on the part of most participants in various studies to have someone to share in the evaluation, decision making, coaching, and fulfillment of various managerial duties. In addition, principals deeply desired an opportunity for peer-reflection (Drago-Severson, 2012; Ozer, 2013; Oplatka, 2017) that would allow them to collaborate with principals and participate in a process of reflection and meaning making to improve their practice. Drago-Severson (2012) interviewed 25 principals
who were well educated, experienced, and successful in their current leadership roles, but they shared similar stories of isolation:

I think [the need for support] was something that I knew intellectually because I worked closely with many principals, but what took me a while to actualize is how lonely a job the principalship is. I find it really hard. I mean, sometimes it’s just work, work, work, work, work, and then collapse. (p.22)

While many of the principals in this study attended the most prestigious schools, with highly acclaimed training, and unique experiences prior to their principalships to assist in their preparation, they were still bothered by the isolation of the day to day operations of the role. In addition, Stephenson and Bauer (2010) noted isolation to be a mediator in predicting physical and emotional burnout. In other words, the more isolated principals felt, the more prone they were to burnout.

**Workload.**

If Rousmanaire (2013) notes the position of principal requires being all things to all people, then the workload of the principal does not equal a regular work day. For decades principals have clocked 60-70 hours in a week (Carr, 1994; Cushing et al., 2003; DeJong et al., 2017; Friedman, 2002) on top of the fact that they have extended school years. Cushing et al. (2003) noted the trend in teachers seeking administrative credentials but only to use them for district level positions as curriculum or area specialists. They wanted advancement without the demands of the school site. Being all means the principal is managerial, instructional, and transformational. Each leadership response requires a specific set of skills and an investment of time. From overseeing the physical building to supporting teachers to building relationships with parents and the community, the list can be extensive (Cushing et al., 2003). Friedman (2002)
highlighted principal concerns ranging from too many meetings, not enough time for required duties, to overburdening. Over a decade later, these concerns remain, and are at the heart of recruitment and retention challenges (Boyland, 2007; Carr, 1994; DeJong et al., 2017; Friedman, 2002; Norton, 2002; Wells, 2013; Wells et al., 2011). DeJong et al. (2017) speak to the continued concerns with loss of personal time and its negative impact on family life, especially when considering the numerous extracurricular activities that require supervision. This directly impacts a principal’s ability to manage a work-life balance, but it is an imposed requirement of the job.

**Managing difficult stakeholders.**

For most principals building and maintaining positive and productive relationships with all stakeholders can present major predicaments. Whether it be energizing and inspiring teachers or responding to those resistant to change and the vision of the principal, principal and teacher relationships were in the top three on every study list for sources of stress and burnout (DeJong et al., 2017; Eckman and Kelber, 2010; Friedman, 2002; Wong et al., 2000). The time demands of parents along with their advocating for personal agendas both privately and publicly were taxing. Additionally, principals were concerned that their role with teachers and students was often one of evaluation or discipline and not always the fostering of collaborative relationships that they had hoped for. The reconstruction of a principal’s job and professional identity could pose tensions counterproductive to collaborative leadership (Eckman & Kelber, 2010; Friedman, 2002; Wong et al., 2000). Add to this the diversity that exists within today’s schools. The goal of every principal is to make all students feel welcomed, included, and successful. The fulfillment of these goals requires relationships in order to unearth the values, cultures, and experiences of students, faculty, and community who build the mosaic of your school (Mehdinezhad and Nouri, 2016).
Accountability coupled with insufficient support.

Doing more with less has become the new way of work for public schools. Accountability coupled with insufficient support is the term for limited district funds that cause inadequate funding for necessary instructional positions and educational programs that would assist schools in meeting state accountability guidelines. Thus, principals are challenged with leading in a time of heightened accountability with limited monetary and people resources. Researchers note it’s not just an inability to add needed faculty, but also an inability to retain current faculty and staff due to the increased performance accountability of public schools (DeJong et al., 2017; Eckman & Kelber, 2010; Friedman, 2002). It is also an increase in managerial duties associated with compliance. This accompanied by perceived lack of support from districts and school boards is often too much for principals to address on their own (Boyland, 2011; Carr, 1994; Cushing et al., 2003; Eckman & Kelber, 2010).

Controllability.

Principals today are also facing greater accountability with less control. As previously discussed in the reference to the meaning of educational work (Somech & Miassy-Maljak, 2003), “the meaning of work is derived from the individual’s work values, which are a series of perceptions that mediate between the individual’s emotional orientation and the group of external objects that offer him or her satisfaction,” (p. 65). Accountability has crowded out the external objects that principals often look to for satisfaction which often creates a sense of limited control due to the need to address a myriad of local and state mandates which is an additional source of stress. Controllability is defined as “the individual’s perceived ability to determine, modify or restrict events, activities, processes, attitudes or thoughts of relevant others” (Friedman, 2002, p. 246). Some performance accountability measures have tied the hands of principals seeking to
make meaningful change at their school sites. This involuntary relinquishing of control manifests in a myriad of areas, from the staffing of teachers and other administrative personnel, the selection of curriculum and curricular supports, and even extends to influencing the dynamics of relationships with teachers, parents, and students (DeJong et al., 2017; Friedman, 2002; Somech & Miassy-Maljak, 2003).

While these multiple factors contribute to the stress and burnout of principals within the context of knowledge and skills, there are also practices of renewal that allow principals to replenish their intellectual needs. A few are explored in the following section.

**Reflective practice.**

Drago-Severson (2012) stands firm in her research findings that reflective practice is essential to principal renewal. Framed in research on adult learning theory, reflective practice addresses both personal and professional learning for principals. The power of reflective practice manifests in its ability to simultaneously remove principals from positions of isolation to a place of collaboration while thinking, reflecting, analyzing and practicing coaching and feedback. This occurs as principals coach each other through the process of challenging their current habits of mind and frames of reference as they influence our actions, behaviors, and meaning-making. Critical reflection allows principals to acknowledge personal bias through self-examination and problem solve with peers. It is an example of transformative learning (Drago-Severson, 2012). The 25 principals who participated in the study recalled it as “an essential source of self-renewal and one that will enable them to improve their leadership (p. 36). Drago-Severson (2012) presents reflective practice as a key component to thriving in leadership.
Principal peer support groups.

On a lesser scale, traditional coaching and support were rewarding to principal self-renewal. Beusaert, Froehlich, Devos, and Riley (2016), an Australian study on support as mediators to stress and burnout, suggested that while support impacts burnout, the provider of the support is a factor. Principals in their study were most responsive to support from their principal peers and faculty as opposed to community members. In addition, Australia hosts regular regional/cluster meetings to allow principals to strengthen their professional network. One New Zealand study (Notman, 2012) emphasized the work of the Kiwi Leadership for Principals which stressed four leadership qualities: manaakitanga (leading with moral purpose); pono (having self-belief); ako (being a learner); and awhinatanga (guiding and supporting). In essence, Kiwi’s qualities promoted a similar process of critical reflection through the exploration and challenging of self and purpose, while simultaneously promoting a culture of learning and supporting as a leader.

Trust among all stakeholders.

Trust is a determining factor in leader success. Ozer (2013) states, “Considering the fact that schools form our children’s attitudes, values, and dispositions and contribute to the kind of society we are and will become, trust is a vital issue in the study of schools” (p. 83). As presented in this excerpt, trust in schools equals trust in educators. The principal is said to shape the vision and practices of the school. If indeed the principal has the power to shape the vision and practices, it is paramount that he/she also have the skills to enlist the multiple stakeholders in the journey of meaningful change. Relational leaders with the social capital with or without charisma have the ability to mediate a major source of stress by establishing trust. Ozer (2013) noted these conditions were easier to create with smaller school sizes; intimacy promoted
relationships. Also, it was easier for principals to build trust with students than with parents. However, both relationships, parents and students, showed a negative correlation with burnout. The more trusting the relationships, the less burnout experienced by the principal. What Ozer (2013) could not detail in her research was the ordering of events and relationships. Did limited trust cause high burnout, or did high burnout cause the principal to act in ways that caused limited trust? Regardless, the power was in the positive relationships.

**Professional programs and degrees.**

Some principals sought more traditional supports for professional self-renewal by returning to school for masters or doctoral programs to assist their growth as leaders. These endeavors kept them current in theory and practice but did little for their time management. Others were renewed by book clubs with principal peers and presenting or attending educational conferences (Drago-Severson, 2013).

The following two sections addressing the “Body” and “Spirit” speak to areas of need that aren’t as commonly addressed by prep programs and district level supports.

**Body: The History of Stress and Renewal**

**Stress.**

The most holistic definition of stress and its related terms is presented by Becker (1976), he defines stress as, “a pressure or strain upon the organism that may be physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual. It may ultimately produce inner conflict, anxiety, and reactions of defense,” (p.139). Stress is brought on by both internal and external factors, internal simply referring to those originating from inside the individual, and external referencing those originating outside the individual. It is important to note some factors can be both internal and external. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) link stress to cognitive theory, specifically cognitive appraisal and coping.
Lazarus and Folkman (1984) posit stress as a relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised as personally significant (a challenge) or as taxing or exceeding resources for coping (a threat). Whether or not something is designated as a challenge or a threat is linked to the values, beliefs, and experiences of the individual. Later, Somech and Miassy-Maljak (2003) explore how religiosity can serve as a specific example of values, beliefs, and experiences shaping one’s interpretation of experiences and in turn one’s level of stress. This linking of stress and coping strategies further connects to resilience research, which will be discussed in the self-renewal section. Unmediated stress, or stress without coping strategies, can lead to burnout.

**Burnout.**

Burnout is another commonly used term in reference to principal stress research. Burnout, like anxiety, is a by-product of stress. Its origin is credited to Freudenberger (1974), who describes burnout as “the feelings of failure and being worn or wrung out, resulting from an overload of claims on energy, on personal resources, or on the spiritual strength of the worker” (p. 159). One of the most commonly used inventories for assessing burnout was created by Maslach and Jackson (1981) who describe it as “a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do ‘people work’ of some kind.” Maslach and Jackson (1981) created three aspects of burnout that are in turn assessed by their scale: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Most burnout research aligns with the Freudenberger (1974) definition grounded in fail overload, although most have specific aspects of failure and overload that they focus on. Maslach and Jackson (1981) are interested in exhaustion, feelings about others, and feelings about self. Later Maslach (2001) wrote an introduction for a special edition of Psychology and Health that explored the
implications of burnout on mental and physical health, noting that if stress can be linked to mental and physical illness, might this also be the case for burnout. As research evolved, Shirom-Melamed’s Burnout Measure (Shirom & Melamed, 2006) focused on the physical, emotional, and cognitive manifestations of burnout.

As one reviews the literature specific to principal stress and burnout, while definitions may vary in wording, most common in scholars is their desire to study factors that are challenging to the success of today’s principals. Regardless of the research’s focus on stress or burnout, internal and external factors are constantly identified. Listed in no particular order, the dominant internal factors are: work-life balance, personal health and well-being, personal purpose and professional fulfillment, and cognitive appraisal. The dominant external or systemic factors are: role conflict and ambiguity, isolation, controllability, workload, management of difficult stakeholders, and accountability coupled with insufficient support.

**Work-life balance.**

As previously mentioned, work-life balance is a challenge for many educators, but especially principals who are responsible for all aspects of the business of schooling, as well as all of the people affiliated with it from the district office, to the faculty, staff and students on site, and beyond to the parents and community members. It is no surprise that in light of the extended duties and hours, principals feel the ability to balance personal and professional responsibilities is futile. They often find themselves not having time for extracurricular or social commitments with friends and families, or even the necessary time that should be dedicated to raising their children. In rare cases where the time is available, they find themselves too exhausted to participate. Many principals stated “achieving balance” as a top goal, but few had figured out
how to manage it (Cushing et al., 2003; DeJong et al., 2017; Drago-Severson, 2012; Eckman & Kelber, 2010).

Wells (2013) discusses stress related workman’s compensation, a new trend in a world where mental and physical health are impacted by, “the pace of work, the stress of work roles, and problems among workers in the facility, the schedule, and a number of issues that originate beyond the scope of the work environment.” Wells (2013) noted while the category in workman’s comp might be new, L.R. Murphy’s 1995 article explicitly stated that working conditions could lead to anxiety, depression, irritability, high blood pressure, high muscle tension levels, as well as poor work performance, and substance abuse, just to name a few. Theoharis (2007) tells the story of social justice principals who harbor excessive stress and resort to negative coping strategies such as alcohol and drug abuse as a temporary solution. Therefore, it is no surprise that the principals in numerous studies spoke to their inability to maintain personal physical and mental well-being (Blaydes & Booth, 2002; Drago-Severson, 2012; Wells, 2013). Again, Wells (2013) stresses the challenge inherent in leadership when “principals [are supposed to] provide the vision and energy for change and growth” (p.339) but are too emotionally exhausted to fulfill the role.

**Wellness and well-being.**

Wellness and well-being are interchangeable terms. At its roots there are two general perspectives to well-being, the hedonic and the eudaimonic. The hedonic approach, which focuses on happiness and defines well-being in terms of pleasure attainment and pain avoidance; and the eudaimonic approach, which focuses on meaning and self-realization and defines well-being in terms of the degree to which a person is fully functioning. Thus, the most basic definition is the absence of illness, but the most inclusive definition is emotional, psychological,
and social flourishing, which can include “positive relationships, meaningfulness in life and work, together with sense of mastery and personal growth, as well as autonomy or achievement” (Cherkowski & Walker, 2016). Seligman (2011) created the acronym PERMA to represent those traits he felt essential to well-being: Positive emotions – feeling good; Engagement – being completely absorbed in activities; Relationships – being authentically connected to others, Meaning – purposeful existence, and Achievement – a sense of accomplishment and success. Meaning is one of the signature traits to fostering well-being and progressing to flourishing. Meaning is found in an individual’s ability to know and understand herself and her values and engage in work, relationships, and achievements that align with what is meaningful.

**Resiliency.**

Resiliency is defined as the characteristics or traits that people possess, “selective strengths or assets to help them survive adversity” (Richardson, 2002, p.309) or stress and burnout. Werner (1993) and Rutter and Rutter (1993) identify these personal strengths as supported in their studies of resilient individuals: easy temperament, socially responsible, adaptable, tolerant, good problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills, humor, etc. The list of traits varied from researcher to researcher, but the characteristics often aligned if grouped into larger categories that addressed determination, endurance, adaptability, and recuperability (Taormina, 2015). In addition, resilience research focuses on the “energy” needed for resilient reintegration. Researchers adhere to the resiliency theory which states “there is a force within everyone that drives them to seek self-actualization, altruism, wisdom, and harmony with a spiritual source of strength. This force is resilience, and it has a variety of names depending upon the discipline” (Richardson, 2002, p. 313). Recuperability or reintegration after confronting stress or burnout is also referred to as self-renewal.
Thriving.

An end result to the promotion of wellness, is thriving. Thriving is not a destination but a journey, a verb, the process of ongoing positive development. Thriving is grounded in relationships with self and others. Thriving is marked by individual characteristics such as (but not limited to) the maintenance of personal balance (i.e., one devotes attention to all facets of their well-being and domains of their lives), a sense of purpose and meaning (which is often derived from the purposeful pursuit of one’s life goals and positive values), and an openness and adaptiveness to experience (which is integral to adaptive developmental regulation). Further essential to the notion of a thriving orientation is that one knows, acts on, and finds resources that foster one’s talents, interests, and aspirations, and through which one contributes to the common good (Benson, 2008; Bundick et al., 2010).

As evidenced in the literature review there are a myriad of connections in the studies of stress, burnout, well-being, resiliency, and thriving. Factors that promote well-being or self-renewal are explored in the three major sections of the literature review. Those more aligned with “body” are explored in this section.

Just as overload is a key stressor, the ability to find the time to take vacations and sabbaticals to reconnect with family and friends is crucial to the well-being of many principals. Striking the work-life balance requires more than finding time, but also forgiveness. As one participant from Drago-Severson (2012) states, replenishment can be about being in tune with family and understanding when they need your time and not having to feel guilty about it. The fact that the same principals with extended work weeks of 60 or more hours feel guilt when they used personal time for family instead of professional duties that have extended beyond the work day speaks to a social conditioning common in society. A strong work ethic doesn’t just mean
performing at high levels while at work, it includes the willingness to put work before family. Thus, principals must often overcome the previous conditioning in order to enjoy family time. Vacations and sabbaticals require approval and elicit public attention which some principals, especially newer ones, feel cause reproach from faculty and community. However, principals attest these external pressures don’t outweigh the renewal that comes with much needed time with family and friends (Drago-Severson, 2012).

3 Rs: resiliency, renewal and reflection.

Blaydes (2002) introduced the three Rs of leading: resiliency, renewal, and reflection as a means of surviving stress and avoiding burnout. His Rs are reflected in the most impactful practices for stress and burnout prevention. Some might say it is time to add the fourth R of resistance. There is an interesting and important distinction between some of the resilience research and the resistance research presented in this literature review. The resilience research often harps on the ability of an individual to cope and the recognition of the characteristics that allow one to better cope or exist within the current conditions of education, while the resistance research focuses on the ability of an individual to make the system better, change the forces that create the conditions of stress and burnout (Dantley, 2003, 2010; Gunzenhauser, 2008). One’s approach may be linked to what one considers to be within his/her locus of control. Depending on who you are and where you are, do you have the individual or collective abilities to change your conditions or can you only change yourself? The answer to this question is essential in one’s approach to self-renewal.

Fit.

Another implication is that of “fit.” Not every environment is right for every individual. Leaders are oftentimes required to lead differently in various situations. While this is separate
from the body of stress and renewal research, it is relevant to previous discussions about care of self, meaningful work, and critical self-reflection. What are leaders willing to compromise to lead in certain settings. Tooms, Lugg, and Bogotch (2010) discuss the politics governing the term “fit” and how it in itself is an attempt at normalization. They posit it as the challenging of how we see ourselves and where we fit in parallel to the subjugation of specific groups by other more powerful groups who determine the cultural norm. Identity and hegemony battle in the workplace. Resistance resurfaces as a leader determines if they are a “fit,” what they are willing to do to “fit,” or if the choice of “fit” is within their control. If one studies the notion of “fit” with the priority of well-being, the selection of a school site that aligns with moral purpose can become a protective factor (Bernshausen & Cunningham, 2001; Gu & Day, 2007; Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006; Isernhaugen & Bulkin, 2011).

Spirit: Care of Self, Connection to Personal Values and Beliefs, Potential for Flourishing

Theoharis (2008) published an article entitled Woven in Deeply. His discourse captures the passion and drive or values and beliefs that are ingrained in leaders who are not simply successful but fulfilled by the work that they are doing. Woven in deeply is a metaphor explained as follows, “the social justice leader is the shirt made with dyed thread. Just as the dyed thread is woven into a shirt, the social justice is woven so deeply into the leader that there is no separation” (p. 20). As noted in Theoharis’ example, the values of the leader cannot be separated from the work of the leader. These values steer the course. Thus, in exploring the spirit of a leader, we will see what drives his life and his work, and ultimately what brings fulfillment. It is also equally important to explore the pitfalls that must be overcome when such spirited leaders are faced with policies and practices that don’t align with their core.
This concept is not limited to the field of psychology, or education. Pargament and Sweeney (2011) document the efforts of the army to build spiritual fitness. The military sees spirit or spirituality as the core of the individual “our individual sense of who we are - our true, spiritual self - defines us. It creates our mindset, defines our values, determines our actions, and predicts our behavior” (Sweeney, 2011, p. 58). Therefore, they consider their efforts to build spiritual fitness as proactive endeavors to ensure resilience in their soldiers. Soldier well-being has four dimensions: physical, material, mental, and spiritual. Soldiers must be prepared in all four dimensions in order to participate in missions. Additionally, West Point has six developmental domains in their Cadet Leader Development System, and human spirit is one of them (Sweeney, 2011).

Purpose and values continue to surface in leadership literature when one studies the work of Dantley (2003; 2010) and Boyd (2012). Both Dantley and Boyd speak to the place of spirituality in leadership, and connect it to the Freirean concept of conscientization, critical awareness of one’s social reality through reflection and action. For Dantley (2003) spirituality is “that part of our lives and community through which we make meaning and understanding of our world. In fact, it is the spiritual dimension of humankind that gives us the motivation as well as the technique to complete the Freirean (1998) task of reading our world through the esoteric exercise of conscientization” (274). Dantley sees conscientization or critical spiritual self-awareness as a tool or asset for the educational leader who desires to foster learning for all. Boyd (2012) affirms the work of Dantley and Freire as he discusses the application of spirituality to multiple professions, but specifically its ability to “move one out of one’s inner life to a sense of solidarity with others and a commitment to improve upon the world as it is, be it through individual acts of compassion or corporate efforts to establish justice” (p. 764).
As noted earlier in the discussion, spirituality is challenged by the current model of leadership in a performance accountability policy context. However, it can be restorative or renewing for those who enlist it as a source of power and impetus for action. Much of the stress and burnout research alluded to work ethic. Principals oftentimes are the teachers who excelled in creativity and productivity. They are overachievers who don’t always need external praise, but instead find silent success in the accomplishments of their students. Due to the distancing of the principalship from students in the classroom, principals no longer experience the same intensity of fulfillment from student success. Frequently they aren’t in a position where they can directly impact the learning that occurs with the students, whether it be a lack of monetary resources, a lack of choice of resources, or a lack of teacher capacity, there is a noted distance in the principal relationship and control over student success which previously provided meaningful connections. Somech and Miassy-Maljak (2003) discuss the concept of “the meaning of educational work.” They defined it as “an individual’s beliefs regarding the results (positive and/or negative) of their work and how these results serve their life… [it] includes beliefs, values, attitudes, and rationale regarding the nature of the work, its goals, its results, and the ways in which to handle it,” (p.65). Somech and Miassy-Maljak (2003) observed the same power and dedication that came with educators’ feelings of being “called” to the provision was equally powerful in lowering their self-confidence and sense of hope when they felt their work was meaningless or useless. There was a negative relationship between the meaning of work and burnout. The greater the meaning of work, the lower the level of burnout. In addition, even the most difficult work was less prone to burnout as long as principals felt their work was meaningful because they had the ability to serve teachers and students well.
While Gunzenhauser is not an official author of stress and self-renewal research, his piece entitled *Care of the Self in a Context of Accountability* (2008) speaks to the main argument of self-renewal, advocating for self, especially in a time of accountability when systems of normalization have been used to usurp power from educators in public schools. His claims speak specifically to concerns regarding “controllability” and a means for countering these attempts. He frames his argument within Foucault’s criticism of discipline and his definition of “care of the self.” Gunzenhauser (2008) asserts that care of the self can manifest as resistance against the norming practices of government reform. With this resistance comes the freedom to be the ethical, genuine, creative self that you were prior to the implementation of external norms. In other words, whether through minor or major acts of rebellion, principals must be critical about who they are and what they value, and once they have identified their moral purpose, they must honor it in acts of liberation for self, faculty, and students.

Religiosity and spirituality as explored in the literature review both speak to similar critical reflection of the personal self. Leaders cannot be at their best if they do not have strong ties to the values and purpose of their inner man. Additionally, stronger inclinations towards religion and spirituality serve as mediators to stress and burnout (Bas and Yildirim, 2012; Mehdinzhad and Nouri, 2016; Somech & Miassy-Maljak, 2003). The meaning of work, meaning people ascribe to work, is intensified for those with religious or spiritual dispositions. The notion of education being a “calling” has greater purpose and greater potential for mediating and motivating a leader in times of difficulty. It is important to note that Mehdinzhad and Nouri (2016) use Ellison’s Spiritual Well-Being Scale and they identify two subscales: Religious Well-Being (RWB) and Existential Well-Being (EWB), and their research shows spiritual well-being as a mediating factor only in the case of EWB, which is the association of meaning and purpose
beyond the individual, while RWB is the association of meaning and purpose in God. Therefore, one does not have to be religious in the biblical sense in order to be spiritual. On the other hand, Somech and Miassy-Maljak (2003) conducted a survey specifically focusing on the degree of religiosity (Jewish knowledge and practice of the commandments) as measured by the Ben Meir and Kedem 1979 Jewish religiosity assessment and its ability to impact burnout. Their survey supported a negative significant correlation between degree of religiosity and burnout. As the degree of religiosity increased, the experience of burnout decreased. Specifically, Orthodox principals in Israel experienced less burnout than secular Jewish principals. However, as most outsiders would reckon, the homogenous experiences of the Orthodox principals could be just as powerful of a mediator as their personal belief. It was noted that the Jewish Orthodox society has a more collectivist view than that of the secular and while this not only shapes the mindset of the principal, it also shapes the mindset of all stakeholders creating a more unified school experience that would by default experience fewer stressors.

A further aspect of critical reflection, mindfulness is about intention, attention, and attitude. Mindfulness is defined as “being aware of the present moment without judgment or striving; it means paying attention on purpose” (Wells, 2013, p. 340). The gained awareness of thoughts and feelings without judgement increases connection and appreciation of self. Mindfulness meditation is a practice associated with health benefits such as the reduction of stress and elimination of burnout, as well as increased immune response (Wells, 2013). In addition Lazar et al. states “the brain regions associated with attention, interoception [the sense that helps you understand and feel what’s going on inside your body] and sensory processing were thicker in meditation participants than matched controls” (as cited in Wells, 2013). Thus, mindfulness meditation is one of the suggested practices of renewal that also include health
benefits. Some institutions such as Yale, Columbia, and Harvard have made mindfulness meditation required components of their professional schools.

While self-efficacy is in the undercurrents of multiple articles specific to burnout and stress management, it is at the forefront for Federici and Skaalvik, (2012). Self-efficacy is defined by Bandura as:

an idea that people can exercise some influence over what they do. People are…self-organizing, proactive, self-reflective, self-regulated and engaged in their own development…affect their own actions and possess the skills to control their own thought patterns and emotions… [it is] the individual’s belief about what he or she can achieve in a given context. (as cited in Federici and Skaalvik, 2012, p. 297)

Again, self-efficacy references a principal’s feelings of control and his/her ability to act with meaning and purpose towards a desired effect. Federici and Skaalvik, (2012) used the Norwegian Principal Self-Efficacy scale to align feelings of self-efficacy with burnout and job satisfaction. Their results proved self-efficacy was negatively related to burnout and positively related to job satisfaction. In other words, high levels of self-efficacy yield high levels of job satisfaction and low levels of burnout. Principals are then left to ascertain whether or not their context allows for self-efficacy and if it does not, are they willing to participate in creative resistance in order to secure some autonomy (Gunzenhauser, 2008).

Research has demonstrated the need to eliminate stress and burnout in order to ensure personal and professional well-being. Even if educators are not concerned with the personal lives and wellness of principals, they must understand how the personal and professional are connected. Leaders are hired because of their strong sense of self, dedication to their profession, and ability to yield positive results. Most of this derives from personal values and ethos. When
working conditions, such as the aforementioned stressors, infringe upon a principal’s sense of self and his/her ability to achieve and find meaning and purpose in work, stress and burnout are often the outcome. As has been evidenced in the manifestations of stress and burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment cause a leader to transition from a place of cognition to one of emotion. As noted by Steward (2014), “while our decisions are driven by our cognitive brain, we remain in control. When a build-up of stress finally pushes us over the edge it signifies that our reactions are being controlled, not by reason, but by emotion” (p. 54). Emotional intelligence is not the same as an emotional leader. Emotional leaders are not always the most effective. As evidenced in these studies, their work and thus their organization and its members suffer. Thus, the ideal goal is to be proactive, but at the very least we can provide necessary supports and interventions for re-establishing well-being.

**Research Questions**

In light of the omissions in education research specific to sources and practices of principal well-being and self-renewal, especially those that promote personal well-being and renewal, this dissertation aimed to identify key sources of principal well-being and self-renewal both personally and professionally, as well as, the impact of well-being and self-renewal on principal work and life satisfaction, and flourishing. The primary research questions explored the role of the principal, district, and educational programs in principal well-being, as well as the impact of principal’s attentiveness to well-being on success and work satisfaction. I asked specifically:
**Question One:** In what ways are principals’ well-being and self-renewal supported by principals’ personal beliefs and practices, district policies and practices, and education programs and organizations?

**Question Two:** To what extent does attentiveness to well-being and practices of self-renewal impact professional success and work satisfaction, and well-being and flourishing?

**Theoretical Framework**

The framework that informed this study relied on theories developed in the fields of education and psychology. These theories allowed me to create a lens that offered multiple perspectives for exploring the well-being and self-renewal of principals. It is a 3-fold framework that consists of mind, body, and spirit falling under the all-encompassing umbrella of thriving. Thriving is described by Bundick et al. (2010) as “the functioning of the integrated, whole person across all life domains; thus, the term implies personal balance, such that one is not considered thriving if he or she is functioning and developing positively in one aspect or area of his or her life but having serious developmental problems in others” (891). This dissertation explored the journey of leaders identified as successful, striving to thrive across all life domains of mind, body, and spirit, asserting that the three domains work together to support the optimal well-being of the leader. As I explored the various domains, the existing framework in the literature organizes the three domains accordingly: mind first, then body, and lastly spirit. Therefore, the framework in Table 2 adheres to this model and presents sub-categories for each domain.
I also embedded Seligman (2011) and Kern’s (2014) PERMAH model which defines well-being and flourishing in the personal and the professional life: P – Positive Emotion; E- Engagement; R – Relationships; M – Meaning; A – Accomplishments; and H – Health (Table 3).

**Table 3: PERMAH Workplace Survey Domains**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERMAH Workplace Survey Domains</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P – Positive Emotion</td>
<td>the right balance of heartfelt positivity to boost our resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E – Engagement</td>
<td>the regular development of our strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R – Relationships</td>
<td>the creation of authentic, energizing connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M – Meaning</td>
<td>a sense of connection to something bigger than ourselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A – Accomplishment</td>
<td>the belief and ability to do the things that matter most to us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H – Health</td>
<td>eating well, moving regularly, and sleeping deeply</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While all aspects of PERMAH can impact all three domains, it is specifically allocated in my thriving framework as Relationships and Engagement in Mind, Health and Positive Emotion in Body, and Meaning and Accomplishment in Spirit.

Mind.

The most familiar domain to scholars of educational leadership is generally the mind. The mind domain addresses attentiveness to and self-renewal of knowledge and skills. Within this domain I explored past and present research regarding desired characteristics or skills of a leader to the now more commonly favored practices and experiences of leaders. Northouse (2015) traces traits and characteristics of the ideal leader back to the works of Stogdill and Kirkpatrick and Locke. He then notes the traits that endure: intelligence, integrity, self-confidence, determination, and sociability. These traits eventually evolve into today’s theories of leadership that include characteristics and actions or practices of leaders including more popular models of transformational and adaptive leadership. Further, studies of late have documented the observed skills of successful leaders (Notman, 2012): critical self-reflection, responsive leadership, building relational trust, and personal resiliency, and observed practices of successful leaders (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007): cultivating a shared vision and practices, leading instructional improvement, developing organizational capacity, and managing change, as well as the observed concerns of principals (Fuller & Hollingworth, 2018): social-emotional learning, working conditions, employment contracts, equity, preparation and support, and authority. Thus, the simultaneous observation of traits, practices, and concerns highlights the need for knowledge and skills that address the person as well as the professional in order to better manage the concerns facing today’s principals.
These more traditional categories of knowledge, skills, and practices are paired with the Positive Education and Appreciative Inquiry (AI) models that encourage the blending of well-being and strengths as foci of leader preparation and schooling (Norrish, Williams, O’Connor & Robinson, 2013; Seligman, 2008; Seligman, Gillham, Reivich & Linkins, 2009). Thus, leaders are taught to learn and nurture their personal strengths as well as work with the entirety of the school community to grow from strengths in the direction of overall well-being that encompasses academic and socio-emotional health. Inherent in a strengths focus are Seligman’s well-being traits of Engagement: the regular development of strengths and Relationships: the creation of authentic and energizing connections. Quality relationships or connections foster the knowing that allows a leader to create the conditions for growing the school community. As the AI principles coalesce into the educational arena, the core AI principles mirror the need for co-construction and positivity in practices of leadership. The AI principles are explained in Table 4.

**Table 4: Core Appreciative Inquiry Principles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Constructionist Principle: Words Create Worlds</strong></td>
<td>Reality, as we know it, is a subjective vs. objective state and is socially created through language and conversations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Simultaneity Principle: Inquiry Creates Change</strong></td>
<td>Inquiry is an intervention. The moment we ask a question, we begin to create a change. “The questions we ask are fateful.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: Core Appreciative Inquiry Principles (continued)

The Poetic Principle: We Can Choose What We Study

Teams and organizations, like open books, are endless sources of study and learning. What we choose to study makes a difference. It describes – even creates – the world as we know it.

The Anticipatory Principle: Image Inspires Action

Human systems move in the direction of their images of the future. The more positive and hopeful the image of the future, the more positive the present-day action.

The Positive Principle: Positive Questions Lead to Positive Change

Momentum for [small or] large-scale change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding. This momentum is best generated through positive questions that amplify the positive core.

Additionally, the core principles of AI introduce a vision that is both creative and inquisitive, which at times allows leaders and communities to use their knowledge and strengths to create models outside of those prescribed by educational reform studies and policies, but instead tailored to their unique contexts. Additionally, work in Appreciative Organizing in Education (Burrello et al., 2016) has established six spheres for applying AI within the school context: creating transcendent core purpose and values; positive strengths-based change; relational leadership; generative learning and capacity building; managing the paradox of internal and external accountability; and whole system coherence. These spheres represent a mindset and practices that reinforce leaders and communities building on core beliefs, strengths, relationships, and the expectations of external entities.
From the most traditional to the more nouveau, all knowledge, skills, and practices can be honored in the mind domain if their presence is valuable in the process of principal success, well-being, and self-renewal. As noted by Blaydes (2002) there are three Rs of today’s principals: resiliency or having the workplace skills to maintain positive energy, renewal which for Blaydes is about striking a balance between the personal and the professional, and reflection which is also about balance, allowing for time to search and reflect within one’s self. This extended notion of preparation and retention segues into the body and spirit portions of the framework.

**Body.**

When questioning the impact of psychological and physical health on success, the disconnect is not as broad as some might think. While stress and burnout research assert the impact of workplace stress on psychological and physical health (Blaydes, 2002; Drago-Severson, 2013; Wells, 2013), positive psychology emphasizes the reverse impact of psychological and physical health on workplace stress and well-being (Murphy, 2016; Wells, 2013). Attention to well-being and practices of self-renewal can prevent or counter stress and burnout. Specifically, the research on positive psychology is grounded in the power of happiness, or positive emotion, and its ability to positively impact personal and professional lives (Seligman, 2011; Seppälä, 2016; Suldo, 2016).

The ability to develop positive emotion is noted to increase our potential in four ways: intellectually, psychologically, socially, and physically (Fredrickson, 1998; Fredrickson, Mancuso, Branigan, & Tugade, 2000; Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998; Oswald, 2009; Seppälä, 2016). The intellectual impact of positive emotion is linked to the ability of positive emotions to increase learning, creativity, and conflict resolution (Oswald, 2009). Positive emotions can
benefit you psychologically by keeping you emotionally balanced and providing resilience to stress. Seligman (2011) refers to positive emotions as “resource builders.” The better you understand what causes them, and how to increase their occurrence, the better able you are to increase your Losada ratio, or ratio of positive thoughts to negative thoughts. Socially, positive emotions have much to offer to the source and the recipients. Research confirms positive emotions spread up to three degrees of separation (Fowler & Christakis, 2008). Positive emotions can greatly impact both the personal and professional life, strengthening relationships, productivity, social connections, and commitment to the leader and the work (Bakker, 2011; Dutton et al., 2010; Lilius et al., 2011). Finally, positive emotion is housed in the body domain of the framework because of the noted effects of positive emotion on the physical health of individuals, positively impacting cardiovascular health, coordination, sleep, and immune function (Frederickson, 2000; Tugade, Fredrickson, & Barrett, 2004). This is regardless of your exposure to high stress environments as negative emotions and environments are balanced or overcome by positive emotions (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2011).

Physical consideration of diet, movement, and sleep are also essential in the overall well-being and self-renewal of individuals, especially leaders. Just as principals strive for work-life balance, the body strives for homeostasis. This equilibrium can be negatively impacted by the lack of proper diet, exercise, and sleep. The role of the principals is not such that they are always able to attend to the body’s need for food, exercise, and sleep, but the benefits to balance or consequences of imbalance can have a direct impact on not only the body but also job performance. While the significance of food on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is well noted, it is not always honored in the day to day of life. Studies attest to the links between nutrition and cognitive and social performance of students (Florence, Asbridge, & Veugelers, 2008;
Rampersaud, Pereira, Girard, Adams, & Metzl, 2005; Taras, 2005) the same is true of adults. Though there has not been extensive research with educators, Blair, Collingwood, Reynolds, Smith, Hagan, & Sterling (1984) conducted a 10-week health promotion program for educators and the study yielded “teachers in the treatment schools increased their participation in vigorous exercise, improved their physical fitness, lost weight, lowered their blood pressure, reported a higher level of general well-being, and were better able to handle job stress” (p. 147). Similar research has surfaced in recent programs to promote psychological and physical supports for educators. This attentiveness to physical well-being can combat job stress (Jennings et al., 2017; Reiser et al., 2016; Sharp & Jennings, 2016). Diet and exercise are consistently connected to one’s ability to combat stress and maintain or increase positive mood, self-esteem, and social identity. While educators are not always involved in such research, the corporate world has conducted extensive research to connect physical fitness to increase productivity of CEOs.

Lastly, the overload of work and commitments to family and friends can cause individuals to sacrifice the recommended seven hours of sleep. Studies suggest lack of sleep can greatly impact the central nervous system to such extremes that it causes an amygdala hijack. The amygdala is often referred to as the body’s alarm system that sends the body into a heightened state of awareness, noting everything as a fight or flight scenario. Therefore, when the amygdala takes over and the frontal cortex, responsible for problem solving and communication, shuts down, some suffer from poor judgment, poor recall, poor communication, and limited creativity (Goleman, 1998, 2011; Nadler, 2007; Wieth & Zacks, 2011). What runs parallel with the research on sleep, is the research on calm, especially calm that manifests through periods of mindful meditation (Murphy, 2016; Seppälä, 2016; Wells, 2013; Wells et al., 2011). Mindful meditation extends the need for rest or states of calm beyond sleep, to mental
periods of rest or calm immersed throughout the day. Calm is noted for its preservation and rejuvenation qualities, allowing individuals to tap into energy sources and combat stress while awake. Wells (2013) notes mindfulness does not just reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, but also improves functioning in the brain regions associated with complex cognitive behavior, personality expression, decision making, and moderating social behavior. Mindful meditation has specific benefits for the insula which is noted as the place in the brain where the mind and body are integrated. Murphy’s (2016) work like Wells’ (2013) focuses specifically on the benefits of mindfulness for educators. In his articles and book, he contends mindfulness practices allow educational leaders to counteract stress as well as spend more time treasuring the triumphs of leading and increasing their effectiveness as leaders. His message has extended to the entire education department at Harvard. In the 2017 school year Harvard offered its first Mindfulness for Educators program with a mission to “help educators build the inner resources to handle complex multi-faceted challenges, manage personal stress, and build resilience while enhancing professional effectiveness… [it is] designed to help participants learn to balance inner needs with outer responsibilities while reducing uncertainty, stress, and feelings of being overwhelmed” (https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ppe/new-professional-ed-program-mindful-practices). There is a trend developing in educator preparation programs addressing the inner and outer needs of educators specific to the management of stress. This is due to research alerting the profession to the necessity to not simply address the mind of the principal, but also the body and spirit of the leader. This framework outlines how attention and preparation have to exist in the mind, body, and spirit in order to fully address the well-being and self-renewal of leaders.
**Spirit.**

While spirit or spirituality can be limited to the theological studies, the definition is extended for this study. Sweeney states “the human spirit is more than a set of fixed traits and characteristics; it is an animating impulse- a vital, motivating force that is directed to realizing higher order goals, dreams, and aspirations that grow out of the essential self... The human spirit organizes people’s lives and propels people forward...Spirituality refers to the continuous journey people take to discover and realize their spirit, that is, their essential selves... Spirituality is the process of searching for the sacred in one’s life” (p.58-59). Thus, spirit and spirituality are not limited to theology, but present in all studies of humanity. They are in fact a driving force in life that bring about purpose and for many purposive leadership (Dantley, 2003) or socially just leadership (Theoharis, 2008), or transformative (Shields, 2014) leadership, to name a few. All of these speak to a leader’s ability to utilize their knowledge and skills to lead from core values and beliefs in a manner that fosters positive and productive change. Thus, thriving in their life’s work and their ability to positively impact the lives of teachers and students.

The spirit component of my framework was conceived by combining Goffman’s (1986) frame analysis, specifically in reference to professional identity, with Gunzenhauser’s (2012) exploration of the active and ethical professional, which grapples with the ethical origins of education and the need to be creative and reflective in a time of reform. The active and the ethical is further shaped by critical spirituality as introduced by Dantley (2010), critical spiritually allows the leader to extend core values and beliefs to the organization by way of critical self-reflection, deconstructive interpretation, performative creativity, and transformative action. Finally, these efforts are complemented by positive psychology and now positive
education models presented in Seligman’s PERMAH model that has been used to emphasize well-being as a core value inherent in schooling.

Goffman presents a frame as a “tangible metaphor” that many of us would associate with context or background, “unstated rules or principles more or less implicitly set by the character of some larger, though perhaps invisible, entity” (Goffman, 1986). I argue that this entity for America’s school is none other than performance accountability policies and the framing of the United States education system as mediocre. Since the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA) education has transitioned from a time of self-regulation and little government interference, to a tidal wave of legislation that pushes federal government involvement and regulation of schooling, all in the name of equality or equity. Over the course of a week it is expected that the media will present some commentary regarding the state of America’s schools. Usually this commentary follows a script established decades earlier with the introduction of the A Nation at Risk report in 1983. The report asserted, “the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens the very future of our Nation” (Loss & McGuinn, 2016). The framing of the U.S.’s educational system as mediocre continued over the next few decades with the adoption of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) of 2002 and currently the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 (Henig & Stone, 2008; Lewis, 2009; Rogers-Chapman, 2015).

For every script or frame there are the stage actors. This is the meeting of the public and political image of the educational system with the private and professional persona of the educator. Enter the mask. In Goffman’s text The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life he highlights Park’s theory of the mask:
It is probably no mere historical accident that the word person in its first meaning, is a mask. It is rather a recognition of the fact that everyone is always and everywhere, more or less consciously, playing a role… It is in these roles that we know each other; it is in these roles that we know ourselves. In a sense, and insofar as this mask represents the conception we have formed of ourselves - the role we are striving to live up to- this mask is our truer self, the self we would like to be. In the end, our conception of our role becomes second nature and an integral part of our personality. We come into the world as individuals, achieve character, and become persons. (p.12)

The mask of “the educator” is one that stems from altruistic origins, emphasizing a selfless concern with the well-being of others. It was actually spoken of in similar ways as one would the religious order. Educators were “called” to the profession. They were called to serve the children and families of society. Embedded in this “service” one finds a discourse of sacrifice that displays itself in long work hours, dedication to students and families, and low pay. This service often extends beyond the classroom and reflects in expectations for the personal lives of educators, as evidenced in the morality clauses found in most public school contracts. Educators are held to a higher standard but are not always at the top of the list for rewards, or even reflected in the most positive light by the media.

Once educators have accepted this role and don the mask, they then experience the tottering between cynicism and sincerity that Goffman describes as they grapple with the desire to be the “martyr” or the “savior” so commonly promoted, while feeling the pressures and disappointments of not always measuring up. Not because they are not quality educators, but because the script written for the educator has become flawed and unrealistic.
Enter Gunzenhauser’s (2008; 2012) active and ethical professional, able to contextualize the powers that create the norms in which he/she abides, and in doing so acknowledge moments when they contribute to their own subjugation by refusing to assert their freedom to “self-create” or as Goffman would say “break frame.” This breaking of frame can occur in multiple ways, as suggested by Gunzenhauser through ethical reflection, and as suggested by Dantley (2003), through critical spirituality. If ethical obligations reference one’s obligations to a profession, then moral obligations represent one’s obligations to personal notions of right and wrong, or core beliefs and values. Dantley’s critical spirituality is the merging of these core beliefs and values into your leadership style and practices. It is not an imposition of the personal onto the professional, but a process that starts with critical self-reflection: acknowledging the core or essence of the self and through critical analysis, liberating the self; deconstructive interpretation: critiquing personal socialization and institutional practices of socialization, including practices within education; performative creativity: leading the school towards envisioning a more equitable and democratic model, beyond the status quo; and transformative action: acting, inquiring, exploring injustice and enlisting all voices for solutions (Dantley, 2010). Dantley (2010) notes, “transformative leaders are those who allow their spiritual selves to assist them in the execution of their leadership responsibilities (p. 215).” This spirituality is “critical” because it requires the ethical exploration of the educational system to notice and act when the system is crippling the development of any particular groups of students. I would add the need to act when the prescribed practices are crippling to the overall well-being of any of the stakeholders, which include educators. Thus, space must be made for a counter-narrative to the current identity and functioning of the leader, especially if the goal is to retain leaders with the ability to create environments that serve all students well.
Chapter Three

Purpose of Study

This study builds upon stress and burnout research on school leaders by providing possible solutions to the current challenges in the field. This study specifically assessed the mind (acquiring and accessing knowledge and skills, sense-making), body (knowledge, protection, and use of body; well-being or nurturing of body; embodied/somatic knowing), and spirit (knowledge and connection to self: personal beliefs and values; development of personal and professional persona; hope, purpose, transcendence; flourishing) relationship inherent in the principalship. Success is not simply connected to the skill-set of the principal often associated with their mental intellect, but also a state of well-being and provisions for self-renewal that are connected to the body and spirit of the individual which allow the mind to be at its best. While this study included an analysis of the contribution of district and educational programs and organizations to principal well-being and self-renewal, the emphasis was on principals’ personal beliefs and practices and how they influenced well-being and self-renewal.

Epistemology

Based on the research information specific to principal stress and burnout and processes of self-renewal, the primary research questions were as follows:

Question One: In what ways are principals’ well-being and self-renewal supported by principals’ personal beliefs and practices, district policies and practices, and education programs and organizations?
**Question Two:** To what extent does attentiveness to well-being and practices of self-renewal impact professional success and work satisfaction, and well-being and flourishing?

This qualitative study aligned with the essential characteristics of qualitative research as outlined by Grbich (2013), specifically those that speak to subjectivity, power, and a holistic view:

1. *Subjectivity* has value, meaning that both views of the participant and those of [the] researcher are to be respected, acknowledged and incorporated as data, and the interpretation of this data will be constructed by both [participant and researcher] are to be respected, acknowledged and incorporated as data, and the interpretation of this data will be constructed by both [researcher and participant], the research is not a distant neutral being.

2. *Power* lies predominantly with the researched (who are viewed as being the experts on the research topic).

3. *A holistic view* is essential (so the structures impacting on the setting such as policies, culture, situation and context need to be included). (p.4-5)

The idea of the participants and the researcher collaborating in the process of discovery and meaning making is at the core of qualitative research. Thus, my participants were the experts whose knowledge and experiences informed the frame and the outcome of this study. The research paradigm aligned with an interpretivist/constructionist view. The interpretivist/constructionist paradigm asserts “the research focus is on exploration of the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences in the worlds in which they live and how the contexts of events and situations and the placement of these within wider social environments have impacted on constructed understandings” (Grbich, 2013, p.7). In addition, Patton (2015) notes the ability of a constructionist frame to create a space for dissonant point of views. They
are welcomed and accepted because the experience and truth of the participants is valued above the presentation or justification of a particular theory or belief. Likewise, the constructionist approach to the interview honors the exchange of truth and experience between the interviewer and interviewee. Both parties participate in the process of sense-making as they clarify, justify, and inform one another, traversing through the various interview questions, adding multiple layers of meaning (Roulston, 2010). The rich exchange between the two parties can be analyzed with the same depth as the responses of the interviewee.

The constructionist lens also aligns with the theoretical framework which emphasizes frame analysis and critical consciousness of the personal and professional self, specifically one’s ability to compare and contrast their personal beliefs and experiences of leadership with the historical and/or societal construct of leadership as it pertains to success, well-being and flourishing. I made the choice to capture the personal stories of a few that allow the reader to view the richness of each participant within the case study. Hence, the qualitative data captured the personal stories of each participant as they reflected on their professional and personal success, current state of well-being, and processes of renewal. By definition, a case study is “an investigation and analysis of a single or collective case, intended to capture the complexity of the object of study” (Stake, 1995). The qualitative case study of the social sciences values the search for “naturalistic” generalizations. In other words, it aims to add to the existing body of experiences and improve understanding by, “recognizing the similarities of objects and issues in and out of context and by sensing the natural covariations of happenings” (Stake, 1978). Thus, a bounded case study of a select few allows the researcher and the readers to glean a deeper understanding of the participants’ unique context, values and beliefs, and experiences that shape their identity as leaders. This qualitative case study was bound by time: the interviews occurred
within a one-month period in the school year, location: all participants were employed by the same school district, and a specific participant criteria: successful principals with more than three years of experience and varied levels of attentiveness to well-being.

**Setting**

**District history and demographics.**

The Florida district selected, referenced in this study as Beach City Unified, is one of the ten largest districts in Florida, and is one of the 30 largest nationally. The district serves various demographics respective of race and class with over 100,000 PreK-12 students, representing multiple races/ethnicities: 55.0% - White; 18.8% - Black; 17% - Hispanic; 4.6% - Asian; 4.4% - Multiracial; and 0.2% Native American. Beach City houses over 100 schools and over 400 full-time on-site administrators. While the district is large and diverse, not all sites reflect this diversity. The district is divided into four areas, each with a unique population which represents the expected diversity of a district that spans over 500 square miles ranging from beachfront to inner city. For the purpose of this study the four areas are labelled North, Middle-North, Middle-South, and South. The North area of the district is more heavily populated with upper middle class affluent families, the majority of them White, with few Title I schools. However, within this White group there are some communities with distinct ethnic or cultural identities which include the Greek, Italian, and Lebanese communities. The South area represents a polar opposite of sorts to the North, with a majority African-American population, lower socio-economic status, the highest percentage of Title I schools, and some of the lowest performing schools in the district. The Middle-North and Middle-South areas are the most diverse. While Middle-South has a larger Hispanic population, greater racial diversity and socio-economic diversity can be found at the schools within these two areas.
With this diversity of people, incomes, and experiences the district has seen a variety of learning needs and thus has constructed a wide variety of programs. The programs within the district range from traditional K-12 school settings, magnets, specialty schools with arts and enrichment foci, International Baccalaureate (IB), technical schools for the career driven, and virtual schools for online learners. Overall, there are in excess of fifty programs for study to apply for based on a family’s specific interests and goals. These schools are dispersed throughout the district and due to their specializations, some students may travel by bus almost two hours from North to South or vice versa to attend a particular program of study. The district is also invested in promoting rigor across the board, promoting honors and advanced placement classes in some of its lowest performing schools, with AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) programs to support college readiness, homework hotlines, and additional supports for struggling students. The district’s graduation rate is over 80% and they have been recognized on a national level for their quality school choice program.

It is important to note while the average tenure for a superintendent, especially in a large and diverse district, is 3-5 years, Beach City superintendents on average have an exceptionally long tenure. Interviews with the district director of professional development and school principals included references to well established and lengthy relationships with the superintendent and area superintendents. Additional information on the district website and district documents revealed the legacy of superintendents and the history of board members. The current superintendent is entering his seventh year of service for the district. Additionally, the seven members of the school board experience extended tenure, most have served almost a decade if not longer. These are elected positions and the ability of the members to secure concurrent re-election is a reflection of the strong district community relations. The community
is deeply invested in the schools and has a history of influencing the direction of the district and holding the district accountable for providing a quality education for all students. Finally, the district also experiences extended tenure with its district level employees and site-based teachers and administrators. This longevity has allowed the district to improve upon its systemic supports for both students and adults within the district.

**District training and supports - the journey of a sea turtle**

When interviewing the district director of professional development, whose pseudonym is Dennis, the meeting culminated with an analogy. Dennis referenced the journey from classroom teacher to principal and compared the odds of becoming a principal in the Beach City district to those of the sea turtle hatchling finding its way from its birthplace in the sand to the oceanfront. The common saying is that the odds are never in a sea turtles favor. To be exact, they are 1 in 1,000. Dennis explained within Beach City Unified the process to get into the principal pool is rigorous. In order to apply teachers had to pass targeted selection. These teachers had earned their master’s degree, served as a teacher leader in positions similar to MTSS coach or a district level literacy or math coach because the district felt those positions provided “better vision of seeing the big picture and having that leadership skill set that sometimes somebody coming directly out of the classroom may not have developed yet.” The district selection committee also preferred the participants have a variety of experiences in different school settings.

A small number of candidates passed the targeted selection process. For those who did, they then had to score high enough in all areas of assessment for the candidate pool, “…there is what’s called a 360 degree survey, they have a written assessment and they also have a panel interview. We have numerical scores for all aspects of this application process and we take all of
the folks who apply for level two and we select based on their scores. We do this annually and the typical class … I would say twenty people would usually get in and they then go through the level two certification program with the university.” Once participants received recommendations from peers and supervisors via the 360 survey, as well as passed the written assessment and panel interview, they had to successfully complete a one year program at the university. However, successful completion of the program did not guarantee them principal placement. Dennis noted that each year there were approximately 8-10 principal openings. With current graduates and past graduates the principal pool was sized around 100. These were the hundred grown by the district. Whenever an assistant principal applied for a position they not only competed with the district pool, but also the out of district and out of state candidates vying for the position. The possibility of securing the principalship quickly diminished.

For those few candidates who made it to a school site and served in the role of principal, the district had tiered supports. There were systemic supports that addressed the personal and professional growth and renewal of the principals. Health supports were offered to all members of the district by way of the insurance company which provided incentivized wellness programs. Dennis explained being proactive was cost-efficient for the district and was mutually beneficial for the participants:

...if you look at many organizations and you just look in businesses, there is so much money that is spent on healthcare and a lot of the research shows that when we have employees who are healthy, they have healthy habits, they're more productive and obviously you know if it’s better for them then it’s also better for the district itself, whether you are a business or an organization, if its less that we are paying in costs, hospital costs, etc. So a part of that is we're trying to promote healthy habits…
The district partnership with the health insurance company offers employees an online app that tracks “vitality points” which are allotted for meeting exercise goals and adhering to annual physical and eye exams, as well as teeth cleanings. They have online seminars on such topics as stress reduction, weight loss, healthy eating, and sleep patterns. These vitality points are then used to purchase gift cards. Dennis mentioned he had over $350 worth of gift cards for the last incentive period.

The district has a wellness coordinator who is responsible for disseminating information regarding the district’s “Be SMART Wellness Program.” The acronym SMART stands for: S – Stay Active; M – Manage Disease; A – Avoid Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drugs; R – Recognize Risk Factors; and T – Think Positive. The program consists of monthly newsletters, wellness trainings both in person and online, and bi-annual health fairs. The program not only offers supports for managing physical health, but also emotional health. These supports are not just at the district level, but are also site-based, as each school is assigned a wellness coach. This wellness coach is responsible for planning site-based events for educators such as after school arts, yoga, and nutrition sessions. Some coaches also organize school-based sports. All of this serves to allow educators an on-site outlet for stress.

Professional growth and renewal of leaders is systemic. The district’s principal preparation program offers multi-tiered supports\(^1\) for candidates seeking principal certification. They have established a Leadership Development Pipeline with the dual objectives of building leadership capacity for the district and providing increased opportunities for leadership and growth of the candidates. The district provides first year assistant principals with a first year Leadership Academy, full-time mentor, and monthly meetings with a cohort group for additional

\(^{1}\) Level 1 and Level 2 principal certification programs

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mentoring and collaboration. Additionally, the district has a Summer Bridge program that provides additional internships for assistant principals, usually at an alternative site, for the purpose of providing aspiring principals with diverse experiences. Additionally, the year begins with a 4-day leadership week with monthly leadership meetings as the year progresses.

Principals are provided with similar supports, a first year principal Leadership Academy, full-time mentor, monthly meetings with cohort group, monthly leadership meetings, and additional monthly area meetings. Novice principals or principals transitioning to new and different roles have a district mentor who is usually a retired administrator with the time and expertise to assist with the needs of the principal, as well as a Thought Partner who is a practicing principal able to assist with questions about the current policies, processes, and procedures. The retired mentor attends a 3-day Coaching/Mentoring Seminar presented by the National Institute of School Leadership (NISL). They visit with their mentees at least twice a month. This way novice principals have two means of support, neither of which is evaluative. In addition to these services, the principals have monthly support meetings and professional development.

**Participants**

In determining the criteria and number of participants for this qualitative study, attention was given to the research questions and who would be best able to answer these questions. After reviewing the literature and conferring with professors and other scholars within the field, it was decided that the participants should have at least three years of principal experience, preferably five years, which was the common number in previous principal studies (DeJong et al., 2017; Drago-Severson, 2012; Friedman, 2002; Wong et al., 2000). This time period gave principals sufficient exposure to the challenges of the job and the ability to experiment with various means
of adapting and overcoming these challenges. It was also acknowledged that the experience of the principalship varied from site to site and level to level, so there needed to be representation from various kinds of schools as well as various levels, elementary, middle, and high. Finally, it was noted that those studied should be principals who were viewed as successful within their professional community, thus these would be leaders who fit the district director of professional development’s criteria for success, but also had a history of serving as mentors, serving on principal panels, and/or working with university preparation programs. The number of participants was based on qualitative interview study guidelines (Rudestam, 2007) which suggest a range of 5-30 for the kind of data that was collected. The longer the interview transcripts, the fewer the number of participants. A lengthier transcript would result from interviews lasting closer to two hours, thus lending itself to a participant group closer to 5 rather than 30. Because the estimated length of time for the interviews was two sessions ranging from 30-90 minutes, the suggested number of participants was 6-9. This number of participants was also appropriate in order to have the aforementioned representation from various school types and various grade levels, also explained below. The participants in the study met the following criteria:

1. Principals work in the designated school district: at least one at level A schools (low performing- D/F), at least one at level B schools (average performing - C/B), at least one at level C schools (high performing - A)².

2. Principals have three or more years of experience as a principal

3. Principals fit the definition of “successful” as described by the district director of professional development

4. Principals are at various levels of awareness and attentiveness to well-being.

² School grades are based on annual performance on state academic assessments
Thus, multiple reference points were used to select participants: district director criteria for a “successful” principal; observation of potential participants by the researcher at principal panels and professional development: I noted principals who discussed practices of renewal in their personal or professional lives and listed them as possible participants for future contact; as well as reviewed public biographical information of principals noting a history of challenges and successes: as principals peeked my interest I reviewed their principal biography pages looking for those with records of high achievement or promising practices in areas of personal and/or professional renewal. I also read newspaper articles when available to get a feel for the principal’s reputation at their school and in the district, again listing those of interest to me. I then compared my list to the criteria set by the district director.

Interviews were conducted with the district director of professional development to provide context for the policies and practices of the district specific to personal and professional renewal as well as to assist in clarifying his definition of successful to create a criteria for selection of candidates. The professional development director was asked questions similar to the following:

1. What is your definition of “success”? How do principals embody those characteristics?

2. What is the reputation of a “successful” principal in the district?

3. What makes you choose them over others?

4. How would they best serve as mentors to others?

5. Are you aware of any preparation that any of them have received that contributes to their success?
There was a short email correspondence to assist with document gathering and a follow up email with specific questions to clarify data gleaned from documents found online and provided by the district’s professional development director regarding leader preparation and supports.

The district criteria for successful was determined by the district director of professional development, Dennis. Dennis defined a successful principal as one who was able to achieve 100% success for the students, meaning “when we look at learning results for students, a successful principal is one, regardless of the situation, can come into the school and achieve high results for their students.” He noted this was often accomplished by putting the necessary systems in place and communicating effectively with teachers and the community to accomplish this goal. Thus, this profile of principal success was used to narrow the pool of participants. As discussed in the literature review, the definition of a successful principal is often determined by external entities. Therefore, a portion of the research study investigated the framing of success within the district, how it aligned with the current literature, and how it aligned with the belief systems of the principals (Goffman, 1986, 2002). In addition, where I saw disconnects in definitions of success, it was also important to note whether or not the principals possessed the desire or ability to redefine their positions.

Ultimately, Dennis assisted me in determining the best means for principal recruitment that would attract participants with the variety of criteria I desired for my study. Initially I was supposed to present and recruit at a district principal meeting. However, due to how late the study occurred in the school year, I recruited via email and only to principals who had served as mentors or on principal panels. My goal was 6-9 principals. I had only six principals express interest and included all six in the study. Table 5 shows the diversity of the schools and principals in the group specific to: School: academic achievement grade, school grade level,
school title status; and Principal: years in administration, highest degree, age, gender, race, marital status, number of children under 18. I assigned each principal a pseudonym. All demographic information for schools is from district documents and all information for principals is self-reported.

Table 5: Principal Participants – School and Principal Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Demographics</th>
<th>Principal Demographics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Academic Grade</td>
<td>School Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanessa</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Biographical narratives of participants.

John - John is a White male in his forties, married to another educator. He noted that their shared commitment to the profession allowed their schedules to better align and provided a shared understanding of the demands of the profession. He stated it also helped that there were no children at the house and that this probably helped him to meet the demands of the job. He comes from a family of educators and he assumed that education was the thing to do. Once he started teaching he knew it was the right decision. He taught math for eight years and has served as an administrator for sixteen years. He had a diverse group of experiences, from his career in the Northeast to his experiences within the district. He served at the middle and high school levels. He left the classroom for administration because he saw the potential for a larger impact on a school site. His high school serves over 1,500 students in grades nine through twelve. He leads with five administrators, 103 teachers, five counselors, and 48 support staff members. His high school earned the designation of AVID National Demonstration School in February 2017.
The high school also increased its graduation rate to 91 percent during the 2015-2016 school year. It is a Title 1 school with 4% Asian, 46% Black, 11% Hispanic, 4% Multi-Racial, and 35% White. The school has maintained a C grade for the last two years.

Carl – Carl is a White male in his 50s with a Specialist degree in education. He has been in education for twenty-eight years. His first seven years were in the classroom and for the last twenty-one served in leadership roles. He’s worked at middle schools and high schools. He is a legend of sorts in the district due to his success with two turnaround schools, one that was in the lowest five percent in Florida, as he was able to accomplish and maintain an A or B status for the school the five years that he was there. He is currently serving as principal of one of the highest performing middle schools in the district. However, he does not attribute his success to him alone, but instead being in the right place at the right time with the right group of people. His current school has been an A school for the past seventeen years. Carl’s work to improve and increase the programs and maintain the rating has caused enrollment numbers to steadily increase over the past three years.

Carol – Carol is a White female in her thirties, married with two children. She currently holds a Specialist degree but is a doctoral student soon to start her research study. She has been an administrator for nine years with experiences at both elementary and middle. This is her fourth year as a principal, her first year at her current school. Prior to administration she taught for five years at the elementary level before transitioning into a Curriculum Specialist position. Her K-5 elementary school serves almost 400 kindergarten through 5th grade students. She operates with two administrators, 34 teachers, and 29 staff members. It is a Title 1 school serving 78% non-white with a 100% FRL rate. The state grade for 2015 was an F, 2016 a C, and it was a D for the 2017 school year when she arrived.
Lisa – Lisa is a White female in her thirties, married with three children. She graduated from the United States Coast Guard Academy serving as an active officer for five years and a reserve officer for an additional two. She received a master’s degree in Elementary Education. She was a classroom teacher for kindergarten and first grade and has experience in building background knowledge to improve literacy and communication skills for all children. She completed coursework in educational leadership at the master’s level and is working towards a doctoral degree in a Leadership in Educational Administration Doctorate program. She had just completed her second year as principal of her current school.

Her elementary school serves over 500 PK-5th grade students. She leads with 2 administrators, 52 teachers, and 47 staff members. It is a Title 1 school serving 89% non-white students with a 100% FRL rate. The school is a turnaround school with an extended school day that allows for targeted instruction for all scholars, a morning meeting to build collaboration and community among scholars, and clubs and activities infused in and around the school day. The state grades for the past years are as follows: 2017 – F, 2016 – D, 2015 and 2014 F. Before the arrival of Lisa, the school’s low performance was closely monitored by the local news outlets. Since her arrival there have been continued inquiries regarding its progress.

Vanessa – Vanessa is an African-American woman in her forties who grounds herself in her Christian faith. She is divorced with two children, one under eighteen. She takes pride in her ability to make meaningful memories for both of her children while still maintaining a successful career. She believes in taking care of herself and owning her challenges. Her ability to care for herself allows her to fuel her family and her school. Her roots are in business and she used the knowledge and skills from business to inform her leadership. After losing her sister to cancer she sought a change in career that allowed her a greater sense of purpose and fulfillment. She
remembered the teachers who had come to her house and the difference they made with her sister. She believes that God called her to do this work and that he gifted her with the skills and abilities to be able to perform. She admits to a type-A personality. She earned her master’s degree and has been an administrator for the past fourteen years. She served as an assistant principal for five years and this is her ninth year as a principal, her fourth year at her current school.

Her middle school serves over 800 students grades six through eight. She leads with four administrators, one part-time instructional reading coach, 54 classroom teachers, and 41 staff members. It is a non-Title 1 school with 2.2% Asian, 10.4% Black, 11.9% Hispanic, 71% White, and .2% Other. It has been rated a Five Star School for the last several years. The school’s Leadership Conservatory for the Arts is recognized as one of the top middle school band programs in the district taking home first place in the 2017 Music USA Festival for concert band, jazz band, orchestra and chorus and was the overall grand champions for instrumental vocal. The school is currently a B for 2017, it was a C in 2016 and a B in 2015.

David – David is a Hispanic male in his thirties, married with five children. He earned his master’s degree and has served as an administrator for the past eight years. He was a classroom teacher for over 13 years and then transitioned to a teacher mentor before becoming an administrator. This is his first year as principal at his current school. He joked about the pressure of following what he considered to be one of the best administrators in the history of the district. He believes the most important question you can ask yourself is “do you have the right heart to do the work?” He pushes himself very hard and noted he tries to be a perfectionist even though he knows he can’t be. His middle school serves over 1800 students grades nine through twelve. He leads a school team of four administrators, 91 instructional personnel, and 35 staff members.
The school is not a Title 1 school. The student body is 59.6% White, 18.2% Black, 13.6% Hispanic, 6.2% Asian, 3.5% Multi-racial, and .8% other. The school has maintained a grade of C or better since 2015. Their 2017 grade was a B.

**Research Design**

In determining the appropriate design of the study, great attention was given to the research questions to determine what was being studied and which methods best aligned with the questions. Therefore, the desire to study a particular group of people, those identified as successful principals, with varied experiences in well-being and self-renewal both personal and professional, and the supports provided by them and their districts and/or education programs, lent itself to a case study model (Stake 1978, 1995, 1998). The case study model bounded by participant criteria and location allowed me to hone in on not just the experiences of a select few, but also the practices of a particular district and the experiences of these few within this district. Generating meaningful discussion around my research questions was best accomplished via interviews and contextualized by additional information collected from documents, observations, and the Workplace PERMAH Survey. The various data sources and analytical strategies are outlined in the research design Table 6 and then discussed more thoroughly in their designated sections.

**Table 6: Summary of Research Design**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Questions</th>
<th>In what ways are principals’ well-being and self-renewal supported by principals’ personal beliefs and practices, district policies and practices, and education programs and organizations?</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To what extent does attentiveness to well-being and practices of self-renewal impact professional success and work satisfaction, and life satisfaction and flourishing?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6: Summary of Research Design (continued)

| Data Sources | Individual Interviews (Director, Participants)  
|              | PERMAH Survey  
|              | Documents: Wellness Newsletters, SIPs, Principal Memos/Handouts, Principal Preparation Program Brochure and Leadership Development Pipeline Presentation |
| Analysis Strategies | Cycles of Coding  
|                    | Preliminary Jotting  
|                    | Research Journal  
|                    | Inductive, Deductive, and Comparative analysis (Thematic)  
|                    | Interactions between researcher and participants  
|                    | Sense-making in “interview talk”  
|                    | Peer Review/Debriefe |

**Data Collection Methods**

For the qualitative researcher, the instrument is often superseded by the individual or the human experience. Thus the “instrument of choice” for data collection is not a thing but a person, the human observer or researcher (Rudestam, 2007). Additionally, case studies emphasize the naturally occurring sources of knowledge, such as people or observations of interactions to make meaning (Stake, 1998). Interviews are often used to generate discussions about the human experience. Therefore, the sources of data for this study consisted primarily of interview accounts, supplemented by survey inquiry and document analysis. These various sources created a triangulation of data to draw a richer picture of the district and participants. The specific data collection methods were as follows:

**Interview protocol.**

Two interviews were conducted with the principal candidates. The first interview provided participants with an introduction to the researcher and an overview of the study, and the
consent form. It was also a time to answer any pending questions from the participants. During the first interview participants reviewed the consent form, shared general background information, were introduced to the PERMAH Workplace framework, and answered the pre-survey questions regarding their attentiveness to personal PERMAH. Candidates also answered the mind and body section of the table. I constantly inquired regarding participants’ comfort and energy, if participants were not too fatigued, they answered questions from the spirit section of the table. Otherwise, the second interview addressed the spirit section of the table, chronicling their journey as educators and how their work connected to their personal values and beliefs. I also guided the participants through their survey results and asked the post-survey questions related to their attentiveness to well-being and promotion of well-being within the workplace. I concluded with a total of two interviews per principal, twelve in all. The first round of interviews ranged from 40 to 75 minutes. I noted on the part of principals, the second round interviews took longer than the first round due to their increased level of comfort and willingness to share more. On my side, I noted my second group of interviews, participants 4-6 took longer for both cycles because I wasn’t simply asking the interview questions, but additional follow up questions to clarify similarities and differences in beliefs and experiences of the participants. After reviewing notes from both the first and second interview, follow-up occurred via email or phone. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and accompanied by notes from the researcher. The majority of the interviews took place at the district office and school sites of principals. The times and locations were selected by the participants with efforts made to ensure the participants were well rested, able to meet with limited distractions, and able to secure a private location to ensure the confidentiality of participant responses. The interview questions are contained in Appendix A.
Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) – Rudestam (2007) notes the significance of the interview for qualitative research as well as the challenges of conducting interviews without prior experience. Therefore, it is suggested that a refinement process occurs, preferably one that includes a pilot interview, to assist the researcher in listening with patience and sensitivity and framing questions to invite the stories of the interviewees, as well as provide meaningful follow-up questions. In preparing for the interview component of the data collection process, I utilized the Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) framework (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The refinement process consisted of four phases. The phases and their purposes were as follows:

**Table 7: The Four-Phase Process to IPR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase One: Ensuring interview questions align with research questions</td>
<td>To create an interview protocol matrix to map the interview questions against the research questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase Two: Constructing an inquiry-based conversation</td>
<td>To construct an interview protocol that balances inquiry with conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase Three: Receiving feedback on interview protocols</td>
<td>To obtain feedback on interview protocol (possible activities include close reading and think-aloud activities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase Four: Piloting the interview protocol</td>
<td>To pilot the interview protocol with small sample</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This process allowed me to follow a structured framework for refining my interview questions and protocol. Each phase asked fundamental questions that allowed me to effectively reflect on my purpose and product. Appendix A represents my exploration of phase one, aligning the research questions with the interview questions as well as connecting the interview questions to the conceptual framework presented in Chapter Two. As noted in the IPR framework:

[The] alignment can increase the utility of interview questions in the research process (confirming their purpose), while ensuring their necessity for the study (eliminating unnecessary ones). A researcher wants intentional and necessary interview questions
because people have complex experiences that do not unravel neatly before the researcher. (p. 812)

Under research question number one are all interview questions related to the essential ideas in the research question. As stated by Castillo-Montoya, another goal of IPR is to assess any holes that may appear in the interview protocol. Therefore, I created sub-categories next to each interview question to assess whether or not participants were encouraged to explore personal, district, and educational supports. This checklist presented a visual of which categories were addressed and how often. Additionally, for research question two my emphasis was on exploring whether or not participants were “attentive” to well-being and practices of self-renewal. The list of interview questions in this section focused on participants’ thoughts and actions regarding well-being and self-renewal. Listed next to each section of questions are the researchers whose literature align with the various domains.

Phase two emphasizes the researcher’s attentiveness to creating research questions that are respectful and inclusive of the participants. It is suggested that the questions are not only developmentally appropriate, but also create an inclusive and non-intrusive environment or tone. Therefore, they walk the line between inquiry and conversation. Specifically, the interview questions are different from the research questions, they resemble typical social interaction more than frigid research protocols, questions are diverse, and there are suggested follow-up questions (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Thus, Table 8 explores my interview questions and sentence stems that are not only inclusive, but varied and appropriate for my audience of K-12 leaders. As sited in Table 6, phases two and three contributed to the variation and wording of the interview questions which evolved as a result of various meetings with different committee members to ensure that the interview questions aligned with the research goals.
Table 8: Phase Two - Inquiry-based Conversation Considerations

| Conversational Cues and Social Rules of Ordinary Conversation: | As I learn more about you over the next month, what do you want me to know in advance about who you are as an individual, your role as a principal, and your school? |
| Tell me about a time when... |
| How do you... |
| When you think about the future, what will it demand of you and how will you respond to these demands? |

| Variety of Questions: | Variety of sentence starters: |
| In what ways... |
| How do you... |
| Why did you... |
| What do you... |
| Tell me about a time when... |

| Script with likely follow-up and prompt questions: | Follow-up questions: |
| Regarding attentiveness to personal wellness: |
| How do you make time for this in you day or week? |
| How do you maintain your routine? |
| Regarding stress management: |
| Is this effective for you? |
| Regarding district supports for well-being: |
| Have you ever taken advantage of these services? |
| Are there services provided at your school site? |
| Regarding the purpose of schooling: |
| What are we giving students in addition to reading, writing, and math skills? |
| Regarding challenges to personal values and beliefs: |
| How does this affect your job satisfaction? |
The primary goal of phase four: piloting the interview protocol, is for the researcher to pilot the revised questions with people who mirror the characteristics of the participants to be interviewed for the actual study. I simulated the actual interview in as real conditions as possible. The goal was to improve the integrity of the questions and the flow of the interview from start to finish. I conducted interviews simulating rapport, process, consent, space, recording, and timing in order to “try out” the interview questions. Needed improvements were noted and final revisions were made to the interview protocol questions in preparation to launch the study (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). As with the sample for the actual study, the pilot participants were selected in coordination with the district director’s criteria for successful leaders. Two participants were selected who represented the additional criteria: variety of grade levels served, variety of student populations served, and a variety of state assigned school performance grades (Table 9).

**Table 9: Pilot Study Group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrators</th>
<th>School Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AP #1 – White male, married with six children, served in the US Army during Operation Desert Storm, Elementary Education and Educational Leadership degrees from USF, educator since 2003</td>
<td>Elementary School – PreK-5, serving 594 students, two administrators, 45 teachers, and 52 staff members. School improved from an F in 2014 to a C in 2017. Title 1 school with 69% minority, 100% Free-reduced lunch (FRL).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP #2 – Black female with an adult son. She has a history in Special Education and a doctorate degree in Educational Leadership. She started teaching in a different southern state before coming to Florida. All of her leadership has been within the current district in middle and high school settings.</td>
<td>Middle School, 6-8, serving 733 students grades 6-8th, three administrators, 40 teachers, and 4 staff members. C school for the first time in three years, non-Title 1 school, 72% minority.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The pilot pair can be compared to the recommended study participants who also represent various grade levels, student populations, and state performance grades (Table 5). The pilot and study group participant data profiles reflect information collected from various online newspaper articles, school websites, and School Improvement Plans (SIP) found on the district website. At the culmination of the interviews the virtual profiles were compared and interwoven into the principal’s personal statements about themselves and their schools.

Pilot Study Context - As previously mentioned, a pilot study was conducted with assistant principals involved in the Gulf Coast Partnership (GCP). The GCP was selected due to past inquiry with the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 cohorts regarding well-being or work-life balance, a common theme that surfaced in the participant requested pre-professional training of principals. Work-life balance was in the top three areas of interest and additional support for both years, including the current 2017-2018 cohort. Previously, with the 2015-2016 cohort, one of the lead professors and I started a voluntary gratitude group to allow a space for participants to discuss their current challenges with work-life balance as well as create supports to minimize or alleviate some of the strain involved in their individual experiences of leadership. The following year inquiries were made by some directors and again by participants to more specifically address the challenges that come with administration and work-life balance. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to use the GCP as a venue to collect data to inform my research as well as the work of the GCP in promoting work-life balance in aspiring principals.
Three to four aspiring administrators were identified using the same criteria established for the research participants:

1. Aspiring principals will work in the designated school district: at least one at level A schools (low performing - D/F), at least one at level B schools (average performing - C/B), at least one at level C schools (high performing - A).

2. Aspiring principals with three or more years of experience as an administrator.

3. Aspiring principals will be identified as “successful” by the district director.
   (Note: director’s definition of success will be included in findings.)

4. Aspiring principals at various levels of awareness and attentiveness to well-being.

After the aspiring principals were identified and agreed to participate, the two rounds of interviews were conducted. These interviews served as a refinement process for the final interview questions, a brainstorming opportunity for follow up questions, a review of the timing and roll-out of interviews and questions, and an opportunity for the researcher to practice listening and prompting of participants. The interviews were recorded but not transcribed because the purpose of the pilot was more substantive which could be analyzed via recording versus detailed transcription.

**Interviews.**

Consent Forms - Consent forms were presented at the beginning of the first interview and reviewed word for word with the participant. After the participant was given time to ask questions and have them answered, the participant was then asked if they were willing to volunteer for the study based on the conditions outlined in the consent form. Once the consent form was signed, a copy was made for the participant and the researcher. The consent form was
stored in the researcher’s backpack that has a number-combination lock on it. Once I returned to my home office the consent forms were stored in a locked file cabinet.

Interview Data - The interviews with participants were recorded via two digital sources (digital recorder and iPhone). Within 24 hours of the interview the data was downloaded from the digital recorders to the main computer with a security password. The digital files were stored under an alternative user account with file encryption. Beach City had its own folder with a file for each participant referenced by number.

Transcription - The digital files were transcribed within three days of being recorded. Express Scribe Transcription Software was used by the transcriber. The transcriber utilized the researcher’s computer. The transcriptions were saved in the same folder with the digital recordings. The printed transcripts were stored in a locked file cabinet whenever they were not under review of the researcher.

Survey inquiries.

The supplemental survey inquiry utilized the PERMAH Workplace Profiler (Appendix C) created by Kern, et al (2014), an adaptation of the original survey created by Seligman (2011) whose concepts of flourishing are explored in the literature review. Kern’s version includes the component of health that was not in the original Seligman survey. The inclusion of health was beneficial for my study that addresses the role of the body in the consideration of well-being and flourishing. To re-visit, PERMAH consists of the following components: P = positive and negative emotions; E = engagement; R = relationships; M = meaning; A = accomplishment; and H = Health. They are explained as follows:
Table 10: PERMAH Survey Domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P and N = Positive and Negative emotions</td>
<td>Emotions are an important part of our well-being. Emotions can range from very negative to very positive, and range from high arousal (e.g., excitement, explosive) to low arousal (e.g., calm, relaxed, sad). For Positive emotion, the PERMA-Profiler measures general tendencies toward feeling contentment and joy. For Negative emotion, the Profiler measures tendencies toward feeling, sad, anxious, and angry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E = Engagement</td>
<td>Engagement refers to being absorbed, interested, and involved in one’s work, and is a key measure for workplaces today. Very high levels of engagement are known as a state called “flow”, in which you are so completely absorbed in an activity that you lose all sense of time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R = Relationships</td>
<td>Relationships refer to feeling connected, supported, and valued by others in the organization. Having positive relationships with others is an important part of life feeling good and going well. Other people matter!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M = Meaning</td>
<td>Meaning refers to having a sense of purpose in one’s work. Meaning provides a sense that your work matters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A = Accomplishment</td>
<td>Accomplishment can be objective, marked by honors and awards received, but feelings of mastery and achievement is also important. The Profiler measures subjective feelings of accomplishment and staying on top of daily responsibilities. It involves working toward and reaching goals and feeling able to complete tasks and daily responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H = Health</td>
<td>Although not part of the PERMA model itself, physical health and vitality is another important part of well-being. The Profiler measures a subjective sense of health – feeling good and healthy each day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A printed version of the PERMAH Workplace survey was provided for the principal participants during the first interview session. After the principals completed their survey I collected them and deposited them into my locked backpack and delivered them to my home office. I scored the surveys and re-presented them to the principal at the second interview for reflection. After the second interview the surveys were stored in a locked file cabinet whenever they were not under my review.

The survey was originally administered by the university principal preparation program. The program serves principal candidates from six districts. One of the six districts is the focus district for the study, Beach City Unified. The PERMAH framework brought context to the theory of well-being as it relates to the role of flourishing in the process of self-renewal. The survey allowed the participants to self-assess and reflect on their current level of PERMAH. This reflection assisted me in understanding the participant’s current level of attentiveness to well-being in comparison to their self-assessment of their success. Because the six pillars of well-being are presented separately, as well as holistically, participants are better able to reflect on which components of PERMAH are more influential to their personal well-being and flourishing.

The survey was a springboard for discussion specific to my research question two: To what extent does attentiveness to well-being and practices of self-renewal impact professional success and work satisfaction, and life satisfaction and flourishing? Participants were asked pre and post questions to explore their views on PERMAH, its impact on their work as leaders, and its presence in their lives. The survey discussion complimented the interview discussion by creating a frame for reflecting on personal and professional well-being. However, the frame was not fixed. The scores on the scale were not used for the purpose of measurement, but reflection.
The questions were most important as they allowed me to engage principals in questioning the emotions and meaning that they associated with the workplace. Administrators were encouraged to agree and disagree with the data presented, as long as they were reflective and thoughtful about what was presented before them. The discussion was about the attention they had given and would give to their overall well-being. For example, when the PERMAH model was first presented I noted to the participants that it was one means of self-assessing well-being in the workplace. I asked for their personal feedback regarding the components and definitions as they applied to the participants work and well-being. I also asked if they saw any similarities between the PERMAH model and leadership models that they were familiar with. The contextualizing of the PERMAH model and framing of the questions allowed for an exchange between myself and the participants instead of an assertion of a claim (Roulston, 2010). Additionally, when I shared the survey scores in round two of the interviews, I reminded participants that it was a self-assessment and then all inquiries were phrased, “Tell me more about what this question meant to you and why you self-assessed at this level.” Again, emphasis was on the meaning making of the participant in reflecting on workplace well-being.

Observations.

During the interview sessions attention was given to the organization of the participants work space, specifically how they chose to represent the personal and the professional self in their office space. This allowed for exploration into the similarities and differences in the personal and professional personas as referenced by Goffman (1986). Observations included the presence or absence of personal effects (family pictures, school memorabilia, posters, pictures, etc.), as well as the presence or absence of professional effects (quotations, pictures, awards and celebrations of professional goals and accomplishments). Pictures were taken of the work space
for future review. Attention was also given to the body language and idiosyncrasies of the participants that manifested in the interview (glancing at clock, watching phone, tapping table, rocking in chair, etc.), and changes in body language based on the question or topic. These were all noted in the researcher’s journal or digitally recorded in the post interview notes within 24 hours.

Documents.

District documents were collected and analyzed for evidence of district influence on professional and personal self-renewal. School websites, climate surveys, and school improvement plans, all accessible to the public. Additionally, the director and principals shared informative public documents specific to the training and support of principals and school leadership. Most documents utilized for the contextual data were viewed online and notes were recorded in my researcher’s notebook. For the printed data that contained identifiable information, I went through and marked out district names and participant names and re-labeled with district pseudonym and participant numbers. These documents were stored in a locked file cabinet.

Data Analysis Methods

Holistic coding was the primary method of analysis used for the interviews, loose applications of formal protocols provided by Saldaña (2009). A code is “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldaña, 2009, p.14). This is an appropriate method of analysis for an interpretivist/constructionist approach to interview transcripts and documents in that coding can be both inductive and deductive, allowing me to honor the words of the participants as well as layer my existing paradigms of thought onto the experiences and
knowledge offered by my participants. More specifically, my specific approach to coding enlisted descriptive and in vivo coding that not only compliment novice attempts at qualitative research, but also allow the researcher to be inductive in the initial stages of reflection on participant accounts. The coding then progressed to an analysis of patterns that grew into categories related to existing theory and the emergence of new theory.

**Preliminary jotting.**

*First interview.* In preparation for the initial interview with participants I reviewed any available documents, interviews, school improvement plans and other data specific to my interviewee and the school site. I noted themes in the documents that might be relevant to my research questions. I also noted unique experiences and characteristics of the participants that might impact their visioning, leadership, and overall well-being. I used this information to tailor some follow-up questions to the specific experiences of the candidates. For example, for those serving in turn-around schools, the pressures and challenges are different from the traditional setting. Therefore, I wanted to be sure to ask about how the context of the turn-around school impacted their experiences.

*Second interview.* In preparation for the second interview I listened to the first interview, reviewed any handouts provided by the principal, and scored and reviewed the Workplace PERMAH survey. I recorded notes and questions that arose from these interviews, documents, and survey results to assist with clarity for the second interview. For example, many questions on the PERMAH survey speak to the well-being of participants. One participant scored exceptionally high on all questions except for one: “At work, how often do you lose track of time while doing something that you enjoy?” While, the survey considered “losing track of time” to be a sign of deep engagement, my participant is especially attentive to time and I knew that this
particular phrase might prevent him from circling “10” which would more accurately indicate his experiences of joy in the workplace as evidenced in our interviews. Thus, the preliminary jotting allowed me to prepare questions to inquire and confirm such discrepancies.

After reviewing data from both interviews and my write-up of the interviews I jotted notes in the margins of the interviews and write-ups for points of clarity or wonderings and used those notes to guide my final inquiry with the participants, selecting only those notes that were relevant to my understanding of the initial research questions.

Pre-coding.

Notes/recordings post interview. Immediately following the interview, I returned to the quiet and private location of my car and digitally recorded my initial thoughts about the interview or jotted them on the back of the interview question protocol form. I noted what stood out to me as dominant themes, intriguing quotations, ponderings for follow-up questions. I looked for salient phrases that could become titles of sections. For example, Lisa’s reference to “Arranged Marriages” was a perfect title for a section discussing the uniting of district principals with external operators (Saldaña, 2009). I also noted comparisons to the director interviews and other participant interviews, patterns that emerged from the discourse. Finally, I noted body language or idiosyncrasies of the participant that were visual and might not be noted in the recordings (Alvesson, 2003; Ochs, 1979; Roulston, 2010; Sacks, 1992). These were later used to accompany my listening and reading of notes to ensure that I had multiple points of reflection.

Listening. Within 24 hours I listened to the recordings with my researcher’s laptop in hand. Again, I listened for themes, key words, and phrases that created a context for the participant and their connection and reflection on the questions. For some notes I marked the minutes on the recording to compare later to the printed transcript for better understanding.
Additionally, I listened for pause and changes in tone, as well as repetition of phrases and nuances in language.

**Reading of transcript.** In my first reading of the transcripts, I underwent initial or introductory coding identifying “first impression phrases,” circling, highlighting, bolding, and underlining. It was the same process I enlisted when reading literature as I searched for the kernels, investing my eyes in the process of discovering the “surprising, unusual, or conceptually interesting” (Creswell, 2007, p.153). These observations and notes later assisted me in creating an overall picture of the participants as individuals and as a group.

**Cycles of coding.**

**First cycle.** The first cycle of coding involved simultaneous coding for descriptive codes and in vivo codes. Simultaneous coding is justified when there are multiple meanings inherent in a text, common in interview data that contains the complexities inherent in social interactions (Glesne, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldaña, 2009). Descriptive codes were created via single words or short phrases to summarize the essence of a particular passage, recording what was at the core of the participants’ accounts. Whether single word, phrase, or full sentence coding, in vivo codes required the use of the participants own words, ideal for honoring their voices to convey their beliefs, values, and experiences of success and well-being. This stage of the coding was manual. I printed the transcripts and one transcript at a time read and noted evolving themes in the margins while highlighting participant quotes that aligned with these themes. The descriptive codes were later combined across participants to assist in determining patterns.

**Second cycle.** The second cycle of coding was dedicated to coding for patterns. This involved a reconfiguring and recoding of previous accounts with the hopes of condensing and
aligning the participant accounts. The goal was to identify consistencies in values, beliefs, experiences and varied responses to similar experiences. I reviewed transcripts with various colored highlighters handy, color-coding the emerging themes across participants. Once the patterns were determined they were grouped into categories. These categories were then studied for new theory and connections to existing theory, specifically the frameworks presented in my literature review regarding mind, body, and spirit. When searching for how the participants’ accounts fit within my existing framework I highlighted in blue for mind, pink for body, and yellow for spirit.

**Post-coding and writing.**

The final stage of coding marked a transition from manual notes to structured writing. During the transition from codes to categories I layered participant accounts into the pre-existing categories of mind, body, and spirit. Additionally, I noted the similarities and differences in the participants’ individual and group accounts as they related to the specific literature for stress and renewal. Finally, the findings included contextual data for the district collected from interviews and documents, individual participant narratives, a dissection of themes emerging from question to question that includes participant quotations, the connection of participant accounts to mind, body, and spirit, and the analysis of the role of the individual principal, professional program, and district in personal well-being.

**Criteria of Quality**

As qualitative research has evolved, there has always been a conversation regarding criteria for establishing quality within the field of qualitative research. Tracy (2010) argued that the quantitative criteria for good research which includes: validity, reliability, generalizability, and objectivity is not in its entirety relevant to the field. However, Tracy did see the need for
cohesion within the field. Subsequently he developed the “Eight ‘Big Tent’ Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research which include: worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics, and meaningful coherence. Therefore, this criteria was used as a guideline for my study.

**Worthy topic.**

A worthy topic is both timely as well as significant. As exhibited in the literature review, stress and burn-out for public school principals is well documented, while solutions to the promotion of well-being both personal and professional are absent. Research that would provide insight into the well-being and renewal practices of successful leaders is needed and thus significant in the field of principal preparation and retention. Additionally, addressing the complexities that come with success in our current society and its overall toll on our families and health is an issue that extends beyond the field of education. Thus, this study did not simply explore how principals were providing personal and professional renewal, but also how attentiveness to renewal at the school site level may be the springboard for higher levels of attentiveness in society as a whole.

**Rich rigor.**

Rich rigor requires one to have sufficient, abundant appropriate, and complex theoretical constructs, data and time in the field, sample size, context, and data collection and analysis processes. The theoretical design is an upshot of solid theory specific to the knowledge and skills of principals, the processes for overcoming stress and burn-out, and the values and beliefs of principals. Additionally, the survey inquiry emerged from theory referenced in the theoretical design, specifically the studies of Seligman (2011) regarding personal and professional flourishing (Jayawickreme, Forgeard, & Seligman, 2012; Peterson, Stephens, Park, Lee, &
Seligman, 2010; Russell, 2008; Seligman, 2004). It was also necessary to review the research regarding case studies and number of participants to ensure that six participants was a sufficient number and that two interview sessions ranging from 30-90 minutes would yield enough information about the participants and their accounts specific to the research questions. The transcripts generated from each interview session ranged from 10-20 pages. The timeline between interviews, researcher notes, and coding was within a month, most recordings, transcriptions, and recordings occurring within a week. Second interviews were at least 3-5 days removed from the initial interview to give me time to review, reflect, and develop follow up questions to ensure depth of data.

**Sincerity.**

Sincerity requires the researcher to exhibit self-reflexivity about subjective values, biases, and inclinations, as well as transparency regarding methods and challenges. I embarked on this journey understanding how my background as an artist, educator, woman, and mother all shape my experiences in this world, specifically my experiences as a principal. I spent the early portions of my life learning how to be attuned and attentive to my personal well-being and that of my family. While my venture into education naturally included an interest in the personal and academic well-being of my students, I did not anticipate that my attentiveness to their well-being would supersede my attentiveness to self and family. The principalship only complicated the balancing act of personal and professional life. While the bulk of the research spoke to stress and burnout, I knew there had to be examples of those who were successful yet striking a balance and flourishing in their lives both personally and professionally. Thus, I enthusiastically endeavored to seek out those individuals and learn from their wisdom and experiences. Additionally, I knew that my methods needed to be complimentary of a novice researcher since this was my second
major study and the first was not qualitative. Therefore, I read up on the various methods that were not only appropriate for my research questions and epistemology, but also my level of experience.

**Credibility.**

Credibility refers to the researcher’s ability to reasonably present the truth or entirety of the experience of their participants (Geertz, 1973; Richardson, 2000; Tracy, 2010). It’s not just the account of the participant, but the context from which this account emerges. Thus, I not only honor the words of the participants via in vivo coding and the sharing of meaningful quotations, but also by revealing to the readers the origin of those words by way of cultural, communal, personal, and professional context. Thick description was encouraged and utilized in this study as a means of communicating context. I attempted as often as possible to show the reader through vivid detail what the participants valued, believed, and experienced, so as to honor the process of the reader deriving personal meaning based on information that is as inclusive as was possible. This includes the description of tacit knowledge which speaks to what was not spoken but unspoken as well as demonstrated through body language.

Crystallization is the use of multiple perspectives or sources of data to deepen one's understanding of a person or topic. For this study the participants’ views and opinions on personal and professional well-being were represented through survey inquiry, qualitative interview responses, and outsider perceptions as represented by the district director. In addition, principals shared information from their Appreciative 360 evaluations that involve anonymous evaluations from peers and school faculty, as well as the area superintendent. This along with the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and the school culture and climate survey served as multiple points of data to connect to interview findings.
Resonance.

Resonance requires the researcher to influence, affect, or move particular readers or audiences through such experiences as aesthetic merit and naturalistic generalizations (Tracy, 2010). Aesthetic merit is accomplished through the researcher’s attentiveness to the artistry of the case and its ability to capture the readers through vivid and evocative representation of the accounts in the study. Therefore, I included rich details in the sharing of accounts in addition to the use of narrative for the principal biographies to create a more cohesive story as opposed to a report (Bochner, 2000). As previously noted, naturalistic generalizations add to the existing body of experiences and improves understanding by, “recognizing the similarities of objects and issues in and out of context and by sensing the natural covariations of happenings” (Stake, 1978). The participants in this case study provided unique experiences that can be evaluated for intrinsic as well as extrinsic value beyond the bounds of the case.

Significant contribution.

A significant contribution is significant specific to practicality, morality, methodology, or heuristics. It can also serve to liberate or empower. The study explored the daily practices of successful principals. They had a history of success but also realistic means for managing their well-being and self-renewal. Again, strategies for addressing stress and burnout are greatly needed in the field. Ultimately, the goal of this study was to present an alternative narrative and a frame of reference for those who wish to unravel themselves from the binding excess challenges of the principalship. Alternative accounts often allow one the liberty or power to pursue a different way of work. Additionally, the findings are heuristic in their ability to conjure curiosity about various aspects of well-being and self-renewal that deserve further study.
Ethics.

Respect for Persons - Out of respect for my participants, all participation was voluntary, requiring participant willingness. All participants received a consent form explaining the purpose and procedures of the research study in terms that were appropriate for the background and literacy level of the participants. In addition, contact information for the researcher and advisor was provided for questions or concerns. Participants were notified that they could opt out of the study at any desired time. Participants will also be privy to the data and write-up that result from the study. In order to ensure privacy, participants were assigned an alias for reporting purposes.

Beneficence - While human subjects are involved in the research study, no risk to participants are known. All participation was voluntary, and all participants were presented with a consent form that outlined the purpose and procedures of the research study as well as their right to opt out of the study at any given time. The benefits of the study vary based on the participants. Research has shown that reflective experiences are beneficial to the growth of educators (Drago-Severson, 2012). The nature of the interview questions encourage participants to reflect on their strengths, values and beliefs, as well as their motivations for entering and continuing in the profession. In addition, educators were asked to reflect on current supports that promote their success as well as additional supports to increase their success and that of their peers towards personal and professional renewal. Research has shown that this kind of reflection is usually productive (Opsal et al., 2016; Wolgemuth, Erdil-Moody, Opsal, Cross, Kaanta, Dickmann, & Colomer,), serving to improve meaning and performance of educators. Finally, the participants may take pleasure in providing information that will benefit their peers in fostering personal and professional well-being (Opsal et al., 2016).
Justice - In addressing the selection of candidates, no participants were selected that fall into the category of “vulnerable.” All participants were consenting adults. All participants were employed aspiring or seated principals who fit the criteria of “successful” by their district directors warranting no cause for a stigma to be associated with their participation in the study. Participants were not selected based on race gender, ability, or any other factor that might have shown bias towards a particular group. The hope was for a diverse participant pool, or at least one that was representative of the district population.

**Meaningful coherence.**

The entirety of the Data Inquiry section of this study has been an attempt to show how my interpretivist/constructionist frame was reflected in my methods and interpretation of participant accounts, from terminology, to inquiry via interviews, coding using descriptive and in vivo methods, as well as the use of narratives to honor the knowledge and experience of the participants. Additionally, the research literature was utilized in the final stages of analysis to enrich the discussion of participant accounts. These various attempts allowed for coherence and variety resulting in an inductive and deductive view of the study, honoring both participants and researcher knowledge.

**Delimitations**

The delimitations or boundaries set for this study are specific to decisions made to bound the case, limiting the study to one district with a diversity of school cultures and administrator expertise and experiences, one month in the school year, and only principals with at least three years of administrative experience who fit the previously discussed criteria for successful. It was also determined that the participants for the qualitative portion of the study would be limited to
ten or fewer to allow for depth of analysis due to the limitations of the timeline established for the study.

Limitations

Some limitations included consideration of the number of retirements and turnover in the district, the number of principals with extensive years of experience was limited and required the inclusion of more participants with three or more years of experience as opposed to other studies that have been based on principals with five or more years. Also, some might consider the selection of principals to be limited by the fact that one district official presented his criteria for “successful” and my selection of candidates was narrowed based on his criteria. Additionally, the candidate pool was not as broad as expected due to a shift in the study timeline that threw the study towards the end of the school year, one of the busiest times for the principals. Therefore, all who responded to the recruitment letter were included in the study. Additionally, the original design of the study included three interviews and a day of observation. Due to district concerns regarding principal time and the limited personnel and students during the month of the study, both had to be eliminated. Finally, while much information was acquired during the interview sessions with participants, due to the short period of time, the responses of the candidates may have been less candid than they might have been if we had a longer period of time to establish trust beyond the ethical guidelines of the research study.
Chapter Four

Introduction

This chapter captures the interview accounts of six principal participants from Beach City Unified. These principals are well respected by their peers and their communities and fit the district director of professional development’s definition of “successful.” They were interviewed in the month of May at the conclusion of their school year. All of the interviews took place at the principal’s school site behind the closed doors of their offices or conference rooms. The interviews were conducted in private and recorded using a digital recorder and an iPhone. The accounts reflect themes derived from my researcher notes from interviews and recordings, as well as the reading and holistic coding of transcripts. The chapter is presented in the following order: Research Questions; Findings Related to Research Questions: Supporting Well-being and Self-renewal, Attentiveness to Well-being and Practices of Self-renewal; Findings Related to the Framework: Mind, Body, and Spirit; and Conclusion.

Research Questions

Based on the research information specific to principal stress and burnout and processes of self-renewal, the primary research questions were as follows:

*Question One:* In what ways are principals’ well-being and self-renewal supported by principals’ personal beliefs and practices, district policies and practices, and education programs and organizations?
**Question Two:** To what extent does attentiveness to well-being and practices of self-renewal impact professional success and work satisfaction, and well-being and flourishing?

**Findings Related to the Research Questions**

**Supporting well-being and self-renewal.**

When exploring the experiences of principals and the possible sources of well-being and self-renewal in their careers, the identified sources to support and maintain the principal were the beliefs and practices of the principal, the policies and practices of the school district, and the principal preparation program, usually a university or college. Therefore, the interview questions were worded to include the role of the principal, district, and principal preparation program in supporting the principals in the various domains of the framework: mind, body, and spirit. The principal accounts revealed the following information.

*Principal.* The principals in this study all shared the belief that the supports needed for well-being and self-renewal were ultimately their responsibility. While they had suggestions for who and where supports could be added, they owned their success and they owned their struggles. When discussing the personal preparation necessary for the day to day affairs of the principals, all six spoke to high levels of preparedness. For most daily preparation started early, days that began at 5:00 or 5:30am. While the principals might not be on site at this time, they were already processing for their day as principals. David was in the car brainstorming his “to-do” list and contemplating strategies for typical scenarios. Lisa was at the gym working out while working through her day and creating strategies for whatever the latest new challenge might be. Carl made his way to work early so that he could get in some reps on his hand weights while reviewing the paperwork on his desk. Lisa, Vanessa, and Carol spent time meal prepping
to ensure they had sustenance throughout the day. For most of the principals, they were one of the first to arrive on their campus and generally the last to leave.

The professional preparation that the principals provided for themselves was often knowledge acquired through books and people. Lisa, Carol, and Vanessa are avid readers, while Carl is into successful models and seeks out schools and leaders who have the knowledge and skills he desires for his next level of growth. He observes school websites for programs and practices, as well as organizes site visits. All of the principals have strong peer groups, and most could name at least one mentor that they have access to on a regular basis.

When discussing push points for desired or needed supports, the principals were all adamant that there were aspects of the principal workload that could be re-evaluated. While they all valued the support they received from the district, they suggested refining the paper accountability process to minimize the amount of paperwork. Carol and Vanessa were especially thoughtful about the structure of the school day and the annual calendar. Carol suggested flexibility in re-organizing the day in such a way that more natural breaks occur for educators to have extended lunch time to re-energize. She also expressed support for the site-based wellness coaches but noted the inability of principals to participate in these sessions due to their workload or after school responsibilities. Similarly, Vanessa noted peaks in low-morale of educators and misbehavior on the part of students between the months of January and March. She expressed the need for educators and students to have a break during this time to re-energize. Additionally, all principals were in agreement that the summers could be reorganized in such a way that they could take a “real” vacation as opposed to a few days here and there.

**District.** When the principals reflected on the supports offered by the district, they were all quick to note that one advantage to a large district was increased human capitol. It was the
opinion of the principals that if the district did not desire to go outside for professional
development, they would not have to. Often the district would rely on their in-house expertise.
David is one of the technology gurus of the district who often facilitates systems trainings.
Vanessa, John, and Carl all serve as mentors for new principals. In return, Carol and Lisa, who
are earlier in their principal careers and at low-performing turn-around schools, both spoke to
their close relationships with their area superintendents and mentoring from the director of the
district turn-around schools program. Due to the large number of turn-around schools and the
specific needs of leaders at turn-around schools, the district not only established a director, but
also started a series of professional development sessions that address the challenges of
turnaround leadership. Many of the principals at turn-around schools are also connected to
contracted coaches from New Leaders, which focuses on leaders as instructional coaches able to
move teacher practice. Additionally, a veteran like Vanessa, benefited from another district
mentoring program headed by the National Institute of School Leadership (NISL) which assisted
in developing her skills as a visionary leader and systems developer.

While the principals were aware of the insurance health initiatives and the wellness
coaches onsite, they were not necessarily major factors in their personal wellness plans. David
did discuss the benefits of the incentives, but he along with John and Carl were the least
physically active. Vanessa, Carol, and Lisa all spoke to personal physical fitness plans, but none
that were district sponsored.

Principal preparation programs. For the majority of the principals there were two major
take-aways from their principal preparation programs, the opportunity to participate in
meaningful internships, preferably with their home district, and the access to other educational
leaders who would later play major roles in their principal peer groups. John, who came from out
of state, noted the significant role his past program and district colleagues play in his peer group whenever he needs to reflect on or problem shoot an idea. The “theory” was also relevant, but many felt the theory was not as beneficial without the experiences and the people resources. Carol and Lisa were the two most appreciative of the theory and text resources provided in their educational programs. Thus, they are also the two candidates who are currently pursuing their doctorate degrees in educational leadership. For them, the readings served as additional professional development and the professors served as additional mentors. Lisa even acknowledged the necessity and benefits of returning to her master’s level texts and re-reading them. However, most, like David, said they still needed more. David noted that the knowledge from the programs was only as good as what was known at the time. He expressed the challenge of being able to foresee what education will be in the future and how to adequately prepare leaders for the ever-changing landscape of the principalship. It is interesting to note that the majority of the principals, even John who was out of state, attended principal preparation programs affiliated with their districts. They were all able to speak to the added benefits to having a shared group of people that you work with and go to school with. Carol and Lisa were especially appreciative of the power of the model to not just expand their knowledge of leadership, but also their knowledge of the district and the people in the district.

Attentiveness to well-being and practices of self-renewal.

Success. Much of the success that the participants experienced in their careers they attributed to their knowledge of self and their resourcefulness. Their awareness of their personal strengths and their available resources for further development allowed them to maintain their professional growth. Each participant could tell you what they do well: John – organized successful systems and built meaningful relationships with stakeholders; Carl – connected people
to the “why” or vision of his leadership and created curriculum and supports that enticed student learners; Carol – “saw” people, made everyone feel included; Lisa – practiced instructional leadership, with an in depth knowledge of literacy; Vanessa – built systems that promoted teacher and student success; and David – lead from the heart – to support both teachers and students. They didn’t just know what they did well, but how their strengths translated into promising practices. Carol and David relied on their relationships to provide other entry points with teachers, students, and parents to move forward in academics and behavior. Vanessa and John relied on their ability to assess the systems and the people within the system to connect the dots for teacher and student support. Lisa relied on her curriculum background to simultaneously build capacity in teachers and students. Carl guided his team towards a vision of student success and the whole team pooled their strengths to accomplish the vision.

**Work satisfaction.** One strength that all of the participants shared was their positive disposition. When I further explore positive emotions in the body section of the framework, it will be supported that a positive disposition contributes to the work satisfaction of the principals. Many of them have discussed that while there are multiple factors that could contribute to decreased work satisfaction, they believed in their ability to control their day. Carol and Lisa attested to their ability to assess their situation, the possible sources of stress, and use their disposition to influence their behavior and those around them in focusing on the positives. John had a slightly different approach, while he was positive, he also extended this to not owning the negative emotions of others. He was aware of the negative effects of personal and organizational focus on the negative or the obstacles and instead drove himself and his school with what was possible. He might experience negative situations, but he always looked to see what could be gleaned from the experience and never took the negativity of the moment beyond the moment.
While David and Vanessa also believed in a positive disposition, it had a more religious origin. This grounding and dependence on their religious faith maintained their work satisfaction through challenging times. Carl did not reference religion, but he did attest to a need to live in the successes and opportunities to create future success, thus always attentive to the positive to maintain his job satisfaction.

**Well-being and flourishing (thriving).** While the principal participants were identified as successful according to the district criteria, many were still striving for more professionally. John and Vanessa wanted to ensure that their systems were strong enough for their schools to sustain beyond their tenure. Lisa and Carl were deep in thought about strengthening their curriculums to meet the upcoming needs of students, and Carol and David where reflective about the successes of their first year at new schools. Many expressed being their worst critics and that they struggled to celebrate their current successes because they were always looking forward to the next challenge. Thus, they did not always see themselves as thriving. Similarly, while most principals were attentive to personal health, none felt they had accomplished their desired goals.

**Findings Related to the Framework**

**Mind.**

**Knowledge and skills of successful leaders.** The first series of questions asked participants to reflect on the knowledge, skills, and experiences that had best prepared them for the job. The major themes that evolved were specific to their mentors and peer support groups both past and present, diversity of experiences, and practical application of what they had learned. They will be discussed in this order.

**Early career mentors/peer support groups.** The principals shared a rich history of mentorship and peer support both past and present. Many of the principals were identified early
on by a leader at their site and provided the guidance and freedom to observe and experiment with various strategies. Lisa spoke to mentors from the Coast Guard who helped her build her confidence. She reflected and laughed about the mindset she acquired, “Of course I can do this or I'm gonna pretend like I can do this until I figure it out.” After all, Lisa had multiple experiences in the Coast Guard that required specialized knowledge and leadership skills. After transitioning from classroom to administration, she reminisced about a particularly beneficial experience with her past principal after they debriefed her initial teacher observations:

So I went in guns blazing like, “What are you doing, what is this?” and she's like, “Now I agree but here's how we're gonna say it next time.” So she did that for me the whole first year and then she started letting me like just take things and run with it and I thought like she is so nice and then at the end of her second year she said okay I’m gonna tell you something and you can't tell anyone, I'm retiring next year. And I was like I thought you were being so nice but all of that helped me learn how to do the work, she let me make mistakes.

Lisa recognized sometimes the power of mentoring was in letting you make the mistakes so that you would be better prepared the next time. She also made a point of connecting with her peers in the assistant principal tier two university program. She recalled that while relations were a little tense, due to early competition for principalships, after they were appointed principal they worked together to help each other succeed, creating a peer support group. Similarly, Carol declared her principal and assistant principal peer group had helped her to acquire the skills she utilizes as a leader. She also referenced the professors from her master’s program as mentors who introduced her to new theories and ways of work.
John specified that one benefit to a large district was a variety of resources and experiences to pull from when you needed mentoring or peer support. Having come from another state, he has additional resources, “I'm fortunate to have a lot of connections to folks outside of the district in similar roles from other areas across the country. So I have people to bounce ideas off of even if I needed to go outside of the county.” This external view allows him the advantage of fresh eyes and added insight as he makes critical decisions for the next steps of his faculty, staff, and students. Vanessa added to the conversation about out of district mentors as she referenced the benefits of her National Institute of School Leadership (NISL) mentor and her New Leaders coach:

I absolutely love NISL. It’s extremely comprehensive and because I'm a reader, I love growing and I like learning new things… I did eighteen months of NISL and then I was sent back to actually be a trainer. So, I'm now a certified trainer of the program. NISL is so beneficial for me, I'm constantly going back. We've read so many case studies and I'm thinking if I'm dealing with something and looking at Kotter’s eight accelerators of change when I'm moving through the change process, understanding where I am through that, so that was beneficial. New Leaders are also beneficial, it talks more about observations and moving teacher practice and coaching and feedback.

While Vanessa is in her ninth year as a principal, she expressed a continued desire to grow and the need for a mentor and fellow peers to share in her thinking and processing. NISL provided her with a superintendent with rich and varied experiences, while New Leaders provided her with an instructional coach for leaders with a specific context focus on turnaround schools. NISL and the district also offered her the opportunity to continue to grow as a leader in the role of a
trainer and mentor. While Carl is well into his career, he remembered the advantages of the National Principal Conferences. He spoke fondly of its benefits:

One thing that they no longer have that they used to have were national principal conferences and there would be funding for us to go and meet at other locations where we would meet principals from all around the United States. And when I had the opportunity to just have open forums, sitting down with successful people from all around and just learning new things and seeing what people were doing and how they handled situations and you could have open candid conversations about the circumstances at your site and the challenges that you had and the challenges you had as a county and share and look at some of their solutions. I had that for the first five or six years as a principal and it was huge. I think of some people that I met, I met one principal from Tennessee that I just met with for three hours at one conference just communicating with that gentleman and he had so much to offer and so many ideas and so many initiatives that he'd put in place and I was just listening to all of them.

Carl expressed he would feel the same delight in similar exchanges decades later. While he did not have a mentor, he did serve as a mentor for multiple administrators in the district and he was ever resourceful about finding models of success both people and schools to inform his practice.

*Diversity of experiences and resources.* Interestingly enough, only three of the six successful principals had traditional career paths for the principalship, John, David, and Carol. John was raised by a family of educators and heeded the call, attending undergraduate and graduate programs for education. In his fifth year of teaching he entered his master’s for Educational Leadership program and seized the opportunities to lead outside of the classroom. He was an assistant principal in four different settings. He recalled, “two middle, two high, some...
of which were really taxing, in terms of the responsibility and the workload, but I’m going to grind through anything. There’s nothing I won’t be able to do, right. By being successful in some really difficult situations and then going into different situations and having a different set of experiences, I think that set me up to be a principal pretty well.” John also spoke to the lessons he learned from an ineffective principal because in his words, “it proved a fantastic opportunity for me to grow the system in spite of the leader that didn’t really see the bigger picture.” In some experiences he was one of several assistant principals at a school site. For two of his experiences he was the only assistant principal. He shares the advantages of having a heavy influence and varied experiences, “I think that some of our current leaders lack that opportunity to learn from different settings, to learn from different school sites at different levels, and when they become a principal they just assume that every school is just like the one that they were in and they can’t cross it over, can they?”

John was not the only one who saw the need to partake in various experiences. Carol shared she was aware that while she had experienced success at her last school, she knew it was an isolated situation. She used her cohort of principal peers as a resource:

So I have a network of people who are in different schools, so they had different experiences and I could learn vicariously through them. Because even though I may not have dealt with transportation issues as a ______ school, I still paid attention to what they were talking about and what they were coping with because I knew at some point it was gonna fall back into my lap.

Carol understood via her peer group that not every site was the same, experiencing the same strengths and challenges and that it was up to her to find the resources to prepare in advance. Additionally, Carol had been tapped by her principal as a teacher leader. She was encouraged
and supported to enroll in a master’s program and in her transition from the classroom to a Curriculum Specialist position. From there she was positioned as acting principal while her principal was out on medical leave. The following year she applied for an assistant principal position at the school and was appointed into the position. The schools in her community had recently been combined. So while her experience was in K-5, the transition of the school to K-8 allowed her the opportunity to work at the elementary and middle school setting prior to taking her first principalship. Both of the previous schools were high achieving and affluent schools in the northern part of the district. Her current position as principal is at a turnaround school in the Southern section of the district. David came into teaching with a different motivation. He was originally going to use his science degree to study medicine, but he preferred the relationships and connections he remembered from education over the feelings of loss that were constant in medicine. He taught for over ten years before he was convinced to return to school for administration. He then had the opportunity to work with “the wizard” and “the relationships king,” both highly respected leaders in the district. He is still in close contact with both men today. I was actually able to meet “the wizard” at the end of our first interview. He currently serves in the professional development department at the district office.

Carl and Vanessa both come from business backgrounds. Both were in search of fulfillment and meaning. Carl was in construction and Vanessa a news anchorwoman. When Carl entered the classroom, it was not a traditional setting:

I was teaching dropout prevention, that's where I started. I started teaching kids that were at-risk students, they were in danger of failing. They were identified at 12, 13, 14 of just not having the motivation, having some problems, so that was what my class consisted of 19 of the most struggling students at the school. So that was the group that I had, I loved
it, enjoyed it. Then I was also social studies certified, social studies and science. So the principal there, after three years, asked me to move into a social studies position because they had some opening, so I split classes between social studies and science. The reason was they said they wanted me to impact more students, so rather than have the nineteen students that I saw every single day they wanted me to have classes of thirty each period…

Carl started in a non-traditional classroom that allowed him to experience the struggles of some of the most challenged students in our public schools. He was successful growing them and connecting with them and applied those lessons to larger groups in subject area classes. His diverse classroom experiences later translated into experiences beyond the classroom as a club sponsor and coach. It grew from cafeteria and bus duty to authoring school improvement plans and learning grants. Finally, he served as an assistant principal in a very diverse list of middle schools and a high school before serving as principal. He has now served a diverse list of schools as principal. Vanessa believed her business background was essential experience for her current position:

…I didn't major in education, I come from a business background and some of the work that I have been involved in in terms of organizational management and effective and efficient organizations, I think that that contributed to my success as a principal coming in because I'm able to view the school like a business and it's an organization and our students are its customers and so I think what has helped my success is the fact that I didn't major in education and I brought to this career an external set of skills and experiences that have blended itself very well with being able to run a school.
Ultimately, regardless of the starting point for each principal, they shared rich histories of diverse experiences and access to resources that provided diverse perspectives. In their words, this diversity allowed them the necessary knowledge and skills to successfully lead in their school buildings.

**Practices.**

After participants reflected on their knowledge and experiences, they then reflected on their practices as leaders. Specifically, those practices that greatly contributed to their success as principals. Their ability to engage teachers and students in meaningful experiences and build relationships with various stakeholders to grow the school were dominant themes in the interviews.

**Engagement.** Lisa especially connected to engagement. She reflected on her ability and that of her staff to regularly develop their strengths. It has already been established that leading for them was an act of love for children and the profession. For Lisa her role as a leader required she give something she attested to be her strength, instructional guidance and knowledge:

Yes, you have to be engaged here, there's really no other way to do it, I mean it is every day in classrooms working with teachers, sitting and planning with them, talking with the kids, sitting there during the lesson and either helping co-teach or helping a child work through a problem. So it is absolute engagement which means the days go really fast.

Lisa is the principal of a turnaround school and the needs of the kids are high. She discussed the challenges that come with addressing multiple traumas and academics simultaneously. She and her faculty must be willing to give more than the average educator and they must be willing to see beyond behaviors to the origin of student discomforts. She acknowledged when you are working in that manner with students you must have a keener sense of who they are and why
they act. Additionally, teachers often experienced their own learning curve with new curriculum and intervention strategies.

*Relationships.* Most every principal could speak to the power of relationships to move them forward as individuals and as an organization. John replied, “Relationships with stakeholders is critical…what we do and how we all coexist is critical.” He spoke to the need to create energizing connections for everyone on the sites. While the main focus is on the students, John made sure that he also created important networks and supports for teachers to ensure they feel well-equipped to answer the demands of the job. Carl knew relationships were his strength:

The one that always jumps out is relationships to me. In this job there are so many kids that are struggling, there are so many people with hardships, there are so many family situations, there are so many dynamics that unless you have a strong group of people all working together, and they see the purpose of why we're here, they never lose sight of that and just doing things daily that need to be done. So that whole relationship in bringing people together has to be with that positive emotion. Everyone has to feel that they're making a difference, that they are satisfied in what they're doing.

Carl presented positive emotion as the energizing force behind meaningful connections. He talked about the “why” or meaning for what they did being constantly reinforced in the relationships they established. Vanessa promoted leading with head and heart, similar to Carl’s, acting with the “why” in mind. This allowed Vanessa to be genuine and open about the why and what of everyday school affairs.

I think they [PERMAH] all have a part to play in what we do, but I think maybe one of the stronger ones is of course a relationship. It would be leading with authenticity and transparency and having the right balance of head and heart in your leadership in making
your decisions…I think that it’s something that I've learned to leverage as a strength. You know when you do enough of those 360 degree [surveys]… I've had to learn that I have to process relationships before tasks in order to even get the tasks completed. So the strength of relationships…in the earlier part of my career…I would not have been able to say [it was] the key to my success...

Vanessa highlighted her ability to create and sustain relationships that were both authentic and transparent was not something she was able to do early on in her career. It came with time and practice. She credited the 360 observations with broadening her understanding and perspective on who she was and how she was perceived by others.

**Body**

**Psychological.**

*Positive emotion/positive disposition.* Positive emotion was another dominant theme in the beliefs and practices of the principals. When asked to reflect on their promotion of personal and school well-being, many expressed the impact of positivity on personal and school resilience. Additionally, they discussed sources of hope that fueled their positive dispositions.

Sources of happiness - Carol and Lisa believed their positive emotion was most essential to their role as leader. Carol focused on how she used her positive emotion to connect with the entire school acknowledging the people in every corner of the school. She learned the power of positivity from her family. She used her positive emotion to foster connection and meaning. Lisa recognized positivity has various forms. While she projected positive energy she also believed in holding her teachers and students accountable for learning. School was not simply about academics, but the behaviors that fostered a positive culture for learning. She believed in a hug and a push for both adults and students. She was especially responsive to her students need for
structure and motivation. She embodied Lemov’s “warm and strict” and was rewarded for the genuine care and concern her students feel she has to offer. They shared the following experiences:

Carol - I think I grew up in a house where both my parents have a positive attitude of life. I don't think I've ever heard my mom say anything that was hurtful or mean or negative in any way, so I just always have lived a life where I always try to think about the positive of a situation, even when it is negative. What can I learn from it? What can I take from this? I guess I believe like the way that you decide to come into work is how your day is going to be.

Lisa - So the principal that I worked with when I was an assistant principal always said, “you choose your attitude,” so I took that to heart, I can choose my attitude. I come here, I enjoy the work, I enjoy the people I work with and I think you just bring that positivity. I also really love Doug Lemov’s work in talking about being warm and strict and that they are not usually exclusive. I can be strict with a child because I love you and care about you and ask you to keep going. When I think about Gloria Ladson-Billings, The Dreamkeepers, she profiled successful teachers with African American children and she said some of them were very, very strict. That doesn't mean I don't love you but because I love you, I’m gonna expect you to perform. So she also said in her book that if you don't know how to hug a child, then you need to figure out how to get yourself there. So all of those pieces kind of lived in me, I am very structured and demanding but I get a million hugs here in a day.
Sources of hope - When considering what causes these leaders to feel a sense of hope and purpose, it’s helpful to understand what they valued most about themselves. While John valued his “intensity,” he understood sometimes people had to take a closer look to understand how it served his students and teachers well:

In my mannerism the way I go about my business is extremely intentional and it works well for most, the closer you are to me, the more you know me, the more you understand the why. But for people from a distance it could be intimidating and that's fine too. So I speak to that as a quality that sometimes is an issue, right. So, if you see somebody who looks over the top intense you don't run towards them sometimes unless you understand why they're intense, right. Intensity is a quality that I take great pride in. Attention to task and detail, to keep making things be as close to perfection as it relates to helping kids is something we take great pride in and I don't just ask that of others, I kind of demand it, right. And so, if you get that and you understand the why, you're running to the war with me every day, right, if you're not you're running away, right.

John made no apologies for the intensity that he brought to the job and expected from his team every day. He has seen this intensity translate into success for his teachers and his students. He noted anyone willing to join him got the support that they needed, and he also referenced the fact that because people understood his why, he didn’t have concerns with maintaining quality staff. His culture and climate scores were high and specific questions that spoke to understanding the vision and serving students well were all ranked high by faculty and students. Consequently, his intensity translated into moments that brought him great hope and purpose such as the following recollection of one students journey. The student began school with six or seven other kids who
raised hell in and out of school. Eventually many ended up in jail and one dead, but this kid made it to graduation with a plan for his future:

…when the cards are completely stacked against the kid and they pull through and you know that they’re about to fly away and do really well, that's exactly the kind of example that brings you hope… for kids that come with that many obstacles and that many things… Some of those obstacles are created by them, some their family, some just the nature of their high level of poverty and where they live. Put all that together though and I'd say the cards for some kids are really, really stacked. The analogy I use when I see that too, we talk about equity and a lot of the cultural relevance… Equity vs equality…I look at it like, if you took high school and said I'm looking at a five mile race… we want to start them all at a start line… some kids they'll get a personal trainer and they are completely hydrated, have the best equipment and they're ready to roll and I've got some kids sitting there, bare feet and I got other kids sitting there with cinder blocks around their feet and we're expecting each and every one of them to get to the same finish line at the same time. That takes some different levels of support, right. He had cinder blocks on and weights and people holding him back and all that stuff… but for him to break through and get to that same point is pretty impressive.

These experiences bring light to the why that fuels John’s intensity. He sees the possibility for success in all of his students and he constantly looked for the supports that he and his team could provide to assist them in overcoming their obstacles. Whatever tools they might need to break away from the obstacles they brought, John looked to provide them.

These struggles were not limited to John’s site. Carl spoke about students who come from homes where a parent was a meth addict and the child was exposed to so much trauma that they
couldn’t be expected to go to school and have a regular day. He remembered one student who
had occasional discipline problems but being privy to her file, he knew that she was doing the
best she could do and that he had to make sure she was getting whatever supports he could offer
her to keep going. For Carl there was much success to look back on, but he still found success in
every individual student who crossed his stage at graduation. When asked what he valued most
about himself he noted his ability to care and show compassion. He stated, “If you don't care, if
you don't really love people and care about growing young adults, it's definitely not the job for
you.”

Negative emotions. While the dominant disposition of the leaders was positive, there
were experiences that caused temporary negative emotions. These negative emotions came in the
form of anxiety, anger, sadness, and loneliness. The principals discussed their sources of
negative emotions and their methods for coping with such emotions.

Sources of anxiety - Carl was always transparent about his deep connection to his
students and his concern for the ones who had less than ideal circumstances. He understood the
anxiety he felt for those students directly connected to stress that directly impacted his health,
“It's a high stress job. Not all your interactions are positive interactions. You hear about kids that
are having such tragic situations that you don't have any control over. You know once they leave
your doors they might be vulnerable to so many things that are happening in their lives and the
stress… you can see where health is impacted.” Carl mentioned more than once his desire to just
take some kids home with him, as unrealistic as he knew that might be, but he emphasized the
thought derived from a belief that the kids were capable of anything, but their conditions
presented them with obstacles beyond their control. So sometimes he wished he could create
better conditions that would allow them to thrive. He understood this was not within his control and instead focused on the conditions they experienced when they were at his school.

Lisa shared early on that she chose to work at her current school. She was ready for the challenge and the positive change that would result from a strong team and hard work. Lisa also admitted to a strong work ethic, long hours on the job and a love for her students and education in general. Thus, Lisa expressed her greatest anxiety occurred when she could not be present in her school:

I'm just a doer, if I'm here and can do something about it, I'm okay, I'll figure it out. The only time I feel really, really anxious is when I'm not here and I don't know what I'm gonna walk into. So as long as I'm here and I can say, like alright what if we try this or I don't know what are we gonna do, what do you think and then someone gives an idea like okay let's go to it. Then I think like we've done our best work today, we didn't leave anyone hanging out to dry.

Lisa admitted the first year was a challenge. She lived in the building with her teachers well beyond the average school day. She finally got to the point where she would make announcements over the intercom for everyone to grab their purses and go home. She felt much better coming into the second year, but also revealed some of her anxiety had returned with the introduction of an external operator. Much of what she felt before was about not knowing and now she felt like she was back in a similar situation where she didn’t know what to expect, and more importantly, she also wasn’t sure if knowing meant she would be in control of the solutions. If the last month of school was any indication she felt many anxious days in her near future.
Sources of sadness - Vanessa proved to be an outlier among the participants, experiencing some of the more severe levels of negative emotion. After sitting with Vanessa, it was brought to my attention that there were various sources of sadness for Vanessa:

…you know you can't come into this space without bringing your own personal life and so this has been a very challenging year for me. Personally, my mom was killed in a car wreck a year ago and so there is this deep sadness that still follows me around and from a work perspective, finishing up my third year, I've had some challenges. This has been one of the hardest years that I've had in my career and I've been a principal for nine years and AP for five before that. We started on such high momentum, excited, you know. I became transparent with my staff and really began to step into that authentic leadership, but I faced some challenges with team dynamics in terms of my administrative team and I found that everybody on the administrative team was not on board. And what was frustrating for me and why I rated those is because I felt like all of the people that I'd been pouring into, all of that, my credibility, my judgment… everything came into question because conversations that should have been private among the team were made public. And so I'm in a place right now having to really step back and evaluate because how do I now pick up the pieces, regain the momentum and move this staff forward considering what we just experienced.

Vanessa shared earlier the loss of sister, the challenges with her son’s cancer, and now she was facing the unexpected death of her mother. While her work performance was not challenged by these feelings of sadness, her well-being was not at its highest. She did note she was able to identify the non-productive member of her team and that person had moved on, but she still had to address the damage in trust and relationships that had already occurred.
David and others spoke to sadness that came when students made poor decisions that would greatly impact their future, or when the school community experienced the loss of one of its members.

Sources of loneliness - Vanessa also experienced feelings of loneliness as she pondered future trust dynamics within the team. Additionally, she spoke to the loneliness that came with being one of few African-Americans in her school community:

You know there are certain leadership skills and traits, of course, that you take with you, but it is really important to understand your school context and understanding your school context will cause you to adapt your leadership style to fit the needs of that particular building. I'm always very direct and open. As an African American female at a predominately white school, I've had to learn to adjust my style to fit the needs at this school. And there is a perception that African American females sometimes are aggressive and assertive and come across as "the angry black woman" and so I am cognizant of my communication style, my demeanor, my delivery, all of those things I'm aware of when I'm communicating with my staff. Because the truth is in my experience you were perceived differently. I can say the same thing in two different schools and one staff will take offense and perceive it completely different than another staff.

Despite the myriad of accolades and accomplishments that Vanessa has received, at the end of the day she is still different, and she has to be considerate of where she is and how her actions may be perceived in her current context. Vanessa has southern roots and varied cultural experiences moving from a deep south state to Florida. She is aware of the spoken and unspoken communications that exist in the professional world. However, awareness does not equal acceptance or approval of what many might call stereotypes or cultural prejudices.
Carl experienced loneliness in a different context. He was clear that he was surrounded by plenty of supportive people every day. Instead his loneliness derived from all of the stories of student trauma and tragedy that he contained. He was the keeper of these confidential stories and at times it took a toll on him. Similarly, David felt loneliness in those moments when he was the only one who could make decisions about teacher cuts or budget. He grimaced at the reality that people had to be let go and ultimately, he was the only one who could make those decisions.

**Physical.**

*Successes and challenges with maintaining physical health.* The majority of the principals in the study were responsive to the PERMAH well-being survey and freely discussed how PERMAH related to their workplace well-being. However, while many embraced PERMAH, they also acknowledged health was the most challenging of all the domains. John exclaimed:

this [health] is a different situation, right, kind of separate. You can kind of have poor health and still do all of that [PERMA] well and you can have great health and that is great too. I do this [PERMA] very well, I do that [Health] uhhh not so good…but I recognize that, and I deal with it. You don’t let it drag you down. It’s just something you try to be keenly aware of, time permitting. Moving isn’t an issue, eating is not a problem. It’s just taking time to exercise and do that type of stuff. Yeah it just doesn’t happen much anymore. There are only so many hours in a day. I don’t feel like I’m in terrible health, but I could certainly do more.

John admitted earlier in his interview to a work week that averaged 60-80 hours. His high school opened at 6:30, he arrived even earlier and stayed late most days. He moved throughout the day as he walked the school site. The campus is exceptionally large, and he did not spend excessive
amounts of time in his office during school hours. So while he did not participate in formal exercise, he moved and ate on the regular and got around seven hours of sleep each night except for the crazy weeks like senior week or testing weeks. Similarly, David agreed there were only so many hours in a day and he chose time with his family over time with the elliptical any day. He also spoke to the challenge of managing sleep having cared for multiple young children and noted he had adjusted to surviving on fewer hours of sleep.

Carl reflected on PERMAH and discussed how the desire to promote or maintain PERMA can have an impact on your health. He spoke to the challenges that come with a high stress environment:

…just being in this job for a number of years I noticed with my colleagues and myself sometime that if you would look at all these [PERMA] without the health, sometimes it takes an impact on the health. It is a high stress job, there's no doubt about it. So that's an area I admit that I can focus on myself even more, you just don't take the time to take care of yourself the way that you wish you could.

Carl used to ride his bike during high stress times but had recently resorted to keeping weights in his office and doing reps first thing when he came in to work and at random breaks throughout the day. Five to seven in the morning was his designated time for self, keeping in shape. He usually ate his lunch standing up in the cafeteria while supervising kids. He did keep his water bottle full throughout the day. Sleep was usually good, but he also confessed that because of the challenges with the students he could often lose sleep thinking about them, “when there is something happening with kids that’s disturbing, you take it to bed with you, you just do.” Carl cares deeply about his students and continued to try to balance care for students and care of self.
The ladies had similar challenges. Carol acknowledged she was her own worst enemy and finding time was a major challenge. She rejoiced in ten minutes of time for herself. She noted the beach was her salvation. She tried to pen in time for a quiet lunch that might involve working but didn’t involve talking. She kept nourishing snacks for the days when she couldn’t make this happen and she made the bathroom a priority, all of the things she didn’t’ always do as a teacher. The greatest set back was probably that her office was all walls without windows. She remarked, “Yeah, I don't have any windows and if my doors aren't open, I have no idea it’s raining outside… there are just days where you just need to get out.”

Lisa declared life without her workouts was a personal disservice. She lost her outlet for stress and her additional means of processing:

I stopped working out when I was always very active. I've always played a lot of sports. I've always been like in good shape but then I had my third child my first year as an assistant principal. So then I kind of was in this place where I wasn't necessarily working out and then I became a principal and I started to get stressed because there were things I didn't know that I didn't know and so I made a commitment to myself in that second semester to start working out again and it was like aaaaaahhhhhhhhh (an awakening sound), like that. I'd go to Orange Theory five days a week at five a.m. and that was like my processing time, like if I'm feeling anxious or stressed about something, while I'm running on my treadmill, I am working it out in my brain and in my body and that is a piece that I have to do in order to like get rid of some of that nervous energy that I have.

Lisa was vocal about what worked for her mind and her body. She meal prepped on Sundays and if she didn’t she said she regretted it. She felt like she could sleep more but she got a good five hours, maybe a little more. Her husband was a night owl, so she got to spend some quality time
with him if she stayed up a little latter. She was usually up at 4am for the gym. Friday was her straight home and crash day. She kept herself hydrated throughout the day. She partnered with her assistant principal; they kept each other on track for eating and tried to encourage one another to leave work at a reasonable time. She noted she was still working on that one.

Vanessa loved her treadmill and tried to get to the gym on the regular. She referred to it as her stress regimen. She also loved her massages. She knew she held her stress in her neck, so she made time for her massages. During the interview she didn’t have a small bottle of water, instead she was drinking from a gallon of water infused with fruit. She noted it was important to stay hydrated. She also mentioned sometimes she had to disconnect completely, “There are also times when I know that I need to take a mental health break. I have to disconnect from this work and I use to do that twice a year, just take and extra Friday off or a Monday off to just disconnect.” She confirmed this was not looked down upon by the district. She could remember district meetings when her superiors encouraged the principals to take a day for themselves. She felt the district tried to be supportive of their well-being. Vanessa also acknowledged that the efficiency of her administrative team allowed her moments to go get a coffee and breathe for a moment during the work day if she needed to. This same efficiency allowed her to attend all of her daughter’s games. She made a point to never miss a game and was adamant about her daughter not coming second to her job. She asserted she was a mother first and she extended that courtesy of family first to all of her employees. She was open about the fact that she did not know how to do this when she was 29 and started her first year as an assistant principal. It was something she had to learn to do in order to be there for her family.
Surviving to thriving.

Looking forward to wellness. As the principals thought about their future aspirations for supporting personal and professional well-being some goals were more detailed than others. John was focusing on solidifying a culture of high achievement and strong relationships that would last beyond his tenure. Carl was intent on growing his knowledge and skills to ensure he was ready for the constant change inherent in the system. Carol aimed to strike a work-life balance that would allow her to be successful as a mother, wife, doctoral student, and principal of a turnaround school. Lisa was walking into an arranged marriage with an external operator armed with positivity and a rigorous workout regimen, but most importantly meaningful relationships with the teachers and students in her building. Vanessa had been extremely reflective about her life and wanted to focus on meaning, “I want to inspire people. I was thinking about Ecclesiastes and you get to the end of your life and you ponder. You know having lost my mom I'm really thinking about keeping my eyes focused on those things that matter, that mean something and leaving that eternal legacy if you will. I want my life to mean something. I want, when I step away, people to say, “she left it better than she found it.” So that's why I say meaning.”

Vanessa’s desire for a life of meaning was reflected in multiple excerpts from her interview. While she was consistent in stressing meaning in her personal life as a mother and her professional life as a principal, she also had evidence of making a difference and leaving a legacy for her children as well as the various communities she has served.

Spirit.

Core values and beliefs of a leader.

Why I became an educator: the calling. Many of the principals in the study spoke to a desire to do more and feel more as their impetus for becoming educators. Some, like John came
from a family of educators and while he wasn’t told to be an educator, he assumed it was the thing to do and knew he was right after he got into it. While Lisa’s career started in the Coast Guard, she said she knew from a very young age she wanted to be a teacher. She just didn’t know how she was going to pay for her education. The Coast Guard provided adventures and skills that contributed to her success. Carl had a lucrative career in construction but did not feel fulfilled. He didn’t feel like he was having an impact on people, so he entered the profession at 30. Vanessa also left her previous profession as an anchorwoman, but the catalyst was far more personal:

Actually, it’s a very personal story, my sister passed away of cancer when she was twenty. I went to school to be a anchor woman, I have radio and television background, and I went into this depression and I had just had my son and I really began to evaluate my life, what I wanted to do with my life and I thought rather than to do journalism I wanted to end up in a career where I would make a difference in the life of a child. She stopped attending school her sophomore year and became home schooled and I watched how her teacher would come to our home and make sure, she was too sick to go to school, but just make the sacrifices they made in coming by our home and making sure that she got her assignments. It really just began to change some things in me and reorganize my priorities, and so when she passed away of cancer at twenty, that’s when I decided to become an educator.

Vanessa’s intimate account aligned in sentiment with those of other participants. Additionally, in deed, all participants made serving children well the litmus test for what they do every day. They too are striving for a lasting impact, one that extends beyond their time with a child. This teacher and others who supported Vanessa’s sister not only left an impression on the sister, but Vanessa
as well, calling her to the profession. David also valued the relationships and connections that came with schools. He referenced his work as a ministry of sorts, a way to give back. He acknowledged how it’s important to be able to ask yourself, “Do you have a purpose in what you do? Does it fill your cup?” If you can say yes, then you’re doing the right thing. Lisa noted the level of dedication required to do this job, “I feel like here people don't make it unless you really are emotionally invested, and you love it, if it’s a labor of love, and you come back every day.”

*The persona of a leader.* When participants were asked various questions about their preparation and skills, many spoke to their natural inclinations. When asked what has best prepared you for the work you do, Lisa jokingly stated, “I don’t know, I mean I was born with this strong personality, that helps. I practiced on my sister her whole life.” Then she also spoke to the “tenacity” and “grit” referenced by the district director, “Some of it is just like I’ve always been a person who won’t quit.” This sentiment was echoed by John when asked how he addressed systemic challenges to the mission of his school, “I just circle back even harder… circle back and redouble up and triple up and quadruple up [my] efforts and do what [I] can to help kids.” For John, he not only spoke to perseverance, but also choices for how he would allocate his energy. He chose to promote positivity and to focus on what was within his control. He too possessed a domineering personality. “Intense” was an adjective he often used to describe himself and his leadership style, but his intensity was accepted because people understand why the work was so important. He stated:

… everybody understands the why before it happens. So good leaders, if they want people to follow, if they want people to work with them, if they want people to take the lead as well, will always make sure they let people know why they’re going to do something before the what. And I think a lot of people put that backwards, you start out
by saying this is what we are going to do and then people are scratching their head saying well I don’t really know why we are doing that and so they don’t buy into it and that could be at the kid level, the support staff level, it could be at the teacher level and it could be at the administrative assistant principal level too, right. So I think that that’s what good leaders do in terms of making sure that you get everybody on the right bus, right?

John used his drive to push others to their fullest potential, teachers and students alike. He was, however, not an enigma to those around him. He was explicit about why the work was necessary and important to the end goals they had agreed on for children. He later stated while some might question his high expectations, he did not have any challenges recruiting or retaining administrators or teachers. People who come, rise to the occasion. He thought some of this was due to his ability to provide the necessary structures and supports to help people to reach their full potential, which was especially necessary for serving communities with challenging and diverse needs. Vanessa also prided herself on her strengths with processes and procedures that she inherited from the business world. Carl noted others had acknowledged his ability to establish a shared vision with his faculty and work collectively to move towards that vision, holding it as a compass to map their course towards success.

Carol, Lisa, and Vanessa were all explicit about their care of self and sense of self. Note, all three participants are women and they specifically referenced how knowledge of self directly impacted their effectiveness as leaders. Vanessa spoke about how her sense of self was necessary in order for her to foster meaningful relationships with others, “learning self, becoming self-aware, knowing your communication style, because I have a type A personality I really focus on the task and I’ve had to learn that I have to process relationships before tasks in order to even get
the tasks completed.” She notes this was something learned over time not something from early on in her career. Similarly, Lisa has an affinity for her books and the lessons they have taught her, she exclaims, “I love Parker Palmer’s book, *The Courage to Teach* and he talks about being authentic to yourself, so I share that with the staff… The second year I said, alright we need a little space. I have to make some space for myself. I need teachers to make space for themselves and their families…” This time allowed Lisa opportunities to reflect, re-energize, and grow.

Carol noted that the number of responsibilities she currently faced required her to find an outlet and a process for connecting with self, “I’m my worst enemy so I feel that is something that is a constant battle for me of finding time or making time to work out even if it’s for ten minutes that you’ve done something for yourself that’s going to help you.” Carol noted that having experienced divorce and death she was especially alert to the need to process, reflect, and care for self.

These leaders also shared the characteristic of self-ownership. Whether it be the knowledge and experiences they desired or the motivation, the principals in this study believed the ultimate responsibility lay with the individual leaders. Carl communicated the need to “develop your skills… it’s just researching and looking. I started looking at other schools that were successful and had great models who were moving large groups of kids that had all the odds against them… You have to get out and experience schools.” Carl continued to verbalize his need to prepare for the principalship and use the available resources to inform his path. Carol asserted, “You have to make opportunities for yourself. So you need to go and seek… and I think in the principal panel that was something that one of my colleagues said, that if this is what you want then you have to find those opportunities and show you have the leadership skills.”

Essentially, Carl and others expressed the belief that leaders don’t wait, they go out and get what
they need. Lisa asserted, “I don’t know that you can ever count on someone else to do it for you… I think you have to be a reader.” While each principal had their various processes and sources of knowledge, they shared the belief that you own who you want to be and go out and get what you need to be best prepared to do it. Additionally, Vanessa added you can’t look outside for affirmation, you have to have a personal sense of your value and the value of the work that you do:

I think internally you've got to be grounded enough to know and not go to people to fill your bucket per say, looking for those outside people that keep constantly stroking your ego and filling you up. You've got to be comfortable enough to know, I'm called to do this work, I understand that it’s going to be lonely, it’s going to be challenging at times, but I do feel a sense of accomplishment in knowing that I'm making a difference in the lives of kids.

Vanessa argued the point that not only do you provide your own sources of enrichment, but you also provide individual measures of success and encouragement. She spoke to the challenges, loneliness being one, and tension that comes with excessive hours and few rewards. This was the lay of the land in the field of education, so principals must have their own map and coordinates for success.

Finally, all participants spoke to an overall attitude or projection of positivity. While they each accomplished it in different ways, unique to their experiences and personalities, they shared a sense of ownership for what they felt and their influence over what others felt. David reflected on his leadership style and how positivity impacted his relationships. He knew that he could be positive and nurturing or authoritative. He was adamant that he would rather work with a person. For him positivity fostered ownership and buy-in from his stakeholders. John spoke to
negativity, “That’s a cloud that I don’t get into. I have no influence over that, I got to work with the measure I got. I could run around and complain about it and make people feel miserable, or I could make my staff feel like they’re getting less accomplished. I could make my kids feel like there’s no hope, but that’s bad right. So you just take it, block it out and circle back and redouble up and triple up and quadruple up your efforts and do what you can to help kids.” John believed in systems and processes, but he also believed in culture and climate and highlighted their high scores in culture and climate due to his desire as a leader to focus on the positive and what he could control. Carol and Lisa were aligned in their belief that they controlled their day:

Carol – I guess I believe the way that you decide to come into work is how your day is gonna be. If you come in with a bad attitude and a sour face, then your day is gonna be that way. But I choose to come in with a smile on my face and to keep that smile throughout the day even when terrible things are being thrown at me or said, just keep that smile on your face and you keep moving.

Lisa – So the principal that I worked with when I was an assistant principal always said you choose your attitude, so I took that to heart. I can choose my attitude. I come here, I enjoy the work, I enjoy the people I work with and I think you just bring that positivity. Carol traced the origins of her positivity to her mother who she never heard say an unkind word, while Lisa credited it to her former principal. Both embodied the notion that they were in control of their emotions, and Lisa was determined to spread those positive emotions to the faculty and students.
Enacting core values and beliefs.

Purpose of schooling: preparing the whole child. Many of the principals did not limit the purpose of schooling to academic proficiency, instead the emerging theme addressed preparing the whole child. John communicated the role of school in a child’s life:

Open kids minds so they start to think for themselves and the other, depending on the level you're at too, I think the second purpose becomes teaching that child how to advocate for themselves in the world so that they can be successful for whatever that word success means, right. Success means something different for everybody but by the time they're in high school its really making sure that they can navigate what's next, right. Inherent in his definition was an opening of minds not specific to a particular curriculum, but more universal, speaking to one’s curiosity. John also presented the notion that success was individual and should be determined by the individual. Thus, this individuality must be paired with advocacy. John paired this with a desire for every child to leave with an actionable plan for their next few years beyond high school.

Similarly, Carl discussed the need to teach children how to establish and maintain meaningful relationships, respect, and a work ethic, but he also addressed the need for kids to come to school and find what’s of interest to them:

My job is to make sure there are a lot of opportunities for students who may be musically inclined, technologically inclined or wherever their interests are, because middle school especially, middle school is the age where they're supposed to have a lot of hors d'oeuvres, they have to try a little bit of everything. So I have to make sure there's a lot of everything available. So whether it's writing clubs, or whether it’s Science Olympiad, or
if the kids are interested in drones and solar cars and robotics or if they're into other things. We have to make sure our athletics is also a full package…

Carl addressed his concerns about how schools often focused on academics to the degree that they didn’t consider fostering students’ interests and talents in other areas. Especially when school was the only opportunity for many students to experience enrichment. For David, the discussion of academics started with a redefining of academics. He explained every class that students participated in was academic and capable of providing knowledge and skills to aid student success in life. He was adamant about the role of arts and sports in building character and developing life skills.

*Defining success: it’s all about the students.* The initial context for success in this study originated from conversations with the district director of professional development. In his interview, he outlined the characteristics that he aligned with success. He first referenced the principal’s ability to “achieve one hundred percent success for the students” regardless of the context. His insistence that these principals achieved in any context contributed to my decision to interview principals from multiple contexts, based on current school grades, socio-economics, and racial demographics, as evidenced in the participant biographies and Table. As the director continued in his discussion, he also noted the principal’s ability to “put systems and processes” in place. He saw them as instructional leaders with interpersonal skills to “move the faculty, relate well with the community, and with students.” When asked what separated successful leaders from other leaders, he noted they were true visionaries able to create a vision for moving the school, a clearly defined plan, and exhibit the ability to follow the plan and adjust along the way. He used the nouns “tenacity” and “grit” when describing their ability to stick to it, endure the challenges of leadership, but re-emphasized at the end the need for interpersonal skills, “…
you have to have the relationship piece. I’ve seen administrators come through that were brilliant, they had the instructional knowledge, they had the curriculum background but what their demise was, it was a shame, they could not relate well with their community and their staff.” In this explanation the director stressed that the other skills were best when accompanied by interpersonal skills.

One goal of the study was to note the alignment or disconnects in the beliefs and practices of the principals with that of the central office. In reviewing the responses of the participants, it was evident that success in their eyes was all about the students. This success was not limited to the immediate success of a year or the students’ years at the school but extended into their experiences beyond the school. John expounded, success is about “meeting the needs of kids… success is not just graduation, but a complete plan as to exactly what is going to occur and how to provide the resources to allow them to access that as they leave high school.”

Similarly, Carl, who reached national acclaim for raising the graduation rate at his last middle school, a predominantly African American school with a history of low performance, noted the need to prepare students for a rich future with varied opportunities, “it’s my job to make sure that when they leave they are ... first of all while they're here they are safe, that they're being prepared when it comes to academics they're having challenges and they're building themselves up so that I know they're well prepared for future challenges and there's gonna be lots of doors of opportunity open to them. So the way that I see it is my success is based on their success.” This ownership and embodiment of student success has led to multiple successes for Carl. While he may be at a new school, he captured the history of the relationships and accomplishments in his immediate workspace, “just look around the room and you look at the pictures that I have up and all the things that I have up and its kids accomplishing things either on a state level, a national
level, a county level, so I know that as a result of the experiences that we give those students they are moving towards great futures.” Carl currently leads at a school with a history of high achievement, but he still searches for the areas for growth, the short lists of students who might be retained. He noted that he competes with himself. He compared ninth to sixth, and while the retention list was short, he created a plan for how each student would overcome and obtain success. David further supported a kid focus, “some educators can be jaded because they focus on themselves too much… it’s about the kids… if it lends itself to a positive outcome for the kids, that’s what it’s about… what we pour into our stakeholders…”

Others spoke to their success and the origins of their success. One principal, Lisa, noted her success in creating a culture of learning, but also acknowledged how that culture started with her work with the teachers. She possessed the knowledge and will to dive in with teachers, growing students and teachers simultaneously. She recalled:

I love teaching and I love working with children in classrooms. I just do the work alongside teachers and then I seem to be able to get people to stay even when the work is hard. And I seem to be able to get teachers who traditionally haven't been successful with other principals to learn and grow. I'm not saying that they've become these perfect teachers, but I have had teachers tell me, “you're the first principal I could really work with, you're the first person that I've been successful with.”

Lisa exhibited the behaviors of the instructional leader spoken of by the district director. She used her curricular expertise to grow and bond with teachers. She later stated how this hands-on approach allowed them to share the challenges and the successes. It also created a new way of work for teachers when the culture was one of learning and growing together. Vanessa shared
similar views of success, noting how her work with teachers and administrators led to student success. She acknowledged her ability to leverage her greatest asset, human capital.

I’ve learned the importance of building strong relationships with my teachers and other support staff members in order to move the organization forward. I determine success by their collective efficacy when everybody buys into the vision and you’re all on the same page in doing what’s right for students.

She like the other principals take the work of the team back to the end goal of doing what was “right” for students, growing them academically, and for many growing them socially.

Finally, a few principals spoke to the fact that success was not about moments in the past or the moment at hand, but a leader’s ability to impact the future by not only graduating students with knowledge and skills that assist them in accomplishing their goals, but also creating a culture and systems that live beyond a leader’s tenure. Carl, who had a history of success at turnaround schools created cultures and systems that fostered student and school success well beyond his years at his sites. The middle and high schools he left behind were still maintaining high grades and strong positive cultures. Additionally, two of the current principals reflected on sustainability when they were away from the building as well as beyond the tenure of the leader. Vanessa noted, “if this school can run very well without me being here, then I have clear procedures and processes in place and everybody understands their role and they can operate in their role very effectively.” She also asserted, “I am not _______ Middle. I should be able to step away from this school and this school function very well, if not I’m not doing my job.” John reflected on his eight years as principal and how the initial goals were specific to “getting the house in order,” ensuring expectations and accountability were clear for students and adults, sustaining faculty and seeking support from the higher education and the community. While he
had maintained the culture and systems through changes in faculty and staff, his absence would be a new challenge, “I haven’t had to deal with plugging in a person behind me, I don’t know what that would look like. And while it wouldn’t necessarily be my responsibility, I would want to have a heavy hand in that, right? Because I would want to make sure that the sustainment last long beyond whatever systems are in place now? That’s my big push now.” Again, the principals returned to a common theme of the district director, the importance of procedures and systems, as well as that of a lasting culture.

*Challenges: Policies and practices that negatively impact student success.* The participants were also asked to reflect on times when policies and practices challenged what they considered to be the purpose of education. While their examples varied, much of what they spoke to addressed issues of access and equity. Carl spoke to an operations situation earlier in the week when he challenged the cafeteria regarding students receiving a “to-go” lunch versus staying in the cafeteria to eat the lunch. Technically, food was not supposed to leave the cafeteria. Any food that was not consumed was to be disposed of prior to leaving. While this was typical protocol during the school year, the principal understood where it was challenging for summer school students on a half day schedule who wanted their free lunch but also had to secure transportation home. It worked for them to get their lunch and go, but the cafeteria worker was not pleased with the suggestion. Carl raised the question, “Why do we have the food? To feed the kids. Are they selling apples on the corner? No. Why is this an issue that needs to take up my time.” On another level Carl expressed concern regarding the practice of school-choice for students who had been bullied. He referenced the chagrin of another principal when he was told according to the law, if a child was being bullied at school, he/she had the right to attend another school of choice. The principal and Carl challenged the logic behind such policy. Why
was the child who did no wrong up-rooted from his home school instead of the bully? Most likely the child needed the support of the friends and teachers in the home environment, not the challenges of starting over somewhere else. While this made sense for a student whose bullying had not been effectively addressed by administration and whose sense of safety and community had been compromised, it should not be the one path for all bullied students.

Lisa expressed concerns regarding the trauma on students as a result of faculty turnover in turnaround schools. Turnaround schools are required to replace a significant percentage of their faculty sometimes multiple years in a row. Who remains, the students. Any relationships they may have built with teachers or leaders are severed in the name of school reform. Lisa noticed the impact of such policies:

I didn't understand how much scholars in this building internalized this job turnover as their issue. So we were talking, this is the first year that kids weren't saying to us, are you gonna be here next year, where they were like, who are we gonna have for fourth grade next year, not are you still gonna be here. So they did internalize a lot of that and they were feeling unsure about that even though we don’t think about it as adults… they live here, and this is their house so you can't just do that.

Lisa was committed to the teachers hired under her tenure and the students at her school. She was clear the decision to come to the elementary school was hers. She wanted the challenge. She thought she could make a difference, use her knowledge from the past to lead the school to a better future. This commitment to teachers and students was Lisa’s motivation for staying through the school’s transition to external operators. She did not know what the future would hold, but she had made a promise to her teachers and students and she was staying.
John also struggled with the realities of state policies. While he appreciated high standards, he also believed in equal access and noted how some policies limited student access, ultimately creating greater inequities in society at large. He exclaimed:

I love the raising of the bar, I do I embrace that...at the same time a challenge of that is that I think we're teetering on a point of getting to where a student of marginal effort and marginal aptitude is likely not going to end up with a high school diploma. It gets to a point where that could be dangerous, right? And if you put in the fact that a student might have good effort, marginal aptitude, but extreme environmental circumstances, that student's likelihood of getting a diploma decreases even more and that worries me, right? And so, there's a tipping point where I don't know that there's an average student. I don't know. If everybody has to be average or better then we're in trouble, right? Because there are kids that when you and I went to school muddled through and then became very successful in life and earned a high school diploma but as it relates to their effort and their aptitude, they were slightly below average, right? But now if you're that you don't have a chance you're blocked out and that just gives you a different career path so that's a challenge that worries me. That challenges my belief that all kids can be successful...you're going to start to leave some kids behind who probably have the potential to be well deserving of a high school diploma and be very successful in life.

John again revisited his purpose for schooling and a common premise that all children can learn. He questioned the ability of public schools to continue to serve all children well. While this might sound comical to some who already view public schools as challenged, it should be noted that John had overcome the challenges of turnaround schools and spent multiple years celebrating the successes of students others would have written off. Once you have personal
experience that all students can be successful, it is disheartening to have to think that some may be left behind because of a policy and not because of their potential.

When participants were asked what, if anything would make them leave, they spoke to concerns about micromanaging, where they only held the title of leader but weren’t able to make the decisions that they thought were in the best interest of students. John spoke to the opposite, opportunities that might allow him to have a larger impact on student success. Ultimately, their shared purpose, the thing that brought them hope and gave them purpose was student success and anything that limited their ability to move towards that vision was a challenge.

*Meaning and accomplishments.*

*Meaning.* A recurring theme in the thoughts and words of the participants was the “why” of what they do. While they contextualized its place within or across various domains, it was present for every principal. Carl, put it at the top of his list of strengths. He explained how he opened every new school that he was assigned to with a visioning activity. This activity allowed the participants to reflect on the purpose of schooling and their role as educators. They then used this preliminary activity to guide their work throughout the year. Over time he recalled, “Relationships and meaning… If I take the feedback from what people tell me, it’s that I'm good at bringing people together. As a strength, I'm good at bringing people together and I’m good at connecting people to why we're together, the meaning part of it.” Similarly, John reflected on the end of the school year when students expressed to the faculty how much their efforts meant to them:

So we'll go back to the task of getting kids ready to leave, making sure they've completed the plan. The intensity that we go through, especially as kids get closer to their fourth year of high school, kicks up and the amount of checking and double checking and triple
checking to make sure that kids are staying on path with the courses they chose just increases more and more. Because my belief is that you will have a completed plan, bottom line, right? And while it may not always work out that way, it typically does. So what does that manifest into, you look at it like a graduation ceremony where kids just couldn't be more pleased with the support… the kids actually take the time… the amount of times that our kids give back and literally stop to do things extraordinarily as it relates to recognizing the adults and thanking them, I've had a lot of experiences of that even this year. Every year it’s like wow our kids really get it and that’s certainly what makes me want to go even harder the next year, right.

John addressed the rewards they reaped when students exemplified how the work of the teachers had contributed to something bigger, student success. And most importantly for John, the students found meaning in their knowledge, experiences, and relationships they’d received throughout their years at the school.

*Accomplishments.* While all of the principals were identified as successful, you will note in their responses that they weren’t into self-aggrandizement, but instead were constantly moving the bar just beyond their reach to stretch their thinking and performance to another level. They didn’t look for validation in a superficial form, but in the relationships and success as of others. While Carl had experienced multiple successes throughout his career, some obtaining media attention, his personal awards and honors didn’t adorn the walls of his office. Instead you saw the accomplishments of students from his various schools in academics, band, sports, and graduation. The same was true for John. He didn’t need accolades or medals for his role as a leader. He actually had the most obvious spaces in his office decorated with students’
achievements and then if you looked closely you saw one shelf behind his desk stuffed with
awards that represented his personal honors. He remarked:

Yeah, I don’t need to feel like I accomplished something when the data and the success
stories are going to speak for themselves. I don’t need to be validated by feeling like I
have a sense of meaning and purpose. It’s there right. You can see that by the interaction
we have with kids. It leads to higher engagement and certainly you can choose to look up
or down at everything you do and if you choose to look up you’ll get more accomplished.
The success and engagement of students was John’s measuring rod. He would prefer to see the
values of the school represented in the actions and achievements of the students. His office
housed a huge card created for him and signed be the entire senior class. His face lit up with an
enormous smile as he drew my attention to the card and explained that the seniors had been
sneaky about getting around to get everybody to sign it. He also walked me into the main
breezeway and showed me two banners, one entitled “[Voyagers] Always Go BEYOND!” It was
for the seniors to sign and leave messages about their future plans for success. He stressed it was
important that everyone had a space to represent their individual success in their own words. The
second banner was entitled “Thank you _______ teachers and staff… From the Class of 2018.”
This was a tradition he started to allow students the opportunity to publicly honor the adults who
helped them along the way and an opportunity for the teachers to hear from the students what
made a difference and mattered to the students. He made it clear that these two banners would
stay up well into the year to welcome the new ninth graders and encourage the continuing
students. He saw it as a public acknowledgement of the culture of support and achievement at the
school.
Interestingly, the principals seemed to totter between not needing public acknowledgement of their accomplishments to not taking the time to honor their accomplishments. Vanessa owned her type-A personality and the challenges inherent in always having the highest expectations for self:

That’s always been a weak area for me, I'm such a task-oriented person that I don't take time to stop and breath and celebrate the growth because I'm on to the next phase… so we were having a discussion yesterday and thinking about all that I've been able to get accomplished here at the school and, like I said, because my personality is very let's get it done, let's do it, let's do it, I'm always thinking about ways to improve, to get better, to enhance, but I don't spend enough time exhaling and celebrating those things that we've been able to accomplish. I mean I came in and in my second year they gave me the key to the city. That's a really big deal, but it's like okay put that key in the drawer and let's move on to something else, you know. I wrote a grant to overhaul the library, did a ribbon cutting ceremony and everything but it's like okay that's wonderful, let's keep moving (clapping of hands in get going fashion)... so that's a weakness…

While all of the principals in the study were labeled successful, some have received more acclaim than others. Vanessa was one of those well decorated principals. However, she didn’t see her work as exceptional but instead necessary for the children she served to be successful. Therefore, she had a habit of stuffing medals and newspaper articles in drawers or file folders instead of taking a moment to relish what her accomplishments meant for all students.
Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the various beliefs and practices of successful principals regarding personal and professional self-renewal. It focused on their district context, personal biographies, and responses to a series of interview questions and the survey inquiry. These findings were captured within research questions and the mind, body, and spirit framework. In the following chapter I will discuss how their accounts connect to the literature within the Mind, Body, and Spirit framework, as well as implications for research and practice.
Chapter Five

Introduction

My motivation for this study evolved from concerns I harbored regarding the self-care practices of educators. Having spent a significant portion of my life studying yoga, dance, and women’s holistic health, I noticed how my practices of self-care were slowly compromised as I succumbed to the stressors and job demands of a principal. When I looked around at other principals in my district and friends across the country I realized I was not alone. I was concerned about the long-term effects of stress on educators. After researching the topic, I noted the majority of the literature spoke to challenges and solutions for teachers but there was very little about administrators. The available administrator literature spoke to causes of stress and burnout but with few solutions. My intent was to study both causes and solutions through an exploration of the beliefs and practices of successful principals with regard to personal and professional self-renewal. While there are studies that discuss the professional renewal of principals (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Notman, 2012; Orr and Orphanos, 2011), I wanted to be sure to add the personal, or physical and emotional renewal of principals (Seppälä, 2016; Steward, 2016). I also wanted to understand the relationship between the spirit of the leader, their values and beliefs, and how this spirit was fulfilled or renewed in the workplace to support optimal thriving (Bundick et al., 2010; Dantley 2003, 2010; Pargament and Sweeney, 2011). My research questions were as follows:
Question One: In what ways are principals’ well-being and self-renewal supported by principals’ personal beliefs and practices, district policies and practices, and educational programs and organizations?

Question Two: To what extent does attentiveness to well-being and practices of self-renewal impact professional success and work satisfaction, and well-being and flourishing?

In this chapter I will discuss the findings from the study in light of the research. The discussion evolves as follows: discussion of findings; discussion of the framework; implications for research, implications for practice, and researcher’s note.

Discussion and Implications

Discussion of findings.

Supporting well-being and self-renewal.

Principal. In chapter four I concluded that the majority of the principals felt they were the ones ultimately responsible for their personal and professional well-being and self-renewal. This is not surprising when considering the literature and multiple references to leaders looking within to address concerns regarding their ability to strike a work-life balance (Cushing et al., 2003; DeJong et al., 2017; Drago-Severson, 2012; Eckman & Kelber, 2010). This is actually a major source of stress for many administrators. Eckman and Kelber (2010) acknowledge conflicting emotions when principals assess their working conditions (job satisfaction) and contemplate the effect of their work on self, family and friends (role conflict). However, the principals in this study did exhibit means for supporting personal and professional well-being. When it came to personal care many believed in setting aside time for family and friends, and some spoke to quarterly vacations (Drago-Severson, 2012). Others spoke to their spiritual beliefs (Bas & Yildirim, 2012, Somech & Maljak, 2003; Mehdinzhad & Nouri, 2016), and some spoke to the
professional need to own the reality that they couldn’t do everything, so they needed to advocate for more time or more resources when needed (Federic & Skaalvic, 2012; Tooms et al., 2010). There were not discussions of mindfulness or other mental or physical practices, outside of the gym, to assist with stress management and proactivity. Therefore, possible suggestions are discussed in the implications section.

District. When reviewing the major sources of stress and burnout for principals specific to district supports, the concerns ranged from role conflict and ambiguity (DeJong et al., 2017, isolation (Drago-Severson, 2012; Stephenson & Bauer, 2010), controllability (Friedman, 2002; Somech & Miassy-Maljak, 2003), workload (Carr, 1994; Cushing et al., 2003; DeJong et al., 2017; Friedman, 2002), managing difficult stakeholders (DeJong et al., 2017; Eckman & Kelber, 2010; Friedman, 2002; Wong et al., 2000), and accountability coupled with insufficient support (Boyland, 2011; Carr, 1994; Cushing et al., 2003; Eckman & Kelber, 2010). The principals within the district were not challenged with an ambiguous title. The role of the principal within the school and the district were clearly established. Controllability was also a non-issue for these principals. Many were able to create their own visions for success and use their strengths to accomplish them. The district also provided the principals with the necessary supports to respond to demands of academic and behavior accountability. All schools were staffed with curriculum and behavior coaches and counselors to support teacher and student growth. However, there were some concerns regarding the time frame for additional resources that were provided to turnaround schools. Most additional financial and people resources were provided for the first year but not guaranteed for the second year. This was problematic for some principals who felt the time frame was not long enough to sustain their academic gains. Some principals expressed concerns with managing stakeholders. For some these concerns were with faculty while with
others they were with parents, but all stemming from trust factors that came from difference
usually in the race of the principal and the faculty or community they were serving. While these
 principals were savvy enough to effectively address these concerns, there were no noted district
supports to assist them in managing the cultural communication dynamics of leadership. Most
districts have some version of cultural sensitivity training, but these were personal incidents that
may have required a peer mentor or buddy. However, these principals were beyond their two
years and did not have mentor support.

Another concern evidenced by the conversations with all principals was the reality of the
workload. Many asserted the need to address the amount of unnecessary paperwork. Mostly
unnecessary because it was a duplicate or triplicate of information that they had provided to
some other individual on a different form at a different time. Some principals noted while the
paperwork was exhausting, they knew there was a practice of forgiveness and more than a few of
the principals admitted to asking for forgiveness when they just couldn’t get everything done.

Aside from the discussions regarding stakeholders and workload, the principals felt
extremely well-supported by their district. From the superintendent, to the area superintendent,
district director of professional development, and professional development opportunities, the
professional needs of the administrators were most often met. However, while the district
utilized an insurance company which incentivized healthy habits and supported a wellness coach
for each site, principals were not the focus of any particular wellness initiative and they were
usually unable to attend the regularly scheduled wellness coach events.

Principal preparation programs and organizations. As evidenced in Drago-Severson’s
(2012) study, many principals sought advanced degrees or alternative learning environments to
bolster their personal and professional renewal. Two of the principals were pursuing doctorate
degrees, and all three of the women participants were avid readers, all involved in self-made or program specific book groups that focused on some aspect of leadership. Lisa even mentioned that recently her book group had started switching off with a few for pleasure books. These venues of classroom and book groups served to rejuvenate the principals. Additionally, principals enjoyed district training and national conferences that allowed them to hear multiple perspectives on relevant educational topics or problem solve through their latest challenge.

**Attentiveness to well-being and practices of self-renewal.**

**Success.** While the principals were attentive to their professional renewal and ensured they had the necessary knowledge to promote student success, they did not always take the time to celebrate their successes. Most were looking to the next task or challenge with little celebration of what was already done. This is most likely connected to the shared over-achiever, type A personalities that were rampant in the group. If not attended to, this inability to live in the moment and celebrate success could cause stress or burnout due to the excessive number of self-imposed tasks and goals in addition to those of the district. Most principals were aware that their drive was at times self-defeating, but they had not yet figured out how to turn off on a regular basis. Some did take breaks periodically, but on a daily basis most still struggled with letting go and packing up for home.

**Work satisfaction.** Work satisfaction as referenced in my study deals directly with feelings of meaning and accomplishment. What was interesting about the principal accounts was many principals derived high levels of meaning from their job. They were doing work that they believed in and loved which contributed to their high levels of accomplishment. Despite self-assessed areas for growth, the principals were overly content with their current positions. Those
who were newer to their schools or entering new circumstance felt a bit more anxiety, but their concerns were about the unknown, not the job or the people.

**Well-being and flourishing (thriving).** If I only define thriving as the ability to be successful in your work while still having enough energy to assist others, then all of the principals are thriving. They all believe in and provide both wellness and professional supports for their faculty. However, for some these supports are provided via the necessary systems and structures, while for others it’s as personal as a cook-out where the principal physically cooks for the entire staff, or exercise sessions where the principal works out with the staff. The level of intimacy really depends on the personality of the leader. If I use the full definition of thriving which requires principals to be flourishing in all areas of their lives (Bundick et al., 2010) then most of the principals are still striving for balance. The advantage they all hold is that they are aware of their circumstances of diet, exercise, and sleep that create the best conditions for their success. They could all easily speak to their levels of sleep and diet, as well as the presence or absence of exercise. However, they did not all have a plan, or in two cases an idea for how there would ever be enough time in the day to exercise. This leads back to earlier discussions of workload, and the organization of the school day and calendar year to better assist principals in securing the time they need to care for themselves.

**Discussion of the Framework.**

As we explore the various domains of mind, body, and spirit, it is important to revisit how they are defined. The mind references acquiring and accessing knowledge and skills, or sensemaking. This has often translated to skills or traits of a principal that allow them to be successful (Darling-Hammond & Rothman, 2011; Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Northhouse, 2015; Orr & Orphanos, 2011). For the most part the research has evolved from traits to practices.
The Darling-Hammond, et al. (2007) article generates a list of practices based on their study: cultivating a shared vision and practices, leading instructional improvement, developing organizational capacity, and managing change. Simultaneously research is being conducted specific to the “soft” skills of leaders or emotional intelligence (Garcia, 2016). Body references your personal knowledge, protection, and use of body; positive emotion, well-being, or nurturing of body; and embodied/somatic knowing (Murphy, 2016; Seppälä, 2016; Steward, 2014; Wells, 2013; Wells et al., 2011). Spirit is the knowledge and connection to self: personal beliefs and values; development of personal and professional persona; hope, purpose, transcendence; and flourishing (Bundick et al., 2010; Dantley, 2003, 2010; Goffman, 1986; Gunzenhauser, 2008).

The interview questions for the study were divided into the various domains of mind, body, and spirit and will be discussed within their individual categories. The strengths of participants that allow them to thrive or the tensions that give them pause have been highlighted as underlying themes throughout the discussion.

**Mind.**

*Knowledge, skills and practices.*

*Systems and structures.* When reflecting on the participant responses to the questions within the mind section of the text, themes emerged specific to systems and structures. Every participant spoke to his or her ability to put systems and procedures in place that would support faculty and students. John noted his systems and structures were about support and efficiency. Vanessa came to her school and conducted a SWAT analysis to determine the efficiency of the organization. Lisa did an overhaul of curriculum structures, but later returned to some of the original structures for a slower transition. Similarly, Carol discussed meetings with her coach and being introduced to an abundance of possible structures and having to determine what to
implement right away and what to change for later. These discussions align with the Darling-Hammond, et al. (2007) category of developing organizational capacity. The principals were clear that the goal of these systems and structures was to strengthen the core of the school, teachers and students, connecting individuals to each other in productive ways and utilizing the strengths of the organization.

Building capacity as instructional leaders. Another repetitive theme was the ability of all principals to serve as instructional leaders (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007). John, Carl, and David were strong in math and Carol and Lisa were strong in language arts, but all knew how to capitalize on the strengths of assistant principals and district curricular coaches to support the needs of their staff. John, Carol, Lisa, and David spoke specifically to the task of providing curricular resources for teachers. John noted the size of his school did not allow him to get into every classroom every day, but he did have APs and coaches as well as teacher support for each faculty member to ensure they received the coaching they needed. Lisa was more hands on and divided the classes with her AP. She planned with grade level teams, sat in on classes, and co-taught lessons. She had the reputation of doing the work with her teachers and was respected for her curricular knowledge and willingness to share this knowledge with teachers and help them to grow. David also dived in and worked with his math team. He organized a core group of teachers for a team. They spent time deconstructing math problems to identify a repetitive process for students to use when solving problems. They created the PRIDE format and rallied around students using PRIDE on their math assessment. All students who had evidence on their assessment scratch paper of using PRIDE were rewarded with various incentives. David noted it wasn’t just about building teacher capacity, it was also about “giving students a game day plan
and helping them feel like they were prepared to compete. That’s a life lesson, how do you use what is given to you in a strategic way to ensure your success?”

*Changing minds, changing behaviors.* Multiple principals, especially those in turnaround schools, spoke to the fact that changing mindsets often accompanied change in leadership. This can be compared to Darling-Hammond, et al. (2007) cultivating a shared vision and practices. John spoke to his faculty, students, and community “drinking the kool-aid” of high expectations. He noted that his first year was one spent determining which teachers were on board for raising the bar and which teachers would be in conflict with supporting the success of students. He exclaimed some teachers were on board verbally but were not willing to change their behaviors and because he had an expressed belief that everyone would do everything they could to promote student success every moment of their work day, there were certain people who would not remain. After a two-year adjustment period he has teachers, students, and parents flocking to the school for its large selection of Honors and Advance Placement classes and its solid AVID curriculum to support first generation college students. Similarly, Lisa promoted and accomplished a shift in school culture when her students went from “throwing books to fighting over books in the library.” She dedicated her first year to building a culture that valued books and the power of literacy. This required her to sit with teachers and parents to discuss what behaviors should accompany thriving readers. Vanessa fought a similar battle with parents who as she expressed shared a fixed versus growth mindset and were vocal about their children not being high performers because they, the parents, were not successful in school. Vanessa worked to introduce the parents to theory and evidence to support her belief that their children could have different experiences and ultimately be successful in school with the necessary supports. David challenged teacher thinking when it came to the behaviors and consequences rendered for
EBD students. Many of his teachers believed the students were taking advantage of their labels and exhibiting behaviors that were extreme because the students knew they would not be disciplined. He noted the many hours he spent educating teachers about the challenges of their EBD population and their legal responsibilities to these children. He also noted that with the reconditioning he needed to offer support to assist them with proactively preventing and mediating behaviors. David also raised the point about redefining academic for his community. He believes everything that happens in a school day is academic because embodied in arts and athletics and other experiences are additional life skills that students need to be successful.

Carl also speaks to his visioning that occurs at his orientation to every school, in addition to his recruitment of elementary school students throughout the district by promoting the vision and practices of his middle school. His enrollment has steadily increased over the past three years during a time when many students in surrounding schools are opting out for private or charter opportunities.

_University and principal preparation._ Darling-Hammond’s past research with teachers is mirrored in her research for principals as she asserts that principals benefit from real world scenarios that mirror the experiences they may encounter once they leave the classroom. All participants were quick to say the theory was not as useful without the ability to practice. Each participant had their own means for gathering experience and exposure. It was a culmination of researching sites of interest for visitation and principal shadowing, volunteering for additional quasi-administrative duties within the district, participating in summer opportunities via the district principal preparation program, and taking advantage of university link ups with other districts. The district also noted the benefits to varied experiences for administrators and tried to be strategic about placements of principals in diverse settings. Even before stepping into the
principalship the director discussed a summer bridge program for the assistant principals that allowed them to spend their summers at an alternative site to vary their experiences in preparation for the principalship.

In addition to university preparation, some of the more veteran principals spoke to organizations like New Leaders who partnered with the district to give specific administrators coaching that would assist them in managing change. This aligns with Darling-Hammond, et al. (2007) final practice of successful leaders.

**Body.**

*Psychological well-being and renewal.*

*Mindset matters: the origin of a positive disposition.* An interesting finding in the research that deserves further exploration is the source or conditions that foster a principal’s ability to maintain a positive disposition as well as be able to disconnect from work to refill their cup with family, friends, and self after work hours. Multiple participants spoke to taking the job home with them, some even to the point of losing sleep over concerns with students and other school related business. While the desire is for educators to be dedicated to those they serve, it is also imperative that they understand the need to strike a balance. Two participants, John and David spoke to an ability to separate work from home. John also spoke to an ability to separate the behavior from the person and to not let negative occurrences follow him home but to instead have his home discussions be about the successes of the day. He was clear that he experienced great job satisfaction and that his job had no negative impact on his well-being, it was instead a positive contribution to his well-being.

Some of what John speaks to is mindset. He experiences the negative, but he does not embody it. He instead extracts the lessons and lets the rest fall away. Additionally, he
experiences the positive and frames his job and his work within the positive. He is repetitive in his belief that you can always find something “wrong,” but you can also choose to focus on the positive. Thus, the implications for research speak to the process and lessons learned from principals who own a positive disposition or mindset. Some of these dynamics are explored in Appreciative Inquiry (Barrett & Fry, 2005) and Appreciative Organizing Work (Burrello et al., 2016; Mann, Burrello, & Roberts, 2018). Within the scope of appreciative thinking is the creation of a strengths-based approach to leadership which requires you to re-frame your thinking about schools and their members. It trains a leader to re-visit communication and support to note when they are working from the positives. One conditioning activity for administrators is “the notebook.” Throughout the day or at the end of the day principals are asked to record three amazing events in the day, it doesn’t matter how large or how small. The goal is to capture the strengths and then revisit those strengths prior to entering the building the next day. For example, at breakfast, or in your car while sitting in the school parking lot, take a moment to review your list of what went well the previous day and let this frame your day. Go forth with the same intent, to give your best and record at least three successes from the day. Having worked with a small group of a little less than ten principals I was able to hear the benefit of notebooking for many of them. I was able to hear how changing their mindset or reframing their thoughts, what they looked for, also changed their feelings about work, not just for them, but also for those around them. As people learned what the notebook was about, they desired to be in it and aimed to exhibit behaviors that would get them there. What then would research show about these leaders promoting positive practices and a positive disposition?

Additionally, if a key component to wellness as defined by PERMAH is engagement, and engagement is defined as the regular development of our strengths, what is there to be learned
from principals who are keenly aware of their strengths and are consistent about developing them? Do they experience greater job satisfaction? This requires one to note there is a difference between professional development, and professional development or coaching that addresses personal strengths that are by definition specific to each individual. Any of the aforementioned would allow the researcher to gain greater insight to the origins of a positive disposition.

Make time for self. While most principals were responsive to the PERMAH survey inquiry, the body language shifted a bit for John and Carl when discussing it. They were authoritative and full of knowledge regarding the inner-workings of the school site and the various aspects of leadership, but not as forthcoming about a work-life balance. John was attentive to the challenges of some of his APs and referenced his discussions with them about managing home and work. However, he noted that he was always honest with his APs about the fact that he did not have children and he understood that this did not allow him to speak to the issue of being a parent and making time for children in a demanding environment. He noted many of his APs were amazing and ready for principalships but had decided to wait until their children were older before taking on the role. This aligned with work-life balance research (Cushing et al., 2003; DeJong et al., 2017; Drago-Severson, 2012; Eckman & Kelber, 2010) which highlights the challenges of principals in the managing of family and the principalship. Interestingly, David noted while he might not make it to his elliptical machine as often as he’d like, he was pretty systematic about putting his family first. He believed in being fully present for his family and his school. He tried to compartmentalize his life so that when he was at work he was fully engaged in work and when he was at home, the phone and laptop went away, and he was fully present for his wife and five children.
Physical well-being and renewal.

Working it out in my brain and my body. Another theme that emerged from Lisa and Vanessa was the use of exercise to release and reflect. Their exercise allowed them to release stress but also reflect and process the work of the previous and current day. Research in movement therapy and some brain therapy speaks to the power of movement to relieve stress and increase intellectual processing (Schulyer, 2010; Vulcan, 2009; Young, 2002). Similarly, Vanessa and Carol escape for beach vacations or time away from the pressures of the job. Time for disconnecting and re-energizing is a common practice among principals in the process of renewal (Drago-Severson, 2012). Carl lifts weights whenever he gets a break throughout the day and David drives. David noted the forty-five-minute drive to work is his release and processing time. He thinks through his goals and potential challenges and makes a game plan for the day.

Spirit.

Moral and Ethical Imperative

Leading with heart and mind. Dantley (2003, 2010) and Gunzenhauser (2008) speak to the necessity of leaders having a critically conscious understanding of who they are and what they value and how those values and beliefs shape their visioning for their schools and everyday work as leaders. As represented in the findings from chapter four, these leaders are adamant and assertive about their understanding of the purpose of school. David is passionate about his belief that you have to have a good heart to be a good leader. He suggests you ask yourself, “Do you have the right heart to do the work? You have to have a way of being consistent and fair in every situation and some situations are very hard. Do you have the heart to determine the right outcome for the kids?” Additionally, the self-sufficiency, inquiry, and advocacy that John speaks of reminds me of Theoharis’ (2007, 2008) social justice educators. I actually felt this in the
words of Carl, Lisa, and Vanessa. They spoke to empowering students in a way that brought about meaningful change and disrupted inequities in society. Carl built a career on growing students and communities that others would deem unsalvageable. He wore his emotions and connections to those students. Carl and Lisa lost sleep thinking about the challenges of “their” children and how they would create environments that served them well. The group of principals shared a commitment that was deeply woven (Theoharis, 2008).

From surviving to thriving.

Bundick et al. (2010) speaks to thriving as the functioning of the whole person across all life domains as well as the ability to reach out and uplift those around you and beyond your moment in time. Thriving is in essence about having enough to sustain you and to give back to others. The principals in this study discuss three means of giving back to others: sustaining the system beyond my tenure, growing teachers and future leaders, and empowering community. The principals contemplated how to sustain the system beyond their tenure. John and Carl constantly referenced the beliefs and practices that needed to be in place to ensure the success of their site beyond their time. NISL’s work with leaders was specific to visioning and organization that allows principals to implement systems and practices that would sustain beyond their time. Additionally, John, Carl, Lisa, and Vanessa spoke to their relationships with the community and how part of their role as the leader required they enlist the community in meaningful change. Lisa spoke to her need to include the community in a way that they felt free to agree and disagree with her visioning for the school. John and Vanessa spoke to sitting down with community members to learn and to build alliances. Additionally, all of the participants spoke to coaching their teachers and administrators to their next level of growth. John noted he gave his APs a variety of experiences to ensure they were ready for the diversity of the principalship. Vanessa
often told her AP that she was growing her to take her place. Carol and Lisa coached teachers on the regular growing their curricular knowledge and practices.

**Implications for Research**

**Discussion of framework.**

*Spirit as the guiding domain.* When reflecting on the three domains of my framework, I was clear that the domains would be mind, body, and spirit, but I did not consider the ordering of the domains. The most commonly referenced sequence was mind, body, and spirit. However, after reflecting on more literature and findings from my interviews, I wondered if spirit, mind, and body would be a more appropriate ordering. When reviewing the comments of the leaders it was challenging to question where the leaders would be without their “why.” The core of their identity and the motivation for their success often came back to their “calling” and the meaning and hope they found in their work as principals. This “calling” was their impetus for fostering knowledge and developing practices that contributed to their success. Their sense of fulfillment was often governed by whether or not this purpose was accomplished. When the principals were asked, what if anything would make them leave, it was not longer hours, an increase in student numbers, or a decrease in funding; many had already overcome these challenges. It was instead concern regarding their impact to do work that they believed in, work that they felt was in the best interest of students and work that would contribute to student success. This honoring of the core is at the center of critical spirituality (Dantley, 2003, 2010) and Guzenhauser’s (2008) notions of the active and ethical leader. Additional support for starting with the core or spirit of the leader was manifested in my interview protocol. My inquiries started with questions from the mind domain that asked about knowledge and experiences, but prior to those questions I asked the principals if there was anything they wanted me to know about them prior to starting. Most
lead into the introduction by telling how and why they came to lead. Therefore, their natural starting point was with their motivation. Thus, future exploration of the framework may require me to further explore the power of spirit first and further explication of where one domain ends and another begins, as well as how awareness in one domain can influence awareness and attentiveness to another domain.

**Current and future studies.**

When pondering areas for growth in the current study, it would be interesting to re-visit the interviewer/participant relationship and process for making meaning in greater detail. A key claim by Roulston (2010) is the power of the exchange between the interviewer and the participants, as well as the power dynamics. It was evident to me that there were tensions on my part and the participants at various points in the interview process. For example, when one of my participants laughed when asked about the purpose of schooling and then again when he was asked “What qualities do you value most about yourself as a leader.” Before offering his official answer, he stated, “Well that’s comical.” While his answers to both questions were valuable and thoughtful, I was at first puzzled and then concerned about his interpretation and valuing of my study. I had to learn his personality and idiosyncrasies. I needed more time with my participants. Similarly, when I returned for my second visit with participants they shared how they had reflected on some of my questions, some adding to their answers or amending them. Another participant spoke to attentiveness to wellness and how she thought about my study as she was contemplating the sleep she lost. These conversations were obviously assisting them in their attentiveness. What would have happened over a longer period of time? Additionally, I noted I was far more at ease with my female participants. Our common ground as leaders, mothers, and workaholics caused far more side inquiries about the how and why of the study and our
experiences as leaders and as moms. I went off script, and they went off script freely asking about my experiences. They shared more details about their challenges on both a personal and professional level than the men. This made me consider what would happen if the interviews were less structured or conducted in groups where the interviewers didn’t just tell their stories, but also got to hear and ask about the experiences of other leaders with similar goals of managing personal and professional well-being. Could I have offered all of us more? Finally, I think about my individual strengths and my love of words and stories and wonder if the better method for sharing participant accounts would have been a narrative form or a more artistic assemblage of words and phrases to honor my participants and my background in writing and literature. I also wonder if video would have captured a more complete story of my interactions with all of the participants and their process of making meaning. Overall, Drago-Severson’s (2012) promotion of critical reflection extended to the interview process and this study served as a critical reflection for the participants as well as the researcher. In the future I desire a model that will better capture the critical exchanges that occur between the researcher and the participants (Wolgemuth et al., 2015).

When contemplating what I would do differently in future studies I first thought about which answers were easy to come by and which answers required more probing. My principals felt comfortable discussing their attentiveness to and practices of professional self-renewal. However, when it came to their personal health, participants weren’t as familiar with discussing overall well-being and work. They were still in an exploration state and some even expressed anticipation to hear the insights gleaned from my study. I then thought back to my protocol and felt that a new study should have a pre-screener that emphasized participants’ feelings of success in the specific area of psychological and physical well-being. The screener would look for those
who felt like they were successful in structuring their lives and work days in a way that supported their well-being. They would be willing to participate in a series of interviews and observations that highlight not just their beliefs, but how their beliefs manifest in their practices. Additionally, a component of the thriving definition discusses the ability of thriving individuals to not just foster their own well-being but to contribute to the well-being of others. I would be interested in screening for principals who have created thriving cultures that emphasize well-being for staff and students, noting the impact of these practices on the academic performance of students, culture and climate of the school, and retention of the teachers.

Another thought is that maybe principals are in need of plans for ensuring wellness and a different approach would be to screen for those interested in improving their personal well-being and then start a trial group implementing specific strategies in the workplace that have been noted to improve well-being (Murphy, 2016; Seppälä, 2016; Wells, 2013; Wells et al., 2011). The study would then document the strategies that were most effective and in what ways. Once exemplars are created for personal principal practices, then practices of principals that extend to faculty and students, and next practices that enlist the community in the promotion of well-being. As noted in my introduction, attentiveness to well-being is not a challenge limited to the lives of educators; overextending has become the American way. Educational leaders have the opportunity to create an emphasis on self-care that can positively impact not just a school, but a community, a generation, by creating a culture that provides an appreciation and practical application of wellness resources that can be used throughout life.

What was evidenced by the participant accounts is the discussion of educator well-being is just beginning and despite its importance, may not be on everyone’s radar. For those who are attentive, the resources may not be available to assist them in creating plans for self-care.
Therefore, the discussion and the research need to continue. Hopefully Murphy’s (2016) work at Harvard and Well’s (2013) work at Oakland University are just the beginning.

**Mind.**

*Benefits of a positive and strengths-based orientation.* An entire movement is occurring in international education to promote an educational model that emphasizes the well-being of all stakeholders as the core mission and vision of the school (Oades, Robinson, & Green, 2011; Seldon & Morris, 2007; Waters, 2011). The belief of positive schools’ educators is that the focus on overall well-being will not only address epidemic levels of stress and depression in K-12 settings and colleges, but that it will also improve academic performance, and promote well-being throughout the lifespan (Norrish, et al., 2013; Seligman, 2008; Seligman et al., 2009). Additional emphasis has recently been added to the preparation of leaders to live and lead in a positive and appreciative manner. The appreciative component springboards from Cooperrider’s Appreciative Inquiry model which stresses strengths and shares a core principle of positivity, positive questions lead to positive change (Barret & Fry, 2008). Therefore, an orientation to strengths and an emphasizes on positive productive change make way for co-construction and positivity in practices of leadership. It would be advantageous to study the impact of positive and strengths-based leadership models on the personal and professional well-being of leaders, as well as faculty and students.

*High stakes accountability.* High stakes accountability policies often impact principal turnover or mobility within a district (Finkel, 2012; McMahon, 2015). Much of the NCLB language regarding the academic success of students is directly tied to the actions of the principal and the teachers. Therefore, one repercussion has been the replacement of principals and teachers when Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) is not met. Most principals don’t have a say in where they
lead within a district, but consideration of “fit” or the conscious consideration of which person is best for which environment, could limit some principal turnover and mobility. Researchers have noticed principals placed at low performing schools with lower numbers of highly performing teachers are more likely to leave or be moved than those at high performing schools (DeAngelis & White, 2011; Li, 2010). Researchers have also documented the impact of “fit” on principal success and satisfaction, as well as the impact that removing principals has on the retention of teachers and the performance of students (Bernshausen & Cunningham, 2001; Gu & Day, 2007; Hoy et al., 2006; Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011). “Fit” is further discussed as I explore the power of choice in improving well-being for all stakeholders, as well as a challenging but possible alternative model to principal mobility, the presence of “external operators” working alongside current school principals.

The question of “fit”: how does choice factor into principal well-being - Another evocative conversation that emerged out of the participant interviews was the question of “fit” and the possibility of choice. The stories regarding how principals landed at their current schools were varied. Some were placed, others volunteered, and most were asked. Multiple discussions arose surrounding the process of principal placement. Carl who was a superstar in the district and had experienced great success at multiple school sites at the end of the day did not have a say in his moves. He noted he could have stayed at any of his previous schools, but he was asked to move to a new location. While he made the best of it and want all in regardless of the assignment, one questions the impact this approach might have on the well-being of other principals.

When Carol was asked whether or not she really had a choice to leave her school, she had to think about it for a moment. She felt like there was a choice, but she was not sure what would
have happened if she had said no, especially with future goals within the district that included one day transitioning to a district level position. On a different note, Lisa was clear throughout her interview that she not only chose the challenge of a turnaround school, but also the specific school. Lisa did mention the district policy regarding principal placement. If you have been an administrator in the district in the past and you transition to a new school but do not experience success with the school, then you will return to your last successful environment. Lisa noted this policy influenced her decision to take on the challenges of a turnaround school. While her end goal was success, if it did not occur fast enough for those at central office, she had the option to return to her last successful environment.

What then might research reveal about the role of “fit” and supports like the last successful environment clause when it comes to principal well-being? This is especially relevant for a district like Beach City that has schools and communities with such unique characteristics from the North to the South. Should considerations be made for principal character, strengths, and even race and gender when determining their potential for success at a particular site? These are especially relevant questions when reviewing the experiences of Vanessa and David. Again, the question is not about whether or not they would be successful, but due to personal identity are there certain sites that might prove more stressful for them than others? And finally, how involved should principals be in this decision-making process from beginning to end. Beach City and other districts might support the research stating the role of “fit” in well-being. When the selection of a school site aligns with moral purpose, “fit” can become a protective factor (Bernshausen & Cunningham, 2001; Gu & Day, 2007; Hoy et al., 2006; Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011).
Arranged marriages: leading with external operators - Lisa shared the impending challenges of partnering with external operators. She like many of the principals valued her autonomy and control over final decisions regarding student achievement. For many of the principals, autonomy was the defining factor in whether or not they would stay at their school sites. Similarly, the research notes one source of stress for many leaders is due to the loss of autonomy or what they refer to as “controllability” (Friedman, 2002; Somech & Miassy-Maljak, 2003; Boyland, 2011; Drago-Severson, 2012). She is hopeful but concerned about the upcoming partnership with the external operators and coined the phrase “arranged marriages.” She felt there might be reluctance and anxiety on both sides and the question was could they grow to love each other, or would it be a co-existing blame game. The role of the external operator working side by side with the district principal is a relationship that needs further exploring. She is one of the first to experience this in her district. Usually external operators will force a full turnover, but in this new model they work closely with the district and the existing principal to grow the school. Little is known about the dynamics involved in these relationships or their effectiveness for all involved. Will this arrangement contribute to another source of stress for leaders, role conflict and ambiguity (Carr, 1994; Cushing et al., 2003; Eckman & Kelber, 2010; DeJong et al., 2017)? Could this arrangement limit concerns regarding leader turnover that impact teacher and student morale (Hoy et al., 2006; Giles, 2007; Muller et al., 2014; McMahon, 2015), especially noting the impact of principal turnover on teacher stress and burnout? Can the principal and the external operator prove to be a powerhouse of resources to bring about positive meaningful change for turnaround schools?
Supporting the socio-emotional and physical health of educators - The socio-emotional health of educators was paramount in the minds of multiple principals. They not only spoke to their personal needs for formal processes of releasing, but also the needs of faculty. Lisa recognized that she along with her teachers had developed poor self-care habits that were leading to excessive hours at work and fewer and fewer hours at home. This lack of balance was taking a toll on their physical and mental health. She reflected back to her Coast Guard days when she would encourage her group to remember that they only had one family, while they would have multiple career opportunities, so it was important to put family first. Family is especially important in stress and burnout research which shows it to be one of the major coping strategies for leaders battling excessive stress and burnout. Time with family and friends was critical for the rejuvenation of many principals. But what do we know about rejuvenation throughout the work day?

One district response to wellness was the assigning of a wellness coach to each school site. The wellness coach organized activities for faculty and staff to assist with destressing and rejuvenation. For some sites this looked like a once a week afterschool Zumba, yoga, or painting session. For others it was the organization of a school kickball team that competes with other schools. Regardless of the form, it was an occasional site-based intervention. However, some principals spoke to more severe circumstances of depression and displaced anger and abrasive behavior. Carol and Vanessa noted teachers who had developed destructive habits as a result of the stresses they encountered in the workplace or brought from home. Carol acknowledged, having come from a different environment she witnessed the severity of the challenges of
teachers in her new environment. Lisa expressed concern that her teachers embodied the traumas of their students. Finally, Vanessa exclaimed some of her teachers suffered from socio-emotional concerns, but they weren’t always able to identify in themselves what others saw and even if they saw it they weren’t able to see its impact on students and classroom culture.

Research that explores a means for supporting the socio-emotional needs of educators is of great interest. A starting place would be reviewing such programs as CARE and mindfulness studies that result from the pairing of school districts with insurance companies who send in specialists to work with educators on practices that promote well-being for self as well as the overall school environment (Emerson, Leyland, Hudson, Rowse, Hanley & Hugh-Jones, 2017; Schussler, Jennings, Sharp & Frank, 2016). Kaiser-Permanente has such an agreement with various districts in Los Angeles, both public and alternative. The initiative is called Thriving Schools and supports are for faculty, students, and the overall school environment. The resources for educator wellness range from healthy eating, physical activity, social and emotional well-being, to staff breakroom makeovers, labor management collaboration, and a webinar learning series. The initiative posits wellness is a conditioning of mind, the availability of resources, as well as the presence of policy to support the belief that well-being matters. While Kaiser is most likely conducting its own research on the impact of its work on schools, it would also be beneficial to have education researchers review the impact of such programs as they relate to educator socio-emotional wellness.

_Spirit._

_Divergences and tensions that lead to further research._ Goffman presents a frame as a “tangible metaphor” that many of us would associate with context or background, “unstated rules or principles more or less implicitly set by the character of some larger, though perhaps invisible,
entity” (Goffman, 1986). One might connect Goffman’s use of character to Shakespeare’s use of
the world as a stage. While Shakespeare discusses the one man playing many parts throughout
his life, Goffman notes one man, or character, can play many parts within a period of his life.
And more importantly, the man does not always get to choose the part he plays. It is instead
determined by a “larger entity.” As previously expressed, an essential component to the mind,
body, spirit framework of well-being is the need for authenticity, or the need to be true to self,
one’s character, one’s values, and one’s beliefs. If our principals find embodied in the definition
and expectations of a principal a reality that is in conflict with their authentic self, then Goffman
asks the question, are they able to break frame, are they able to redefine “principal” and still be
successful? Some of the divergences and tensions in the participant accounts spoke to moments
when personal identity was challenged in the workplace. These challenges ranged from
participants being type-cast based on race and or gender, as well as the usurping of power by
larger entities.

Challenges of gender and race - Participant Carl spoke to a time when his identity as a
Caucasian male was challenged by the predominantly African-American school community that
he inherited. Carl notes, there were already two white males on the administrative team and the
last thing they wanted was a third. While the community was initially hesitant to receive him, his
openness and willingness to listen to the community and include the community in the process of
change allowed for a union to form despite differences in race. He did not have to compromise
his identity in order to be included. For Vanessa, the lack of acceptance was not overcome by
her willingness to listen or include her community, these were all inherent in her leadership.
Instead, she knew she would not be able to use the same words or present the same behaviors as
might John because for her these behaviors would be affiliated with preconceived notions about
race and gender. Her experiences of anxiety and loneliness due to her race and gender suggest a need for a growing body of literature specific to not just the work experiences of women of color in leadership positions, but the impact of their experiences on their personal well-being. How often are they asked to re-establish their identity to meet a standard often based on a dated stereotypical image? Similarly, Carol and Lisa spoke to the demands of the position and how meeting those demands required major adjustments in their home lives. This opens a discussion regarding the overall experience of women in the role of principal and in what ways their leadership preferences and lifestyle preferences are impacted by the demands of the job.

God: a shout and a few whispers - Earlier on in the literature review the discussion around spirit and spirituality intentionally distinguished between spirituality and religiosity, noting spirituality is about connecting to self and understanding the role of the self in the greater universe, a connection to something great. Religiosity on the other hand is a belief in a god or higher being; one who subscribes to a religious faith. Both spirituality and religiosity were present in the body of research related to stress and burnout. While I purposefully did not include question about religion, specifically, I did expect the topic might surface. Interestingly enough, out of the six participants, only one person presented a dominant discourse about her belief in God and her life being shaped by her Christian faith. Her beliefs manifested in her office space as one observed a combination of gifts from faculty and students, as well as personal pieces from home that ranged from a wood carved cross made by a student, photo art of a cross with a poem in the background and large letters that say “Faith,” and a large di that was labelled on all sides with various words: blessed, pray, believe, love, live, and laugh. As mentioned, while I never asked a question about religious beliefs, she interjected during the second half of the interview focused on body/health, “I am a woman of faith and I know that was coming, and because of my
relationship and my belief in a higher power, I'm active in my church and I just believe that God had called me to do this work and that He's gifting me with the skills and abilities that I need to be able to perform.” She believed religion had to play a role in a study about principal well-being and self-renewal. I also noticed that any questions asked about values and beliefs translated to religious connotations for her and a questioning of how her Christianity impacted or was impacted by any of her roles. While Vanessa brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to her position, she was clear that the core of her identity lay in her Christian roots. For Carol and David, the discussion of God and his role in their lives was more subtle. Carol was asked about the maintenance of stress and she acknowledged:

I definitely think for me you have to have faith in something, so I do believe in prayer, I do believe in a higher being. So I think that my faith is, I guess it’s the trunk, if you know anything about a tree, that really keeps the roots and I really feel like my faith is really where I’m centered at and so I think it’s hard to give something up to a higher power to see there must be a reason behind everything that happens…

Carol discussed how it was important for her to understand that there was a reason for everything, like the hardships that her students faced and the various disappointments related to personal and professional life, and her faith helped her through those moments. However, this was the only time she referenced it in the interview sessions. More emphasis was put on her positive disposition as she approached people and work. Similarly, while Christianity was not the focus of the conversation with David, he did mention one way he addressed stress was to pray through things. While the mentioning of religion was not a surprise, what was peculiar was there appeared to be a pause or hesitation on the part of Carol and David as if religion might not be the acceptable or expected response. There was not shame, but there also was not the same level of
assertion as presented by Vanessa. It causes one to ponder the notions of professionalism as it intersects with religion. Of course, the promotion of religion is not acceptable in the workplace but are there other challenges or stereotypes posed when you acknowledge your faith in the workplace. Somech and Miassy-Maljak (2003) would argue underplaying religion in the workplace is a disservice to all because for many religion is its own preventative framework that allows individuals to deepen meaning and diminish stress. Thus, those with religious beliefs should be encouraged to use their religion as an internal compass and buffer.

Implications for Practice

University curriculum pedagogy.

After reviewing various research regarding the needs of principals as expressed by principals and district superintendents, common themes emerged, specifically, the desire for a transformational leader who could fuel the energies of all stakeholders towards the common goal of student success, an instructional leader who could grow teachers and students simultaneously, and a leader knowledgeable of the various factors that contribute to successful change or school turnaround (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Fuller & Hollingworth, 2018; Notman, 2012; Orr & Orphanos, 2011). Additionally, these representatives expressed concern regarding leader preparation and the need for universities to experiment with their approaches to authentic and relevant internships for principals that allowed for the seamless connection of theory to practice. The following section on implications for practice at the university level highlight stress management for leaders and appreciative inquiry and appreciative organizing. Then attention is given to various models of principal internships as presented in the literature.

Stress management for leaders. Wells (2013, 2016), Wells et al., (2011), and Murphy (2016) have spent an exceptional amount of time dedicated to researching job related stress of
educators and realistic means for preventing or coping with these stressors. Both are advocates for the power of mindfulness in the workplace. While mindfulness has been introduced in schools to assist students academically and behaviorally, educators have yet to experience the full benefits. Harvard recently included mindfulness training in their education program. Prior to this they were already offering mindfulness practices in their schools of medicine and law. They noted, their curriculums for medicine and law provided their students with the necessary knowledge to be successful professionals, but it did not provide any resources for managing personal well-being. Therefore, higher education is asked to consider, where and when do professionals explicitly learn how to manage the stress inherent in their selected professions? The benefits affiliated with mindfulness include a reduction in stress, anxiety, and depression, as well as an improvement in brain functioning. Wells (2016) and Murphy (2016) have both published texts for educators on implementing mindfulness into their lives, but most importantly into their day. Murphy (2016) discusses mindfulness practices that principals can try while at work to bring periods of calm to their day. Periods of calm throughout the day are noted to be just as significant to thinking, creativity, and positive interactions as proper sleep and diet (Seppälä, 2016). Murphy (2016) suggests the journey of a mindful leader is not limited to the meditative poses people often associate with mindfulness, but instead include: minding your values (act based on what matters most to you); yielding to now (slowing down and focusing your attention); disentangling from upsets (gain perspective before you engage); allowing unease (deal with the internal and external realities in order to move forward); nourishing yourself (participate in activities that replenish your energy); cherishing self-compassion (be kind to yourself so that you can grow and support the growth of others); and expressing feelings wisely (learn how to share feelings in a productive way that fosters connections and relationships).
These practices of leaders embodied in a class might assist leaders in determining the values that will govern their work as leaders, saving time by learning how to more effectively focus attention, build stronger relationships by building strategies for addressing internal and external conflicts, and physically caring for their well-being to promote higher levels of overall functioning. Similar approaches are underway in the corporate world as Seppälä (2016) chronicles the misconceptions regarding success noting the top six: never stop accomplishing; you can’t have success without stress; preserve at all costs; focus on your niche; play to your strengths (do what you do best and stay away from the rest); and look out for number one. She instead asks that we have leaders develop a new six: live (or work) in the moment, tap into your resilience; manage your energy; do nothing; be good to yourself; and show compassion for others. Seppälä’s new six allows leaders to be more attentive and nurturing of personal wellness and has proven successful in her work at Stanford.

Appreciative inquiry and appreciative organizing. While appreciative leadership is relatively new to the education world, the components of appreciative leadership cover more ground than those of transformational, instructional, and change orientations. This is evidenced in its ability to encompass all of the aforementioned leadership styles in its six spheres and take a strengths-based approach to change as opposed to the traditional deficit approach (Burrello et al., 2016). Like appreciative inquiry, it is grounded in the belief and practice of co-creation of a school or districts transcendent core purpose and values (CPVs), sphere one. The CPVs are not the product of a leader but a community of leaders, teachers, students, and parents creating a shared vision. Additionally, the second sphere, which emphasis positive strengths-based change, again requires one to use the strengths of the community and its various stakeholders to progress towards a common goal. There is an inherent honoring of history and people that often
accompanies transformational change. Similarly, the third sphere, relational leadership, is another orientation often valued by educational organizations. It is evident in Beach City’s district director of professional development’s definition of a successful principal. These relationships allow principals to know and grow their schools and communities, as evidenced in sphere four, generative learning and capacity building. In order to generate learning and build capacity, whether instructional or otherwise, leaders must have meaningful relationships that foster trust and collaboration, as well as communities of learning that allow for trial and error. The relationships component of AI and AO are positive supports for principal stress often brought on by ill preparedness in managing various stakeholders as evidenced in studies (DeJong et al., 2017; Eckman & Kelber, 2010; Friedman, 2002). Finally, principals are able to delve in to accountability measures and systems as they transition through the last two spheres of internal and external accountability and whole system coherence. There is an added bonus to appreciative theory that manifests in current concerns with the socio-emotional health of students. Much of the work in appreciative leadership is based on a leader’s ability to create environments that not only promote academically tested success, but whole child success. Thus, those experimenting with the leadership style are often challenged to evaluate their promotion of well-being for faculty, staff, and students. Current work with my university’s principal preparation program has yielded evidence to support the practical application of appreciative leadership in school change. Specifically, after interviewing members of Beach City Unified, it was evident that their appreciative organizing practices were not limited to principals but were also utilized at the district level as they used a strengths-based assessment criteria for principal selection, and used their knowledge of assistant principal and principal strengths in making decisions regarding the placement of principals in district schools.
**Relevant internships.** Much educator research, whether referencing teachers or leaders asserts the need for relevant and meaningful internships. Orr & Orphanos (2011) highlight the St. Louis program model where aspiring principals participated in internships Monday through Thursday and then attended classes on Thursday evening and all day Friday. This was in addition to traditional models of weekly courses and summer institutes, to models sequenced to support the context and challenges of the district. For example, organizational and systems classes might come in the Spring to prepare leaders for Summer systems work. Summer work might highlight instructional coaching to prepare principals to work with teams upon their return for the new school year. Ultimately, the goal is university partnerships with districts and alignment with calendar and curricular needs. The current principal preparation program at my university does similar work in the sequencing of guest speakers and assignments for aspiring principals depending on the roll out of their school year. For example, attention is given to when they will evaluate teachers and participate in instructional coaching to ensure it will align with the unit on capacity building. Districts and universities reap greater benefits when they are able to work closely to meet the needs of school leaders.

**District.**

**Systemic refinement.**

**Principal workload.** Much research speaks to the job description that accompanies the principalship. While the participants in this study are considered successful principals, they still raise concerns regarding the amount of paperwork that they are asked to complete and the number of responsibilities they have that far extend the hours allotted to do the job. Similar sentiments were expressed by participants in the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) 2018 study. In The Pre-K School Leader in 2018: A 10-Year Study (Edward,}
Young, Richardson, Pendola, & Winn, 2018), the general profile of the female principal average age 50 with ten or more years in the classroom and 5-10 years in the principalship noted:

She is likely to have a 12-month contract and works, on average, 61 hours per week during the formal school year and 42 hours per week outside the formal school year. Her annual salary is about $96,000, and merit/incentive pay is not available to her (p. 3).

The general response from my participants regarding the paperwork was they simply didn’t do all of it and part of surviving was understanding what you could get away with and what must be done. These were principals who have records of success; the district was equally invested in them. What about the novice principal aspiring to their ranks who does not understand how to prioritize or how to advocate for an extension or additional support. Many of the participants believed that while the district systems and practices had improved greatly over time, there was still room for growth in this particular area. Consolidating of forms, dispersal of due dates throughout the year versus heavy periods of paperwork, systems that allowed for better sharing of information so that the information is generated in the computer as opposed to at the principal’s desk via multiple forms. These simple refinements of district systems and practices could save much needed time.

The additional concerns brought up in the NAECp study were concerns mirrored in the conversations with my principals, specifically limited contracts and summers that can be just as congested as the school year because they are jam-packed with trainings, teacher hiring, and summer school. My principals were adamant about re-visiting the practice of an annual contract, noting the stress that comes with temporary contracts, especially for those who have accepted the challenge to lead in turnaround settings that require immediate results from teachers and students. Some principals also expressed the need to re-arrange the summer schedule to create an
open period of time when principals were more easily able to take an extended break as opposed to a few days here and there. Another principal noted the lengthy periods in second semester as opposed to first semester when educators and students have to go without a break. She noted spikes in student behaviors and educator stress in that time span between January and spring break in March. DeJong et al. (2017) also recommended attention to negotiations regarding principal contract length. Eckman and Kelber (2010) discussed various models of co-principalships, one model could include a summer release that allows a different leader to step in during the summer and provide a significant amount of duty relief.

Another consideration relevant to principal workload was distributive leadership models or strategic delegation of principal duties across the leadership team based on the strengths of the team (Spillane, 2006; DeJong et al., 2017). For many of the elementary school principals, their job titles fell between them and one assistant principal, at the secondary level there were additional numbers of assistant principals but also increased numbers in faculty and students. How then does one principal fulfill the needs of all present on campus? John was adamant that he knew he couldn’t get into every classroom every day, but that’s what he depended on his team of assistant principals, instructional coaches, and teacher leaders to do. His job was to put a system in place where everyone was supported, not to be the one individual who provided that support.

Distributive leadership is not the only model to assist with an excessive workload. As previously mentioned, Eckman and Kelber (2010) tout co-principalships as a viable solution to principal workload. They noted isolation often stymies ideas, while the co-principalship offers both physical and mental support, providing principals with more time, fewer duties, and fewer feelings of loneliness when it comes to making important decisions across all levels. It also
allows for professional growth and collaborative opportunities as principals are able to reflect
together and pull from collective knowledge as opposed to individual.

*Preparation and support throughout the tenure of a principal.* Professional development
time in the district is currently a time for training and limited sharing. While the principals all
agreed the gatherings were meaningful and the information important and relevant, they also
noted there was little time for true reflection and collaboration. For a district so large with such a
diverse group of principals with varied knowledge, they seldom get to sit and share. David
acknowledged he usually looked in-house for reflection and collaboration, utilizing the
knowledge of his assistant principals and other instructional staff before he ventured out. He also
noted that he was a tech guy and when he did one training for the district he built in opportunities
for short-term collaboration during the class but also long-term collaboration by teaching the
principals in the workshop how to share their online platforms with each other so that they could
access each other’s documents and plans as resources. While this was impromptu on the part of
the principal, it was noted as a successful and systemic approach to collaboration. Thus, some
organized form of sharing is feasible and beneficial to current principals, both novice and
experienced. At the very lowest level it could be a virtual sharing platform or a more interactive
face-to-face space for regular periods of reflection and collaboration. Beausaert et al. (2016) note
how rewarding the exchange with peers is for principals, their study revealed principals were
most responsive to support from other principal peers.

Similar to Beach City’s mentor model for first and second year principals, a two-tiered
model of mentoring would be beneficial for novice principals. One level is mentoring provided
by a retired principal who commits to at least one hour per week of contact time with the
principal addressing universal traditional principal development. The second level of mentoring
is provided by a practicing district principal who is the go to person for current district demands such as teacher reassignments, summer trainings, or forms due for review that the mentor may not be as familiar with. Additionally, the retired mentors, who attend a three-day mentor training by the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) also provide services to veteran principals who have reached a challenging time in their leadership. New Leaders and NISCL both sponsor principal training programs in the district that provide mentors for those who participate. A systemic approach to mentorship throughout a principal's career would prove beneficial to sustaining the professional renewal of principals.

Notman (2012) studied models for sustaining principal success on both the national and international level. He focused on skills that benefited principals throughout their careers and came up with the following: critical self-reflection, responsive leadership, building relational trust, and personal resiliency. His New Zealand study emphasized additional supports for principals that spoke to personal development, specifically, increased self-awareness to assist principals in understanding why they think and act as they do. John, Carl, and Vanessa were the most experienced principals in the group and what was interesting about their professional development was that it was unmentioned or supplied by outside sources. It would be beneficial to discover what long-term principal support would look like in the district. Discovering what would happen if the district that is already paired with the university for tier two credentialing, established another cohort of veteran principals tailored to their mid-career needs. John expressed interest in sustaining the school culture and systems beyond his tenure. Carl expressed preparing for competition with schools of choice, how to compete in the ever-changing world of choice. Lisa expressed enlisting the community in growing the school. While she doesn’t have the same experience as the other principals, community engagement is a point of interest for
principals at various levels in their career. The experienced elementary principals in the NAESP survey noted a need for professional development in the following areas: improving student performance, improving staff performance, understanding and applying technology, time management, using social media effectively, and school improvement planning. This partnership and support of veteran principals might give them the gift of time that they crave by organizing resources for renewal in one location, as opposed to them seeking out personal enrichment from various sources.

*Support educator well-being.* Beach City serves as a model for the promotion of physical and emotional well-being with incentivized health initiatives. One inconsistency within the study was the effectiveness of the wellness coach. David was able to speak to teachers organized for kickball leagues, quarterly after school activities, as well as wellness screenings that occurred on school sites. Others spoke to weekly events held after school for teachers such as painting, yoga, and nutrition classes. Carol, who found herself at a school that she felt needed a wellness coach more than her last, did not feel the same level of support or engagement from her current wellness coach. While the coaches receive a small stipend as incentive for their work, it may be necessary to cross-pollenate the knowledge and practices of the coaches to ensure the sites are getting the desired level of support. Blair et al. (1984) conducted a 10-week health promotion program that attested to the power of a site-based program to improve mental and physical well-being of educators. This suggests there is great promise in the presence of a wellness coach with some attention to the integrity of the position.

*Principal.*

*Promising practices.* As noted early on this study, there are certain supports that principals put in place for themselves to support their personal and professional well-being. The
ability to assess personal and professional well-being and provide the necessary supports is a skill set of its own. Below are examples of personal and professional practices that are realistic and adaptable.

**Personal.** While concerns regarding the workload of a principal are duly noted and disputed, principals currently confronting the challenges are finding means for overcoming the challenges of long hours on the job and limited time with family and friends, and sometimes limited time to care for self. More than a few of my principals had a family plan that involved a spouse or parent assisting with the household responsibilities and the care of children. These roles were not always stereotypical, husbands were cooking and cleaning to accommodate the long hours of their wives. Grandmothers were living in the home to assist the children and husband when the wife was away. One principal was the head of his household and his wife stayed at home to take care of their large family. However, as soon as he got home his phone went away and he was fully present. He was also responsible for the night shift with their six-month old and had been the night shift since the sleepless nights of their thirteen-year old, four children earlier. No matter how varied, the principals with younger children had specific plans. One mom expressed the need to meal prep every weekend. Hydration was a recurring theme with many of the principals. When asked about their overall health they noted they kept water handy to stay hydrated. Most had a daily plan that consisted of early morning exercise or short meditative walks throughout the day to a happy place on campus. Many spoke to a protein rich snack stash for those days when the lunch schedule didn’t work. Some spoke to learning their schedules and looking for those slow times in the day when they could have a quiet lunch instead of a walking and talking meal. They also spoke to their exercise or drive time being the intermission time between work and family when they regrouped to prepare for the change from
work to home or home to work. Some spoke to the need to enjoy family and not just be present but make lasting memories for their children and spouses. For some rejuvenation came at the beach or with the masseuse. Regardless of how, principals had family plans, daily plans, and identified outlets to assist them in renewal.

*Professional.* A running theme for half of the group was their desire and contentment to read, read, and read some more. Much of their professional development came from texts from their programs or peers. They found time for the reading by relying on a mix of printed texts and audio texts. Many listened while exercising or driving to assist with the time management. Most secured a diverse peer group that they could turn to as additional sources of knowledge and experience. These peer groups were formed in past administrative university programs and/or district cohorts. Many principals who didn’t have mentors or needed assistance that their mentors couldn’t provide, designated their own mentors based on their personal knowledge of which principals in the district could best assist them. Additionally, these principals have discovered or are discovering additional supports at district office that can assist them in their growth as principals that may not have been well advertised. Some are self-selecting professional development and trial supports looking for any assistance that might give them an advantage. The combination of district services, peer groups, and self-learning via books and other resources are all realistic and highly applicable practices that emerged from the practices of the principals in this study.

**Researcher’s Note**

While the role of the “mind” is often at the forefront of leadership preparation, what shined through in this dissertation was the role of the “spirit” as leaders led from their core and overcame challenges of leadership most often through a combination of mind, body, and spirit. It
was not simply their knowledge and skills, but their positive dispositions and their attentiveness to how their dispositions impacted their physical well-being. While I hypothesized that there was indeed a mind, body, spirit connection inherent in sustainable leadership, I am overly intrigued by the complexity of how these domains work in unison. As I reflect on the accounts collected from the principals I realize that this is a keyhole view into the role of well-being and self-renewal in the life of the school principal.

What also shined through was the power of critical reflection which occurred for the researcher and the participants as a result of the interviews (Drago-Severson, 2012). When we are open to the inquiries and experiences of others to assist us in reflecting and growing, we are closer to obtaining the constant state of critical consciousness that Dantley (2010) references as the core of leaders and Roulston (2010) touts as the power of qualitative research. My goal was to lead my participants in a shared experience of reflection and meaning making about well-being and self-renewal. I believe I was successful in co-construction a new understanding for researcher and participants in regard to the role of mind, body, and spirit in principal well-being and self-renewal.
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Appendix A: Phase One - Interview/Research Questions Map

**Phase One:** Aligning Research Questions with Interview Questions

**Research Question One:** In what ways are principals’ well-being and self-renewal supported by principals’ personal beliefs and practices, district policies and practices, and educational programs and organizations?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Educational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mind</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What knowledge or skills are most valuable to be successful as a leader?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What has best prepared you to do the work that you do as a leader?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What additional preparations of knowledge and skills would you suggest be developed by the principal and other supportive parties (i.e. schools, districts, etc.) to promote principal success?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about an impactful experience that highlights your utilization of knowledge and skills to move your school towards success.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Body</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does the district do to support personal and professional well-being?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there additional considerations or supports you feel educators need in order to ensure personal well-being that can be provided by the individual or district?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spirit</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what ways do the current policies and practices of leadership support and challenge leaders in leading from their heart or core values and beliefs?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Phase One: Aligning Research Questions with Interview Questions

**Research Question Two:** To what extent does attentiveness to well-being and practices of self-renewal impact **professional success** and **work satisfaction**, and **well-being and flourishing**?

**Mind** (Blaydes, 2002; Cooperrider & Srivasta, 1987; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, Darling-Hammond & Rothman, 2011; Notman, 2012; Northouse, 2015; Orr & Orphanos, 2011; Seligman, 2011)

When you think about the future, what will it demand of you and how will you respond to those demands?

**Body** (Fredrickson, 1998; Murphy, 2016; Seppälä, 2016; Steward, 2014; Wells, 2013; Wells et al., 2011)

In what ways are you attentive to personal wellness and the impact of your job on your personal well-being in both a positive and negative manner?

How do you physically prepare yourself for your job? Are you especially attentive to exercise, sleep, and diet?

What do you do when you are in a high stress situation?

**Spirit** (Bundick et al., 2010; Dantley, 2003, 2010; Goffman, 1986; Gunzenhauser, 2008; Pargament & Sweeney, 2011)

How do you define success? In what ways do you consider yourself to be successful?

What do you believe is the purpose of schooling? How does this purpose reflect in your work?

What are the qualities that you most (admire/value) about yourself as a leader?

What qualities allow you to be the most effective in your job?

Tell me about a time when your personal beliefs and values directly manifested in your work as a leader.

Tell me about a time when your work caused you to feel a great sense of hope or purpose.

**Flourishing/Thriving** (Bundick et al., 2010; Murphy, 2016; Seligman, 2011)

In what ways are you supporting the personal and professional renewal of others?
### Appendix B: Revisions Resulting from IPR Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Revisions to Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase One: Ensuring interview questions align with research questions</td>
<td>To create an interview protocol matrix to map the interview questions against the research questions</td>
<td>Change from using original two surveys to PERMAH (Seligman/Kern) survey that was inclusive of health component of well-being embodied in research questions, as well as the conceptual framework for the study that includes Seligman’s positive psychology and PERMA well-being research. Application of IPR framework caused me to revise certain questions to better align with the parts of the research question that they were created to explore.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase Two: Constructing an inquiry-based conversation</td>
<td>To construct an interview protocol that balances inquiry with conversation</td>
<td>After reviewing initial interview questions with committee, suggestions were made to create research questions that attended to each component of well-being that I desired to explore (mind, body, and spirit). Additional suggestions were made regarding the wording of interview questions to assist in soliciting personal stories/experiences of participants. The following question starts were suggested: <em>Tell me about a time when… In what ways…</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Revisions to Study</td>
</tr>
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<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase Three: Receiving</td>
<td>To obtain feedback on interview protocol (possible activities include close</td>
<td>Additional suggestions were made regarding:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feedback on interview</td>
<td>reading and think-aloud activities)</td>
<td>Noting the time for each domain of questions to determine necessary number of interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protocols</td>
<td></td>
<td>Noting wording that is problematic for participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase Four: Piloting the</td>
<td>To pilot the interview protocol with small sample</td>
<td>After discussions surrounding the piloting of survey to the GCP, pre-survey questions were added to assess pre and post thoughts of participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interview protocol</td>
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<td>regarding work PERMAH. They are as follows:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>As you review the various domains within PERMAH consider the following:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How does each domain contribute to your ability to lead and flourish?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Explain which three are most essential for your personal leadership?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Explain which two domains you think will emerge as your most dominant.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

The Workplace PERMA Profiler
Margaret L. Kern, University of Pennsylvania

Measure Overview
In his 2011 book *Flourish*, Dr. Martin Seligman, Distinguished Professor of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania and founder of the field of positive psychology, defined 5 pillars of wellbeing, PERMA (positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment). We originally developed the PERMA-Profiler to measure these five pillars, along with negative emotion and health. This version was later created, which adjusts the questions to the workplace context.

P and N = Positive and Negative emotions
Emotions are an important part of our well-being. Emotions can range from very negative to very positive, and range from high arousal (e.g., excitement, explosive) to low arousal (e.g., calm, relaxed, sad). For Positive emotion, the PERMA-Profiler measures general tendencies toward feeling contentment and joy. For Negative emotion, the Profiler measures tendencies toward feeling, sad, anxious, and angry.

E = Engagement
Engagement refers to being absorbed, interested, and involved in one's work, and is a key measure for workplaces today. Very high levels of engagement are known as a state called "flow", in which you are so completely absorbed in an activity that you lose all sense of time.

R = Relationships
Relationships refer to feeling connected, supported, and valued by others in the organization. Having positive relationships with others is an important part of life feeling good and going well. Other people matter!

M = Meaning
Meaning refers to having a sense of purpose in one's work. Meaning provides a sense that your work matters.

A = Accomplishment
Accomplishment can be objective, marked by honors and awards received, but feelings of mastery and achievement is also important. The Profiler measures subjective feelings of accomplishment and staying on top of daily responsibilities. It involves working toward and reaching goals, and feeling able to complete tasks and daily responsibilities.

H = Health
Although not part of the PERMA model itself, physical health and vitality is another important part of well-being. The Profiler measures a subjective sense of health — feeling good and healthy each day.

Use of the Measure
Two versions of the measure are provided below: the first is for presenting the items one screen at a time, or as a full measure as part of a paper questionnaire; the second groups questions together with the same response scales, to reduce the number of pages needed. The questions should be presented in the order noted. The health and negative emotion questions act as filler questions and provide more information; for

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briefness, the 16 PERMA questions (3 per PERMA domain plus a single overall question) could be used, but we recommend using the full measure.

The measure is freely available for noncommercial research and assessment purposes, after registering (please complete the form at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1eabklyQDsWGf72qum8Cei_2j1iZ3Q7rsFE5pE/A/viewform?usp=sendl_form). In the future, we will have an online portal for taking the measure and receiving results and insights, but at this point, we cannot provide assistance with administering or scoring the measure.

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Question Administration
The questions should be presented either with radial buttons or on a slider scale, with only the end points labeled. Note that this is an 11-point scale, ranging from 0 to 10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In general, to what extent do you feel contented?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scoring:
Scores are calculated as the average of the items comprising each factor:
- Positive Emotion: $P = \text{mean}(P1,P2,P3)$
- Engagement: $E = \text{mean}(E1,E2,E3)$
- Relationships: $R = \text{mean}(R1,R2,R3)$
- Meaning: $M = \text{mean}(M1,M2,M3)$
- Accomplishment: $A = \text{mean}(A1,A2,A3)$
- Overall Well-being: $\text{PERMA} = \text{mean}(P1,P2,P3,E1,E2,E3,R1,R2,R3,M1,M2,M3,A1,A2,A3,\text{happy})$
- Negative Emotion: $N = \text{mean}(N1,N2,N3)$
- Health: $H = \text{mean}(h1,h2,h3)$
- Loneliness: $\text{Lon} (\text{single item})$

Sample Scoring Presentation
We are working on the best way to display scores. To date, we have used bar graphs:

![Your PERMA Profile](image)

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## Version 2: Grouped Version (Each Group Should Be a Single Page — See Example Below)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response Anchors</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pg. 1</td>
<td>How often do you feel you are making progress towards accomplishing your work-related goals?</td>
<td>0 = never, 10 = always</td>
<td>A1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At work, how often do you become absorbed in what you are doing?</td>
<td></td>
<td>E1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At work, how often do you feel joyful?</td>
<td></td>
<td>P1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At work, how often do you feel anxious?</td>
<td></td>
<td>N1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How often do you achieve the important work goals you have set for yourself?</td>
<td></td>
<td>A2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pg. 2</td>
<td>In general, how would you say your health is?</td>
<td>0 = terrible, 10 = excellent</td>
<td>H1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pg. 3</td>
<td>To what extent is your work purposeful and meaningful?</td>
<td>0 = not at all, 10 = completely</td>
<td>M1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To what extent do you receive help and support from coworkers when you need it?</td>
<td></td>
<td>R1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In general, to what extent do you feel that what you do at work is valuable and worthwhile?</td>
<td></td>
<td>M2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To what extent do you feel excited and interested in your work?</td>
<td></td>
<td>E2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How lonely do you feel at work?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pg. 4</td>
<td>How satisfied are you with your current physical health?</td>
<td>0 = not at all, 10 = completely</td>
<td>H2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pg. 5</td>
<td>At work, how often do you feel positive?</td>
<td>0 = never, 10 = always</td>
<td>P2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At work, how often do you feel angry?</td>
<td></td>
<td>N2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How often are you able to handle your work-related responsibilities??</td>
<td></td>
<td>A3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At work, how often do you feel sad?</td>
<td></td>
<td>N3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At work, how often do you lose track of time while doing something you enjoy?</td>
<td></td>
<td>E3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pg. 6</td>
<td>Compared to others of your same age and sex, how is your health?</td>
<td>0 = terrible, 10 = excellent</td>
<td>H3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pg. 7</td>
<td>To what extent do you feel appreciated by your coworkers?</td>
<td>0 = not at all, 10 = completely</td>
<td>R2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To what extent do you generally feel that you have a sense of direction in your work?</td>
<td></td>
<td>M3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How satisfied are you with your professional relationships?</td>
<td></td>
<td>R3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At work, to what extent do you feel contented?</td>
<td></td>
<td>P3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pg. 8</td>
<td>Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are with your work?</td>
<td>0 = not at all, 10 = completely</td>
<td>hap</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D: IRB Approval Letter

May 7, 2018

LaSonja Roberts
L-CACHE - Leadership, Counseling, Adult, Career & Higher Education
Tampa, FL 33612

RE: Expedited Approval for Initial Review
IRB#: Pro00035042
Title: LEADER SELF-RENEWAL: MIND, BODY, SPIRIT CONNECTION INHERENT IN SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP

Study Approval Period: 5/6/2018 to 5/6/2019

Dear Ms. Roberts:

On 5/6/2018, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and APPROVED the above application and all documents contained within, including those outlined below.

Approved Item(s):
Protocol Document(s):

Consent/Assent Document(s)*:
DirectorConsentVersion1May 12 2018.docx.pdf
PrincipalConsentVersion1May 12 2018.docx.pdf

*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent documents are valid until the consent document is amended and approved.

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45 CFR 46.110. The research
proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(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.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval via an amendment. Additionally, all unanticipated problems must be reported to the USF IRB within five (5) calendar days.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Mark Ruiz, PhD, Vice Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board
Appendix E: Principal Recruitment Letter

Dear Participant:

My name is LaSonja Roberts and I am a doctoral candidate in the school of Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of South Florida (USF). I am leading a dissertation research study, along with my supervising professor (William Black, Ph.D.), that will assess the belief and practices of successful principals that foster personal and professional well-being and self-renewal. The principals who volunteer to participate will agree to two face-to-face interviews that may last anywhere from 30-90 minutes. These interviews will take place within the course of a month. The interviews will take place at your school site or your location of choice. The interviews will include questions specific to principal and district beliefs and practices that promote the success and well-being of principals. Previous research in the areas of stress and burn-out among principals has shown a need for research that highlights successful personal and systemic practices that support principal well-being and renewal.

Your participation is greatly appreciated. The identities of participants will be protected and kept confidential in any resulting research presentations or publications. If you are willing to participate or would like more information, please contact me, LaSonja Roberts, at lasonjar@mail.usf.edu.

Sincerely,

LaSonja Roberts
Doctoral Candidate, USF
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies