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## **Explicit Self-Care for Principals and Their Teachers: A Qualitative Transcendental Phenomenological Study on Administrator Stress Levels**

Nadia Oskolkoff  
*Concordia University - Portland*, oskolkoff@msn.com

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Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Doctorate of Education Program

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CERTIFY THAT WE HAVE READ AND APPROVE THE DISSERTATION OF

Nadia Oskolkoff

CANDIDATE FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Audrey Rabas, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

Brian Creasman, Ed.D., Content Specialist

Nesa Sasser, Ed.D., Content Reader

Explicit Self-Care for Principals and Their Teachers:  
A Qualitative Transcendental Phenomenological Study on Administrator Stress Levels

Nadia Oskolkoff  
Concordia University–Portland  
College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in  
Administrative Leadership

Audrey Rabas, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

Brian Creasman, Ed.D., Content Specialist

Nesa Sasser, Ed.D., Content Reader

Concordia University–Portland

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## **Abstract**

Principals and their teachers experience stress levels to such a degree that student achievement can be negatively impacted. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological qualitative study was threefold: to explore and better understand principals' first-hand and lived experiences of on-the-job stress and their practices of self-care to negate that stress, understand if principals find it important to model the practice of self-care to their teachers to reduce stress levels, and understand principals' awareness of their emotional intelligence and how they use that to support not only themselves but their staff. Three research questions were developed, and semistructured interviews were conducted with 14 California principals. Triangulation of data was met with the semistructured interviews, an online survey, and observational field notes. Through data analysis, 10 themes emerged that help to answer the research questions. This study shows that principals experience high levels of stress, and while they try to self-care and reduce consequences, they are not always successful. Teachers also experience high levels of stress, and principals are very aware of this but do not always have the time, resources, or knowledge to support modeling of self-care. Emotional intelligence skills are used by principals but not with complete self-awareness that this is what they are doing. This study revealed data that can provide a better understanding of principal and teacher stress and the implications on any given school campus.

*Keywords:* emotional intelligence, mindfulness, principal (workplace) stress, relationship-management, resonant leadership, sacrifice syndrome, self-awareness, self-care practices, self-management, social-awareness, symptoms of occupational stress

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to all of those who have helped me along the way for without you, I would not be here today. First, to my husband Eddie. His endless interest, patience, understanding, support, and love for me while I walked through this journey was priceless. You read more papers, listened to more topics of educator stress, and wiped more of my tears than I can remember. You are truly the best and I love you.

Second, to my friends and family who encouraged me and always understood when I had to stay back or stay home to do “homework.” My daughters, brother, and mother were the best cheerleaders. I also have some of the best friends and feel so blessed by them. These last few months have meant the world to me as you all leaned in to get a closer look and engaged in my writing as I came upon this phenomenal finish line. I love you guys!

And finally, I dedicate this dissertation to the participants of this study. You so willingly shared your principal experiences so that we can all better understand the phenomenon of stress. You give your heart and soul every day to your staff and students and it shows in such positive ways. I am in complete awe of you and your passion to keep doing the good work no matter the level of stress you are experiencing. I have learned more from you than I was able to express in this study, but my hope is this body of work will begin the repayment of that gift you gave me.

I will always live in gratitude for who each of you are.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Whether Americans have a school-aged child in the public-school system or not, good education for students is relevant to everyone. Students leave classrooms and go into the world presumably as productive citizens. Knowledge and skills, such as the subjects of math and English Language Arts, or the skills of problem-solving and critical thinking, are essential to the success and growth of any country, especially in a time of globalization and 21st century changes (Nganga & Kambutu, 2017).

More than 50 million students returned to United States public schools in the fall 2018–2019 school year, and over 3 million full-time teachers welcomed those students into their classrooms in more than 90,000 schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). That required tens of thousands of principals to lead and transform in a way that students achieve and become global citizens. However, when job responsibilities and pressures for both principal and teacher becomes too high and stress increases to unbearable levels, researcher shows that teachers and principals leave the profession due to job burn out and job dissatisfaction (Darmody & Smyth, 2016; Hancock & Müller, 2014) and ultimately student achievement is negatively impacted (Klocko & Wells, 2015; Pierce, 2014).

### **Background and Conceptual Framework for the Problem**

Historically, the need to prepare society's children as skilled workers who are ready for diverse industries has driven education policy, but we are now in an ever-changing modern world (Aydin, Ozfidan, & Carothers, 2017). Unfortunately, multiple researchers have argued that principals and teachers alike are experiencing high levels of stress leading to harmful outcomes that negatively impacts student achievement and readiness (Aritzeta et al., 2015; Boyatzis &

McKee, 2005; Goldring, Cravens, Porter, Murphy, & Elliott, 2015; Klocko & Wells, 2015; Pierce, 2014; Taliadorou & Pashiardis, 2015; Wells, 2015).

High levels of stress can be an emotional response to a negative situation that leads to anger or frustration and even depression, and if it happens over prolonged periods of time, that stress can impact job satisfaction and performance (Raju, 2013). High levels of stress can be understood as a physiological or psychological impact on teachers or principals when demands of the job intensify to unmanageable levels (Beusaert, Froehlich, Devos, & Riley, 2016). Generally speaking, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (2014) defined workplace stress as both physical and emotional reactions to situations when the worker feels their abilities or resources at hand do not allow he or she to meet the expected job responsibilities of which can often lead to health issues or on-the-job injuries.

On the other hand, rather than responding with high levels of stress, researchers have found that principals with high emotional intelligence or teachers with social-emotional health are better able to navigate through stress and reduce job burnout, which in turn increases student support and success in the classroom (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Durlak, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Gullotta, 2016; Pierce, 2014). A January 2019 report released by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning noted a significant increase in recent research that connects teachers' and principals' social-emotional competencies to their well-being, reduced stress, and reduced job burnout. While this research is important and guided this study, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the potential benefits of principals' consistent and explicit practice of a self-care for their social-emotional well-being and physical health or the explicit modeling of that practice to their teachers (Beisser, Peters, & Thacker, 2014; Tikkanen, Pyhältö, Pietarinen, & Soini, 2017; Wells, 2015).



Studies and reasoning behind the conceptual framework that guided this study can be summarized into four categories:

- teacher stress
- principal stress
- social-emotional health
- emotional intelligence

To help examine the research questions fully and arrive at possible conclusions, Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) prosocial classroom theoretical model, which suggested that teachers need to regulate their own emotions to achieve maximum success in the classroom, provided one of the theories that guided this study. In addition, Goleman and Boyatzis' (2009) mixed-model or framework on emotional intelligence and the work of Boyatzis and McKee (2005) on resonant leadership provided theory-based insight on an effective leader's ability to manage and lead especially in those specific times of stress. Both the prosocial classroom theoretical model and the emotional intelligence framework use the four social-emotional competencies of: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.

### **Statement of the Problem**

High stress levels impact the social-emotional health and relationships of everyone on a school campus from the principal and teachers to the students and their academic achievement. Researchers have shown that stress is a contagion and negatively impacts the way a teacher instructs his or her students (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016), how well a student learns (Arens & Morin, 2016; Timms, Brough, & Graham, 2012) and the way a principal leads the school (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Durlak et al., 2016; Pierce, 2014). The issue prompting this study was that there is a lack of research on the self-care a principal may practice to explicitly reduce

their stress or if principals feel the responsibility to model those self-care practices to their teachers. According to Sogunro (2012), administrator stress is a phenomenon that is not going away, yet very little is being done about it. It has been assumed that both the practice to take care of one's self and others involves emotional intelligence, but this must be explored further. In summary, self-care practices that are explicitly used to maintain a healthy lifestyle may improve and positively impact the social-emotional health of the school climate, but it was not known if a principal's use of self-care and the modeling of that practice to staff members was considered important to principals.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The first purpose of this transcendental phenomenological qualitative study was to explore and better understand principals' first-hand and lived experiences of on-the-job stress and their practices of self-care to negate that stress. With principal stress on the rise and their job responsibilities and demands continuing to increase (Klocko & Wells, 2015), researchers have found that more administrators are leaving the profession due to the role becoming "less attractive and more intense" (Roulston, 2010, p. 367), but especially in schools with low socio-economic populations, minorities, and low-achieving students. Secondly, the purpose of this study was to understand if principals find it important to model the practice of self-care to their teachers to reduce teacher stress levels. High levels of stress for the teacher can impact the environment of the classroom that does not support student learning and in fact has an adverse effect (Arens & Morin, 2016; Timms et al., 2012). Thirdly, the purpose of the study was to understand principals' awareness of their emotional intelligence and how they use that to support not only themselves but their staff.

## **Research Questions**

Three research questions guided this study:

RQ1: From the principals' perspective, how does one personally focus on social-emotional health and self-care to explicitly reduce levels of on-the-job stress and the related consequences?

RQ2: From the principals' perspective, how does explicit focus and modeling of self-care to teachers for the betterment of their social-emotional health impact the overall school climate and student success?

RQ3: From the principal's perspective, how does the ability to use emotional intelligence help reduce personal stress or the stress of others?

## **Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study**

The rationale of this study was that it may provide administrators an understanding on how stress impacts not only themselves but their teachers and students, and how self-care practices may play a role on school campuses. There are studies on principal and teacher stress and the ramifications that it has on the school system, but there is a deficit in the literature on the practice of self-care to improve educators' social emotional health (Jennings et al., 2017).

Research focused on the topics of principal stress, teacher stress, social-emotional health, and emotional intelligent leadership is well reasoned and supported this study

The relevance of this study was that it addressed the deficit in the literature. While the review of literature for this study was comprehensive, not having studies on principals' practices of self-care did not give a clear understanding on how to solve the problem of administrator on-the-job stress. The same is true of not having studies on how or if principals feel the responsibility to support their teachers' stress levels. The relevance of this study leads to its

significance and purpose. There are no words strong enough to express how valuable and important education is and the results of this study could not only provide a better understanding on educator self-care but also encourage further research.

This study was designed in such a way that it could easily be replicated across multiple states and school districts. It was essential to find a solution and way to minimize the high levels of stress experienced on school campuses.

### **Definitions of Terms**

The following are terms and definitions used throughout the study.

*Emotional intelligence:* According to Goleman (1995), “Emotional intelligence is the ability to use one’s deep emotional understanding about themselves and others in a way that allows them to build relationships and lead in a superior way” (as cited in McCleskey, 2014, p. 77).

*Mindful:* To be mindful is to be in the present moment with intent and without judgement (Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus, & Davidson, 2013).

*Principal (workplace) stress:* Principal (workplace) stress is both physical and emotional reactions to situations when the principal assumes that their abilities or resources at hand do not allow them to meet the expected job responsibilities that can often lead to health issues (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 2014).

*Relationship-management:* According to Goleman and Boyatzis, relationship-management is the ability to guide the emotions of employees (teachers and staff) especially during times of “conflict management, developing others, inspirational leadership, influence, change catalyst, and teamwork and collaboration” (as cited in Livesey, 2017, p. 27).

*Resonant leadership:* Resonant leadership involves emotionally intelligent leaders who are present and mindful of their emotional needs, have the ability to inspire hope, show great compassion and empathy for their staff, and all the while being in tune with the issue around them (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005).

*Sacrifice syndrome:* Sacrifice syndrome is a syndrome that leaders find themselves in where they are cut off from relationships and support and are struggling with dissonance and distress, which is contagious and spreads (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005)

*Self-awareness:* Goleman and Boyatzis said, “Self-awareness is the ability to know your own emotions and how they impact those around you” (as cited in Livesey, 2017, p. 27).

*Self-care practices:* For purposes of this study, research has left the definition of this term open to be discovered and answered by participants; however, many studies mention the practice of mindfulness as a self-care practice to reduce stress (Klocko & Wells, 2015; Wells, 2015).

*Self-management:* Goleman and Boyatzis said, “Self-management is the ability to take initiative, focus, and work towards goals, which need the control of emotions and optimism” (as cited in Livesey, 2017, p. 27).

*Social awareness:* Social awareness is the ability to understand how those around feel and adapt to their emotional needs with empathy (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002).

*Symptoms of occupational stress:* Symptoms of occupational stress are linked to many psychological complaints such as “headaches, high blood pressure, sleeping difficulties, heart palpitations, heart attacks, dizzy spells, breathing problems, nervous stomach, anxiety, and depression” (Wells, 2015, p. 338). Similarly, principal stress can be experienced as “tension, restlessness, nervousness, and/or anxiety” (Tikkanen et al., 2017, p. 261).

## **Assumptions, Delimitations and Limitation**

**Assumptions.** The researcher made several assumptions as the basis of this study. First, it was assumed that in order to understand the lived experiences of the participants, a phenomenological study was the most appropriate research design. Second, it was assumed participants would share honestly and their responses would be trustworthy. Third, because of the privacy of a one-on-one semistructured interview, it was expected that participants would feel comfortable and complete the study; however, each participant was offered to exit the study at any time they felt the need to do so. And finally, the researcher assumed there is a deep influential connection between the teacher and student and the teacher and principal. A principal's actions and behavior have a direct impact on teachers and an indirect impact on students.

**Delimitations.** Because this was a phenomenological study and did not require a large sample size, selected participants were based on their lived experiences as a principal with self-reported stress levels as suggested by Creswell (2012). Only principals with three or more administrative years participated in the study to give a rich sense of on-the-job stress verses collecting data from principals experiencing "new job" stress. If participants took the preinterview survey questions and either reported that they do not experience on-the-job stress or that they had been in administration for less than three years, they were removed from the study. Because of the need to interview participants, they were limited to the geographical area that was easily accessible to the researcher. All of these delimitations narrowed the data source.

**Limitations.** Phenomenological research is designed to be limited in scope and because of that prevents the findings from being generalized to a larger population (Creswell, 2012). For example, this study was limited to no more than 20 principals in California. While that sample size was acceptable for a phenomenological study, it did make it harder to achieve saturation

(Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). To offset this, this researcher recruited principals from multiple school districts with diverse student populations of ethnicity and socio-economic background and principals with multiple backgrounds and experiences. However, it was noted that these limitations may cause reliability and validity issues and this researcher took the steps of triangulating the data obtained from multiple data sources through member checking and a pilot review of interview questions to prevent such issues.

## **Summary**

As the modern world continues to change and the demands and job responsibilities of educators persist, administrators and teachers' stress levels will continue to be present. This ultimately impacts students. The psychological complaints linked to stress have a strong effect on the physical and social-emotional health of educators, decreasing overall performance in the classroom (Tikkanen et al., 2017; Wells, 2015).

This chapter laid out the conceptual framework supporting the study, in particular, Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) prosocial classroom theoretical model, Goleman et al.'s (2002) emotional intelligence framework, and Boyatzis and McKee's (2005) work on resonant leadership, and the purpose behind the research. The rationale and relevance to moving forward with this study are supported by a review of literature rich in data on principal stress, teacher stress, social-emotional health, and emotional intelligence. This study fulfilled a need where there is a deficit in the literature of an up close and personal understanding on principals and their engagement in the practices of self-care regarding stress.

Chapter 2 provides a detailed review of the current literature within the conceptual framework used in this study. Chapter 3 reviews the methods selected for this qualitative study and the reasoning behind that decision especially considering most of the studies in the literature

review are quantitative studies. Chapter 4 presents the data of the research and explain the findings and discussion. Chapter 5 provides a summary and analysis of the results and how the data answered the research questions. Recommendations for future research are also provided.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction to the Review of Literature

Elementary and middle school teachers and principals face tremendous pressures in today's public schools. The current education legislation *Every Student Succeeds Act* or ESSA mandates that all students are taught with high standards, namely the Common Core State Standards for states that have adopted them and succeed at levels that ultimately prepare them for college (United States, 2015). This significant accountability piece, coupled with the on-going demands of school districts, increased work hours, increased school violence, lack of resources, and managing the emotional and mental exhaustion of the job, has increased the levels of stress and job burnout educators experience, which negatively impact student achievement (Arens & Morin, 2016; O'Neal, Gibson, & Cotten, 2017; Sogunro, 2012; Wells, 2015).

Wells (2015) argued that principals have struggled with high levels of stress for decades but asserted that principals deal with much more complex politically-charged relationships as well as instructional demands that will lead to higher student achievement and transformational leadership demands than in the past, adding significantly to present principals' stress levels. Wells noted that occupational stress is linked to many psychological complaints such as "headaches, high blood pressure, sleeping difficulties, heart palpitations, heart attacks, dizzy spells, breathing problems, nervous stomach, anxiety, and depression" (p. 338). Similarly, Tikkanen et al. (2017) cited principal stress as experienced by "tension, restlessness, nervousness, and/or anxiety" (p. 261). When referring to stress in this study, these complaints and experiences was considered.

According to research on teacher and principal stress, social-emotional health and well-being plays a role on how educators handle their stress levels and can make a difference in both

self-efficacy and student achievement (Flook et al., 2013; Penrose, Perry, & Ball, 2007; Raju, 2013; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). For example, teachers' social-emotional well-being and ability to self-regulate emotions influence their relationships with students and studies found the deeper the relationship between student and teacher, the deeper students can learn (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Coupled with this, Schonert-Reichl also found that teachers who are able to manage their social-emotional well-being are more apt to create warm and positive classroom environments for students, and it is those classrooms that promoted not only student learning but student social-emotional health. Furthermore, research shows that principals are very influential when it comes to achieving school-wide education goals and can be considered pivotal on whether or not students meet the mandates of ESSA (Beausaert et al., 2016; Dutta, & Sahney, 2016; Pierce, 2014).

More importantly, principals who used their emotional intelligence to effectively manage their energy and motivational perspectives with their teachers (Bartz, Thompson, & Rice, 2017), or work successfully from the four domains of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management were much more likely to be "outstanding" leaders (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005). Research connects principal support of teachers to teacher efficacy, and that teacher efficacy to student achievement (Pierce, 2014); however, if the cycle of stress continues for principals without some sort of self-management or self-renewal, they can become ineffective and slip into what Boyatzis and McKee (2005) call "sacrifice syndrome" (p. 6). As principals slip into deeper cycles of ongoing stress, without renewal or the ability to successfully navigate through the four domains of emotional intelligence, they repeat ineffective habits and create an emotional crisis (Boyatzis & McKee,

2005). It is the renewal process and an ability to share this process and strategies with teachers who are also in need that must have further investigation.

Research is limited on the practice of self-regulation strategies or the explicit and proactive practice of self-care to diminish negative consequences of stress for teachers or principals (Beisser et al., 2014; Tikkanen et al., 2017; Wells, 2013). According to current studies, more research is needed in the area of emotional intelligent leadership, self-care, and modeling that self-care to teachers to reduce overall stress levels and maintain student achievement (Beisser et al., 2014; McCleskey, 2014; Pierce, 2014). This is especially true for qualitative studies.

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological qualitative study was to explore and better understand principals' first-hand and lived experiences of on-the-job stress and their practices of self-care to negate that stress, understand if principals find it important to model the practice of self-care to their teachers to reduce teacher stress levels, and understand principals' awareness of their emotional intelligence and how they use that to support not only themselves but their staff as well. Connected to understanding the practice of each principal's self-care, is how and if they have a sense of responsibility to share the practice of self-care with their teachers.

Research shows that teachers experience levels of stress that are high enough to negatively impact the classroom environment and student achievement (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016; Pierce, 2014). The definition of emotional intelligence is based on Boyatzis' (2009) definition, "ability to recognize, understand, and use emotional information about oneself that leads to or causes effective or superior performance" (p. 757). Principals who are socially and emotionally healthy due to their own emotional intelligence and recognition that they need to

practice some level of self-care, and who model this to staff, may directly negate the stress levels experienced by those educators. As the influential leader on campus, principals with low emotional intelligence not only put themselves at risk of job burnout or physical and mental exhaustion, but also their effectiveness to lead (Bartz et al., 2017), or the job satisfaction their teachers experience (Laine, Saaranen, Ryhänen, & Tossavainen, 2017; Lambersky, 2016; Taliadorou & Pashiardis, 2015).

This review of literature includes studies mostly between the years of 2010 and 2019 and was gathered from databases of EBSCO, ERIC, Education Database, SAGE, and Google Scholar. It was divided into four subtopics (and keywords): social-emotional intelligence/health, teacher stress, principal stress, and emotionally intelligent leadership. This chapter provides a discussion of the conceptual framework including Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) prosocial classroom theoretical model, and the work on Resonant Leadership of Boyatzis and McKee's (2005) based on the emotional intelligence framework of Goleman et al. (2002). This work includes four competencies in the areas of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005). Additionally, a review of methodological issues and challenges of each study was discussed as well as a critique and synthesis of the research.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The stress levels teachers and principals experience are due in part to the many different responsibilities that they are expected to perform and perform well. Changes in curriculum and instruction have increased with the expanded use of technology and readily available information as well as the implementations of Common Core State Standards and need for 21st century skills (O'Neal et al., 2017). Managing an instructional program that is constantly changing is a

necessary component of teaching in today's classrooms, but so too is managing the social-emotional health of that classroom (Greenberg, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Durlak, 2017; Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

The job responsibilities and skills needed from teachers adds to the level of support they need from their principals ultimately adding to the stress levels administrators must manage (Timms et al., 2012). This level of on-going job stress impacts teachers' and principals' social-emotional health and eventually the learning environment of the school (Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Wong, Ruble, Yu, & McGrew, 2017). As an elementary school principal, this researcher has noticed the need to take care of personal social-emotional well-being first. Connected to that is the need to support teachers' mental health in a way that they can be successful in the classroom.

The research around teacher and principal stress, social-emotional health, and emotional intelligence in leadership provides insights and identifies the gaps in the literature when considering the following three research questions:

RQ1: From the principals' perspective, how does one personally focus on social-emotional health and self-care to explicitly reduce levels of on-the-job stress and the related consequences?

RQ2: From the principals' perspective, how does explicit focus and modeling of self-care to teachers for the betterment of their social-emotional health impact the overall school climate and student success?

RQ3: From the principal's perspective, how does the ability to use emotional intelligence help reduce personal stress or the stress of others?

**Guiding Theories.** The three guiding theories of the study and the bases for the conceptual framework were the prosocial classroom model (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009),

emotional intelligence framework (Goleman et al., 2002) and resonant leadership studies (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005). After careful consideration, Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) prosocial model addressed the need to understand teacher stress and that impact on student achievement, and using Goleman and Boyatzis' (2009) mixed model of emotional intelligence as well as the continued work of Boyatzis and McKee (2005) on resonant leadership, made the best sense for a study on principal leadership and stress management. In particular, the use of Goleman's definition of emotional intelligence guided this study:

[A]n ability to recognize, understand, and use emotional information about oneself that leads to or causes effective or superior performance and the ability to recognize, understand and use emotional information about others that leads to or causes effective or superior performance be used to guide the current study (as cited in McCleskey, 2014, p. 77).

The connection between Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) prosocial classroom theoretical model and Goleman and Boyatzis' (2009) mixed-ability model including Boyatzis and McKee's (2005) work on resonant leadership is linked via the connection teachers and principals have on campus. If the prosocial classroom theoretical model helps us to understand the need for teachers to regulate their emotions for well-being and job productivity, then Boyatzis' emotional intelligence framework guides how principals' emotional intelligence and leadership skills can help make that happen. Similarly, Boyatzis defined social intelligence competency as "the ability to recognize, understand, and use emotional information about others that leads to or causes effective or superior performance" (as cited in McCleskey, 2014, p. 77).

This study was divided into the four sub-topics of teacher stress, principal stress, social-emotional health, and emotional intelligence. The studies in the literature review are the most relevant studies within those topics.

**Teacher stress.** While teaching has its tremendous rewards and job satisfaction, time spent teaching students can also bring stress leading to job burnout (Arens & Morin, 2016). Wong et al. (2017) found that there are many reasons for teacher job stress including but not limited to student behavior, relationships, the level of student needs and the lack of student success, all of which was directly campus related. Jennings et al. (2017) researched ways of reducing teacher burnout by analyzing the program Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE) for teachers and found that their program has a positive impact on teachers' social-emotional health. This impact increases the quality of their classroom interactions with students.

Specific programs designed to help teachers are useful, but studies have found that teachers can take their mental health into their own hands with practices such as mindfulness. For example, Flook et al. (2013) found mindfulness to not only helps reduce burnout but increases best practices in the classroom. Likewise, Jennings' et al. (2017) study on a specific intervention program that teach teachers mindfulness as a way to negate stress also shows positive results.

**Principal stress.** Principals are not immune to stress, and research shows that principals are dealing with stress and burnout more than ever before (Beusaert et al., 2016; Sogunro, 2012; Tikkanen et al., 2017; Wells, 2013). Several researchers agree and their studies show an increase of stress and burnout for principals due to an expected 24/7 workday, lack of resources,

increased demands of legislation, or pressures from the community (Hauseman, Pollock, & Wang, 2017; Klocko & Wells, 2015; Mestry, 2017).

Hauseman et al. (2017) found that principals experience increased workload and an intensification of work and stress brought on specifically by the demand principals have to build relations with the school community and neighborhood organizations or agencies that support the students in their school. Darmody and Smyth (2016) pointed out that principals have been responsible for human resources, curriculum and instruction, student achievement, community relations, and school facilities for decades. However, the current stress antecedents that are noted for principals such as the fast pace of the job and increased responsibilities (Tikkanen et al., 2017), time management (Wells, 2013), or the sheer volume of the workload (Beisser et al., 2014) have increased over time.

Research dating back to Fullan (1993) has suggested that principals who remain at their schools for at least five years have a greater chance of positively impacting the school culture and making changes that benefited their school. Likewise, Mascall and Leithwood (2010) argued that using stage theory that conceptualizes change as a process of steps, principals should ideally stay at the same school site for five to seven years to build trust and relationships needed to make positive impacts on school culture and student achievement. On the other hand, if principal turnover occurs every two to three years, it is very difficult for the staff and school to get beyond the initiative stage of change (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010).

Béteille, Kalogrides, and Loeb (2012) found that school districts across the United States struggle with an average rate of 15%–30% of their school leadership leaving each year. This averages out to be more than one out of every five principals nationwide. Also, according to the most recent report from the U.S. Department of Education (2018), titled “Principal Attrition and



Mobility: Results from the Principal Follow-up Survey,” 12 % of principals left the profession. While research available on the direct connection between principal turnover and student achievement is limited, there are enough studies that show principal turnover can have a negative impact on student achievement and in particular in schools of poverty (Béteille et al., 2012; Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). If stress is a contributing factor to why administrators may not be as successful in their positions and even leave their position, it is worthy to study further.

**Social-emotional health.** Considering the high levels of stress both teachers and principals deal with, there are plenty of studies that show the importance of a social-emotional healthy classroom that directly and indirectly benefit all who are on campus. For instance, Schonert-Reichl’s (2017) study revealed that the social-emotional competence and well-being of teachers has a direct impact on student learning and achievement. The findings of the study reiterate that teaching is stressful and impacts the social-emotional health of teachers, which in return impact their ability to teach. Schonert-Reichl also recognized the importance of a positive child-adult relationship that helps a child to be successful in school, and if a teacher lacks in their social-emotional health, their students are negatively impacted.

Similarly, Jennings’ et al. (2017) showed that an intervention program titled “Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education or CARE for Teachers” had a positive impact on teachers’ social-emotional health and is able to draw a connection between social-emotional health and the quality of the classroom relationship. The Flook et al. (2013) study similarly found that a mindfulness intervention program designed specifically for educators can reduce stress symptoms including burnout, which ultimately supports student learning. Considering such findings in their own research, Schonert-Reichl, Kitil, and Hanson-Peterson (2017) argued that now more than ever, teachers need consistent social-emotional learning, and it should begin in

teacher preparation programs. Unfortunately, Schonert-Reichl et al. (2017) found teacher preparation programs to be lacking in the area social-emotional health.

**Emotionally intelligent leadership.** There are many studies, most of them being international, that highlight the leadership benefit of emotionally intelligent administrators and those studies provide data showing that educational leaders who have high emotional intelligence can foster relationships, get the most productivity from their staff, and sustain personal health. For example, Lambersky (2016) researched the “human side of leadership” and claimed principals can impact the way teachers feel or work just by the way they interact with them (p. 379). The research question that guided Lambersky’s Canadian study looked at the impact leaders have on the emotional lives of their teachers and found that principals have influence over teachers’ emotions and levels of stress and job burnout.

Dutta and Sahney (2016) found that transformational leadership behaviors rather than principal leadership indirectly impacted the school climate. In particular, Dutta and Sahney studied social and affective components of a school leader and found them directly connected to teacher job satisfaction and student achievement. One promising study out of New York found that after only one semester of social-emotional learning for aspiring leaders, there is no significant impact on their emotional intelligent leadership; however, after two years of continual focus and social-emotional learning, the researchers found substantial self-reporting competencies of those same aspiring leaders (Sanchez-Nunez, Patti, & Holzer, 2015). Goleman et al.’s (2002) mixed model on emotional intelligence guided Boyatzis and McKee’s (2005) later assertion that resonant leaders must maintain a level of self-care and constant renewal to sustain excellent leadership.

All of the studies on the topics of teacher stress, principal stress, social-emotional learning or health, and emotionally intelligent leadership validate the need to research and address the research questions for this study. There is clear research that confirms the high levels of stress teachers and principals feel and how that negatively impacts the classroom and school culture and increases job burnout (Flook et al., 2013; Jennings et al., 2017). There is also research that speaks to the benefits of having social-emotional competent teachers that aim to have a social-emotional healthy classroom, and emotionally intelligent leaders on a school campus (Brinia, Zimianiti, & Panagiotopoulos, 2014; Pierce, 2014; Singh & Dali, 2013; Taliadorou & Pashiardis, 2015).

What research in the United States does not show is how or even if principals practice self-care explicitly to manage their own mental and physical health. In addition, there is little research to show if or how important it is that principals model such a self-care regime to their staff, or how and if district offices take on any of that responsibility. Research and current evidence point to a claim that both teachers and principals deserve systematic support in social-emotional learning and the children in classrooms deserve adults that are equipped to meet their every need.

The research that supports this study was based mainly on the work around emotional intelligence and its connection to teacher well-being and effective principal leadership. Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) prosocial classroom theoretical model looked at the competencies needed for teachers to regulate their own emotions in the classroom and the impact on teachers' well-being when they do not hold such social-emotional competencies and helped guide the current study. To help understand the studies around the effectiveness of principals and their ability to lead with emotional intelligence, the three model of emotional intelligence were

considered: Salovey and Mayer (1990) ability model, Goleman and Boyatzis mixed-model (Boyatzis, 2009; Goleman, 1995; Goleman et al., 2002), and Petrides' trait model (Petrides, Pita, & Kokkinaki, 2007).

While there is disagreement in the field amongst the three emotional intelligent models (McCleskey, 2014), the overall premises of emotional intelligence when looking at all of the emotional intelligence models is (a) emotions are important to our daily life, (b) people understand and manage emotions differently, and (c) because we are different in the way we handle emotions, our workplace can be affected. The mixed-ability model includes research on the 12 social-emotional competencies in the areas of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management as well as the ability to lead in the realm of emotions (McCleskey, 2014). This model partners nicely with the responsibilities and role of a principal. It is also important to believe, as Goleman et al. (2002) did, that educational leaders can be learn how to be emotionally intelligent.

### **Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature**

The following is a survey of current literature in the areas of teacher stress, principal stress, social-emotional health and learning, and emotionally intelligent leadership. Within the bodies of evidence cited below, logical reasoning points to a claim that stress levels are high for educators, which is impacting school campuses and more importantly students. Concluding from this premises is another claim that more research in the areas of emotionally intelligent leadership and explicit self-care and modeling self-care in managing stress is needed. A careful review of methodologies is also a part of the literature review giving insight to the work that has already been done in this area.

**Teacher stress.** Teacher stress is directly connected to job satisfaction (Raju, 2013) and is one of the consequential reasons for job burnout, which leads to reduced student success in the classroom (Jennings et al., 2017; Wong et al., 2017). Empirical research shows that student exhaustion is linked to students' low academic scores or lack of learning and even overall well-being (Jennings et al., 2017). With a specific focus on the five accepted social-emotional competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making, teachers and entire school campuses can become more connected and increase student achievement (Durlak, Dymnicki, Taylor, Weissberg, & Schellinger, 2011). Research also showed that there is a need for teachers to have strong social-emotional skills when teaching, and Jennings and Greenberg (2009) specifically proposed a prosocial classroom model that underscores the importance of having an emotionally safe environment that supports students' well-being.

One specific reason cited for teacher stress is the increased role of technology in the classroom. O'Neal et al. (2017) studied the impact of 21st century teaching and learning and found the increased use of technology and the change in skills needed to teach in today's classrooms create difficulty for teachers. In this study, 21st century skills were referred to as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication, otherwise known as the four C's. Explicitly noted is the digital divide between the students (digital natives) and the teachers (digital immigrants) and the hardship that can cause their role as teachers. More research around the argument that 21st century teaching and learning can add stress or impact student success is needed for a clear understanding of the impact changes in instructional practices and needed mind shift have on educators.

High levels of unchecked teacher stress can lead to diminished job satisfaction and negative effects on the mind and body. Too much pressure caused by job duties or administrative issues that are not addressed by the educational community can lead to despondent teachers. The relationship principals or administrators have with their teachers is important to note and was considered in other studies to follow. Some emotions attached to high levels of teacher stress include anger and depression and a sense of a threat to well-being (Raju, 2013). The study is helpful as it showed the negative emotions teachers may struggle with while in the classroom working with students or engaging with the school community. Raju, however, did not address how low teacher job satisfaction impacts student learning or what precisely the administrative issues were.

Wong et al. (2017) differently concluded that high levels of unchecked teacher stress lead to diminished teaching and student outcomes, especially where special education students are concerned. Their study fills the empirical research gap on the correlation between teacher burnout and student outcome. Wong et al. measured teacher burnout in the three categories of emotional exhaustion, or the feeling of being overextended, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment and found that if emotional exhaustion and depersonalization were high, personal accomplishment tended to be higher. In other words, to feel accomplishment, teachers are often pushed to exhaustion, and for the most part, that exhaustion came directly from the relationship or interactions teacher had with their students.

The Wong et al. (2017) study also analyzed correlations among variables and statistically found that stress was a significant predictor of diminished quality of instruction and student engagement. While the study's findings included direct and indirect implications of teacher stress on student outcome, it only highlighted the work of special education teachers and the

overall impact on students with Individual Education Plans (IEP). Further study on how teacher stress can impact all classrooms is needed.

There are also studies that analyze teacher burnout and classroom “stress-contagion” and the direct impact on students. Using the stress-contagion framework, researchers Oberle and Schonert-Reichl’s (2016) international study found that teachers’ levels of job-related stress had a direct impact on students’ ability to regulate their stress. With over 400 fourth to seventh-grade students in the study, Oberle and Schonert-Reichl found higher levels of morning cortisol in students with teachers who self-reported levels of burnout and because of their findings, noted a cyclical relationship between teacher burnout and student stress. Again, using Raju’s (2013) results that teachers experience feelings of anger and depression when experiencing high levels of stress, how stress is managed on school campus should be considered.

Arens and Morin’s (2016) quantitative research similarly found teachers’ emotional exhaustion can lead to burnout that then directly impacts student outcomes including both cognitive and noncognitive accomplishments. As in other studies, burnout is considered “a syndrome consisting of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment” (p. 800). Using data from the 2016 PIRLS study, including 380 teachers and 7,899 fourth grade students, Arens and Morin found that the cognitive impact of teacher burnout is student academic success. Just as important, the noncognitive effect was students’ perceptions of their teacher’s support the impact that had on their overall school satisfaction. If teachers who feel emotionally exhausted also feel overwhelmed, and teachers who sense reduced personal achievement, also are unable to meet work demands, as Arens and Morin asserted, a negative impact on student success is concluded. What is missing from Arens and Morin’s (2016) is the

impact a principal can have, as a resource to support teachers' ability to handle the demands of the job and their exhaustion levels.

Researchers Timms et al. (2012) studied school employees who reported feelings of burnout to gain a better understanding of the similarities in employee work experiences. To test their hypotheses, the researchers used a self-reporting survey from 953 teachers, principals, and other school staff, and using that data, placed employees into five cluster groups of empowered, under pressure, unengaged, burnout, and extreme burnout. Using the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory, Timms et al. analyzed the participants of each cluster group and statistical data revealed that there was a significant negative correlation between dedication and disengagement and that disengagement had a negative correlation with feelings of reward.

On the other hand, and similar to Wong et al.'s (2017) findings, workload was positively connected to work exhaustion (Timms et al., 2012). This type of research is important because of the understanding it provides of like-minded or like-experienced employees and why burnout occurs. Timms et al. found that employees who experienced burnout had less dedication, engagement, and vigor and educational leaders' understanding of their employees is valuable.

Researchers have also studied teacher stress but considered ways to negate the effects. Flook's et al. (2013) qualitative study found that using a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Course reduced the burnout symptoms teacher experience in the classroom. Their study focused on the persistent challenge of managing teacher stress and how the practice of mindfulness can negate the symptoms that can lead to teacher burnout. The study used the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Education Survey to consider teacher burnout in the three areas of (a) emotional exhaustion, (b) depersonalization, and (c) personal accomplishment. The results of their study found that the use of a mindfulness practice can reduce the psychological symptoms of teacher



burnout specifically in those three areas and increase effective teaching. Flook et al. also found that mindfulness improves ones' ability to not only pay attention but to use social emotions such as empathy and improved overall well-being with explicit practice.

Likewise, Jennings et al. (2017) looked at an intervention program called CARE designed to support teachers' emotional competence in the classroom and their well-being. The researchers asserted that recognizing and understanding teachers' stress levels and the ramifications in the classroom is needed worldwide. Using the Jennings and Greenberg (2009) prosocial classroom theoretical model as a guide, this study considered the CARE intervention program and specifically the use of mindfulness as a way of reducing stress for teachers. Their study found an increase in teachers' ability to regulate emotions, teacher efficacy, and continued use of mindfulness practice when teachers participated in the CARE intervention program.

A qualitative study out of Norway explored what individual teachers did to negate the levels of stress and noted that teachers are not only experience high levels of stress and job burnout, they are leaving the profession to such a degree that it has become a problem across the world. Teachers experience on-the job stress based on a lack of personal coping skills and working environment, but also on their level of job satisfaction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). In their study, Skaalvik and Skaalvik argued that more teacher autonomy, a sense of belonging, and supportive relationships with colleagues and principals all lead to higher job satisfaction, yet time constraints, discipline issues, increased workload, and lack of recognition increased stress levels. While not directed by the principal or through a district-supported program, teachers in the study found ways to minimize the emotional and physical toll they were experiencing. Young teachers tended to work harder and longer hours to be better prepared, middle-aged teachers worked long hours but used sick leave days to recuperate, and senior teachers used sick leave

and minimized hours to focus on exercise and relaxation. It should be noted that the researchers of this study did not interview those teachers who had already left the profession.

Researchers Jennings and Greenberg (2009) considered many studies and proposed a prosocial classroom model to help establish teacher social-emotional competencies and help prevent the common phenomena of teacher burnout. The relationships teachers have with their students is key for both teacher and student, as is having a social-emotional healthy classroom and intervention programs at hand. All of those key factors are reliant on the social-emotional health of the teacher and his or her ability to be self-aware of feelings and manage them in a productive way, especially when considering the constant emotionally provoking interactions with students.

Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) prosocial model is also based on the social-emotional learning competences, including self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision making, self-management, and relationship management. In this model, teacher-student relationships, effective classroom management, and social-emotional learning implementations are what create a healthy classroom environment and all things socially and emotionally positive in the classroom begin with the teacher's own social-emotional well-being. Once that has been established, the model suggests positive social-emotional and academics outcomes will take place. As in other studies, the research does not consider the work or presence of the principal as a variable.

The research on teacher stress shows that teachers are prone to job dissatisfaction, emotional exhaustion, and reduced teacher efficacy. Teacher stress can arise for several different reasons such as too much job responsibility, changes instructional practices, relationships with students, or administrative issues. Research such as Beisser et al. (2014), Klocko and Wells

(2015), and Wells (2013) showed that intervention programs that focus on the social-emotional well-being of teachers such as mindfulness practice can negate the negative consequences.

Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) study showed that if specific and explicit care of teachers based on the five social-emotional competencies take place, teachers benefit. However, the studies did not show how teacher stress can be offset by specific steps taken by the principal to support the well-being and social-emotional health of their teachers. The need to further such study is twofold. First, principals must understand their own feelings of burnout and its implications in supporting their staff and second, principals must be able to recognize when their staff has symptoms of burnout and know how to intervene.

**Principal stress.** The job responsibilities of a principal are seemingly endless, considering they must interact with and guide students, teachers, parents, and the community, which can lead to mental and emotional exhaustion (Beausaert et al., 2016). The stress levels of an administrator have been studied, and research has found that high levels of stress from increased demands 24/7 communication assumptions and high expectations for student achievement (Wells, 2013).

In one study, principals reported to work an average of 62 hours per week (Sogunro, 2012). High stress can impact job performance and even quality of life issues for school leaders, ultimately impacting student achievement (Klocko & Wells, 2015; Sogunro, 2012). Because of the research on high levels of stress, there are also studies on how to manage stress such as mindfulness and using components of emotional intelligence (Poirel & Yvon, 2014; Wells, 2013). While the following studies give good insight on the current situation of principal stress, there are areas of growth in understanding how to negate the effects.

Mestry (2017) conducted an international study that asserted school administrators experience high levels of stress. The stress is due in part to multiple and fast-paced changes happening in 21st century education and the lack of training or preparation for such a role as principals. The purpose of Mestry's study was to research the culture of professional development for principals both in preparation of becoming a school leader and throughout a principal's career. The study found very few training or professional development opportunities available to support principals managing and leading a 21st century school.

Principals are responsible for managing a school in all aspects of a cooperation including budgets, personnel, and strategic planning, but Mestry (2017) also asserted relationship skills. Although relationship skills are noted as important by the researchers, the study does not address the need for principals to have a strong emotional intelligence. Further studies in the United States regarding professional development that are specifically around being social-emotional healthy and the ability to lead with emotional intelligence is needed.

In their quantitative study, Beausaert et al. (2016) asserted that principals are dealing with stress and burnout more than ever. The researchers pointed out that a principal has incredible influence on student achievement and if a principal is not mentally and physically well, that could lead to a "disastrous impact on the well-being of the school" (p. 2). This Australian longitudinal study examined the effects that social support (colleagues, supervisors, and the broad community) may have on principal stress and burnout and determined that specific types of social support can reduce stress and exhaustion principals feel while others can increase burnout. Beausaert et al. found that higher stress equals higher burnout in principals, but that social support from colleagues decreases stress and burnout. They also discovered that more support from the community actually increased principal burnout and referred to this as the

“downside of empathy” (p. 1). The results of the study support other similar studies but in particular when teachers lose support from colleagues, burnout is more likely.

Another study that also found community involvement impacts principals is Hauseman et al.’s (2017) study on the influence a school community has on an administrator’s workload. Citing the multiple studies, the authors referred to the increase of principal workload as a “recent phenomenon experienced by some contemporary principals” (p. 86). Principals have complicated tasks to accomplish within tight timelines, must work long hours, are responsible for volumes of communication due to increased technology, must support the diversity of student needs, politically handle bureaucracy, and manage the overall stress of it all knowing that their work might not get done.

The increased amount of work expected from principals today is further impacted by the variable of the school community. Principals on average are involved in 4.4 school-community initiatives, and of principals surveyed, 64% said that involvement increased their workload and limited their ability to be instructional leaders. What the Hauseman et al. (2017) study does not consider are the ways these principals are handling the daily levels of stress such as the work and frameworks of Boyatzis and McKee (2005) and Goleman et al. (2002) of emotional intelligence and resonant leadership.

Wells (2013) also found principal stress and job burnout to be on the rise over the past several decades. A few examples of stressors principals feel are the shift in job responsibilities and expectations towards the nearly impossible for one to achieve, the implementation of Common Core State Standards and student expectations, and relationships principals have with numerous people on campus. Any given day can be filled with multiple demands on principals

pulling them in a different direction including managing time, people, and money and as Wells noted, they must do it well to be effective.

Similar to O’Neal et al.’s (2017) study on teacher stress, changes in 21st technology and communication tools led to expectations that principals should be available 24/7. This added immensely to their levels of stress and emotional, physical, and psychological exhaustion. It is difficult for principals to be effective transformational leaders, manage multiple responsibilities, and make critical decisions all throughout the day when they are already exhausted or burnt out due to high levels of stress (Wells, 2013).

Wells’ (2013) study considered evidence-based practice of mindfulness as a secondary way of reducing stress. Kabat-Zinn (2015) stated that mindfulness means to “be aware of the moment without judgment or striving” (as cited in Wells, 2013, p. 340) or “becoming aware of thoughts and feelings and noting them” (p. 340). The practice of mindfulness would apply not only to teachers’ mental health but those of administrators too. While Wells’ (2013) meta-analysis does not align to a particular theoretical or conceptual framework, it does align and support the need for the current study, which was guided by both Jennings and Greenberg’s (2009) prosocial classroom theoretical model and the Goleman et al. (2002) emotional intelligence framework. The need for principals to self-care and manage their social-emotional well-being is clear, and the work of Boyatzis and McKee (2005) around resonant leadership also guided the current study.

In a similar study, Klocko and Wells (2015) used two timeless surveys to research principal stress in relation to the multiple stressors connected to managing a school, but in particular to the increased legislation and demands for student achievement including No Child Left Behind Act and the Race to the Top Act. *Every Student Succeeds Act* is current legislation

along with Common Core State Standards that guides instruction (United States, 2015). The Klocko and Wells (2015) study showed the stress connected to the ever-changing demands and added legislative responsibilities of principals. The results of the study also showed that stress levels increased significantly, and the three areas that caused the most stress were lack of time to complete the job, the constant interruptions, and the high volume of paperwork, and these responsibilities noted as high stressor could not be delegated to support personal. By comparing the two sets of principal surveys, Klocko and Wells found an increase in principal stress in the areas of personal stress and work related to on-the-job demands but at the same time, research cited in their study highlights the lack of stress reduction programs for district leaders (Hawk & Martin, as cited in Klocko & Wells, 2015).

Specifically, in Klocko and Wells' (2015) findings was that principals reported an increase in loss of personal time and an imbalance of work and personal life. This imbalance led to the feeling of being overwhelmed that the researchers claimed could manifest in medical conditions such as anxiety, high blood pressure, and depression. The conceptual framework used in Klocko and Wells study was resonant leadership, which highlights the need for school leaders to manage a school with emotional intelligence, compassion, and hope. Pulling from that framework, Klocko and Wells cited Boyatzis and McKee's (2005) assertion that principals in the throes of constant stress and crisis tend to give too much of themselves in what they refer to as the "sacrifice syndrome" and become ineffective leaders (p. 334).

To help negate the effects of such stress and based off of Boyatzis and McKee's work, Klocko and Wells (2015) recommended practice of mindfulness, emotional intelligence leadership, and a sound understanding of being resonant. Even more specifically, the authors argued to change the cycle of sacrifice syndrome. Educational leaders need explicit focus and

voluntary personal work on the three “constructs of hope, compassion, and mindfulness” (p. 335).

Darmody and Smyth’s (2016) study was an international study that used data of nearly 900 principals in Ireland and found that a significant number of Ireland’s primary principals were dealing with high levels of stress and not particularly satisfied with their job. The researchers found that this is primarily due to principals’ characteristics, the conditions of the job, and the culture of principal-teacher relationships. According to Boyatzis and McKee’s (2005) research on resonate leadership and the Goleman et al. (2002) emotional intelligence frameworks, relationship management is a vital component to emotional intelligence leadership, and managing relationships is an important part of reducing stress. While the data pool of this study was large, it drew from previous research on “Growing up in Ireland” that had collected information on principals’ job stress levels and satisfaction (Darmody & Smyth, 2016).

Hancock and Müller (2014) sought to understand why principals stay in their positions even with the high levels of stress as well as the reasons for the high number of principals leaving the profession. In the collaborative study between Germany and the United States (North Carolina), 159 German principals and 134 U.S. principals were considered similar in the factors of gender, education level, and the number of years they served as a principal. Principals from these two developed countries were selected because of the similarities in job responsibilities and participant characteristics such as educations level and years of experiences. The findings showed that principals from both Germany and the U.S. had higher expectations for job satisfaction than what they were experiencing. Principals in Germany and the United States experience a difference in actual job satisfaction when compared to expectations of job satisfaction in seven different subcategories.



According to the Hancock and Müller (2014) study, of the seven categories, four subgroups showed a significant difference in both countries: “a) salary, b) hours I work per week, c) time I have to spend with my family, and d) recognition I receive for doing a good job” (p. 71). The study suggested principals feel they are not paid enough in comparison to what the demands of the job are. The researchers also raised a claim aligned with the other studies in this literature review. Principals are stressed by the volume of expected work, which not only impacts their well-being while at the school site, but their personal lives and relationships at home.

Poirel and Yvon (2014) found that principals use emotional inhibition most as a coping strategy when dealing with stressful situations underscoring their argument that administrators need to have emotional intelligence and coping skills that specifically help them during stressful situations. During their study the researchers observed and filmed six principals in the Province of Quebec. They used filming as a way of collecting data on emotional coping strategies and found that principals can feel highly emotional due to their job responsibilities and pressures. Poirel and Yvon researched the emotions of anger, anxiety, and empathy as well as the coping strategies principals tended to use. Even though the authors acknowledged that their hand-selecting principals for their study who were professionally known for coping well in stressful situations were favorable for their research, it does not provide research or explanation of principals who do not deal well with stress and what impact that may have on school culture. The study was also limited as it only studied emotions and not the other areas of emotional intelligence such as relationship management or self-care.

Also interested in coping skills for stressed administrators, Sogunro’s (2012) case study out of Connecticut researched effective and ineffective ways of dealing with stress and asserted that proactive self-care is a way to weather the inevitable and increasing stress today’s

administrators experience. Effective ways include talking with someone, using humor or faith, and scheduling breaks on the calendar, while ineffective ways included hostility, withdraw, and blaming to name a few. In the study, it was not only underscored that principals are not prepared for the emotional role of their job, it was also clearly stated that there is not enough being done to support the need for administrator support. Sogunro suggested professional development programs for those principals already tenured and preparation programs for aspiring leaders.

In another study, Wells (2015) continued the research on the practice of mindful leadership and developed a conceptual framework for mindfulness leadership in schools. Directly connected to the emotional intelligence framework, Wells' framework acknowledged previous research, including the work on resonant leadership (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005), social intelligence and emotional intelligence (Goleman et al., 2002), and mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2015). By combining such studies, Wells created a framework that supports the needs of educational leaders. The researcher asserted that the practice of mindfulness reduces stress, enabling principals to be more effective

Mindful leadership means to understand how to be and not just what to do. Mindful leaders are present and aware of their feelings and emotions but also of those around them. Within Wells' (2015) mindful framework are descriptors of mindful leadership such as listening instead of talking, being fully aware instead of doing, or offering compassion instead of judgment, all of which can provide a principal with the tools to lead in a way that reduces stress for all. While Wells' framework was guided by the frameworks of Boyatzis and McKee (2005) and Goleman et al. (2002) as was this researcher's study, the intent was wanted to include other components of emotional intelligence and ways of reducing stress other than just mindfulness.

Considering the evidence that stress amongst administrators is rising, one would assume there would be plenty of research and attention on how to maintain the well-being of administrators, but Beisser et al. (2014) argued that there is not enough research in this area. After carefully researching, the Beisser et al. findings showed that there is a gap between what administrators know, what they should do to maintain a healthy lifestyle, and what they do. This gap is referred to as Pfeffer and Sutton's knowing-doing gap. For example, Beisser et al. explained, principals want to live a balanced life but feel there is nothing professionally that they can give up, so they understand they must work out to maintain health but not do so because they do not have time in their schedule. The Beisser et al. study also found that even though principals felt a responsibility to model a healthy lifestyle to their staff, the more stress they felt, the less they were able they were able to do that modeling. Keeping in mind the increase of responsibilities principals has, the knowing-doing gap and inability to maintain a healthy work-life balance are of no surprise. Exercise, eating well, having a mentor, and mindfulness are some steps Beisser et al. suggested to help negate stress.

There is just enough research on principal stress to understand that school administrators are socially-emotionally suffering due to high levels of unchecked stress as are their teachers. There is research that finds principal responsibilities are increasing and that is adding to their overall dissatisfaction and job burnout. If the Oberle and Schonert-Reichl (2016) study showed the adverse effects of a stress contagion in the classroom, one could assume there could also be a stress contagion on a school campus. There is not enough research in the United States in the area of the self-care practices and the benefits for both principal and staff nor in the specific area of how principals use their emotional intelligence to manage such concerns.

**Social-emotional health.** The social-emotional research found higher social-emotional health positively correlated to self-efficacy. According to Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2019), the five competencies of social-emotional learning are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. These competencies are the foundation of several studies (Greenberg et al., 2017; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009) and are considered to support people in managing their emotions and being aware of other's emotions with empathy (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). The social-emotional health of a classroom, including warm teacher-student relationships, supports deeper learning (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Empirical research has shown that teachers have an impact on their students' social-emotional learning, and social-emotional competent students increase student achievement. Durlak et al. (2011) and Schonert-Reichl (2017) asserted that for teachers to have such an impact on the social-emotional health and academic success of their students, they must have social-emotional well-being themselves. Because of this, Schonert-Reichl argued that now more than ever, teachers need social-emotional learning training beginning in teacher preparation programs.

According to Schonert-Reichl (2017), frameworks for social-emotional learning contain three interrelated components of (a) the learning context, (b) the teachers' social-emotional learning, and (c) the social-emotional learning of students. Each component points to the need for a safe and caring learning environment and positive teacher-student relationship for the students' social-emotional learning to thrive. The researcher also examined the impact teacher stress has on the teacher-student relationship and overall climate of the classroom and found that not only is stress contagious spreading from teacher to student, it can also lead to teacher burnout. Using Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) prosocial classroom model as a guide to

perhaps reduce stress, teachers with well-being and high social-emotional competency are more self-aware and have better relationships with students, colleagues, and parents. The prosocial classroom model also shows the connection of social-emotional well-being to teacher-efficacy and job satisfaction.

Schonert-Reichl (2017) suggested with an urgency that the United States make changes in teacher preparation programs to ensure teachers arrive in classrooms self-aware and mindful-ready to promote their students' well-being. Multiple countries such as Finland, Singapore, and Australia have already started this work and have seen results. According to the researcher, knowledge of child development and social-emotional learning and its connection to classroom management must be taught to aspiring teachers. Not included as a variable in Schonert-Reichl's study was the principal's influence as the leader of the campus.

Furthering the notion that social-emotional learning should be taught to aspiring teachers in preparation programs, and that social-emotional learning is foundational to the success of education, Schonert-Reichl et al. (2017) analyzed college programs across the United States. Out of 991 public and private colleges, 304 colleges, or 30%, were selected from each state to participate in the study. The researchers sought to understand what colleges are serving aspiring teachers and are providing social-emotional learning. While many states have components of social-emotional learning within their teacher programs to address teachers' social-emotional learning, promoting student social-emotional learning is not given very much attention.

The Penrose et al. (2007) quantitative study hypothesized that there would be a direct relationship between high teacher self-efficacy and emotional intelligence, and self-efficacy and its relationship with emotional intelligence would be moderated by gender, age, and length of teaching. However, the findings showed while emotional intelligence and teacher self-efficacy

are directly correlated, they are not moderated by any variables. The result is that perceived self (teacher) efficacy includes the teachers' belief about their ability to manage life events that can impact their performance in the classroom. In other words, a teacher's emotional intelligence is a more influential factor in successful teaching than years of experience. Nonetheless, the researchers asserted that there is not enough research available to give insight on how to influence or increase a teacher's emotional intelligence.

Researchers Hjertø and Paulsen's (2016) quantitative international study found that collective emotional intelligence, collective general self-efficacy, and team potency has a positive correlation with academic performance on a given project. The study was a different perspective of emotional intelligence than other studies because it looked at emotional intelligence and its impact on success as a group of students instead of individual teachers in the classroom. Hjertø and Paulsen's research is essential to understand because it showed a connection between an emotionally intelligent classroom and student success, and other noted studies (e.g., Jennings et al., 2017; O'Neal et al., 2017) showed a connection between teacher emotional intelligence and student success. The study also found that a team with minimum emotional intelligence does not change their overall findings as long as at least one member on the team had high emotional intelligence. According to the researchers, controversial theories and background information around emotional intelligence will continue to exist until further research is complete and because of that, it is hard to validate what external emotional intelligence is and how to measure. This is considered a weakness in the study and should be researched further.

Aritzeta's et al. (2015) international study also researched group emotions with the goal to create a measurement for collective emotional intelligence, specifically in the classroom. In

their work, the researchers found that studies on collective emotional intelligence are scarce, and they wanted a clearer understanding of the educational phenomena for collectively learning and teaching social-emotional learning. Using the Mayer and Salovey theoretical model that measures individual emotional intelligence as a guide, Aritzeta's et al. developed a questionnaire to measure collective emotional intelligence. In doing so, they discovered that individual emotional intelligence in a classroom becomes an integral part of the groups' emotional intelligence, but because of the fluidity, measuring differentially in emotional intelligence is difficult. However, their findings that the individual's emotional intelligence is integrated is similar to Hjertø and Paulsen's (2016) study that showed one member's high emotional intelligence could positively impact the entire group. Furthermore, Aritzeta's et al. (2015) discovered that collective emotional intelligence is based on the group's experiences with one another. The teacher's level of emotional intelligence would also directly impact the overall emotions of the classroom and should be researched further.

Social-emotional intervention programs implemented in schools are of interest to researchers. For example, Jones, Barnes, Bailey, and Doolittle (2017) closely examined 11 widely used social-emotional learning intervention programs and analyzed the way each program measures outcomes. According to their research, social-emotional learning is so crucial that non-academic skills should be a foundational part of schooling. Out of their study, an analysis of 11 intervention programs showed findings that could be used for further studies, including the acknowledgement of the time it takes for teachers to teach the program in the classroom and the level of initial and follow-up teacher training needed.

The Jones et al. (2017) analysis also showed that out of the 11 intervention programs, very few foci on cognitive regulation and only teach basic emotional skills to students; however,

excellent social learning happened, all of which leads to benefits for aggression and academic success. The researchers argued that many prior studies analyzed outcomes of such programs and offered conflicting data, making understanding the value of social-emotional learning intervention programs difficult. They recommended to policymakers, practitioners, and researchers that American classrooms have focused social-emotional learning program towards classroom outcomes. Students of all ages receive grade-level appropriate social-emotional skills, and close follow-up and measures are put into place of all intervention programs.

Another example of intervention programs research is the Fagan, Hawkins, and Shapiro (2015) study, which analyzed 12 community based social-emotional learning intervention programs based off the Communities That Care or CTC systems. The researchers noted that even though studies (Durlak et al., 2011) have shown social-emotional learning intervention programs to be beneficial to students emotionally, mentally, academically, and behaviorally, when implemented correctly, studies also show these programs are not being widely used due to costs and the use of instructional minutes needed. Fagan et al. found that with the help of community coalitions, social-emotional learning intervention programs can be implemented and successfully thrive. More research is needed on what can be done other than timely and expensive intervention programs to cultivate socially and emotionally healthy school campuses.

An additional study on social-emotional learning intervention programs is Lam and Wong's (2017) Hong Kong study. The researchers found social-emotional learning intervention shows a significant improvement in the social well-being of early children, including children with aggressive tendencies and anxiety. Using Durlak et al. (2011) and Greenberg et al. (2017) studies, Lam and Wong argued that teachers support a students' well-being and social-emotional development in the classroom, especially where young children are concerned. Using the



Wisconsin pyramid model Lam and Wong's findings showed that social-emotional learning intervention programs designed to develop students' social-emotional skills are not only beneficial but deserve further study, including how to train teacher and assess the benefits of the program. Nonetheless, the Lamb and Wong study is limited in its age range of students and is also an international study.

Similarly, the Durlak et al. (2011) meta-analysis of school-wide social-emotional intervention programs showed improved student academic performance and behaviors. This research strongly supports the overall need for social-emotionally healthy classrooms via teachers and their abilities to support student social-emotional learning. Using the five social-emotional learning competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making to gauge the social-emotional health of students, Durlak et al. discovered that many students do not have these social-emotional competencies and disengage from school. The researchers suggested that teachers may successfully teach and model social-emotional learning skills that would ultimately lead to higher student success and fewer behavior problems. The study also found that school-wide programs that include classroom teaching and school-wide social-emotional learning do not benefit students more than classroom only programs. This finding suggested the need for teachers to be well-versed in SEL practices and their social-emotional health.

Another analysis on the benefits of students learning social-emotional skills is the research of Belfield et al. (2015). Their study highlighted the need to teach more than academics and used a modified benefit-cost analysis to evaluate the four social-emotional learning intervention programs of the 4 Rs, Second Step, Responsive Classroom, and Life Skills Training to determine the economic benefit of social-emotional learning. Using a benefit-cost analysis in

the specific categories of immediate economic benefit, post-intervention economic benefit for youth, post-intervention economic benefits for adults, and the positive impact on school culture, the researchers argued that the advantages gained by any of the social-emotional programs outweigh the costs of them. The study is useful, as it supports the empirical research that shows a need for social-emotional learning in the classrooms; however, it focused on the use of an outside program and not the skills of a socially and emotionally competent teacher or emotionally intelligent principal.

Also supporting a need for more teacher training in social-emotional learning was Brackett and Patti's (2016) meta-analysis of over 200 studies. The researchers recognized and asserted that social-emotional learning training and formal social-emotional learning education is needed to help negate the daily stress and emotions educators feel. According to their research, teachers who have the emotional intelligence skills show more empathy and ensure healthy communication in the classroom, and these types of classroom learning environment are more conducive to student academic success. Brackett and Patti also argued that this begins with the leadership of the district or the superintendent and should be a district-wide approach.

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning or CASEL's (2019) social-emotional learning competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making guided the Greenberg et al. (2017) study. Like previous studies, Greenberg et al. asserted that there is a great need for social-emotional learning to take place in a school setting, and based on their findings from a meta-analysis, they called this a public health issue. According to the researchers, public health is meant to support well-being and social-emotional health is foundational to that well-being. Considering the hours

children spend in a school setting, classrooms with teachers are the perfect place for social-emotional learning to take place.

In a similar study but outside the realm of education, Hollander, McKenley, Malouff, Schutte, and Simunek (2010) found statistical data that showed a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and the characteristics of a positive mood and self-esteem. The higher the emotional intelligence, the more natural participants are able to maintain their positive mood or outlook and self-esteem when faced with a negative state induction. The study is essential to the current research because of its connection to other studies that showed positive mood and/or higher self-efficacy or self-accomplishment improve teacher and student outcomes (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Penrose et al., 2007). And while not specifically in classroom settings, these findings also support the notion that teachers' social-emotional health improves when they are equipped with the coping skills to handle stressful situations that can take place in a classroom such as classroom management, parents, student behavior problems, or emotional provocative situations (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

The studies in this literature review on social-emotional learning or social-emotional health highlight the crucial need for more explicit focus on the social-emotional health of teachers and students alike. Studies show a direct connection between the teacher's social-emotional learning (or emotional intelligence) and their ability to teach and influence students social-emotional well-being. The studies also indicate a relationship between students' social-emotional health and their academic success. The research supports the argument for more social-emotional learning in teacher preparation programs in multiple studies along with the case that more social-emotional learning should be taught in the class. Not covered in these studies limiting the overall goal of improving the social-emotional health of classrooms and campus

alike, is the influence principals may have on guiding the social-emotional health of staff that ultimately supports students in classes.

**Emotional intelligent leadership.** With principal and teacher stress so directly related to the level of job satisfaction and student achievement, emotionally intelligent leadership is crucial to education. Principals are influential figures on a school campus and can impact the social-emotional health of teachers who in return can affect the social-emotional health of students (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Research shows that the more emotional intelligence a principal has, the more effective he or she is as a school leader and effecting teacher satisfaction and performance (Lambersky, 2016; Taliadorou & Pashiardis, 2015). Research also indicates that the levels of stress have increased for principals and the job responsibilities are not getting any easier (Beusaert et al., 2016; Wells, 2013).

The studies in the next section address ways to negate the stress, including mindfulness practice. They also address how having emotional intelligence benefits principals. Nonetheless, like the other studies in this review of literature, this body of research does not go far enough in studying principals' abilities to self-care and model that to staff.

McCleskey (2014) carefully studied the four major emotional intelligence models including ability, mixed, trait, and other and their connection to emotional intelligence leadership. While there has been controversy in the field of emotional intelligence with regards to its importance to leadership and the choice of models to use with evaluating leaders, McCleskey showed that emotional intelligence has a place in the workplace and should be studied further. The researcher specifically focused on the Mayer ability model while analyzing the other emotional intelligence models for comparative understanding and the relation to leadership skills. McCleskey's reasons for asserting emotional intelligence is valuable in the

workplace and are connected to the three fundamental premises, including “our emotions play an important role in our daily lives; people vary in their ability to perceive, understand, use, and manage these emotions; and these variances affect individual capability in a variety of context, including organizational leadership” (p. 88). While McCleskey (2014) focused on the Mayer ability model, the mixed model is more appropriate for education leadership. Important to note is that McCleskey cited Cherniss (2010) who argued that the debate on which emotional intelligence constructs to use should stop.

In Petrides et al.’s (2007) study, 274 students participated in a quantitative study that used the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire. Findings from the study produced the “trait emotional intelligence oblique factor” (p. 283) that infers that trait emotional intelligence is specific enough that it can be singled out within one’s personality yet runs oblique or slant to the established psychology literature of emotional intelligence including the Giant Three and the Big Five personality dimensions. Data based on the questionnaire also showed “trait emotional intelligence as a predictor in four out of six regressions in the presence of the EPQ factor” (p. 285). As a result of their study, Petrides et al. discovered emotional intelligence is correlated the most with personality dimensions. Data from multiple measures showed that emotional intelligence has a positive relationship with life satisfaction adaptive coping skills while emotional intelligence had a negative relationship with rumination of negative events and using maladaptive coping skills. The researcher’s argument that trait emotional intelligence is superior to the ability or mixed models did not take into consideration the leadership skills or qualities needed in education and therefore was not considered for this study.

The research of Hollander et al. (2010) provided context on how important emotional intelligence is at work, home, or learning environment. Using previous studies (Goleman, 1995;

Salovey & Mayer, 1990), Hollander et al. explained emotional intelligence as the ability to regulate and harnesses emotions in such a way that positively impacts learning, work, and relationships. Those who have control their thoughts, feelings, and emotions and understand all of those belonging to others, generally have a more positive outlook on life that ultimately improves their well-being. The researchers studied the characteristics of a positive mood and self-esteem and their correlation with emotional intelligence and found a significant positive connection. The higher the emotional intelligence, the more comfortable participants can maintain their positive mood or outlook and self-esteem. While the study is not directly connected to teachers or principals, it does show how emotional intelligence can help principals maintain a positive outlook and high self-esteem on a school campus and to be more successful during stressful work moments both in the classroom and on campus.

Studies have shown that it is vital for principals to take care of their emotional health to maintain physical and mental health as well. Bartz et al. (2017) argued that long hours take a toll on principals' physical, mental, and emotional health. Principals must learn to pause, reflect, and focus on their strengths and adapt to the fluidness of their day-to-day demands. With parents, teachers, and students all needing the attention of the principal, the day can easily be pulled in different and unplanned directions. The study found that managing energy is crucial to principals and to do so, principals must maximize their human capital. Effective use of emotional intelligence allows maximum use of human capital. Principals benefit from being optimistic. Principals will perform better if they focus on strengths. Emotionally intelligent principals have the skill set to foster healthy relationships that would benefit everyone on campus.

Taliadorou and Pashiardis (2015) found that both emotional intelligence and political skills of school principals are directly related to their educational leadership styles. The study

also found the level of emotional intelligence and political skills a principal has to be connected to the teachers who work with them and the level of job satisfaction teachers experience.

Considering the impact principals have on teachers, there is a need for principals to develop emotional intelligence and political skills. The data in the consisted of 182 principals who self-reported measuring emotional intelligence (and political capacity. Also, in Taliadorou and Pashiardis' study, over 900 teachers completed a questionnaire measuring the principal's leadership style and job satisfaction.

Taliadorou and Pashiardis (2015) discovered that there is a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and political skills leading them to create the concept Emotional-Political Capacity. The higher the emotional-political capacity a principal has, the higher job satisfaction for all occurs. Much like other research, the study indicated the importance and benefit of principal emotional intelligence. What the study did not cover, however, is how principals maintain or improve their emotional intelligence or more specifically how they retain what Boyatzis and McKee (2005) would refer to as resonant leadership.

In slight contrast, Harms and Credé's (2010) meta-analysis found less than the predicted strong correlation between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership skills and suggest emotional intelligence is not the core of transformational leadership. In their study, the researchers found mixed results when analyzing research on the connection of emotional intelligence and transformation leadership skills. They noted the studies used in their research do not include a study that validates the emotional intelligence and transformational leadership relationship. The studies that do exist are mostly self-reporting data. Harms and Credé's claim suggest that there is not a strong connection between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership but points to a moderate connection. They base their argument on previous studies

that may have had inflated results of relationship due to the type of testing they used. Because of these conflicting results, more research in this area is needed.

Lambersky (2016) studied teacher job satisfaction, and in a study of 20 secondary participants, found that principals impact teacher emotions simply by the way they behave and interact with the teacher. For example, showing respect, allowing teachers to be heard, protecting them from negative interaction,s and being a competent leader, all lead to positive teacher emotion. Teachers interviewed by Lambersky shared they feel unheard or underappreciated and that leads to negative feelings. Teachers also shared that the way the principal carries themselves impacts morale. Teachers want to feel supported by their principal. Using the understanding of what emotional intelligence means (McCleskey, 2014), relationship management is clearly key to reducing the stress levels of both teachers and principals alike.

Whether it is job satisfaction or teachers' morale, principals influence a school culture. In a cross-sectional survey of 306 principles and 1,539 teachers, Dutta and Sahney (2016) found that it is transformational leadership behaviors rather than principal leadership that indirectly has an impact on the school climate and in particular social and affective components, which lead to teacher job satisfaction and student achievement. Even though Harms and Credé's (2010) meta-analysis found a less than predicted connection between emotional intelligence and transformative leadership, Dutta and Sahney found otherwise. The authors argued that the benefits of instructional and transformational leadership behavior have an indirect impact on student achievement via the direct impact on the physical environment of the school, school culture, and teacher job satisfaction.

In a case study, Laine et al. (2017) studied job satisfaction of teachers and the well-being of teachers concerning the expectations of the principals and the overall support from their



principal. The authors of this case study found that a school's occupational well-being for principal and teachers alike improves due to communal interventions that are developed either by the staff as a whole or by the administration. The study also indicated that relations between teachers and the principal impact the well-being and satisfaction of staff. If the principal expects too much professional development without considering the staff's well-being, relationships suffer, much like the studies on social-emotional learning intervention programs that showed improved social-emotional health with explicit care (Jones et al., 2017; Lam & Wong, 2017).

Laine et al.'s (2017) research found only 8% of the team feel supported by their principal, but after "well-being afternoons and conversation cafes," (p. 36) that number went up to 36%. Another improvement was teachers who felt they were left with no support decreased from 8 % to 0% within five years. Furthermore, the relationship between principal and teachers also improved with 50% in the beginning of the study who disagreed or were neutral to the question to 42% by the end of the study. As Goleman's (1995) definition of emotional intelligence asserted, the Laine et al. study highlights the need for principals to be keenly aware of their staff's thoughts and emotions to get their best performance.

Similarly, in a small case study, Lee and Li (2015) asserted that an elementary principal's determination and encouragement of his staff explicitly guides his teachers to excellence. In the study, the relationship skills of the principal are highlighted. An award-winning group of teachers guided by their principal help to create a productive and conducive school culture. The culture is caring and collaborative, and teachers share best practices with one another, freely, and teachers give credit to their principal for inspiring that type of teacher behavior. The principal's ability to lead staff to excellence includes excellent communication skills, culture changing skills, relationship skills, and inspirational leadership skills. While not directly connected to

Goleman and Boyatzis emotional intelligence framework, the Lee and Li findings are in line with a principal's need to recognize emotions of others and to understand what motivates employees while working towards a goal of excellence.

A leader's inspiration can inspire a school culture, but so can their emotions. Berkovich and Eyal's (2015) narrative review explained that emotions expressed show how leaders react to situations, leader emotions can have an impact on teacher emotions, emotional intelligence is a precursor to leaders' ability to be successful, and the unstable and highly political educational environment influence a leader's emotions. Considering previous studies (Klocko & Wells, 2015; Wells, 2013) showed that principal stress has increased significantly, and emotional inhibition is used most often as a way of coping with stress (Poirel & Yvon, 2014), the Berkovich and Eyal (2015) study is valuable because it shows the benefits of principals having emotional intelligence skills to help manage stress and challenging situations. This argument is only the beginning of more needed study on educational leaders and how their emotions impact a school culture and the importance of knowing how to manage those feelings.

Through the lens of emotional intelligence and leadership, Brinia et al. (2014) surveyed over 30 Greek principals and found that principals who are emotionally intelligent are more able to move a staff toward the school's goals than principals not considered as emotionally intelligent. In particular, principals who are able to create a school culture that is "self-conscious and organized" with the values of "trust, prospect, achievement, and effectiveness" are successful leaders (p. 28). Principals cannot merely be office managers but must have the emotional intelligence to inspire the human capital at the school site, argued Brinia et al. Critical factors for emotional intelligence leaders, including several aligned with Goleman and Boyatzis' emotional intelligence framework, are noted as crucial to leadership including relationships with

staff, the ability to deal with stress, communication skills, and flexibility. Even though the study was an international study, the focus and drive for better understanding of emotional intelligence leadership in conjunction with educational leadership are needed in the United States.

In a book titled *Shine*, about the power of brain science, Hallowell (2011) indicated what matters most to employees is not money but to shine. Just as other studies noted (Brinia et al., 2014; Lee & Li, 2015), Hallowell insisted that leaders who have the interpersonal skills to bring out the best in people are leaders who have the skills to be successful. Also, just as other studies have identified stressful environments (Klocko & Wells, 2015; Wells, 2013), Hallowell recognized the highly stressful work environment that exists today in multiple industries and underscored a need to de-stress employees, the researcher's solution to the problem of high stress at all levels is his cycle of excellence model. Using research and studies on brain science (Gheusi as cited in Hallowell, 2011), and correctly matching employees to work, managers connecting with employees (Christakis & Fowler as cited in Hallowell, 2011), importance of play (Brown as cited in Hallowell, 2011), the need to grapple and grow (Loehr & Schwartz as cited in Hallowell), and recognizing employees or "shine" (Pasupathy & Miller as cited in Hallowell), Hallowell created a way to emotionally and intelligently engage with staff.

Just as the cycle of excellence model has steps for leaders to take to be successful, Durlak et al. (2016) wrote extensively on the reasons for and steps to take when developing school leaders who are socially and emotionally competent. Like many of the studies mentioned, the researchers also argued that educational leaders and principals have an impact on the school culture and indirectly student success. To support principals in such an influential role, Durlak et al. suggested that leaders develop in the five areas of social-emotional health to transform and sustain change as needed at school sites. These basic premise of the steps or guidelines are:

1. Learning in a safe environment
2. Building personal and shared visions
3. Setting goals based on the school's vision
4. Recognize and use social-emotional competencies
5. Coaching: a tool for reflective process
6. Practice and reassess
7. Build resilient peer networks

When considering an emotionally intelligent leader, all of these steps are valuable, especially regarding relationship management and communication, yet, missing are the steps that allow the leader to refresh and self-care to be optimally present.

On the other hand, Boyatzis and McKee's (2005) book titled *Resonant Leadership* does encourage self-care. Based on empirical research, Boyatzis and McKee (2005) argued that today's leaders across industries are burdened with an increase of stress and are trapped in a "cycle of sacrifice," and if they do not learn to self-care and sustain "resonance," it will lead to "dissonance" (pp. 1–8). If there is one thing benefiting an emotionally intelligent principal, it is to be in harmony with staff, students, and parents. Leaders can sustain resonant leadership with three elements of mindfulness, hope, and compassion in a framework called resonant leadership.

Using empirical research, Boyatzis and McKee (2005) concluded that leaders could lose their resonance when under prolonged stress and in what they call the "sacrifice syndrome" (p. 40) creating a leadership crisis. The sacrifice syndrome releases corticosteroid hormones that over time when released too often, can cause damage to the body's immune system. Emotional intelligent leaders who can take ownership of the emotions they are experiencing would have the

skill set to recognize these moments of stress and burnout and use the tools of mindfulness and self-compassion to minimize or negate the impact of corticosteroid hormones.

In a few studies, researchers focused on the social-emotional learning of school leaders rather than emotional intelligence. For example, Sanchez-Nunez et al. (2015) studied 32 leaders (10 men and 22 women) who had participated in a post-graduate educational leadership program in New York, including the courses Leadership to Enhance Human Resources and Supervision of Instruction with a focus on social-emotional learning. After one semester, the researchers did not find any significant impact of focused social-emotional learning content, but after 2 years, they discovered substantial findings of self-reporting competencies concerning leadership.

Statistical data from the Sanchez-Nunez et al. (2015) study showed that new administrators or educational leaders benefit from a specific focus of social-emotional learning. The researchers highlighted that this learning should take place over a minimum of a 2-year period. This research is relevant because it indicates that leaders need specific training in social-emotional learning, and they should not be expected to know already how to handle an emotionally charged situations without training or focus. Relationship building, coaching others, facilitating conversations, and influencing teachers who impact children's lives are emotionally intelligence skills that leaders may not necessarily be born with or carry when they become aspiring leaders, but can certainly be learned.

Another study on social emotional learning for leaders was Schonert-Reichl's (2017) quantitative study on the social-emotional competence and well-being of teachers and their direct impact on student learning in the classroom. While mentioned earlier in this review of literature, it is important to note that the Schonert-Reichl study recognized the stressful job of teachers, but also the direct relationship between the emotional intelligence of elementary principals, as

reported by their teachers, and the collective teacher efficacy. Using Goleman's (1995) emotional intelligence framework, Schonert-Reichl argued that now more than ever teachers need social-emotional learning training that should either begin in teacher preparation programs or are supported by principals. For principals to manage the social-emotional learning of their teachers, one would assume they too would need social-emotional learning or emotional intelligence skills. The idea that the principal's perception of self and the teachers' perception of principal's emotional intelligence skills is critical for the relationships and should be studied further.

Wanting a better understanding of this concept on the relationship between teachers' perceptions of the principal's emotional intelligence and the principals' self-perception of their emotional intelligence, Pierce (2014) collected survey data from 45 random schools. Findings showed that a principal's emotional intelligence is critical for collective efficacy and student achievement, a leader's ability to build relationships may enhance teacher efficacy, and relationship-oriented skills are necessary for teacher efficacy. Teachers want their principal to have skills that build and support relationships and manage stress levels of all. As noted by the researcher, a weakness in this study was the data based on teachers' perception of their principal's emotional intelligence happened at a moment in time, and it was assumed the reporting to be accurate. Further research is needed to determine principals' emotional intelligence correctly.

In a culminating study of the many findings mentioned in Polly's (2016) meta-analysis, four crucial points were underscored: (a) self-regulation is possible, (b) both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation exist, (c) people have the ability to regulate emotions, but the environment and social interaction that take place can influence that regulation, and (d) people with high

emotional intelligence could use their emotions to help them solve problems and make decisions. The most important part of their assertion was that people who score high on the Salovey, Caruso, and Mayer (1990) MSCEIT emotional intelligence questionnaire are also found to be capable of changing their mood as needed for self-regulation. A principal's ability to recognize staff emotions, as well as their own, and help to facilitate mood changes as required would benefit the school campus. However, the article does not go into enough detail on how one would practice self-regulation or specifically how intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can differ. There is also no direct connection to leadership, but for this study, that connection can easily be made.

When analyzing studies on teacher and principal stress, there are high levels of stress that are impacting school cultures, classrooms climates, educators' physical, mental, and emotional health, and student success. When analyzing studies on social-emotional learning and health, and emotional intelligence leadership, it is empowering to understand there are ways to negate the effects of stressful teaching and school leadership. Research indicates that schools benefit with emotionally intelligent leaders guiding staff, and classroom benefit with socially-emotionally healthy teachers sharing social-emotional learning with their students. The questions remain, however, on how often principals practice self-care in a way do that supports emotional intelligence and how important is it to model self-care to their staff in a way that promotes social-emotional health in the classroom.

### **Review of Methodological Issues**

Teacher stress, principal stress, social-emotional intelligence in the classroom, and emotional intelligence leadership were included in the review of literature. Of those included studies, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods have all been used, yet overwhelmingly,

quantitative studies are the methodology of choice for all four topics. According to Creswell (2012), quantitative research uses both experimental and nonexperimental designs to test variables and focuses on numerical data. Qualitative research, on the other hand, uses narratives, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnographies, and case studies to inquire and explore for understanding of a phenomenon and is a part of the current literature review, yet in fewer studies. An analysis of eight quantitative studies, three qualitative studies, and two mixed methods studies follow, highlighting the objectives of this study to understand the importance of principals' emotional intelligence and self-care practices.

Lam and Wong (2017) and Taliadorou and Pashiardis (2015) are quantitative examples of nonexperimental designs using survey questions to collect data. Lam and Wong (2017) surveyed 106 early educators and 32 kindergarten students using random selection to gather data on an intervention program, and in particular, noted their intent to reduce selection bias. The study found that teachers need a good understanding of their social-emotional health before supporting children's social-emotional health. Likewise, Taliadorou and Pashiardis (2015) surveyed 182 principals and analyzed their responses to measure the correlation between emotional intelligence and political skills of school leaders. A numerical understanding and measurement of either emotional intelligence leadership, social competences within the classroom, or the impact teacher behavior has on students, gives researchers of these studies the data needed to prove or disprove their hypotheses (Creswell, 2012).

Using Goleman's mixed-ability emotional intelligence framework, Pierce's (2014) nonexperimental quantitative study of 13 principals not only sought out data via a self-reporting survey to answer the research question, "Is there a relationship between principals' emotional intelligence . . . and teacher efficacy?" but also considered the cause and effect relationship



between a principal's self-reporting emotional intelligence and teachers' reporting of that emotional intelligence and how that impacts teacher-efficacy (p. 317). Pierce's study also supports the assertion in this study that the principal of the school site must have emotional intelligence in such a way that benefits teachers and students. Creswell (2012) explained that quantitative data collection as in these nonexperimental studies usually have the intent of generalizing the proven hypothesis to a broader population.

Jennings et al. (2017) and Oberle and Schonert-Reichl (2016) are both quantitative studies used an experimental and quasi-experimental design. Both studies used the Jennings and Greenberg (2009) prosocial model and a stress-contagion framework to formulate their hypotheses, as Newman and Ridenour (1998) suggested that researchers do. The Oberle and Schonert-Reichl (2016) study was the first to connect stress-contagion to the classroom. Researchers using these designs such as Jennings et al.'s (2017) intervention study, used random assignments in controlled groups (Creswell, 2012) to understand the effects of the experimental intervention (Newman & Ridenour, 1998). This multisite cluster randomized design gave Jennings et al. (2017) an opportunity to analyze teachers' stress levels and the efficacy of the intervention program in a balanced manner. As noted in the study, a limitation of such a design is the spillover effect of the program's benefits.

In Oberle and Schonert-Reichl's (2016) study, all student-participants engaged in the collection of cortisol samples that measured student stress levels in conjunction with their teachers' self-reporting feelings of burnout. However, as noted by the researchers, a study of this manner is also limited by the expense of collecting such data, ultimately forcing a limited size and length of study.

Other critical quantitative studies in the review of literature included Beausaert et al.'s (2016) longitudinal study spanning over four years and Klocko and Wells (2015) time-series design. Both studies took time to gain a deeper understanding of the workload and work increase principals experience in schools today. While Beausaert et al. (2016) used the demand-support constraints model and the Job demands-resources model to guide the conceptual framework, Klocko and Wells (2015) used Goleman's (1995) emotional intelligence framework and Boyatzis and McKee's Resonant Leadership conceptual framework. Considering Newman and Ridenour ' (1998) explanatory model of quantitative research, both Beausaert et al. (2016) and Klocko and Wells (2015) started with a theory on principal stress and work levels, reviewed empirical research on the topic, used a conceptual framework to support the formulation their hypotheses, and collected data that then proved or disproved their hypotheses.

Multiple quantitative measurements are used to study teacher stress, principal stress, social-emotional intelligence in the classroom, and emotional intelligence leadership. This review of literature did not uncover one measurement used more than another but did highlight the overall use of self-reporting surveys and semistructured interviews to collect quantitative data. Creswell (2012) noted that these measurements are used to understand trends, attitudes, and opinions of participants in the studies. Additionally, the measurements used were directly connected to the conceptual framework of the studies. For example, Pierce (2014) used the Emotional and Social Competence Inventory (Goleman et al., 2002) measurement that included the four categories of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. This measurement connects to the Goleman mixed ability emotional intelligence framework that guided the study's hypotheses that there is a strong correlation between a principal's emotional intelligence and teachers' efficacy (Pierce, 2014). Likewise, Lam and

Wong (2017) used the Mayor-Salovey ability model and the Social Competence and Behavioral Evaluation measurement that measures the teacher-student relationship. What is important to point out in this particular measurement is it allowed Lam and Wong (2017) to capture participants' individual emotions and relationships with others.

This review of literature included qualitative studies on the subtopics of principal and teacher stress. Creswell's (2012) definition of qualitative designs asserted that qualitative research holds the social constructivist worldview and seeks understanding on individual experiences in the world and work. Often, Creswell noted that qualitative researchers are looking for deeper meanings of a social or human problem or phenomenon. This explanation of qualitative research holds true for the three qualitative studies mentioned in this review of literature. The four qualitative studies included two phenomenology studies and two case studies.

Lambersky's (2016) phenomenography study quoted "little or no direct relationship exists between principal leadership and student achievement" (p. 1) and seeks to understand what effects exactly principals have on teachers and students. The research questions of Lambersky were "how" and "what" questions and with the use of semistructured interview questions for 20 teachers, the study gathered data to answer them in a way that identifies the essences of human experience. Lambersky's review of literature covered the subtopics of teacher job satisfaction, stress, and efficacy, but was small compared to the quantitative studies in this review of literature. Creswell (2012) described phenomenological research as having a small number of participants. Like Lambersky (2016), Mestry's (2017) phenomenography study had a small number (15 principals), allowing the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the principals' increased work demands.

Lee and Li's (2015) qualitative case study had an even a smaller number of participants. The researchers studied one teacher team to answer "how" and "what" questions around the phenomenon of an award-winning teacher team and sought to understand the connection of that team to the principal. Newman and Ridenour (1998) described qualitative research as only one case or one unit studied of which this case study fits. As with the other qualitative studies, Lee and Li (2015) used semistructured interviews that allowed the participants to share their personal experiences more profoundly, giving the researchers a better understanding of the phenomenon at hand.

Sogunro's (2012) case study on administrator stress and the coping skills they use had a larger participant pool of 52 high school administrators across Connecticut. Similarly, to a phenomenological study, Sogunro investigated a phenomenon in-depth through the use of personal interviews both in person and by phone. Just as in a phenomenological study, the researcher seeks to understand the participants' experience, Sogunro asked five open-ended questions that then allowed the researcher to probe deeper. Field notes and interpretational analysis of transcripts gave way to seven main themes that were then coded for further understanding.

According to Creswell (2012), mixed-method studies can be sequential, concurrent, or transformative. Hauseman et al. (2017) study fits Creswell's (2012) definition of sequential mixed-method study. With an objective to better understand the impact a school-community has on a principal's workload, Hauseman et al. (2017) used a two-part study. The first part of their design included focus groups to help create appropriate survey questions for participants and the second part of the study involved those participants taking an online survey. Similarly, Flook et al. (2013) used multiple methods in their study, including pretest survey questions, observations,

cortisol samples, and a randomized control pilot of a mindfulness intervention program designed to reduce teacher stress. The study is an example of Creswell's (2012) explanation that mixed-method studies include multiple forms of data and consider all possibilities of outcomes. A noted limitation of such a design is the small sample size leads to difficulty in detecting effects of the pilot program (Flook et al., 2013).

Many of the studies currently in the field on the level of stress educators experience and the influence a principal has on that are quantitative and international. There was a wide range of the number of participants in the studies, but most studies collected data via self-reporting surveys. There are very few qualitative studies in the field for the current literature review (especially out of the United States) on the deliberate self-care principals do to manage their stress levels or explicit modeling to the staff to support social-emotional needs. A qualitative transcendental phenomenological study allows an inquiry on the experiences that principals encounter around the phenomenon of high stress or managing teachers with high stress.

### **Synthesis of Research Findings**

**Teacher stress.** The job of teaching has numerous rewards and benefits; however, research shows an increase in the level of teacher stress that not only decreases job satisfaction, but it can lead to job burnout, impacting student academic success (Jennings et al., 2017; Raju, 2013; Wong et al., 2017). Through quantitative studies, researchers showed evidence that teachers feel emotionally exhausted and overwhelmed by the demands of the job and personal achievement or a sense of accomplishment lacks where burnout is high (Arens & Morin, 2016; Timms et al., 2012). Furthermore, where there are feelings of burnout and disengagement, there tends to be a lack of dedication (Timms et al., 2012). If a teacher does feel personal

accomplishment, emotional exhaustion has been found to be higher (Timms et al., 2012; Wong et al., 2017).

In studies that offer solutions, both mindfulness practice and intervention programs designed specifically to reduce teacher stress levels are suggested by researchers (Flook et al., 2013; Jennings et al., 2017; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017). Overwhelmingly, studies regarding teacher stress have involved the use of questionnaires designed by Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1997), which were based on the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Through self-reporting surveys or focus groups, the researcher collectively recognized the phenomenon of teacher stress and burnout and its positive correlation to student success in the classroom.

Researchers have proposed a correlation between teacher burnout and work engagement (in the classroom working with students) and found that to be correct (Timms et al., 2012). These assumptions and findings were guided by several conceptual frameworks but relevant to this study are the prosocial classroom model (used in Jennings & Greenberg, 2009) and Maslach burnout theories (used in Flook et al., 2013; Timms et al., 2012; Wong et al., 2017). Included in the audience of such studies are educators and educational researchers.

**Principal stress.** Researchers have provided evidence showing educational leadership has experienced an increased amount of stress and higher levels of burnout (Bartz et al., 2017; Beausaert et al., 2016; Hauseman et al., 2017; Klocko & Wells, 2015; Wells, 2013). The responsibilities of a principal have evolved as the 21st century has influenced changes in education and expectations placed on principals have become nearly impossible to manage (Hauseman et al., 2017; Wells, 2013). Klocko and Wells (2015) noted Boyatzis and McKee's (2005) "sacrifice syndrome" as a cycle of ineffective leadership principals can find themselves into when buried under constant levels of high stress. The common phenomenon of principal

stress is just as critical to understand as the common phenomenon of teacher stress due to principals' tremendous influence on school culture and indirectly on students' success (Beusaert et al., 2016; Dutta & Sahney, 2016; Lee & Li, 2015).

Of the different strategies referenced to negate principal stress, emotional inhibition (Poirel & Yvon, 2014), seeking help, communication, humor and faith, or scheduling breaks (Sogunro, 2012) were all suggested for leaders and principals to incorporate. The practice of mindfulness or mindful leadership were also studied and recommended (Klocko & Wells, 2015; Wells, 2015). In addition to specific practices or the use of intervention programs to help manage stress, emotional intelligent leadership is suggested and was analyzed in this review of literature.

Differently than the studies on teacher stress that are quantitative, studies on principal stress are both qualitative and quantitative. Research methods of surveys, meta-analyses, and focus groups were used to collect data on participant groups that ranged from a few to over 1,000 participants, yet, one-on-one interviews or case studies were not used. Multiple conceptual frameworks guided these studies, including the demand-support model (used in Beusaert et al., 2016), motivation-hygiene theory (used in Darmody & Smyth, 2016), and Goleman's mixed-ability model (used in Klocko & Wells, 2015). While a range of methodologies, research methods, and frameworks exist in current research, the common phenomenon of principal stress and job dissatisfaction (Darmody & Smyth, 2016; Hancock & Müller (2014), burnout (Beusaert et al., 2016; Wells, 2013) and negative impact on the entire school campus (Beusaert et al., 2016; Dutta & Sahney, 2016; Lee & Li, 2015) are apparent and need further study.

**Social- Emotional health in classrooms.** Studies on social-emotional health or social-emotional learning in the classroom align and support the findings of the teacher and principal stress research. For example, Schonert-Reichl (2017) studied the well-being of teachers and their

ability to handle stress and data showed a correlation between the social-emotional health of a teacher and student success in the classroom. Researchers insist that explicit social-emotional learning in the classroom is beneficial and necessary for both teacher and student and must be addressed starting in teacher preparation programs via training (Brackett & Patti, 2016; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017). In the classroom is beneficial and necessary for both teacher and student and must be addressed starting in teacher preparation programs via training (Brackett & Patti, 2016; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017). In the classroom is beneficial and necessary for both teacher and student and must be addressed starting in teacher preparation programs via training (Brackett & Patti, 2016; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017).

Evidence provided by researchers indicate a positive correlation between social-emotional learning and social-emotional health and improved success in the classroom as well as emotional intelligence and self-efficacy (Hjertø & Paulsen, 2016; Penrose et al., 2007). Aritzeta et al. (2015) studied the benefits of emotional intelligence in the classroom and found a relationship between the emotions of a classroom (teacher and students) and school performance, however, the researcher noted that additional research is wanted in this area. Research in social-emotional learning for teachers and students and their health as foundational to education is needed

The agreement among researchers for explicit social-emotional learning in the classroom and the social-emotional health of teachers is so vital that researchers suggest changes in education policy and insist on public health support. The studies on social-emotional learning and social-emotional health are both quantitative and qualitative with questionnaires, meta-analysis, and case studies used for data collection. Case studies included analysis on social-emotional learning intervention programs (Belfield et al., 2015; Lam & Wong, 2017). Several



studies had similar hypotheses and found a positive relationship between high emotional intelligence or social-emotional learning and individual or group academic success (Aritzeta et al., 2015; Hjertø & Paulsen, 2016; Lam & Wong, 2017; Penrose et al., 2007). Because the findings cover areas of classroom, school culture, and policy, the most-likely audience of these studies included all levels of educators and policymakers.

**Emotional intelligent leadership.** Research on emotional intelligence leadership aligns with the assertions made in other studies mentioned in this review of literature. The common phenomenon around teacher and principal stress and the impact that stress has on the classroom, or the common insistence for social-emotional learning to take place in all classrooms, are both correlated to the emotional intelligence leadership research. Emotional intelligence leadership can be directly related to principals who lead schools.

In reference to the phenomenon of high educator stress levels, Bartz et al. (2017), Boyatzis and McKee (2005), Hallowell (2011), and Polly (2016) all analyzed stress in educational leadership and found high stress levels to take a toll on principals' well-being and ability to lead ultimately impacting the culture of the campus. Multiple studies support the assertion that principals can have such an influence on a campus that teachers' social-emotional health and student success is impacted (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Durlak et al., 2016; Dutta & Sahney, 2016; Laine et al., 2017; Lambersky, 2016; Taliadorou & Pashiardis, 2015). Much like the studies on stress levels, it is recommended that education leaders practice self-care, and mindfulness in particular (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Durlak et al., 2016; Sanchez-Nunez et al., 2015).

The studies on emotional intelligent leadership are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies with questionnaires, interviews, meta-analysis, and case studies used for data

collection. Depending on the needs of the study, data sources involved large participant groups with almost 2,000 people (Dutta & Sahney, 2016) or small participant groups of 20 (Lambersky, 2016). Many of the studies on emotional intelligent leadership similarly hypothesized that the level of emotional intelligence skills a principal has directly impacts the school culture (Brinia et al., 2014; Goldring et al., 2015; Harms & Credé, 2010; Taliadorou & Pashiardis, 2015).

### **Critique of Previous Research**

Within the four topics of this review of literature, researchers have sought to understand the stress levels of educators, the effect that stress has on their social-emotional and physical well-being, the impact that stress has on student success in the classroom, how social-emotional healthy teachers and emotionally intelligent principals can influence a school campus, and ways to intervene. Given the importance of education and the changes technology brings to the world around us, the purpose of these studies is relevant and needed to continue preparing students to productively live in the 21st century. The available research is current and based on conceptual frameworks such as the demand-support model and Goleman and Boyatzis' (2009) mixed-model or framework on emotional intelligence that help to understand and address the needs of educators today, and in particular principals who lead school campuses.

There is agreement among researchers when it comes to the levels of stress teachers and principals experience and that further study in this area is needed. However, there is not enough research on the specific interventions that would support teachers and principals managing their stress levels. While there is agreement among researchers that principals are influential in their role as a leader on campus, there are no studies that specifically speak to how principals can and should model self-care to their teachers. Other than mindfulness, the current studies do not

include nor underscore the need for a practice of self-care. Research is also lacking or non-existent in the area of principals modeling such a regime of self-care to their staff.

Throughout the review of literature, studies on both social-emotional learning and emotional intelligent leadership align with one another in their findings that show the more socially and emotionally healthy or emotionally intelligence teachers and principals are, the more job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and student success there is on a school campus. There are no current disagreements on the benefits of having social-emotional healthy teachers under the leadership of emotionally intelligent principals other than the framework or theory used to measure such aptitude. With three major emotional intelligence models of ability, mixed, and trait, McCleskey (2014) posited that more study is needed on the models, and even then, researchers may never agree on one model of choice. Because of this, research on emotional intelligence can be disjointed. However, the Goleman and Boyatzis' (2009) mixed-model or framework on emotional intelligence and the research of Boyatzis and McKee (2005) guided this study.

Throughout all four topics, international studies had to be used in the literature rereview, since there is not enough research conducted in the United States on these topics. This lack of research was most noticeable when researching emotional intelligence. International studies are relevant and essential to the overall purpose of this study, but studies done in the United States are more aligned with the American education system and were preferred. Additional comprehensive research is needed from schools across the United States on stress levels regarding principals and how to prevent the consequences.

## **Summary of the Review of Literature**

Based on the review of literature, teachers and principals hold highly stressful jobs, and for some, their stress levels are increasing. The high stress educators experience can often lead to job burnout, job dissatisfaction, impact educator health, and affect student success in the classroom. Studies indicate that stress is a contagion and too much stress in the classroom can lead to teachers feeling emotionally exhausted (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016).

Studies show that principals who are emotionally intelligent leaders are best equipped to support themselves and their teachers and reduce stress levels for all. Researchers have provided data asserting that teachers who hold high social-emotional skills and are able to transfer those skills to students, are more effective in the classroom and are better able to maintain relationships with their students. Studies have shown that principals who are emotionally intelligent are better able to manage their own stress and are more effective leaders. Resonant leaders, or leaders who have the practice of renewal, are able to get out of the syndrome that leads to sacrifice and exhaustion. Principals who can manage with the language of hope, compassion, and empathy are better able to inspire and destress school staff (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005).

What researchers do not show is if and how principals practice self-care and how important it is that they model that selfcare to their staff for the emotional well-being everyone. Teachers and principals will continue to hold stressful jobs that have changing and growing responsibilities as the demands for 21st century teaching and learning continue. The high stress levels educators feel can often lead to job burnout and job dissatisfaction that can negatively affect the student achievement in the classroom and lead to educators leaving the profession.

Statistics indicate that without better equipped principals, educators are leaving the profession. Taking into consideration the studies found in the conceptual framework and a

noticeable lack of research on how principals practice self-care for their own well-being and if they feel a sense of responsibility to model that self-care to their teachers for the sake of teacher well-being, the questions that guided this study sought to fill these gaps. This unique review of literature provides strong support to pursue such research on principal stress and their explicit use of self-care practices.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological qualitative study was threefold: to explore and better understand principals' first-hand and lived experiences of on-the-job stress and their practices of self-care to negate that stress, understand if principals find it important to model the practice of self-care to their teachers to reduce teacher stress levels, and understand principals' awareness of their emotional intelligence and how they use that to support not only themselves but their staff as well. Thus, it was important to look closely at whether principals feel a sense of responsibility to model self-care practices to their teachers who may also struggle with stress. This researcher's intent was to get a sense of how the emotional intelligence of a principal can help reduce the stress levels of both principal and their teachers. A phenomenological study was believed to be the best method to answer the research questions because this researcher considers stress to be a phenomenon across school campuses experienced by both school administrators and their teachers. The components of Chapter 3 include a complete description of the qualitative transcendental phenomenological design used in this study, including the research questions that focused the study, the population and sampling method, the choice of instruments, the data collection methods, an analysis procedure, the limitations of the study, the expected findings, and perceived ethical issues.

### **Research Questions**

Phenomenology is a social science research method that can be hard to define, but it is an inquiry method designed to deeply understand the reality and experiences of a particular phenomenon (Qutoshi, 2018). Edmund Husserl, considered to be the "founding father of phenomenology," influenced the phenomenology "movement" so that only the reality of those

living the experience is considered and there is an awareness of how the phenomenon experienced influences behaviors (Allen, 2017, p. 1228). According to Hofmann (2016), the overall idea behind a phenomenological study is to reflect on a phenomenon and understand how it is experienced. Through this study, this researcher sought a deeper understanding of individual principals' experiences with the phenomenon of self-reported stress and their personal awareness and interpretation of those experiences as well as their awareness and understanding of their emotional intelligence and how it influences their leadership.

Creswell (2012) posited that when considering phenomenological study, it is important to formulate questions that are open-ended and researchable. Likewise, Elliott and Timulak (2005) noted that qualitative studies are designed to gather meaning from linguistic data rather than numerical data, and the questions are open-ended to encourage curiosity and investigation of the phenomenon at hand. The research questions for this study were guided by the conceptual framework and designed in a way to provide this researcher the ability to fully explore and gain a deeper insight of a shared experience from the participant perspective. The three research questions that focused this study were:

RQ1: From the principals' perspective, how does one personally focus on social-emotional health and self-care to explicitly reduce levels of on-the-job stress and the related consequences?

RQ2: From the principals' perspective, how does explicit focus and modeling of self-care to teachers for the betterment of their social-emotional health impact the overall school climate and student success?

RQ3: From the principal's perspective, how does the ability to use emotional intelligence help reduce personal stress or the stress of others?

## **Purpose and Design of Study**

The first purpose of this phenomenology study was to understand principals who self-report experiencing stress by exploring their explicit practice, if any, of self-care that is meant to minimize the consequences of stress. Klocko and Wells (2015) not only recognized the phenomenon of principal stress, but also found their stress levels to be on the rise. Hancock and Müller (2014), concerned with the number of principals leaving the profession, studied and found the job demands placed on principals negatively impact their levels of job satisfaction.

In Boyatzis and McKee's (2005) book based off multiple studies, they argued that leaders under the constant cycle of stress must practice self-care and learn to maintain *resonance* to sustain their leadership role and produce results. Considering that principal stress has already been determined, as noted in the review of literature, this study did not focus on learning if stress levels exist among principals. This study was designed to learn how principals understand the phenomenon of stress and how they regulate and manage the negative ramifications on their campus.

The second purpose for this study is to understand how principals manage their stress and gain insight on how important it is for principals to model the practice of self-care to their teachers so that they too can reduce the impact of stress. Studies show that teachers experience high levels of stress and the concerning effects can be burnout and or student achievement being negatively impacted (Arens & Morin, 2016; Timms et al., 2012). Not only have researchers studied the impact of teacher stress, but they have also determined it to be a contagion, which can impact the classroom learning environment and school culture (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016). Schonert-Reichl (2017) and Greenberg et al. (2017) underscored the importance of maintaining a level of social-emotional health and well-being for both teachers and students alike



that would include the explicit reduction of stress levels. The study was designed in such a way that gave a better understanding of how the principals' modeling or encouragement of self-care supports teachers and the learning environments.

The third purpose of the study was to understand participants' awareness of their emotional intelligence and how they use that to support not only themselves but their staff. As defined by Boyatzis and McKee (2005), emotional intelligence has the same components of social-emotional health including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management and resonant leaders are leaders with emotional intelligence but also who are "in turn with those around them" (p. 4). The researchers argued that emotionally intelligent leaders who are also resonant are better able to manage their moods, which are contagious, and feelings of others. This portion of the study was not meant to determine if participants are emotionally intelligent as deemed by predetermined questionnaires, but to determine if they think they are emotionally intelligent and how they use that to sustain the social-emotional health of their campus.

The purpose for exploring self-care practices regarding managing well-being and how a principals' modeling or encouragement of such a regime benefits their teachers, was based on multiple studies on both social-emotional health and emotional intelligence. Schonert-Reichl (2017) found that emotional well-being of teachers has a direct benefit to student learning. Teachers who are socially-emotionally healthy are better equipped to handle the stressors of being a teacher and are better able to manage the emotions in a classroom that can impact learning (Brackett & Patti, 2016). A principal who is able to practice empathy or relationship management skills and offer help their teachers' emotional awareness would be able to cultivate the social awareness in the classroom (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005). Researchers have also point

out that principals who are considered to be emotionally intelligent are better able to support the well-being of the teachers and improve teacher efficacy, school culture, and student achievement (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Durlak et al., 2016; Pierce, 2014). While understanding how principals manage stress is important, it is also vital to know how social-emotional health or emotional intelligence play a role.

There are multiple ways to address the overall question or topic of this study. Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies have been used to research the issues of teacher and principal stress, social-emotional health, and emotional intelligence, but the majority of them have been quantitative with a numerical analysis of survey data. When using a quantitative methodology, surveys, observations, or an analysis of data are used in nonexperimental studies (Creswell, 2012). An experimental quantitative study would observe and collect data on an experimental treatment such as principals practicing mindfulness; therefore, after careful consideration, this researcher determined that asking principals the same survey questions based on predetermined assumptions, attempting to observe stressed behaviors, or asking principals to practice mindfulness did not seem feasible or appropriate for the questions in this study.

It is well known that what works for one person under stressful situations does not necessarily work for the next person. For this researcher, it appeared to be much more valuable to understand principal stress and how it is handled or not handled from the principal's perspective and not the researcher's perspective. This researcher does not hold any particularly predetermined assumptions on what best practices of self-care is or how principals should model self-care to staff. This study, however, considered what principals have in common around the phenomenon of stress with the purpose of learning from them about what are the best practices they use to manage stress for both themselves and their staff.

While the majority of studies in the review of literature for this study are quantitative, a more exploratory and open-ended approach was needed to get to the crux of what principals experience and to understand how they support teachers who are also experiencing stress. Pierce (2014) recognized the value of quantitative studies on principal emotional intelligence and its impact on teacher efficacy but noted the need for more qualitative studies. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015) also asserted that there is not enough research with open-ended questions for participants to answer around the coping strategies used in the teaching profession.

There are numerous school administrator stories to be told, and according to Marton (1986), a phenomenology study is designed to help the researcher understand the “what” and “how” of lived experiences. By using a phenomenological research design and examining the phenomenon of stress through the lived experiences of principals, the researcher would be able to tell the story of experiences and common understandings of principals. Furthermore, and at the heart of this study, a qualitative approach to collecting data allowed for a more descriptive account of principals’ experiences (Elliott & Timulak, 2005). By focusing on this one area of a principals’ professional life, a deeper and more personal knowledge of how the practice of self-care may influence the psychological, mental, and social-emotional well-being of educators in today’s schools was gained.

Considering the focus of this study and the way the research questions are designed to understand better the phenomenon of stress and how principals’ self-care plays a role in their life, a transcendental phenomenological study was determined to be the best way to obtain the answers sought out in this study. According to Moustakas (1994), this approach insists that the researcher bracket his or her own experiences and preconceived ideas of dealing with the phenomenon, which then allowed the participants true experience to naturally surface. For

example, the first research question of this study seeks to understand how important it is to the individual principal, not the researcher, to personally focus on their social-emotional health when considering their stress levels. This question was designed to connect the researcher's initial thoughts of principal stress levels to a deeper mastery of how the principals experience stress in a way that removes the researchers' own experiences of stress as noted by Moustakas. Also, each of the questions were "what" are you experiencing and "how" are you experiencing questions, which were designed in a semistructured open way to encourage participant voice and complete story to emerge as suggested by Moustakas.

This researcher believed that a transcendental phenomenological design was necessary to force the bracketing of personal experience as a principal who experiences stress and to achieve a comprehensive and natural flowing understanding of others' experience around the phenomenon. Answering such questions gave this researcher an insight into the world of stress and an understanding of why addressing principal stress is so important. Going back to the studies of Arens and Morin (2016), Flook et al. (2013), O'Neal et al. (2017), Penrose et al. (2007), Schonert-Reichl (2017), and Wells (2015), a clear connection between principal stress and student achievement is recognized. Organizational effectiveness at the school and district levels is also no doubt impacted by principals who are suffering from any of the stress-related psychological complaints noted by Wells (2015). How principals handle their stress levels is essential to understand as well.

### **Research Population and Sampling Method**

The general population for this study was principals of elementary and middle schools. This researcher was interested in participants who were at a minimum in their third year of administration to ensure that the stress studied is stress that exists beyond that of a new principal.

This helped differentiate stress from learning the role a new job to that of the on-going stress of the responsibilities of being a principal.

Purposeful sampling was used for the study, and more specifically, criterion sampling. Given (2008) noted that purposeful sampling is practically synonymous with qualitative research just because the researcher seeks out data from individuals who are purposefully selected and linked to the study's objective rather than collecting data based on a common theme or disposition of a large group. However, in the study, each participant must meet specific criteria. The targeted population was both male and female principals in California. Other demographics such as cultural, economic, political, or religion was not as important in selecting participants as location and accessibility to the researcher as well as years of experience.

For this study, this researcher invited potential participants who are at least in their third year of principalship and feel a sense of on-the-job stress. As suggested by Daniel (2012) for a phenomenological study, 14 participants were selected. For convenience purposes, participants in this study were selected from a geographical area that was accessible by this researcher. This was important considering the methodology involved personal interviews.

The geographic area included several school districts in California. As recommended by Jayanthi and Nelson (2002), participants were selected based on a professional relationship this researcher has or had in the past with them. This researcher either currently works with the participants, worked with them in the past, or established a professional relationship with them through educational conferences and seminars.

Snowball sampling was a possibility by asking principals already selected for the study to recommend other principals who may also be interested in participating. Snowball sampling or adding participants to the study would be a way to not only help maintain saturation, it also

would help to negate the risk of limiting diverse experiences of participants as noted by Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora (2015). Marshall et al. (2013) asserted that saturation occurs when no more new information can be gathered when bringing in new participants. To ensure this saturation, more than the recommended 6–10 participants were recruited to counter the possible participant-withdraw from the study, and 16 principals were invited.

Marshall et al. (2013) noted that the quality of interviews was essential; therefore, data collected could have an influence on the needed sample size. The professional relationship and established trust between researcher and participants positively influenced the outcome and forthcoming of information during the interviews in this study. The relationship also ensured the validity of the collected data, which is the researcher's obligation.

### **Instrumentation and Data Collection Source**

For this qualitative study, as the researcher, I was the main instrument. In order to collect the data in this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study, survey questions, semistructured interviews, and an analysis of observational field notes were needed. Additionally, observational field notes provided data triangulation when analyzed with the two self-reporting data points of surveys and interviews (Frey, 2018).

Considering that this study was a qualitative transcendental phenomenological design, reflexivity, or the “researcher's engagement of continuous examination and explanation of how they have influenced a research project,” was vital to the trustworthiness of the study (Given, 2008, p. 748). Bracketing of thoughts and feelings that may have influenced the design of the study can be done by journaling and is something I found to be helpful. Galletta (2012) noted that allowing the participants themselves to give new meaning to the direction of the study's

focus and a “reciprocity between participant and researcher” (p. 25) allowed for clarifying questions to be asked and for the deepest of understanding.

To start, the participants were asked to complete a survey using Qualtrics that was then used to guide a semistructured individual interview with each participant. The online survey questions gathered demographics, experience as an administrator, level of stress participants feel, and if they practice self-care. Survey question topics included the following (a complete list of questions can be found in Appendix C):

- Gender, Race, Ethnicity
- Age
- Years served as an administrator
- School level served
- Average hours a week the participant works
- Level of stress experienced due to professional responsibilities
- Explicit practice of self-care
- Understanding of emotional intelligence

Once the Qualtrics online survey was completed, this researcher scheduled an interview with each participant. There are several ways to conduct qualitative interviews including unstructured, semistructured, and structured (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Elliott and Timulak (2005) asserted that qualitative interviews should be focused but not too structured; therefore, after careful thought, semistructured interview questions were selected for this study. Giving the participants a few of the interview questions ahead of the semistructured interview helped to guide the direction of each interview.

Each interview was guided by researcher-created, open-ended questions that allowed the conversation between the researcher and participant to progress naturally and uncover the personal experience and essence of the phenomenon at hand. For example, if a participant responded to the preinterview survey questions that he or she experiences high levels of stress, this researcher wanted to explore and probe for elaboration. This elaboration was different from a participant who responded that he or she only experiences moderate levels of stress. With individual interviews, a deeper and more personal understanding of how principals experience and handle stress occurred.

The semistructured interview gave this researcher the opportunity to ask follow-up questions as the unique conversations with each participant took place. The predetermined questions guided the interview to progress towards the goal of the study, but the semistructure of the interview enabled investigation and a deeper understanding of individual's experiences through a more casual conversation to take place rather than a question and answer format (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015). For a complete list of interview questions used, see Appendix B.

### **Data Collection**

The three forms of data collection to ensure triangulation were an online survey, an individual one-on-one interview with participants, and an analysis of field or observational notes collected during the interviews. Impressions of the principals' office or self-care objects that were readily available and used by the principal were noted and cataloged. For a template of data collected during these particular field notes and artifact analysis, please see Appendix D.

The following steps were taken for data collection to ensure thorough in-depth documentation and detailed semistructured interview collection protocols:



1. As necessary for Concordia University–Portland, an IRB approval was obtained.
2. Once IRB approval was granted, this researcher obtained a site authorization from each school district.
3. Once district authorization was granted, an informed consent form was generated, (Appendix H), including a brief overview of the study, the participant’s rights, the researcher’s intent for participant well-being, and an explanation of data storage (that the data was stored electronically on a password protected drive and will be destroyed after three years). The informed consent form also included a clause that explained to participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time (see Appendix A).
4. This researcher emailed an information packet and a thank you note to each participant. The information packet explained the three ways data were collected and how each process works, including the online survey, interview, and observational field notes taken during the interview.
5. An online survey link with the preinterview questions and three open-ended questions was emailed to each participant asking them to answer within one week. Online survey questions can be found in Appendix C.
6. This researcher then scheduled individual interviews with the participants to take place at a time requested by the participant. This researcher traveled to the participant’s school office location. The individual interviews were expected to last up to two hours.
7. The interview questions were emailed to the participants one week ahead of time, along with a reminder explanation of what the interview would entail.

8. During the semistructured interview, open-ended questions were used with follow-up probing questions to gather enough data on the participants' feelings and thoughts on their experiences around the phenomenon at hand. As Galletta (2012) suggested, questions asked in the beginning of the interview allowed for more narrative or storytelling from the participant and focused on the lived experiences of the participants, but then moved to more theory-based questions.
9. During the interview, this researcher paid close attention to how the participant was sharing their experiences and was consciously attuned to when it was a good time to interject clarifying questions or refocus questions and when it was a good time to allow the participants to continue, as suggested by Galletta (2012).
10. To maintain and encourage reciprocity, this researcher also consciously kept in mind the communication space needed between data and theories that are driving the study. It was recognized that this may have come in the shape of a participant sharing experiences of feeling stress from triggers or experiencing consequences of that stress that were not mentioned in the review of literature. This also involved the researching listening for important points that need to be noted for clarification later (Galletta, 2012).
11. Toward the end of the interview, this researcher critically engaged the participant in the data he or she provided as it related to the theories within the conceptual framework. Together, this researcher and participant examined expected and unexpected meaning known as "dialectical theory building" (Galletta, 2012, p. 94).
12. The interviews were recorded using this researcher's recording device. For confidentiality purposes, each participant selected their own pseudonym to be used

throughout the note taking and transcription. In the final manuscript, participants were listed as numbers.

13. This researcher took field notes during the interviews regarding impressions of the environment (school and office) and asked about specifics of any self-care items or routines within the office or school site that the principals has access to. As needed, photographs were taken of those items.

14. For member-checking, once the interviews were transcribed, participants received a copy for any follow-up or corrections that they wanted to make.

### **Identification of Attributes**

Identifiable attributes that defined the study consisted of principals who self-reported levels of stress and at what degree (high, medium, low). Each principal had a minimum of three years administrator experience and was either at a public elementary school or middle school. Each principal was from the same geographic area. Principals in the study had the common responsibility to manage teachers who potentially experience stress. Each principal was familiar with the concepts of stress and social-emotional health. Another identifiable attribute was at what level principals were aware of their emotional intelligence and how they used that for the betterment of their overall school culture.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

As noted by Moustakas (1994), there are specific steps to analyzing data in a phenomenological study including epoch, transcendental phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of meaning. To begin, epoch, or the process of setting aside the researcher's ideas, experiences, and understanding of the phenomenon at hand, is crucial in a transcendental phenomenology study and was the first step this researcher took when analyzing

data. In other words, “the everyday understandings, judgments, and knowing’s are set aside, and phenomena are revisited, freshly, naively, in a wide-open sense, from the vantage point of a pure or transcendental ego” (p. 33).

In 1913, Husserl called this the “natural attitude” or the belief that the way people, including researchers, perceive the world is based on their experiences and is their reality (as cited in Dodson, 2015). To come to a true sense of what participants experience, researchers must bracket those beliefs to maintain a phenomenological attitude (as cited in Dodson, 2015). For this study, the use of epoch was the first step of data analysis, and throughout the entire study bracketed this researcher’s assumptions or personal understanding of experiencing stress and practicing self-care. This allowed for fresh eyes while studying the phenomenon.

During the second step of transcendental phenomenological reduction, and by using the participants’ descriptive explanations of experiences with the phenomenon, this researcher gained an understanding of the participants’ textural or actual experiences with the phenomenon. To ensure the right descriptive explanations were shared, a pilot study with a mock interview took place prior to the study. An interview that aligned with the study’s design took place with a principal who did not participate in the actual study. By holding this pilot study, this researcher was able to change and adjust interview questions as deemed necessary by both researcher and the principal who participated. More on this pilot interview is explained under the section involving the validity in this study. Audio recordings of each interview was transcribed into verbatim notes using NVivo 12 data-management software, with a conscious removal of repetitive, overlapping, and irrelevant statements during transcription. The data-management software program was also used to produce codes and patterns and help the researcher make meaning out of the data.

During the third step of imaginative variation, codes and patterns were reduced further into common themes to help analyze the data. During this reduction step, Husserl noted that the researcher uses intuition or “reflective awareness” to understand the essence of the phenomenon by considering all the different ways that phenomenon could present itself or be experienced (as cited in Dodson, 2015). It is during this step that the researcher became familiar with the data.

Again, using the NVivo 12 software, visuals of charts and tables allowed for a different way to experience the data. It was in this step that a deeper understanding occurred. Taking each step together and analyzing the data carefully led to an overall synthesis of meaning. After the initial problem, the purpose of this study, the research questions, and instruments to gather data were determined, analytical methods to analyze that data were also considered. Please see Appendix E for an explanation of how data was collected and analyzed for each of the research questions.

### **Limitations and Delimitations of the Research Design**

**Limitations.** Even with careful steps put into place, there is no doubt that limitations impacted the outcomes of this study. As noted by Creswell (2012), a phenomenological design is meant to understand participants’ lived experiences of a phenomenon with as little as five participants. However, such a small sample size is limiting in the sense that it only provides an understanding of a few. A sample size that is small can also lead to what can be considered an elusive saturation (Marshall et al., 2013). To combat this struggle for saturation within a small sample size, principals from multiple cities in California and multiple school districts with varying demographics participated to give a wide range of experiences to understand. While the phenomenological sample size may be relatively small, it was diverse enough to provide rich data, including years of experience as an administrator, varying degrees of background, diverse

student populations served, diverse staff personality, and no doubt different experiences of work-related stress.

An additional limitation was the connection participants have to this researcher. Considering the participants were mostly from a professional “group” of principals this researcher knows and has access to, data from outside this known group of principals was limited. Having other principal participants outside of a specific geographical area in California share their experiences may have provided different results. Also, while an empathic approach to analyzing data limits outside ideas from altering the data of a participants’ experience, it did call for interpretation of what was not explicitly stated, thus there was potential for empathic interpretations. This is especially true considering this researcher’s familiarity with the phenomenon at hand. To combat this, it was suggested that the interviewer and interviewee work together to understand what the interviewee is feeling and thinking (Flick, 2014). There was also the possibility that the participants were reluctant to honestly share about their experience of stress. To negate this, this researcher took all cautionary steps to ensure confidentiality.

As noted earlier, an essential aspect of a phenomenological study is the ability for the researcher to bracket their ideas of the topic at hand. While Flick (2014) noted the researchers must limit outside views, beliefs, and experiences, Snelgrove (2014) also noted it is not possible to remove one’s experiences entirely from the study, especially one with self-awareness. This would be this case in this study, since this researcher is a principal with self-reported stress and certainly has a personal bias on the phenomenon of stress.

**Delimitations.** As an intentional limitation, only principals with three or more administrative years were selected to be a part of this study. This limitation was put into place to differentiate new job stress from on-going job stress. Additionally, only principals’ self-reporting

levels of on-the-job stress were selected to continue in the study. All of the participant principals in this study who took the survey questions reported that they experience stress in their role as a principal, so no principals were eliminated from continuing. For nothing more than ease of access, the participant principals were also limited to the geographical area that was accessible. All of these delimitations narrowed the data source.

### **Validation**

A phenomenological study is designed in a way that is valid and establishes credibility and dependability with little errors (Creswell, 2012), but especially when considering the researcher's desire to understand individuals' experience dealing with stress and the impact that can have on their work and personal life. Work-related stress is a very personal topic that deserves the approach of a phenomenological design, but it also deserves care and trust to ensure the credibility and dependability of outcomes. The transferability of this study design to other populations of principals is also an essential part of the validity. To achieve this, this researcher implemented three steps: triangulation from multiple data sources, member checking via transcribed interviews emailed to the participants, and a pilot review of interview questions.

**Credibility.** To establish data triangulation, data was collected from three sources of data: survey questions, interviews, and observational field notes. Survey questions provided background information from each participant that could guide the direction of the individual interviews. The interview provided abundant data on the participant principals' experiences. Observational field notes were carefully and systematically written regarding impressions of the principals' offices (environment) or self-care items used to support the principals' social-emotional health added dimension to the overall data as proposed by Frey (2018).

According to Embraced Wisdom Resource Group (2015), validity and trustworthiness (credibility) in qualitative research can be established through interpretive validity that involves the participants reading what the researcher wrote to check for agreement. Creswell (2012) also noted the value of “member-checking,” or the participants reading their transcribed interviews to correct mistakes or misunderstandings, to help ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. Interviews for this study were recorded and transcribed verbatim to later share with participants for member-checking. The process of recording and transcribing the participants experience not only provided the needed trustworthiness for credibility, it also kept this researcher focused on describing the phenomenon from just the participant’s perspective and helped to reduce researcher bias.

**Dependability.** To ensure the ability of the interview questions, a pilot study was done first. The interview questions were piloted by a separate interview of a principal who did not participate in the actual study. The purpose of the piloted interview was to test the interview questions and their ability to address the overall research questions, align with the theories of the study, and get a good sense of how long the interview would take. The pilot interview was conducted on October 14th and was audio recorded using a computer application called Mico Notes and Google Docs using the pilot study questions found in Appendix F.

Taylor et al. (2015) noted that audio recordings is a common way for qualitative interviews to be captured as it is easier than researchers trying to record data from memory. The researcher should be aware of background noise, battery issues, and even where the recording devices are situated when using this form for data collection. These were all factors that this researcher wanted to determine and experiment with before the actual study. As Creswell (2012)



asserted, it is the researcher's role and responsibilities to anticipate such problems and do everything to address them.

During the first pilot interview, this researcher met with the principal at her home and went through all of the interview steps, including emailing the principal the questions in advance, recording the interview, and transcribing on Mic Notes. The interview lasted 1 hour and 15 minutes with little disruption, although the transcribing application did not work the entire time. After the pilot interview, a complete analysis of the questions was completed to take into consideration whether the questions addressed the overall research questions, wordiness, clarity, and balance so as not to lead the participant toward a desired answer. Overall, several of the interview questions were revised. Both versions of interview questions can be found in Appendix B. Also, because of the transcribing issues using Mic Notes, this researcher switched to NVivo 12 software for the study.

### **Expected Findings**

The expected findings of this study were broken down and understood by the research questions listed as follows:

1. From the principals' perspective, how does one personally focus on social-emotional health and self-care to explicitly reduce high levels of on-the-job stress and the related consequences?
  - a. Multiple studies in the review of literature found on-the-job principal stress not only exists but has increased over time (Hauseman et al., 2017; Klocko & Wells, 2015; Wells, 2015). Considering these studies, this researcher anticipated results to be very similar, and participants in this study would self-report high levels of stress due to the demands of being a principal.

- b. With respect to the five social-emotional competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Durlak et al., 2011), it was expected that principals would report that they practice self-care in multiple ways based on their self-awareness and need for self-management, but that those practices would not be considered enough to reduce their overall stress levels and improve their social-emotional. It was also expected that principals would report there is not enough time, or they have too much job responsibility to include regular routines of self-care (Wells, 2015).
2. From the principals' perspective, how does explicit focus and modeling of self-care to teachers for the betterment of their social-emotional health impact the overall school climate and student success?
  - a. According to several studies (Arens & Morin, 2016; Jennings et al., 2014; Jennings et al., 2017; Wong et al., 2017), teachers' stress levels have also increased over the years directly impacting student learning and overall teacher burnout. Due to these findings, it was expected that the principals would acknowledge their teachers' stress levels and even acknowledge the negative impact teacher stress has on student learning. However, it was not expected that the principals explicitly and regularly model self-care to their teachers for their sake of social-emotional health.
3. From the principal's perspective, how does the ability to use emotional intelligence help reduce personal stress or the stress of others?

- a. The conceptual framework theories of Goleman and Boyatzis' (2009) mixed-model and resonant leadership work of Boyatzis and McKee (2005) both point to the need for leaders of school to have high levels of emotional intelligence. Goleman's definition of emotional intelligence is "an ability to recognize, understand, and use emotional information about oneself that leads to or causes effective or superior performance" and "the ability to recognize, understand and use emotional information about others that leads to or causes effective or superior performance" (as cited in McCleskey, 2014, p. 77). Considering these definitions and theories developed in Goleman and Boyatzis' work, it was expected that principals would report that they understand the importance of emotional intelligence as defined in the practice of self-care but may not have the explicit guidance or support to maintain renewal and growth in emotional intelligence that reduces stress levels.
- b. While it was expected that principals would self-report high levels of emotional intelligence, it was also expected that principals do not receive regular training or encouragement to improve or use this understanding of self and others to reduce stress levels on school campuses.

### **Ethical Issues**

After thoughtful consideration, the following issues have been identified as possible ethical issues related to the study and sample population. Also included are the ways this researcher addressed those issues. The issue of confidentiality is an ethical issue because of the sensitive and personal nature of one-on-one interviews and the work-related topic of stress. Participants talking about their stress levels may feel vulnerable regarding the connection that

stress has on their work production or performance and the potential that has to embarrass them (Given, 2008). To address this, the American Psychological Association (2018) and United States Federal Government guideless on research and publications where human participants are concerned were closely followed. As well, the informed consent steps, including participants being fully informed of all steps of the study beforehand and their right to withdraw at any time, and the institutional approval and informed consent for recording of audio interviews were followed.

The issue of data management procedures and ways to store and maintain paper and electronic data is an ethical issue because of the need for secrecy and confidentiality. To address this, anonymization was maintained. Also, individual raw data was stored on a password-protected computer with firewalls and surge protectors and was not be shared or opened by anyone other than the researcher, as recommended by Given (2008). Nondigital material such as photographs and researcher's notes were digitized in a password protected digital files as also suggested by Given (2008). The data (including consent forms) will also be destroyed via shredding and permanently deleted from the computer after three years, as required by Concordia IRB; except for audio files, which were destroyed as soon as the transcription was complete.

The issue of participant fatigue was an ethical issue because that would negatively and directly impact the participant but also adversely impact the findings. To address this, this researcher met each participant at a time that best suited the participant. As insisted by the American Psychological Association (2018), participants must be informed ahead of the study the duration of their role. The researcher adhered to this by informing the participants that an interview block of two hours was needed for the study. The researcher also offered breaks from questioning every 20 minutes to allow the participant time to refresh and kept the interview

questioning at a pace that was comfortable for the participant. None of the participants became too tired to continue, so rescheduling for another time was not needed.

While there were risks, there were also benefits. Participants benefited directly from the study by gaining knowledge and understanding of how other school administrators handle the phenomena of stress, practice self-care, and support their teachers who may also be experiencing stress levels. As a community of administrators who may not know one another and will never meet, they will still feel like a part of a community who participated in solving a significant and very current problem in education. Giving principals a voice and allowing them to tell their story of why and what gives them stress empowered them in a way they may not have experienced before.

Indirectly, there is a curiosity in the field of education of why administrators and teachers alike leave the field. This study's outcome and findings may lend understanding and support for solving this problem or encourage further research. Educators in our country are under extreme stress and the consequences of stress impact everyone involved including students and their achievement.

**Conflict of interest assessment.** There was minimal conflict of interest, risk, and discomfort for participants in this study. This researcher was not in an evaluative role with the participants that could result in coercion or influence and did not have any power over them. This researcher's role with the participants outside of the researcher-participant role has been a principal-principal role in the same school district. As insisted by the American Psychological Association (2018), and through informed consent, principals who were invited to study had the absolute right to decline participation as well as the right to withdraw from the study at any time

and for any reason. There were no economic benefits in the outcome of the study that benefits this researcher.

**Researcher's position.** Maintaining stress levels for the sake of social-emotional and physical health is imperative for principals and their teachers. Studies showed that high levels of stress impact student learning and understanding this phenomenon may help to improve that. As an elementary principal in overlapping geographical area as the participants with similar job experiences, this researcher may have had a biased opinion. To minimize bias, the validity strategies noted earlier such as member-checking, multiple data sources, and bracketing were used. Also, while the role as a principal involves evaluating others, it did not include evaluating other principals; therefore, this researcher's position did not involve coercion.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological qualitative study was threefold: to explore and better understand principals' first-hand and lived experiences of on-the-job stress and their practices of self-care to negate that stress, understand if principals find it important to model the practice of self-care to their teachers to reduce teacher stress levels, and understand principals' awareness of their emotional intelligence and how they use that to support not only themselves but their staff as well. The sample population was principals in California who had at least three years' experience as an administrator. The three data collection sources were an online survey, one-on-one interviews, and an analysis of field notes. The conceptual framework and theories of Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) prosocial model and Goleman and Boyatzis' mixed-model on emotional intelligence as well as the continued work of Goleman and McKee (2005) on resonant leadership guided each of the three data sources.

## Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

### Introduction

Principal stress exists whether the principal has been an administrator for three years or 19 years, and regardless of the level of stress principals feel or the way they self-care, teachers on those school campuses are also feeling stress. Researchers have explained that there are physiological or psychological consequences for on-the-job stress, and when the job requirements begin to demand too much, the stress levels can increase to unmanageable levels (Beusaert et al., 2016). Researchers also point out that principal and teacher stress can impact the culture of the school or classroom and ultimately student achievement (Aritzeta et al., 2015; Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Goldring et al., 2015; Klocko & Wells, 2015; Pierce, 2014; Taliadorou & Pashiardis, 2015; Wells, 2015).

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological qualitative study was to explore and better understand principals' first-hand and lived experiences of on-the-job stress and their practices of self-care to negate that stress, understand if principals find it important to model the practice of self-care to their teachers to reduce teacher stress levels, and understand principals' awareness of their emotional intelligence and how they use that to support not only themselves but their staff as well. The conceptual framework found in Chapter 2 guided how the lens and the following research questions shaped this study:

RQ1: From the principals' perspective, how does one personally focus on social-emotional health and self-care to explicitly reduce levels of on-the-job stress and the related consequences?

RQ2: From the principals' perspective, how does explicit focus and modeling of self-care to teachers for the betterment of their social-emotional health impact the overall school climate and student success?

RQ3: From the principal's perspective, how does the ability to use emotional intelligence help reduce personal stress or the stress of others?

This researcher's role was to be an observer and have a better understanding of a familiar topic. This researcher's background, experience, and perhaps motivation towards understanding principal stress is because of personal experience as an administrator for the past eight years. However, it was necessary to bracket and epoch personal feelings, thoughts, prejudgments, and experiences to observe principal stress and self-care from fresh eyes as suggested by Moustakas (1994). To help do this, Moustakas suggested that researchers reflect quietly on thoughts and judgments as they arise and continue self-dialogue to maintain a reflecting bracketing state.

This chapter includes descriptions of the sample population, the research methodology, data analysis, and a summary of findings. The data analysis was derived from both textual languages, but also through an analysis of charts and graphs that help show coding occurrences and relationships between themes and participants. These charts and graphs are found throughout this chapter and in the appendices. This chapter concludes with a presentation of textual and structural descriptions of the participants' experiences of the phenomenon of on-the-job stress and the explicit focus or lack thereof of self-care.

### **Description of the Sample**

The sample size in this study was based on the recommendation for a transcendental phenomenological qualitative study to have between five and 25 participants who have experienced the phenomenon at hand (Creswell, 2012). Using purposeful sampling enabled this



researcher to be selective with participants and seek those who were administrators for a minimum of three years, currently principals at an elementary or middle school, and working in California. Homogenous sampling allowed for the opportunity to work with a subgroup of principals who self-reported the experience or phenomenon of stress. Snowball sampling as needed ensured the correct number of participants for the study (Creswell, 2012). Once permission was granted from the three participating school districts' superintendents, requests to participate in the study were sent via email to 20 principals, and 14 positively responded. There was no need to utilize snowball sampling.

While the demographics of each school district are not exact to one another, that variable was not relevant to the overall findings of the study. Each school district and each school in the study had diversity among their student populations, including multiple races and culture, special education, English language learners, newcomers, and socio-economic differences. The range of students at the principals' school sites were less than 350 to over 500, and the range of teachers on staff was approximately 18 to 35 members. Table 1 shows the demographic breakdown of the participant principals.

Table 1

*Participant Demographics*

Number of Principals	Number of Years in Administration	%
2	3–5 years	14.28%
7	6–10 years	50.00%
3	11–15 years	21.44%
2	16 + years	14.28%
Total: 14		100%

**Research Methodology and Analysis**

Transcendental phenomenological qualitative research captures and analyzes the participants’ experience with a phenomenon and provides insightful knowledge as long as the researcher is careful to bracket their judgments and experiences (Creswell, 2012). This bracketing allowed this study to be guided by the participants’ personal experiences and their understanding of stress and perceived need to practice self-care, and not those of the researcher (Moustakas, 1994). A transcendental phenomenological qualitative approach was selected as a research method not only because of the need for epoch, but also for the meaning of the word phenomenon itself.

According to Moustakas (1994) the word phenomenon comes from “the Greek word phaenesthai, to flare up, to show itself, to appear” constructed from “phaino, a phenomenon means to bring to light, to place in brightness, to show in itself the totality of what lies before us in the light of day” (p. 26). This method gave clarity to the day-to-day stress principals experience as it appears or flares up throughout their days, weeks, and school year. It is also a method that gave voice to the participants in a way necessary to achieve the overall goal of this research.

Triangulation of data, as explained by Creswell (2012), was achieved with an online Qualtrics survey, a semistructured interview, and a collection of observational field notes that included photographs of artifacts found in principals' offices. An email with a Qualtrics link was sent to participants that asked them to complete the survey within two weeks. Once they completed the survey, a one-on-one interview was scheduled with each participant at his or her convenience and at their school office. This scheduling email also included several sample questions of the interview so they could be thinking about the interview and asked them to prepare for roughly two hours of interview.

Consent forms were signed by each participant, and audios of the interviews were recorded on a digital recording device. Any photographs of relevant artifacts located in the principal's office were taken with this researcher's camera. All data were uploaded into NVivo 12, which was used to help organize the data into over 80 codes. Using in vivo coding captured participants experiences verbatim and is a suggested method of coding for new researchers such as this researcher (Saldaña, 2015).

The interviews were the primary way to understand participants' experiences, and because they were semistructured, this researcher had the opportunity to probe and ask questions to understand individual experience further. This research method provided an abundance of in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences, and it provided the data needed to answer the research goals (Given, 2008). Interview transcriptions were cross-referenced with the audio recording, and corrections were made as required.

Once transcriptions were completed, the audio recordings were deleted from the hand-held device. Transcriptions were emailed to participants for member-checking and validation of data with no changes requested by the 14 principals. Observational field notes and the online

survey results were also analyzed and connected to the emerged codes and themes. Overall, this provided a deeper understanding and accuracy of the analysis of participants' experiences.

As suggested by Moustakas (1994), analysis of the data happened through the steps of epoch, phenomenological reduction, and imaginative variation. In phenomenological reduction, bracketing, horizontalization, clustering of themes, and textural description were all sub-steps taken by this researcher. Horizontalization, or "horizons of a phenomenon," were captured during the in-depth and multiple readings of the 14 interview transcripts and analysis for significant statements. Moustakas noted that there are many horizons within a phenomenon. Each horizon is abundant with textural data. What started with reflection, did indeed become a deeper appreciation of principals' experiences as the analysis of data deepened. During this process, this researcher reduced repeated or overlapping ideas from each principal, and the 250 pages of textual data was reduced to the horizons that ultimately became the themes central to the study.

In vivo coding and clustering into themes took place within the program of NVivo 12. In the beginning, over 80 codes, a number unmanageable, needed to be clustered and themed into a more manageable size for analysis. The conceptual framework for this study and the work of Boyatzis and McKee (2005), Goleman et al. (2002), and Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) guided the themes that arch across all participants experiences. In the end, 10 themes emerged.

Reduction allowed this researcher to see how the participants actually "experience" principal stress rather than confuse it with my "conceptualization" of principal stress (Given, 2008). In Moustakas' (1994) second step of data analysis, imaginative variation means to seek meanings of all the data collection and provide a textual description of the phenomenon by using "imagination, frames of references, polarities, and reversals, and divergent perspectives" (p. 97).

It is encouraged to carefully examine any perspective of the phenomenon in order to fully understand each individuals' experience (Moustakas, 1994). This was accomplished by carefully reading through each transcript and survey result no less than three times, which provided new insight and perspective each time. Analyzing the participants' experiences and keeping in mind their connection to one another helped to produce a composite textural description of the phenomenon that is presented at the end of this chapter.

Reflection and examination of the textural descriptions also provided an overall structural understanding of the phenomenon and experiences. These structures are based on "time, space, materiality, causality, and relationship to self and to others" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 99). Just as analysis leads to a composite textural description, it also results in a composite structural description that will be noted later in this chapter. Imaginative variation was an important step because it helped shed light on the many possibilities of themes that feed into the phenomenon and how, in this case, the stress came to be the experience it is for the principal group in this study.

### **Summary of the Findings**

**Theme Development.** Ten themes emerged through numerous initial in vivo codes or sub themes and were aligned to one or more of the research questions (see Table 2). After the initial coding process, the researcher looked for patterns of themes, as suggested by Given (2008), in order to reduce the number of groupings. For example, when considering the extent principals experience stress, the theme principal stress helped to answer research questions one and two and resulted from the in vivo codes of frequency of stress, job responsibilities that cause stress, awareness of stress, and levels of stress. The theme of a principal's impact on school culture came from of the initial codes of principals manage emotions to reduce campus stress,

moods are contagious, principal personality impacts school culture, and SEL programs on campus. This theme provided data for all three research questions as noted in Table 2. Likewise, the themes of a social-emotional healthy principal and their self-care practices helped to address all three research questions and included in vivo codes such as the ability to handle emotions, be at their best, feeling lazy, exercise, or talking to someone.

When considering the data around teachers' stress levels, the themes of principals know when their teachers are stressed, job responsibilities that cause teachers stress, and the role of the principal to model self-care helped to answer questions two and three. Initial coding or sub themes of these three themes included teachers complain more, sense a culture shift, discipline issues, report cards, parent-teacher conferences, small gifts, practice self-care in meetings, or provide positive feedback to teachers. After analysis of the multiple sub themes, the three themes around teacher stress emerged.

And finally, when considering principals' emotional intelligence, the themes of principals understand and explicitly use EI, resonant leadership, and principals' impact on student learning addressed all three research questions and included in vivo codes of relationships, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, compassion, hope, mindfulness, and engagement. All of the themes were guided by the conceptual framework and working theories of Jennings and Greenberg (2009) prosocial classroom model, Goleman et al. (2002) emotional intelligence mixed ability model, and Boyatzis and McKee's (2005) work on resonant leadership. Below is further description of each theme and Table 2 shows each of those themes and how they align directly to the research questions.

Table 2

*Themes and Connection to Research Questions*

Themes	RQ 1 What level of stress? How it came to be. How it impacts.	RQ2 What level of stress? What modeling? How it impacts.	RQ3 What understanding? How is emotional intelligence used? How it impacts.
Principal stress	X		X
Principals impact School culture	X	X	X
Social-emotional healthy principal	X	X	X
Self-care	X	X	X
Principals know when teachers are stressed		X	X
Job responsibilities that cause teachers stress		X	X
Role of principal to model self-care to Reduce teacher stress		X	X
Principals understand and explicitly use EI	X	X	X
Resonant leadership (ability to renew/effective leadership)	X	X	X
Principal impact on student learning	X	X	X

**Presentation of the Data and Results**

During the analysis of data, horizontalization was the first step in phenomenological reduction and helped to ensure that statements from all participants were weighted equally (Moustakas, 1994). The process of recording participant statements, or horizons, supported the

themes that emerged during that process. How they connect to the overall goal of the study are explained in the following sub section of each theme.

**Theme 1: Principal stress.** Principal stress can be understood as physical or mental exhaustion that leads to an inability to perform their job duties (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 2014), burnout (Darmody & Smyth, 2016), or even physical ailments such as headaches and high blood pressure (Wells, 2015). This theme helps to understand RQ1 and RQ 3. Of the 14 principal participants, all reported experiencing stress at some point in their role as principal. One participant reported “low” levels of stress, and three reported “medium” levels of stress. That left 10 of the participants reporting both “high” and continuous levels of stress due to their role and job responsibilities as a principal.

Participants reporting low or medium levels of stress came from two out of the three school districts and had six or more years of experience as a principal. Participants reporting high levels of stress came out of all three school districts and had the full range of experience from 3 years to 16+ years. Principal 7 explained the feeling of stress by saying, “You know sometimes it’s like whoa this is too much right now!” Principal 13 likened stress to the sense of “hitting a wall” and then sitting there and asking, “How is one person supposed to do all of this stuff?” Principal 4 reported that stress is “that feeling when you want to split yourself in six different ways but can’t.”

Job responsibilities are a major cause for stress levels and a sub-component of this theme. Participants reported which job responsibilities cause them stress, which were coded into 12 sub-categories. These sub-categories can be referenced more closely in Figure 1 (see Appendix G). Of the 12 responsibilities, employees are the most mentioned, including evaluations and dealing with employees. “The amount of time it takes to make a quality evaluation process is extremely



stressful and overwhelming,” said Principal 1. On the other hand, Principal 2 explained, “I would say managing adult issues like adult egos and adults’ discomfort with change. That is probably the one that causes the most stress.” Principal 13 had a similar response, “I think what gives me the most stress is managing adults and in particular adult behavior who are not doing their job up to a certain level and standard that we expect our employees to have.” Overall, 13 participants made 17 separate references about their duties involving employees making working with teachers and support staff the most reported stressor in a principal’s job description.

Also ranking high on reported stressors and directly connected was the job responsibility of paperwork and tasks and not having enough time and too much to do. Principal 3 stated:

Here’s all the things that we need to do, and I said out loud. I don’t remember if I said it to another principal or even to the superintendent. Like, “How am I going to do all of this? I’m not going to have time for that.”

Principal 10 shared:

I would say what is the thing that is giving me stress lately is the amount of busywork that is being put on us from the district office and for no reason other than they want it done. It has nothing to do with the learning at this school. That becomes very stressful for me.

Principal 1 added, “Tasks. They tend to get in the way of being an instructional leader.”

Likewise, Principal 7 stated, “Reports.”

Other job responsibilities that cause participants stress ranged from parents and students to school safety. For example, Principal 8 shared:

I’d say any student discipline . . . not any, but some of the more significant to discipline. That’s a stressful area because you’re not really sure how the parents are going to

respond. Some of the parents that are more reasonable respond in a nice way and you problem solve together to support the student. Other ones think you're like the bad guy because you found out their kid did something wrong and even if you talk about the developmental aspect of their growth or changing what we're trying to do to support and how we're partners we're working at a team they still don't want to hear because you are the bad guy.

Principal 14 explained:

I think around safety, I feel very responsible for the safety and care of the children and staff here. And when there have been safety concerns or issues that have come up over the years; that creates a lot of stress.

Another sub-component of the theme of stress is how participants know they are stressed. During the interviews, participants were asked if and how they know when they are experiencing stress. A multitude of responses were given. Although there are 13 reported ways principals respond to stress, four ranked number one: anxiety, pressure or sensations in the chest, mood changes, and not being at their best to do their job. Principal 6 said: "I feel anxiety. I feel like oh my gosh I'm going to go. I've gotta go! What's next? What's next? And, when I get into that mode, it's definitely an indication that I'm stressed." Principal 9 shared: "I've definitely had panic attacks; not where I'm like uncontrolled, but I can't catch my breath." Principal 1 expressed, "It's just this anxiety-ridden feeling that just builds right up into my chest." As far as mood changes go, Principal 8 had this to say: "If I'm short with someone it is because I am feeling anxiety." Principal 14 added: "I am definitely less patient with my children [when I am stressed]."

As for not being at their best at work when they are stressed, Principal 13 explained it this way, "When I feel stressed, I cannot focus as well on the task. I don't have the endurance and

stamina to finish it and I have trouble focusing.” Principal 5 said, “I feel stress in my mind and sometimes become more forgetful because the lists start getting longer.” When asked, Principal 6 replied, “I am absolutely not at my best when I’m in stress-mode.” Principal 2 related stress back to how it impacts her ability to work with others:

I am not at my best, and I always want to be at my best in terms of working with students, parents, or teachers. There are days when a lot has happened, and I find myself thinking it is not a good idea to reply to this email.

Principal 11 noted that she knows she is “probably not at her best when stressed.”

Principals also experience an inability to sleep and headaches when their stress levels at work are high. Principal 12 reported that she struggles with “lack of sleep” and an inability to stop thinking about work. Likewise, Principal 7 said, “And then when you do sleep, you dream about work. I can’t escape this life.” Principal 5 also struggles leaving work at work, “Sometimes I’ll have sleepless nights because I am thinking about it [the stress].” Both Principal’s 11 and 14 get headaches when stressed but also clench their jaws and feel stress in her shoulders and back. This tension felt in the body is experienced by principals both while at work and at home, especially while trying to sleep

Principals also experience medical issues due to their levels of stress. Principal 4 said: “I feel my heart beating fast and actually I am on a diet for high blood pressure for the past year.” Principal 3 shared that she experiences vertigo when stressed. Principal 9 had to take time off from fatigue and shingles believed to be due to her high levels of stress.

**Theme 2: Principals impact school culture.** The environment, and how effectively principals, teachers, and students all work together, or how they interact and engage with one another is considered the school culture (Durlak et al., 2016; Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016;

Pierce, 2014). While interviewing the participants in the study, it was important to understand their levels of stress and what caused that stress, but then it was important to understand how they perceive themselves and their stress levels to impact the culture of their campus. This theme helped to answer all three research questions.

Overall, principals are very aware that their emotions and moods set the tone, and it is their responsibility to manage those emotions, so they appear to have everything under control. Principal 4 shared, “I do think you as a principal do affect the culture of the school and that you have to be careful.” Principal 3 stated that her “MO is to keep calm and keep the school calm” and her staff appreciates that about her. Principal 13 asserted that as the leader of his school, his moods and emotions are “contagious and touches the entire culture of the school.” Principal 7 explained the awareness of his impact and the pressure he feels from that in more detail:

You are supposed to have this nice smile on your face and grab hands with a nice grip and say good morning like everything is fine, but you may have just gotten off of the phone with a parent yelling at you. I am very cognizant when I step outside my office door or when a teacher comes in, I am there for everybody.

Principal 11 shared the importance of not letting stress or the negative impact the teachers which would ultimately impact the culture:

What I try to do is through the years there have been times that have been very stressful, but I don't allow it to touch the teachers. I manage it myself. I never let them know the chaos and the crazy that was going on.

Principal 2 explained why her (and others) impact in so powerful:

Whether it is our students, teachers, or staff, they're all watching us every single minute. You know watching how we make decisions. What decisions are made when we are

confronted? They are watching who we align ourselves with. How we handle parents, teachers, and students. They are always watching how I handle situations.

Principal 8 stated, “If I’m short with my staff, it is going to trickle down and have a snowball effect.”

Principals also impact their school culture through the social-emotional programs or foci that they bring to their campus. Participants were asked about current social-emotional programs or explicit professional development made available, specifically for teachers but also for their students on campus. While the participants understand the positive benefit by having those types of programs available for their teachers, not all schools in this study have access to them. Systematic programs with a focus specifically meant for teachers’ social-emotional health was not clearly present, and all the participants recognized the need for more programs and support for their teachers. Social-emotional learning programs that support students in the classroom, however, are discussed and included in this study because participants believe teachers are impacted, even if indirectly, by those social-emotional learning programs.

PAX Institute, a mental health program for the state of California designed to help students in the classroom with self-regulation, is a program offered in the schools of one of the school districts in this study. A one-time professional development for the district’s fourth- and fifth-grade teachers began and then was offered to all grade levels. Other than that example of district-wide effort, the participant principals in this study can use their own decisions and judgement for implementing social-emotional programs on campus and rely on their Parent Teacher Associations to financially support them. Regarding that point, Principal 4 stated, “I feel it is my responsibility making sure teachers are in tune with their students and families.” Principal 12 specifically mentioned the five social-emotional competencies, “I think it is really

thinking about how am I helping and supporting those five social-emotional competencies of my teachers and what am I doing to make sure my teachers are receiving that support?” As an example of this, Principal 6 had this to share:

Yes, I know I need those social-emotional tools for my staff. It’s my responsibility again being the coach. It’s the emotional side to help us see things and our students in different ways. I just started a conversation with my co-workers telling them I am getting this high number of newcomers now who have moved from their country for political reasons. I definitely need that support not only for the students, which I think we’re not equipped to help, but also, we can’t forget the teachers because they didn’t go to any academy to learn how to help these students. Some of the teachers have only been teaching 2, 3 or 4 years and you know this whole border situation they see on CNN? Well, now they’re actually seeing those students in their classrooms. And yes, I do feel the responsibility to make sure that I support them but right now I’m not even equipped myself.

Four participant principals in this study have brought programs that focus on relationship building for students but also for students and teachers into the classroom to their site. Principal 6 explained, “We have had professional development on building relations with students through morning meetings and developing social-emotional protocols to be a part of everyone’s day.”

Three principals mentioned a program that teaches students how to be a good friend and a good example and gives them skills to work things out. Principal 2 brought mindfulness to her entire community: “I brought mindfulness not just to staff but to the students. I also did a parent workshops and made sure that my staff understood that this was part of a systematic approach and part of the culture.”

Principal 5 shared that she has been trying to bring more social-emotional health programs to her school: “We need to focus more on it, and I need everyone to be on the same page.” Her concern was around the half-day of professional development, and one time from DO “is not enough and makes me feel like we are all over the place. We have students that need support, and I think it is important that we take the time to learn more about how to handle those types of behaviors and students.” She also spoke of students who were suicidal, emotionally traumatized, behavior issues, or coming to school lacking academic skills.

Plans to move forward with social-emotional learning programs to support both teacher and student was what Principal 3 was planning for the summer: “I want to send at least four teachers to the training. I want them to feel like this is important, and it will help my stress level.” As well, Principal 14 is already thinking about the next school year:

This is something we need to explore for the coming year and do some training for our staff around social-emotional work. I have a committee of teachers and parents that are looking at different opportunities and trainings for us to invest as a community. To help our kids and staff and it is my role as an administrator take the barriers and obstacles away.”

Principals are clearly aware of their impact on the social-emotional health of their campuses and either have practices in place or plans in place to make continuous improvements.

**Theme 3: Social-emotional healthy principal.** Analyzing the theme of a social-emotionally healthy principal and what that means to the participants helped to answer all three research questions. The participants were not given a definition of a social-emotionally healthy person; instead this researcher wanted to hear their thoughts. This practice of epoch allowed the participants’ experiences to be captured.

The participants have multiple ways of seeing themselves socially and emotionally healthy. Of the seven different ways they feel emotionally healthy, the top three are having the time and bandwidth to feel connected to friends, family and staff; being at their best and feeling confident at work; and feeling healthy with energy for the job. Within those top three categories, over 20 different responses from all the participants were coded.

Principal 4 reported feeling her best when she is “able to plug into her family instead of being constantly plugged in to work.” Principal 6 shared that not only are his family members and friends important to him, but he feels social-emotionally healthy when he can connect with his “colleagues and teachers positively and has time for that balance.” Principal 8 said:

A social-emotional healthy principal is available to their staff members because staff members have a hard day too and you know people will come into your office and just break down. In that moment, I have to be able to do well with that when they are struggling.”

Other participants reported being at their best was a sure sign they are in a healthy state of mind, spirit, and body. “You want to be cheery, happy, and calm in order to be at your best, and that is a part of being socially and emotionally healthy,” shared Principal 1. Principal 3 explained, “I feel healthy when I am touching all the facets of me, and right now I am not able to do that.”

And, Principal 9 noted that it merely means that she feels confident and content.

**Theme 4: Self-care.** The theme self-care addressed all three research questions and finishes the focus of principal stress. How and if principals explicitly self-care knowing the levels of stress they are experiencing and the impact it can have on their health and the culture of the school was central to this study. It also points to if principals are in tune with the concept of



self-care not only for themselves but for their staff, which will be addressed later in this study. It addresses all three research questions.

Again, this researcher did not prescribe what would qualify as self-care practices but instead allowed the participants to share what they did to reduce the feelings of stress. All 14 principals shared at least one thing they do to reduce stress, but some shared multiple ways. Figure 2 in Appendix G highlights this.

Overall, 13 different activities were mentioned and coded as stress-reducing, with three highlighted as significant. Thirteen out of 14 participants mentioned that talking to a friend or spouse is their preferred way of reducing stress. Principal 1 explained it this way, “It’s better for me to just talk about it with an apology afterward saying, ‘thanks for hearing me vomit.’ But then I feel better.” He has multiple people he can call or go to and does so on a regular basis. Likewise, Principal 2 expressed the importance of going home to someone to talk to:

My job is so involved with long hours and it is because of his support that I’ve been able to do that. Some of the problems I am facing he has a completely fresh perspective that sometimes I may not even have thought about.

Spending time with friends and family was also very high on principals’ lists of self-care activities. “Just playing with my children, you know, playing games and not taking myself so seriously but instead concentrating on them and what they need and now dwelling on myself and my own internal world as much,” said Principal 12. Exercise also helps to reduce stress. Principal 8 stated, “Exercise is my priority because if I don’t maintain that, everything else is going to go. I cannot do this Job without maintaining my physical health and that social-emotional health is more working out for me.” Similarly, Principal 6 said, “On a Saturday morning after these long stressful weeks, I just get on my bike and go for two-three hours. It’s

great exercise for my physical health but it's equally important for my mental health." Other activities mentioned included deep breathing and mindfulness, eating well, listening to music, watching television or a movie, house projects and hobbies, or being outside.

**Theme 5: Principals know when teachers are stressed.** This theme was a transitional point of the study, as it brought the focus to the second part, which looked briefly at teachers' stress and their social-emotional health. It addressed RQ 2 and RQ 3. The goal was to understand if principals know when their teachers are stressed and what sense of responsibility, they feel to support teachers' social-emotional health.

Responses from principals are organized into four categories in descending order (a) a sense of a culture shift on campus, (b) teachers tell their principal, (c) more student discipline, and (d) teachers complain more. Principal 1 explained teacher stress as a "general sense of tension on campus" and something that can "tailspin" if he does not get a hold of it quickly. Principal 2 stays in tune with her teachers by "taking the last 5 to 7 minutes of lunch for face time to sort of check in and get a feel of the lunchroom." Principal 7 referred to the calendar and said, "You can always feel when it is February and March on his campus." Similarly, Principal 11 said she can always tell when the vacation is near.

Teachers also share with their principals when they are feeling high levels of stress. Seven out of the 14 principals revealed that their teachers have just shared that information with them by either coming to the principal's office or stopping them in the hallway.

**Theme 6: Job responsibilities that cause teachers stress.** Teacher job responsibilities are connected to teacher stress and again shed light on the awareness principals have about their teachers' stress level. This theme addressed RQ 2 and RQ 3. The number one stressor for teachers, according to the participating principals, is supporting students' academic, physical,

social, and emotional needs. Eight out of the 14 participants asserted that their teachers feel stress because [they] are in IEP meetings with parents and their attorney,” said Principal 4. Or, “It causes teachers stress in SST meetings when we do not have enough budget or services to really provide what these kids need,” replied Principal 5. Or, “I am expecting my teachers to provide intervention support . . . and they may not have the capacity to do that” stated Principal 2. And finally, “They just get burned out by certain kids,” explained Principal 12.

**Theme 7: Role of principal to model self-care to reduce teacher stress.** How principals see their role in reducing teacher stress connects the relationship principals have with their social-emotional health to that of their teachers. This third and final part of the study looked at the principals’ understanding and use of emotional intelligence to negate both their own and others’ stress levels. Each participant was read the following statement and asked if they agreed and if they had any thoughts they would like to share:

Social awareness, self-awareness, relationship management, self-management, and decision-making skills are all social emotional competencies. Research shows that teachers experiencing stress or exhaustion can directly impact the learning that takes place in the classroom and that there is a need for teachers to have a strong social emotional skillset when teaching. What does this statement mean to you, and how do you see your role as a principal in the social-emotional health of your teachers?

Five participants not only agreed with the ideas behind the read statement but are also currently engaging teachers in activities that teach, model, or support their social-emotional health. Six participants agreed with the statement and while not currently doing things to engage teachers’ social-emotional health with intent, they are able to point to things they do either as needed with individual teachers or have plans in the near future for addressing the whole staff. Three

principals admitted that they either had not given the work behind the research any explicit thought or that they needed to do a lot more work in this area for their teachers.

Principal 2 explained, “A teacher who is stressed out may be taking a toll on how they are operating, how they teach, what kind of interactions they have with students and especially students they are frustrated with.” She further explained how her mindfulness program helps both teachers and students. Principal 9 shared that she supports her teachers socially and emotional any way she can so they can support their students in the classroom. She sits with students and goes into the classroom to support and that “allows those teachers to support those kids with their social-emotional skills and be responsive in ways I know they can.” Principal 9 also provides voluntary professional development for teachers that is intended to help both the teacher and student. Principal 13 has spent time talking to and training his staff about this very thing in staff meetings and reflected this way:

I would go back to what I said earlier when I’m feeling stressed, I can’t focus as well on the task. I don’t have that endurance and stamina to finish it. It’s the same thing [for teachers]. I believe there’s research to show that stress has that effect on the brain. And so, when you’re in a classroom with 30 kids and you’re feeling stress and exhaustion, your follow-through on things isn’t as good and your focus on things isn’t as good.

You’re not noticing certain things in the classroom that maybe you would have normally.

You may not notice a child’s demeanor because your own demeanor is kind of down. And although Principal 8 provides monthly staff wellness activities for his staff and includes regular teacher-lead social-emotional professional development in staff meetings, he still said they have more to learn: “I think we still need to have some more learning around that. Some

more professional development around social emotional learning and the stress you [the teacher] can bring into the classroom.”

Principal 1 shared, “It is obvious to state if a teacher is struggling socially and emotionally, it is going to impact the kids and their learning indirectly. As leaders, we want to help that.” He continued, “It is important that I see and connect with every teacher every day even if it is just to say ‘hello’ because if I don’t, I feel very disconnected from them.” Principal 7 reflected on the read statement and connected it to the staff lounge and a rise he senses in teacher complaints: “We probably do not want to hear what they are saying in there, but there have been issues this year where teachers are saying ‘it’s too much’ and then I know I need to do something.” When asked if he felt responsible to change the culture when that is happening, he agreed, and his preferred strategy was to rely on his relationships he has with his teachers and speak to them individually on how he can help. Principal 11 was able to put the statement into her own words:

I do agree with that, and the people who are less socially or emotionally sound have the hardest time dealing with kids because sometimes they trigger the student’s misbehavior. As a principal, you have to be aware of that, so you know if it is the kid or the teacher. Regardless, the child is not learning because they are being sent out of the classroom and typically to my office. It’s a problem when the teacher’s stress level escalates the problem instead of de-escalates. We are looking at doing some professional development next year around this.

Principal 10 reflected in this way with, “That’s really interesting. I am not surprised to hear that but that’s really interesting.” Principal 12 understood the statement and wants to think about how to move forward:

That makes me wonder how am I helping to support those five competences for my teachers and what am I doing to doing to make sure each teacher is receiving the sort of support they need. Just thinking about this one teacher who had a really rough beginning of the year and had a lot of behavioral needs with about five students in her class and just you know she was just surviving at the end. And it did have a huge impact on student achievement on the other kids that are in the class because her energy was being spent helping to support the ones that are needing more behavioral support.

The participants also were asked how they model self-care or what do they do specifically to reduce their teachers' stress (see Figure 3 in Appendix G).

**Theme 8: Principals' understanding and explicit use of emotional intelligence.** The theme of emotional intelligence helped to answer all these research questions and uncovered components of relationships, self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness, as emotional intelligence as defined by Goleman et al. (2002). This theme is essential because of the insight it provides on these "soft skills" such as relationship building, and how they have an impact on reducing stress levels on a school campus. Of course, to do that, principals must first be aware of themselves and others.

On relationships, Principal 2 shared, "I know almost all of my staff members' families, and I invest in them that way. I build relationships. That's a priority for me and I think it is the most single important role of a principal." Principal 8 explained:

I feel like if I wasn't available for my staff my relationships would be a mess. I wouldn't have the relationships that I have with the people on my campus without keeping them in my mind and in my heart. As I have conversations with them, I've been able to be

socially and emotionally aware and available to them and when that starts to slip, it's because I've hit my maximum somehow [and that is not good].

It is crucial to Principal 12 that she has relationships to the extent that staff know she cares. "It's really important to me that they see me as the instructional leader and yes, I do evaluate them, but it's important to me that they know that I care about them."

Principals help to reduce their stress, build better relationships, and understand what is going on with their staff through self-awareness. For example, Principal 5 stated, "I'm becoming more mindful when I need to do some deep breathing." Principal 12 gave herself grace:

I react to situations, and my emotions and feelings aren't always going to be positive. You know that's just part of being human, but I think feeling regulated and like I can always pull myself back to that place is important and knowing that there is going to be ups-and-downs and peaks and valleys for sure that would be in any job. But just knowing that I have the skills to come back to that centered kind of place is helpful.

Likewise, Principal 9 shared that she is aware of her need for improvement but that she is working on that:

I'm always kind of checking in with kind of how I'm feeling depending on what's being thrown at me, and it might take a little longer to calm down because I'm responding and reacting to it. It is hard not to react emotionally sometimes.

Principal 6 related his self-awareness as a need and to his staff:

I mean it's almost like a trickle-down. If I'm not self-aware to be able to know my influence and impact on teachers, how are the teachers going to know how to their influence is going to be on their students?

Principal 13 also connected his self-awareness to his staff:

I do self-reflect, and I do get frustrated, but everybody has their own perspective and reality. I take my social-emotional health in two parts. The social is my interactions with others both positive or negative, and the emotional are how I am regulating my own emotions.

Principal 14 was self-aware and self-reflected:

I feel like I have not mastered it by any means but I'm better at recognizing when it's [emotional reactions to stress] happening so that I don't project it onto other people. I have not mastered it, but I'm definitely getting much more tuned to that. And so I can listen to people when they're stressed or frustrated and not hold on to that.

Self-management or the control of emotions is a way that principals can maintain their focus on the goal or task at hand in mostly a positive manner. Principal 2 elaborated:

I try not to work in the evenings. Sometimes I find myself checking an email even though I won't respond. It is hard to say, "Okay, School is school, and home is home," but I do my best to maintain that."

While at school, Principal 5 said, "I'll close the door because it was stressful for me, and I want to make sure that I have that neutral demeanor at all times." Principal 6 said it directly and to the point, "I am not sacrificing anymore."

For the emotional intelligence component of social-awareness, incidences when the principal showed an understanding of their teachers' emotional needs and spoke of the need to respond to them with empathy or care as noted by Goleman and Boyatzis and cited in Livesey (2017) were coded. Principal 3 shared an incident of racial tension between two staff members when she felt it essential to navigate through in such a way where both employees felt heard and validated. Principal 4 recognized that "all people want to be heard, and they want principal



support.” Principal 10 shared that she feels confident when supporting teachers’ emotional need. “The emotional toll my teachers experience is what I’m really good at supporting.”

**Theme 9: Resonant leadership (ability to renew/effective leadership).** Resonant leaders, as described by Boyatzis and McKee (2005), are emotionally intelligent leaders who are aware of their emotional needs and their employees. They are positive thinkers who emulate hope, show compassion for those around them and understand the importance of renewing through mindfulness. This theme had sub-components of compassion, hope, and mindfulness, and helped to answer all three research questions. Figures 4, 5 and 6 in Appendix G provides a break-down of each these components.

Within the sub-category of compassion, all participants showed great compassion for both staff and students. As described by Boyatzis and McKee (2005), it is the act of caring for someone and understanding their feelings but also having the willingness to act on those feelings. Principal 14 stated, “I want them to know I care about them, and I am paying attention.” Likewise, Principal 1 said, “They just need to know as a person I really care about them.”

Principals also want their teachers to know that they are listening to them and show their staff compassion in that way. Principal 5 shared, “I feel like listening to them is the most important thing and putting yourself in their shoes.” Principal 4 added, “I am respectful to the teachers and recognize that they want to be heard.” It is essential to Principal 7 that his teachers know this. “I feel their stress and want to help them. I see someone is having a hard day and I stop them and as ‘Hey, how can I help?’” Principal 11 dropped everything, and will every time, to take one of her staff members to the hospital. Principal 12 knew one of her teachers was struggling and said, “I was thinking about her even when I wasn’t at school about what I could do to support her more.”

Principals show compassion towards students as well. Principal 9 works with children to ensure that they get the best outcome during discipline issues. Principal 3 keeps snacks in her office for students who come to school with little or no food. Principal 10 will stay with children late until parents can pick them up and says, “You’re the mom, you’re the nurse, you’re the mediator.”

The sub-component of hope is important to the overall goal of this study because as Boyatzis and McKee (2005) explained, “In a hopeful state, we have more physiological as well as emotional resiliency, and we are mentally and physically prepared to deal with challenges” (p. 151). Hope is explained as “elation about the future, excitement, happiness, optimism, dreams, and aspirations, belief in yourself to make a change, and in touch with those around you” (p. 152). Principals were asked to share emotions that they feel as a principal. Those thoughts can be viewed more closely in Figure 5 (see Appendix G), but overall, more positive emotions were expressed than negative, and many principals expressed how much they love their work.

The final sub-component of mindfulness is a specific stress-reducing strategy that counters the Sacrifice Syndrome talked in more detail in Chapter 2. Of the 14 principals, only four mentioned any type of mindfulness practice. Boyatzis and McKee (2005) described mindfulness awareness of self and in a cognitive state that allows leaders to be in tune with their “bodies, minds, hearts, and spirits” (p. 113). Principals may benefit and reduce their stress through other activities, but for this study, mindfulness practices are a necessary and researched component of being a resonant leader.

**Theme 10: Principal impact on student learning.** How principals view their impact on student learning helped to answer all three research questions and gives insight to how principals view their role as the leader of their campus. This is important, as it ties directly to how

principals manage both their stress levels and their teachers. While analyzing responses, four codes emerged in descending order: (a) relationships, (b) tone and culture, (c) engagement, and (d) support teachers.

Principal 1 said, “Building relationships with kids as a principal is really important.” Principal 5 agreed with that statement and added that her impact comes from the relationships she builds with students every day. Principal 9 tells her students, “I value what you are doing. I value that piece of writing or math that you are working on.” It means everything to Principal 10 that her students know she is there for them. As well, Principal 11 said, I help when I know the student is having problems.” Principal 14 makes it a point “to go into classrooms and visit kids and have conversations with them especially if they appear lonely or disconnected.”

Principals are leaders of a school and impact the culture as well and that includes the culture for students. Principal 4 stated “My leadership affects the tone and culture and what expectations of students we have.” He asserted that he has impacted the school through his work with the vision and mission and making sure to put that into practice. Likewise, Principal 12 reported being the instructional leader who is setting the tone but “also helping to push forward the goals of the school site.” Principal 8 works to change the culture, so it is “what is best for kids.” And Principal 13 makes sure his presence in the classroom holds teachers accountable to what their students are learning and that standards are being addressed.

### **Composite Textual-Structural Description**

A composite textual-structural description is “based on the individual textural description and imaginative variation. Construct for each research participant a textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of the experience, incorporating the invariant constituents and themes” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). Through analysis of data collected from 14

participant principals in this study, the themes and verbatim text informed this researcher's composite textual description and group experience of stress, practice self-care, and explicit modeling self-care to their teachers.

Addressing RQ1, all of the participant principals in this study experience some level of stress in their role as a principal. Ten out of the 14 participants experience high levels of stress, and three experience medium stress levels. Only one participant reported low levels of stress. Participants in this study also found many job responsibilities to cause stress, but overwhelmingly, any duties dealing with personnel caused the most stress followed closely by paperwork and tasks.

All of the participant principals in this study are self-aware of when they are feeling stress and have no problems articulated what the experience of stress feels like and the consequences they experienced. Some have suffered the effects of stress more than others. For example, six participants reported one to two effects from stress, seven reported three to four reactions to stress, and one principal had five responses to stress. Anxiety, pressure, or sensations in the chest and mood changes plagues these participants the most.

Also addressing research RQ1, it is, of course, important to understand how principals explicitly practice self-care to negate these consequences, and there are many different options reported. All participant principals in this study have at least two ways they prefer to use to reduce stress, and three principals reported as many as seven different ways. It is noted that this does not necessarily mean stress is reduced to healthy levels.

The participants also reported a lack of time available in their schedule to do the self-care practices that they enjoy or felt needed to relax. To counter their busy schedules, several participants, especially those with small children at home, take advantage of the brief time they

have in the car ride home to listen to music or audio books. Less than half of the participants spoke of some degree of mindfulness practice.

Addressing RQ2, all of the participant principals in this study are tuned into their teachers and know when and even why they are feeling levels of stress. The most common way for principals to recognize teachers' moods and stress levels is by being keeping attuned with the culture of the school. They can actually feel when the culture shifts. More than half of the participants recognize the need to do something to change the culture or feeling on campus immediately. Some have become aware of teacher stress because teachers come in to tell them, which speaks to the relational component of a principal's workday and where they thrive the most. All of the participants reported a sense of responsibility to help reduce their teachers stress levels, yet there was a varying range of ways principals engaged teachers in ways to do that, and very few principals reported modeling self-care practices to their staff to explicitly reduce their stress.

Addressing RQ3, data on how principals understand and use their emotional intelligence is based on their relationships, self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness. By far, the most active component of emotional intelligence as relationships. All principals build, thrive on, and value their relationships with teachers, students, and even parents very much. It is where they have the most positive emotions about their role as an administrator. Followed closely behind is the principals' ability to understand social-awareness and the use of this soft skill to reduce the stress of others. The component of self-management had the fewest participant responses.

A resonant leader is a leader who can renew and sustain challenges and stressful leadership situations (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005). Of the three components necessary to be a

resonant leader, compassion, hope, and mindfulness must be present and practiced, and only a few participant principals in this study showed abilities in all three areas. The bulk of the participants appeared to have elements of compassion and hope, and a couple participants showed responses in only compassion. Of the three components, all principals showed strong compassion for students and staff.

### **Summary**

This chapter explained the research methods used in this study and an analysis of interviews from 14 participating principals. The data produced 10 themes: Principal Stress; Principals Impact the School Culture; Social-Emotional Healthy Principal; Self-Care; Principals Know When Teachers are Stressed; Job Responsibilities that Cause Teachers Stress; Role of Principal to Model Self-Care to Reduce Teacher Stress; Principals Understand and Explicitly Use EI; Resonant Leadership (ability to renew/effective leadership); and Principal Impact on Student Learning.

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological qualitative study was to explore and better understand principals' first-hand and lived experiences of on-the-job stress and their practices of self-care to negate that stress, understand if principals find it important to model the practice of self-care to their teachers to reduce teacher stress levels, and understand principals' awareness of their emotional intelligence and how they use that to support not only themselves but their staff as well.

Chapter 5 provides a discussion about the meaning of the results of this study and their relationship to the literature. Chapter 5 also presents an analysis of the limitations of this study and implications for future practices. The chapter ends with recommendations for further research and a conclusion.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological qualitative study was threefold: to explore and better understand principals' first-hand and lived experiences of on-the-job stress and their practices of self-care to negate that stress, understand if principals find it important to model the practice of self-care to their teachers to reduce teacher stress levels, and understand principals' awareness of their emotional intelligence and how they use that to support not only themselves but their staff as well. Fourteen principals from three different school districts in California participated in this study. Semistructured interview questions were designed around the review of literature and from the conceptual framework.

As an educator and principal, it was this researcher's position that there was a need for research regarding principal stress. There was a distinct gap in the current literature, particularly in the United States. In this chapter, this researcher summarizes and discusses the results of this study, connects results and themes of this study with the current literature, recognizes any limitations of the study, discusses significant implication the results may have on practice, policy, and theory, provides recommendations for further research, and a conclusion to this study.

### **Summary of Results**

Principals are leaders of their school sites, managing people and decisions daily, and leadership can no doubt be stressful. The working theories of Goleman et al. (2002) on emotional intelligence and leadership, Boyatzis and McKee (2005) on resonant leadership, and Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) prosocial model helped to guide the conceptual framework, research questions, interview questions, and understanding of emergent themes in this study. These

theories provided a foundational understanding of the overall purpose and objectives of the study, and once the data was collected, these theories guided the analysis of results.

The research questions for this study were as follows:

RQ1: From the principals' perspective, how does one personally focus on social-emotional health and self-care to explicitly reduce levels of on-the-job stress and the related consequences?

RQ2: From the principals' perspective, how does explicit focus and modeling of self-care to teachers for the betterment of their social-emotional health impact the overall school climate and student success?

RQ3: From the principal's perspective, how does the ability to use emotional intelligence help reduce personal stress or the stress of others?

After thoughtful consideration, it was determined that a qualitative transcendental phenomenological study with semistructured interviews would best answer the research questions because the methodology would capture the participants' lived experiences. The conceptual framework guided the forming of research questions, which then guided the interview protocol and survey, which in turn produced a deeper understanding of principal stress and their practice of self-care.

Within the conceptual framework, Goleman and Boyatzis' mixed-model on emotional intelligence, and in particular Goleman's definition of emotional intelligence indicates that emotionally intelligent leaders have a skill set that allows them to not only understand their emotional information but that of others, and because of that, leaders are able to make decisions that lead to superior leadership (as cited by McCleskey, 2014, p. 77). Goleman and Boyatzis' theory guided the analysis on the phenomenon of stress felt by principals and their awareness of



their teachers' stress. Coupled with that is the work of Boyatzis and McKee's (2005) on resonant leadership. According to their work, leaders who lead with compassion, hope, and the practice of mindfulness are able to sustain the stressfulness of their job responsibilities. This theory guided the analysis of how principals practice self-care as well as their overall stress levels. Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) prosocial model highlighted the importance of social-emotional healthy teachers and the impact of stress in the classroom. This theory was the framework used to analyze the need for principals to understand when and why their teachers feel stress and explicitly take steps to reduce the consequences.

Seminal literature since the beginning of the study was limited, but there were two studies recently published that were essential to note, since they are relevant to the findings of this study. The first is a study about health care professionals and the high levels of stress they experience, but more importantly, it was a look at how they manage their stress levels. Low, King and Foster-Boucher (2019) found that while the health care profession can be very stressful, strategies such as (a) reflective practice, (b) storytelling, (c) peer support, (d) professional support, and (e) mindfulness practice all help to build resiliency. The researchers argued that these practices help to reduce and "overcome workplace difficulties" (p. 324). This researcher found the principals in this study to be extremely reflective in their principalship and practitioners of self-awareness. They too found talking to peers or others to be helpful, and almost all principals mentioned this as a coping strategy when dealing with stressful situations. Also, those principals that did incorporate some practice of mindfulness also found that to be beneficial. However, Low et al. suggested storytelling and professional support to be helpful stress-reducing strategies, but this researcher found it to be missing from a principal's work-life in this study.

Kaufman's (2019) study on principal stress and coping skills in the Midwest Metropolitan areas is another recent study. The study included 320 public school principals and sought to understand their stress levels, cognitive flexibility, and frequency of physical symptoms. While the study showed principals as not having an elevated level of stress, the researcher concluded that this surprising finding could be connected to the fact that these principals self-reported to participate in multiple stress-reducing activities. These activities were themed as (a) exercise, (b) spending time with relationships, (c) meditative activity, (d) alcohol, and (e) therapy. Kaufman (2019) further separated the coping strategies into problem-facing, emotional-facing, and maladaptive and noted that principals have learned to navigate through stressful situations.

This researcher observed that the principals in this study also use similar stress-reducing activities, including exercise and spending time with loved ones. Of the 14 principals involved in this study, one reported low stress but also acknowledged exercising regularly. Similar to Kaufman (2019), this researcher discovered that principals strive toward resiliency in ways that work best for them and learn how to manage the daily stress of the job.

## **Discussion of Results**

The qualitative transcendental phenomenological design leads to an insightful study of principals' experience with on-the-job stress and practice of self-care. The 14 principals in this study had varying backgrounds of administrative experience and school sizes. Their lived experiences, reactions to, and thoughts about stress led to 10 overall themes: (a) principal stress, (b) principals impact the school culture, (c) social-emotional healthy principal, (d) self-care, (e) principals know when teachers are stressed, (f) job responsibilities that cause teachers stress, (g) role of principal to model self-care, (h) principals understand and explicitly use emotional

intelligence, (i) resonant leadership, and (j) principal impact on student learning. Each step in this study was deliberate and focused on the goal and helped to answer the three research questions.

**Principal stress.** Through the first part of the interview protocol, this researcher attempted to understand how much, if any, stress principals felt and the “why” behind those experiences. All principals in this study acknowledged some level of stress, and most reported high levels. The researcher also allowed the participants to share how that stress felt.

During this study, the principals were asked to explain their job responsibilities that causes them the most on-the-job-stress. They were asked to share how they knew they were experiencing stress. The responses from principals aligned with Wells (2015) who noted occupational stress is linked to many psychological complaints such as, “headaches, high blood pressure, sleeping difficulties, heart palpitations, heart attacks, dizzy spells, breathing problems, nervous stomach, anxiety, and depression” (p. 338). The principals in this study are very aware of when they are feeling stress and have a good understanding of why they reach that point. While this information was crucial to the overall study and the next step in the interview process, the data did not directly answer any of the research questions.

Next, this researcher sought to uncover principals’ practices of self-care. The data collected from this portion of the interview protocol highlighted the principals’ practice of self-care but also their use of emotional intelligence skills, and in particular, the component of self-awareness. Because this was a phenomenological study, data was gathered from the principals’ perspectives and lived experiences and not this researcher’s, so I did not define what “self-care” meant to the study or more importantly to this researcher. However, in doing this, some of the responses regarding practices of self-care may not be considered a universal stress-reducing

strategy that can be found in other studies. For example, a principal reported she listened to music on the drive home, or many principals pointed out that they had quotes of positivity as reminders in their offices. Regardless, every principal in this study had multiple practices of self-care that they considered helping reduce their stress levels.

These findings are important for the entire community of educators including principals, teachers, students, and the administrators at the district office level. The findings can also guide the next steps in research. Principals are clearly experiencing stress and living with the negative consequences of that but giving them the social-emotional tools, that studies show will reduce their stress or at least help them to manage those feelings, is “why” these findings are valuable. If the community of educators explicitly recognizes that first, principals are experiencing high levels of stress and secondly, principals are very aware of that stress and trying to manage the consequences on their own but not always successfully, then a plan can be put into place at the district-level.

Principals recognize how their stress can negatively impact the culture of the school and ultimately students’ achievement, but it is not clear if district administrators are aware of this. The value in a plan to teach, share, or encourage the use of multiple researched self-care practices and emotional intelligence skills is the proven fact that reduced stress levels support everyone on campus, including students, to perform at their best. The more ways principals understand how to practice effective self-care, the better off everyone will be.

**Teacher stress.** According to Jennings and Greenberg’s (2009) prosocial classroom theoretical model, teachers need to regulate their own emotions to achieve maximum student success in the classroom. All principals in this study are aware of their teachers’ stress levels and could articulate what part of the teacher role causes the most stress. Principals reported that their

teachers experience high levels of stress, and that can have a negative impact on the school culture. Principals asserted that they can *feel it* when their staff stress levels are high, because overall complaining and student discipline increases.

Gathering this data was foundational to the overall study, but it did not directly answer the second research question. Nonetheless, what this data did do is show how principals use their emotional intelligence skills such as relationship management and social awareness to navigate their campus and school culture, which helps to answer research question three. Through data analysis, it was determined that all protocol questions could help to answer the third research question on emotional intelligence.

Although teachers experience stress, and principals are aware of that stress, not all principals explicitly have practices in place to model self-care or reduce the consequences of teacher stress with the direct goal to support student learning. The goal of this study was to explicitly find out what principals do with intent to reduce their teachers stress levels. Principals in this study agreed to the findings found in Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) research that claimed teacher stress and exhaustion can directly impact the learning that takes place in the classroom. They also agreed with the assertion that teachers should have strong-emotional skills (specifically in the five social-emotional competencies) when teaching.

Principals are aware of what causes their teachers stress. They spoke of how they try to support them during those stressful and exhausting times. Classroom management, report cards, or dealing with parents were examples of how principals took some of the workload from teachers in order to reduce the stress levels. The principals in this study were very compassionate and showed deep care for their teachers, but it was not clear if that compassion was directly meant for the reasons behind Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) prosocial model.

These findings are valuable because they highlight that a principal's agreement to a statement read from a study on the importance of social-emotional healthy teachers and classrooms is quite different from principals having prior awareness of such researched assertions and making explicit plans to support a prosocial classroom. Principals' social-awareness and relationship skills help them to see value in the ideas behind a prosocial classroom. They also intuitively know when their teachers are exhausted and *agree* that exhaustion and stress can impact student achievement. What the findings of this study show, however, is that while principals live the experiences noted in Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) study, they appear not to have the time, resources, or even complete researched strategies of how to create such a classroom. Much like the need for an explicit plan to help reduce principal stress, the findings of this study provide insight on why there also needs to be a plan to support teachers' social-emotional health.

**Emotional intelligence.** The goal of this third part of the study was to understand how emotional intelligence is used to reduce the consequences of stress levels for both the principal and teachers. According to multiple studies in the review of literature but specifically the work of Boyatzis and McKee (2005), principals with high emotional intelligence are better able to navigate through stress and reduce job burnout (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Durlak et al., 2016; Pierce, 2014). In part, this portion of this study was also designed to understand how much principals understood emotional intelligence.

Most but not all of the principals in this study are aware of "emotional intelligence" and consider themselves to use the skillsets associated with the term. However, a few of the principals reported that they did not know what the term referred to exactly, and one principal, not understanding the term at all, reported that she was probably not emotionally intelligent. It

was unclear from the study exactly how much principals think about using the components of emotional intelligence to navigate through their day. Even though there is an overall understanding and use of self-awareness, relationship management, and social awareness from all principals in the study, not all principals explicitly connect that to mean they are an emotionally intelligent leader.

In terms of resonant leadership, most principals in this study were not aware of the term or concepts found in Boyatzis and McKee's (2005) work. This is not to say that when this researcher explained the concepts, the principals could not relate or comprehend how resonant leadership was actually a part of their day-to-day work. All principals were found to be compassionate. They recognize that this part of their job and is necessary to be an effective leader. Renewal through hope and mindfulness was not as familiar to the principals, but they all understand how hopefulness and having a positive outlook could provide renewal and the self-care practice of mindfulness.

Analyzing these findings, specifically on emotional intelligent leadership, is valuable to the community of educators because it brings light to the need for clear understanding and practice of such concepts. The principals in this study were curious and receptive to the ideas presented on emotional intelligence and absolutely understood the benefit of embedding them in their leadership practices. They just need that information. Again, just as knowledge about principal and teacher stress and the need to practice self-care would be valuable to a school campus, so too would be the guidance on proactive and social-emotional healthy leadership strategies.

## **Discussion of Results in Relation to the Literature**

The results of principals' responses and reflections to the protocol questions are directly related to the community of practice as an administrator, the review of literature, and the community of scholars and further studies. The review of literature was summarized into the four categories: (a) teacher stress, (b) principal stress, (c) social-emotional health, and (d) emotional intelligence. The questions principals addressed were gathered from the four categories as well as the guiding theories of the study.

**Implications of RQ1: From the principals' perspective, how does one personally focus on social-emotional health and self-care to explicitly reduce levels of on-the-job stress and the related consequences?** Just as the studies in the review of literature suggested, the results in this study also showed that all principals experience some levels of on-the-job stress. It was predicted that principals would all self-report high levels of stress due to their job responsibilities, but only 11 out of 14 actually did. Two reported medium levels and one reported low levels of stress.

Job responsibilities that cause principals stress according to the participants in this study also align with the findings in the review of literature and support those studies. For example, Tikkanen et al. (2017) found that principals feel stress from the increased responsibilities, and Wells (2013) found that principals feel stress from time management concerns. Almost all of the participants in this study (10 out of 14) expressed that having too much to do, too many tasks at hand, and not enough time to do everything caused them a great deal of stress.

One stark difference from the current study to past studies is that the principals in this study reported levels of stress from the responsibility of employee interactions more than any other responsibility. Of the 14 principals, six revealed that working with adults not getting along,



teachers not wanting to change instructional practices, or evaluations are their number one triggers for stress. This was not found in the review of literature.

The objective of this part of the study was to understand how self-care strategies or practices help principals to reduce reported levels of stress and the related consequences. Participants reported 12 different ways of practicing self-care to reduce the sensations and feelings of stress related to their job. Sogunro (2012) gave examples of effective ways to manage stress as talking with someone by using humor or faith and scheduling breaks on the calendar.

Wells (2015) and Boyatzis and McKee (2005) posited that mindfulness or meditative breathing can be a stress-reducing strategy. Beisser et al. (2014) recommended exercise as a stress-reducing practice. Most of the self-care practices reported by the principals in this study are proactively done to reduce their stress levels such as exercise, outside activities, talking to someone, or deep breathing. On the other hand, few of the self-care activities, such as listening to music on the way home from work, being lazy, doing house projects, or being with family, provide relaxation, but this researcher does not consider them to be explicit and proactive stress-reducing strategies. Principals reported those activities as ways to relax, and no doubt is beneficial, yet there is a noted difference from activities that are almost prescriptive such as mindfulness or talking to someone, to activities that are relaxing and part of an everyday routine such as driving home or doing household chores.

Many of the principals in this study practice self-care activities daily or weekly and during the weekends when they have more time. If they have young children, it is harder for them to participate in activities meant just for themselves. Of the 14 principals in the study, five reported daily self-care activities and seven reported the practice of weekly self-care activities. Of those 12 principals who practice some sort of self-care activity, all but two of them also

reported high levels of stress. Eleven principals have more than one stress-reducing activity, and three principals only have one or none of the recommended and studied self-care activities. As the review of literature suggested, more research on this topic of self-care activities is needed (Beisser et al., 2014; Tikkanen et al., 2017; Wells, 2013).

**Implications of RQ2: From the principals’ perspective, how does explicit focus and modeling of self-care to teachers for the betterment of their social-emotional health impact the overall school climate and student success?** Overall, data analysis supporting this question showed that principals are indeed acutely aware of their stress levels. All principals in this study display the social-awareness and relationship management skills to help them tune into their teachers’ emotional health and understanding of their stress levels. This data is important to note, as Jennings and Greenberg’s (2009) model suggested, social-emotional healthy teachers and classrooms lead to student success.

Similarly, the results of this study align with Beusaert et al. (2016) who found that a principal has influence on student achievement and if that principal is not mentally and physically well, it could lead to a “disastrous impact on the well-being of the school” (p. 2). Principals of the current study agreed with that statement completely. Other studies in the review of literature recommend intervention programs that focus on the social-emotional well-being of teachers such as mindfulness practice because that can negate the negative consequences of teacher stress (Beisser et al., 2014; Klocko & Wells, 2015; Wells, 2013).

Likewise, an intervention program called CARE designed to support teachers’ emotional competence in the classroom and their well-being was researched with positive results by Jennings et al. (2017). In this study, the effects on principals explicitly modeling self-care practices with the intent to reduce stress are limited.

Similar to principals' self-care practices, this researcher did not define what modeling of self-care practices to teachers should look like. Instead, the goal was to have the principals tell me what they would consider that to be at their school sites. Overall, participants gave eight different examples, and all but two principals gave examples of how they work to reduce their teachers stress levels. Of the eight examples, (a) celebrate staff, (b) end work meetings early, (c) model handling emotions, (d) positive feedback, (e) self-care moments during a staff meeting, (f) small gifts, (g) teach SEL in a staff meeting, and (h) team building, three of them are considered as modeling strategies to reduce teacher stress.

Of the 14 principals, four use staff time to model self-care in at least two or more of the aforementioned ways. Five principals reported modeling how to handle emotional situations, six principals have self-care moments during staff meetings, and five principals teach SEL strategies at staff meetings. Ten of the principals practice at least one type of modeling to their staff with the explicit intent to improve their social-emotional health and two practice all three examples. Out of the four principals who do not model any SEL or self-care strategies to their staff, two of them also do not use or the researched strategies to reduce their own stress.

As Beisser's et al. (2014) study asserted, the principals in this study also feel a sense of responsibility to model and focus on social-emotional health but do not feel they have the bandwidth to do it themselves or the time for such activities. Even those principals who are implementing SEL or self-care practices reported that it is not enough what they are doing, and their teachers need more support. District support for such programs would be welcomed.

Overall, modeling self-care strategies to staff is thought to be effective by participants but is an admitted area of growth. While almost all of the principals see the benefit to taking time to model and teach stress-reducing strategies to teachers, not all principals in the study are

participating in this type of activity. This is mainly due to a lack of time; however, some principals admittedly need professional development or district support. As expected, principals need explicit guidance or support to maintain renewal and growth within their own social-emotional health and how to specifically use their emotional intelligence to reduce stress levels on their campus.

**Implications of RQ3: From the principal’s perspective, how does the ability to use emotional intelligence help reduce personal stress or the stress of others?** This part of the study was guided by the five competencies of social-emotional learning, which are (a) self-awareness, (b) self-management, (c) social awareness, (d) relationship skills, and (e) responsible decision making (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2019) used by Goleman (1995), Goleman’s et al. (2002) mixed-ability model of emotional intelligence, and Boyatzis and McKee’s (2005) resonant leadership assertions including the components of hope, compassion, and mindfulness. In particular, this researcher used Goleman’s (1995) definition of emotional intelligence to guide this study. The researcher defined emotional intelligence as “an ability to recognize, understand, and use emotional information about oneself that leads to or causes effective or superior performance” and “the ability to recognize, understand and use emotional information about others that leads to or causes effective or superior performance will be used to guide the current study” (as cited in McCleskey, 2014, p. 77). Along with the work of Goleman et al. (2002), are the multitude of studies found in the review of literature that supports the concept that the more emotionally intelligent leaders are, the more able they are to handle stress (Lambersky, 2016; Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Taliadorou & Pashiardis, 2015).

Principals in this study were asked questions about their emotional intelligence skillset and social-emotional health. Of the 14 principals, 10 reported being familiar with the term

emotional intelligence, and four reported that they are only somewhat familiar. They are all familiar with the concept of social-emotional learning, but not all are completely knowledgeable about the five components. However, with the data analysis, this researcher discovered that the principals use their emotional intelligence daily regardless if they are able to put a label on what they are doing. The findings indicate that principals use their emotional intelligence skills whether they are consciously aware of doing so or not. Principals' understanding what the terms themselves mean did not seem to make a difference when answering interview questions related to the RQ3 "How does one use their ability of emotional intelligence to reduce both personal and others' stress level?"

For three of the four components of self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship management, all 14 principals in this study clearly display these soft skills. An example of principals using their emotional intelligence for the betterment of their campus and overall stress levels, even if they are unaware that they were doing so, is their use of self-awareness. Principals in this study showed self-awareness and the ability not only to recognize when they are stressed, but also to articulate the negative consequences of that stress they experience, including headaches, lack of sleep, or heart palpitations. Raju (2013) asserted that high levels of stress can have both a physiological and psychological impact, and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's (2014) definition of workplace stress includes both physical and emotional reactions to situations.

As a resonant or emotional intelligent leader, emotional information about one's self is a necessary skill to have (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005). Principals in this study recognize that their stress levels can have a negative impact on their job performance with consequences as the inability to focus or have the bandwidth to support their staff. This particular data aligns with the

Klocko and Wells (2015) and Sogunro's (2012) studies, which reported principals struggle with a lack of work-life balance and those consequences of the sacrifice cycle.

Principals in this study also have skills in social-awareness and relationship management. By far, building relationships with their staff is the number one-way principals can help to reduce stress on their campus. This is an area they excel in and enjoy about their position. Principals understand why teachers feel stress in their role and have an awareness of others to recognize when their staff is feeling stressed. Principals understanding, identifying, and reacting to stress for the betterment of their campus is essential to the overall health of the campus and can be directly tied to student achievement (Durlak et al., 2011; Jennings et al., 2017).

Where principals in this study show fewer emotional intelligence skill use is in the component of self-management or the ability to take initiative, focus, and work towards goals, which needs the control of emotions and optimism (Goleman et al., 2002). As previously noted, principals feel stress but are not always able to self-care, or specifically use a self-care practice that is explicit and prescriptive in nature. The definition of self-management is directly tied to the three components of a resonant leader: hope, compassion, and mindfulness (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005).

All 14 principals in this study portray great compassion for their staff and students. Just as relationship building is important to principals, so too is showing their staff how much they care for them. This is often done at the expense of the principals' social-emotional health or physical health, but it is very important to principals to go out of their physical and social-emotional way to support their staff. The principals reported that regardless of what they are experiencing in that moment, they want to be there for their teachers if they are needed. All 14 principals provide compassion and use this skill to reduce stress on their campus.

For the component and soft skill of using hope as a means to resonant leadership and as an intelligent, emotional skill, the results of this study indicate that fewer principals experience or use hope to positively frame their mind. Boyatzis and McKee (2005) explained that when [a principal] is hopeful, he or she has more emotional resiliency, and in turn, it helps them to manage stress and tackle challenges. Stronger emotional resiliency would no doubt put principals in a better position to not only improve their stress levels, but also in helping others.

Of the 14 principals, 11 principals displayed feelings of hope, but only six principals portrayed more hope or positive thoughts than negative ones. The other eight principals asserted that they have negative thoughts or much more negative thoughts than positive ones. This was important to note due to Boyatzis and McKee's (2005) assertion that hope and a positive outlook can help restore.

Mindfulness is a self-care practice that has been studied and suggested by multiple studies; however, Boyatzis and McKee (2005) encompassed all the studies by simply implying that mindfulness is a way to be in tune with one's body, mind, and spirit in order to reduce stress. Only four principals in this study mentioned any mindfulness practice. Of the three components of resonant leadership or self-management, compassion, hope, and mindfulness, only four principals showed responses in all three areas. Eight displayed responses in two out the three areas, and two showed responses in one of the areas.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the more resonant a leader is, or the more emotional intelligence skills used the more principals are apt to model self-care strategies to their staff. Principals who gave positive responses in all three areas of resonant leadership, meaning they showed compassion, had positive and hopeful thoughts, and practiced mindfulness, also practice self-care strategies that have been studied and proven to reduce stress and model those

strategies to their staff. The ability to use emotional intelligence therefore reduces stress on a school campus.

### **Limitations**

When looking closely at the current study to consider mistakes, time constraints, errors, analysis, and how the study could have been improved, there are a few suggested methodological weaknesses. These methods could be improved for further studies. First, as a qualitative study, the sample size is small and should not be used to generalize to the broader group of principals (Creswell, 2012). It is one sample size in a specific regional area of California with 14 principals and may not apply to other regions of the United States. This study is bound to the participants involved. The sample included mostly elementary principals, but also two middle school principals. While this study produced data where the level of school did not make a difference, it might benefit further studies to separate out the school levels of the principals and study only elementary, middle, or high school principals.

Second, the semistructured design allowed for the participant's lived experiences with stress to be explored, but it also provided answers from participants that may not have been directly aligned with the review of literature and needs further investigation. For example, there was a lot of data gathered on what causes principal stress in the way of job responsibilities, but that data did not directly answer a research question. More research would need to be done in those areas.

Third, because of the intimate setting of a semistructured, one-on-one interview, participants may not have expressed themselves completely honest when answering questions due to wanting to look good to the researcher or in the study itself. While there is confidentiality in the study, participants may still have felt uncomfortable to answer completely, especially if it



would cast a negative light on their administrative practice. This is the case even though the research went to great lengths to support honest and open responses.

### **Implications for Theory, Policy, and Community of Practice**

**Implications of theory.** Literature and theories guiding this study included a prosocial classroom model (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), emotional intelligence framework (Goleman et al., 2002) and resonant leadership studies (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005). This study and findings support the theories in the conceptual framework. The conceptual framework was designed around the theories and studies of Jennings and Greenberg (2009) that found teachers' stress levels can impact the classroom and ultimately student achievement. Their study highlighted the need for social-emotional training of teachers and the principals in the current research reported the same need.

The mixed-ability emotional intelligence framework guiding this study aligns completely with the results of this study. Self-awareness, relationship-building, and social awareness, in particular, prove important to the success of principalship. The use of principals' soft skills helps to diminish stress on their campuses. Resonant leadership indicates the need for principals to have compassion, hope, and the practice of mindfulness. The principals in this study who displayed skills in those areas also showed more ability to support their teachers' social-emotional health.

**Implications of policy.** There is no known policy on reducing principal and teacher stress; however, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health has a policy on job stress and the Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional & Emotional Academic Development tracks well-being of educators and connects research that monitors teachers' and principals' social-emotional competencies to their well-being, reduced stress, and

reduced job burnout. The California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders calls for principals to “manage the organization to cultivate a safe and productive learning and working environment” (Standard 3), and “sustain personal motivation, commitment, energy, and health by balancing professional and personal responsibilities” (Standard 5; Commission on Teacher Credentialing & California Department of Education, 2014). The results of this study support the existing policy and even encourage further policy to ensure the social-emotional health of administrators.

Based on the data of this study, there are three policy recommendations. First, include self-care learning for all aspiring teachers and administrators. This would come in the form of class requirements for graduation and certificates. Second, a government-supported framework on self-care strategies and social-emotional health ideals. And finally, a biennial nationwide stress-related survey to determine the social-emotional health of educators in order to maintain preventative next steps.

**Implications of community of practice.** The three school districts in this study and their principals, teachers, and students were the community of practice and focus of this study. The implications of this study are undoubtedly meaningful for the three school district communities in this study, but also all school districts with administrators, teachers, and students. The greater educator community will also find the findings of this study meaningful.

This study revealed data that can provide a better understanding of principals’ stress, the implications of that stress, and an understanding of teacher stress. Both principal and teacher stress is reported to be on the rise with consequences that include the health of employees and student achievement (Klocko & Wells, 2015; Sogunro, 2012; Wells, 2013). According to the data analysis of this study, which is guided by theories and researched suggestions, communities

with administrators and teachers can take proactive steps to reduce the negative consequences of stress impacting the health of their employees and potentially student achievement. For example, implementing practices of mindfulness or encouraging the idea of taking mental health days would be beneficial. It does seem the first step, however, is to have explicit conversations about stress levels that educators are experiencing.

Principals in this study reported levels of stress that could potentially impact their overall success as an administrator. Results from this study and others like it may provide insight and deeper understanding of the lived experiences of principals and stress, which could lead to policy change. School districts could benefit from awareness, education, and prevention around principal and teacher stress and the practice of self-care.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

This study sought to understand the lived experiences of principal stress and the stress of their teachers. It also collected data to understand better how principals practice self-care to reduce their stress levels and how they support their teachers to do the same. The methodological design of this study was created so that it could be replicated across the region of the United States and worldwide. It is recommended that further study on these topics take place with qualitative studies for a deeper understanding of the lived experience and quantitative studies for broader generalization.

Additional qualitative studies on principal stress in other regions of the country or world would deepen understanding and add to the literature as it exists today. It is important to note that there are limited studies in the United States, even though there is a great need to understand this phenomenon of principal stress. Studies on the “why” behind the stressors of the job would benefit the community of educators and may produce ideas on how to prevent stress from

happening to begin with. There is clear agreement by researchers that more studies on principal and teacher stress, the impact stress has on their social-emotional health, and the benefits of emotional intelligence is needed. Additionally, a better understanding of self-care is explicitly needed so questions that focus on the self-care element of this study is suggested.

Information on how school districts can support their principals is an obvious need and the next step in this research process. Research on possible benefits of explicit plans and implementation and attention around reducing educator stress levels as well as ways to use emotional intelligent skills is recommended. Research that focuses on research-based programs or strategies and how they could be used but also taking time limitations into consideration is also recommended. There is value in studies that empower principals to take back their campus from the grips of stress.

## **Conclusion**

With the guidance of the literature and theories, including a prosocial classroom model (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), emotional intelligence framework (Goleman et al., 2002) and resonant leadership studies (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005), this researcher sought to understand the phenomenon of principal stress and stress of their teachers. This included understanding the practice of principals' practice of self-care and their sense of responsibility to model those self-care practices to their teachers. With the goals to answer the three research questions, I designed a transcendental phenomenological qualitative study, of which 14 principals participated.

In this study, 10 themes emerged and defined the lived experiences of principals experiencing stress and their sense of responsibility to reduce their teacher stress. These 10 themes helped to answer the three research questions guiding this study. The analysis of data shows that principals indeed experience on-the-job-stress and have physical and emotional

consequences as noted in other studies regarding this topic. It was predicted that all principals would report experiencing high levels of stress, but that was not the case. Only 10 out of 14 principals reported high levels of stress.

Principals participate in self-care activities daily, weekly, and monthly, but not all are strategies that are considered research-based strategies known to reduce stress. The principals in this study are self-aware and able to express when they have experienced high levels of stress and why. Principals are curious about reducing their stress levels and want to engage in learning more.

Just as the research in the review of literature suggested, teachers working with the principals also experience stress. Principals are socially aware of teacher stress levels, mainly by using their emotional intelligence skills of social awareness and relationship skills. Principals are able to articulate when teachers have been stressed and what in particular and what causes that stress. Although the principals in this study are socially aware and understand when their teachers are stressed, the data indicates that even if principals acknowledge the sense of responsibility to model self-care practices to their teachers, they are not always able to do so.

Overall, the principals in this study are emotionally intelligent in relationship management, social awareness, and self-awareness components. They also display deep understanding and high compassion for their employees. What this study found is a marked area of growth with the emotional intelligence skills of self-management and resonant leadership, particularly in the elements of hope and mindfulness. Hope gives principals a positive mindset and ability to be resilient, according to Boyatzis and McKee (2005), and mindfulness is a researched and proven way to reduce stress.

This study and other studies have shown that American educators are experiencing stress and the consequences of that ultimately impact classrooms. Self-care strategies being used and modeled are currently not central to the daily responsibilities of all principals and their teachers. However, the principals in this study reported that they not only understand the benefit of a social-emotional healthy campus, but also recognize that more time, deeper understanding, and professional development resources on emotional intelligence leadership are needed, and therefore, more research on this topic is suggested.

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## **Appendix A: Letter to Participants**

Dear Fellow Administrator,

My name is Nadia Oskolkoff and I am in the final phases of my doctoral degree at Concordia University–Portland. I am seeking and would appreciate your participation in my qualitative study titled “Explicit Self-Care for Principals and Their Teachers: A Qualitative Transcendental Phenomenological Study on Administrator Stress Levels.” Currently, I am in my 6th year as an elementary principal and 8th year overall in administration and I know the amount of work you put into your role as an administrator every day. As your colleague, I am interested in understanding how you manage your stress levels and the stress levels of your teachers. It would be an honor to include your experiences with this phenomenon in my research.

To participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a brief 16-question online survey with 13 multiple choice questions and three open-ended questions. Following the survey, you and I will schedule a time to meet at your office during a time that works best for you. For more details on your rights and what will happen during this portion of the study, please reference the Consent Form that is attached. After completing the consent form, you will be directed to the survey questions. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw for any reason at any time.

I thank you in advance for your consideration and participation in this research. Your experience and story will no doubt help other educators and potentially even furthermore research on this very important topic.

Yours truly,

Nadia Oskolkoff, Doctoral Student, Concordia University–Portland

## **Appendix B: Interview Questions**

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I am going to ask you some questions to try and better understand the phenomenon of principal and teacher stress and how important self-care is to the social-emotional health of both you and your teachers. Your answers are completely confidential, and any documentation of this interview will not have any identifying information on it. You will find the questions, for the most part, to be open-ended so you can answer them in a way that highlights your experiences. There are no right or wrong answers and I appreciate your complete honesty.

Did you have a chance to go over the interview questions that I emailed you?

Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Let us start, then . . .

### **Principal Stress Questions**

Start with story-telling and personal experiences, as suggested by Galletta (2012).

1. Tell me a little bit about your personal life. (children, wife/husband, hobbies)
2. Tell me a little bit about your school. (If the principal does not go into detail about his/her teachers I will prompt them)
3. What areas of your responsibility cause you the most stress? (ex: teachers resistant to change, teacher evaluations, parents, student discipline, reports, etc.)
4. How do you know when you are feeling high levels of stress?
5. Do you take your stress home with you?
  - a. If so, talk about this.
6. How does your stress levels impact your teachers or the culture and climate of the school?

7. Can you tell me about the expectations placed on you as a principal and if that causes you any emotions (Poirel & Yvon, 2014)?

8. What does being social-emotionally health look and feel like for you personally as a \_\_\_\_\_ (mother/father/wife/husband/daughter/friend/etc.; a principal/co-worker/etc.)

9. How important is it for you to maintain your social-emotional and physical health?

10. In the survey, you mentioned you practice self-care \_\_\_\_\_ (daily, weekly, monthly). Can you tell me more about that?

11. How do you feel socially-emotionally refreshed throughout the workday especially if you are having a stressful day?

### **Teacher Stress Questions**

12. Would you consider yourself to know and understand what is on your teachers' minds? Would you know their passions? If so, how do you know their intentions?

13. How do you know when your teachers are feeling stress or burnout?

14. What areas of their job do you think causes them stress?

15. Research shows that teacher stress and exhaustion can directly impact the learning that takes place in the classroom and that there is a need for teachers to have strong-emotional skills (specifically in the five social-emotional competencies) when teaching (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). What does this statement mean to you and how do you see your role as a principal in the social-emotional health of your teachers?

16. How do your teachers' stress levels impact your stress levels? The culture and climate of the school? Their students or classroom environment?

17. How do you take the explicit steps to reduce your teachers' stress levels?
18. How important is it for you to maintain the social-emotional health of your staff?
19. What steps do you take to help your staff regulate their stress levels?
20. Is there anything you would like to tell me that we did not touch on with the questions?

### **Emotional Intelligence Questions**

21. Move more into questions based off of the conceptual framework (Galletta, 2012).
22. Can you tell me your understanding of emotional intelligence and how you use it as a principal? (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management) (\*note: if the participant is not familiar with the term, the researcher will explain the components as it is believed that once the participant knows what those are, they will be able to apply the concept to their role as a principal.)
23. Can you give an example of when you used your emotional understanding of self or others to defuse a situation or help solve a problem?
24. How does your ability to recognize, understand, and use emotional information of your teachers help you to successfully lead them (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005)?
25. Would you consider those moments as stressful? Can you explain why or why not?
26. What is something you do that helps you to regulate your emotions especially when trying to build relationships with your teachers (or students) that are meant to support them (Taliadorou & Pashiardis, 2015)?



27. How does your ability to understand self and others' emotions help you to reduce the stress levels staff members (including yourself) may feel?

28. It is noted by Boyatzis and McKee (2005) that moods are contagious beginning with the school leader. Do you agree with this statement and why or why not?

29. It is also noted by Boyatzis and McKee (2005) that resonant leaders are emotionally intelligent but also have the ability to stay in tune with their emotions and moods of those around them. How do you see this playing a role at your school site?

30. Research shows that principals (directly and/or indirectly) impact student achievement. What are your thoughts on this statement?

## Appendix C: Online Survey Preinterview Questions

Qualtrics (with Click-consent Form) for survey

Please select a pseudo name. This is the name that will be used throughout the study from this point on. Your real name will not be used when referencing your experiences nor will any identifying criteria such as your ethnicity, age, gender, or school district.

1. What is your gender? (M; F; Other)
2. What is your ethnicity? (Black, White, Latino, Filipino, Asian, Other)
3. What is your age range? (20–30; 30–40; 40–50; 50–60)
4. How many years have you served as an administrator? (3–5; 6–10; 11–15; 16+)
5. What is the level of your current school (elementary, middle)?
6. On average, how many hours a week do your work? (0–40; 40–45; 45–50; 50+)
7. What level of stress do you experience due to your professional responsibilities (low, medium, high)?
8. How often do you experience this stress? (daily, a few times a week, a few times a month, other)
9. How often do you explicitly participate self-care to negate the consequences of your stress levels? (none, daily, weekly, monthly)?
10. What specifically do you do to practice self-care to reduce your stress levels?
11. What level of stress do you think your teachers experience due to their professional responsibilities? (low, medium, high)?
12. How often do you think they explicitly participate in the practice of self-care to negate their stress levels? (none, daily, weekly, monthly, I do not know)?

13. As a principal, do you have conversations with your staff about the need to practice self-care either individually or as a whole staff? (Yes; Somewhat; No)

14. If you answered *YES* or *SOMEWHAT* to #13, please briefly describe how you encourage or modeled self-care to teachers specifically reduce their stress level.

15. Are you aware of the term Emotional Intelligence? (Yes; Somewhat; No)

16. How would you define YOUR Emotional Intelligence?

### Appendix D: Field Notes Template

Principal \_\_\_\_\_

General observations about the principal's office	
Principals' feelings/thoughts about office	
"Self-care" artifacts that are either in view of the researcher or brought to the attention of the researcher by the principal	

Other Notes:

### Appendix E: Data Analysis Procedures

Category	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3
Data Collection	1) Survey, 2) Interview, 3) Observational Field Notes	1) Survey, 2) Interview, 3) Observational Field Notes	1) Survey, 2) Interview, 3) Observational Field Notes
Non-Statistical Data Type	Principals in California	Principals in California	Principals in California
Data Management	1) Survey stored in Qualtrics and NVivo 12 data management, 2) Audio recordings of semistructured interviews, 3) Observational field notes written down by the researcher during the interview and recorded later into a Microsoft Office Home Word Document. 4) Photographs taken of any self-care artifacts stored in an online Google folder 5) NVivo 12 data-management software for transcription and coding.	1) Survey stored in Qualtrics and NVivo 12 data management, 2) Audio recordings of semistructured interviews, 3) Observational field notes written down by the researcher during the interview and recorded later into a Microsoft Office Home Word Document. 4) Photographs taken of any self-care artifacts stored in an online Google folder 5) NVivo 12 data-management software for transcription and coding.	1) Survey stored in Qualtrics and NVivo 12 data management, 2) Audio recordings of semistructured interviews, 3) Observational field notes written down by the researcher during the interview and recorded later into a Microsoft Office Home Word Document. 4) Photographs taken of any self-care artifacts stored in an online Google folder 5) NVivo 12 data-management software for transcription and coding.

<p>Data Analysis</p>	<p>Thematic analysis and data reduction of survey question, semistructured interview, and observation field notes data to identify themes as well as constant transparency and clear record keeping of data will ensure reliability (Little, 2016). To come to an understanding of how each principal focuses on maintain their social-emotional health, Jennings and Greenberg’s (2009) prosocial classroom theoretical model and Goleman and Boyatzis’ mixed-ability model including Goleman and McKee’s (2005) work on resonant leadership was applied to help make meaning (Galletta, 2012)</p>	<p>Thematic analysis and data reduction of survey question, semistructured interview, and observation field notes data to identify themes as well as constant transparency and clear record keeping of data will ensure reliability (Little, 2016). To come to an understanding of the importance of self-care both for the individual principals and their staff, Jennings and Greenberg’s (2009) prosocial classroom theoretical model and Goleman and Boyatzis’ mixed-ability model including Goleman and McKee’s (2005) work on resonant leadership was applied to make meaning of the data collected (Galletta, 2012)</p>	<p>Thematic analysis and data reduction of survey question, semistructured interview, and observation field notes data to identify themes as well as constant transparency and clear record keeping of data to ensure reliability (Little, 2016). To come to an understanding of each principal’s understanding and use of emotional intelligence, Jennings and Greenberg’s (2009) prosocial classroom theoretical model and Goleman and Boyatzis’ mixed-ability model including Goleman and McKee’s (2005) work on resonant leadership was applied to make meaning (Galletta, 2012)</p>
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<p>Analysis Procedure</p>	<p>Transcribed interviews were coded using NVivo 12 data-management software provided an organized and proficient way of managing data. Survey results, interviews, and field notes regarding the environment and any self-care artifacts was coded by using descriptive commenting or highlighting key words and phrases (Smith, Flowers, &amp; Larkin, 2009). Codes will then be categorized into broader categories or themes through the researcher’s assertions and interpretations of the data (Roulston, 2010). It is important to note that specific codes and themes will not be predetermined by the researcher, but instead be guided and determined by interpreting the data itself as the researcher collects it.</p>	<p>Transcribed interviews were coded using NVivo 12 data-management software provided an organized and proficient way of managing data. Survey results, interviews, and field notes regarding the environment and any self-care artifacts was coded by using descriptive commenting or highlighting key words and phrases (Smith, Flowers, &amp; Larkin, 2009). Codes were categorized into broader categories or themes of self-care through the researcher’s assertions and interpretations of the data (Roulston, 2010). It is important to note that specific codes and themes will not be predetermined by the researcher, such as what the researcher would consider “self-care,” but instead be guided and determined by interpreting the data itself as the researcher collects it.</p>	<p>Transcribed interviews were coded using NVivo 12 data-management software provided an organized and proficient way of managing data. Survey results, interviews, and field notes regarding the environment and any self-care artifacts were coded by using descriptive commenting or highlighting key words and phrases (Smith, Flowers, &amp; Larkin, 2009). Codes will then be categorized into broader categories or themes through the researcher’s assertions and interpretations of the data (Roulston, 2010). It is important to note that specific codes and themes on emotional intelligence will not be predetermined by the researcher, but instead be guided and determined by interpreting the data itself as the researcher collects it.</p>
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Justification	Coding in this way will allow the participants' unique experiences maintaining their social-emotional health to guide the study and help the researcher to find common themes that was important to the overall objective of the study (Little, 2016).	Coding in this way will allow the participants' unique experiences with stress and self-care to guide the study and help the researcher to find common themes that was important to the overall objective of the study (Little, 2016). Coding will also support understanding how principals model or promote the need for self-care to their staff.	Coding in this way will allow the participants' unique experiences with stress and self-care to guide the study and help the researcher to find common themes that was important to the overall objective of the study (Little, 2016).
Analysis alignment to research questions and study	Using the semistructured interview, predetermined questions based on the research questions will guide the interview, but follow-up and probing questions will ensure data aligns with overall research objective (Roulston, 2010). Observational field notes will align as needed and will only focus on the objective of the study.	Using the semistructured interview, predetermined questions based on the research questions will guide the interview, but follow-up and probing questions will ensure data aligns with overall research objective (Roulston, 2010). Observational field notes will align as needed and will only focus on the objective of the study.	Using the semistructured interview, predetermined questions based on the research questions will guide the interview, but follow-up and probing questions will ensure data aligns with overall research objective (Roulston, 2010). Observational field notes will align as needed and will only focus on the objective of the study.



<p>Analysis Interpretation</p>	<p>Inductive analysis of data will help to generalize patterns of how and if principals deal with stress. These patterns will help the researcher to understand the overall impact of stress and how principals are managing this phenomenon (Roulston, 2010). By following Moustakas' (1994) steps to a phenomenological study and ensuring validity, the essences of what each participant experiences will surface. The researcher's "empathic" approach to analysis and interpretation will occur by the strategic focus on what is presented and limiting or bracketing outside ideas of principal stress (Flick, 2014).</p>	<p>Inductive analysis of data will help to generalize patterns of how and if principals deal with stress. These patterns will help the researcher to understand the overall impact of stress and how principals are managing this phenomenon (Roulston, 2010). By following Moustakas' (1994) steps to a phenomenological study and ensuring validity, the essences of what each participant experiences will surface. The researcher's "empathic" approach to analysis and interpretation will occur by the strategic focus on what is presented and limiting or bracketing outside ideas of principal stress (Flick, 2014).</p>	<p>Inductive analysis of data will help to generalize patterns of how and if principals deal with stress. These patterns will help the researcher to understand the overall impact of stress and how principals are managing this phenomenon (Roulston, 2010). By following Moustakas' (1994) steps to a phenomenological study and ensuring validity, the essences of what each participant experiences will surface. The researcher's "empathic" approach to analysis and interpretation will occur by the strategic focus on what is presented and limiting or bracketing outside ideas of principal stress (Flick, 2014).</p>
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## Appendix F: Pilot Study Interview Questions

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I am going to ask you some questions to try and understand the phenomenon of principal and teacher stress and how important self-care is to the social-emotional health of both you and your teachers. Your answers are completely confidential, and any documentation of this interview will not have any identifying information on it. You will find the questions to be open-ended so you can answer them in a way that highlights your experiences. We will begin with questions about emotional intelligence. these questions There are no right or wrong answers and I appreciate your complete honesty.

Did you have a chance to go over the interview questions that I emailed you?

Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Let us start, then . . .

### VERSION 1

#### Emotional Intelligence Questions

1. If you understand being an emotional intelligent leader to have the (a) ability to recognize, understand, and use emotional information about oneself . . .and others to perform effectively and (b) an ability to regulate emotions and cope effectively with emotive or arousing situations (Boyatzis, 2009), how important is it for principals to have emotional intelligence?
2. Can you give an example of when you used your emotional understanding of self or others to defuse a situation or help solve a problem?
3. Would you consider those moments as stressful? Can you explain why or why not?

4. In your experience, does your ability to understand self and others' emotions help you to reduce the stress levels staff members (including yourself) may feel?

### **Principal Stress Questions**

1. What areas of your responsibility cause you the most stress? (ex: teachers resistant to change, teacher evaluations, parents, student discipline, reports, etc.)

2. Think of a time when you experienced stress and describe that to me in as much detail as possible. How do you know when you are feeling high levels of stress?

3. How does your stress levels impact your teachers? The culture and climate of the school?

4. How important is it for you to maintain your social-emotional health and what does that look like?

5. In the survey, you mentioned you practice self-care \_\_\_\_\_(daily, weekly, monthly). Can you tell me more about that?

### **Teacher Stress Questions**

1. Would you consider yourself to know and understand what is on your teachers' hearts and minds? If so, how do you know this information?

2. How do you know when your teachers are feeling stress?

3. What areas of their job do you think causes them stress?

4. How do your teachers' stress levels impact your stress levels? The culture and climate of the school? Their students or classroom environment?

5. How important is it for you to maintain the social-emotional health of your staff?

6. What steps do you take to help your staff regulate their stress levels?

Follow-up/probing question starters:

1. You mentioned . . . tell me what that was like for you (Roulston, 2010).
2. You mentioned . . . describe that in more detail for me (Roulston, 2010).

## VERSION 2

### Principal Stress Questions

Start with story-telling and personal experiences, as suggested by Galletta (2012).

1. Tell me a little bit about your personal life. (children, wife/husband, hobbies)
2. Tell me a little bit about your school. (If the principal does not go into detail about his/her teachers I will prompt them)
3. What areas of your responsibility cause you the most stress? (ex: teachers resistant to change, teacher evaluations, parents, student discipline, reports, etc.)
4. How do you know when you are feeling high levels of stress?
5. Do you take your stress home with you?
  - a. If so, talk about this.
6. How does your stress levels impact your teachers or the culture and climate of the school?
7. Can you tell me about the expectations placed on you as a principal and if that causes you any emotions (Poirel & Yvon, 2014)?
8. What does being social-emotionally health look and feel like for you personally as a \_\_\_\_\_(mother/father/wife/husband/daughter/friend/etc.; principal/co-worker/etc.)
9. How important is it for you to maintain your social-emotional and physical health?
10. In the survey, you mentioned you practice self-care \_\_\_\_\_ (daily, weekly, monthly). Can you tell me more about that?
11. How do you feel socially-emotionally refreshed throughout the workday especially if you are having a stressful day?

## Teacher Stress Questions

1. Would you consider yourself to know and understand what is on your teachers' minds? Would you know their passions? If so, how do you know this information?
2. How do you know when your teachers are feeling stress or burnout?
3. What areas of their job do you think causes them stress?
4. Research shows that teacher stress and exhaustion can directly impact the learning that takes place in the classroom and that there is a need for teachers to have strong-emotional skills (specifically in the five social-emotional competencies) when teaching (Jennings et al., 2009). What does this statement mean to you and how do you see your role as a principal in the social-emotional health of your teachers?
5. How do your teachers' stress levels impact your stress levels? The culture and climate of the school? Their students or classroom environment?
6. How do you take the explicit steps to reduce your teachers' stress levels?
7. How important is it for you to maintain the social-emotional health of your staff?
8. What steps do you take to help your staff regulate their stress levels?
9. Is there anything you would like to tell me that we did not touch on with the questions?

## **Emotional Intelligence Questions**

Move more into questions based off of the conceptual framework (Galletta, 2012).

1. Can you tell me your understanding of emotional intelligence and how you use it as a principal? (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management) (\*note: if the participant is not familiar with the term, the researcher will explain the components as it is believed that once the participant knows what those are, they will be able to apply the concept to their role as a principal.)
2. Can you give an example of when you used your emotional understanding of self or others to defuse a situation or help solve a problem?
3. How does your ability to recognize, understand, and use emotional information of your teachers help you to successfully lead them (Boyatzis, 2009)?
4. Would you consider those moments as stressful? Can you explain why or why not?
5. What is something you do that helps you to regulate your emotions especially when trying to build relationships with your teachers (or students) that are meant to support them (Taliadorou & Pashiardis, 2015)?
6. How does your ability to understand self and others' emotions help you to reduce the stress levels staff members (including yourself) may feel?
7. It is noted by Boyatzis and McKee (2005) that moods are contagious beginning with the school leader. Do you agree with this statement and why or why not?
8. It is also noted by Boyatzis and McKee (2005) that resonant leaders are emotionally intelligent but also have the ability to stay in tune with their emotions and moods of those around them. How do you see this playing a role at your school site?

9. Research shows that principals (directly and/or indirectly) impact student achievement. What are your thoughts on this statement?



## Appendix G: Figures

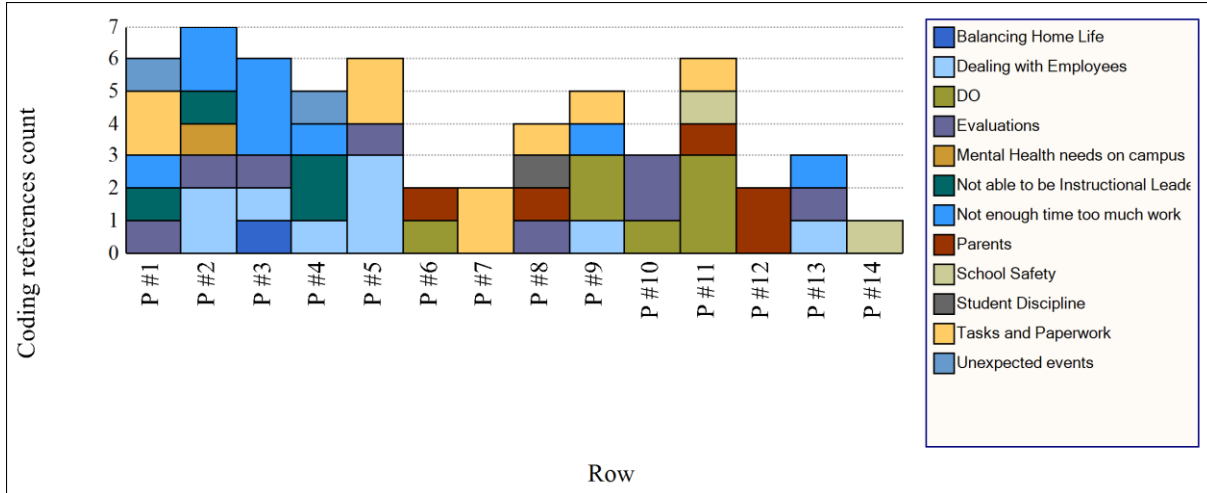


Figure 1. Principal job responsibilities that cause stress.

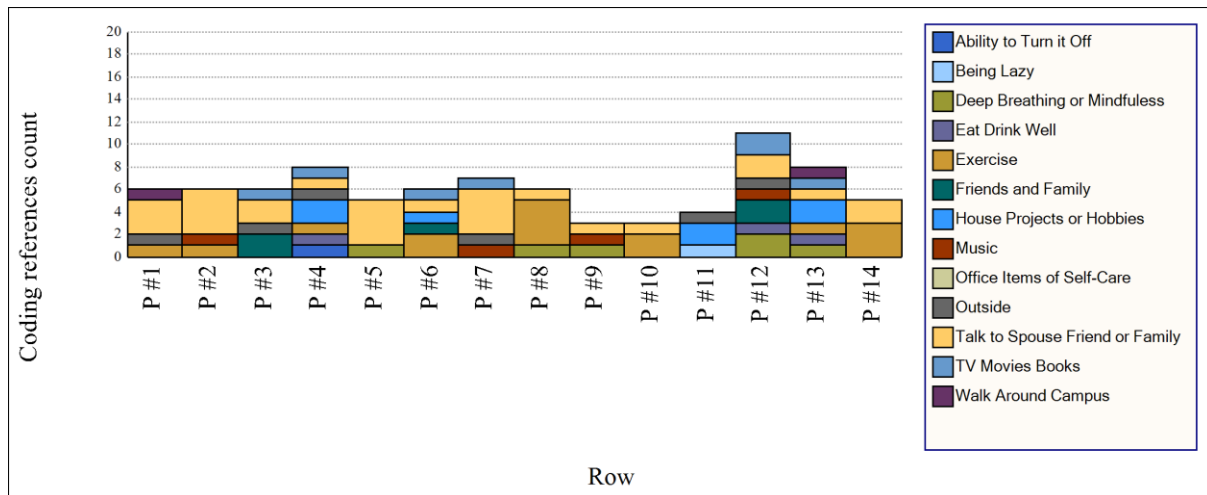


Figure 2. Principal self-care practices.

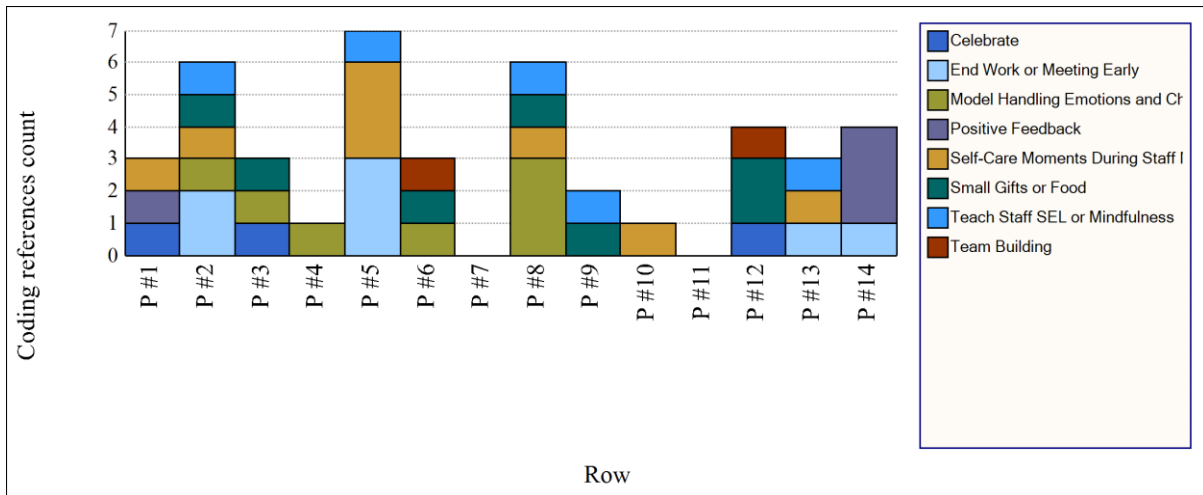


Figure 3. Role of principle to model self-care practices to staff.

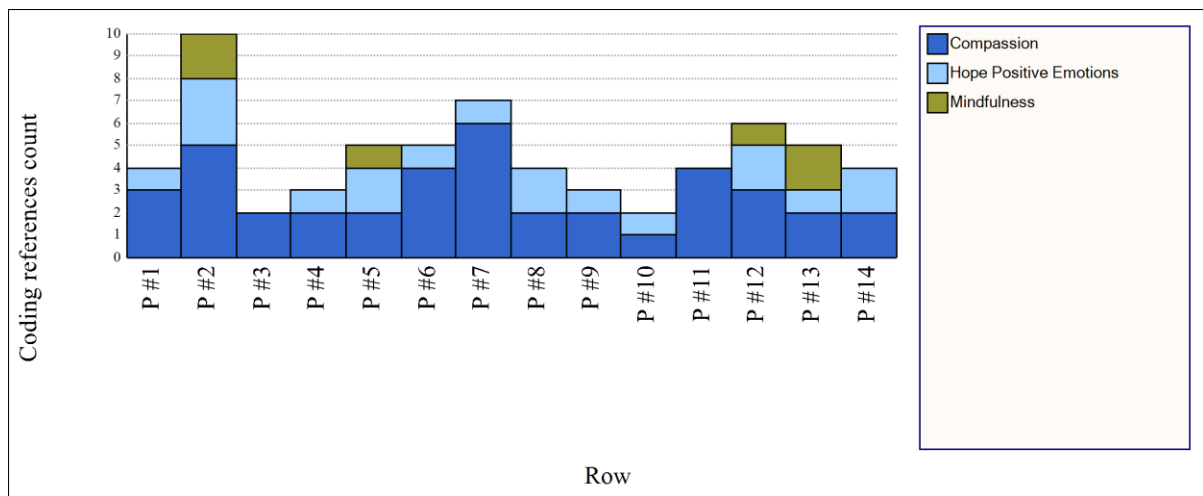


Figure 4. Principal characteristics for being a resonant leader.

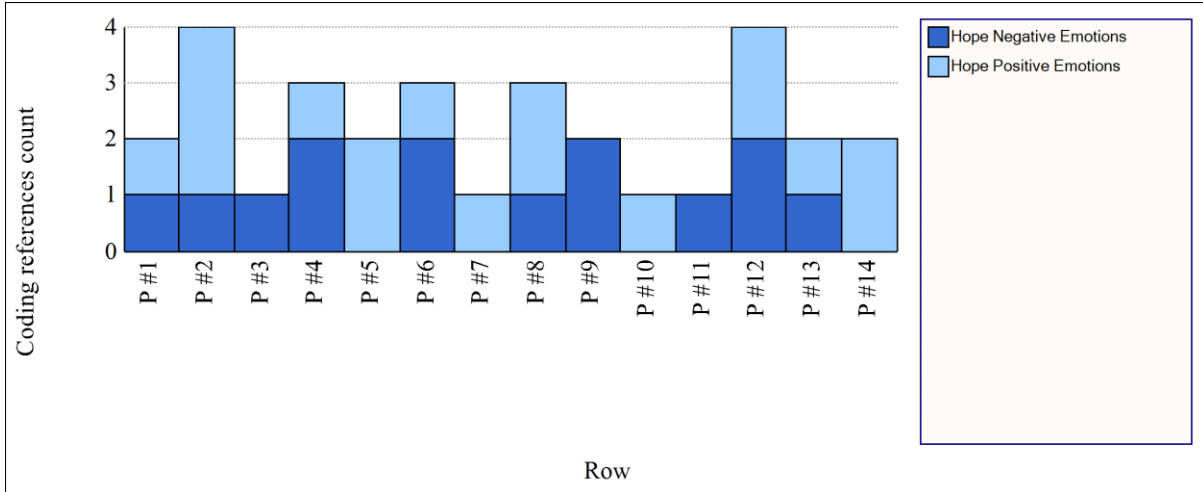


Figure 5. Principal characteristics of displaying hope emotions.

## Appendix H: Informed Consent Form

**Research Study Title:** Explicit Self-Care for Principals and Their Teachers: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study on Administrator Stress Levels

**Principal Investigator:** Nadia Oskolkoff

**Research Institution:** Concordia University–Portland

**Faculty Advisor:** Dr. Audrey Rabas

### **Purpose and what you will be doing:**

The purpose of this qualitative study is threefold: 1) To better understand elementary and middle school principals who self-report experiencing on-the-job stress by exploring their explicit practice, if any, of self-care that is meant to minimize the consequences of stress. 2) To better understand how important, it is for principals to model the practice of self-care to their teachers and what practices they take to reduce the impact of on-the-job stress their teachers may feel. 3) To better understand participants' awareness of their emotional intelligence and how they use that to support not only themselves but their staff.

We expect approximately 20 principal volunteers and no one will be paid to be in the study. We will begin enrollment on March 1, 2019, and end enrollment on July 31, 2019. To be in the study, you will be asked to take a brief online survey and participate in a one-on-one interview with the principal investigator. The interview should take 90–120 minutes and you will receive the questions ahead of our time together so you know what will be asked of you. The principal investigator will travel to you at a time that is most convenient for you. During the interview, the principal investigator will use an audio recorder and take field notes. Once the interview is transcribed, you will receive a copy of the transcript so that you have a chance to review it to make any necessary corrections, clarifications, and/or additions. The timeframe of your overall participation should not last longer than six months.

### **Risks:**

There are no risks to participating in this study other than providing your information. However, we will protect your information. Any personal information you provide will be coded so it cannot be linked to you. Any name or identifying information you give will be kept securely via electronic encryption or locked inside the personal file cabinet of the principal investigator. When we or any of our investigators look at the data, none of the data will have your name or identifying information. We will only use a secret code to analyze the data. We will not identify you in any publication or report. Your information will be kept private at all times and then all study documents will be destroyed 3 years after we conclude this study.

### **Benefits:**

The information you provide will help the field of education to understand how principals handle the phenomena of stress, practice self-care, and support their teachers who may also be experiencing high levels of stress. As a community of administrators, who may not know one another and will never meet, you may directly benefit from this study as a part of a community who participated in working towards solving an important and very current problem in education. Indirectly, you could benefit from this study because there is a curiosity in the field of education of why administrators and teachers alike leave the field. This study's outcome and

findings may lend understanding and support for solving this problem or encourage further research. Educators in our country are under extreme stress and the consequences of stress impact everyone involved including students and their achievement.

**Confidentiality:**

This information will not be distributed to any other agency and will be kept private and confidential. The only exception to this is if you tell us abuse or neglect that makes us seriously concerned for your immediate health and safety.

**Right to Withdraw:**

Your participation is greatly appreciated, but we acknowledge that the questions we are asking are personal in nature. You are free at any point to choose not to engage with or stop the study. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating. If at any time you experience a negative emotion from answering the questions, we will stop asking you questions.

**Contact Information:**

You will receive a copy of this consent form. If you have questions you can talk to or write the principal investigator, Nadia Oskolkoff at [redacted]. If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board, Dr. OraLee Branch [email redacted or call redacted].

**Your Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered. I volunteer my consent for this study.

\_\_\_\_\_

Participant Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Investigator Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Investigator Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Investigator: Nadia Oskolkoff [email: redacted]  
c/o: Professor Dr. Audrey Rabas  
Concordia University–Portland  
2811 NE Holman Street  
Portland, Oregon 97221

## **Appendix I: Statement of Original Work**

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously-researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

### **Statement of academic integrity.**

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

### **Explanations:**

#### ***What does “fraudulent” mean?***

“Fraudulent” work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one’s own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate’s final work without full and complete documentation.

#### ***What is “unauthorized” assistance?***

“Unauthorized assistance” refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another’s work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

**Statement of Original Work (continued)**

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University–Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*.



Nadia Oskolkoff

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Name

11/3/2019

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Date