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The Influence of Self-Efficacy on Principals' Capacity to Lead in Low Socioeconomic Status Schools

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The Influence of Self-Efficacy on Principals' Capacity to Lead in Low Socioeconomic Status Schools

by

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Abstract

School leaders have the responsibility to exercise leadership that results in success for students. However, low socioeconomic status (SES) schools are complex environments for leading, teaching, and learning which presents unique challenges for principals. Teachers frequently face tougher challenges than their counterparts in other schools due to many students presenting with academic and emotional problems, disengagement with school activities, and/or mental health issues which result in low achievement and behavioral concerns. Many students are also lacking in the essential basic resources, namely, food, clothing, physical and psychological safety, and emotional support. In many cases, parents are disengaged from school life and fail to provide the necessary supports for their children. This is turn creates a negative perception by teachers toward parents as they feel that parents do not value education, which reinforces students' disengagement and problematic behavior. The capability of staff to provide academic and emotional support for low SES students is perceived by principals as necessary conditions for school success. Principals exercise leadership by managing the school but their fundamental goal is to promote student achievement through the provision of professional growth of their teachers and by influencing the school environment to ensure greater opportunities for educational success. Time constraints caused by school-based issues involving students, staff, and parents often limit principals' instructional leadership capacity. These constraining factors on instructional leadership engender stress and feelings of failure which impact principals' resilience and self-efficacy, which in turn, deleteriously influences their leadership

agency. However, principals react differently to school stressors as a result of their unique knowledge, skills, and attributes. It is the combination of the personal factors of the principal and their particular context that influences leadership action to create optimal conditions for change. This convergence of these factors leads to an examination of leadership in these highly multifaceted contexts, to discover where difficulties may exist for leaders in sustaining high self-efficacy and resilience which are requisite for effective leadership.

This research study investigated the influences on principals' self-efficacy and resilience in low SES schools. This study encompassed four topics of interest conceptualized within the framework of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, a range of leadership theories, and relevant theories of change and change agency: the context of low socioeconomic status schools, leadership, self-efficacy, and resilience. The research design was underpinned by the pragmatic paradigm and encompassed a two phase, mixed method approach utilizing questionnaires and interviews with principals in low SES schools across the province of Alberta, Canada. Four major themes emerged in this study which indicated that principals in low SES schools were influenced by:

- the tensions they experienced in managing their competing leadership responsibilities;
- their teachers' pedagogical expertise and relational acumen;
- the imperative to partner with and forge strong relationships with their community to better meet the needs of their students; and

- their capacity to employ appropriate coping strategies that promoted resilience, enabling them to persist in the face of these challenging environments.

A new model, the Quadratic Pathways Model, was conceptualized from these findings. This model was designed to identify and enhance the influences on principals' self-efficacy and resilience in low socioeconomic status schools. This model is aimed at informing system leaders' policies and approaches in more effectively supporting their principals within these challenging school contexts. Additionally, an expanded definition of instructional leadership is proposed.

Acknowledgments

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Dedicated to the strong women who have affected my life's path

to Patricia Dorney,

who mentored me toward and through this journey with her vision and unrelenting quest for knowledge

to Irene Hill,

who inspired me with her ethic of work and her demand for perfection

to Shirley O'Neill,

who exemplified lifelong learning and provided constant encouragement

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

In each school, institutional power is given to the principal who must be the leading agent of change in order achieve increased student achievement. Research has stated that leadership influences student achievement (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010; Fullan, 2010; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2012; Penlington, Kington, & Day, 2008; Seashore Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010; Sergiovanni, 1984), and others have agreed that although principal impact on student achievement might be educationally significant, it varies among individuals (Leithwood, Stanley, & Montgomery, 1984). The ultimate responsibility for teaching and learning in the school resides with the principal, in other words, the skills, knowledge, and beliefs of the school leader can influence student achievement (Seashore-Louis, et al., 2010; Wahlstrom & Seashore Louis, 2008). Therefore, he/she must possess the knowledge and expertise, ***as well as***, exercise his/her skills to achieve this goal of enhancing student achievement (Bryk et al., 2010; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). This combination of knowledge, expertise, and skills that lead to action is referred to as 'leadership agency' (Bandura, 2006). Following the district expectations, principals must exercise agency within the two roles specified by Alberta legislation (*Alberta School Act*, 2000); 1) complying with expectations as managers in provincially and district mandated requirements; and 2) as instructional leaders, who shape the culture of the school and lead the school to improvement. Through collaboration and the establishment of

relationships with students, teachers, and the parent community, principals guide theory to practice that will result in successful change that increases student learning (Blase & Blase, 1999; Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010; Seashore Louis, Dretzke, et al., 2010).

Low socioeconomic status (SES) schools are a complex environment for leading, teaching, and learning. Compared to other schools, schools in low SES communities generally have a proportionately larger number of students who require various forms of academic, behavioral, emotional, and physical support (Atzaba-Poria, Pike, & Deater-Deckard, 2004; Hill & Craft, 2003; Kennedy Green, Huerta, & Richards, 2007; Mulford et al., 2008). Hence, it is in this highly multifaceted context where difficulties may exist in successfully exercising leadership. In many cases the role of the principal involves extensive time engaged in student behavior management and positive school culture development to ensure student success by creating a collaborative culture of shared commitment to group values and goals, and/or the need for communication with community resources such as the justice services or social work agencies (Hill & Craft, 2003; Kennedy Green et al., 2007; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2012). Within the context of low SES schools, the principals` responsibilities may necessarily expand to ensure that the basic needs of the students are being met and the time demands entailed in these activities can be considerable. As a result of these demands, principals often feel pressed for time to engage in instructional leadership that they know will influence student success, and consequently feel torn between the demands of the school and the provincial and district expectations. This tension leads to stress, with commensurate

concerns over sustaining their leadership resilience and self-efficacy within these complex school contexts.

Self-efficacy is a judgement of one's ability to successfully accomplish a particular task at a specific time (Bandura, 1997). Knowledge, skills, and attributes alone are not adequate for ensuring an aligned performance. Instead, how people perceive their future performance influences actual performance. In other words, self-efficacy beliefs influence principals' intended actions. Agency, or intentional action, demonstrates leadership by the enactment of goals. Individuals can adapt themselves to their environment, or modify their existing surroundings (Bandura, 1986). Previous studies have not examined these aspects of principal self-efficacy and leadership specifically within the context of low SES schools.

Context

In low SES school contexts, leaders have the responsibility to increase student achievement and must mobilize all available resources to ensure that students realize that success, all the while working against the contextual constraints that effect school leadership capacity. This research examined the various influences that impacted leadership self-efficacy and resilience in low SES contexts with the view to informing leadership development, and policy and practices that may provide greater support for these leaders in these multifaceted contexts.

Research Questions

Primary Research Question

What is the relationship between effective leadership and high self-efficacy in principals within the context of low socioeconomic status schools?

Secondary Research Questions

1. Acknowledging the importance of the multifaceted role of the principalship, how can principals maintain high self-efficacy within this complex context?
    a. What are the attitudes, beliefs, skills, and perceptions of principals about their role of school leader in low SES schools?
    b. What are the contextual factors that can influence perceived self-efficacy?
    c. How does self-efficacy relate to resilience in principals?
2. Is there a relationship between principals' level of self-efficacy and their capacity to influence student success?

Overview of the Research Design

This study explored the perspectives of school principals who were leaders in low socioeconomic status schools, and the influences on their self-efficacy and resilience within this complex context. A pragmatist approach supported this two-stage,

mixed-method design which included the use of both questionnaires and interviews. The use of both research strategies allowed the enhancement of the credibility and consistency of findings which emerged from multiple sources of data collection, including: self-reports, interviews, focus groups, and additionally an open-ended component on the questionnaire. The purpose of the use of these methods was to attempt to discover a pattern of commonality (Ary, Cheser Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006) without losing the 'uniqueness of the individual' explored through the interviews (Mertens, 1998).

The examined population in this study were principals in low socioeconomic status schools across the province of Alberta, Canada. Both purposive and random sampling procedures were used in the selection of school districts for possible inclusion in the study. These Alberta districts were all publicly funded and represented both metropolitan, and rural and small urban centers, as well as, both public and separate (Catholic) systems. Within each participating school district, all principals who were identified as leading low socioeconomic status schools were invited to participate. Therefore, the sample that was elicited was a result of a near census (entire population) sampling procedure. A response rate of 60% was achieved with 42 complete questionnaires returned.

The questionnaire used a rating scale as well as an open-ended component, which allowed a measure of flexibility in the responses. Principals were questioned on the nature of their efficacy beliefs in their specific circumstances. Self-efficacy was determined by using Tschannen-Moran and Gareis' (2004) "Principal Sense of Efficacy

Scale". The researcher developed additional items for this scale, as well as created a resiliency scale which explored some topics identified from research as indicators of resiliency, and adapted them to the leadership of schools.

During Phase 2, 13 principals were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule that aligned with the questionnaire items/scales. The interviews provided added insights related to leadership efficacy beliefs by affording principals the opportunity to expand on their statements of beliefs about leadership in low SES contexts that were informed themes emerging from the questionnaire. At the conclusion of the data analysis the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data sets were triangulated to provide a more detailed understanding of principals' personal efficacy beliefs (Burke Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Their selection was a result of self-nomination or from random stratified sampling. The response rate was sufficient to allow the results to be generalized to the population of principals of low SES schools in Alberta.

Conceptual Framework Assumptions

This study was guided by three main assumptions. First, that leadership is necessary for effective schools (Bryk et al., 2010; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2012), and to create collaborative cultures that build the necessary capacity to better support students (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Mulford, 2008; Seashore Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011; Tschannen-Moran, 2009). Second, that the context of low SES schools provides a unique environment (Alexander et al., 1997; Hill & Craft, 2003;

Kennedy Green et al., 2007) which influences leadership capacity (Carlisle, Stanley, & Kemple, 2005; Horvat, Curci, & Partlow, 2010; Kennedy Green et al., 2007). Third, that the individual beliefs and attitudes of leaders will influence what they do to achieve success in their roles as principal (Bandura, 1997; Patterson & Kelleher, 2005; Wahlstrom & Seashore Louis, 2008). The conceptual framework (See Figure 1.1) was guided by these assumptions, which in turn created a structure for the literature review.

Three fields of scholarship, education, sociology, and psychology, converged in this study that explored the agency of principals who lead in low socioeconomic status schools. The three major topics discussed were principals' Personal Factors, Leadership Agency and Action, and the Environment in Low SES Schools, and these were explored through the lens of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, taken from the field of psychology. As the movement of influence among three interacting factors, individuals' cognitive aspects, their context, and their behavior describe human functioning within Social Cognitive Theory, this conceptual framework describes the reciprocal influences of the context of low SES schools on the personal aspects of principals and on how they put leadership into action. As illustrated in Figure 1.1, the arrangement of the major topics and the reciprocal lines of influence provide the central framework for these interactions. The relationships between the headings and sub-headings are denoted by color, with arrows showing the direction of the lines of influence.

Individual Personal Factors identify principals as individuals – their skills, attributes and beliefs, and depicts that these influence what actions principals take to show leadership. The attributes that lead to resilience were identified as personal

relationships, a sense of humor, flexibility, a sense of self-worth, the ability for rebounding from adversity, and high expectations. Metacognition, or self-knowledge, is shown as a personal factor of principals that is related to the processes of self-regulation. Self-regulation encompasses the awareness and reflection that lead to behavior. Self-regulation is comprised of forethought, self-reactiveness, self-reflectiveness, and self-efficacy. These cognitive processes, along with intentionality, are the fundamental properties of 'agency', or intentional action, and thereby are encompassed within the heading of Leadership Agency and Action. This topic is concerned with both the theoretical aspects of leadership in addition to leadership agency, and principals' intentional actions which demonstrated their role beliefs in Management and Leadership. Four major leadership theories are examined: Instructional, Transformational, Authentic, and Distributed as these were deemed the most relevant in this study.

Self-efficacy is that aspect of self-reflection that provides to each individual a determination of future successful behavior, so it is situated between Personal Factors, specifically resilience, and Leadership Agency and Action. Self-efficacy is highlighted in importance because it is central to the topic of this research study, as visualized by the conceptual framework. The context of low socioeconomic status schools, with particular reference to students, parents, and teachers, was the third topic, taken from the fields of education, sociology, and psychology. The following review of the literature illustrates the influences of low socioeconomic status schools on principal self-efficacy, resilience, and agency.

Conceptual Framework

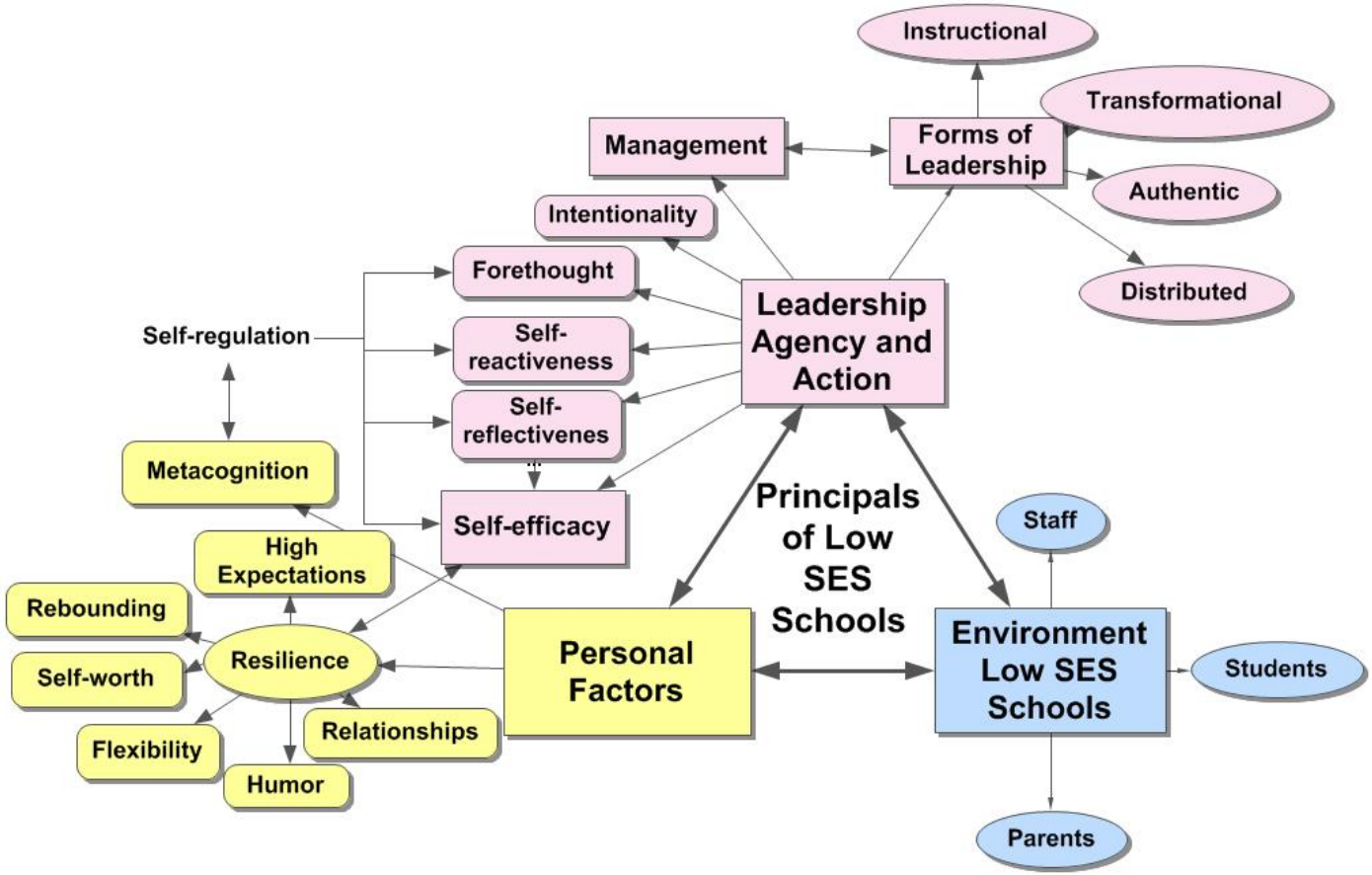

Figure 1.1: Influences on principal agency in low SES schools (through the lens of Social Cognitive Theory). Adapted from Social Foundations of Thought & Action: A Social Cognitive Theory (p. 24), by A. Bandura, 1986, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

The description of the many influences on principal self-efficacy was difficult to clearly describe in a linear manner, because of the many linkages between all of these factors. Nonetheless, Figure 1.1 conceptualizes the reciprocal nature of the interactions between these influences.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study lies within the framework of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, but also is justified in practice. In some school districts, there is a process in place that allows for experienced principals in the district to apply for the leadership of schools that have a vacancy. Some schools within lower SES environments may not be considered desirable, and the positions of principal are often filled with novice school leaders who are willing to take on these challenges in order to attain promotion. Likewise, experienced principals are frequently appointed to these schools by their superordinates rather than these leaders choosing to move to these contexts.

In general a person who has achieved the role of principal has been successful, with a concomitant high level of self-efficacy; however, the demands made upon leaders of low SES schools are unique, and can have an impact upon even the most efficacious principal. Knowledge of the protective factors that encourage resiliency and continued self-efficacy is important, both to individuals in those positions and to district administrators who have the responsibility for placing people in leadership positions. Efficacious and resilient leadership is required to facilitate improved student outcomes.

Findings from this study offer much to school district administrators who are selecting leaders for their low SES schools. Knowledge of how to develop the qualities of self-efficacy and resilience in their school leaders will assure enhanced succession planning. Findings will also be of interest to the following stakeholder groups:

- The scholarly community – by narrowing and strengthening the identification of knowledge, skills, attributes, and beliefs that influence positive principal agency in low SES schools;
- Principals – increasing their understanding of resources which are available to them from external providers, internal to their school community, and from within themselves. Reflecting on the experiences of their peers in relation to their own context and actions can further motivate principals to continue to be effective within these challenging environments;
- Ministry policy and decision-makers – increasing the understanding of the differences that low SES contexts represent may inform policy and procedures that influence schools and leadership approaches;
- Administrators in boards –
    - by informing the pre-selection and selection processes for identifying effective aspiring educators for the position of principal within this context;
    - by expanding the understanding of the importance of personal supports for the principal and financial and agency supports for the school within these contexts; and

- Leadership professional developers – by informing their programming related to developing aspiring and incumbent principals' knowledge, skills, and values and beliefs in order to more effectively strengthen existing self-efficacy beliefs and leadership capacity.

Delimitations

The chosen population was school principals in low SES schools across eight school districts in Alberta. This study was delimited in that the following factors were not considered:

- This study was focused on the perceptions of those leaders whose schools were situated in low socioeconomic status community and/or the student population was considered to be primarily low SES. Therefore, the perceptions of those principals who led schools with small populations of low SES students, or those principals who led high SES schools were excluded from the study.
- Even though it is understood that in low SES school communities other stakeholders exert varied and widespread influence on the functioning of schools, this research study included the participation of school leaders only. Therefore, the perceptions of school staff, students, parents, community members, and district personnel were excluded from the study.

Definitions of Terms

The definitions of key words or phrases that were used in this study are provided in the glossary in order to ensure uniform understanding, as some of these terms are unique to the literature pertaining to the subject of this study.

Glossary

Low Socioeconomic Status Schools	Low SES schools have a high percentage of families with a low family income. In the United States, this is sometimes identified by the percentage of students qualifying for a free or reduced lunch – a federal program with the criterion of family income, and seen to be a valid indicator of low socioeconomic status (McGuigan & Hoy, 2006). In Alberta, the incidence rate for each school jurisdiction is determined by Alberta Education using the following indicators from Statistics Canada: the average years of the mothers' education, the percentage of single parent families, the percentage of those parents who own their own homes, average income of families with children, and the percent of parents with no post-secondary education. These are added to the transience rate of students, which is information given by the school jurisdictions (Alberta Education, 2013).
Social Cognitive Theory	Social Cognitive Theory is Albert Bandura's view of human development. He believed that human development is always changing. Human behavior is the result of interplay of three influences: behavior, personal factors, and the environment. These causal sources are varying in their strengths and in their ability to exert influence and be acted against. For example, the environment will exert influence over the personal attributes of an individual, and this will modify how they choose to act. Self-reflection enables individuals to set goals for themselves and to

	learn from past experience.
Self-efficacy	"Perceived self-efficacy is a judgment of one's ability to organize and execute given types of performances" (Bandura, 1997). Perceived self-efficacy impacts how individuals interpret their thoughts, their decisions on the behaviors practiced, and how these are interpreted. It is not so much what one can do that may influence actions, but what one believes can be successfully accomplished.
Principal	The principal is the lead teacher in a school; the individual who bears the responsibility for the management and instructional leadership of the school.
Resiliency	Resilience is the ability to succeed in spite of adversity. For leaders in schools, this means the ability to cope with the stresses that are foreseeable or unplanned; to persevere which often leads to success (Henderson & Milstein, 2003). The terms 'resilience' and 'resiliency' are used interchangeably throughout this study.
Triadic Reciprocal Determinism	This is a model of human functioning described by Bandura (1986). Bandura defined the word reciprocal to describe mutual influence between each of three factors: personal attributers, the environment, and behavior. These factors all interrelate, with each belief and action and environment having an impact on the other factors, creating an effect which in turn is an influence.
Effective leadership	This is leadership of a school which has undergone planned change leading to improved academic achievement of the students in the school, as well as the development of the abilities of the staff.
Relational acumen	This has been defined as "the art of developing relationships and the science of understanding the reality of forces shaping the nature of relationships", specifically focusing on trust and respect (Churchley, Neufeld, & Pervey, 2013, p. 174).

Engagement Student engagement is a commonly-used term which describes students' connections to school that involves a combination of thoughts, feelings, and actions (Crooks, Chiodo, Thomas, & Hughes, 2010).

Conclusion

School principals are responsible for the teaching and learning that goes on in their schools. The role of principal includes the managerial duties that are necessary for efficient functioning, and leadership functions. It has been stated that the principal has the responsibility for increasing academic achievement in their schools, and in Alberta, rankings on the provincial achievement test results is one measure of academic achievement. In low socioeconomic status schools, improving school academic achievement is often the goal of the school. The instructional leadership of the principal should be the driving force that results in improved achievement for students. However, the principal may find that the majority of time in school is spent on necessary managerial duties which include dealing with behavior issues so that the school is a stable and safe learning environment. The environment of the school therefore may influence the self-efficacy of the principal. Their beliefs in their abilities to accomplish their stated goals impact the actions that they choose to make. These behaviors reciprocally influence their beliefs in their ability for successful accomplishment. An analysis of how individual efficacy beliefs influence behaviors of principals of low socioeconomic status schools will identify the factors that lead to successful principal functioning, as this success will impact everyone in the school.

Overview of the Thesis

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to establish the theoretical and contextual framework through which this work was engendered, developed, and interpreted. Through the lens of social cognitive theory comes the understanding of the conceptual framework: the intersection of the major themes presented in this work.

Chapter 2 begins with a review of the literature on the themes pertinent to the study: low socioeconomic status contexts, then provides an explanation of Bandura's social cognitive theory, and subsequently presents self-efficacy, resilience, and leadership. A detailed description of the methods and methodologies used are found in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 deals with the presentation of the data resulting from both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study. A discussion of the major findings of this study and how it is situated within the established research is found in Chapter 5. A summary of the major findings of this research study concludes Chapter 6, which also contains the outcomes of the study - the Quadratic Pathways Model which describes how principal self-efficacy and resilience is influenced by their low socioeconomic status context, and an expanded definition of instructional leadership.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Three significant domains of scholarship, that of, education, sociology, and psychology, coalesced in this study to underpin and inform the exploration of the agency of principals who lead in low socioeconomic status schools in Alberta, Canada. Figure 2.1 conceptualizes the approach taken to ordering of the topics of interest for this study. This chapter describes the details of these influences by establishing first the context of this study. This examined the external aspects of low SES principals' lived experiences that included the students, parents, and staff, as well as their interactions. The context of low SES schools was taken from the fields of education, psychology and sociology. At this point in the literature review, principals' personal factors, specifically self-efficacy and resilience, were explored from the field of psychology. A theoretical viewpoint was taken in order to provide the reader with an explanation of agency within social cognitive theory, how self-efficacy beliefs act as motivation for agency, and the relationship between self-efficacy and resilience. Finally, this literature review discussed leadership, leadership agency, and the resultant actions. This was taken from the field of education. The two major roles played by the principal which were discussed were management/administration and various forms of leadership. Within this section on leadership, an overview of previous principal self-efficacy studies is also examined. Each major heading is illustrated with the relevant section of the conceptual framework (See Figure 1.1). Chapter 2 ends with a brief summary of the major topics.

Literature Review Approach

Figure 2.1: The approach taken by the review of the literature

Context

The purpose of the following chapter section is to identify the complexities inherent in the context of low SES schools, and how they affect the students, their parents, and staff. This also includes the community and the district and personnel, as well as the interactions among these (See Figure 2.2). Research was selected to offer an explanation of these social interactions.

Schools are social and cultural institutions. When describing "how schools work," it is necessary to examine people and their interactions within each school context. The setting of this study is in low socioeconomic status schools. Burney and

Environment of Low SES Schools

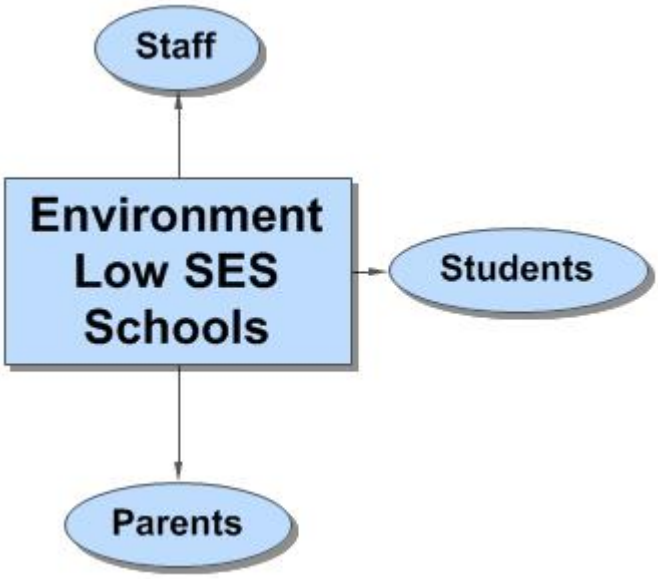

Figure 2.2: Major components of the environment of low SES schools, taken from the Conceptual Framework

Beilke cited the US Social Security Office of Policy Research and Analysis who defined the term *socioeconomic* as "one's relative standing in regards to income, level of education, employment, health, and access to resources" (2008, p. 297). Poverty, therefore, is only one of the indicators of low SES, but serves to delineate one contrast between the school staff, which tends to be middle-class, and the students who attend the school, and who are products of their family and of their environment, the community in which the school is located. Jenson defined poverty as "a chronic and debilitating condition that results from multiple adverse synergistic risk factors and affects the mind, body, and soul" (Jensen, 2009, p. 6). In other words, these risk factors are important contextually-derived determinants of human behavior. To examine behavior within the circumstance of low socioeconomic status, it is important to

understand the particular milieu in which people interact. Bok (2010) referred to Bourdieu's theory of habitus, where people behave in certain ways dependent upon their socially defined context. Because of this, the inhabitants of any context tend to motivational and behavioral uniqueness.

Context of Low SES Schools

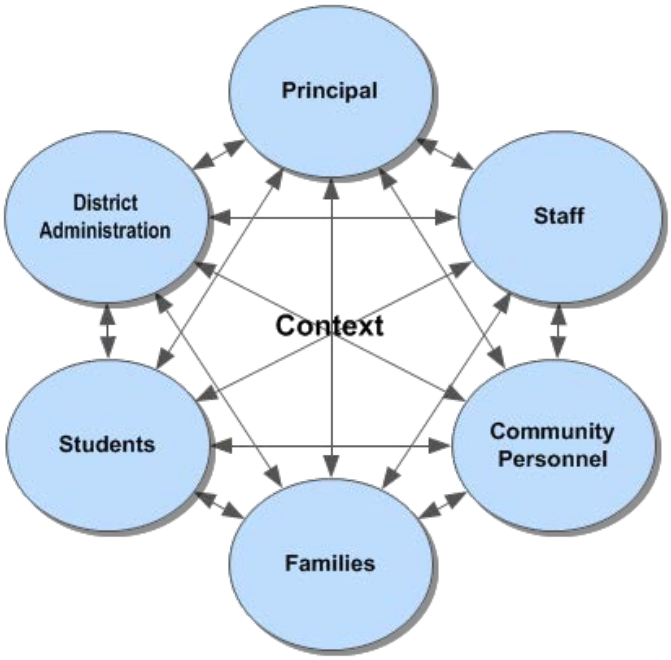

Figure 2.3: A further conceptualization of the low SES context

Context is more than environment. Context encompasses students, families, community, school staff, administration, and the district hierarchy, and also includes the interactions between them. Figure 2.3 illustrates this relationship. Context also encompasses the barriers of understanding between people within the school institution, and people from the community that the school serves. Because the socioeconomic status is dissimilar between families and school personnel, "many times the expectations, experiences, customs, and values of schools are very different from those

present in children's homes" (Hill & Craft, 2003, p. 156). The variance of class, race, and culture between parents and school personnel was defined by Horvat et al. (2010, p. 703) as "social distance". This difference has been seen to affect the viewpoints of both parents and schools, as well as their interpretations of the other's perspectives, based upon their own culture, experience, and expectation (Carlisle et al., 2005).

Students

Students in low SES schools enter schools as individuals with personal ability and skills that are tempered by genetic and environmental characteristics which come from their families and neighborhoods (Kennedy Green et al., 2007). The primary risk factors that could influence all people in poverty have been identified as: difficulties in dealing with emotional and social interactions, long-term stress related to poverty, lags in cognitive development, and concerns regarding health (Jensen, 2009), and these factors interplay in the lives of the poor (Atzaba-Poria et al., 2004). Because poverty presents unique circumstances that have a negative benefit to children and their families, students in low SES schools present a particular challenge to school personnel (Sirin, 2005). One of the most important differences is that of academic achievement. Achievement has been found to be influenced by four socio-emotional factors: academic and school attachment, teacher support, peer values, and mental health (Becker & Luthar, 2002). The results from studies have shown that in low socioeconomic status schools, students who come from low income backgrounds do not tend to achieve as highly on standardized achievement tests as do students from middle-class backgrounds (Kennedy Green et al., 2007), and are also more in danger of dropping out, or not

continuing their education after high school graduation (Alexander et al., 1997; Halle, Kurtz-Costes, & Mahoney, 1997). Furthermore, not only was it found that they do more poorly in school, but children of low-income families were described as being already behind others when they start school. Alexander and Entwisle (2008) described these children as being disadvantaged when they start and continuing to stay behind. Therefore, this difference in achievement throughout the course of the students' schooling may impact how teachers perceive and interact with these children.

Another important difference of low SES schools is the incidence of behavioral concerns among the students. More specifically, low socioeconomic status has also been associated with aspects of mental health such as high degrees of depression and delinquency in students (Wright, Botticello, & Aneschensel, 2006). A recent review of Canadian cities concluded that 14-25% of children and youth face mental health issues (School-based Mental Health and Substance Abuse Consortium, 2013) One mental health issue, depression, has been found to have a relationship with academic performance (Chan, Zadeh, Jahng, & Mak, 2009). The mental health issues may include such aspects as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or Conduct Disorders, which may impact on academic achievement or positive social interactions. Recently, The Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science, and Technology (2006) recommended the establishment of school-based teams made up of social workers, child youth workers and teachers to help provide seamless service for students and their families. This same study suggested that it would be beneficial for schools to provide the venue for mental health service delivery. This committee also specifically recommended that teachers be trained to recognize forms of mental illness, and offered

supports such as time and resources in order to achieve this knowledge. Certainly, if it was available, these mental health supports would improve the likelihood of students achieving school success, as well as increasing their ability to have healthy relationships (Dababnah & Cooper, 2006). The growing importance of the need for counselors to address student mental-health needs has been highlighted, with some researchers having stated that even trained counselors were not meeting the needs of students today, as most of these councillors tended to continue the service delivery model that focused more on guidance (Keys, Bemak, & Lockhart, 1998). Therefore, in low SES schools, it is suggested that generally there have been many diverse students who have not made adequate successful connections with others in their environment, and who have experienced and demonstrated various degrees of disengagement with academic or social growth.

The attachment that students feel to school may also be reflected in their attendance at school. Strong evidence has been found in educational research to suggest a significant relationship between student attendance and student achievement (Roby, 2003; Spradlin, Cierniak, Shi, & Chen, 2012), specifically for math (Parke & Kanyongo, 2012). This relationship was found to be true for all racial groups (Parke & Kanyongo, 2012; Spradlin et al., 2012). It was not surprising to note that research findings indicated that attendance was an issue that was associated with higher poverty levels (Spradlin et al., 2012), but it was also noted that student attendance and academic achievement was related to the condition of the school building itself (Parke & Kanyongo, 2012). In other words, the external immediate environment was found to affect students' decisions to spend time in that building.

In low socioeconomic status schools, the student acquisition of language is a concern to school personnel. There tend to be two categories of language concerns. The first is the quality of language by English language speakers who come from low SES families. The second is the total lack of ability of a group of students to communicate in the language of instruction.

Spoken language acquisition

In low socioeconomic status families, the use of language in the home is often qualified by the type of discourse that takes place in the family. In other words, compared to those in high socioeconomic status households, these children's opinion and judgment are neither sought nor encouraged by parents, thereby increasing the gap in reasoning and language skills between the lower SES students and more advantaged students (Lareau, 2002). In addition to the type of discourse, low income parents speak less often and much more simplistically to their children, and it could be argued that this practice of language exchange provides children with a less stimulating cognitive environment (Sirin, 2005). This was endorsed by Lareau (2011), who found that middle-class children have higher language skills, which were identified as better understanding of abstract comment and a larger vocabulary. Therefore, the quality of oral language is affected by the socioeconomic status of the child's family.

Second language populations in schools

Immigrants from other countries who speak languages other than that which is spoken in the schools have comprised a growing percentage of students in today's

classrooms (Becker & Luthar, 2002). They may not have the necessary understandings of their social and cultural surroundings or may not have the necessary family resources to enhance academic achievement. Students who are foreign-born have encountered many difficulties. Some of these difficulties may be the misunderstanding of the educational system, the difference in culture, or a difference in language from that of instruction. Especially when they start, immigrant students may have lower academic achievement compared to those whose home language is the same as that of the school (Chiu & Xihua, 2007). Their ability to acquire language may affect the perception of their abilities, both to themselves and to educators who evaluate their progress. The quality of previous educational experience in the first language is a strong predictor of success in the second language (Krashen, 2005). Educators are informed by past recorded achievement for all students including those who speak other languages. However, there are some students who have never before had formal education, as in the case for some refugee students. These students are placed in age-appropriate classrooms, and they must learn another language plus required behaviors that are socially accepted in educational institutions. English language learner students add another factor of influence often found in low socioeconomic schools.

Parents

Students in low SES schools are products of their backgrounds. Bronfenbrenner and Evans (2000) discussed their continuing attempts to portray an accurate model of human development, referring to a bioecological model, wherein human development is a process of progressively complex reciprocal interactions between the person and their

immediate environment, and this development is influenced by regularity and over time. Myers and Pianta (2008) cited Bronfenbrenner (1986) who referred to the primary influence of the family environment on how the child relates emotionally and socially to others. Within the context of the study, this influence is important when their children become students in schools and must interact with school staff, especially their teachers. This fact has implications for socialization of the child. To more fully understand the low SES context, it is important to explore the characteristics of low SES families and how these factors may influence school success for their child.

Family factors

Research has shown that factors, such as family characteristics, have been found to have an association with the academic attainment of the child (Lareau, 2002), as well as with their behavior at school. The relationship status of parents, the number of children in the family, and the lack of financial resources have an impact on student achievement. The first of these, the relationship status of parents, could be defined as the psychological aspect of the family structure. Wright, Botticello, and Aneschensel (2006) found that those students who came from two-parent families scored higher academically than those students who had come from other family situations, and family structure was also negatively associated with overt negative behavior. Students are likewise influenced by interactions between family members. Emotional trauma that may occur as a result of conflict within families has been found to lessen both motivation and achievement of students (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001) and to increase the probability of behavioral, emotional, social, and academic problems for children

(Amato & Cheadle, 2008). This conflict has included parental discord and divorce (Alexander et al., 1997; Amato & Sobolewski, 2001). Conflict in families regarding parental relationships or marriages lead to stress for the entire family, and appear to be linked with the psychological instability of children that may influence the future relationships as well as the academic achievement of these children (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001). Additionally, it has been found that if children come from families that model aggression, they are not able to learn necessary social skills that would lead to mutually rewarding social relationships (Amato & Cheadle, 2008).

Not only has emotional trauma been found to be related to marriages or deaths, it also has been connected with adults moving in or out of the home, and moves of the family or changes of school for the student (Alexander et al., 1997). The psychological well-being of the child has been found to generally decline with the numbers of these family transitions (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001). This disruption of the relationship between parent and child has been found to be a primary factor that affects the academic failure of students, as well as establishes a need for belonging and stability (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001).

It has also been found that single parent families or those parents who have often experienced separation offer their children less attention or financial support (Chiu & Xihua, 2007). When parents experience stressors that result in a lack of capacity to be supportive to their children, the negative psychological impact on their children may lead to more problematic behavior at school (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). Included in family structure is the number of children in the family. Sibling structure has been

found to have had an impact on academic achievement, where students with many siblings scored lower than those who did not (Chiu & Xihua, 2007).

Another family characteristic which has been found to be a factor that impacts the school achievement is the amount of resources found within the home (Lareau, 2002). These resources, both material and cultural, have an impact on the academic success of the child (Chiu & Xihua, 2007; Marks, 2006), and the disposition of the use of these resources has been found to make a difference to the student (Chiu & Xihua, 2007). Low SES students have limited access to tangible, printed resources, such as books (Cunningham & Sanzo, 2002). Performance on standardized tests in reading has also been associated consistently with access to printed materials, which has strongly indicated a relationship between the acquisition of written language and disadvantaged students (Krashen, 2005). Low SES students also are less likely to be involved in programs outside of school that would provide exposure to learning opportunities, resulting in comparative disadvantage to other students (Burney & Beilke, 2008). Generally speaking, children in poverty have been found to possess fewer supportive networks then do children from higher SES backgrounds (Evans, 2004).

In her longitudinal study, Lareau listed some differences between how middle-class families and families in poverty raise their children. "Social class does have a powerful impact in shaping the daily rhythms of family life" (2011, p. 8). She found that low SES parents raise their children with no sense of entitlement, as this sense comes from a strong sense of belonging, and there tends to be a very clear boundary between adults and children. In middle-class families, this sense of entitlement gives

children a sense of comfort with authority figures. There is also a difference between how families choose leisure activities for their children. Lareau found that low SES parents do not view leisure activities as an aspect of good parenting. On the other hand, middle-class parents focus on stimulating their children's social and cognitive development. Lareau stated that generally middle-class families bring up their children in close correspondence with the school as an institution:

> On the one hand, there are profound differences in the quality of services provided by institutions. On the other hand, institutions accept and promote the same standards regarding cultural repertoires. Thus, teachers placed a shared emphasis on the cultivation of children's talents through organized activities, the importance of parental development of children's vocabulary, and the importance of responsive and positive parental participation in schooling. (Lareau, 2011, p. 28)

Lareau went on to state, “These standards privileged the cultural practices of middle-class families over those of their working class and poor counterparts” (2011, p. 28). Lareau’s viewpoint highlights the social, linguistic, and cultural deficits of low SES students in the school setting.

Another intangible resource for all students is the interaction of adults in the educational process at home or in the school. Parental involvement at school includes, but is not limited to, attending parent teacher conferences, volunteering in activities at school, and attending school-sponsored programs. Lee and Bowen (2006) cited McWayne (2004) who identified supportive parental involvement at home with

activities such as assisting with their children's' homework, organizing home activities or having discussions with their children about educational matters.

For students, this influence of this interaction comes from the ability of parents to interact with school staff and influence the direction of their child's education. When parents become involved in schools, they do so with an underlying belief that their actions will influence learning for their child (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Middle-class families and children operate with the school from a sense of equality and in some cases, entitlement, in their expectation that they can influence changes for their children at school (Lareau, 2002). However, some low SES parents may not believe that they have the ability to interact with the school and affect their child's education. In low SES schools, some children are at a disadvantage because their parents do not know how to access resources, information, and opportunities from the school (Lareau, 2002).

Parental involvement

It appears that all stakeholders – parents, students, and teachers agree that parental involvement is important (McGee, 2003). However, compared to low SES schools, schools with a high SES often have higher academic achievement and an increased degree of involvement from parents (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987). Levine (2002) found that teachers in low SES schools stated that only 25% of their parents were involved in the classroom. This lack of active involvement is of concern, as it has been found that the academic functioning of students whose parents are more involved at their school was greater than that of those students whose parents are less involved (Burney & Beilke, 2008; Hill & Craft, 2003; Jeynes, 2003; Lee &

Bowen, 2006). Furthermore, parental involvement has also been proven to positively influence the social skills of their children (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Therefore, it could be concluded that the lack of parental involvement in low SES schools contributes to lower academic achievement, even though authors of a recent study concluded that they could not determine that the lack of parental involvement in education for children is a primary cause of lower achievement (Ryan, Casas, Kelly-Vance, & Ryalls, 2010).

School staff have expectations for parental involvement and support for the students in their schools (Horvat et al., 2010). They expect parents to ensure regular attendance at school, as well as prepare their children for learning, and provide parental support when the school deals with behavior issues with their children (Horvat et al., 2010; Milne & Plourde, 2006). School staff equates parental involvement at school to having a value for education (Sirin, 2005). To be specific, it is likely that parents who have little or no communication or active involvement with the school may be viewed by some school personnel as not valuing education for their children (Hill & Craft, 2003; Lareau, 2011; Lott, 2001; Sirin, 2005), being uncaring, or having general lack of interest (Lee & Bowen, 2006). School staff construct their interpretations of parental involvement upon observation and inference, based on their own beliefs and experiences. Some staff believe that if parents show that they value education for their children, their children will also have a positive attitude toward school, which would be supported by their approach to learning and their classroom behavior (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Fan and Williams explained the value of demonstrated involvement by stating that "…when parents are engaged in school related activities, they strengthen the bond between home and school and demonstrate that they value education" (2010, p.

70). However, this school-based belief does not agree with researchers who stated that all parents want the best possible education for their child (Horvat et al., 2010). Specifically, Cooper (2010) argued that low SES parents want their children to succeed in school.

Factors that influence involvement

Burney and Beilke (2008) state the importance of understanding that poverty itself restricts parental involvement in schools as well as student achievement. Some individual factors that may determine low socioeconomic status have been linked to restricted parental involvement at school. Parental involvement has been found to be significantly related to race (Lee & Bowen, 2006), and also linked to family income (Burney & Beilke, 2008; Sirin, 2005), as well as to parents' education and marital status (Hill & Craft, 2003). Therefore, this has invited the inference that low SES parents are not very involved in their children's school (Jesse, Davis, & Pokorny, 2004; McGee, 2003).

One factor also associated with low socioeconomic status is that of parent ethnicity. Because school personnel tend to be from their society's dominant culture, there may be a cultural difference between these parents and schools. Lee and Bowen (2006) found that this inequality in social, economic, and educational culture is likely to result in less parental involvement. There may be several reasons for this lack. This cultural difference may be reflected in parent unawareness or misunderstanding of the level of parental involvement that the school may consider appropriate. These parents

also may not feel that school personnel understand or respect their background and this may influence their participation (Carlisle et al., 2005).

The second aspect to a difference in ethnicity may be the language that is spoken at home. Many parents do not speak English and this may limit involvement in many ways. They may not understand the teachers or feel comfortable being in the school and dealing with teachers, which Hill and Craft (2003) concluded would lead to a lack of parental self-confidence.

Carlisle et al (2005) described how the educational experiences of parents also have a bearing on their willingness to be involved in their child's' education. First, parents who had positive educational experiences themselves were more likely to relay that positive message to their children and participate in their children's educational experiences. Secondly, positive parental educational experiences are related to their subsequent successes in school which would encourage parental belief that they have the ability to impact their child’s education. Hill and Craft (2003) additionally found that low parental educational attainment may limit their ability to help with activities such as homework.

Another difference in what parents consider to be appropriate involvement also exists in parental belief that they should not interfere with education. It was found that this lack of interference was based on their belief that education was the responsibility of the school staff, and they expected to not interfere (Lareau, 2011).

In some cases, non-participation by parents may be a deliberate choice. For example, Lareau found that not only did the low SES parents in her study tend to be non-demanding when dealing with school personnel, she described deliberate attempts on the part of parents "to maintain a separation between school and home rather than foster an interconnectedness" (Lareau, 2011, p. 198). Not only is there a division between school and parent, but in some cases the students are an audience for parental behavior. This researcher stated that parents would acquiesce with staff suggestions, but later would openly criticize staff in front of their children. Lareau described this attitude as “a hostile undercurrent of resistance” (p. 199). She also intimated that the face-to-face acquiescence may have been caused by parental concern that schools may contact Child Services if they do not indicate compliance.

Eccles and Harold (2004) and Carlisle et al. (2005) both found that commitments to employment were among the more important reasons for non-participation of parents. Certainly, it was admitted that in the case of single parent families, or families where both parents work, parental participation in schools is difficult (Carlisle et al., 2005).

Not only do some low SES parents choose non-involvement, but it was found that some schools themselves present barriers for involvement. In a comparison of low income and working-class parents to middle-class parents, Lott (2001) found that school staff do not welcome low SES parents, and took a stereotypical view of these parents regarding parental values concerning their children's education and their ability to help their child with academics. In this case, parents did not feel that their suggestions were respected or valued by school staff, and so therefore they did not feel that they could

influence the educational outcomes of their children (Lott, 2001). This has led to a lack of trust on the part of parents toward schools, with differences in race, class, and educational attainment adding to the difficulty in creating honest communication (Milne & Plourde, 2006). However, this belief that low SES parents are not involved or feel unwelcome or unable is not supported by all studies (Eccles & Harold, 1996). Specifically, parental engagement is not only defined by having a physical presence in school life. It has been found that “parents from diverse racial/ethnic, educational, and economic backgrounds are involved in their children’s education regardless of whether they are formally involved in their children's school life" (Lee & Bowen, 2006, p. 210).

School Staff

It also is necessary to examine how the school context mediates the behavior of school staff. One of the roles that principals must play is that of an instructional leader, and within that practice of leadership, believe that leadership practice can influence student learning (O’Donnell & White, 2005). When exercising leadership, a principal looks to the teachers on his/her staff to provide good teaching to the students. Good teaching was described as “developing and nurturing caring relationships with students and being professionally and ethically focused on student learning" (Cochran-Smith, 2006). An additional definition of effective teachers includes the acquisition of varying modes of knowledge, the development of pedagogical skills and communication, and the capability to be reflective and manage optimal learning environments for students (Leonard, 2007). In any case, all administrators agreed on the importance of teachers'

ability to teach well, have rapport with the students, and have the necessary attributes to develop themselves professionally (Watt, Mills, & Huerta, 2010).

Teacher expectations

Classroom teachers evaluate students and assess their achievement. Researchers have examined how teachers' expectations are influenced by the context in which they work. Specifically, Auwarter and Aruguete (2008) studied the relationship between expectations and low socioeconomic status schools. They found that teachers have low expectations for students who are low SES, especially for boys (Auwarter & Aruguete, 2008; Burney & Beilke, 2008), and this lack of optimism for the ability of low SES students to be successful is related to teachers' perceptions of students' ability to overcome the poverty-based obstacles to success. In other words, some teachers do not tend to believe that low SES students can succeed (Woolfolk Hoy, Hoy, & Kurz, 2008). Diamond and Spillane (2004) were cited by Auwarter and Aruguete (2008), in which they were reported as stating that teachers' motivations are based on their beliefs that they can influence student outcomes. It influences what teachers decide to do, or their agency within the classroom. Therefore, if teachers believe that student academic ability is determined by their SES, they may make less of an effort and so may not encourage student achievement.

In Alberta, standardized testing in grades three, six, nine, and twelve has been a long-established mandated requirement for schools. The pressure of the responsibility for public evaluation comparison may well cause stress for some teachers. In low socioeconomic status schools, it was found that standardized testing was a source of

difficulties for the first year teachers (Darby et al., 2011). In some instances, teachers may focus on increasing academic achievement to the detriment of factors that may increase student engagement. For example, in the case of schools in districts where standardized tests are given, it has been suggested that some teachers may focus on trying to have their classes succeed in these tests, and thereby sacrifice classroom interest (Cunningham & Sanzo, 2002). In schools where academic disengagement may be prevalent, the classroom behavior of the students may reflect this disinterest and cause stress to the teacher.

Teacher turnover

The concern of teacher turnover in low socioeconomic status schools was explored. It has been found that many teachers leave teaching after the first few years of practice, with about one third of teachers leaving within the first five years (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Darling-Hammond (2003) and Ingersoll (2001) found that teacher turnover is more highly prevalent in schools who serve a low SES population. This conclusion was agreed upon by both previous and subsequent research. It was found that teacher turnover in urban, high-poverty schools was 50% higher when compared with schools with low poverty, generally attributed to teacher stress when working with students in these areas (Ingersoll, 2001). To be more specific, the following were related to teacher turnover: dealing with unacceptable student interactions, a lack of support from administration, the lack of decision-making ability, and low salaries (Ingersoll, 2001). Kelly (2004) focused on the first two factors, and described the results as "poor behavioral climates" which accounted for higher rates of teacher

attrition in low SES schools (Kelly, 2004, p. 198), while stating that poverty and minority enrolment are factors which are not as important in the decision to leave teaching. Other explanations also include a lack of trust, and a school climate that is not cohesive (Hipp, 1996). Ingersoll also found that the age of teachers was related to their decision to leave teaching, with the youngest and oldest teachers more likely to leave (Ingersoll, 2001). Teacher turnover can also be related to teacher experience. Explicitly, it was found that experienced teachers are more likely to remain in the profession than are less experienced teachers (Goddard & Skrla, 2006). Later research also indicated higher rates of teacher turnover in schools of high poverty, high minority, urban and rural schools (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010).

Whether or not attrition, though it seemed more prevalent in low SES schools, appeared to be an indicator of hiring difficulty appears to be a minor matter for debate. James and Connolly (2009) denied that it was, though others grouped low SES with low performing schools and merely stated that they were "disadvantaged" in recruitment and hiring ability, but that often it was not just the situational context of the school that disadvantaged it, but by the organizational structure and culture of the school (Papa & Baxter, 2008), those situational results that are influenced by leadership. This suggests that the amount of teacher attrition is under the control of the principal, who, for example, can control the school climate by providing support, recognition to teachers, and sharing in decision-making (Hipp, 1996; Ingersoll, 2001). In other words, teacher turnover could be a result of principal actions, not just low SES context. In this sense of teachers needing to feel part of a community that deals with mutual trust, Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) found that the school responsibility for creating a climate is

dependent upon the principal, as it is his/her responsibility for creating a trust-filled, cooperative environment. The school climate, especially principal support, has been found to be especially important to attract new teachers (Milanowski et al., 2009). Often in these schools, there are many new teachers who find positions in schools when other teachers leave vacancies (Milanowski et al., 2009). New teachers can provide schools with new energies and ideas (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010) which could be seen as highly desirable by school administration. However, the cost of teachers leaving schools may be found in its impact to school community and the performance of both teachers and students. Specifically, it has been found that "high levels of employee turnover are both cause and effect of ineffectiveness and low performance in organizations" (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 405). Teachers are impacted by negative student interactions more than by low academic achievement. For first year teachers, these two issues were the primary focus for negative interactions (Darby et al., 2011).

Teacher effects on students

The achievement of students' academic success is the focus of the work of schools, and it has been found that even though success for students is derivative from multiple factors, the work of the teacher is one of the most important influences (McNeal 2005). Because of this, the school principal must put a priority on ensuring the effectiveness of the teachers in the school. Konstantopoulos (2009) found that effective teachers promoted positive gains in all of their students; however, he also suggested that these teacher effects were higher with students from low SES schools. Another study highlighted the importance of individual teachers on low SES students. These

researchers found that teacher effects on students depended upon individual teachers. "To put it another way, in low-SES schools, it matters more *which* [italics in original] teacher a child receives than it does in high-SES schools" (B. Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004, p. 254). The teachers who have the ability and willingness to develop supportive relationships for students possess the characteristics of emotional warmth and acceptance, and can therefore provide their students the necessary support for establishing academic and social engagement (Myers & Pianta, 2008).

As part of their profession, teachers are mandated to effectively teach the curriculum, and in doing so, ensure the academic engagement of all students in the class. However, teaching a group of individuals is a challenging task, especially when some students experience conflict through negative social interactions. The prevention of conflict between and among students must be achieved by staff, in addition to teaching the curriculum. Moreover, teachers interact with each student, and the quality of this relationship affects both the student and the teacher.

Student engagement is a commonly-used term which describes students' connection to school. Crooks, Chiodo, Thomas, and Hughes (2010) explained the highly complex nature of the concept of student engagement as a combination of thoughts, feelings, and actions. Student engagement is shaped by teacher interactions and students' perceptions of themselves and of their interactions with teachers (Skinner, Furrer, Marchand, & Kindermann, 2008), and has been analyzed as both academic and emotional. These particular researchers identified the core construct of engagement as behavioral participation in the classroom, and explained that this engagement may make

significant changes throughout the school year. Emotional engagement, on the other hand, was described as a more stable construct, but tended to indicate the direction of how the person was motivated as a whole, and this was also taken from how students believed that they interrelated with their teachers (Skinner et al., 2008). This study indicated that students who are emotionally engaged in a positive relationship showed an increasing and related behavioral engagement throughout the school year (Skinner et al., 2008).

All the relationships that an individual can create with others in the school are not uniform. The qualities and beliefs of each individual will influence the relationships that are created. Some teachers, for example, have the ability to foster higher quality relationships with students than do other teachers (Jerome, Hamre, & Pianta, 2009). The personality of the teacher, particularly the warmth of the teacher, has been found to be a factor that would influence the creation of relationships. This is not to say that teacher warmth is an unchangeable facet of their personality. In fact, in a study that was focused on the development of emotion, it was found that emotional warmth and instructional techniques can be learned (Hamre et al., 2012). Therefore, all teachers should have the relational acumen to build these effective teacher student relationships, and so the willingness of the teacher to do so may be of primary influence. Relational acumen has been defined as "the art of developing relationships and the science of understanding the reality of forces shaping the nature of relationships", specifically focusing on trust and respect (Churchley et al., 2013, p. 174). Teachers' beliefs can also influence the kind of relationship they can have with students. These differing viewpoints can be a result of experience and teacher attitudes about the background of

students that they teach, and this includes whether or not teachers believe that they can influence low SES students (Hamre, Pianta, Downer, & Mashburn, 2007).

The attempts of teachers to teach the curriculum are facilitated by the positive adjustment of students to school. This adjustment indicates the acceptance of students to embrace the necessary structure imposed by an educational institution, including self-monitoring their behavior. Positive adjustment has been identified as non-conflictual behavior, with a willingness to participate and show an effort for increased academic performance (Birch & Ladd, 1997). Schechtman and Yaman (2012) defined positive behavior as having communication skills to openly talk about and have an understanding of themselves and each other, and to be encouraging to each other.

When children leave home and enter the formal settings of schools, it has been found that relationships with teachers are the critical basis for successful student adaptation into the school setting (Myers & Pianta, 2008). Skinner, Furrer, Marchand, and Kindermann (2008) found that students' emotional engagement is shaped by their perceptions of their interactions with teachers, which also appears to be critical to sustaining this engagement throughout the school year. In this particular study it was found that those students who had increased their emotional engagement at the beginning of the school year showed increased behavioral engagement throughout the year. Therefore, positive student/teacher relationships resulted in an improvement in student behavior. Similarly, Anderson, Christenson, Sinclair, and Lehr (2004) revealed a connection between the quality of staff-student relationships and improved student engagement, specifically in the area of attendance at school. Teachers in the study by

Anderson et al. (2004) rated students who had improved their attendance as having also shown an improvement in academic and social engagement with school. In other words, both studies showed that relationships between students and adults in schools positively affected student engagement, facilitating increased student educational performance. A positive relationship with teachers is also related to lower high school dropout rates, deriving from the fact that positive academic behaviors are related to high school completion rates (Croninger & Lee, 2001). This does not mean that it is necessary for students to have positive academic behaviors in order to achieve a relationship with teachers. It is important to note that positive student/teacher relationships have been found to exist between teachers and students who exhibit negative behavioral concerns (Myers & Pianta, 2008). To summarize, students may benefit positively in both academic and behavioral engagement from positive student/teacher relationships, so it is suggested that relationships have been found to create engagement.

Beginning students in low socioeconomic status schools often exhibit emotional, social, and academic behavioral concerns which have an impact on teachers. In a study involving kindergarten children, it was found that when students first entered school, their background experiences or factors affected how teachers initially related to students (Jerome et al., 2009). Certain factors of children have been found to lead to greater conflict with teachers in kindergarten, with demographics such as race and gender, non-maternal childcare, lower academic ability and higher rates of behavior problems, even though in this study teachers' perceptions did not identify these as contributing factors to a lack of closeness with students (Jerome et al., 2009). Ladd, Birch, and Buhs (1999) found that children's family background and their cognitive

maturity influenced their behavior, involvement, and success in kindergarten. The maturity of the students can also influence how students interact with others (Birch & Ladd, 1997). It appears as if the ability for some students to connect with others cannot be greatly changed, because it has been found that how students behave when they enter school influence subsequent abilities to connect with others later (Ladd et al., 1999), and specifically that their initial poor relationships with teachers continued throughout their elementary years (Jerome et al., 2009).

Teachers differ in their abilities to create a cohesive and emotionally supportive classroom. This emotional support was identified by Buyse et al. (2008) as the stabilizing influence of the teacher to the atmosphere of the class, and was determined by how these teachers approached and responded to students. This ability for a teacher to establish a class climate that is emotionally supportive engenders many positive results. For example, it has been found that students may be less likely to develop conflict with the teacher in an emotionally supportive classroom (Hamre et al., 2007). It has also been specifically found that behaviorally challenged students will benefit from having a teacher who was capable of establishing emotional support for students (Buyse et al., 2008). In contrast, it was found that teachers who reported experiencing emotional concerns, poor mental health, and a lack of self-confidence also reported conflict in the classroom, and this conflict involved all students (Hamre et al., 2007). In other words, the ability of the teacher to emotionally support the class greatly influenced the direction and degree of conflict within that class for all students (Schechtman & Yaman, 2012).

The teacher's skill in maintaining the behavior of the students in the class is a major influence on the quality of the relationships that can be formed (Buyse et al., 2008). This was true for all students (Buyse et al., 2008), but it was found that even though all students were influenced by the negative behaviors in their environment, those students with the most overt behavioral issues were most strongly affected by their interactions with others and observations of the behavior of others in the class (O'Connor, Deering, & Collins, 2011). The existence of conflict in the classrooms has been found to result in less engagement and more disinterest of students (Birch & Ladd, 1997). The logical conclusion is made that the emotional support of teachers increases the probability of positive classroom behavior and lessens the amount of acting out behaviors (Buyse et al., 2008).

For students who exhibit external behavior problems, it is important that they gain the ability to manage themselves effectively in the classroom, as there has been found a connection between student behavior issues and low academic achievement (Schechtman & Yaman, 2012). In addition to being placed into a classroom that is well-managed and emotionally supported, a personal relationship with the teacher may provide a student with supportive factors against continued disengagement. Even though conflict is created by low SES students, it is still possible that they can develop positive relationships with their teachers (Buyse et al., 2008). The importance of establishing a relationship with the teacher is crucial, as not only does the relationship allow the teacher to modify the child's behavior (Hamre et al., 2007), it has been found that the relationship between teacher and student was the only factor to influence student behavior concerns (O'Connor et al., 2011). The support for strong relationships between

teachers and students has been found in many studies. For example, it has been found that teacher-perceived qualities of their relationships with students can predict how successful that student may be in the future (Buyse et al., 2008). In fact, Birch and Ladd (1997) identified the explicit paths of influence of teacher/student relationships. Specifically, they found that teachers' identification of conflict with students was related to their assessment of students' adjustments to school, and the closeness of the teacher/student relationship was related to academic performance.

The other aspect of teaching can be described as good teaching practices, which means all of those classroom behaviors of a teacher who is considered successful at improving success for students. Buyse et al. (2008) found that an individual teacher's style of teaching was important for at-risk students. In this study, it was also found that how students expressed conflict affected different aspects of relationships. Specifically, they found that student-exhibited negative behaviors were associated with conflict in their relationship with teachers, though this was strongest when teaching quality was poor (Buyse et al., 2008).

Therefore, teacher/student relationships are important. It is unfortunate that some teachers may find it difficult to create and sustain relationships with students, especially when they are the cause of conflict in the class, as this formation of relationships can result in a lessening of conflict and an increase in student engagement.

Leadership in context

Principals are influenced by the specific needs of their school community. Principals' behaviors are therefore shaped by their specific contexts, their beliefs that influence behavior, as well as their personal characteristics (Hallinger et al., 1996). The factors of increased expectation and accountability, enforcement of new policies and the provision of support for programs add to the complexity of the role of principal, which in some cases demand more from the principal than is reasonably possible within time constraints (Cooley & Shen, 2003). In Alberta, student achievement is formally evaluated in one way by the Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs). Principals acknowledge the pressure felt by teachers whose students are evaluated against standardized testing. Results of the PATs have been published, and schools and teachers have been judged by their test results through the individual bias of each stakeholder. Often, schools that have been considered low socioeconomic status have not done as well on standardized tests as have schools that were not considered low SES (Hughes, 1995). In low-achieving schools, test scores may result in a feeling of failure for those who feel responsible for student success. Generally speaking, teachers either believe that they can create change in student learning in spite of student background, or else they believe that this background is a more powerful influence than are their efforts. This may lead to diversity in the feeling of responsibility for student success. If teachers believe that they possess the ability to create change that had not been realized in academic improvement on tests, then in all probability they may feel that they had failed the students. On the other hand, they may attribute any lack of success to the students and their socioeconomic background (Auwarter & Aruguete, 2008). There is a concern

when teacher beliefs do not match the philosophy of the school principal, or with those teachers in the rest of the school. The increasing diversity in the cultural, linguistic, and academic backgrounds of the students require a possible change in practice by classroom teachers so that the students can experience success, both in the PATs and alternative criteria.

Personal Factors

This literature review section discusses the personal factors of principals, particularly self-efficacy and resilience, described within the theoretical framework of Social Cognitive Theory. Additionally, the process of agency and its interaction with these personal factors is explained. As well, the processes of self-regulation and metacognition are introduced as well. Figure 2.4 illustrates these interactions.

The Influence of Personal Factors on Leadership Agency

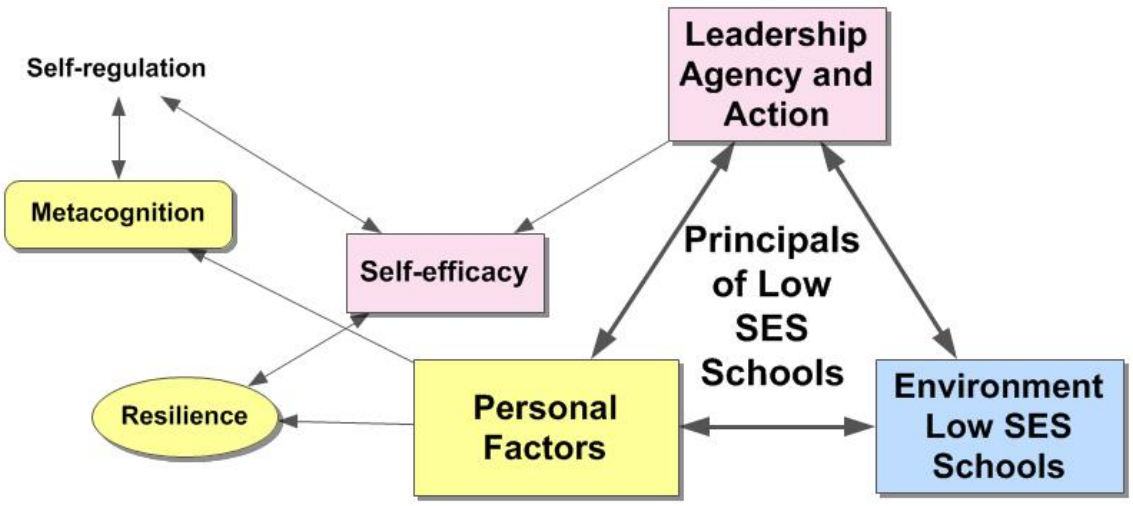

Figure 2.4: The influence of personal factors on leadership agency. *Note:* The environment of low SES schools is added to this illustration to better demonstrate the social cognitive dimension of the interaction of influences.

Social Cognitive Theory

Theories that explain the motivational and behavioral causes of human functioning are needed to direct the understanding of how change happens. The educational setting of a school is focused on the community which guides the development of students so that their academic and emotional functioning is optimized for the purpose of full and successful participation in society. All individuals, including the principal, adapt and learn within each environment. However, the principal is responsible for creating change within the school to reach the goal of increased student achievement. Therefore, principals must be agents of change, by setting goals and taking purposeful action to meet those goals. In this study, the perspective of Social Cognitive Theory was used to examine how the interaction of influences on principals' knowledge, skills, attributes and beliefs affected their agency.

Social Cognitive Theory was developed by Albert Bandura in 1986, but was an evolution from an earlier Social Learning Theory which was created by Bandura and Walters in 1963. Social Cognitive Theory provides an explanation of human behavior through the reflection and assessment of individuals upon their own actions, and evaluated within a social environment, or in other words, with other individuals. This theory involved the importance of how individuals can learn through observing others, attention, memory, and motivation from within a social framework (Pajares, 2002). Bandura posited that human behavior was not limited to imitating the actions of others and receiving reinforcement for those actions in the form of the approval from others in

society, but believed that individuals have the capacity to modify their behaviors from these models so that they could meet their own needs.

Bandura's theory gave a central role to how individual beliefs influence development and change (Pajares, 2002). In Social Cognitive Theory there are three major factors that are involved in decision-making. These are the personal, behavioral, and environmental factors of each individual. The personal factors include the attributes; the cognitive ability, skills, and physical aspects of each individual. Bandura stated that not only did individuals' personal factors affect their behavior, but the environment which is composed of external factors is also a key component to behavior.

Triadic Reciprocal Determinism

Bandura conceptualized an analysis of human functioning that described the movement of influences among three interacting factors: cognitive aspects of the individual, the external environment, and individual choice leading to behavior (Bandura, 1978). This was labelled as triadic reciprocality (Bandura, 1986). This conceptualization describes how all three factors influence each other. In Social Cognitive Theory, the personal factors, such as learned skill and the mood of each individual, influences the decision on what actions to take.

The individual also is influenced by the context in each situation. The fact that the environment exerts a mutual influence on the individual which leads to behavior is of particular importance in this study. The extent and strength of each influence on the others would be individual to each circumstance. This interplay is illustrated in Figure

2.5, and is followed by an explanation of how these influences may operate with each other. When examining the interplay of related influence among all three factors, it is difficult to determine the exact cause and effect of each influence. Therefore, it is useful to explain the interrelationship between two factors in isolation (Bandura, 1986).

The Flow of Influences in Social Cognitive Theory

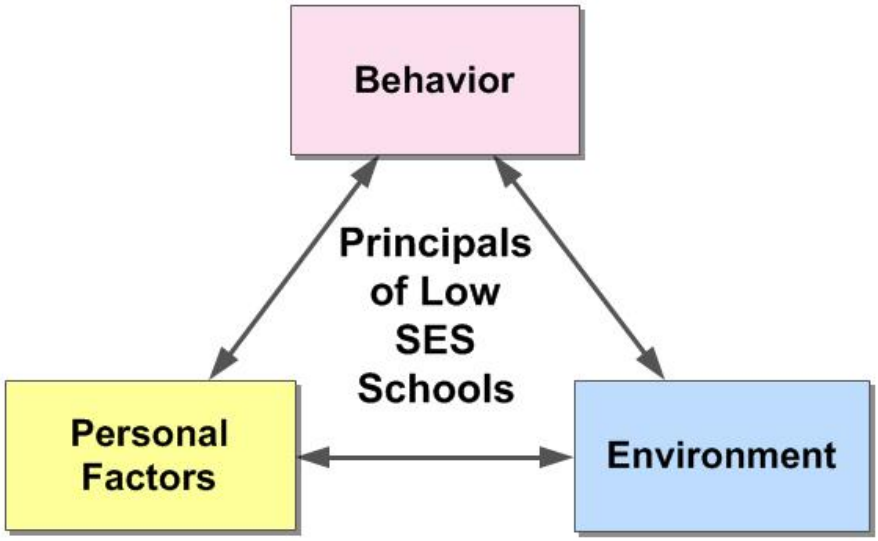

Figure 2.5: The flow of influence in triadic reciprocal determination in social cognitive theory. This figure comprises the basic components of the conceptual framework for this research study. Adapted from Social Foundations of Thought & Action: A Social Cognitive Theory (p. 24) by A. Bandura, 1986, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Social Cognitive Theory provides the framework to understand the movement of influence in this present research study. The individual is the principal who possesses personal knowledge, skills, and attributes. The behavior or actions of each principal is based not only upon these personal factors, but by the environment, the low SES school. The particular interest in this study is the influence of the environment on principal beliefs and behavior. However, the reciprocal influence of principal beliefs and actions

on the environment of low SES schools is of utmost importance, because that is leadership that effects change.

Personal attributes and behavior

The personal factors of each individual have been identified as the abilities for cognition, how emotions operate and are interpreted, and any biological or physiological event guide the decision-making process toward action (Pajares, 2002). Bandura (2001) defined cognitive processes as "emergent brain activities that exert determinative influence" (p. 4). In other words, how individuals think can modify what they do. Individuals' cognitive conceptions, beliefs, and intentions provide information on how they think and feel. This shapes how individuals behave. This behavior, in turn, influences self-referent thought and affective reactions through consequent successes and failures, which in turn influence motivation to action (Bandura, 1986). It is in personal factors that self-efficacy, which is an aspect of self-referent thought, is located. It is also in the personal factor that resilience is generated and activated.

Personal factors and environment

The context, or environment, exerts an influence on each individual. The environment is made up of the physical location, the people, the resources they can access, and the relationships between these people. Society, or the people in the environment, provides cues for behavior, and this behavior is enacted through the personal attributes of individuals. People receive reinforcement from others whose opinions they value in their environment, as well as observe and reproduce modelled

behavior. Society provides the norms of accepted behavior within each environment. Individual personal factors in turn exert a reciprocal influence on their environment. People affect their environment by their appearance, along with other personal characteristics, such as socially conferred roles. People's perceptions of themselves can be modified by their observations of how people react to them.

Behavior and environment

Bandura indicated that the flow of mutual influence between behavior and environment is difficult to analyze in terms of cause and effect, because one event is either the influence or the result of the influence (Bandura, 1986). He stated that the analysis must extend to cognition, or "tapping into what people are thinking as they perform responses and experience their effects" (p. 26). As stated earlier, individuals gain conceptions of themselves through the following processes: direct experience of the effects of their actions, vicarious experience of the effects of someone else's actions, judgments from others, and self-evaluation. Therefore, people can learn from the results of events enacted by themselves or from watching others, from how others in the environment view and evaluate an action, and finally, by using their ability to modify an existing behavior so that it meets their immediate needs.

The exercise of personal agency depends upon the ability of the environment to be modified. In other words, some aspects of environment, such as the physical or social aspect, can be controlled by each individual depending on the skills and abilities of the individual, and what they select to change. Therefore, the environment is not fixed, but rather a "potentiality" that would come into existence only when aspects are

selected and activated and individuals have a choice of what they take from it, and how they react to it (Bandura, 2005). Dependent upon the nature of their self-referent thought, individuals can focus on the positives or the problems within the environment, and so each may react differently to the same potential environment.

These three components of individual functioning are the basis of understanding behavior. In this study, the subject of inquiry are principals, and it is their knowledge, skills, and attributes that interact with the environment of low SES schools as they consider how they will act or behave. Principal behavior, or how they provide leadership, is pivotal to this study. As mentioned previously, some principal actions are reactive as they deal with urgent issues, or mechanistic as they handle their administrative functions. The third form of actions taken by principals is the planned behaviors designed purposively to lead to improvement. This is principal agency for change.

Human agency

The principal belief underlying social cognitive theory is that of human agency. "To be an agent is to influence intentionally one's functioning and life circumstances" (Bandura, 2006, p. 164). Individuals possess self-beliefs which exert control over their own behavior, thoughts, and feelings. The core belief of agency is that individuals have control over their actions, and that these actions produce effects that can be intentional, such as goal setting and achievement. Individuals adapt themselves to their environment or to their social systems, but can also modify their surroundings, both

socially and environmentally, to better meet their needs. “Thus, individuals are viewed both as products and as producers of their own environments and other social systems" (Pajares, 2002, para. 6). The cognitive aspect of human agency is enacted when individuals think about what they do and modify aspects of these thoughts based on self-judgments. This is particularly important for principals as leaders, especially in low socioeconomic status schools. The expectation for principals is to bring about needed positive change in these schools. This change could happen at many levels and may influence teaching and learning, student outcomes, student well-being, partnerships with the community, and accessing resources. Therefore, principals' beliefs that motivate them to act are especially important, as it is in action that leadership is manifested.

Metacognition

Metacognition has been defined as "thinking about thinking" (Dinsmore, Alexander, & Loughlin, 2008). Therefore, metacognition implies awareness of the thinking processes. Bandura (1997) described metacognition as the cognitive thoughts and ability judgments as well as the use of self-correction to guide action. Flavell (1979), who pioneered the study on metacognition, identified these thoughts in four ways: metacognitive knowledge, or what individuals know, metacognitive experiences, or how individuals consciously feel about each experience, the goals or objectives, and actions, which would be how individuals achieve their objectives. Flavell (1979) believed that the source of metacognition was derived from how individuals perceive reality through their own representations. Similar to Bandura’s theories on self-regulation where the individual uses self-knowledge to continually monitor behavior,

Flavell discussed individuals as having control over cognition that would lead to behavioral strategies. Specifically, Flavell conceptualized metacognition as influencing self-belief as learners, how individuals think, and how they work through tasks. Therefore, the feature of metacognition is a conscious awareness by the individual who could selectively store or activate knowledge by self-reflection. In other words, metacognition emphasizes monitoring and control of cognition. Therefore, metacognition is an important factor in self-regulation, where awareness and reflection are connected to the behavioral aspect of learning (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993).

Self-Regulation

Bandura described the cognitively-based motivators of self-regulation as the processes of forethought, self-appraisal, and self-reaction (Bandura, 1991). Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) and Zimmerman (1998) identified similar processes in their interpretation of self-regulation. These were forethought, monitoring of performance, and self-reflection. Winne and Nesbit (2010) used a two-stage model of self-regulation which was comprised of monitoring and comparison as the first step, with these differences providing the motivation for action. Generally speaking, these models all contained the provision for metacognitive knowledge and control of one's self, and also the evaluation of one's own performance. However, some theorists on self-regulation also focused on the aspect of the attention that an individual may practice during task completion (Marzano et al., 1988).

Features of human agency

Bandura lists fundamental properties of human agency: intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness and self-reflection (Bandura, 1997). Another term used to describe the cognitive aspects of these properties is self-regulation. Figure 2.6 illustrates the four central features of human agency. Reference is made to principals in order to provide a connection between theory and to this study.

The Core Features of Human Agency

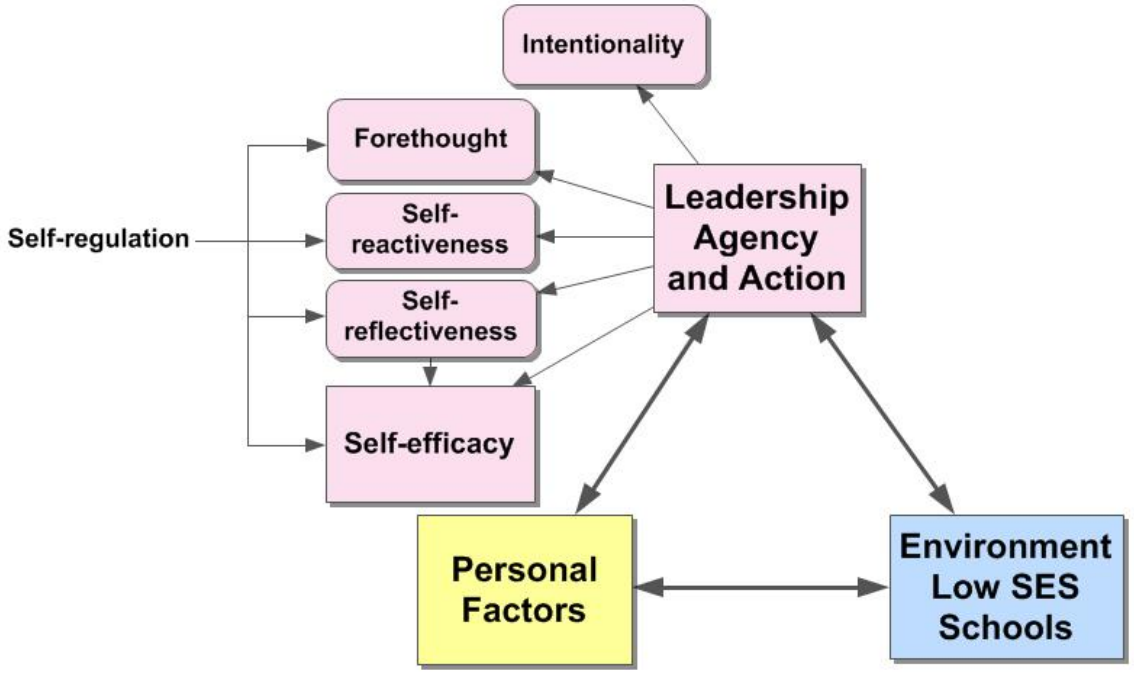

Figure 2.6: Human agency defined by its four core features. Adapted from "Social Cognitive Theory: An Agentic Perspective" by A. Bandura, 2001, Annual Reviews Psychology, 52, p. 6-11

Intentionality

Agency is connected to intentional action. Individuals plan and execute courses of action to produce desired outcomes. This key feature of agency is the power to act in the pursuit of a specific purpose. It does not matter whether or not those acts eventually lead to the desired outcomes. Principals need to have the intent to take action in order for change for improvement to occur. Otherwise, they limit themselves to the managerial function of their roles, which, even though they are necessary to maintain stability, tend to stasis rather than movement toward change. Therefore, the principal must provide the force to initiate the planned change.

Forethought

Individuals do more than just react to present circumstances, or are regulated by past experience. Purposeful behavior is controlled by forethought, which is the ability to think of and plan future behaviors so that they lead to desired goals (Bandura, 2006). The motivation for behavior comes from the expectation of a successful outcome. Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) also referred to forethought as the planning stage, where motivation to begin any action or process was engendered by interest and goal setting. With a future time perspective, individuals can anticipate consequences, set goals, and plan courses of action for future scenarios. Goal-setting develops the ability to self-regulate, because it puts into position the performance and the monitoring of that performance. How these are interpreted affect how individuals approach the processes that they use (Zimmerman, 1998). Forethought acts as an incentive for behavior, which helps guide actions because as individuals envision positive outcomes, they act in a way

so that those desired outcomes are realized. In this way, motivation becomes a mechanism for the self-regulation of behavior (Bandura, 1986). The principal then must be a dynamic agent of change, and mobilize followers to subscribe to a vision and goal oriented direction. Self-regulation is a process whereby the feedback of information is necessary to set goals, and establish motivators. Distal goals do not provide ongoing feedback for success if evaluation for success is at the end of the process, so goal-setting toward a vision should involve levels of sub-goals (Bandura, 1991; Zimmerman, 1998). The leadership role is to develop the plan of action, with specific reference to goals and sub-goals. In this way, principals will have established more planned opportunities for feedback and monitoring.

Self-Reactiveness

Another feature of agency is self-regulation which is made up of how individuals self-monitor and judge their behavior against individual or imposed standards, and examine and evaluate their own affective reactions to this judgement of the difference between the set goals and what is actually accomplished (Bandura, 1997). During this self-evaluation, individuals can regulate themselves to continue to act in acceptable ways. One way is to create incentives for themselves. These self-imposed critical evaluative reactions influence subsequent behavior. Even though external forces can influence behavior, it is self-influence that determines in part one's actions (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Principals exercise agency by deliberately identifying sub-goals as a way to encourage evaluation of how their planned action for change is proceeding. They must be able to clearly identify the influences to the plan. Principals may also influence

their environment to facilitate conditions for success, such as improving the resources of the school. Also importantly, principals must monitor their own internal motivations at each evaluation point. All of this information provides feedback which in turn offers an opportunity for the principal to react with modification of action and/or goals.

In the individual monitoring step, individuals attend to their thoughts and feelings, as well as evaluating their own performance for immediate feedback. The ability to sustain their attention on behaviors is characteristic of good self-regulators. Strategies such as self-verbalizing or focusing on mental images of performance provide motivation and guides for action. However, individuals who can self-regulate must be able to correctly identify their progress by understanding their own behavior, having an awareness of actions and the ideas that shape actions and modifying their own performance (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993).

Self-Reflectiveness

In self-reflection, individuals evaluate what they have done. Capability for self-reflective thought allows people to examine their own experiences and to understand their thought processes. Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) pointed out the importance of emotion in this aspect of self-regulation. Reflective practice acknowledges how emotion influences behavioral change.

Individuals who are self-reflective tend to attribute failures to either external controls rather than their own skill. Focus on self-reflection allows individuals to examine their own reactions to performance and to evaluate the success of their efforts

by comparing their results to standards set by themselves. This would provide information whether or not behaviors could be correctable. Skillful self-regulators in the self-reflection phase genuinely approach self-evaluation positively, and tend to compare present efforts with their own earlier efforts, rather than with others. They also tend to attribute negative outcome to strategies used rather than lack of skill, and continue efforts until an effective strategy is found Osterman and Kottkamp (1993)

When people gain an understanding of how they respond to thoughts or events, they then have the ability to alter their own thinking. Through self-reflection, individuals monitor ideas and act upon them. They can judge the correctness of their thinking and compare it with the outcomes that were produced, and if needed, can modify their conceptualisations (Bandura, 1997). Self-reflection is also a means by which individuals question their values and actions that they have taken (Bandura, 2001). Self-regulation tends to establish a pattern of behaviors which may need external modification to become “self-fulfilling” (Zimmerman, 1998, p. 10).

Self-Efficacy

Individuals act purposively as a result of their beliefs of their abilities to succeed. The ability to engage in reflection about their beliefs and actions with the purpose of gaining self-knowledge is central to understanding self-efficacy. Knowledge and skills alone are not adequate for ensuring a matching performance; if they were, one could predict behavior from the extent of knowledge and skill development of the individual. Instead, how people perceive future performance influences actual performance. In

other words, self-efficacy can alter the relationship between knowledge and action. “Perceived self-efficacy is a judgment of one's ability to organize and execute given types of performances” (Bandura, 1997). This means that self-efficacy is activated whenever a person thinks about potential performance attainments. Therefore, because reflective appraisal leads to self- knowledge and it is this self-knowledge that forms the basis of agency, self-efficacy is the most influential aspect of self-knowledge focused on personal agency (Bandura, 1986, 1991). Even though an individual may possess adequate skills to perform successfully, it is the belief about personal ability that may impact the consequent performance. Self-efficacy also explains the individual difference in performance from people with exactly the same skill set. Self-efficacy does not focus on skills, but on individual judgments on how skills will be utilized (Bandura, 1986).

Even though Bandura placed self-efficacy beliefs as an aspect of self-reflection which initiates action, efficacy beliefs of past behaviors also act as an influence to future behaviors. The self-reflection model by Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) placed self-efficacy in the planning stage of agency.

Sources of self-efficacy

Bandura (1997) described four primary sources when individuals receive information that would influence self-efficacy. These are mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and psychological and affective states. Self-efficacy beliefs can be influenced by previous personal success or failures. Mastery experiences provide individuals with the most powerful information to influence self-efficacy.

Vicarious experience is gained by observing others' successes and perhaps emulating these behaviors. Vicarious experiences are strengthened by the perception of similarity between oneself and the others whose actions are being observed. Verbal persuasion information comes from how one responds to other people being encouraging or disparaging. Affective states give efficacy information by the interpretation of how individuals' bodies react to experiences, and by how one feels at that time.

Mastery experiences

Mastery experiences are derived from direct personal experience of experiencing success, so they provide the most compelling source of information (Bandura, 1997). When individuals make a decision to act upon self-efficacy beliefs, they assess their achievements. The evaluation of success is made through how they interpret their own success. In other words, self-efficacy and performance are not equivalent, but self-efficacy and an individual's interpretation of how well they performed are comparable (Bandura, 1997). Therefore success strengthens self-efficacy beliefs, and until high self-efficacy beliefs are established, failures can lead to a lowering of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). However, it is not only performance success that is a factor in self-efficacy beliefs, but personal bias in how they perceive themselves.

Negative experiences also provide potential for growth. "Difficulties provide opportunities to learn how to turn failure into success by honing one's capabilities to exercise better control over events" (Bandura, 1997, p. 80). Perseverance and continued effort with a strategy is a characteristic of people with high self-efficacy. However, if a

person has in the past achieved success easily, then he/she may not be motivated to persevere during times of failure (Bandura, 1997).

Vicarious experience

Vicarious experience allows an individual to learn from the behavior of others, and also to compare their performance against that of others. This is also described as social modelling. Bandura stated that this comparison to individuals of similar situations provides efficacy beliefs, and these beliefs are strengthened with increased similarity between the attributes of the individual and the other with whom the comparison is made, or on the similarity of the past performance of the model (Bandura, 1997). In other words, if success is attained by individuals who you perceive have the same capabilities as yourself, you are likely to believe that you also can be successful (Bandura, 1997).

Verbal persuasion

Verbal persuasion is another means by which self-efficacy information is acquired. This occurs when an individual believes when told that their success would be possible. However, this form of self-knowledge is not as strong as those beliefs gained from personal experience. Therefore, verbal persuasion by itself may not exert sufficient motivation for self-efficacy beliefs to strengthen and endure (Bandura, 1997). Bandura discussed the strength of persuasion, and how individuals can be influenced by others, especially those whose opinion they value. When individuals are persuaded that they are capable of being successful, success may be achieved if the goal is realistic. In

this way positive self-efficacy could be enacted. Bandura also stated that if individuals believe in the encouragement that they could be successful, they will have greater effort and persevere longer than if they did not believe in their abilities (Bandura, 1997).

Support

High self-efficacy is also related to the level of external support felt by the principal. Support can occur in the form of feedback about work practice, and social support from co-workers. Those with high self-efficacy were found to have supportive relationships with Central Office (D. E. Evans, 2010). Osterman and Sullivan (1994) supported this view by describing non-efficacious principals as having feelings of isolation from support on both personal and professional level, with increased stress and feelings of loneliness. It appears that there is a connection then between those principals who have high self-efficacy with those who are capable of interacting with others on both levels.

These researchers also cited the role of vicarious experiences to provide support, in which observations or hearing of others who are similar to themselves succeeding in adverse circumstances. Often, the support given by peers would help principals believe in the possibility of their own success. Achieving success in dealing with adverse situations through peer support or modeling would heighten self-efficacy beliefs and resilience.

Affective states

Information is also given to an individual by their own psychological and affective or emotional state. Autonomic human functioning is one example of this. When individuals experience a physiological response such as elevated respiration in a stressful situation, they are more likely to believe that they lack the control they wish to maintain. The body then reacts by arousing a greater response, thereby resulting in the loss of control which that individual originally feared (Bandura, 1997). Individuals also interpret any physical weakness as a lack of ability (Bandura, 1997). Mood also can affect an individual's perception of self. Certainly, individual differences affect the predisposition of people to focus inwardly to perceive weakness, or their likeliness in having a positive outlook about themselves. Instead of concentrating on individual weaknesses, these individuals may attribute any failures to the effect of outside influences, which may encourage them to try again (Bandura, 1997).

Individuals have the basic need to feel capable, as well as having that sense of well-being that comes from accomplishment (Pajares & Schunk, 2001). When considering self-efficacy, principals also need to feel emotionally involved (Osterman & Sullivan, 1994). Therefore, their commitment to their profession as well as the feeling of self-worth and purpose are both interrelated with self-efficacy.

Stress has been found to influence principal self-efficacy. Specifically, administrators who reported higher stress levels also scored lower self-efficacy (Lynn, 1999). DeMoulin (1992) also considered the relationship of motivation, confidence and stress and believed that the result depicted a level of efficacy. Stress was also a variable

in the study of leaders' management of staff during a period of change. Similarly, Dimmock and Hattie (1996) found high self-efficacy was related to positive staff management, specifically as it facilitated the understanding of staff reactions to change.

Self-efficacy beliefs of people can influence and even protect their reactions to stress (Bandura, 1997, p. 467). Individuals are not as distressed by stressors if they feel that they have the capability to deal successfully with them. Bandura stated that stress could be relieved in two important ways: for individuals to believe that they could successfully manage the stress, or if they had support (Bandura, 1997). Individual methods of dealing with stress are varied, and differ with self-efficacy beliefs. For example, Bandura stated that those with high self-efficacy relieve stress by engaging in problem solving activities, while those with low efficacy beliefs do not believe that they have the ability to modify their situations, and so choose coping activities that are described as "dysfunctional" or "escapist".

Self-efficacy can also determine the amount of anxiety felt by individuals. For individuals with low self-efficacy, this may exhibit itself in poor sleeping patterns or the adoption of health impairing practices such as substance abuse (Bandura, 1997). A recent study by Webber and Scott (2013) revealed additional principal reactions to stress, which included negative feelings that hindered their productivity and lessened their physical and emotional well-being. The lack of balance between work and personal life may also add to individuals feeling a lack of control in both aspects of their lives (Bandura, 1997). In fact, when work is emotionally taxing, Bandura suggested that needed breaks may occur by not overlapping work and personal life.

Individual characteristics have also been examined to determine a relationship with principal self-efficacy. One characteristic of principals with high self-efficacy was identified as optimism (Osterman & Sullivan, 1994). These principals spoke in terms of success and their ability to achieve this success (Osterman & Sullivan, 1994; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). This positive outlook also was found to be related to job satisfaction, and negatively related to burn out and motivation to quit (Federici & Skaalvik, 2011). Indeed, one important characteristic of principals with high self-efficacy was the ability to discard those efforts that had not led to success (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). This agreed with an earlier study that principals with low self-efficacy possessed a lack of the ability to deviate from a pre-set plan (Osterman & Sullivan, 1994). Another important characteristic was considered to be persistence. DeMoulin (1992) specifically stated that high self-efficacy does not directly lead to improvement, but to greater persistence.

Those characteristics of principals with high self-efficacy that were found to positively influence others were a tendency for being calm (Smith, 2009) and self-confident (Daly, Der-Martirosian, Ong-Dean, Park, & Wishard-Guerra, 2011). Ream (2010) also identified these principals as having higher levels of self-professed emotional intelligence. Possessing multiple perspectives was also considered another characteristic, as self-efficacy was been found to allow principals to understand others' reactions to school change (Dimmock & Hattie, 1996).

The lack of self-belief for success debilitates abilities for coping (Bandura, 1997). It can be assumed that the role of the principal is associated with the risk of

being unsuccessful in achieving the goal of greater student achievement. This lack of success may be exacerbated by the influences inherent in low SES contexts. This low-SES context also acts as an influence on judgments of the expected consequences of these actions.

Outcome expectancies

Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their potential accomplishments. An outcome follows these accomplishments. Therefore, an outcome expectation has been defined as "a judgment of the likely consequences such behaviors will produce" (Bandura, 1997, p.21). In other words, self-efficacy is the belief in the capability of the execution certain behaviors, and outcome expectancy is the belief that this behavior will conclude with an expected outcome.

Even though it has been established that the self-efficacy beliefs of individuals provide motivation for behavior, or agency, it does not necessarily determine the success of that outcome. Certainly, the actions of individuals are necessary precursors to outcomes but do not solely determine these outcomes. However, individuals anticipate outcomes largely dependent on beliefs concerning the capability to perform those actions. The other influences on outcome expectancy would be external forces not within the control of the individual (Bandura, 1997). The influence of these external forces determines the importance of the context in which the individual is operating, and how this environment may support or negate individual actions.

Bandura (1997) explained how outcome expectations can have an effect on the actions of individuals. The combination of efficacy beliefs and expected outcome expectations can result in a range of physical, social and emotional effects. Positive expectations function as incentives, or motivation to act. Examples of positive incentives for these effects may include pleasurable sensory experiences and the gaining of recognition and approval. Self- satisfaction and pride would be examples of the emotional form of outcome expectation in individuals.

Individuals with high efficacy and positive outcome expectations will feel a sense of fulfillment and productive engagement (Bandura, 1997). However, those highly efficacious individuals will continue their efforts if they do not achieve success. Those individuals with low self-efficacy may expend much effort but still not achieve success, especially while observing the success of other similar individuals in that same environment. This may cause individuals to think poorly of their own value, as this indicates that the environment has been responsive to the effort or skills of others. Similarly, low self-efficacy beliefs within an environment that will not respond positively no matter how much effort is expended may lead to depression and indifference.

There is no doubt that outcome expectancies affect both success and self-efficacy beliefs of individuals. Therefore, it is important to define both and to make the distinction between them when it comes to motivation. However, this research has focussed solely on the self-efficacy, or the beliefs of personal abilities to succeed, rather

than the outcome of the behavior, and so it will continue to describe self-efficacy exclusively.

Along with the examination of principal self-efficacy, the concept of resilience is also explored. When principal resilience is described, it is understood as sustained effective practice despite ongoing stressors. The characteristic of resilience would be an important asset of principals, especially those in low SES schools. There is a relationship between these two concepts of self-efficacy and resilience. Specifically, Gu and Day (2007) found self-efficacy to be a fundamental element of resilience. They stated that the characteristics and strengths of high self-efficacy beliefs strengthen the development and growth of resilience. This concept of self-efficacy as a factor of resilience was echoed in other research (Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007; Howard & Johnson, 2004). Figure 2.7 illustrates how self-efficacy is situated as a factor of resilience. The purpose of this conceptualization is to offer clarification to the seeming redundancy in the following discussion.

Resilience

The interpretation of the character of individual resilience is varied. Resilience has been defined as a personality trait, similar to personal capacity (Gillespie, Chaboyer, & Wallis, 2007) which some had and others had not (Walsh, 2003), or as a characteristic that developed in reaction to stressors, and from which positive character traits had evolved (Christman & McClellan, 2008). More recently it has been understood as a process (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000b; Miller & Daniel, 2007). Others have

described resilience as a concept that deals with the interaction between experiences of risk or crisis and leading to positive outcomes despite this risk (McMahon, 2006). Masten and Obradovic (2008) cited their earlier findings (2006) in a comprehensive description of resilience – as "the processes of, capacity for, or patterns of positive adaptation during or following exposure to adverse experiences that have the potential to disrupt or destroy the successful functioning or development of the person" (2008, p. 2).

Rutter (2006), who did not endorse the analysis of resilience as a trait, instead described how the character of resilience was unique for each person. Firstly, he stated that each individual responds differently to circumstances in their environment. This uniqueness of reaction leads to an individual construction of resilience, which also explains the impossibility of inferring the character of that resilience in broad terms. Secondly, experiences in dealing with adversity may provide either a "steeling" effect or sensitization when individuals have subsequent dealings with those experiences. In other words, resilience may change for the same individual for the same adverse circumstance at a later time (Gu & Day, 2007; McMahon, 2006).

When adverse challenges occur, individuals either succumb or adapt and grow. O'Leary (1998) used the term "thrive" to focus on the positive outcomes to stress which could be personal, emotional, or spiritual growth. The transformative property in thriving "is contingent on a fundamental cognitive shift in response to a challenge. Challenge provides the opportunity for change because it forces individuals to confront personal priorities and to re-examine their sense of self" (O'Leary, 1998, p. 430). Factors in thriving are individual psychological resources such as coping mechanisms,

cognitive resources which may define how risk is perceived and in which self-efficacy will determine the individual's reaction to that risk, social resources, and support which can influence physical and mental health and lead to resistance to stress (O'Leary, 1998)

Protective Factors of Resilience

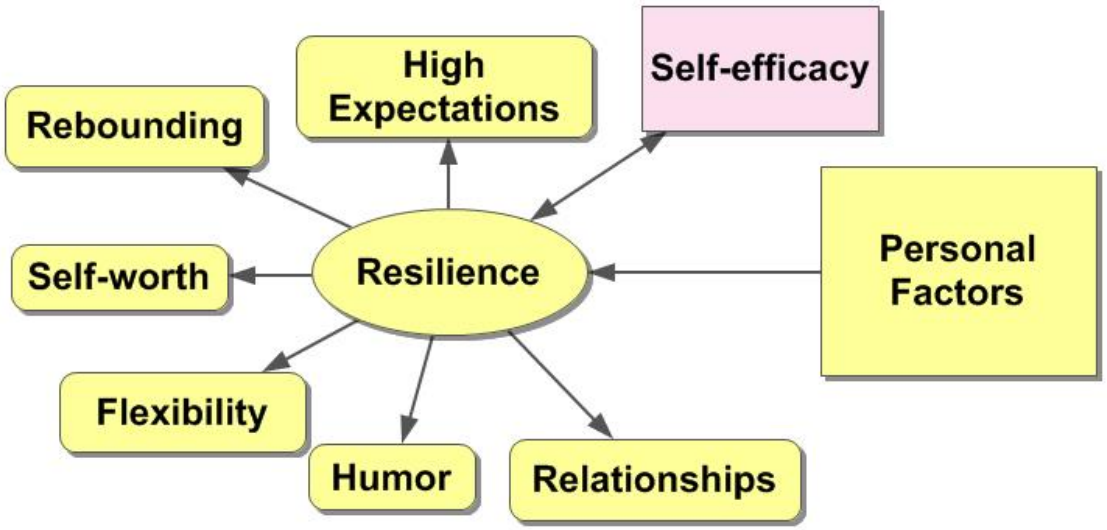

Figure 2.7: Common protective factors of resilience. Adapted from "Resilience: A Concept Analysis", by M. Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007, Nursing Forum, 42(2), p. 81.

Other research focused on identifying the factors which protect the individual against negative results of traumatic situations in life (Howard et al., 1999; Luthar, Sawyer, & Brown, 2006; O'Leary, 1998), allowing adaptation from these situations and resulting in individual growth in resilience (McMahon, 2006). Without these "protective factors" to balance against the stressful situations, the individual is at risk of a feeling of a lessening of worthiness which may lead to a generalized lack of ability to cope with life's pressures (Henderson & Milstein, 2003). The outcomes of overcoming the adversities have been described as strength (Walsh, 2003) or personal growth (Gillespie et al., 2007). This interaction of risk and protective factors (Rutter, 2006) of

each individual is what will determine his or her resilience. Figure 2.7 illustrates common protective factors which emerged from an analysis by Earvolino-Ramirez (2007) of previous studies on resilience.

Social cognitive theory also explains the character of resilience, by placing importance on how the context impacts each individual. Specifically, Prince-Embury (2008) stated that "resilience has come to be defined as a complex interaction between the person and his or her environment that is highly contextual in nature" (p. 6). This context also includes the interaction and influence that individuals have on one another (Walsh, 2003). Henderson and Milstein (2003) stated that resilience interacts with the environment in two ways. The environment influences each individual's internal protective characteristics that alleviate the reactions to stress, and the environmental conditions themselves may change the psychological response of the individual. Resilience is a result of how these factors impact the individual's internal balance regarding stressful situations.

The focus of study then concentrated on the construct of resilience. Masten (2009) concluded that resilience particularly in young people can be encouraged by three approaches. Masten used the example of the prevention of violence in schools by way of reducing risk exposure that would promote occasion for adversity. The second means was to offset risk for students by providing resources, such as provision for healthcare or nutrition. The last approach suggested to help young people was comprised of interventions to help develop or restore protective systems for students, which would include teaching self-regulation for students, or to offer programs to

develop relationships. Essentially, Masten (2009) focused on resilience coming from within the individual, and also from external supports.

It is human nature for individuals to wish to exercise their agency in order to succeed (Masten, 2009). This belief in the ability to exert control over personal circumstances or interactions is an important aspect of the development of resilience, and echoes a social cognitive understanding of the dynamic process of human development. Individuals then must be able to identify their personal needs and to access supports for these needs (Hanewald, 2011). Individual growth or strength is perceived to be a result of the interrelation of these beliefs and the risk (Walsh, 2003).

As described earlier in the chapter, low SES schools are environments in which there are plenty of opportunities for stressful situations. Because the majority of the school population may experience chronic stressors that are derivative of poverty, the social interplay between staff, students, parents, and the school leader are often based on what could be considered adverse situations. Adversity encompasses change and disruption that provide a challenge to individuals (Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007). Amidst this adversity, principals either thrive or may be overcome by the daily reality of leadership. Therefore, for resilience to be present and activated, the individual must first encounter adversity or stress. The context of low SES schools may provide this adversity for some principals.

Resilience of Leadership

Certainly, resilience has been described three ways: as experiencing more success than expected within groups of individuals considered high risk, as the continuation of successful functioning or competence within periods of stress, and also as the ability to gain strength by overcoming adversity (Henderson & Milstein, 2003; Masten & Obradovic, 2008). The concept of resilience can easily be applied to school principals, and even though the adverse situations that they face daily may not affect them on the same level as trauma. Gillespie, Chaboyer and Wallis (2007) stated that they still must deal with uncertainty and possible failure, which are worrisome as they manage their responsibility for maintaining high academic success for their students. Margolis and Stoltz (2010) defined resilience in the business world as effectively dealing with crises. Generally speaking, stress that is experienced in the workplace has been found to decrease "mental well-being" (Zellars, Perrewe, Rossi, Tepper, & Ferris, 2008). In other words, the impact of stress in a job-related sense may exacerbate an employee's fear of failure. As well, it has been found that stress in the workplace has resulted from the perception that individuals feel unable to control these stressors (Gillespie et al., 2007; Zellars et al., 2008). Therefore, leadership resilience is explored against those potential stressors of low SES to examine individual traits or protective factors of principals.

Day and Gu (2007) concluded that individuals must have emotional capacity and a sense of efficacy, and it is these two factors which may lead to effectiveness and resilience. In other words, school leadership must be both effective and resilient in

order to positively and continually enact personal agency within the framework of their position. A professional identity and self-efficacy have been positively related, as how principals view themselves within their work-related context is based upon their beliefs of their ability to enact their duties (Day & Gu, 2007), and certainly, they are judged on their behaviors and accomplishments. Positive self-efficacy is an important factor that acts amidst job related stressors, thus leading to resilience. In the case of educators, the results of self-efficacy caused the development of more problem-solving strategies (Zellars et al., 2008), which has been found to be directly related to leadership skills (Hannah, Avolio, Wallumbwa, & Chan, 2012).

Common attributes of resilience

Self-efficacy

Even though self-efficacy was mentioned in detail previously, it is an individual attribute that is connected to resilience. In fact, it has been concluded that self-efficacy may be one of the key elements to the personal circumstances that may lead an individual to successfully cope with challenge (Rutter, 2006), and one of the defining attributes of resilience (Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007; Gillespie et al., 2007; Masten & Obradovic, 2008). Therefore, this section discusses self-efficacy specifically focusing on the aspects of coping, overcoming adversity, and perseverance.

The process of self-efficacy works in each individual as a reinforcing cycle that adds to resilience. Self-efficacy determines the amount of effort expended, and the length of time spent in perseverance (Gillespie et al., 2007). Upon succeeding, these

individuals are reinforced in their efforts to succeed (Masten & Obradovic, 2008). Resilience also identifies with human agency (Masten & Obradovic, 2008). Self-efficacy is the aspect of resilience that determines belief in the successful accomplishment of behavior. Therefore, the agentic property of resilience is due to and works through individual self-efficacy.

High expectations

O'Leary (1998) suggested that high expectations or goals that are set and then effectively achieved by educators promote higher resilience. Goal-setting has been stated to be integral to self-regulation, and effects are made even if these goals are created externally (Locke & Latham, 2005). For example, it would not matter where the goals originated, whether by principals or from district office, as long as they were successfully met. It is in that aspect of retrospection where self-regulation originates. Individuals evaluate their accomplishments based whether their expectations were met. This would encourage the positive growth of resilience (Bobek, 2002), as well as self-efficacy, planning and persistence (Martin & Marsh, 2006).

Sense of personal worthiness

Even though literature in the area of identifying personal traits has made various definitions of self-worth, self-confidence, self-concept, and self-esteem, these are all self-referent beliefs that are based on each individual. Therefore, there appeared to be much overlapping of definitions. Earvolino-Ramirez used self-worth as her label in the category that generally meant to have positive belief in oneself. Self-worth is essentially

the belief by each individual that they are entitled to be treated with respect from others, and has been identified as a characteristic that leads to resilience (Davey, Goettler Eaker, & Henley Walters, 2003). Miller and Daniel (2007) used the comprehensive review that had been established by Mruk (1999), who stated that his model of self-esteem was a combination of two categories: self-worth and self-competence. Self-competence has been defined as individual belief that they can accomplish something (Miller & Daniel, 2007), and self-efficacy is the belief that an individual can accomplish a specific task.

Sense of humor

A sense of humor has been found to offer a sense of control and a way of resisting against stress (Bobek, 2002). This was particularly noted in the study by Henman (2001) who found in her study of repatriated Vietnam prisoners of war that communication through humor was a particularly powerful method of creating strong resilience. The study also revealed the contagious influence of humor as building resilience, because the stories built resilience for the POWs who were incarcerated at that time, and also continued through word-of-mouth for several years to entertain subsequent prisoners and contributed to their resilience.

Rebounding

The attribute of being able to bounce back after adversity has been a common finding in resilience literature (Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007). Even though individuals experience negative feelings, those with resilience overcome their negative reaction and

focus forward 2010). This could also be identified as persistence (Masten & Obradovic, 2008).

Flexibility

Flexibility is described as having the capacity to deal with unexpectedness with tolerance (Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007). Those personal characteristics that lead individuals to be easy-going have been found in studies on resilience. Even though flexibility may be considered more of an innate trait, the skills for flexible thinking and self-regulation can be learned (Masten, 2009).

Positive relationships

Positive interpersonal relationships have a relationship with resilience (Bobek, 2002; Collishaw et al., 2007; Rutter, 2007). Some of these relationships have been found to provide support for principals, especially as a means of dealing with workplace stress. Webber and Scott (2013) highlighted the importance of sharing feelings with others who could be trusted to keep information confidential, and whose focus was on the care of the principal as a person. Principals who have received support reported a higher engagement and skill working within the construct of instructional leadership (Bloom, Castagna, & Warren, 2003). One type of support is mentorship, and this may have resulted from an established district initiative to purposefully aid principals developing competence in the execution of their duties. The purpose of mentorship was to provide the protégé with greater knowledge of district challenges and priorities (Clayton, Sanzo, & Myran, 2013), or in other words, the learning of the organizational

culture of the district (Zepeda, Bengtson, & Parylo, 2012), and a greater knowledge of what the job entailed (Scott, 2010). Mentorship research has indicated that many school principals cited mentorship as having provided an important support in their daily enactment of their job (Bloom et al., 2003). Additionally, there were emotional benefits to the mentees, which included engendering loyalty to the organization, together with team identification (Scott, 2010). However, these researchers cautioned that at times this mentorship cannot always be positive, as the mentors themselves are practicing leaders and cannot always be accessible to their protégés. Therefore, they suggested that a principal should have a coach, someone who is not primarily in a lateral position, who could offer support. Hoffman (2004) also indicated that in some school jurisdictions, school districts have provided support to increase principals' resilience by the designation of an experienced principal to act as a mentor for his colleagues as well as by establishing professional learning communities to enrich each individual member and to increase the professional skills of each leader. Hoffman stated that this resulting increase in principals' competency was a major contributor to increasing resiliency. Specifically, he stated, "The strength and resiliency of our school leaders appears [sic] to be closely linked to the quality of their involvement in the district's efforts, rather than the absolute success or failure of those efforts" (Hoffman, 2004, p. 35).

In the resilience literature, Spanneut and Ford (2008) shared their beliefs in the importance of district superintendents developing principals as instructional leaders to attain student success. They stated it was important for principals' district superordinates to share in a common understanding of what was needed to achieve success. He also needed to ensure that they understood that they were supported in their endeavors by

providing them with the necessary resources as well as alleviating principals' managerial duties so that they could focus on leading instruction (Spanneut & Ford, 2008).

In some cases, principals have found support from other principals. Grodzki (2011) found that principals enjoyed the fellowship and interactions with other principals even at an informal basis during larger district meetings. Principals have been found to seek out "reciprocal advice relationships" with colleagues. This advice tended to a difference relative to experience. For example, those with more extensive leadership experience were sought out for reform advice, and newcomers for innovative practices (Daly & Finnigan, 2011). At times, the school district may also orchestrate principal peer relationships. As a matter of fact, it has been found that specific efforts to create relationships enhanced the ability of that organization to effect change (Daly & Finnigan, 2011).

School-based change was at times challenged by a high rate of principal turnover (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). Educational change has often taken long periods of time for results to be observed (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010); so it has been argued that principals need to be in their schools for that long. Mascal and Leithwood (2010) stated that change theory requires tenure of at least three years in order to make substantial change, even though the individual skills of principals must be taken into account. The culture of the school then must be developed to sustain a collaborative and productive interaction within the school.

Strong relationships have also found to include those relationships with a spiritual being such as God, as well as interactions with others who believe that the

individual could be successful (Walsh, 2003). Spirituality has been named as playing a role in adult resilience. Masten and Obradovic (2008) explained that the relationship to spiritual leaders or figures could be comparable to attachment relationships (Masten, 2009) or to practices such as meditation or prayer that may serve to encourage positive self-regulation (Masten & Obradovic, 2008).

Leadership Agency and Action

The final section of this literature review focuses on the actions taken by principals. The social cognitive viewpoint focuses on the influences on these actions as the low SES context, as well as the personal factors of each individual principal. One important personal factor is resilience, which focuses on sustained action. However, self-efficacy beliefs will mediate principal agency and actions.

In this section on leadership, the roles of principals for management and leadership are delineated. Four forms of leadership are briefly discussed. Included in this section is a brief overview of organizational change. The intent of this section of the literature review is to outline how effective leadership is enacted, in order to promote change that focuses on improvement. Figure 2.8 illustrates this portion of the conceptual framework. This segment of the review primarily uses literature from the domain of education, but also includes those writers and researchers from the field of psychology. This is because previous studies and analyses on principal self-efficacy are included in the relevant components on leadership actions. Specifically, principal self-efficacy research revealed findings concerning principal beliefs and motivation to act.

Leadership Agency and Action

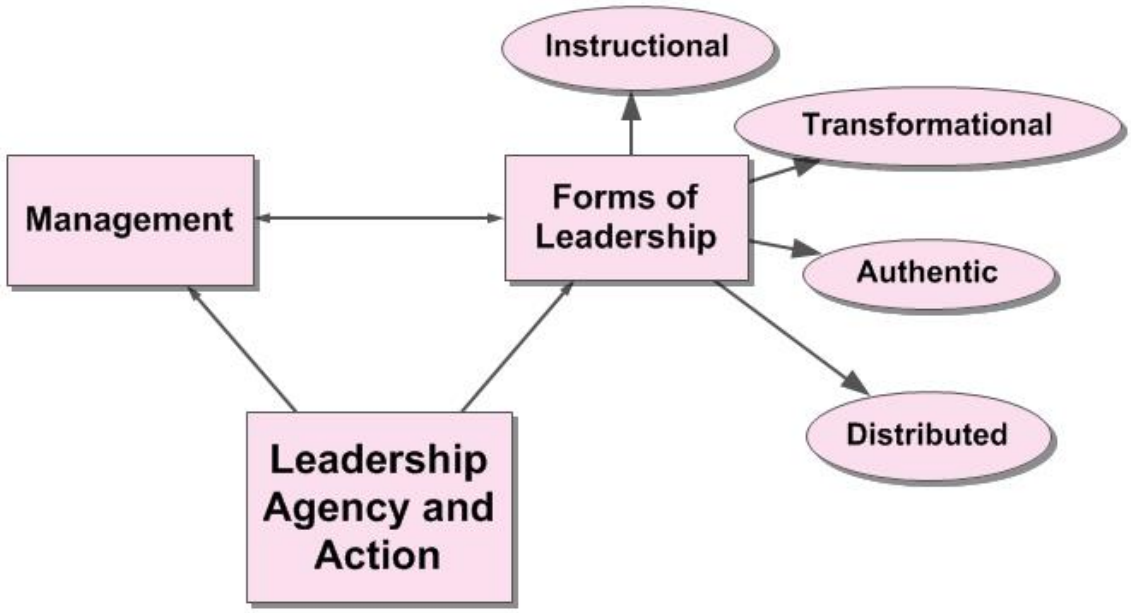

Figure 2.8: Leadership agency and action

Principals have responsibility for what happens in their schools, and are accountable to many stakeholders. To school districts, principal accountability is based partially upon the assurance that mandated policy is being upheld as well as on compliance with district rules and regulations so that all aspects of the school are working well. Principals are responsible to students and parents for the character and quality of teaching and learning that occur at the school (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). They also have the responsibility to the community to help develop each student's ability to successfully interact in society. Additionally, principals are accountable to their staff to ensure in the removal of roadblocks that may prevent the optimization of teaching and learning. Finally, principals are answerable to their own moral and ethical standards for how they choose to act.

All principals hold these multiple responsibilities. However, today's schools are influenced by many diverse factors that impact these responsibilities. One of these factors is the increase in the use of technologies, which impact principals in their financial decisions regarding resources, in addition to choices concerning student curriculum and staff professional development. Another factor is increasing global migration, resulting in a greatly increased cultural and linguistic diversity among some school populations. Other influencing factors are the wide ranges of economic disadvantage as well as the varied learning abilities and engagement potential among students. Low SES students are among those who challenge the abilities of staff and the resources of the school to effectively support student success despite the many disadvantages with which some of low SES students attend school, and which have been described as fundamental causes of school failure (Leithwood et al., 2010). These factors affect student populations particularly in low SES schools. Not surprisingly, the social composition of the school increases these negative effects (Leithwood et al., 2010). In other words, the socioeconomic status of peers will influence student achievement, even if the individual student does not come from a low SES background (Leithwood et al., 2010). School underperformance often occurs because of the lack of capacity to sustain change. How leadership enacts change depends upon the character of leadership enacted by the school principal in response to challenges. However, principals with a lack of leadership ability have also been found to be a cause for school failure (Leithwood et al., 2010). This creates considerable difficulty to all stakeholders when principals fail in their responsibilities for school success. School improvement, therefore, is an outcome for which all principals aspire.

Impact of Leadership

It is understood that principals have an impact on schools (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996; Seashore Louis et al., 2010). Indeed, leadership has been found to be the most influential factor on the school environment (Stewart, 2006). It influences the culture, attitudes and behavior of the others in the environment of the school and in the school community (Sammons, Hillman, & Mortimore, 1995). It is generally agreed that through shared purpose and relationships that enable the effectiveness of others through mobilized collective effort, leadership effect on student learning is powerful (Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2012; Penlington et al., 2008). However, the character and extent of the influence that is acted upon each school context is not the same, as each individual in the position of principal exercises his/her agency based on personal skills, knowledge, and beliefs within a contextual influence. When individuals meet their desired goals, it means that not only are they functioning effectively, but that they feel satisfaction in their beliefs of their own ability (Bandura, 1997).

Principal influence

There has been some discussion on the impact of principal influence. Some researchers posited the understanding that principal influence on academic achievement is indirect (Bush, 2008; Day, Leithwood, & Sammons, 2008; Penlington et al., 2008; Seashore Louis, Dretzke, et al., 2010; Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, Anderson, et al., 2010; Silins, Zarins, & Mulford, 1998; Stewart, 2006). This includes the influence of resources directly controlled by the principal (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Mascal, 2008). However, other research has indicated that academic

improvement was the direct result of leadership. It was found that in low SES schools, there were positive direct effects by leadership on student achievement in basic skills (Rowan & Denk, 1984), though the research design in this study was criticized for lacking reliability (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Leithwood and Jantzi (2000, 2008) also found that principal leadership influenced student learning more than did teacher leadership. The implications of leadership are thus widespread. However, the influence of leadership practice has lately been specified to occur only when there is a connection between the principal and how teachers organize themselves into professional communities, because of the shared norms and values that would lead to all staff having collective responsibility for student achievement (Seashore Louis, Dretzke, et al., 2010).

For low SES schools, often widespread change is needed in order to meet the diverse and complex needs of this particular student population. However, complex and lasting change is effected by addressing the school on a systemic, organizational level (Burke, 2011).

Organizational Change - A Systems Perspective

Senge defined learning organizations as establishments "…where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire" (1990, p. 3). Therefore, schools have been defined as learning organizations (Bryk et al., 2010). Organizations have also been viewed as systems, where all the variables are considered interrelated components of the complete system (Burke, 2011).

There are several purposes for conceptualizing organizational change as a system. Effective organizational change must gain the understanding that any variation on each of the organization's components effects change on all the others (Burke, 2011). Another reason for systemic change was that previous research (Campbell & Dunnette, 1968) negated the usefulness of changing the organization one person at a time (Burke, 2011). Instead, the target for change must be system-wide to influence the culture of the organization to form the basis of new behavioral standards (Burke, 2011).

Organizational models are meant to illustrate those most important components of the organization and present a clear view of the overall conceptualization, which includes the flow of energy through the system. When an organizational model is conceptualized, this energy is illustrated as arrows that designate the direction of influence. Burke (2011) defined as organizational model as an open system: "because of its dependence on and continual interaction with the environment in which it resides" (p. 56). Generally speaking, the change process is conceptualized as ongoing, with an input, a process or throughput involving transformation, and output, with a continuous feedback loop connecting the output with the input. The external environment acts as input, the product of change is the output, and feedback monitoring is a continuing process of reciprocal interaction of energy (Burke, 2011).

Models of change

The primary responsibility of the school principal is for raising academic achievement (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 2010) as this outcome defines what have been considered successful schools (Blair, 2002). However,

leadership is more than the sum of the individual qualities of a person in charge. It is also about how principals practice their roles with followers. In other words, leadership is a combination of what is believed by the principal and revealed to others by consequent actions and behaviors.

The many functions of leadership recently have been distilled into two fundamental roles, identified as providing direction (Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2012; Seashore-Louis, et al., 2010) and exercising influence (Seashore-Louis, et al., 2010). This influence of effective principal actions was directed toward developing people, redesigning the organization, and improving instructional program (Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2012). Similar essential components and interactions to implement plan school change were identified in a recent longitudinal study of urban schools in Chicago (Bryk et al., 2010).

The first and most important aspect of effective leadership toward school success was that leadership needed to be the driver for change (Bryk et al., 2010). From the organizational perspective, Burke also specifically emphasized the importance of the leader on planned organizational change. In this theoretical model, the role of the leader was derivative of a conceptualization from Burns (1978) who identified that change leaders exercise two behaviors for change, transformational and transactional. Each of these behaviors illustrated a difference in the leader's actions, as each acted upon certain components of the organization. The components that were involved in transformational change were the external environment, leadership, vision and strategy, and culture (Burke, 2011). The transformational aspect of leadership was described as

that which causes lasting or sweeping change. Leaders who enacted a transactional view were focused on system maintenance, and any changes made would tend to be very gradual. In the transactional viewpoint, the relationship that a leader would have with a follower was comparable to an exchange or transaction (Burke & Litwin, 1992). The following variables were considered involved in transactional change, and include structure, management practices, climate, task requirements, individual needs and values, motivation, and individual and organizational performance. In this organizational model, the distinction between transformational/transactional was likened to leader/manager. Both styles can effect change, but each has a unique functional perspective (Burke, 2011). "Transactional change requires managers who see their jobs as that of constantly focusing on improved the quality rather than on an overhaul of the total system" (Burke, 2011, p. 218), but change leaders must cause transformation to bring about lasting change.

Management and Leadership

The leadership perspective as utilized in educational contexts has highlighted an often-discussed description of the functions of the principal. These have been identified as management and leadership. Generally speaking, administration, or management, has focused on organizational objectives to provide structure and stability, and leadership has been understood to exert influence on others that leads to reaching the group goals of continued improvement (Leithwood, 2007). However, these roles cannot be considered mutually exclusive, as effective school leadership requires the enactment of all the functions of leadership. Certainly, stability is a prerequisite for success when

it is used as a euphemism for organized, compliant, stable, orderly, and well-run based on jurisdictional norms, as these structures would offer supports to a climate that is necessary for teaching and learning to occur (Bush, 2008).

Hallinger (2005) noted that the distinction between the roles of management and leadership were explicitly detailed for each principal by each school district (Hallinger, 2005). In Alberta, it is a legal requirement, legislated within the Alberta School Act. In this act, Section 20 directs in the list of expectations that principals are to "provide instructional leadership in the school", and “direct the management of the school" (*Alberta School Act*, 2000, p. 25). Because of the role specificity, principals consider themselves successful when they have accomplished both.

However, the managerial role of school administration has escalated with the increase in technology, changing regulations and policies, along with the requirements made for reporting (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Advancement in technology has increased the amount of communication received and delivered by a principal, specifically focused on the increasing numbers of e-mails issued through personal computers. Within the last five years, the amount of e-mail and paperwork has increased (Mulford, 2008), requiring a higher level of expertise in technology. Moreover, these demands are issued with seemingly faster turnaround times expected for completion, requiring constant surveillance of and for messages. Attending to these explicit functions and requirements is given a high priority by districts, so time is very often first spent by principals on those functions of administration.

The school context and structure create a complex environment that challenges the ability of the school as an organization for systematic and planned improvement (Blase & Blase, 1999). In the context of small schools, the “double load phenomenon”, or role conflict for teaching principals adds another factor of complexity to the demands of their leadership, as principals who are tied to a timetable often feel frustrated when they do not have the freedom for professional practice in activities such as attending meetings and taking part in professional development activities (Ewington et al., 2008, p. 551).

Exercising the administrative role only is not enough for principals to produce a change in school culture to influence student learning (Fullan, 2000). According to Fullan (2000), principals who only exercise these duties may find that lasting and sweeping school improvement is difficult to achieve. However, the concern for principals appears to be the lack of sufficient time to complete their required tasks.

Use of Time

Dealing with the requirements of administration is not the only demand on time by principals. Along with these administrational demands is the requirement for increased communication which includes the time required for dealing with the social problems of parents and students, managing labour disagreements with staff members, and dealing with student issues (Cooley & Shen, 2003). In low SES schools, the necessary requirements may include the support of students who need emotional assistance (Becker & Luthar, 2002), and continuing academic improvement which also

involves interacting with the parent community. Therefore, the time demands for principals to exercise their administrative functions in low SES schools have been considerable. The necessary time that is taken for these additional demands is seen to further remove principals from their role of influencing instruction (Stephenson, 2007).

For time to be effectively used, the prioritization of tasks is essential for effective self-management. Yet, principals have been concerned with how this is accomplished within the time allotted or extended for regular work days. Hallinger and Murphy (2013) cited Covey (2004) who analyzed work tasks into the categories of "urgency and importance." Covey defined urgency in relation to meeting a deadline, and importance was judged against how the task contributed towards stated goals or development of individual or group capacity. Through this definition, it is clear that tasks that are considered important are those that lead to improved teaching and learning, but these tasks are hardly ever considered urgent. Therefore, urgent tasks tend to have higher and more immediate priority for completion. Undoubtedly, leaders recognize and act on this focus on urgency, but may feel that they are not accomplishing goals that they consider most important – those that focus on increased capacity of both teachers and students.

Leadership Theories

Instructional leadership

There have been many published theoretical constructs of leadership. One of the most common terms is “instructional leadership” which is used specifically in the Principal Quality Practice Guideline (Alberta Education 2009) for principals in Alberta,

and employed when describing actions that lead to student achievement. Because this is the primary goal for principals, this phrase has become synonymous for good leadership (Leithwood, 2007) and a general descriptor that is often used as a prerequisite for having an effective school. Though instructional leadership has been listed as a necessary factor for school effectiveness, there has been no precise definition that has gained wide acceptance (Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2012; Rorrer, Skrla, & Scheurich, 2008). Even so, writers of leadership literature have created lists of leadership actions that focused on the establishment of vision and the mobilization of people to realize that vision (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2012), as well as framing and redefining goals, managing instruction, and promoting a social learning climate (Mulford, 2008). Whatever the specific leadership practices, describing leadership as instructional assumes a focus on classroom practice (Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2012). Mulford (2008) cited Hallinger's (2005, 2007) commentaries on the accountability felt by principals to enact instructional leadership, "regardless of whether or not they felt competent to perform it" (Mulford, 2008, p. 39).

Transformational leadership

Leithwood and Seashore Louis (2012) discussed transformational leadership in general, rather than in an educational context, which focused on the characteristic of leaders to influence followers. Mulford (2008) discussed the ability to effect change in educational leadership when he clearly delineated that the difference between two of the most common adjectives that described leadership – instructional and transformational. It could be stated that the ability for transformational leadership to influence followers is

based on Social Cognitive Theory by enabling an adjustment of self-efficacy perceptions of the people in the organization (Leithwood, Jantzi, Silins, & Byron, 1993), thereby causing a change in the individual beliefs of people in the organization. These leaders engage the commitment of the staff by promoting increases in the self-concept of individuals as members of the organization, by linking their behaviors and goals to personal beliefs, and having these beliefs reflected by the encouragement of a vision of the organization that reflects their needs (Leithwood et al., 1993). Ross and Gray (2006) found that transformational leadership practices enabled increased staff commitment to organizational goals. A relationship could be assumed between leadership behaviors and self-efficacy as it was found that employees may benefit more from these behaviors if they have high self-efficacy themselves, and their positive reaction to leadership facilitates the leader in the efforts to create change (Nielsen & Munir, 2009).

Authentic leadership

An authentic leader has been defined simply as an individual who is honest and knowledgeable to themselves in concert with followers (Gardner, Cogliser, Davis, & Dickens, 2011). More specifically, authentic leadership is described as a process whereby the leader influences the attitudes and behaviors of the followers by modeling and causing to increase in followers such positive emotions as trust, hope, and optimism (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004).

Leaders who are considered authentic clearly understand and communicate their vision to others by both words and actions (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). They are aware both of how they think and behave, and how they appear to others (Cooper, Scandura, &

Schriesheim, 2005). This communication of vision provides followers with the clearest conceptualization of future goals in order to clarify the direction being set (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), and also serves to reflect personal values (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005).

The followers within the concept of authentic leadership also play a special role. Avolio and Gardner cited Erickson (1995) who stated that they provide a critical audience who evaluates the sincerity of the leader, and who are reciprocally influenced by the leader to change. Authentic leaders have knowledge of their own values and act in accordance to these values (Branson, 2007). As leaders convey their values by word and action, the followers gain an understanding of their own personal values and identities, which then leads to greater self-knowledge and possible regulation of their own behavior to achieve both personal and organizational goals (Gardner et al., 2005). Therefore, leaders can directly influence the values, attitudes, and behaviors of followers by supporting self-reflection (Avolio et al., 2004). However, if followers identify both personally with the leader and socially with the organization, then they are likely to develop similar values and beliefs (Avolio et al., 2004).

Authentic leadership has been identified as a generic root concept that is a component of many different kind of leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Therefore, there are fundamental similarities, or overlap, between it and other leadership concepts – most particularly with that of transformational leadership (Avolio et al., 2004; Cooper et al., 2005). Transformational leaders possess similar positive personal characteristics as do authentic leaders: they possess hope and optimism, and are concerned with

developing others and themselves (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Both leadership concepts involved leaders' stated values and beliefs that are congruent with their actions, throughout time and varied experiences (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Leaders have a strong self-concept, understanding their own weaknesses, but augmenting this with knowledge of the strengths and abilities among their followers will allow the evolution of growth for themselves and others (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

The leadership style in both concepts is not prescribed; both authentic and transformational leaders could be directive, participative, or authoritarian in nature (Avolio et al., 2004). Authentic leadership differs from transformational leadership in follower development. Specifically, transformational leaders develop followers into leaders. This is not predicated with authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio et al., 2004).

Authentic leaders also differ from charismatic transformational leaders. Avolio and Gardner (2005) cited Bass (1985) who explained that charismatic leaders may influence followers by manipulation of others through their personality, but authentic leaders act on their true values. The difference is that authentic leaders engage fully in the leadership process, and charismatic leaders merely change others.

Distributed leadership

“Distributed leadership" has been defined as an individual leadership theory. Distributed leadership involves shared decision-making among the collegial support of teachers and the administration team who provide added leadership. When this occurs,

this shared leadership involves collective decision-making among the collegial support of teachers and the administration team, and is reported to be a factor in sustaining improved student outcomes (Seashore Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011; Spillane et al., 2001). This shared leadership fosters collective commitment to the planned change, and increases satisfaction by staff with higher levels of school autonomy (Silins, Mulford, & Zarins, 1999). Essentially, shared leadership may form the foundation for the transformation of others. In other words, providing a leadership opportunity for teachers in the establishment of a team with a common goal and purpose may set a context for "reculturation" of staff, thereby initiating their transformation. The essential components of distributed leadership are the focus on leadership practice, the understanding that this practice is created and adapted to the interaction of leaders and followers in context, and that the specific context or situation is mutually influenced by leadership practice (Mulford, 2008).

Distributed leadership is not merely handing over leadership responsibilities to teachers. Silins, Mulford, and Zarins (1999) and Hallinger and Heck (1996) offered evidence that the impact of leadership on school performance would be more effective if the principal worked through shared leadership with teachers who welcomed and embraced a higher level of trust and professionalism as they took on more complex forms of leadership. The benefit to students from the concept of shared leadership was seen to be high, and it was stated that shared leadership only evolved from a principal who was transformational in nature, allowing the leadership of others.

Core Leadership Practices

Providing Direction

Leadership practices in this category are focused on building shared knowledge, through setting goals and creating high expectations (Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2012). Leaders must also communicate the mission and vision to staff. An organization's mission is based on its stated purpose based on beliefs, whereas vision professes the desired outcomes which are reached by establishing and working to fulfil goals (Burke, 2011). Therefore, the leader articulates the vision for the students in the school, and goals are established based on this vision. It is in this core practice of leadership where the leaders' hopes and beliefs can be articulated, and against which leadership actions will be assessed. Leithwood et al. (2010) stated that leaders who could create change have been able to create a shared vision with their staff, which helped establish group commitment to the goals. Goal setting itself is important. DuFour and Marzano (2011) cautioned against general goals, stating that even though vision is communicated and shared, each individual within that team must establish performance targets for their students for which they personally are responsible.

The values of principals determine their leadership practice. Sergiovanni (1992) found that individual values and belief systems that were directed toward acting morally were stronger motivators than was self-interest. Stephenson (2007) articulated his agreement that personal convictions of principals which were based on their beliefs and values were revealed in how they chose to act; however, their ideologies also were

reflected against their own school contexts "that further shaped what was possible and expedient in any given set of circumstances" (Stephenson, 2007, p. 776). Therefore, he stated that the school environment provides a forum that limits principal choice in how leadership is enacted. During this leadership practice, principals have an opportunity to define any moral purpose that they individually possess. Fuller (2012) assumed that low SES school contexts would engage principals' values and beliefs so that leadership was defined as practicing a commitment to realize social justice. Because leadership involves guiding followers, the philosophical beliefs that motivate decision-making are articulated, enacted, and shared so that staff may learn to similar values and beliefs.

As previously stated, the principal has the responsibility for effectively developing and sharing goals with the others in the organization, and mobilizing the efforts of others to meet the organizational goals (Leithwood, 2005). One aspect of immediate importance for principals when undertaking change agency is whether or not they believe that they could successfully accomplish goals that they have set. The level of principal self-efficacy influences the height of goals that are set and the sustained effort he/she puts into achieving those goals, or in other words, the principal’s adaptability to change (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The level of certainty of the principals in their ability to achieve success influences how their efforts and actions move toward this stated purpose (McCullers & Bozeman, 2010). Both of the above researchers specifically mentioned that principals with high self-efficacy show determination in the attempts at goal attainment. Therefore, decisions made by principals are influenced by their level of self-efficacy.

Exercising Influence

Promoting a positive school learning culture

In their causal model of organizational performance and change, Burke and Litwin (1992) specifically discussed two distinct set of organizational dynamics, one primarily associated with the transactional level of human behavior and the everyday interactions and exchanges that more directly create climate conditions, and the transformational level of change that is involved with the culture of the organization. The differences between culture and climate were considered essential for understanding organizational change (Burke, 2011; Burke & Litwin, 1992), but in educational literature often the terms were somewhat interchangeable. Climate was evaluated in terms of groups of individuals, and culture in terms of the organization. Climate has been described as norms that provide the basis for members of the group to attach meaning to experienced events, and is judged by individual perceptions of group interaction with others (Burke & Litwin, 1992). Culture was defined as a set of behaviors and beliefs that are affected by previous practice, and which influence organizational actions (Burke & Litwin, 1992). Peterson and Deal (1998) further identified the basis of culture as the expectations and values that motivate what people do and how they interact with others.

Lumby and Foskett (2011) utilized the concept of influence when talking about the concept of school culture. Specifically, they identified culture as “the capacity of an individual or group to influence positively or negatively the psychological and material resources of others” (Lumby & Foskett, 2011, p. 447). Culture is developed through

time, but it is also changeable, dependent upon the influences placed upon it. Therefore, individual leaders and teachers, based upon the strength of their influence on others, can influence a culture.

The school principal plays a distinct and important role within the school culture. In order for principals to be successful, they must have the ability to identify the culture in their schools, the internal and external influences on the culture, and how this culture affects the students in the school. Because principals affect student achievement mostly through school staff, it is primarily with school staff that culture is developed on the school level. For principals to make a sustained impact on a staff, they must not only be able to influence the behaviors of the staff, but also influence the beliefs and values of the staff, so that change is sustainable, not superficial.

The establishment of a culture of shared responsibility is a result of many factors. For example, any shared success is influenced by the amount of time that has already been spent in establishing leadership in the school, the amount of time spent by individuals in the role of leader, and the school context (Penlington et al., 2008). In all cases, the school principal is instrumental in establishing an effective leadership model in response to perceived school needs. In an organization committed to learning, the optimal objective would require the entire school functioning as one unit or system, where all work toward one goal (Leithwood et al., 1993). When there is no collaborative culture, individuals in the school, “are, more often than not, left to develop their own sense of worth and gain private satisfaction from achieving personal goals” (Silins et al., 1998, p. 6). This gain of personal goals does not necessarily exist in

concert with the goal of student achievement, or even with general school improvement goals. However, forming collaborative cultures that includes shared leadership opportunities may direct and strengthen both personal and school goals in a climate of collaboration.

Increasing teacher capacity

Certainly, principals must be politically and professionally responsible in order to ensure that teachers have and demonstrate a required level of competence to undertake the fundamental aspects of the profession, as well demonstrate a student-centered focus (Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2012). The principal's role with "underperforming" teachers is to ensure that they meet the required standards and to increase their knowledge. Successful principal utilize many methods, including professional development to increase teachers' professional skills and knowledge (Leithwood et al., 2010). Principals who have been considered successful also have practiced modeling desirable behaviors for teachers to repeat (Leithwood et al., 2010). If teachers are not amenable to personal change and are not seen as having strong enough pedagogical skills, then it may be necessary to discipline or to counsel teachers to retire or transfer (Gray & Streshly, 2008). Successful principals understand the importance building relationships with their staff. These principals have offered personal knowledge and concern about staff members as individuals (Leithwood et al., 2010).

Building connections and creating relationships

Interactions with staff

It is suggested that relationship-building builds a culture of emotion (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998). School culture affects relationships between educators in the school, as sharing core values and participating in the development of higher levels of practice affects instructional effectiveness, so that students not only have higher levels of student achievement, but imitate stronger socializing models, resulting in increasing staff satisfaction (Seashore Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011). In this way, principals respond to the people within the context: the staff, the students, the parents, District personnel, and representatives from the community, with a purpose to create stronger ties of influence.

How these relationships are built, and consequently the attached result of stronger pedagogical practices, is contingent upon the capacities of the principal. One of the most important capacities for principals is their ability to create relationships with staff, students, parents and the community (Gray & Streshly, 2008). Dependent upon the leadership styles of the principal, the practices of a principal range within a continuum that house on one end a directive style of leadership to the other end when leadership is participative. This leadership is meant to assure that professional educators all assume the mantle of professionalism. Tschannen-Moran (2009) identified a profession as comprised of "members who possess specialized expert knowledge and who pledge their first and primary responsibility to the welfare of those whom they serve" (p. 225). In schools, this means that the welfare of the students takes precedence over the individual needs of the adults. Sergiovanni (1992) stated that people who have

professionalism are motivated by their moral standards rather from external direction. Hargreaves and Shirley (2012) defined as the need for professionals to be intellectual, so assuming that cognitive ability and academic challenge was a characteristic for professionals in the educational field. Therefore, an important influence of principals' behavior is their belief on how their staff behave as professionals, as well as the outcomes that they have achieved. However, in some schools, the culture does not contain staff that cohesively work together as a team. Instead, "staffs [*sic*] are extremely fragmented, where the purpose of serving students have been lost to the goal of serving adults" (Peterson & Deal, 1998, p. 28). When this is the reality for the school principal, leadership is challenged to promote change so that the possibility of creating a culture may be realized – a culture that is dedicated to students, deriving from the increasing of the core of shared values and norms of expected behaviors. In reality, the search for increased cooperation and collective responsibility that would lead to a change of practice by some teachers is hard work for the principal (Seashore Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011).

Principal leadership styles can range from almost managerial in nature to those who willingly share their leadership practices with their teachers. Tschannen-Moran (2009) labeled these as "bureaucratic orientation" and "professional orientation", principal philosophies based on core assumptions on their role as leader with the people they lead. In this case, how leadership is enacted depends upon the divergent beliefs of leaders on the capacity of their staff to do their jobs. Therefore, the amount and quality of trust that the principal has of the staff is one strong influence on leadership orientation. It is also true that the perceptions of trust within the staff were found to be

related to leadership orientation and teacher trust in the principal (Tschannen-Moran, 2009).

That is not the only form of trust must occur in schools, as it is necessary that trust must occur between all the stakeholder groups of the school (Seashore Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011). Principals tend to be more bureaucratic when they do not trust the abilities of the teachers and what they can add to the profession, with the result that these principals focus on establishing rules, and then monitoring and evaluating teachers to ensure that they follow these rules. They tend to believe that teachers may limit their effort and work because they lack the required intrinsic motivation based on the demands of their profession (Tschannen-Moran, 2009). It was not surprising to find that Tschannen-Moran (2009) found that the more the focus of culture had on rules, the more likelihood there was that teachers only performed the minimum job required of them. The result of a lack of trust can affect communication within a school, between stakeholders of differing power and authority. For leaders, the result of close supervision of subordinates may be seen as a lack of trust and respect, resulting in teachers not being given professional development and realizing their professional capacities, and limiting the degree of respect from teachers to the principal (Seashore Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011).

On the other end of the continuum is leadership with professional orientation, with leadership that has implicit trust that their teachers are professionally competent and they possess moral integrity. These teachers deserve and are given more latitude to conduct their professional obligations (Seashore Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011). Two

important aspects of principal practice are to select and enact work processes and also to set expected standards for their teachers. The result of a professional orientation of leadership is an increase in trust in teachers as they ascribe the common beliefs which are necessary in professional learning communities. These common beliefs are identified as the outcome of a culture which implicitly supports a shift of staff motivation from a self-serving mentality to that which acts as a profession. However, all aspects of the school have reciprocal influence on each other. This means that principal influence can modify what teachers do, so not only could the changed practice of teachers influence improved student achievement, but principal observations of change practice could result in their acknowledgment of a higher level of teacher "professionalism" which would be interpreted as successful compliance with those standards. The results of teacher improvement are various: greater student achievement, increased level of teacher ability, and principal recognition of both with the added benefit that acknowledges the effort expended. Added to that is the reciprocal growth of teachers' trust in principals. These changes in culture create the foundation for the formation of professional learning communities (PLCs) (Seashore Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011). PLCs are the result of schools whose culture places a high value on professional development and service to students (Lambert, 2002).

A professional learning community is based on culture is focused on knowledge (Mulford, 2008), and has reciprocal and self-sustaining structures in place as far as the monitoring of teacher performance. When the teachers are focused on shared goals, are working toward developing their own ability to teach, and are positively committed to students, the principal role of monitoring and evaluating teachers works in concert with

staff self-monitoring. In other words, the professionalism of teachers is increased as they become acculturated to the expectations of the school, where there is a standard shared purpose among all members with which all members are expected to show that they comply. In this case, all members are responsible to each other, rather to school leadership, to accede to these requirements of the culture (Tschannen-Moran, 2009).

Students, as well as teachers, benefit from the professional orientation of leaders. Tschannen-Moran (2009) has found that this viewpoint, with clearly communicated expectations of responsible behavior for students, extends the message of trustworthiness to students and parents. Positive relationships based upon respect and common beliefs are created from the professional school culture, leading to positive relationships within the school. Cultural changes that affect pedagogy and increase teaching effectiveness also serve to affect student socialization, as the adults within a school environment model appropriate professional interaction to students. Additionally, appropriate social behavior and increased achievement by students has been found to increase staff satisfaction (Seashore Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011).

To successfully a collaborative atmosphere among staff, the principal must be able to engage the staff emotionally and cognitively through positive relationships (Luthans & Peterson, 2002). “The purpose of leadership is to facilitate group goal attainment by establishing and maintaining an environment favorable to group performance” (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004, p. 574). Osterman and Sullivan (1994) identified this relationship as the ability of the principal to garner support among people.

Initiating communication between home and school

In low socioeconomic status schools, principals may find themselves at a crossroads between home and school, where lack of communication from families has led teachers to believe that parents do not care for education, and therefore cannot or will not support their child or the teacher in the school. It therefore falls on the principal as leader to recognize the value of two-way communication, and to initiate this communication in their schools. Because of the social inequity between parents and school officials, researchers have suggested that the invitation should be initiated by the school (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005) as "the more powerful party" in the unequal relationship of power (Milne & Plourde, 2006, p. 130). Eccles and Harold (1996) believed that the attitudes held by school staff about parental involvement can either aid or hinder this involvement. When parents receive an invitation for participation from the school, it acts a motivator to parents because they receive the message that their involvement is welcome and has value to the school community (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Anderson and Minke (2007) found evidence that communication from parents to schools may be influenced by parental concerns about whether or not the teacher cared about their child, and whether they felt that the teacher valued their input. When they were invited to collaborate, it initiated a feeling of trust between school and parent.

The culture of the school impacts the creation of trust (Adams, Forsyth, & Mitchell, 2009). The perception of trust derives from how the school staff interact with each other, with students, and with parents. It is also based upon the behavior and

attitudes of each of these groups (Adams et al., 2009). Some schools have environments that are purposefully built to create relationships that engender trust, while others are left to develop on their own. Having trusting relationships with families is important, because it is only then that educators believe they are supported by families in their attempts for students to be successful. When this does not exist, it can be created. Adams et al. (2009) stated that leaders can build and sustain parent trust, regardless of any discrepancy of ideas between school staff and parents. This is important because when a breakdown or non-existence of communication occurs between those two groups, it is often the principal who must then take the time to build those relationships, or at least to establish a conduit of communication between home and school.

The literature on school-initiated efforts to improve parental involvement provides evidence that such attempts have revealed relationships which have predicted performance on achievement tests (Sheldon, 2003). In low income urban neighborhoods, when schools establish programs to involve parents in that community, students are more likely to show improvement on achievement tests. Thus, it has been found that schools can overcome the negative effect of context when they "purposefully foster non-threatening and non-contentious social exchanges between parents and school authorities" (Adams et al., 2009, p. 28). Sheldon, Epstein, and Galindo (2010) also found that the existence of a well-functioning atmosphere of parental involvement may help schools improve the academic achievement of students on math achievement tests.

The initiation or support of principal actions in the creation of parental support programs was found to be an important component of the success of these programs,

and the indication of principal effectiveness was their ability to work with parents and the community (Horvat et al., 2010; Weihua & Williams, 2010). Van Voorhis and Sheldon (2004) also found that principal support of family and community involvement programs was positively related to parental support and program quality. As leaders in the school, they act as role models for teachers to maintain attention and energy on these programs. As change agents to promote parental involvement, trust emerges when participants observe an active commitment to building relationships. However, when role modelling is not enough to initiate change, principals have used their power of status to attempt to create a collegial school community from hesitant staff and parents. That is to say, even though schools may initiate programs for parental involvement, the effect on this involvement is based upon the capacity of the school and teachers to involve these parents (Epstein, 1996; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; McGee, 2003). This means that any attempt to create relationships could fail based on staff personalities and communication skills.

Principal Self-Efficacy Studies

How people decide to act within social cognitive theory is dependent upon what they believe about their own abilities. This individual self-knowledge determines how people exercise what options they believe they have, as well as the extent of their motivation to act. The following information has emerged from previous studies on principal self-efficacy, and has been divided into leadership themes and how SES has related to principal self-efficacy.

The focus on principals' agency is of utmost importance, as their position requires the enactment of skills and abilities into the performance of the necessary functions of leadership which have previously been described, but it is their beliefs in their own ability to effect change that is seen to be a mediating force in school improvement strategies (Imants & DeBrabander, 1996). Therefore, self-efficacy can limit or extend principal agency, as notwithstanding the skills and attributes that are possessed, leaders attempt what they believe is in their power to do. Their beliefs evolve from how they conceptualize themselves and through their interpretation of the information they receive from their environment.

In the present political context of accountability, principals must create change when needed, and to do that, they must also believe that they can be successful throughout the duration of this planned change, even when there are many perceived impediments to success. As previously stated, low SES schools may provide those impediments. It is likely that without these barriers that prevent success, self-efficacy beliefs would be stronger. However, leadership comes from interacting with all of the realities of life, and is especially tested under difficult circumstances. It is how leaders deal with and solve problems that they model leadership to others, and provide the basis for personal beliefs in themselves.

Self-efficacy and personal factors

Research on principal self-efficacy revealed many personal aspects that promoted positive efficacy beliefs when exercising agency. Principals with high self-efficacy recognized and utilized opportunities for change (Dimmock & Hattie, 1996),

with a focus on future change. It is important to note the high importance of the ability of the principal to identify the need for change, and to be able to plan timely actions that would result in this change. One aspect of this could be identified as problem solving abilities, such as having the ability to interpret problems (Osterman & Sullivan, 1994), as well as the ability to analyze context-specific situations and choose appropriate strategies. Flexibility and adaptability when managing contextual constraints were further characteristics of principals' problem-solving skills (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). This ability to work effectively within the bounds of district resourcing, as well as accessing optional resourcing activities, such as knowledge of funding application or optimizing community resources could be identified as political acuity. Similarly, the ability to use the available resources or to gain resources due to personal attributes was identified as resourcefulness (Smith, 2009).

Self-efficacy and low SES

Previous research studies have examined the influence of low SES to principal self-efficacy with differing results. Some researchers found that principal self-efficacy was positively related to the SES of students (Lehman, 2007; Lucas, 2003; Sierman Smith, 2007; Smith, 2009), which was especially true for efficacy in instructional leadership (G. D. Nye, 2008). Lehman (2007) specifically found that results of her research indicated that low SES was a predictor of low principal self-efficacy. However, this relationship between low SES and principal self-efficacy was not uncontested, where other researchers concluded that SES was unrelated to principal efficacy beliefs (Dimmock & Hattie, 1996; Modlin, 1996; Osterman & Sullivan, 1994;

Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Therefore, previous research cannot unilaterally state that the impact of dealing with the concerns of the low SES community affected principals' self-efficacy beliefs.

Self-efficacy and student achievement

The findings of previous studies on the influence of student achievement on principal self-efficacy indicated contention. Many of these studies were focused on the beliefs of principals who were leading schools that were designated Program Improvement Schools. These were schools that had not made adequate yearly progress according to state expectations for the realization of the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act. Such schools would be exposed to mandated "corrective action measures"; therefore, in schools such as these, principals would have an added responsibility to ensure an increase in student achievement. Santamaria (2008) found that not only had principals with that designation lower self-efficacy than their peers who were not in Program Improvement Schools, this designation was the primary influence on their efficacy beliefs. McCullers found that leaders' self-efficacy was positively related to their belief in the attainability of these state and federal achievement goals (McCullers, 2009). Additional studies have concluded a positive relationship between principal self-efficacy and achieving leadership standards (Lehman, 2007; Wintering, 2008), as well as student academic performance (Lehman, 2007; Roley, 2008)

Findings that were opposite in nature also existed. Daly et al (2011) did not find support for the hypothesis that the stress of leading a school that had not performed up to standard would have an influence on principal self-efficacy regarding district

perceptions. Green (2008) found that there was no relationship between principal self-efficacy and student achievement for students with disabilities, even for those principals who had specific training. Other studies from the same time period found no significant relationship between self-efficacy and student achievement (D. E. Evans, 2010; D. V. Evans, 2010; Green, 2008).

Self-efficacy and setting direction

As previously stated, the principal has the responsibility for effectively developing and sharing goals with the others in the organization, and mobilize the efforts of others to meet these goals meeting the organizational goals (Leithwood, 2005). One aspect of immediate importance for principals when undertaking change agency is whether or not they believed that they could successfully accomplish goals that they have set. The level of principal self-efficacy influences the height of goals that are set and the sustained effort he/she puts into achieving those goals, or in other words, the principal's adaptability to change (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The level of certainty of the principals in their ability to achieve success influences how their efforts and actions move toward this stated purpose (McCullers & Bozeman, 2010). Both of the above researchers specifically mentioned that principals with high self-efficacy show determination in the attempts at goal attainment. Therefore, decisions made by principals are influenced by their level of self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy and influencing others

Osterman and Sullivan (1994) defined principal self-efficacy as the ability to influence the direction of school change. Effecting change could be described as exercising leadership, whereby the principal's beliefs and behaviors have an effect on the rest of the people in the school, so the degree of personal self-efficacy of the principal has a "cumulative and dramatic" effect on all others (Dimmock & Hattie, 1996, p. 65). This belief was echoed in another study, where self-efficacy was defined as the ability to affect teachers' behavior (Imants & DeBrabander, 1996). This indicated the importance that was placed by these researchers on that aspect of leadership that deals with exerting influence over staff members. Whaley (2011) found a strong correlation between self-efficacy and leadership. As well, collective efficacy, or the strength in a community's belief that together they can effect change, also was found to have a direct relationship with effective leadership practices (Sierman Smith, 2007). It is reasonable to assume that collective efficacy reflects the combined positive belief of the staff which was influenced by the efficacy beliefs of the leader. Lloyd-Zaninni (2002) also found a significant correlation between the size of a staff and self-efficacy beliefs in collaborative leadership practices.

One research study highlighted the individual construction of principal self-efficacy. In this study, principal beliefs were compared to that of teachers, as both groups evaluated the effectiveness of principal actions as they exercised their leadership to produce change in their schools. Specifically, it was found that there was a lack of congruence between leadership self-efficacy and how teachers perceived the

implementation levels provided by the principal (Lucas, 2003). This research finding was of particular importance, as it highlighted the capacity of an individual to have high self-efficacy beliefs for his/her own actions when others do not share that belief of success.

Another characteristic that was found in the study of high principal self-efficacy was a utilization of transformational leadership practices (Daly et al., 2011; Osterman & Sullivan, 1994), such as influencing a change of practice and/or philosophy to the staff. Certainly, Dimmock and Hattie (1996) stated that these principals with high self-efficacy had positive beliefs in their own ability to manage their staff. This was echoed by Wintering (2008) who spoke generally of leadership skills, but focused on high-level of self-performance evaluation of these principals. That indeed is reasonable when the focus is on having a realistic self-view.

Summary of the Review of the Literature

Context

The context of low SES schools is made up of students, parents, school staff, and can be expanded to include district personnel and community agencies. The highly complex nature of this context provides some challenges to leadership. Students in these schools enter school with academic, social, emotional, and physical concerns. They do not tend to achieve as highly as those students in high SES schools in academics, and low SES students have higher dropout rates or are more likely to not continue their education after high school. Low SES students are also associated with

mental health issues such as depression behavior concerns in school. Some students do not have many supports at home to help them succeed educationally. Several students in these areas have poor language acquisition skills. Some schools have high percentages of immigrant families, so many students do not understand the culture or language of instruction.

These concerns with students provide difficulty for the teaching staff. The lack of language skills enhances the difficulty for communication. The differing skill levels of students necessitate appropriate teaching methods by staff, and student emotional disengagement requires staff skill in dealing with conflict. Staff experience difficulty in communicating with parents to enlist their support for students. Parents do not tend to be involved in academic activities at their child's school. The reasons for these may include a parental lack of education, employment requirements, a feeling of inferiority based on social differences with staff members, or lack of available child care, or lack of interest. School staff tend to interpret parents' non-involvement in school life as a lack of value for education, citing incomplete student homework and absenteeism as concerns. There appears to be a need for staff to increase their understanding of the barriers and constraints under which parents and students live, so that communication can be established between home and school.

There is often high staff mobility, with frequent staff changes made by teachers who do not thrive in highly demanding educational contexts. This lessens the continuity and structure that a stable staff could provide to the school. The ability of the staff to connect with students in positive relationships was seen to be a strong influence on

student emotional engagement, and those teachers who have emotional intelligence could provide a supportive environment for students to improve behavior and increase academic success.

Resilience

Resilience has been identified as a personality trait, an attribute developed in reaction to stressors, or a process. Resilience is said to occur with the interaction between experiences of risk or crisis that conclude with a positive outcome. Against stress, individuals with resilience thrive rather than succumb. Low SES schools provide opportunities to encounter stress. Paramount in workplace stress for individuals is fear of failing to enact their duties, and this could become combined with other negative feelings, such as lack of control. Attributes that lead to resilience are: self-efficacy, having high expectations, having a sense of personal worth, a sense of humor, being able to rebound or bounce back after adversity, flexibility, and having positive relationships. Individuals can personally foster their own resilience by establishing coping mechanisms or utilizing various forms of support.

Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory is the underlying theoretical framework that anchors this study. Social Cognitive Theory is attributed to Alfred Bandura who stated that the motivation for human behavior is based upon triadic reciprocal determinism. This is where human agency, or individual action, arises from the combination of three interactive human aspects: the attributes and skills of each individual, the decision

making process resulting in action, and the environment in which the decision to take action occurs. This framework endorses the importance of the environment as an influence that guides human behavior, and in this study, supports the thesis that the leadership actions of a principal are clearly affected by the environment.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is the most important aspect of self-referent thought, and it is through self-efficacy that the selection of action occurs. Self-efficacy is much more specific in nature than are self-concept or self-confidence. Self-efficacy is the belief that one can accomplish a specific action. Information that influences self-efficacy is based on four primary sources. These are: mastery experiences, where information about successful action is derived from past successful experiences; vicarious experience, where one learns from watching and imitating the actions of others; verbal persuasion where individuals are convinced from others that they could be successful at a specific action; and an individual's affective or emotional state, where an individual assesses their own state of readiness or ability to successfully undertake take specific action. Successful action will increase high self-efficacy beliefs, and conversely, failure may lessen these beliefs. This can be dependent upon their evaluation of their own past achievements, and how they perceive themselves.

Leadership

Leaders have multiple responsibilities to school districts, students and families, the teaching staff and to themselves to ensure that they act within their own ethical

standards. Leaders have an impact on schools, and through leadership can exercise agency to fulfill their goals for increased student achievement. Often, leaders are involved in organizational change, where they understand the interacting influence between all aspects of the school, and purposefully choose to extend influence on that which needs to change.

Leaders are said to provide direction and exercise influence (Seashore-Louis, et al., 2010). Leadership is exercised by efficiently managing all organizational objectives of the school, and providing direction and influencing the staff. The role of administration facilitates the functioning of the school, while leadership, whether instructional, transformational, distributed, or authentic, is seen to affect change. Direction is provided by leaders who are motivated by their philosophical and ethical beliefs, and by creating and sharing a vision and setting goals for the school. The role played by the principal involves creating professional learning communities which are supported by a culture that strives for educational excellence, made up of staff who embrace shared values and common goals, and who hold to a common responsibility for professional improvement and student success. The ability to create sustainable collaborative cultures is one foundation for leadership success. One attribute for successful principals would be the ability to create trust-filled relationships with others. The styles of leadership are often different, but the focus on school leadership is to positively influence staff development. One aspect of leadership in low SES schools has been to initiate relationships with parents by encouraging parental engagement in schools, in order to strengthen those family supports for students.

Previous Self-efficacy Research

There have been many studies done on principal self-efficacy. These studies have sought to better understand this construct within the multi-faceted dimension of school leadership. They searched for or attempted to prove a relationship between self-efficacy of the principal and at least one aspect of the responsibilities of leadership. These included themes of Student Achievement, Organization, or Personal Concerns. Through an examination of these studies, self-efficacy was compared with another aspect of school leadership, such as the identified personal characteristics of the principal, student achievement, or a mandated program or practice. Some studies added the feature of school or leader demographics in an attempt to find relationships, if any, between those and principal self-efficacy.

Studies determining principal self-efficacy have found conflicting evidence in stating that low SES contexts were related to low self-efficacy. One reason for this may have been on how self-efficacy was measured in each context. It appeared that there were conflicting views on the relationship between principal self-efficacy and student achievement. Self-efficacy studies that identified how a principal exercised leadership focused on principal attributes of goal setting, adaptability to change, determination, problem solving ability, create cohesive collaborative groups, flexibility, and adaptability. All of these were seen to be attributes of principals with high self-efficacy. Therefore, examining influences on self-efficacy will provide a framework for supporting effective leadership.

Chapter 3: Research Design

This chapter provides a framework for this two-phase sequential mixed methods research study that was designed to explore, in low socioeconomic schools, the influence of these contextual influences to principal self-efficacy and resilience and how principals practice their leadership. This chapter is structured to provide the background information that informed the research design, choice of research methodology, the approach that was chosen, and the research process itself, which included the background and assurance of trustworthiness throughout the research design.

This chapter begins with an overview and background of the major paradigms and explains the pragmatic viewpoint that was taken. The following section in this chapter describes the choice of a mixed methods approach that was taken which utilized survey research methods. It also described the purpose, design, and validity of data collection instruments, and specifically mentioned the origin of the instruments used in this study. Also included in this chapter is the typology of the study. The next section focuses on the necessary ethical considerations along with the procedure of achieving ethical clearance. The last section explains the research procedure itself, including the sampling frame for both phases of the study. It also includes how the data were collected, making specific reference to software used. This section also makes specific reference to the emphasis that was placed on validity and reliability, and that the mixed methods design allowed the triangulation of data to reinforce trustworthiness. Data analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data is included in this section.

Overview of Research Paradigms

The conceptualization of a research study is based upon the collection of pre-existing shared beliefs and practices that guides the researcher's actions. This has been described as a paradigm (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). However, there are many definitions of "paradigm". The most common forms of the term have endorsed the definition of a paradigm as being a shared belief system that influences how knowledge is conceptualized and interpreted. These beliefs or paradigms are held within an individual's philosophy, which is conceptualized and differentiated in layers of generality (Morgan (2007). Researchers' viewpoints are therefore based on their ontology, or how they perceive the nature of reality (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005) and their epistemology, which is concerned with how objectivity is achieved by examining the relationship between the knower and the known (Mertens, 2003). The understanding of these then leads to methodology, or the underlying principles that concern how the researchers will learn what they wish to discover. In this way, a paradigm is concerned with all three branches of philosophy (Anfara & Mertz, 2006).

Within each paradigm, there is an associated dominant methodology that is quantitative, qualitative, or some combination of the two. The viewpoint taken by the researcher then guides how the study is constructed. The positivist/normative view is that the world is structured around scientific principles: there is one reality, reality is measurable, reliable, and valid, and cause and effect can be predicted (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The understanding that objectivity is achieved by the researcher comes from the belief that all phenomena exist independent of the onlooker. In other

words, the researcher takes the objective stance through a distant perspective. Having this understanding would lead the researcher to utilize quantitative methods, because in this way, data are collected and analysed according to statistical principles, with the researcher describing and presenting factual findings.

The interpretive/constructivist paradigm is commonly found in qualitative research approaches. Having this outlook requires the interaction between the knower and the known, because that is what is essential to create knowledge. This viewpoint accepts that reality exists in multiple forms, constructed socially, culturally and historically (Crotty, 1998), and that cause and effect cannot easily be distinguished from each other. Therefore, there is interaction with the participants and the interpretation of responses is necessary.

A Mixed Methods Approach

This research study was enacted through a mixed methods approach. Mixed methods involves the collection or analysis of both quantitative and/or qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially, and involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). The philosophy of mixed methods research is to consider all viewpoints in a quest to discover knowledge, so the decision about the approach to research rested in the identification of the nature of the knowledge that was to be identified, and was also guided by the research questions themselves.

One important purpose of choosing a mixed methods approach is to strengthen the study results by preventing any potential for areas of weakness that may emerge from either the quantitative or qualitative methods. The quantitative approach offers structure to a qualitative study. Adding the perspective gained from a qualitative viewpoint may ensure the gaining of enough information and extending the understanding of complex situations or variables. The mixing of the methods then allows for the researcher to gain further insight than quantitative data can provide. Qualitative approaches in a mixed methods study will bring its corresponding strengths, which include the fact that the researcher is involved in the creation of the study, and so has a vested interest in the results. In-depth information is achieved from the respondents, who provide an emic viewpoint in their natural settings and give researchers access to their own perspectives. Should the focus of a study have been solely dealing with quantitative data, little chance is afforded for the exploration of other potential avenues of information from the principal participants. However, unexpected information may emerge during qualitative data collection to give the researcher in-depth information and detail from that snapshot in time.

Survey Research

In any study, decisions must be made by the researcher on the identification of and perspective toward the variables of interest. In this research study, the identified variables were the opinions of principals (participants) regarding their beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors. The term survey research was identified by Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) to refer to studies in which are used questionnaires and interviews, and is

an approach used to test hypotheses or to answer questions based on opinion (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). The primary question in this study focused on identifying and describing any existing relationships between good leadership and high self-efficacy of principals who lead low socioeconomic status schools based on principal responses. Therefore, in order to collect these non-observable data so that they could be measured and recorded, survey research was employed.

Data Collection Instruments

There were two instruments that were used in this descriptive study. These were a questionnaire which was utilized in Phase 1, and the interview guide which guided the semi-structured interview for Phase 2. Generally speaking, questionnaires are utilized when the research is oriented toward looking at the components of the variables examined. In the case of the study, the research questions attempted to more clearly identify and describe the characteristics and relationships between variables such as principal self-efficacy, resilience, and leadership. Interviews can be utilized when research is meant to examine "the complexity of a phenomenon within its context" (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 267). In this way, the individual participants themselves reveal beliefs and motivations, further explaining leadership behavior. In the case of this study, the researcher wished to discover data from both sources which guided the researcher to utilize both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires are comprised of printed questions aimed at a chosen group of respondents (Gay et al., 2009). The use of questionnaires is advantageous to the researcher for the following reasons. One advantage is the minimal cost of data collection compared to other methods (Gall et al., 2007). An additional reason for choosing questionnaires is that they can reach a larger sample, or wider geographical range of respondents (Gall et al., 2007; Gay et al., 2009). A further advantage for utilizing questionnaires is that there is less time expenditure for the researcher during data collecting.

However, questionnaires also hold inherent disadvantages. One of these is that the researcher cannot connect to the participant who must respond to the static, written item on the questionnaire. This means that no rapport between the researcher and participant can encourage the amount and quality of involvement. Furthermore, there is no further opportunity for explanation or clarification of questionnaire items (Gay et al., 2009). This creates a distance between the researcher and the participant, emphasizing the need for the questionnaire to elicit the necessary information. In other words, the questionnaire must be designed to answer the research questions. Each of the items on the questionnaire must be worded so that it is only asking about one aspect of the topic, and there is no ambiguity based on poorly structured questions, or the use of non-specific terms.

In order to encourage an adequate response rate, the design itself must encourage participation. Therefore, it must be structured so that it is not onerous for participants to

complete. Often, checklists and scaled items, such as the Likert scale, are used to indicate response (Gay et al., 2009). This ease of response for participants may likely encourage participation and also would facilitate a timely response.

Questionnaire for this research study

The questionnaire was divided into four sections: demographic information, a principal resiliency scale, a principal self-efficacy scale, and two open-ended questions that invited personal response. These are described in the following paragraphs.

Section 1 of the questionnaire (See Appendix B.1) comprised a demographic form which asked 18 questions relating to the individual participant's professional situation, and variables that may contribute to school complexity. The items relating to each participant included gender, ethnicity, age range, and highest degree completed. Additionally, items included the experience range of each principal as educator (teacher) in years, years of experience as principal, years of experience in their present school, and in how many schools had they been a principal. Items also captured information regarding whether or not their current school was their own choice or a district placement, as well as how many placements had been personally selected as opposed to being a district placement.

The school demographic information included: whether the school was public, private, or charter, where the school was located (metropolitan or small centres and rural); the level of grades in each school; the population of the school; the percentage of

English as Second Language (ESL) students; and the estimated percentage of refugee students. The demographic information also asked the ethnic component of each school.

Section 2 included the resiliency component of the questionnaire and was a researcher-developed instrument (See Appendix B.2). Several general resilience scales that were already established in psychological research practice were examined for possible inclusion. Nine items were chosen from one of these (Connor & Davidson, 2003), and one from another (Wagnild & Young, 1993). As it was felt that the items on these scales did not reflect resilience in principals, several additional items were developed by the researcher based upon a review of resilience literature, combined with that of leadership literature. Two sample items were: "I can influence students and adults (eg. teachers, parents, superiors) ", and, "The principalship is a satisfying role". The instrument that was finalized consisted of 17 items which were grouped by the researcher to four larger themes: Tenacity, Self-Confidence, Relationships and/or Supports, and Competence. On this questionnaire, participants were asked to respond to items with the stem, "Reflecting on my past experience as a principal..." and recorded the responses on a six point Likert scale that was anchored at "Not true at all" to "True nearly all of the time". It also had a category for those who are "Undecided". A definition of resiliency was placed strategically on the questionnaire to provide a common understanding of the term and to prevent possible ambiguity that may have influenced the participants' responses.

Section 3 focused on the self-efficacy questionnaire. In order to find an optimal instrument, the researcher closely examined previously-developed instruments on

principal self-efficacy to determine whether or not they would be appropriate to use in order to answer the questions that guided the study. The researcher decided that, rather than amend the questions to match the questionnaires, some slight modification would be done with an established instrument that measured principal's self-efficacy. From among the instruments that were developed in other studies (see Appendix B.3), the Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004), an attitude inventory scale, was chosen, as it most closely aligned with the researcher's understanding of self-efficacy based on Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, as well as contained items that best illustrated dimensions of leadership to the researcher. The PSES is an established instrument developed to specifically assess principal self-efficacy, and has been validated (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004), as well as used extensively, in its entirety or partially, in previous research which examined principal self-efficacy (Daly et al., 2011; Lehman, 2007; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; G. D. Nye, 2008; Ream, 2010; Santamaria, 2008; Thomason, 2006; Wintering, 2008). In the 18 items of the PSES, three factors, or common themes, are listed as: Self-Efficacy for Instructional Leadership, Self-Efficacy for Management, and Self-Efficacy for Moral Leadership. Because the focus of the study was on the self-efficacy of principals in low socioeconomic status schools, seven items were added by the researcher. These items were considered to be variables of low socioeconomic status schools, and were chosen from an examination of literature and personal experience, and were influenced by key informants on factors that may influence self-efficacy in low socioeconomic status contexts. This additional factor, or group of items, was named Self-Efficacy in Low SES Contexts. This was done to allow for the opportunity for comparison between

studies of the original the 18 item PSES. This questionnaire used a nine point Likert scale as a response format, and asked participants to respond considering their current ability, resources and opportunity to undertake those aspects of leadership that were written as items on the survey. The stem for each item was: "In your current role as principal, to what extent can/do you..." The responses on the Likert scale ranged from "Not at all" to "A great deal".

Section 4 (See Appendix B.4) comprised two open-ended items that asked principals to consider supports and barriers to high self-efficacy: "What other variables have influenced your self-efficacy in your role as principal in low socioeconomic status schools?", and "Please describe how a principal can maintain a high level of self-efficacy in a low socioeconomic status school."

Instrument fidelity

The precaution taken by the researcher to ensure that the instruments used are optimal for this investigation is called *instrument fidelity* (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Instrument fidelity could be assessed throughout both quantitative and qualitative stages of investigation. The assurance of instrument fidelity involves the use of cautionary measures to increase the validity and reliability of the instrument. These precautions may include a pilot study or a test of the instrument so that useful modifications could be made, or a new instrument could be developed. Pilot testing is when individuals who share similar characteristics with the participants responded to the questions with the purpose of challenging ambiguity (Gall et al., 2007). Essentially, the knowledgeable and critical eye of the participants in pilot tests will in all probability

identify any weaknesses in the existing questions, and may offer suggestions both in content and in wording. Using this feedback, questions can be reworked for greater clarity, and perhaps can add an important concept that may have been initially missed.

In this study, a key informant group offered suggestions and advice based on their experience to the instrument as it was developed. As recommended, these individuals were similar to the potential participants, as they were leaders in low socioeconomic status schools, but could not be potential participants as they worked in the exempt school district. Additionally, another principal pilot tested both the questionnaire and the interview questions in the latter part of development, and modifications were made at that time in response to this critique. Utilization of these precautionary measures is a key approach to increasing rigor and trustworthiness of the data.

Interviews

Interviews are comprised of oral questions and responses usually done as a conversation between the researcher and participant (Gall et al., 2007; Gay et al., 2009). An interview is a planned interaction for the purpose of eliciting information. In interviews, the responses to questions by participants are recorded to provide the majority of the data. This information could stand on its own, as it does in a purely qualitative study, or could provide complementary data when it occurs in a mixed method study.

Interviews offer information that is inaccessible to researchers who analyse responses in a questionnaire, because they provide the opportunity for participants to respond in their own words, and to explore themes and topics (Gall et al., 2007). An advantage of interviews is that they allow for participants' "greater depth of response" (Gay et al., 2009), and allow rapport and trust to be established between the researcher and the participant. A disadvantage for the researcher in using interview data is that the time spent in recording and analysis is more extensive than it is with questionnaires.

Structure of interviews

The structure of interviews differs in the standardization of questions. There are three major types of interviews, which are structured, unstructured, and semi-structured (Gay et al., 2009). Structured interviews are those where the researcher asks only previously established questions. An advantage of "sticking to the script" is that uniformity of questions ensures a consistency of responses. However, this does not lead to the freedom to take advantage of divergent responses. In contrast to the structured interview is an unstructured interview style, where questions emerge from the statements of participants (Gay et al., 2009). In the unstructured interview, interviewers base their questions on their own background knowledge, a general plan of what they would like answered, and the ability to assess the participants' personal characteristics (Gall et al., 2007). In this interview style, the skill and perception of the interviewer are of the utmost importance, because data will emerge from the questions that are asked.

A semi-structured interview contains aspects of both structured and unstructured interview style. Specifically, well-designed questions are stated in advance of the study,

and the interviewer follows the sequence and the wording during the interview. This is to ensure uniformity to the questions so that planned aspects are covered. The advantage of the semi-structured interview, however, is to allow the interviewer to diverge from consistently asking only the questions that are listed, and to permit the interviewer to follow promising avenues that are presented from the participants in order to probe more deeply for additional information (Gall et al., 2007). This would allow for data to emerge that would add to the descriptive power of the study.

The questions in an interview are crucial (Turner, 2010). The idea is to get as much information as possible that can be applied to answering, in the case of the study, the research questions. The following are important criteria to follow when establishing effective interview questions. First, the questions are open-ended, or divergent. The purpose for divergent questions is for the allowance of the opportunity for participants to be more expansive in their responses (Gay et al., 2009). They should also be worded to avoid assumptions or judgment by the interviewer, should utilize vocabulary appropriate to the participants (Gall et al., 2007).

This study uses a semi-structured approach to its interview questions. The interview guide (See Appendix C) was established prior to the commencement of data collection, derived from literature, researcher experience and focus group suggestions, and was based upon the primary research questions.

Typology of This Study

Mixed methods research focuses on both the combining, and the reason to combine. Because mixed methods research is dedicated to best answer research questions, the pragmatist approach is all about choice. This choice can be found along this continuum that ranges from pure quantitative to pure qualitative approaches. Figure 3.1 displays the three major paradigms in this continuum, together with a typology for mixed methods. This figure visually shows the range wherein approaches can combine qualitative and quantitative aspects in varying proportions. The typology, adapted from Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009), is a visual description of how approaches are mixed. Generally speaking, a reader can visually identify the method of highest priority in the research study, which is indicated by uppercase letters. The typology displays the order of methods that were used - whether they are concurrent or sequential. Finally, in this typology, the dominant method is indicated first.

Conceptualization of the Major Research Paradigms

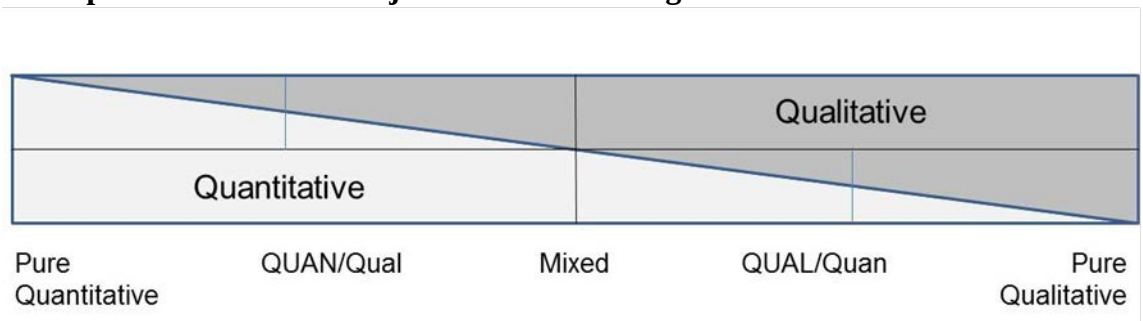

Figure 3.1: Conceptualization of the three major research paradigms, adapted from L. R. Gay, G. E. Mills, and P. Airasian, Educational research: Competencies for analysis and applications (9th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

Gay, Mills and Airasian identified the QUAL/Quan model as exploratory in nature, with information gained from qualitative data then informing the character of the instruments used in quantitative techniques. The QUAN/Qual type was considered explanatory, where quantitative data is collected and analyzed, and then the decision is made to decide upon the kind of qualitative data to collect. These would then explain the results that were obtained through quantitative measures. Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009) identified a central position as the QUAN/QUAL model, in which each approach in the study is equally weighted, and where information is gathered at the same time rather than in phases and the results analyzed together.

The emphasis on the present study design is defined as Quan/QUAL, which delineates the sequence of the data collection, but does not list the dominate method first. This study was designed to be sequential in terms of data collection only, whereby quantitative data were collected in the first phase, and qualitative data in Phase 2. However, this research study was not designed so that data from one approach was intended to inform the method of data collection from the subsequent approach (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007), as all questionnaires and the interview protocol were established prior to receiving ethics approval, and did not deviate from these during the research process. The purpose of this design was to utilize a qualitative approach following the questionnaire phase in order to add explanatory detail to the results, which were interpreted concurrently.

Study Process and Procedure

Ethical Considerations

Notwithstanding the ethical issues that have been applied to the subjects of the study, the basic ethical principle of honesty must be clearly observed by the researcher. Locke, Spirduso, and Silverman (2007) described honesty as “the social contract among scholars” (p. 25). When dealing with human subjects, every person's human rights, their safety and protection against physical and psychological harm, must be upheld. This means that the need for data by the researcher takes a secondary position to the rights of the individual. All people taking part in the subject need to know the details of the study, and also their rights in either giving or withholding their participation (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2007). Respect must be given to all individuals who participate in the study, and the researcher must consider it an honor to receive information from people on how they really feel and about what they understand.

Permission to Conduct Research

As part of the ethical processes demanded from the University’s graduate student research requirements, application was made for permission to conduct the specific research that was defined by the application. The completed data collection instruments were submitted for inspection. These included the questionnaire which was in four sections (See Appendices B.1 - B.4), and the interview protocol (See Appendix C).

Apart from the data collection instruments, other necessary documents were included (See Appendices A.1 - A.3). One of these was a consent form that was based

on a template given from the University. In this document, the purpose of the study, which was to fulfil the requirements of a PhD, was clearly delineated, in addition to identifying the criteria for expected participation. This included information as to the length of time required of participants to complete the questionnaire and the interview. The assurance of the researcher of anonymity and confidentiality was given, as well as the guarantee of the voluntary nature of participation, and established the right to withdraw. It was also clearly stated that any information given by the participant until the point of withdrawal would be retained and used as outlined in the consent form. Furthermore, it revealed what personal information would be asked of participants, and well as gave personal information including contact information of the researcher. This established the criteria for informed consent, which would be given through the return of the completed signed document (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2007).

This document also listed the personal information that the researcher wished to collect, as well as an opportunity to understand and receive permission that the interview would be audio-taped. A list of potential risks or benefits to any participant was also given. They were also told that the researcher had asked each district's superintendent or designate to identify schools that were classified as low socioeconomic status, but that even if they were among those nominated by the district superintendent, he/she would not have knowledge of which principal chose to participate.

In this application to conduct research, all data collection instruments were submitted, as well as were permission forms, any letters of explanation to superintendents and potential participants, as well as the script for any possible repeated

contact to be utilized to encourage a greater response rate. As a result of this application, permission to conduct research was granted.

Research Procedure

Figure 3.2 illustrates a conceptualization of this research study, and the processes through which decisions were made on the study design. It also shows the primacy of the research questions and the choices that were made in response to these questions. Moreover, the lines indicate influence. The visualization of this process, including the use of color to highlight the approaches used, facilitates the conceptualizing of the mixing of methods for the study.

Sampling Frame for Purposive Sampling

The target population upon which this study was focused consisted of principals in Alberta who lead low socioeconomic status schools. A sample is a smaller representative group from the population being studied (Gall et al., 2007). Sampling is a procedure that involves choosing participants so that they are representative of the population of which they are a part. The purpose of sampling allows the researcher to gain information from this smaller group, as using the larger group is not usually feasible. The smaller sample is chosen to represent the population: "Representativeness…is the degree to which the sample accurately represents the entire population" (Teddlie & Yu, 2007, p. 77). Having a representative sample will result in generalizable results (Gay, 1987).

Conceptualization of the Research Process

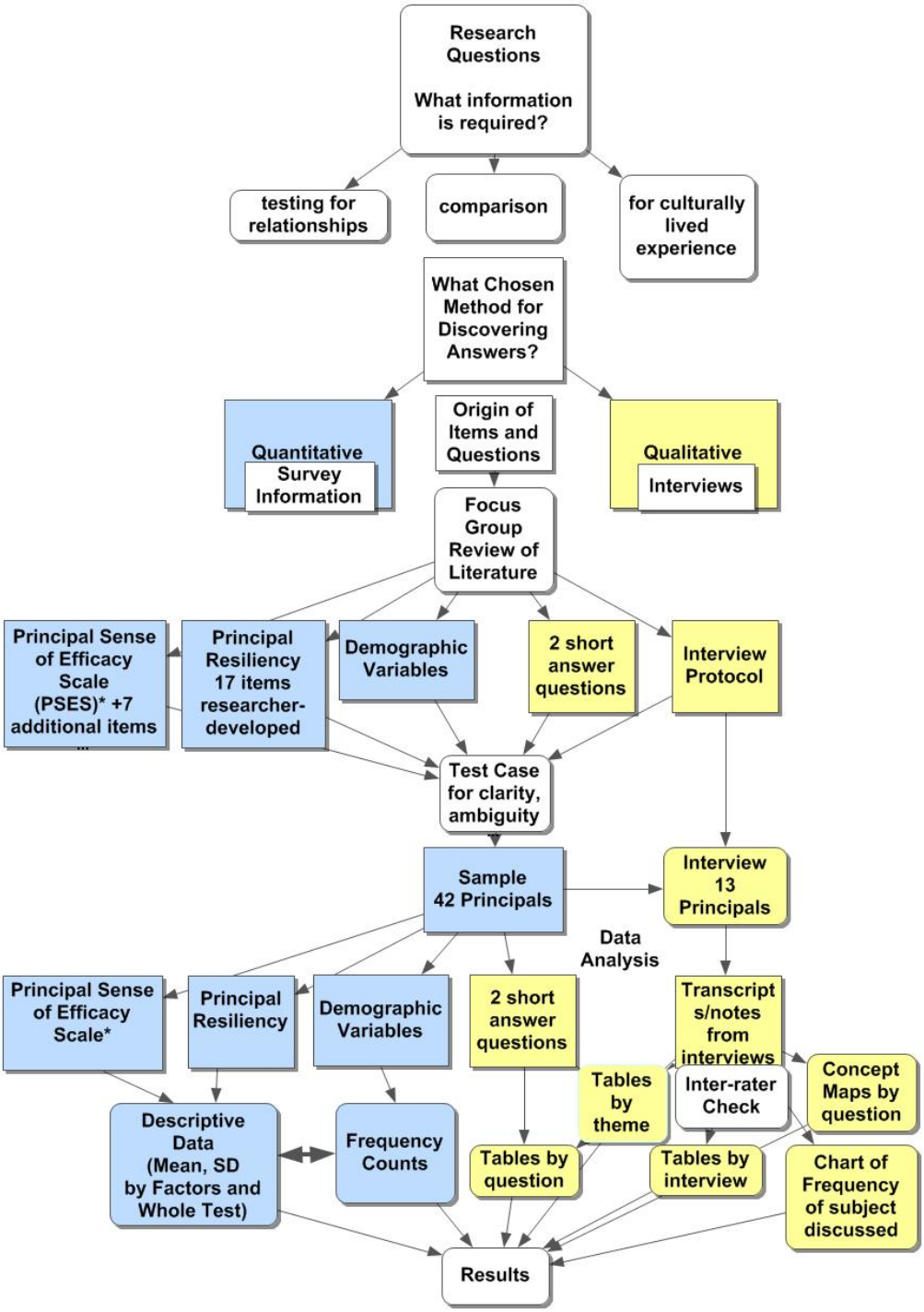

Figure.3.2: Conceptualization of the processes of this research study. This illustrates the priority of the research questions, and how decision-making emerged from these. Note: Quantitative approach is in blue, qualitative approach is in yellow. *Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale (PSES) (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004)

The first step in the study was to identify potential school districts to be invited to participate in this project. The intent was to have representation from both publicly-funded provincial school systems as well as each of the province's geographic areas. In the province of Alberta, there are two publicly-funded school systems. One of these is the separate school system which still maintains its right through legislation to form Catholic school boards. The other is the public school system. School districts were contacted from each of these school systems in order to provide representation from both. In all cases, with the exception of the board that was exempt from the study because it was the employer of the researcher, application for permission to ask for participation was submitted to both the public and separate school districts of each area.

Using Alberta Education's website, which listed the authorities and schools by geographic areas, the superintendents or designates of randomly-chosen school districts from each of the five geographic areas were approached with an invitation to allow the school principals within their jurisdiction to participate. The researcher received permission in eight school districts from four of Alberta's geographic areas. In response to the researcher's request for the superintendent or designate to identify potential schools that were low SES, six of these offered the names of principals and schools that their district identified as low SES. For the remaining two school districts, the researcher identified low socioeconomic status schools by examining the municipalities' website information and comparing the annual income of the residents in each community. This process constituted the identification of the members of the population, as well as the selection of individuals to target for participation.

All principals (N=74) from the identified schools were contacted by telephone. During this phone call the researcher described the intent of the study, and requested permission to mail to them the study documents which included:

- an invitation to participate in the research project;
- a cover letter with more information about the study;
- a copy of the ethics approval from the university;
- the questionnaire; and
- a stamped return envelope.

All principals confirmed the low SES status of their schools, and therefore identified themselves within the target population of principals of low SES schools. Therefore, the sampling frame consisted of the entire population of principals (N=74) in low SES schools from the participating districts. Three of the 74 principals excused themselves by saying that their schools did not qualify as low SES. Therefore, 71 packages in total were mailed to potential participants. The resulting response rate was 60%, as 42 completed questionnaires were returned. Participants from the Phase 2 component of the study (n=13) were a subset taken from those principals who participated in Phase 1.

Demographics of the sample

Phase 1

The participants in Phase 1 were comprised of 62% male and 38% female principals. All principals had been professional educators from 10 to more than 35

years. Their ages ranged between 35 years to over 65 years. Their experience as principals ranged from first year principals to those with 25 years' experience. They also varied in the highest degree attained, with 7% having a doctoral degree, 76%, a master's degree and 17%, a bachelor's degree. There was also a large range in the total number of years as principal of the present school, ranging from one year to 12 years, with 83% being in the present school for four years or less. In this sample, 78% of the participants had only led one or two schools, with 12% having been principal of 3 to 5 schools. These principals were also asked if they were placed in their school, or if it was their choice: 52% stated that it was their choice, with 48% responded that their superintendents had placed them in their school. Those principals had been placed from between 1 to 4 schools. These principals were all (100%) from publicly-funded school districts.

The principals lead schools that included kindergarten to grade 12, though there were no discrete senior high principals as participants. Most of the principals (79%) lead schools in metropolitan areas, as compared to 21% who lead schools in rural or small urban centres. The population of the participants' schools varied widely, from less than 100 students to greater than 999 students. There was also a wide range of students who were designated as English as Second Language (ESL). These ranged from less than 10% to less than 90%, with the majority of principals (24%) stating that their population was between 20% to 29% ESL. There were two other questions on the questionnaire that were not used to define the context of these principals. One of these questions asked the principals to estimate the percentage of refugee students within their school population. Only three principals responded, and they reported less than 10%.

Another question asked for the estimated percentage of the cultural diversity of the student body. This question did not have sufficient responses to accurately analyze. These two questions were also not used in the analysis because this theme was not mentioned by any participant in the interview, or in the short answer questions, indicating that this was not an important variable in the context of leadership for these principals.

Phase 2

The same sampling frame was used throughout the study, as the participants for Phase 2 of this research were a subset of these 42 participants from Phase 1. From the questionnaire that principals completed, seven principals responded positively to the invitation to participate in Phase 2. The remainder of the participants were randomly selected through purposive sampling, as this type of sampling provides greater range of information.

They interviewed principals were 62% male and 38% female, a similar proportion as were the Phase 1 participants. These principals in Phase 2 also shared similar demographics. They had a comparable wide range of experience as educators, and similar age ranges and experience which ranged from first-year principals to those with 26 to 30 years' experience. The majority (82%) of these principals had been in their schools less than four years, and also a smaller majority (76%) had limited experience as leader in other schools. The percentages of principals who chose schools and the ranges of school levels, student enrolment, and percentage of ESL students were

comparable to those principals in Phase 1. The majority of principals, 62%, led schools in metropolitan areas, and 38% were in small centres or rural schools.

Data Collection

The data collection in Phase 1 began in October, 2009 and continued until May, 2010. The quantitative data were recorded from questionnaires on an ongoing basis as received by mail from principals. These data were then inputted into Microsoft Excel for subsequent analysis. The responses from the short answer questions were recorded into Microsoft Word.

The interview phase of this research study began on February. The interviews for the majority were done over the phone. Specifically, only three of these interviews were undertaken face-to-face. A digital data recorder was used for the majority of the interviews, and detailed notes were also taken. All principals responded to the same questions, but were given a chance to extend any ideas or to introduce a theme that was not mentioned in the questions. The researcher personally transcribed all of these interviews, most of which lasted approximately one hour. These were saved in digital files that were identified by the date of the interview.

Trustworthiness

Prior to describing the actual data analysis processes, the issue of trustworthiness, validity, and reliability must be addressed. This provides the theoretical

background that is essential to all research - to report accurately on what has been discovered to be true.

Validity, together with reliability, are means to ensure that all stages, or both the processes and results of the study could be considered trustworthy (Roberts, Priest, & Traynor, 2006). In a mixed method design such as the present study, trustworthiness must occur within both quantitative and qualitative approaches during sampling, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and the report of the findings.

Validity

Validity has been defined as "the closeness of what we believe we are measuring to what we intended to measure" (Roberts et al., 2006, p. 41). Validity must be established in both quantitative and qualitative research. In quantitative research, attention is focused on the data collection instruments. Ensuring the trustworthiness of the data analysis by the researcher is an aspect of validity that often describes qualitative research.

Validity in quantitative research

To ensure the validity of measuring instruments, Gay et al. (2009) described four forms of validity that had been identified by various researchers: content validity, criteria-related validity, construct validity, and consequential validity. Content validity is the degree to which the test items measures the stated content. Content validity is ensured when test items adequately encompass aspects of the content being measured. The judgment concerning adequate measurement can be made by a content expert who

possesses this knowledge, and this ensures content validity. Criterion related validity is "validity that is determined by relating performance on the test to performance on another criterion (e.g. a second test or measure)" (Gay et al., 2009, p. 600). This is useful for testing the predictive validity, or assessment of the performance of an individual, or for concurrent validity, which the degree of similarity between two instruments that are meant to test the same criterion. Consequential validity is used to determine negative effects on participants of these tests. Construct validity, considered to be the most important form of validity, describes how a test measures the intended construct. Constructs are observable traits that support and define the concept being measured (Gay et al., 2009). Factors that may affect the validity of research instruments include ambiguity, unclear directions, and misinterpretations of vocabulary (Gay et al., 2009). A factor analysis could be utilized for consistency between the items on a test that measures one construct. This analysis would provide internal consistency reliability. Another approach that would measure reliability is Cronbach's Alpha, which is an analysis used on tests that use ranking scales, such as Likert scales. In an analysis with Cronbach's Alpha, all items are compared to each other, and to the whole test, giving a statistical measure of reliability.

Validity in qualitative research

Validity in qualitative research is concerned with the assurance of truthfulness, accuracy, and credibility in the interpretation and report of the data (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011), specifically coined as trustworthiness (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006). Trustworthiness can be determined by addressing issues that deal with the

accuracy and integrity of the research findings (Gay et al., 2009; Yin, 2006). To ensure trustworthiness, researchers must faithfully report the facts obtained from the participants, interpret correctly the meaning of the participant, and present these data honestly (Gay et al., 2009; Rudestam & Newton, 2007).

Reliability

The instruments used to measure the findings must have reliability as well as validity (Gay et al., 2009). Reliability is a measure to which results could be similarly reproduced (Roberts et al., 2006). In qualitative research, issues of reliability could be described when ensuring consistency, for example, in coding processes, so that they could be understood and replicated (Rudestam & Newton, 2007).

Two of these coding techniques to ensure reliability are method of common comparison and classical content analysis, both of which were methods utilized to increase reliability for this research study. The method of common comparison is the one most commonly used in qualitative studies (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007), and has been defined as reliable (Roberts et al., 2006). The entire data set is used. To utilize this method, the researcher reads the data in their entirety, and finds ideas that are meaningful to the study. These are listed, compared, and grouped into categories. Each category is given a name or code. The researcher compiles common categories into themes, and entitles each. In this way, data is classified according to those themes. The value of creating codes and then themes is that that can be done at any time during the study. Specifically, coding can be done deductively, or identified before data analysis,

inductively, where codes emerge after analyzing the data, or abductively, where codes develop iteratively (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

Classical content analysis is similar to constant comparison analysis. However, instead of creating themes, this type of data analysis involves counting the number of times codes are used. This is done to identify the most commonly-used codes, and is done after the data are collected. One aspect of this method is that it can also be used throughout the study, and the coding can be periodically reviewed to confirm "stability over time" (Roberts et al., 2006, p. 44). Roberts et al. also spoke of the need to revisit data to add to the reliability, or how repeatable the results may be.

Because all aspects of a research study are chosen and interpreted by the researcher, then the researcher must ensure that the results are safeguarded against researcher bias, especially from qualitative approaches where scoring is done subjectively. A method of decreasing bias in data analysis is called inter-rater reliability (Roberts et al., 2006). Inter-rater reliability refers to reliability when there is more than one individual rating the data. When findings are interpreted similarly, this knowledge lends weight to the claim of the trustworthiness of the analysis, and so increases the strength of these findings (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Inter-rater reliability was used in this study when a peer of the researcher independently coded the latent themes within the data which were elicited from interviews and the open-ended questions. The high degree of coincidence supported the accuracy of the analysis.

Another method that was used to add validity was to use the participants' voices. Simply stated, using direct quotes from participants also serves to lessen researcher

inference, as quotes substantiate the actual data which was presented to the researcher (Roberts et al., 2006). Another reason for adding quotes is to add interest to readers by providing them with primary data, allowing them the opportunity to make evaluative judgments about how these data were utilized, or in other words, drawing readers into the process for themselves (Gay et al., 2009).

Triangulation

Triangulation augments the validity in qualitative research methods, and has been described as “the core justificatory principle underpinning mixed method approaches” (Torrance, 2012, p. 113). The purpose of triangulation is to overcome the natural bias that comes from the singularity of methods, data analysis, or researcher (Torrance, 2012). Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2007) cited Denzin (1970, 1978) in his list of four types of triangulation which occur when researchers use differing methods of approach, data sources that provide alternate perspectives, investigators, and theory. This allows for consistency to be checked or challenged, resulting in a much more accurate portrayal of the topic being researched (Roberts et al., 2006). Triangulation has been described as "soliciting data from multiple and different sources as a means of cross-checking and corroborating evidence and illuminating a theme or a theory (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 114). Even if the findings from the data do not agree, the discrepant results open the door to consequent research studies, and may indicate that our previous knowledge of that particular subject has not been sufficient (Torrance, 2012).

The conception of triangulation that involves the use of differing methodological approaches has been called between-methods triangulation, where more than one method is used to answer the same research questions (Howe, 2012). In the case of this present study, between-methods triangulation was established with the design of a mixed methods approach. Data from questionnaires was compared to the results of the semi-structured interviews and the open-ended questions. These data provided a more descriptive conception of the influences of self-efficacy on principals than would have been possible had only one method being used to gather data.

Data Analysis

The data analysis in this mixed method study supported the descriptive approach to answering the research questions. The analysis for the quantitative data utilized statistical calculations that generated frequencies, averages, percentages, and standard deviation of responses. The qualitative data from the digital recordings were transcribed and coded. The themes were developed through an iterative process which involved using various tables, mind mapping software for visual representation of data, and counting the frequency of responses and responders. The data from these were subjected to a rigorous review and checking process by the researcher. These processes helped support the reliability of the study.

Quantitative

The data that were returned from the questionnaires were analyzed in two ways. The raw information from the questionnaire was inputted into Microsoft Excel, so that

frequency data could be compiled. The frequency tests that were utilized were the average, or mean and standard deviation of individual items from the self-efficacy and resiliency scales. Microsoft Excel was the program that was used to display the raw scores and to calculate the average, or mean test score and standard deviation for each individual participant for both self-efficacy and resilience. With Excel, it was also possible to calculate the mean score and standard deviation for each of the tests' items, in order to describe item results that were outliers. As well, both the resiliency and self-efficacy tests contained items that could be reported together because they measured similar characteristics. The mean and standard deviation for these grouped items were also calculated, compared, and reported. Additionally, the responses for the self-efficacy and resiliency questionnaires were reported by the percentage of principals who selected each possible response. The resiliency table reported these percentages using the original scoring system. However, the nine self-efficacy responses were grouped and reported using the following response ranges: 1-3 was considered Low (L), 4-6 was described as Moderate (M), and 7-9 determined High (H) self-efficacy.

Qualitative

The transcripts from the interviews and the open-ended questions from the questionnaire were examined and coded for recurring themes. Because the subjectivity of the researcher is activated during the interpretation and analysis of qualitative data, an independent analysis of the data was completed by a professional educator who was a peer of the researcher. Inter-rater reliability is created when coding or marking is done by more than one person independently. The researcher then compared the ratings of

each of the two assessors. It was found that this coding was similar to that of the researcher. This led to greater confidence in the reliability of the reported results (Gay et al., 2009).

For the open-ended questions, the written responses of the participants were transposed to a master table. Common themes were color-coded and copied on charts that highlighted the common themes, in order to maintain the understanding and context of each response. Finally, the responses for each theme were counted by the numbers of principals who discussed those themes. The major themes were considered those that appeared with the greatest frequency. The responses were both questions were combined to produce overall results of both questions.

For the interviews, the transcriptions were tabulated using Microsoft Word. Initially, each interview transcript was tabled individually to show the response for each question. Next, highly specific themes were listed in a master spreadsheet on Microsoft Excel, and taken from the original transcripts. Excel was used because of its facility to create large spreadsheets that can accommodate many data entries, as well as presenting clear information on a single worksheet. The frequency of coded themes by each participant was tallied, and added as themes were combined into larger broader categories. From this method, the numbers of principals who discussed each theme and the frequency of this discussion were clearly determinable.

The data were then divided into tables that displayed the information that was given as a response to each of the interview questions. The tables contained the thematic headings which were previously developed, and the data for these tables were

cut and pasted from the transcripts. At this point, if the established themes did not adequately express the information of the data, they would be modified.

An additional method of interacting with the data was the use of mind mapping. The software program Inspiration was used for visual mapping of the concepts for each interview question. Figure 3.3 illustrates an example of the concept mapping of one of the questions using Inspiration. With this program, each individual participant's responses were numbered and color-coded, and recorded on shapes that could be manipulated. Again, these data were taken from the interview transcripts. These shapes were then visually grouped by theme, and arrows were added to show these connections. This visual was able to show the themes, the responses, and the individual responders, and was used to help structure and challenge the themes that had been iteratively identified. To summarize, the themes were developed as a result of an ongoing, multi-method process, iteratively derived from original transcripts, and triangulated with the themes developed from these alternative methods. This established a high level of confidence in the reliability of these themes based upon this process.

After these data were analyzed, the qualitative aspects of the research were found to add a high agree of explanatory or supportive description to the quantitative data from Phase 1.

A Concept Map of Question 3

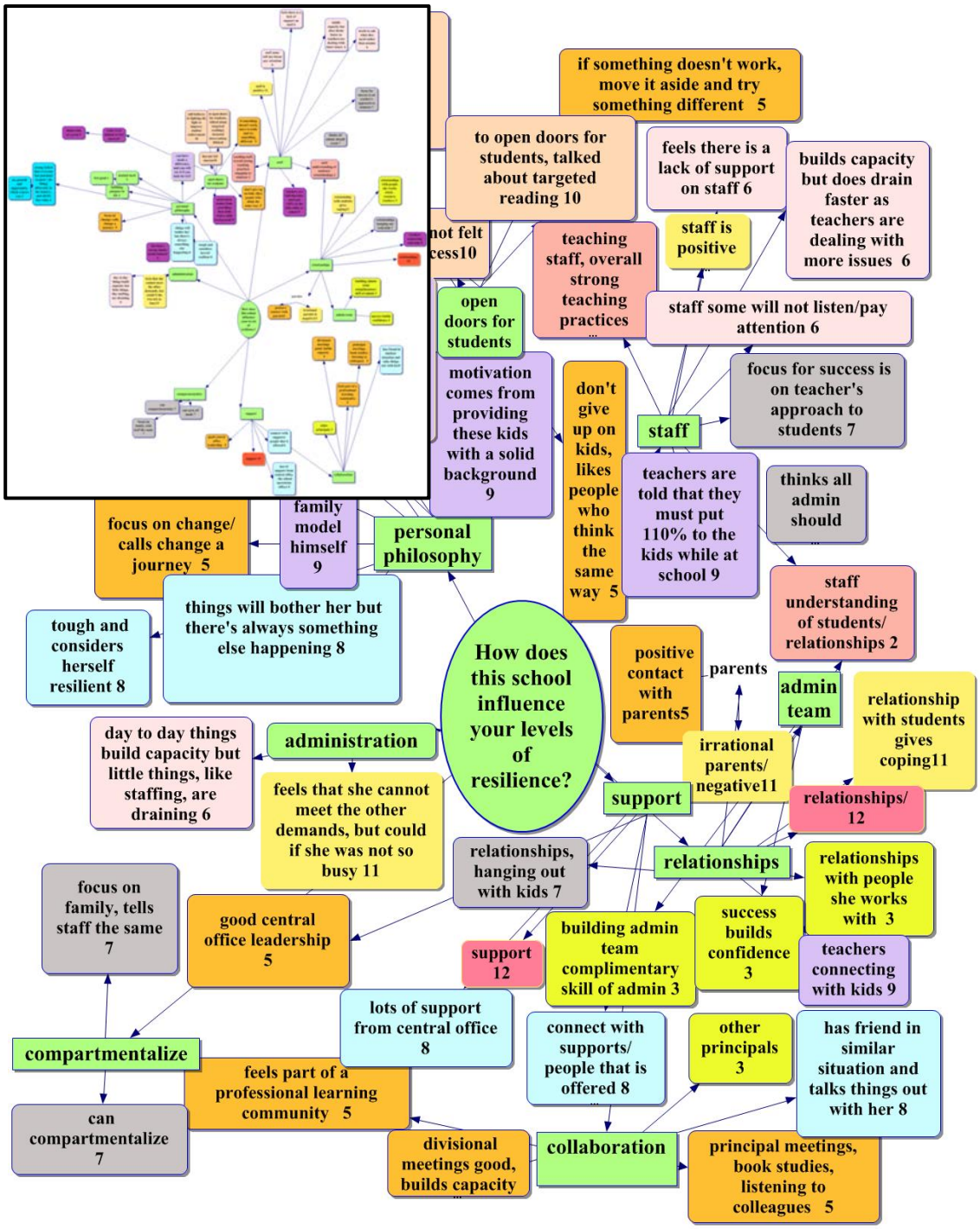

Figure 3.3: Concept map of Question 3. This was done using Inspiration mind-mapping software. Each color represented one participant, which visually facilitated the reporting of engagement of each principal with the major themes, as well as itemized the components of each theme. *Note*: This map was formatted to fit the page and for readability; therefore, the thematic linkages are not apparent. Inset diagram shows complete mind map with themed groupings.

Summary of Research Design

This research study was a two phase sequential mixed methods study which explored the contextual influence of low SES schools to principals' self-efficacy and resilience, and how leaders enact leadership within this complex context. Mixed methods mean that both qualitative and quantitative methods are used within the study. The researcher used the pragmatic paradigm to answer the research questions, which meant that the researcher chose among qualitative and quantitative approaches to find a workable solution to the research questions (when and where to mix). In other words, no methodological constraints were placed upon the study in answer to the research questions. Using typology that displays visually the method of higher priority in the study, the study has been described as the Quan/QUAL model, whereby the explanatory nature of the qualitative data deepened our understanding of the quantitative. This survey research study relied on questionnaires and interviews to collect the data, with questionnaires comprising Phase 1 of the study, and Phase 2 involving semi-structured interviews with a subset of the participants from Phase 1. The sequential design of this study was chosen so that the rich data acquired from the interviews would offer substantiation to the descriptive data which was derived from the questionnaires.

The four-sectioned questionnaire was comprised of a demographic section, a resiliency scale, a self-efficacy scale, and two short answer questions. The self-efficacy scale that was used was the Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale (PSES) which was created by Tschannon-Moran and Gareis (2004), and comprised an 18 item scale that was

established to have three factors: Self-efficacy for Instructional Leadership, Moral Leadership, and Management. The PSES has been validated and used in several previous studies. To that scale, seven items that related to Self-efficacy in a Low SES Context were added. The resiliency scale was researcher-developed, containing items from a previously-established scale (Connor & Davidson, 2003). The 17 items on the scale were divided into four factors: Tenacity, Self-Confidence, Relationships and/or Supports, and Competence.

The population in Phase 1 of this study consisted of 42 principals in Alberta who lead low socioeconomic status schools. These principals came from eight participating school districts in Alberta and who had returned the questionnaire from Phase 1. The sample from Phase 2 was comprised of 13 of these same participants who expressed willingness to take part in the semi-structured interview.

In the data recording and analysis from the survey information, data from Phase 1 were recorded as they were received. Phase 2 was initiated before Phase 1 was completed. Immediately after the interviews took place, the dialogues were transcribed into Microsoft Word. Data analysis was done when all interviews were completed. As well, the responses of the short answer questions were recorded in table form when all completed questionnaires had been received.

When working with the quantitative data, the raw data from the questionnaires were inputted into Microsoft Excel using three worksheets, all of which contained the coded identifiers of the participants: the first spreadsheet contained the demographic information that was provided; the second listed the results of the resiliency scale; and

the third included the responses for the self-efficacy questionnaire. Descriptive data were taken from the description of the participants with reference to the demographic information, the scores from the self-efficacy and resiliency scales, both by item and by factor or theme. Qualitative data were determined by transcribing the interviews and finding common themes which were coded and counted. These raw data were visually enhanced by the use of tables, spreadsheets, and concept maps. The open-ended questions from the questionnaire were also grouped into themes for comparison.

Safeguards to eliminate bias were used in multiple aspects of this research study in order to substantiate the validity of the study. One of the methods used to lessen researcher bias was to use other experts in the field. This was done in two ways. Before the instruments were developed, the researcher used peers to determine context and personal variables which influenced the questions asked and items on the questionnaires. After the questionnaire and the interview questions were established, they were piloted by another peer of the researcher to evaluate any ambiguity. Triangulation occurred when both qualitative and quantitative approaches were to be taken. In this way, mixed methods were used to identify multiple aspects of single variables. In data analysis, the creation of themes in the qualitative data underwent much iteration during the use of multiple analysis techniques. Finally, results were combined so that the structure of the questionnaires and their use of peer and research-based variables to be tested complemented the data gained from open-ended questions provided detail and context for principals' responses. .

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter reports the results of the present study that was undertaken to determine any relationship between effective leadership and high self-efficacy and principals within the context of low socioeconomic status schools. To reach a conclusion, several variables were examined, such as the attitudes, beliefs, skills, and perceptions of principals in low SES schools, their levels of resilience, and the contextual factors that influence self-efficacy. Furthermore, principals' self-efficacy was examined for any relationship with how they impacted student success.

The study utilized a two-phase mixed methods approach, where quantitative data were obtained by a questionnaire which included the self-efficacy and resiliency tests, and qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and the short answer component of the questionnaire. These quantitative results were compiled on Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, and statistical analysis of frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviation were applied to the data. The qualitative results from the questionnaire were transcribed, and iterative coding procedures were applied to these data, using tables from Microsoft Word and Inspiration, a mind mapping software program. This was done in order to increase the validity and reliability of the findings.

This chapter is organized into major sections. The first of these sections provides an overview of the quantitative results of the self-efficacy and resilience questionnaires. These are described in terms of percentages, average scores, and standard distribution and are presented in tables. The purpose of this separate

presentation is to provide a structure that first identifies the items in each of these tests, and gives an overview of the responses of all of the participants.

The second section provides the frequencies of the coded responses from the qualitative data and again presents these as tables for visual representation. However, the combined results from the quantitative and qualitative data are presented and discussed thematically. There are six investigative elements that were determined from the findings of the study. These are Relationships within Schools, Staff Influence on Principal Self-Efficacy, Management and Instructional Leadership, Influence on Student Success, and Influence of Principal as Person. The presentation and discussion of the results will occur for each of these themes. Finally, a short summary of each theme and a summary statement concludes the chapter.

Please note: In this chapter, italics were used to denote quotations from the respondents. This was done to represent the change of voice in the narration and to emphasize the actual comments made by the respondents, in order to enhance clarity.

Overview of Quantitative Results

Self-efficacy

The test that was used in the study to measure principal self-efficacy was made up of 25 items. This questionnaire was a combination of the Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale (PSES), which was an 18-item questionnaire developed by Tschannon-Moran and Gareis (2004), with the inclusion by the researcher of an additional seven items that

specifically related to the low socioeconomic status context. In the development of their questionnaire, Tschannen-Moran and Gareis used a statistical factor analysis which identified three groups of items, with each item in each of the groups measuring an aspect of this group. This created what was called "three subscales or factors" (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004, p. 580). They entitled the three original factors Instructional Leadership (IL), Management (Man), and Moral Leadership (ML). The added seven items were grouped under the common theme of Low SES Context (C). Participants indicated a response within a 1-9 point Likert scale, which specified responses from "Not at all" to "A great deal".

The total results of the self-efficacy scale are reported in Table 4.1, in which the percentage of principals who responded to each item is indicated. These responses were grouped into general headings to facilitate comparison. The Likert scale responses within the range of 1 to 3 was considered low (L), from 4 to 6 was described as moderate (M), and responses that ranged from 7 to 9 were considered high (H) in the ranking of self-efficacy. Most of the responses were found on the 4-9 range on the Likert scale, indicating a moderate to high self-efficacy score overall. There were only two items that some principals scored as "Not at all”, indicating a lack of self-efficacy. These were: Item 9, "Promote a positive image of your school with the media"; and Item 13, "Shape the operational policies and procedures that are necessary to manage your school".

Table 4.1: Self-Efficacy Responses

	Likert Response Range	Percentage* 1-3 L	4-6 M	7-9 H
	Items			
1	Facilitate student learning in your school	5	21	74
2	Generate enthusiasm for a shared vision for the school	0	21	79
3	Understand the parameters of your role as principal	0	14	86
4	Handle the time demands of the job	2	26	71
5	Manage change in your school	0	14	86
6	Promote school spirit among a large majority of the school population	0	29	71
7	Create a positive learning environment in your school	0	10	90
8	Raise student achievement on standardized tests	2	55	43
9	Promote a positive image of your school with the media	5	24	71
10	Motivate teachers	0	24	76
11	Promote the prevailing values of the community in your school	0	45	55
12	Maintain control of your daily schedule	7	55	58
13	Shape the operational policies and procedures that are necessary to manage your school	12	19	69
14	Handle effectively the discipline of students in your school	0	12	88
15	Promote acceptable behavior among students	0	14	86
16	Handle the paperwork required of the job	5	36	60
17	Promote ethical behavior among school personnel	0	14	86
18	Cope with the stress of the job	0	19	81
19	Prioritize among competing demands of the job	0	14	86
20	Feel supported from my superiors	2	45	52
21	Reduce the barriers of learning for students	0	21	79
22	Collaborate with community to ensure further supports for students	2	19	79
23	Ensure the safety and security of students	0	7	93
24	Develop respectful and trusting relationship with parents	0	17	83
25	Establish effective professional development in the school	0	12	88

Note: Responses indicate percentage of participants who responded within those ranges, which are labeled Low (L), Moderate (M), and High (H)
*Percentage is based upon 42 respondents

Table 4.2 displays the mean score and the variability of self-efficacy responses, described by the standard deviation of each individual item. The lowest mean score (M=5.95) was found in Item 12, "Maintain control of your daily schedule". Item 12 and Item 13 indicated the highest variability (SD=1.82 and SD=1.84).

Table 4.2: Self-Efficacy Items Grouped in Factors

Factor		**M***	**SD****
Instructional Leadership			
1	Facilitate student learning in your school	6.98	1.51
2	Generate enthusiasm for a shared vision for the school	7.45	1.21
5	Manage change in your school	7.60	1.11
7	Create a positive learning environment in your school	**7.90**	0.91
8	Raise student achievement on standardized tests	6.26	1.38
10	Motivate teachers	7.29	1.13
	Total	**7.27**	**0.95**
Management			
4	Handle the time demands of the job	7.00	1.41
12	Maintain control of your daily schedule	5.95	1.82
13	Shape the operational policies and procedures that are necessary to manage your school	6.52	1.84
16	Handle the paperwork required of the job	6.67	1.65
18	Cope with the stress of the job	7.40	1.27
19	Prioritize among competing demands of the job	**7.43**	1.11
	Total	**6.84**	**1.21**
Moral Leadership			
6	Promote school spirit among a large majority of the school population	7.24	1.14
9	Promote a positive image of your school with the media	7.00	1.67
11	Promote the prevailing values of the community in your school	6.93	1.47
14	Handle effectively the discipline of students in your school	7.76	1.01
15	Promote acceptable behavior among students	**7.83**	1.01
16	Promote ethical behavior among school personnel	7.67	1.05
	Total	**7.44**	**0.76**
Low SES Context			
3	Understand the parameters of your role as principal	7.74	1.31
20	Feel supported by my superiors	6.60	1.52
21	Reduce the barriers for learning for students	7.45	1.15
22	Collaborate with community to ensure further supports for students	7.07	1.24
23	Ensure the safety and security of students	**7.86**	0.95
24	Develop respectful and trusting relationships with parents	7.57	1.09
25	Establish effective professional development in the school	7.67	1.00
	Total	**7.46**	**0.69**
	Total Test Score	**7.23**	**0.64**

Note: Scores in boldface signify the highest score within each factor, and the total mean score for each factor and the entire questionnaire

*M=Mean, **SD=Standard Deviation, N=42

The grouped responses from the self-efficacy questionnaire are now examined. Leaders indicated a higher self-efficacy with Moral Leadership (M=7.44, SD=0.76) and Low SES Context (M=7.46, SD=0.69). The lowest score was with Management (M=6.84, SD=1.21), which suggests that principals do not feel as positive with the successful completion of management items, even though this factor had the highest range of responses. Because the highest-scoring items are not found in the same factor, high self-efficacy appears to not be associated with one single factor. However, items relating to Management do not occur within the five highest scoring items. Table 4.3 identifies those items that scored highest and lowest on the self-efficacy scale. The majority of the lowest scoring items are found in Management.

Table 4.3: Highest and Lowest Scoring Self-efficacy Items

	Items	**M***	**SD****
	Highest Scoring		
7	Create a positive learning environment in your school (IL)	7.90	0.91
23	Ensure the safety and security of students (C)	7.86	0.95
15	Promote acceptable behavior among students (ML)	7.83	1.01
14	Handle effectively the discipline of students in your school (ML)	7.76	1.01
3	Understand the parameters of your role as principal (C)	7.74	1.31
	Lowest Scoring		
16	Handle the paperwork required of the job (M)	6.67	1.65
20	Feel supported by my superiors (C)	6.60	1.52
13	Shape the operational policies and procedures that are necessary to manage your school (M)	6.52	1.84
8	Raise student achievement on standardized tests (IL)	6.26	1.38
12	Maintain control of your daily schedule (M)	5.95	1.82

Note: *M=Mean, **SD=Standard Deviation, N=42

Resiliency

The 17 items that comprised the researcher-developed resiliency questionnaire were chosen to lead to a measure of resilience for principals. The participants recorded their responses on a six point Likert scale, anchored at zero for the response, "Not true at all" to four as the most positive response, "True nearly all of the time". The number five indicated the response "Undecided" which was only given to Item 17 on the scale. Therefore, all other responses can be considered to have been ranked on a 0-4 point Likert scale. Table 4.4 displays the overall responses of the principals to each of the items on the questionnaire.

Table 4.4: Resiliency Responses as Percentages

		Principal Responses %*					
Items		**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1	I am able to adapt to change.	0	0	0	12	88	0
2	I can make unpopular/difficult decisions.	0	0	2	57	40	0
3	I am not easily discouraged by failure.	0	0	19	24	57	0
4	I have maintained a strong sense of purpose.	0	0	2	12	86	0
5	I have close relationships with others.	0	2	7	43	48	0
6	I can achieve my goals.	0	0	0	48	52	0
7	I take pride in my achievement.	0	0	2	21	76	0
8	Coping with stress strengthens me.	0	0	17	43	40	0
9	I can deal with difficult situations.	0	0	0	17	83	0
10	I know where to turn for assistance/support.	0	0	10	31	60	0
11	I have the capacity to multitask.	0	0	2	33	64	0
12	I can influence students and adults (eg. teachers, parents, superiors).	0	0	2	31	67	0
13	My interpersonal network helps me cope with stress.	2	0	10	29	60	0
14	I can find the humor in most situations.	0	0	0	29	71	0
15	When I make plans, I follow through with them.	0	0	2	45	52	0
16	The principalship is a satisfying role.	0	0	5	24	71	0
17	My spirituality aids my coping mechanisms.	10	7	19	26	33	5

Note: Responses indicate percentage of participants who responded with the above ranking
*Percentage is based upon 42 respondents

Table 4.4 indicates that the majority of principals responded within the range of "Sometimes true", to "True nearly all of the time" to the items listed on the resiliency questionnaire. For the first question, "I am able to adapt to change", 100% of the principals responded that this statement was "Often true", or "True nearly all of the time". This was also true with Item 6, "I can achieve my goals". For Item 9, "I can deal with difficult situations", and Item 14, "I can find the humor in most situations", the majority of the respondents indicated that these statements for them were "True nearly all the time". Only one question, "My spirituality aids my coping mechanisms" resulted in the widest range of responses, with 10% of the principals stating that that statement was "Not true at all", to 33% who stated that it was "True nearly all of the time". Five percent of the principals were "Undecided". This item also had the lowest mean score. One interpretation of this wide range of responses may lie in the reluctance of principals in public schools to define themselves as having a faith-based philosophy. In Alberta, both the public and separate school systems are publicly funded, and for some, the distinction could be interpreted as diametric; that is, one could be identified as "religious" if they are principals of a separate school, but not if they were in the public school system. Some principals may connote "spirituality" with religion, and may therefore not consider that as a support for them in their role.

As on the self-efficacy questionnaire, items in the resiliency test were grouped into four groups or factors. Statistical factor analysis was not applied to this questionnaire because of the small sample size. Rather, these factors were created by the researcher. These factors were named Tenacity (T), Relationships and Support (RS), Competence (C), and Self-confidence (SC).

Table 4.5: Resiliency Items Grouped by Factors

Item	Factors and Scale Items	M*	SD**
Tenacity			
3	I am not easily discouraged by failure.	3.38	0.79
4	I have maintained a strong sense of purpose.	3.83	0.44
6	I can achieve my goals.	3.52	0.51
15	When I make plans, I follow through with them.	3.50	0.55
	Total	**3.56**	**0.61**
Relationships and Supports			
5	I have close relationships with others.	3.36	0.73
10	I know where to turn for assistance/support.	3.50	0.67
13	My interpersonal network helps me cope with stress.	3.43	0.86
17	My spirituality aids my coping mechanisms.	2.70	1.37
	Total	**3.27**	**0.98**
Competence			
1	I am able to adapt to change.	3.88	0.33
9	I can deal with difficult situations.	3.83	0.38
11	I have the capacity to multitask.	3.62	0.54
2	I can make unpopular/difficult decisions.	3.38	0.54
	Total	**3.60**	**0.49**
Self-confidence			
7	I take pride in my achievement.	3.74	0.50
8	Coping with stress strengthens me.	3.24	0.73
12	I can influence students and adults (eg. teachers, parents, superiors).	3.64	0.53
14	I can find the humor in most situations.	3.71	0.46
16	The principalship is a satisfying role.	3.67	0.57
	Total	**3.60**	**0.59**
	Total Test Score	**3.53**	**0.25**

Note: Scores in boldface signify the total mean score for each factor and the entire questionnaire
*M=Mean, **SD=Standard Deviation, N=42

Table 4.5 displays each item grouped under a common theme or factor, and indicates that the respondents scored themselves similarly on Tenacity (T) and Self-Confidence (SC). The factors that were given the highest mean score (M= 3.60) were that of Competence (C) and Self Confidence. The lowest mean score (M=3.27) was in the category of Relationships and Supports (RS). This suggests that the participants had

a stronger belief in their personal capability and confidence in the enactment of their job than they did with their interaction with other people. This category also included how strongly they felt that they had received support from their superiors.

Table 4.6: Highest and Lowest Scoring Resiliency Responses

Resiliency Responses		**M***	**SD****
Items			
	Highest Scoring		
1	I am able to adapt to change.(C)	3.88	0.33
4	I have maintained a strong sense of purpose.(T)	3.83	0.44
9	I can deal with difficult situations.(C)	3.83	0.38
7	I take pride in my achievement.(SC)	3.74	0.50
14	I can find the humor in most situations.(SC)	3.71	0.46
	Lowest Scoring		
3	I am not easily discouraged by failure.(T)	3.38	0.79
2	I can make unpopular/difficult decisions.(C)	3.38	0.54
5	I have close relationships with others.(RS)	3.36	0.73
8	Coping with stress strengthens me.(SE)	3.24	0.73
17	My spirituality aids my coping mechanisms.(RS)	2.70	1.37

Note: *M=Mean, **SD=Standard Deviation, N=42

Table 4.6 displays the highest and lowest-scored items on the resiliency scale. There was no evident pattern of attributes identified in these item factors, though Item 1 and Item 9 were identified as a principal having competence, and Items 7 and 14 both dealt with the principals' self-confidence. However, this positive outlook revealed by principals could be related back to efficacy beliefs, as competence is synonymous with capability and accomplishment, and self-confidence is a positive outlook on personal abilities. Therefore, the definitions of these constructs which all tend to deal with interactions between belief and ability are closely interrelated, and personal ratings would tend to endorse the more specific construct of self-efficacy.

Within these highest-scored items, Relationships and Supports were not represented. The highest scoring item was "I am able to adapt to change" (M=3.88, SD=0.33). The lowest score was found with "My spirituality aids my coping mechanisms" (M=2.70, SD=1.37) and was described previously. Table 4.6 also lists the items with the lowest scores. As with the highest scored items, there was no evident pattern with the lowest scored items, but both Items 5 and 17 were listed as Relationships and Supports.

Predominate Influences from Qualitative Results

The qualitative component of this research study was derived from interviews and from the short answer questions from the questionnaire. Table 4.7 lists the predominate themes that emerged from the interviews.

Subsequent to interview analysis, the following themes were identified as the most prevalent: Table 4.7 indicates that all (100%) of the principals discussed Relationships, Staff, and Parents and Management as influences on both their self-efficacy and resilience. All (100%) of the parents also discussed their interpretation of Student Success, but this was expected since one of the interview questions directly asked about this topic. The great majority of the principals spoke about how students impacted their leadership (92%), and 85% of the principals mentioned how they received support. Most (92%) of the principals also discussed their own attributes and how they affected self-efficacy and resilience, and 69% revealed how their philosophy sustained their leadership.

Table 4.7: Predominate Interview Themes

Themes from Interviews	**Respondents***
Relationships	100%
Principal relationships	77%
Staff relationships	69%
Students with others	31%
Relationships with parents	62%
Building Communication	54%
Staff	
Staff -positive	100%
Staff- negative	100%
Attitudes	92%
Role with Staff	77%
Parents	100%
Skills	38%
Lack of Values	46%
Engagement	23%
Expectations	31%
Students	92%
Beliefs About	77%
Physical Needs	62%
Management	92%
Support	69%
Central Office	69%
Collaboration with Peers	62%
Resources	69%
Community Resources	69%
Success	100%
Academic Achievement	77%
Provincial Achievement Tests	46%
Accountability	23%
Programming	54%
Personal Philosophy	46%
Beliefs	46%
Knowledge	100%
Abilities/Skills	92%
Attitudes	62%
Loves Job	46%
Attributes	92%

Note: *Percentage based upon 13 respondents

The following section in this chapter will discuss the major themes on principal self-efficacy utilizing data that were derived from both the questionnaires and the interviews and short answer questions. The purpose of combining these data is to present information from both the qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, in order to provide an in-depth portrayal of how their leadership was enacted, and principals' beliefs concerning their agency.

Relationships within Schools

The theme of relationships was one of the most predominant during the interview phase of this study, discussed by 100% of the interviewed principals. These principals related 'relationships' to their sense of 'self-efficacy' as well as to their 'resiliency'. The aspects of relationships fall under the following headings: the leaders' relationships with staff and students, the relationship of staff with students, the relationship of both leader and staff with families of students, and the leader's relationship with members of the community.

In both the resiliency and the self-efficacy instruments, there is one item in each questionnaire that pertained to relationships. In the self-efficacy questionnaire, "Develop respectful and trusting relationships with parents" (M=7.57, SD=1.09) scored above the average mean (M=7.53), indicating that principals declared they successfully accomplished building relationships with parents. In the resiliency questionnaire, "I have close relationships with others" (M=3.36, SD=0.73) received a high score as well, even though it was below the average resiliency score. This indicated that principals

believed they had established relationships with others, potentially encompassing superiors, peers, staff, students and families, or friends and family.

In the interviews, principals (69%) discussed how their staff interacts with students and parents (see Table 4.7). Some of these principals related relationships to student success, stating that relationships influence student success, and when students experience recent success, they will take more educational risks. Therefore, it is necessary for connections to be made with students, and with their parents.

When principals spoke of their own relationship with students, they tended to describe those that were more general. Only 31% of the interviewed principals (See Table 4.7) talked about the importance for them as leaders to create direct relationships with students. One principal said that he influenced student success by " *when the bell rings, I want to be at one of the two doors with the kids coming in, greeting and meeting kids*". Some principals (23%) described their relationship with students as generalized-kidding with and teasing them in the hallways. "*You've got to have the kids believing that you care about him and you're being honest*." Three principals spoke of maintaining regular classroom visits to ensure that they had interaction with the students to promote their understanding of the individual student's needs. Another principal stated that he would be "… *kidding them and teasing them so that they know you know them, and they're okay with it, and they know you*".

Some of these principals believed that because the teachers interact most with the students, then they should be the ones to establish and nurture interactions with the

students. The students' relationship with the teacher is one that should be deeper because of teachers' greater knowledge of the students, and therefore more meaningful than principals' relationships with students. The principals' role then was described as facilitation - to provide the environment to support teacher relationships with students and their parents.

Principal beliefs concerning relationships

One result of relationship-building was the creation of trust between student and teacher. For example, one principal who promoted these values to her school staff talked about students trusting staff enough to reveal to them that they did not have a lunch and that they needed one, or trusting them with private matters such as family issues from home. She stated that she believed that if students have a trusting relationship with adults at the school, "…*they can translate that into their learning*".

One further outcome for students that had developed as a result of these relationships is a belief in their own potential for future success. One principal explained this by stating that when a teacher engaged students, the students would believe that they can realize their ambitions. In other words, students will trust their own ability for future accomplishment if the teacher recognizes their talents and believes in their capability, or will aspire to a higher level of aspiration. She stated, *"...I think that the kids would see that the teacher sees and understands who they might be."* This was understood to mean that students will respond positively to teachers, improving relationships as a result.

Staff relationships

Even though all principals believed that relationships were important, not all principals believed that their schools' staff were successful in their creation of relationships. Some principals stated that this was because staff did not have sufficient knowledge of the students they taught. For example, one principal focused on his own knowledge of the cognitive maturation of his students. He said that it frustrated him when teachers did not understand that teenagers have a hard time paying attention first thing in the morning. *"He's not doing this to be a jerk. He just can't get out of bed, you know. Some teachers don't get that, and it just drives me crazy!"* He believed that tolerance and understanding on the part of the staff would positively change their approach and expectations of the young people in their classes.

However, most (54%) of the interviewed principals spoke about their role in ensuring that relationships are created, and this could be because they had the belief that student/teacher relationships in their schools were not effective. One principal stated that she influenced staff behavior in two ways. One method was by modeling the behavior she would like them to imitate. However, this principal continued by declaring that if her staff did not learn by her example, she would simply enforce their behaviors that normally would lead to creating relationships. Each of the principals who spoke of creating these relationships agreed that it was necessary. Only one of these principals indicated that his attempts to model relationship building to his staff were not successful. Instead of creating positive relationships, his teachers instead focused negatively on students' behaviors despite the principal's ongoing efforts.

Parent relationships

An important influence that differentiates low socioeconomic status schools was that of parents, which was mentioned by all (100%) of the principals (See Table 4.7). This theme was broken up into four sub-themes: parental support for students, parents' lack of value for education, parental expectations, and parental engagement and communication with school. In the self-efficacy instrument, there was only one item that referenced having a relationship with the community (parents). In the questionnaire (See Table 4.2) the item “Promotes the prevailing values of the community in your school" (M=6.93, SD=1.47) scored lower than the mean score on the self-efficacy scale; however, most interviewed principals wished to influence the values of people in the community by the beliefs of the school, and this may explain the low self-efficacy score on that item. The large variability in the responses may refer to the difficulty that some principals expressed in dealing with parents. Indeed, principals discussed how these many experience-based aspects of dealing with these parents impacted principal self-efficacy, primarily because of the expenditure of time and effort that had been taken in order to counteract these differences between school and parents.

The relationships that parents have with the school are often an extension of the relationships that their child has with the school. The interviewees described relationships with parents in the context of dealing with negative student issues, as well as provided a description of the differences they perceived with these parents.

Variables preventing effective communication

At schools, relationships with parents are generally developed with the teacher as a result of regular communication. However, in this low SES context, principals stated that the lack of positive communication was an influence to self-efficacy. This was defined by two principals as uncertainty as to whether or not the school had parental support, and was viewed as a primary reason for the lack of communication between school and family. For example, one principal stated that in "*a regular school*" parents would usually work in cooperation with the school and address school problems at home. She contrasted that with her present experience, saying, "…*whereas here, you just never know what you're going to get. You've gotten everything from the fabulous support to the yelling and screaming in your ear.*" The same principal spoke about her teachers and their reluctance to contact parents about problems with children because of their fear of an angry reaction.

One principal defined relationship-building between staff and parents as creating understanding and building mutual respect. She stated that it was difficult for her staff to do this and believed it was because of the difference in education level which caused a barrier for effective communication. Another principal spoke about her school staff that had difficulty in creating positive parental relationships when they believe that these parents do not have parenting skills. She stated that her staff members were divided: some criticized the parents, or some staff members developed a real understanding of parents' backgrounds and limitations. In contrast, another principal was pleased with how some staff members responded to his direction that they communicate with parents:

If any parent doesn't call, or doesn't sign up for parent teacher conference, they [teachers] are asked to call to try to set one up, because [for] some of our parents, it may work better and we do have teachers who will go to their home, meet them at Tim Horton's, or whatever they have to do to make it work, but not all of them. I wish it was everyone, but we make progress in small steps and some are more comfortable doing that than others.

Principals' beliefs about parents

It was found that 38% of the principals focused on parents' lack of skills for general parenting and providing for their children. These principals, like staff, either described their concerns with parents as belief statements, or were actively engaged in helping parents. Some principals interacted directly with parents in an attempt to offer support. One of the principals stated that it was necessary for the school to help support the parents in caring for their children. He compared the parents to children themselves, as he said they were young and did not know how to parent. He felt that even though neither he nor the school had all the answers, helping parents deal with parenting issues was a part of his job that needed to be developed as a continuing practice.

The lack of supports for the students in the school from parents was also an issue that was discussed. These resources were defined as either economic resources or other resources that could be considered a support to students, such as parents having a consistent positive outlook for their child's education. At times, principals stated that there was support, but this tended to be inconsistent. A general difference between

schools in low SES context and affluent areas was described by one principal who stated that all schools have students who need support, but in more prosperous areas, the families have their own support networks that will make their children successful. Low socioeconomic status parents do not tend to have those structures in place.

The subtopic of parental values and attitudes was described by 46% of the principals, specifically, the lack of value for education which was demonstrated by the attendance patterns of absenteeism and lateness of their children. One principal stated that this was exhibited by parental choice of where they spent their money, which in this case was drugs and alcohol for themselves, instead of on supports for their child's education. To this principal, this further represented the lack of value for education by how they prioritized the expenditure of their resources.

Another instance of how principals were impacted by parental choices was illustrated by a story from one of the interviewed principals, who mentioned the difference in opportunities that parents provide for their children. He stated that after Christmas holidays these children did not mention any trips that they had taken, but they did mention their new expensive electronic games. The principal went on to explain that he used that as an example because this was the family that the school had identified as being needy, and for whom the staff collected food. This was taken to mean that the principal wanted to comment on the parents' choice in how they spent the limited resources they had or received - on entertainment, rather than on basic needs or educational opportunities for their children.

Principals also discussed parental choices concerning their child's nutrition. One principal spoke of the lack of nourishment that was supplied by the choices of food that parents gave to their children. He stated that they were being given a great deal of fast food, and was concerned about the lack of proper nutrition for the students. Some students did not come to school with lunches at all. Principals mentioned that their schools provided against the effects of hunger and poor diet by offering breakfast or lunch programs.

Another aspect of engagement of the parents in their child's education had to do with the attitudes that these parents had toward education. It was stated by a principal that parental attitudes closely affect how their children learn at the school, and limit what the school can do for that child. As well, principals believed that the negative attitude of students for their personal experience and education was learned directly from their parents, who, they said, may not have experienced educational success themselves. As well, another principal said that parental belief in the importance for the students to be at the school and achieving did not tend to be high.

Parental expectations were mentioned by 31% of the principals as illustrating a difference in the low SES context. Principals stated that there was a tendency for lowered expectations for low SES parents. One principal explained this by saying that generally speaking, lower educational attainment of parents resulted in a small worldview, and that was what limited their expectations. This narrow outlook was seen as societal, limited by geography and general community expectations. For example, one principal stated that parents from his community rarely ventured outside that

particular area, and were not aware of nor looked for opportunities for their children elsewhere.

> *We've got a kid in grade 9 -…he gets good grades, and he's an outstanding athlete. He wrestles - he's gone to the nationals, and all that and there's a lot of universities saying, 'Come to the University of Calgary, your education will be paid for you. You will wrestle for us', but he still said, 'No, I think I'll stay around here and get a job in the oil field like my brother, making big money.'*

Even though he tried to persuade the student to take advantage of this opportunity and be aware of the long-term personal benefits that the scholarship could provide, this principal could not convince the student to accept the scholarship. He expressed frustration that he could not overcome the influences that limited the academic ambitions for young people. This principal felt badly about the missed opportunity for this student.

Some principals also dealt with groups of parents, and one principal stated that skill is needed by principals to work collaboratively with the school community. He explained that there is a balance that leadership must make between making independent choices for the school with no community input or buy in, and having the community dictate the actions of the leader. He also stated the potential for negativity in the community.

> *If you do it the right way and engage them along, they become your best friend and become involved in the process and you get that much more mileage, but if*

you do it without their input and never engage them in the process, all you get is resentment and they can't wait to see you go.

The need to create communication with families was echoed in the short answer questions (See Appendix D) where 8% of the principals discussed the importance of the creation and development of strong communication and this was agreed upon by 54% of the interviewed principals. One principal revealed that he laid the groundwork for communication with families by making an effort to meet each family prior to school registration.

Lack of parental engagement

The lack of communication with families impacted school/parental relationships, and was mentioned by 62% of the leaders. One principal stated that it was challenging to engage low socioeconomic status parents in any kind of dialogue, not just on the topic of student behavior. Some principals mentioned the fact that they had limited attendance at parent teacher conferences, and some parents never came to school council meetings. When contact was attempted by the school, messages often were not returned. This was described as a great challenge which impacted student achievement, because it tended to make efforts to improve achievement very difficult, and one principal felt it reduced the success rate of the school.

Success student success at school can be positively influenced by parental involvement. However, in these schools, principal stated that this involvement was not widespread, so principals felt the importance of developing these relationships, despite

the difficulty. For example, one principal described her efforts to communicate with parents:

> *That's a huge challenge-with some [parents]. With some, not so much. It depends where they are coming from. Some of them are very open and looking for help, and some of them have had bad experiences themselves and so there's walls up, and we have to take our time to do (fix) that.*

She explained that without building relationships with parents, everything else was difficult. For example, the school cannot help students with specialized programming or testing without parental agreement, which is often not achieved because parents do not have the necessary understanding. If relationships were built, then trust is built as well so that students get the support they need. Besides academic help, building trusting relationships with the family could make a difference to the attendance of the student. For example, another principal stated that he had developed relationships with certain families so that he felt comfortable in saying to the parents, "... *you send those kids no matter if they have a lunch or not, and I will feed them*".

The theme of engagement with and of the parents/families of the students in those schools was listed as an important factor that defined the difference in context of low SES schools. Three principals described the lack of active involvement with the school in their child's education, some attributing that to a parental lack of value for education as far as their academic expectations for students and their commitment to homework. Other principals compared the amount of homework done by students in

both high and low socioeconomic status schools, attributing this to the value that parents have for education. She stated that for low SES schools, maybe 10% of them would get their homework done, as opposed to students in higher SES schools, where perhaps 10% of them would not get their homework completed. Another principal explained that he tried to get parents to help with homework, but they excused themselves by saying they did not know how to help, and that they could not spend the time because they had a job.

Another principal gave an example for what she considered a lack of educational values of low socioeconomic status parents. She stated that parents were interested in registering their children in the school's daycare program, but these parents did not care in which language their children would be receiving instruction. This was understood to mean that the parents were not interested in the educational aspect of that particular daycare, only for the free childcare it provided.

Another principal discussed the values together with unrealistic dreams that these parents had for their offspring. "*Homework is never important and school is never important, but they'll play hockey for 30 hours a week because they're going to be in the NHL. They're going to be a movie star … the dreams they have for their children are very unreal.*"

Only a few principals did not agree with the statement that these parents generally were disinterested in the educational process for the children. Instead, they declared that parents did want their children to learn, and wanted to see their child experiencing educational success. One principal stated that one of the difficulties in

dealing with parents was trying to convince families "*who have lived in a dark place a long time*" that their child could achieve success.

The lack of communication and interaction by parents was attributed by some principals as parental faith that schools will help the children. Therefore, parents will not interfere. One principal quoted one of her immigrant parents. "*We believe you're going to change the world for my kid.*" Another viewpoint stated that some parents do not believe they have anything worthwhile to offer the school, so that those schools must connect with families and help them understand that they do. There was no consensus as to whether or not principals believed that parents put a value on education. One principal declared, "*An education - they could care less about education…the commitment to education and the importance to education is just non-existent for most - I would say for 90% or so.*" Another principal agreed, and stated creating a relationship with parents was one way in which he could influence the success of the students - by convincing parents that the school will need their support in educating their child.

Principal agency for building communication

Some interviewed principals discussed also their agency in building communication with parents. One stated, "*I've come to realize that relationships are way more important than having the right information*". He described the importance of having established dialogue with parents that may include small-talk, or creating any kind of interaction to produce lines of communication with these parents. "*It's establishing a trust with them before you're going to get them to work with you.*

Relationship building is the key." This was similar to the response of another principal, who also said that when she contacted parents, she was conscious of how deliberate she was with the conversation. She stated that she felt she needed to tread lighter with these parents and, as did the previous principal, spoke of trivialities so that she could establish some sort of relationship with the parent. She admitted that she has felt like she had been deliberately manipulating the conversation with parents, in order to create a more positive outcome.

Because communication between school and these families tended to be fairly rare, some principals made specific intentional plans to increase communication between staff and parents. One principal discussed the fact that parental communication was not happening, since staff was reluctant to contact home because of the unpredictability and potentially abusive parental response. *"There was very little communication with parents other than interviews and that was only because they had to do it. And they never looked forward to it."* The principal put a change of practice into place which included mandatory connection with home by teachers for each student each term. This was done to convince teachers of the positive need to interact with the parents of the students in a classroom, and also to actually establish a connection with the parents by overcoming the "wall" between parents and school. *"Teachers have removed for the most part the wall that's there, but now they need to learn to step over all the blocks that fell."*

Resiliency was reported to be increased with positive contact with parents, and dealing with difficult parents negatively impacted resilience. For example, dealing with

challenging parents has influenced the resilience of one principal to the point where she wondered why she works in her job. She stated that even though she was highly skilled at dealing with conflict, "...*sometimes you have very irrational parents who are difficult to reason with, and I think that has affected my resiliency. Those days kind of get me down*."

Staff Influence on Principal Self-Efficacy

In the interviews and in the short answer questions from the questionnaire, the influence of staff on principal self-efficacy was mentioned by 100% of the principals. This influence was either positive or negative, but indicated that the importance of the school staff was primary to principal self-efficacy and resiliency.

The self-efficacy questionnaire (Table 4.2) contained items from all four factors that represented the interaction with staff: Item 10, "Motivate teachers" (M=7.29, SD=1.13); Item 13, "Shape the operational policies and procedures that are necessary to manage a school" (M=6.52, SD=1.84); Item 17, “Promote ethical behavior among school personnel" (M=7.67, SD=1.05); and Item 12, "Establish effective professional development in the school" (M=7.67, SD=1.00). Only Item 13 scored lower than 7.23, the total mean score. Even though the questionnaire indicated moderately high self-efficacy and resiliency in regards to staff, the interviews revealed some concerns of principals that more clearly exposed the complexity and range of the issues.

Staff attitudes and abilities

The majority of the principals, (92%) spoke about the attitudes of their staff, both positive and negative. Principals discussed their beliefs concerning differences between their staff members and those who were not in low SES schools. One difference was the attitude of the staff concerning the population they teach. Consequently, this had a great impact upon the school leader in terms of their self-efficacy. The first issue listed by some principals was that they felt that some teachers on their staff did not want to be at those schools. For example, one principal explained that these teachers worked at her school long enough to get a continuous contract, and then they transferred to other schools, which left openings that novice non-tenured teachers could access. As a result, this left job openings in these schools that were filled by a high percentage of inexperienced teachers. Principal perceptions regarding a young staff were not similar. One principal stated that she did not find that this was a concern, because she could train new teachers and appreciated the large choice when hiring. Another principal stated that her staff, the majority of whom were young and relatively inexperienced, had made a positive difference in how she felt about her job. She stated that the advantage for having a high percentage of new teachers was that they have a willingness to try new things. They have a different skill set than did the more experienced teachers, but her young staff showed their enthusiasm, which energized all teachers on staff.

Another concern felt by principals was that their staff may not clearly understand the background of the population of the school when they apply for a position, and

emphasized the importance of having staff members understand the school culture when they first come to the school. She stated that in her school, they had changed their interview questions to focus on the basic beliefs of the school and what was expected from the teachers. This was done to clearly inform teachers before they committed to teaching in that environment. Her value for teachers was not on their understanding and experience, but stated that they needed to be willing and dedicated to the core beliefs that ground the school culture.

> *You know what, they need to know what it's all about. They know what they're getting themselves into and what is expected and if they're on board, great - we will give them all the support and all the PD and whatever it is they need.*

One principal talked about the importance of having the right people in the schools by saying that the human resources department in his district should look at what kind of teachers are needed in the schools, and should help support the schools by trying to match the needs of the school community with potential teachers who want to be there, share similar values, and facilitate personalized learning for students. This was understood to mean they needed the removal of impediments with the staffing process within the district. In the short answer component of the questionnaire, this was echoed by one principal who stated that self-efficacy is influenced by the ability of a principal to hire like-minded staff.

Another principal said that the inability to keep effective staff at his school was an influence to his self-efficacy. He stated that the young teachers who move quickly

through low SES schools were trained well to focus on the individual student. *"They get trained to look at the person that they are working with"*, and he believed that the students in this area "*make you more accountable to what you're doing, a more honest humanistic level than on an academic level"*. However, this principal had a different point of view when speaking about staff members who have been at his school for a long time. His teachers complain about the students, but do not voluntarily transfer. He thought that these teachers should move somewhere else so they could experience change, as he questioned the professional growth of these staff members. This was understood to mean that even though his teachers were experienced, their teaching had not improved with their practice. He questioned whether there should be mandatory practice of teacher movement among schools. This was understood to mean that this principal was unsuccessful in exercising his influence that would result in teacher growth. This belief in the disinterest or unwillingness on the part of the staff to effectively work with low SES populations was not universally agreed upon. Only one principal stated that his staff understood the reality at home for low SES students. He felt that they were all committed to teaching and caring for the students in their classes. He believed that teacher collaboration on his staff and the programs that they had put in place have made a difference to the students.

One principal recognized two categories of staff members: those who lack patience and are frustrated with students, and those who are positive with the students, are adept at deciding when to engage in difficult conversations with students, and have the emotional maturity to deal with these interactions. "*I think of these individuals are*

long-termers here because they see the value of what they're bringing to the students without allowing it to affect their own frustration levels, or happiness levels or whatever." She explained that these teachers have a positive outlook when it comes to students, and do not focus on students' past negative interactions, but treat every day as a new day. She concluded by stating that notwithstanding the battles that take place between student and teacher, she believes that a certain personality of teacher is needed to be in a low SES school. Even though some teachers may be very highly knowledgeable in their field of expertise, they lack the ability to connect with low SES students. She stated too that the students respond well to humor, and negatively to educators who are structured and serious and expect students to conform...*"so it's just not that kind of right personality fit for this type of environment."* She said she had:

> *…four or five who could be outstanding teachers in a different environment, but just aren't meeting with success and therefore frustrated based on that alone….[T]hey are not seeing the growth in the kids and of course the kids pick it up*.

One principal spoke about his staff in general and the difference in philosophy between his ideas and the way some staff members interact with students. For example, he explained that on the topic of student discipline, he believes the teachers are too hard on the students and approach student discipline punitively, and the teachers believe that he is too permissive. He explained his stance by stating that he believed the necessity to build student self-esteem rather than react negatively, saying, "*Our job is to build* (students), *and we need to look at what skills they have*." He said that when teachers

respond punitively to students, young people think that teachers do not care for them as individuals. He said it was important for the students to know that it was about their behavior that teachers are did not like, not the students themselves. He felt that his teachers still did not have this understanding or in some cases, the willingness to change.

One principal spoke very positively about the attitude of her staff. She commented on the difference that she saw between teachers in low SES schools, and those teachers who taught in a higher SES area. The last principal indicated the importance that she felt on the teachers creating relationships with students. She stated that even though she knew these teachers had to improve their teaching practices, she was happy with the attitude and philosophy of the staff and how they interacted with the students. *"The battle in my other schools has been how do I get the teachers to realize that they need to improve still, whereas here there is no question in any staff member's mind about needing to serve the students"*. In this way, she stated that the alignment between her ideas and the outlook of the staff helped increase her resilience.

Principal agency - Establishing a school culture

Several principals (77%) discussed their staff by illustrating the agentic role that they play in providing leadership to teachers. Agency describes the intentional leadership actions taken by principals. One important aspect was sharing vision. When staff members do not share a similar philosophy when they come to a school, the principals believed it was their role to guide staff awareness of the expected philosophy expected of each teacher. This, along with sharing a vision in order to guide the school, was essential in establishing a school culture. Principals presented their vision and

beliefs to staff by overtly stating and by modeling what they believed to be important. Principals used the term ‘instructional leader’ to denote their role in ensuring that the staff share a common vision, that teachers are competent, and that everyone at the school has a common philosophy or understanding of students.

Sharing the vision

Table 4.2 contains the following items for Instructional Leadership that focus on creating a positive environment for students, usually created by promoting change in teachers. Specifically, Item 1, "Facilitate student learning in your school" (M=6.98, SD=1.51), Item 2, "Generate enthusiasm for a shared vision for the school" (M=7.45, SD=1.21), Item 5, "Manage change in your school" (M=7.60, SD=1.11), and Item 7, "Create a positive learning environment in your school" (M=7.90, SD=0.91) all deal with the successful establishment of school culture. These results show that principals believed they were moderately successful at the accomplishment of those items. The results of the interviews provide a more thorough explanation of the limitations and successes of creating school culture.

Some interviewed principals focused on the necessity to have staff at the school who are performing with a similar philosophy regarding their role as teachers, and the importance that this understanding be guided by the vision of the principal. This was echoed within the responses to the open-ended questions, where principals spoke of commitment of highly motivated staff to the school community, or as quoted by one, "*a strong team of individuals who have the same feelings about helping the marginalized*".

Within this group (See Table 4.1), some interviewed principals (31%) presented a point of view that involved their role in the creation of a team with common goals, or finding high self-efficacy in, as one principal stated, "*the ability to convey a sense of partnership in providing the best learning opportunities for students*". This concept was stated on the questionnaire as "Motivate teachers" (M=7.29) and indicated a moderately high response. This was discussed by 54% of the interviewed principals, and by 26% of the principals who responded to the open-ended questions in the questionnaire. One principal who felt positively about his staff stated that his staff was wonderful and "*…really makes it easy coming to school each and every day. We all have similar guiding principles that allow us to put the best interests of children first*." Of the three principals who made positive comments about their staff regarding their influence on resilience, only one principal spoke of her staff with unqualified positivity, and said that they helped keep up her resilience. *"I've had my ups and my downs but [it's] my super staff I think that helps keep me up… so I think it has a positive influence on my resiliency."*

One philosophy with which principals have revealed is the belief that it is possible to effect change for students, as well as their attitudes to learning. Sometimes, principals found that their staff do not share this idea. One principal spoke about convincing an established staff that they could effect change in their students, particularly with the students' poor work ethic and attendance. He was speaking about his staff when he said, *"I think that we have to focus on the positive and not just throw*

your hands up in the air and just give in. I think we have to continually try new strategies"

Another principal spoke about his staff and how the teachers experienced stress from the students' poor work ethic and poor attendance. He said that in the past the staff felt helpless to make a difference in this aspect for students. He had acknowledged the fact that staff need to commit to the idea that they could affect change in student engagement. He worked with staff and said that it took some time, but now teachers talk about how they are progressing with changing the culture of the school and giving students extra help, *"... rather than continuing to claim that they were totally out of their element, and that it was just a waste of time ."*

This response was echoed by another principal clearly described in the short answer component how his self-efficacy is influenced by his staff:

> *There will be naysayers on any low SES staff (i.e. those who say "these kids can't learn")* [in original]. *That is tragic and a shame. The key is getting those teachers into a different school as they are not a good fit. It is also important that these teachers have minimal influence on others. So, in short, helping to maintain a high level of self-efficacy is building a teaching-team in the school that has a high degree of group efficacy and beliefs in their abilities collectively to create a great school. Once you have this type of team, step back a bit and let them shine. My effectiveness as a principal is mediated by the effectiveness of my staff.*

There were five principals who mentioned their staff as a negative influence on their resilience. One of these principals spoke about his frustration regarding his staff not following a schedule with clearly written directions given to them from administration. This principal understood this as an indication that the teachers did not care or feel that what they were doing was important to them, so they did not bother to invest any energy in it.

Principals effected change in their staff by establishing a school culture that reflected their goals and vision. One principal recalled how she effected change in her staff by stating that she had clearly articulated a vision that she had for her school to her staff before the beginning of the school year, and also clarified how she saw the teachers fitting into that plan.

> *I said this is going to be about relationships, about developing relationships, having fun with the kids … I know that some of these individuals are looking at me going, 'That's not what education is - what on earth are you thinking?'*

She stated that if teachers felt that this plan was not a good fit for them, she told them that she would support them in finding whatever change they were looking for in another school. Another principal was also very clear in his expectations to his staff. He mentioned that after he spent one year of leading the school, only two staff members asked for transfers, and the rest of his heretofore mobile staff chose to stay:

> *Two of the teachers like I said, I told them straight out that if they're not on the same wavelength with me, that they should look hard for something because the*

next year we're going to be doing a different process and they decided to leave, but other than that, out of 46 that's not bad.

This discussion on what principals needed to do in order to effect change was given a positive outlook by one principal who was successful in his effort to create a common school culture. For example, he stated that behavior problems no longer existed in his school, as every adult in the school had actively worked hard in the past to achieve this present positive culture.

Building staff capacity

One important role of an instructional leader was ensuring that teachers are engaging students in learning by exercising good teaching practices. One principal stated that some of her teachers were not successful in engaging their students with practices that were suitable to the environment of the students and are meaningful to them, which resulted in students acting out in class, talking with their friends, or not returning to school after lunch. This lack of success was attributed to the teachers' lack of ability or willingness to differentiate or accommodate for students. Another principal was referring to the work of teaching and how she was initiating improvement when she stated,

There's no doubt it's a hard job, nobody's denying that, but we've got teachers who are extremely dedicated. [I] don't ever question [them]- they do what they need to do, and they keep trying things and keep making change, and then we got some for whom this is a 9-to-5 job. They can't do anything more than that, so

that's where all the real challenges are. But we've reverted back to the KSAs, teaching quality standards, and we were finding that a lot of teachers, once they got their continuous contracts, those kind of went by the wayside. It's making some people uncomfortable, but if they need to be uncomfortable, that's how it is.

Another principal did not attribute poor teaching skills as an influence on his self-efficacy. He clearly stated that students in these areas need to have good teachers, and defined his expectations for their acceptable performance very clearly at the beginning of each year.

I think sometimes when highly complex schools aren't working well, it allows teachers to hide. They can make all kinds of excuses why kids aren't learning, and we had some staff here like that. I said basically to them, 'I will put kids in your classroom prepared to learn. Don't disappoint me or the kids by not being prepared to teach them'.

This principal stated that if teachers did not comply, they would not continue at his school. Other principals found it difficult to evaluate experienced staff members, or deal with the staff members who were "*not good enough*", though they recognized the necessity for this. One of these principals focused on the importance for these low SES students to have teachers who are highly competent. *"These kids have one shot and we can't compromise that*".

A few principals mentioned staff members who chose to leave the school rather than comply with the expectation of the school leader. Only one principal revealed

direct action, based on the belief of the responsibility to ensure an acceptable standard of teaching in the school. In a previous year a teacher had been moved because of unacceptable practices. "*I pulled her into my office and said, 'Get your stuff, give me your keys, and get out of my school'.*"

Other principals felt they had to build capacity for staff by research-based professional development. One principal said that another way he supported staff was by spearheading the creation of a network of small high needs schools in which teachers and principals planned and worked collaboratively together. He had brought to this group some ideas that aided in communication by giving staff a common knowledge base and language for meeting the needs of the students. The research base, he said, was instrumental in convincing teachers of the value of their focus, as he felt that his staff needed to know that a change in practice was based upon proven methods.

Principal beliefs concerning students

Table 4.1 displays the responses to items that deal with students which are: Item 6, "Promote school spirit among a large majority of the school population" (M=7.74, SD=1.14); Item 12," Handle effectively the discipline of students in your school" (M=7.76, SD=1.01); Item 15, "Promote acceptable behavior among students" (M=7.83, SD=1.01); and Item 23, "Ensure the safety and security of students" (M=7.86, SD=0.95). These scores indicate a high degree of self-efficacy felt by principals in achieving these outcomes. The interviewed principals shared their beliefs in dealing with students.

Responses dealing directly with leaders' beliefs about students were made by 77% of the principals. One theme discussed by principals was the belief that all students need the same opportunities, and it was important to understand that the opportunities for students in these schools were limited. This was understood to mean that they believed that it was necessary for leader to put effort into creating learning experiences for low SES students similar to those received by students from higher SES contexts in areas such as technology. For example, one principal spoke about applying for government grants for technology to ensure that her students had similar opportunities.

One principal stated that students who come to school from low SES families enter with a different skill set than do students from higher socioeconomic status families. Low SES students come to school unprepared in literacy skills, as well as in social skills. Another principal stated her beliefs that students from this area were less likely to succeed, so the importance is to be attentive and to guard against that. This principal was speaking about the obstacles in learning of the students because of their background with the statement, "*... those things don't define you as a learner. There are many kids who can learn effectively despite that*".

Two principals focused on the negative attitudes toward education that students bring to school. One principal attributed these attitudes as having been modeled to them by their parents, and how these affected students.

Providing for students' basic needs

One aspect of leadership in low SES schools was importance of helping with supporting the students and focusing on providing students with their basic needs, as these were obstacles to student success. Several principals (62%) gave their opinion that in order to do the job of the school, which means for students to progress academically, low SES students have to have a standard of physical health that allows them to learn. One principal referenced Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and stated that only after their physical needs are met can you address their emotional needs *"... so that they can feel like they can be intellectual"*. In some schools, a hot meal program was provided for students, because basic nutrition that was provided for them at home was limited. In this way, these principals stated that providing these resources to students will definitely make an impact on low SES students' educational outcomes.

In addition to having some sort of food program or school, some principals also revealed that they provided other resources for students. One principal spoke about replacing a child's boots with holes with a better pair. *"I mean to me that's the thing to do and we don't think anything about … how that plays into their learning when they come to school each day"*. Apart from food and clothing, one principal mentioned that often students will come and spend time sleeping during the day because they had not slept the night before. Another principal focused on the importance of having an ability to acquire needed resources for families, by stating that it was important to make "*sure that you're giving people what they need in order to be successful, … those supports that you help beyond the school for them are really important"*.

It was understood by some principals that often the needs of families in crisis take precedence over dealing with educational issues. This expenditure of time was described this way: *"… it takes time away from when you wanted to do learning things, like keeping the results up"*. This principal stated that it was his belief that student lack of focus with education had nothing to do with their lack of financial resources, but their emotional state when they arrived at school, and stated his understanding that students do not come to school ready to learn if they are experiencing trauma at home.

Another aspect of dealing with students in low SES areas was the additional workload because of behavior issues of students which are placed on staff members, and sometimes the principal in cases where there are no extra teachers to share the workload. One principal described extra daily supervision to which he had to attend.

> *I mean we have a girl here. … She's fine in the classroom, but when she was with mom and there was no structure and the meds weren't handed out right, she was so, you know, hitting the principal, throwing kids on the floor and giving kids concussions and getting them sent to the hospital. .... and I go out on supervision within the general vicinity of her to make sure that she doesn't elbow or kick somebody to step in, so... this is the kind of thing we're dealing with.*

This principal spoke in compassionate terms of a child who obviously was experiencing severe difficulty, even though his time was used acting as a guard to ensure the safety of the other students and teachers. Principals have experienced other concerns with students in these schools, the life choices students are making, and the

reasons for those choices. The same principal spoke about another girl in his school and spoke of his regret of the following circumstance.

> *[S]she's a full blooded native girl and probably our smartest kid by far, but her grades are in the toilet because her mother doesn't have it together and the other kids are suffering for it including this girl in high school and I mean she wanted to be a doctor and here she is blowing the whole semester because, you know, they're waiting to get into a treatment facility for the family.*

This principal stated that these issues negatively impacted his resilience.

Management and Leadership

Table 4.1 lists the following under Management that require principal skill and knowledge: Item 4, "Handle the time demands of the job" (M=7.00, SD=1.41); Item 12, "Maintain control of your daily schedule" (M=5.95, SD=1.82); Item 13, "Shape the operational policies and procedures that are necessary to manage your school" (M=6.52, SD=1.84); Item 16, "Handle the paperwork required of the job" (M=6.67, SD=1.65); and Item 19, "Prioritize among competing demands of the job" (M=7.43, SD=1.21).

Table 4.4 illustrates the low self-efficacy scores for items relating to Management. Data from the interviews (See Table 4.7) may more fully explain these results. During the interviews, most (92%) principals discussed management issues. The most common issues of management that were discussed included the amount of time principals needed to spend in these kinds of activities or the support they received

so that they could complete managerial duties. An example that was given by some of some of the respondents was that there were others on their administrative teams or their office assistants who could either be relied upon to help with paperwork, or else did not have to be constantly supervised when doing their assigned jobs. Therefore, delegation to trusted and responsible staff was an important skill. Even though the influence of staff on principal self-efficacy was found to be one of the major themes of influence in the study, the impact of staff on principals' time expenditure was extensive. Generally speaking, principals spent a great deal of time with staff who required supervision on duties such as classroom behavior management. This was found to be a negative influence on principal self-efficacy. However, when a principal spent time mentoring staff into assuming more responsibility and being able to handle their own issues, she said that she "*…found that the staff will go away and solve the problem and then come and tell me…and I thought, oh my God, I got the paperwork done in double time!*" A few principals spoke at length about every day issues with which they had to spend their time, and how they are overwhelmed with paperwork. Comments by a novice principal encapsulate common perceptions of first-year leaders who attempt to balance expectations and realities of school leadership:

> *and so I came in very proud of myself thinking I am going to be a fantastic instructional leader, (laughs), and I've disappointed myself, not because I feel I've failed, but because I feel like I haven't been the instructional leader that I thought it would be …There's a lot going on every day, and I don't get a lot of time. I feel like I've been running around putting out fires, and haven't had the*

time to put everything in place to be more proactive, to stop the fires from happening, I guess.

She spoke about some of the issues of school management and the constant demands on her time, as well as how she felt about her ability to complete all demands from Central Office:

Sometimes, the paperwork and the deadlines get me as well. And those come from Central Office. I mean obviously there are certain times of the year when things are due, and those deadlines are known well in advance, and I have no excuse for getting them in the last second. But sometimes other requests come up, and they are due as well, and you know if I had the time to get all that stuff done…but as I said, this is a busy school. I don't sit on my butt here in the office all day long…You know, I'm out and about. I'm either evaluating teachers or I'm doing classroom walk-throughs. I'm meeting with teachers over various things. I'm meeting with parents and teachers and dealing with students. I'm supervising just like everyone else is, and with the amount that comes up on a daily basis, just the things that are thrown at me every day, problems that come up that I deal with, I feel that I don't…and then at the end of the day, I see there's an e-mail that says, 'Oh this is due today'. 'So sorry, I just can't get it done'. So I do struggle with that sometimes.

One principal discussed his perception of enacting the principalship role in low SES schools, and explained how his time is spent, dealing with ongoing as well as emerging issues that originate from the families of students. *"I think you always deal*

with students' needs first. I mean like, you know you want to…be an instructional leader. However here there are a lot of families in crisis and that, so that takes kind of precedence." This comment addressed the common concern by principals that often planned activities of principals became overset by the greater need to assist students, thus adding to the amount of time needed to complete necessary administrative requirements.

Supports for Leadership

Principals discussed the external supports for their role as principal. These supports were listed as influences that both increase and decrease principal self-efficacy. Several principals (69%) discussed general supports which included support from the workplace such as school council, or personal supports for the leader, either in friendships or from the people and their immediate family, or district support, described as support from superiors, or allocated resources (69%) which were provided from the districts. Many respondents (62%) cited that the support that they found from their peers or from Central Office administration was an important factor in increasing their resiliency.

In Table 4.2, Item 20, "Feel supported by my superiors" received a lower than average (M=6.60, SD=1.52) score on the self-efficacy scale. From Table 4.5, the three items that were identified as having to do with relationships and support were: "I have close relationships with others"; "I know where to turn for assistance/support"; and "My interpersonal network helps me cope with stress." The mean score of each of these

items was also below their total mean score, indicating that the majority of principals felt that they did not have these factors in place to promote their own self-efficacy. A further exploration for this is necessary from the qualitative responses in order to present an explanation. In the short-answer questions, 69% of the principals cited supports as an influence to self-efficacy.

District support

In the short answer component of the questionnaire, a few principals (7%) mentioned support from their school district as a variable that had an influence on their self-efficacy. The perceptions of these principals were varied regarding the nature of this influence, with some principals ascribing to the "deficit belief," in which their low SES schools are disadvantaged by their lack of resources, with some blaming this on district allocation. One principal believed that there was not "*an equal playing field*" in low SES schools because of a lack of financial resources, while another of these principals called this lack "*an obstacle*" for student success in a small high need schools. Some principals felt that this deficit prevented them to effectively run their school. This deficiency was an influence on principal self-efficacy, and was reported by 11% of principals in the short-answer questions. One of these principals stated that the district should provide financial and human resources to support the needs of the students and families in the school. This was understood to mean that even if the district allocates to each school a proportionate amount of resources, the lack of assets that low SES students bring to schools disadvantages low SES students. Therefore, the district should allocate more to offset this deficit.

One topic that was introduced was about whether or not principals believed that their school district treated all schools equally, and principals were not in agreement. For example, one principal, who mentioned "*the politics*" of his school district, wrote "*attitudes within our own board are different about different areas and communities*," attributing that to the fact that the parents in low SES areas do not have the same level of awareness or influence. This was understood to mean that these parents do not exercise the same political pressure on school districts then do more affluent parents, so the choice of distribution of any resources is entirely that of the school district.

Other principals did not share the view that a lack of resources influenced student success. In fact, one principal stated that she believed that the practice in her school district of site-based management has ensured the leader of having a great deal of influence over decision-making and management, including how the school's resources are allocated. One principal stated that the school was very comfortable in the amount of financial resources that they had. However, she stated that there always was a need for more human resources, such as full time mental health therapist or even a few more teachers to lower class sizes. However, this principal stated that even though this would be beneficial, the lack of resources does not really negatively influence her self-efficacy. This lack of resources was even seen to be the stimulus for increasing self-efficacy, as was the case for principal who stated that she took pride in her ability to find resources in her community.

An experienced principal discussed his disappointment when principals in his district had budget limitations imposed upon them by their Central Office. He was

especially concerned when one of these curtailed expenditures had been proven to build mental health capacity in students. "*You find something that works and they say you can't do it.... I see solutions that are not coming very quickly and they don't want to listen*."

Support from superiors at Central Office

When analyzing the self-efficacy scale, it was interesting to note that one item "*Feel supported by my superiors*" received the lowest average score within the factor of Context, as well as reported the largest variability of responses. Even though the principals did not feel that this variable increased their self-efficacy, in the interviews and in short answer questions this was a response that was mentioned often.

Several principals spoke of their Central Office as either a positive support (31%) or an impediment to feeling successful (23%). As an example of a positive support, one principal spoke very highly of the support he received from his Central Office. He had been placed by his district into a very problematic school because of his skills and proven ability to deal with a particularly difficult school community. He stated that in conversations with District personnel in which he demanded their backing against controlling parents, the message he received was an assurance of their total confidence in him. He said this support did not give him confidence, as he is already a self-assured person; rather, he felt he deserved that assurance. For example, he stated that he has asked for and received a support of confidence from his director, whereas he has known other principals to fail to receive the backing of their superiors. He felt

strongly that he has a deserved reputation of hard work and successful practice for his school district. This was understood to mean that this principal has strong self-efficacy and continues to rise to the challenge of initiating change in the school, especially with parents. One other principal stated that Central Office provided excellent advice from a highly experienced district employee from whom she could ask direction. She stated that she was very thankful for all of the timely support given in this way from her district's Central Office.

On the other hand, another principal spoke about how the hard work done by the staff at his school to increase school attendance has not been appreciated at his Central Office. He felt he had achieved success for students in his particular school population by modifying the curriculum and academic expectations. This principal believed that even though the school can positively influence student success by controlling the academic aspect of each child, the success is limited by factors outside of the influence of the school. He states that this limitation is viewed "*from higher up*" as a question of whether or not the school is putting enough effort into their work. For example, he stated that his school been successful with increasing student attendance, but then was visited by the superintendent who asked why the school achievement was not higher than it was. He felt that the Central Office has not understood the reality of his school population. He stated that in another environment the same hard work from his staff would have resulted in higher accomplishment. He did not attribute student achievement to poverty, but stated that the students are influenced by trauma in their homes, and when they come to school they are not in a mood to learn. He said that if he

had explained this to Central Office, it would have been interpreted as an excuse for their lack of improvement.

> *Yeah, it just seems that there is some disconnect between the superintendent anyways. He doesn't see the whole picture. He sees it one way and I said, 'Well no, it's not that way. This is what we're dealing with'. It's not our efforts. I think if we had the same effort in a different environment, our results would (improve).*

Peer support

Formal and informal support from peers was found to be a strong influence in a leader's self-efficacy and provided strong support, as 62% of the interviewed principals and 13% of the total principals in the questionnaire specifically mentioned that as a positive support in their work as leader, describing these as "*principal network*", "*circles of critical colleagues*", "*close-knit community of like-minded colleagues*", and "*support teams*", with one principal specifically mentioning that it was important to have a network of colleagues that was based on trust. In fact, a caution was made against principals working in isolation.

The theme of collaboration was also described as a highly supportive influence to resilience. One principal placed a major focus on the importance of collaborating with other principals in order to hear stories of their past experiences. It was through this that she said that she realized that leading schools is more of a process developed by many events, rather than single events that could turn out to be failures. She stated that being able to draw on others' past experiences makes it easier for her to deal with similar

events, so it builds her own confidence. She stated that her increased confidence affects her resiliency because she feels that she could be successful.

The principals described two configurations of principal meetings. One kind of principal meeting was a formal requirement of the district and which disseminated information and direction. Another type of meeting, directed by the district, involved feeder school groups, where all schools that feed into the same senior highs meet three or four times a year or as needed for lateral capacity building. Principals found both meetings positive. One principal said that she felt it was interesting to talk to principals informally at different levels to find that what works in their schools. This way, she stated that she has an appreciation of the strengths and experiences of her colleagues. As well, she said that an important part of listening to others' sharing time is that she feels she is not unique in the circumstances with which she has to deal and this is one way she receives support.

Support from the community

The theme of community support was another important subtheme. In Table 4.2, Item 22, “Collaborate with community to ensure further supports for students" M=7.07, SD=1.24) revealed that principals gave a wide range of responses for this item, and generally had lower than average self-efficacy. The questionnaire item was focused specifically on principal action, but was discussed during the interview as both a commodity that was established in their community, what some principals did in order to establish support within the community, and also a group of unutilized potential supports.

Some principals (69%) in the interviews (See Table 4.7) spoke of the importance of strong positive established community resources outside of the school to help support the needs of the students. One principal mentioned well-established community associations which offer programs for the students. Another principal talked about community programs which included mental health support, and how greatly they were utilized. Still another principal commented that it was an important to him to build relationships of trust with social workers, as well as health care professionals in the neighborhood to be sources of information for himself and his staff. Community support was also considered to be a factor that would maintain self-efficacy. In the open-ended questions from the questionnaire, one principal reiterated the importance of developing strong relationships with the community, while another spoke positively about the willingness of businesses and community agencies to be involved in the school. Another principal felt that there were too many community services that wanted to become involved with schools, and it was his job, he felt, to choose those which could be most supportive.

Only one principal had personally established a school/community team, comprised of a police member, a social worker, and the school principal. Even though he stated that these teams were now commonly in existence because they fulfill a need for students, when he started he did so without support from his school district. Their formation of a support-team approach for children and youth was a product of his vision and willingness of the other individuals to see the potential strength of a combined

approach for students. This particular principal was very passionate in his successful attempts to find and facilitate necessary support for the students.

This success in establishing collaborative relationship with members in the community was not achieved by another principal who was not as positive about the community resources that were operating around her school. She stated that she did not feel that the support services were being run well enough to be a strong partnership. She stated that she felt it was the personalities of the individuals running the programs that prevented it from being as supportive as it potentially could be.

Influence on Student Success

Principals indicated high self-efficacy when they believed that they had been successful in creating success for students. According to the beliefs of principals, success influences the students themselves, their parents, and the principal who is responsible for the success of students in his/her school.

Principals' definitions of success

In every school, a leader places attention on student success; however, to understand this concept, this must include each leader's definition of success. As principals' self-efficacy is examined, it also is necessary to explore principal agency; that is, the actions principals take to influence student success. Student success could be generally considered comparable to achievement, so a comparison was made of how

principals scored on items of the tests in the questionnaire that pertained to student achievement.

In Table 4.2, one factor, Instructional Leadership, contained the items that focused on improving student achievement. Two items specifically, "Facilitate student learning in your school", and, "Raise student achievement on standardized tests", most clearly are identified with student success. Within this factor of Instructional Leadership, these two items had the lowest reported scores. The lowest mean score of 6.26 was found in the item, "Raise student achievement on standardized tests", and the greatest variability as indicated by a standard deviation of 1.51, was calculated from the responses for "Facilitate student learning in your school". This indicates that principals did not feel high self-efficacy for student success as defined by student achievement on standardized tests. Because student achievement is understood to be one criterion for success for principals, it was imperative to discover what these principals understood as success, and how they influenced that success in their schools.

Student success was described by principals (100%) in two basic themes. The first theme could be defined as academic achievement. Academic success is intended to indicate how well students gain mastery of the curriculum and is quantifiable, as indicated by test scores. Because the Provincial Achievement Tests that are mandated in Alberta are written by all Grade 3, 6, and 9 students, and the diploma exams are written in Grade 12, the majority of principals in Alberta must deal with issues involved with the writing of these tests by students in their schools. Therefore, it was interesting to note if any mention of these tests occurred during the discussion about student success.

Another theme of student success was defined as the attitudes and behaviors of students at school - their daily interaction with the educational experience. This was indicated by student engagement with school activities, through and with school personnel. Often, principal responses indicated both interpretations of success, and clearly illustrated the value that they put on each during the time of the interview.

Academic achievement

The theme of academic achievement was identified by 77% of the respondents as an important factor to consider when talking about school success. Even though most principals agreed that academic achievement was synonymous with success, it was also defined as general continual improvement. Another principal believed that it is important to compare how his students are doing to a set of standards, which is part of his continual improvement plan. He believed that it is his role to facilitate for his staff, and that it is important for him to validate their efforts for student achievement. He likened himself to *"the big picture guy"* who has an overview of what is going on and can provide feedback and the necessary support to keep staff on track. Another principal stated that the definition of student success was achieved by removing failure from frame of mind of the staff. She talked about the negative belief of her teachers in their ability to effect change, and stated that *"Even though we know … we can't do everything, we must try to do our best and that it's never too late"*. She believed that it is personal choice rather than inability when students or teachers say that they cannot do something, and felt that sharing her belief with people has given them a sense of control over their lives.

Another principal talked about the difference in the meaning of success between the school leadership and of teachers. She did say that to teachers in her school, good behavior is considered a success. This principal went on to explain that in some classrooms, *"...just getting them all to sit and be engaged, even if they can't pass a test worth beans is still complete and total success"*. She went on to declare that it was important to lead her school to redefine success because her definition of success has changed, and revealed that the Fraser Institute's ranking of schools on PAT scores was not even something that she seriously considered anymore. She now placed more importance on student engagement as a valid measure for success. However, even though a shift has been made in the focus she has put on the results of the PAT exams, she still holds her staff accountable for individual student's academic growth.

The most encompassing definition coming from a principal who stated the belief that student success is measured by the development of the whole child, not only academically but spiritually, emotionally, and physically. This principal believed that the measurement of student success should incorporate all of those. Principals discussed the importance of student emotional health, and how it was a necessary component to potential academic achievement. One principal gave her belief that the school must provide avenues for students to feel successful, so one support that is given to students was to publicly acknowledge student achievement in areas such as fine arts and physical education.

> *And at the end of the year, you know (PAT) results are looked at, and schools are compared. Ours will be at the bottom or close but I think as a staff we feel that*

we're successful because we got those kids in other ways and we promoted them and try to instil and improve their self-confidence and self-concept.

Attendance at school was also another sign of student success, because it was believed that students would attend when they enjoy coming to school. Student happiness was also discussed by principals, with one principal declaring that student happiness was seen as a result of student success, while others defined student happiness and emotional engagement as the criteria for success. One principal identified student success as "*The kids are here every day, and they're happy*". Several principals agreed that every student should feel success, and also stated the importance of the school as a venue to acknowledge successes for all students. Finally, student success was defined by some principals as acceptable behavior from the students. One principal stated that in his school, there are very clear expectations set out to the students for acceptable behavior, and success is found by following these.

Provincial Achievement Tests

Approximately half of the principals (46%) spoke about the Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs). One principal stated his understanding that Alberta Education has defined a very narrow view of success, which was the percentage of students at a school achieving at an acceptable standard on the PAT. A few principals (23%) especially talked of the low scores achieved by students in their school. All principals who admitted to low PAT scores did not limit their definitions of success to academic achievement. Another principal gave an example of his school's attitude to

the achievement tests. He spoke about two boys in the same class who were receiving instruction leveled to their abilities, but below grade level. As a result, the school had made a conscious decision for them not to write the Provincial Achievement Tests. Therefore, this principal was possibly risking having to defend a lower achievement ranking to the general public and to his district.

When asked about the emphasis placed by their district on Provincial Achievement Test results, some principals (23%) acknowledged that they personally would be held accountable for the marks from their schools by their superintendents. These principals said that when their school performed below standard, they would be contacted and questioned. Another principal who felt this onus for improvement in test scores mentioned a constant pressure from Central Office because of school rankings. *"Well, they don't lay off. They know, I think, we put pressure on ourselves, and that is because of the media."* It is important to mention that not all of these schools did poorly on standardized testing. In fact, only four of the principals mentioned PATs, and one particular school received awards for their achievement. Because this principal had spent some time at that school, consistent sustained leadership was thought to be an important influence to success in programming and academic achievement.

Programming for students

Some of the interviewed principals (54%) discussed concepts from within their educational field that they felt have influenced their practice and their way of thinking relative to the low socioeconomic status population, and have engaged themselves or

their staff in professional development in order to put these concepts into practice. One programming concept that had been put into practice by three of the principals was the leveling of instruction in the belief that it would affect student achievement. The subjects were leveled according to each student's ability, and the content was oriented to what was meaningful for them. Therefore, students in one grade were not all working at the same level and concepts. However, all students who were enrolled in a grade that had a scheduled achievement test had to write it, even though they had not received the same instruction on the subject matter. Principals who leveled instruction declared that they did not worry about the provincial achievement tests in their schools. One of these principals felt quite successful with that program, because he said that the students were doing well. He stated that they were positively engaged in work that was attainable to them, resulting in successful experiences.

Influence of Principal as Person

In the questionnaire and during the interviews, principals discussed specific skills and abilities that they believed would influence principal self-efficacy and resiliency. As well, they also spoke about their personal philosophies and revealed their closely held values that supported them in their work in low socioeconomic status schools.

Abilities/skills

In Table 4.5, the resiliency factor that most clearly allies itself with this category of personal skills of principals is that of Competence, which at 3.60, tied for the highest

average score. The items that compose the factor are: "I am able to adapt to change"; "I can deal with difficult situations"; "I have the capacity to multitask"; and" I can make unpopular/difficult decisions". The one item that scored lower than the total average was "I can make unpopular/difficult decisions", and which had the largest variability. All other items scored higher than the total average. The item that scored the highest (3.88) within this factor and also within the entire resilience scale was "I am able to adapt to change". This item also had the smallest standard deviation of the total scale. This indicated that principals believed that their ability to adapt was high.

Knowledge

Professional knowledge and experience was found to be a significant indicator of resiliency from the questionnaires. From the interviews, principals (23%) spoke of their own personal skills or attributes which they gained from personal or professional experience. One principal said he had personal experience of growing up with very little monetary resources in his own family. Because of this experience, he felt that he could identify with the students more than did his staff. He stated, *"Teachers with no experience of living this kind of life don't understand it"*. Principals in the short answer responses (See Appendix D) rated previous experience similarly (26%), describing it as a positive influence to self-efficacy.

Coping with stress

Item 18 from Table 4.1, "Cope with the stress of the job" (M=7.40, SD=1.27) indicated an above average score for dealing with stress. A few principals specifically

mentioned strategies with which they dealt with stress. One stated that she could control stress by not dwelling on unpleasant situations that bothered her. Other principals stated that they managed by 'compartmentalizing', or completely separating, their work and home lives. This was their strategy to limit spending excessive amounts of time on school duties, and also by practicing their belief that their family time should not be impacted by their work. Compartmentalization was seen to be a more positive way of dealing with stress, rather than alternative methods such as substance abuse.

On the other hand, one highly experienced principal did not share a similar belief and focused instead on the students. "*In my whole career I haven't left it all at work. There's so much work to do in the schools and these kids need us so much and their families, and to just leave it every day, I can't do that*." Later in the interview, he continued, "*I often felt guilty about the time I didn't give to my kids when they were growing up, but those kids are doing okay….It's hard to keep balance in life*".

Principals' attributes and attitudes concerning their role

In Table 4.5, two factors represent principal attributes: 'Self-confidence' and 'Tenacity'. 'Self-confidence' contains items that represent how principals react emotionally within their role. 'Tenacity' describes the motivation of principals to continue in that role.

The items within this factor of Self-Confidence are: Item 7, "I take pride in my achievement"; Item 8; "Coping with stress strengthens me"; Item 12, "I can influence students and adults"; Item 14, "I can find the humor in most situations"; and Item 16,

"The principalship is a satisfying role". This factor also scored 3.60, the highest factorial score. Within this category, the item, "Coping with stress strengthens me", (M=3.24, SD=0.73), had a lower score than the total average. This indicated that most principals, even though the range of answers was large, did not believe in the rejuvenating power of stress, or in the efficacy of their coping mechanisms. All of the other items scored higher than the total average score, with the highest score coming from the statement, "I take pride in my achievement".

Approximately half of the principals (46%) said that they enjoy their jobs. One principal explained that the key for positive thinking is that it is necessary for each person to be aware of what they can change. He declared that this environment can be deliberately set up to do this by the principal and the intent of action should be on helping, and of focusing on what is positive. In this way, resiliency was described, not as an innate attribute, but as a conscious decision of individuals who are in control of how they respond to events.

> *I think that resiliency is something that you to a certain extent build yourself a bit and decide how resilient you're going to be, and if you decide you're going to be resilient in the situation, then you find ways to make that happen.*

One principal talked about the importance of her ability to be tough, in reference to dealing with parents. She was willing to help parents with their concerns over social services or groceries, but felt she had to maintain professional boundaries with parents either to not be viewed as a perpetual supplier of goods and services, or to not readily change expectations for parents who use hard luck stories as excuses.

Seen on Table 4.5, four items were identified as being components of the multifactor of Tenacity, which received an average score from the respondents of 3.56. The factors are made up of items that stated: "I am not easily discouraged by failure"; "I have maintained a strong sense of purpose"; "I can achieve my goals"; and "When I make plans, I follow through with them". The item with the highest mean score was "I have maintained a strong sense of purpose". This item also has the lowest (SD=0.44) variability. The item with the lowest average score was "I am not easily discouraged by failure", and this item had the highest standard deviation (0.79) in this factor.

Several principals responded to the interview question by speaking genuinely about their personal beliefs in why they continue as leaders in low SES schools. These strong statements revealed a philosophy of care and concern by 46% of the respondents, and were centered on students.

The interviewed principals spoke sincerely about their motivation for their work with students. However, not all principals were unanimous in their certainty that they were fulfilling a life passion. One principal declared that occasionally she has had some very down times and questioned her choice of profession. This questioning was not shared by another principal who stated, *"Occasionally there is that kind of tiredness, but there's never been a sense that – 'Oh gosh why am I doing this?', or, 'Do I really have to do this?' kind of idea"*.

One principal spoke specifically of his motivation in dealing with students in low SES schools. He stated that to him it appeared that often the parents, the system, or someone has already given up on them. He described his philosophy very briefly by

saying, *"You don't give in and you don't give up"*, and he stated that this gave him the impetus for his leadership:

> *… when you get into the role of an administrator, you get to see and know what many children have to live with when they walk outdoors and go home, and what little chance they could have if they don't have the right situation or the right circumstances to succeed….That's what really makes me want to make a difference.*

A strong commitment to leadership particularly within this context was indicated by the response of a principal who stated that he needed the students and staff as much as they needed him. He spoke very positively about this personal philosophy of mutual need. "*It does make you feel good, the work that I'm doing. And that's how my resiliency works. I'm fulfilling what I think is my purpose in life. And that is to help those kids*." In the short answer questions, 36% of the principals believed that having a purpose influenced positively their self-efficacy.

Opening doors for student success was mentioned by 23% of the principals. One principal stated that his motivation was to give students a solid chance for success. Even though in his present principalship he questioned whether or not he had the ability to change the attendance issue or effect an improvement in achievement, he did emphasize the continued need to keep trying. He declared that even though student success does not come easily, he believed leaders still need *"to fight the battles we need to be fighting"* in order to impact individual student achievement.

There were 62% of the principals who stated their attitudes about leadership. Two other principal reported that resilience was supported by strong beliefs in the value and potential for growth of all human life, and saw that working with the students would result in tremendous growth and opportunity, and that this knowledge provided the incentive for continued effort. "*The baseline of strength-based resilient practice is to hold high expectations and to put in place the support necessary for students to achieve*". This belief that students were worth the effort that they gave was listed by principals as a positive influence on their self-efficacy.

Summary of Results

Students in low SES schools came to school generally lacking the resources needed to assist them to succeed in the schools. This lack involved basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing, but also the lack of social and educational resources. Low SES students were generally not high achievers and displayed varying degrees of educational, social, and emotional engagement. Additionally, students were influenced by parents in their purported lack of value for education. Parents of low SES students were generally not perceived to be engaged in the school life of their child. One concern from principals was that there appeared to be a lack of communication between parents and teachers, potentially due to a lack of understanding of the circumstances experienced by low SES parents. Therefore, because these contextual issues appeared to prevent or diminish the probability for student success, principals believed that they needed to take action to ameliorate these barriers for student success. This need was augmented by an ethic of care for students in their schools, which motivated principals

to make a difference for students. In consequence, principals in low SES schools felt the need to provide supportive structures which students and families did not possess, in order to reinforce to them the importance and value of education, and that they could fully participate in creating this success for students.

Relationships

The theme of relationships was predominant in the study. These relationships involved the principal, students, parents, and community. One area of relationship-building was to engage parents so that they took a more active part in their child's academic life, in order to increase the support parents could give to their children. Most principals believed that it was more necessary for teachers to create direct relationships with students, as they believed that relationships influenced student success. Principals believed the relationship building engendered trust that would provide a framework for increased communication. Even though generally principals had high self-efficacy for creating successful relationships, they indicated that positive relationships made by others highly influenced both their self-efficacy and resilience.

Staff

The capacity of staff was also another influence on principal self-efficacy. Staff were required to have the capacity for "good teaching" and the ability and willingness to form relationships with students. Even though student engagement would result from effective teaching skills, principals believed in the imperative of staff having the capacity to create relationships with students so that the connections they made with students provided the students with the feeling of value and inclusion. Staff were also

expected to create communication with families who were not engaged with schools. When this did not happen without intervention, principals initiated and supported school programming focused on increasing parental engagement in schools.

Principals' Roles

The responses to the self-efficacy questionnaire indicated that principals scored higher in Instructional Leadership than they did on Management issues. These leadership demands concerned the principals who were highly committed to the fulfilment of both management and instructional leadership aspects of their job. However, some felt the pressure of not being able to exercise instructional leadership as a result of how they prioritized their time. Administrative issues were ranked very highly by principals as necessary to accomplish. Those aspects of the role of principal that ensured the basic running of the school and meeting deadlines for paperwork were among those activities for which principals were evaluated. Often, however, issues arose that demanded the most immediate attention of principals. These issues recurrently involved the need to deal with student behavior as well as with other, more contextual tasks such as dealing with outside agencies such as the police service and social services. These were the circumstances wherein principals felt that they lacked control of their time, and where principals indicated the lowest self-efficacy. These urgent demands as well as dealing with the requisite administration or management expectations of the district often expended the available time for principals. It was not surprising to note that principals felt that good organizational skills were necessary to maintain high self-efficacy, though the daily unplanned activities challenged this skill. The instructional leadership activities, such as effectively guiding teachers toward a

culture of learning to increase student success did not always occur, especially for those newly-appointed principals. However, as principals gained experience and understanding and made more efficient use of time, they could then focus their attention more on the instructional leadership aspect of their jobs. Therefore, even though principals in this study scored higher in instructional leadership than on management issues, novice principals seldom felt that they had sufficient time to exercise the effective instructional leadership skills that they possessed.

Supports

Because principals took varied action in schools in an attempt to alleviate the cultural differences between families and school personnel, principals greatly appreciated support from others. They acknowledged peer relationships as particularly valuable avenues of support. Principals either developed their own peer group, or the school district provided the opportunity for meeting. The components of knowledge, expertise, and encouragement were given within a trusting environment. However, all principals did not believe that there superintendents were a positive influence on their self-efficacy or resilience. To help sustain their resilience, or ability to sustain their effectiveness within their jobs, principals put in place personal coping mechanisms such as compartmentalizing, or creating a boundary to separate home and school life.

Influences for Success

Student success, identified as academic, social, and emotional improvement, was a result of intentional, planned school change. In order for this change to happen, principals had to establish a foundation on which it was possible to initiate improvement

efforts. Principals believed that they influenced student success through teachers. Therefore, having a staff with the capacity to interact with students on academic and relational level, thereby engaging students in academic, social, and emotional development, was identified as necessary. The positive learning climate was then created by principals and staff working together united by common beliefs and sharing the willingness to create change for student improvement.

However, student academic success was not observed by principals who experienced a lack of staff capacity or the absence of student engagement. Consequently, principals needed to take action to increase staff pedagogy and relational acumen. Principals used their knowledge, skills, and attributes, as well as external supports and advice to create and carry out their plan for change. The evaluation of their abilities to successfully accomplish the planned activities would influence self-efficacy beliefs.

Self-efficacy and resilience were closely related in this research. Particularly, self-efficacy was considered one of the protective factors for resilience (Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007), so the belief in principals' ability for situational success echoed the levels of resilience, or continued coping in the face of adversity or stress. Even though participating principals understood the definitions of both self-efficacy and resilience, it was important to note that principals mentioned similar influences for both, so there was a great deal of overlap of themes.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The focus of this study identified the influences on the self-efficacy of principals who lead low socioeconomic status schools for the purpose of determining how high self-efficacy can be maintained despite the competing demands on leaders in the schools. The data for this study were collected from 42 Alberta principals in a questionnaire, with a subset of 13 of these principals having participated in an in-depth semi-structured interview. Therefore, the data from both were analysed separately, and were combined in the results.

Self-efficacy is the individual belief that he/she is able to achieve success in a specified activity. Unlike self-confidence, which is a feeling of self-worth or ability to succeed in general, self-efficacy beliefs are activated toward particular actions. Therefore, this chapter examined the predominate beliefs of these principals. Four major themes emerged from the findings of this study and are explained in detail. Principals in low SES schools were influenced by:

- the tensions they experienced in managing their competing leadership responsibilities;
- the capacity of their staff for pedagogical capability and relational acumen;
- their imperative to partner with members of the community to meet students' needs; and
- their exercise of coping mechanisms and reliance on support for ongoing work

Tensions in Managing Competing Leadership Responsibilities

The first major finding of this research study was that principals experienced tension between the many leadership dimensions of their role. This was because both of the two most important leadership dimensions, leadership and management, are legislated requirements for each principal. The completion of the tasks within each of these dimensions challenged principals, primarily because of the perceived imbalance of available time and what they needed to accomplish. The exceptions to this were those principals who were highly experienced and/or did not avoid conflict when dealing with staff and students.

Instructional Leadership

One major role for principals was leadership. The most common form of leadership referred to by principals in this study was instructional leadership. Instructional leadership was seen to be spending thoughtful time and effort to increase the capacity of the staff, therefore influencing student achievement or success through the work done by teachers with students. Bush (2008) cited Cuban (1988) in his understanding that instructional leadership involved influencing others by shaping their beliefs and actions to initiate change. Principals in this study endorsed that definition, believing that instructional leadership was a process that involved the communication of goals in order to create positive change in the learning climate of the school (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). This agreed with a list of skills, abilities, and behaviors that were identified on the questionnaire as specifying instructional leadership actions which were:

facilitate student learning in your school, generate enthusiasm for a shared vision for the school, manage change in your school, create a positive learning environment in your school, raise student achievement on standardized tests, and motivate teachers (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The principals in this study scored higher on self-efficacy with instructional leadership than they did with management, but during the interviews the principals generally expressed the belief that in their practice, they had not fully exercised their instructional leadership roles. The lack of coincidence across the two data collection approaches was assumed to be because principals who participated in the interviews focused on a generalized conception of instructional leadership in its form as professional development or professional learning communities, both enacting positive change in teachers' instructional approaches. In other words, the questionnaire delineated a wider range of instructional leadership behaviors, but the responses to the interviews revealed the narrower conceptualization of instructional leadership as teaching teachers. It was further assumed that the interview format engendered a more emotional and in-depth reaction from principals than did the questionnaires.

Management

The management role was identified by principals as meeting deadlines for document submission, managing staff and their concerns, handling student behavior and communicating with parents, an identification of job requirements that was endorsed by Cooley and Shen (2003). An important component of the management role clearly articulated in this research study was the responsibility by principals to maintain a

standard of staff proficiency. The management issues that were assessed in the questionnaire included: being able to prioritize among job demands; handling paperwork; shaping school policies and procedures; managing the time for the job; having control over the schedule; and coping with job stress (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The principals in this study, similar to those in previous studies (Lehman, 2007; Ream, 2010; Santamaria, 2008) scored a lower self-efficacy score for these grouped management items than they did for instructional leadership. Explicitly, the issue of feeling a lack of control for how they spent time during their day had the single highest negative influence on their self-efficacy as principals. It was interesting to note that principals felt high self-efficacy in being able to prioritize among job demands. However, it could be assumed that district-mandated priorities which included a great deal of the management tasks were always considered most important, because these included concrete expectations against which principals were evaluated. Therefore, it was understandable that principals chose to prioritize highly those job demands where they were answerable to their district superiors (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013). These standardized management activities endorsed the conceptualization by Bush (2008), who described management as sustainability and orderliness, and a prerequisite for the existence of a supporting learning climate. Leithwood (2007) discussed the goals of management and leadership as stability and improvement. This would then provide a reason to prioritize management activities first, and leave the instructional leadership tasks that take time, planning, and foresight, as ongoing goals for later completion. However, when principals prioritized instructional leadership as secondary to management, they did not believe they were successful in practicing

leadership to its fullest capacity. Indeed, they professed frustration and disappointment when they could not exercise leadership to create change that impacted instruction. Certainly, district offices and Alberta Education have promoted the understanding that principals must be instructional leaders, but principals have been measured on a daily basis primarily against management tasks. This mixed messaging was particularly evident when low provincial test scores engendered public and district dissatisfaction aimed toward the principal, sending the evaluative message of role and school-related inadequacy. It appeared as if novice principals were most affected by the seemingly impossible task of instructional leadership, primarily because of the high standard principals placed on themselves for personal achievement.

The Impact of Low SES on Principal Leadership

In addition to experiencing the struggle to achieve balance through the two competing priorities, principals in low SES schools also revealed an additional difficulty for principals in both their leadership and management issues. Students in low SES schools often have unmet physical, emotional, and social needs, as well as lower academic attainment. Thus, dealing with these issues for student nutrition, shelter for families, and additional behavioral and special needs issues are added to the imperative to increase lower achievement levels. This increase in role requirements has challenged the abilities of some principals. Principals dealt with these issues according to their priorities, belief systems, personalities, and skills. The principals who would be characterized as focused on relationships found this difficult on three levels. First, they had a strong ethic of care for low SES students and families that motivated them to

spend time trying to find resources for students and families. Second, because they had strong beliefs about making a difference for students, it was frustrating for them when the school staff did not share that empathy or knowledge of the background situation for some of low SES students. Third, as addressing low SES issues necessitated time expenditure, principals felt more constrained to complete administrational aspects of their role, causing a further impediment to practicing instructional leadership.

The extent to which principals could accurately gauge their choices of action, their capabilities to enact their goals, and their expectations of future success was the result of specific experience within a low SES environment. These principals had to understand the leadership requirements in leading a low SES school, and that these school characteristics have the potential to influence principal agency. Principals concluded that prior experience or having the "right personality for the job" were important determinants on principal self-efficacy or resilience.

When principals entered schools, they had expectations for themselves that were based on their previously-established self-efficacy beliefs. However, prior experience provided limited knowledge if it was acquired in contextually-different school settings or in different leadership positions. Specifically, principals commented on the unpreparedness that they felt when they were junior administrators or principals in other non-low SES school settings. The skills that they had learned from those experiences were not sufficient preparation for them to feel comfortable in all aspects of their present role. For some, the context was the unknown factor. The differences experienced by principals in these low SES schools was defined as an increased frequency and extent of negative urgent student-centered situations, and were identified as visits from police and

social services, weapons and gang activity at school, destruction of private property, and student violence. Schools that were located in low SES environments also exhibited another unexpected aspect of school culture which involved a difference in the receptiveness, belief systems, attitudes and skills of students, staff, and parents. Briefly speaking, this was seen to be the result of a difference in understanding between school staff and those who lived in the low SES communities. These differences were most evident in the beliefs of how each group valued education, and the subsequent efforts of school staff to exert influence on the communities' beliefs about education. These contextual considerations influenced the principals, whose responsibilities rested in determining the school direction. Principals' beliefs, goals, actions and plans revealed their identities as principals (Stephenson, 2007), which were tested and re-forged through experience.

Staff Capacity

The extent of principal high self-efficacy beliefs was largely dependent upon the abilities and willingness of staff to interact with students on two levels - academically and relationally. The principals in this study were very positive about teachers who recognized the need to establish academic and social engagement for students, and who subsequently possessed the ability and emotional capacity to develop supportive relationships with the students. This directly endorsed previous findings by Myers and Pianta (2008) who identified characteristics of emotional warmth and acceptance by those teachers who had the skill to provide these necessary supports for students.

Cochran-Smith (2006) and Leonard (2007) agreed that this combination of abilities - both academic and interpersonal, supported their definition of a good teacher.

Principals viewed their staff as groups of individuals with whom they continually attempted to develop a sense of community by sharing their vision and beliefs. Therefore, principals valued staff continuity because it offered the time needed for principals to influence staff development. However, these principals described staff turnover as a frequent problem. This statement of concern regarding teacher turnover was endorsed by Darling-Hammond (2003) and Ingersoll (2001), who stated that there was a higher prevalence of teacher turnover in low SES schools. More recent research also indicated that schools with high minority groups also experienced higher rates of teacher turnover (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010). This difficulty to keep effective and valued staff in the schools with low SES populations was a concern to the principals in this study, primarily because effective teachers promote the most gain in students which was identified by Konstantopoulos (2009) as significant factor in effective schooling. Principals wished to retain staff members who were personally and professionally committed to student personal development and ongoing academic achievement, and equally importantly, who enjoyed working in that environment and chose to work there. However, the districts' present practices have focused on teacher choice in schools, where tenured teachers could apply to teach in other, higher SES schools. When these teachers applied and were hired to other schools, it resulted in vacant teaching positions to which other experienced and talented teachers seldom applied due to the demand these positions exacted upon teachers. Therefore, these positions were frequently filled by novice teachers. This study endorsed the finding of Milanowski et al. (2009) who

commented that the undesirability of positions in low SES schools led to these jobs being filled by new teachers who lacked the choice which tenured teachers possessed. However, this perpetuated a "revolving door" effect, whereby principals in this study shared a belief that most beginning teachers would teach long enough to get a continuous contract, and then would attempt to transfer out. However, this constant influx of novice teachers was not always referred to negatively by principals. These principals shared the idea of Ingersoll and Merrill (2010) of the desirability of the different skill set, energy, enthusiasm, and willingness for innovation that novice teachers brought to their role; however, inexperienced teachers, no matter how energetic and willing, do not often have the skills of any experienced teacher. Therefore, the willingness of principals to have a large contingent of novice teachers emphasizes the value they put on teacher energy, commitment to their profession, the willingness to embrace new ideas, and to readily be influenced by principal-lead, school-based vision. A related concern involving more experienced teachers was also discussed by principals, as some were described as harder to convince to embrace new ideas and technology, and were defined by principals as appearing stagnant. These were the teachers who generally stayed at the school either because they felt comfortable, or because they could not successfully transfer out of the school. It was believed that these teachers felt complacent in a school where parents were more accepting and who did not tend to place high expectations on teachers. Staff were described as having an outlook of rigidity and negativity if they were not perceived to be engaged in ongoing professional development or were unwilling to make changes in their teaching methods. Therefore, this perpetuated an enforced tenure at that school, because these teachers would not be

successful in a job competition elsewhere. This resulted in an ongoing and stressful necessity for principal intervention to uphold a standard of teaching practices.

Pedagogical Capacity

Principals in this study felt the challenge of ensuring that their staff had and demonstrated the capability to "perform good teaching practices", which were described as activities such as differentiating, and accommodating lessons for students. Essentially, this meant that each teacher must take into account the particular needs of each child and modify the instruction and the expectations of what constitutes acceptable student achievement. Because the focus of the school was on academic improvement, principals valued those who they considered to be good teachers, and considered these staff as highly positive influences in their efforts to ensure academic success for students. Principals valued the capability of their staff to provide support for student improvement, and to have consistent and high expectations for their students' academic achievement. However, some staff echoed the findings from Auwarter and Aruguete (2008) who commented on the low expectations of teachers for low SES students. Specifically, principals mentioned that some of their teachers had to be encouraged to believe that any efforts they expended would make a difference in the achievement level of low SES students. This reluctance to express confidence in their own teaching skills was endorsed by various researchers had found that that some teachers did not believe that low SES students could be successful (Auwarter & Aruguete, 2008; Burney & Beilke, 2008; Woolfolk Hoy, Hoy, & Kurz, 2008). Principals felt that this positive outlook was a necessary condition for school success.

Therefore, principals felt an increased responsibility in low SES schools to ensure that teachers' professional development was ongoing and effective, so generally described an action plan that provided for increased teacher capacity or facilitated their movement toward a school that was intended to be more compatible to the teachers' skills and abilities.

How principals felt about dealing with their staff depended upon their personalities, and whether they were more relational or direct when they were dealing with people. Some principals found it difficult to deal with non-engaged staff. These principals who believed that staff change is difficult and should be approached gradually focused on ongoing professional development, in addition to utilizing the leadership skills of highly capable staff members to help the development of their colleagues. These principals were categorized as relational, and hoped to influence staff without the stress of open conflict. They viewed staff improvement as part of a long-term process leading to school achievement, so their self-efficacy was a result of their evaluation and involvement in the components of that process. Fewer principals approached the need for staff change directly and quickly by redistributing teaching assignments, giving staff members a choice to comply within the boundaries of the leaders' stated visions or to leave, by using their influence to help non-effective staff members find another position, or by dismissing them from the school. However, these principals felt successful at inviting confrontation and dealing with conflict, so they felt particularly high self-efficacy in dealing with their staff. Even though most principals stated their belief that they must make every effort to encourage teachers to improve, the outcome was that they believed that the students in low SES schools especially needed effective teachers.

This belief in teacher effects for low SES students was supported by Nye, Konstantopoulos, and Hedges (2004), who found evidence of the particular importance of the capacity of individual teachers for students in low SES schools. Previous research by Painter (2000) found that when dealing with teachers not yet working at their full capability, the most common practice for principals was to continue to support them, a finding that was echoed in this study.

The perception of the principals in the study was that the engagement of each student was related to the individual teacher in each classroom and with teacher's ability to create inquiring learners, specifically with academics. McNeal (2005) supported this belief that the teacher is one of the most important influences on students' academic success. These principals were highly satisfied with these effective teachers who were on their staff. They valued teachers who were committed to their profession, who worked hard, and thereby positively influenced the future of students. Some felt their role in this situation was to adequately resource these capable teachers, and to provide them with leadership opportunities.

Principals in the study explained their belief that teachers needed to possess the capability to engage students in their learning in both academic and emotional ways. These two concepts were both important and interrelated. There were differing opinions given as to the antecedents of these different forms of student engagement. The more dominant belief was that relationship building was the key to student success, because students would be more motivated to value themselves as learners through a trust-based relationship with their teacher. This was endorsed by Skinner et al. (2008), who found

that students who were engaged emotionally because of positive relationships showed improvement in subsequent behaviors. Additionally, Anderson et al. (2004) provided evidence that positive relationships with teachers can improve attendance, a contributor to greater gains in academic achievement. Furthermore, Croninger and Lee (2001) found a relationship between positive student/teacher relationships and lower dropout rates and higher high school completion. A second belief was that the ability of teachers to engage students in academic learning was related to the formation of meaningful relationships. Specifically, some principals believed that relationships could not be established between students and teachers who could not modify teaching practices to meet students' academic needs. In this case, academic engagement was a prerequisite for students to forming relationships with teachers. Still other principals believed that student relationships with teachers that focussed on academics existed regardless of student achievement. This belief was endorsed by Myers and Pianta (2008) who presented the finding that positive student/teacher relationships can exist despite student academic disengagement. Therefore, the extent of this importance for the principals was based upon the needs of their schools; that is, if their schools had emotional or academic disengagement within the student population, then building relationships increased in importance. It has been found that student engagement is a result of the interplay between the perceptions that students have of themselves and with others, but is also shaped by teacher interactions (Skinner et al., 2008). Therefore, the importance of teachers in student engagement was vital, a conclusion which was shared by Myers and Pianta (2008). Even though not all principals in the study agreed on the antecedents of

student engagement, all principals recognized the importance of student/teacher relationships.

Relational Capacity

The other major role for leaders was to build relational acumen in teachers. Some principals valued the ability of teachers to develop relationships with students even more than they did their teaching competence. The importance of teachers' ability to relate to students in low SES schools was considered by principals in this study to be of particular importance, echoing the findings of Konstantopoulos (2009), who suggested that even though effective teachers positively influenced all students, teacher effects appeared higher in low SES schools. Nye, Konstantopoulos, and Hedges (2004) previously stated that relationships between individual students and their teachers had a much greater academic effect on students in low SES schools, particularly in terms of students' results in math and reading. This current study supported these authors' claims, as principals made specific reference of the positive students' results for which they attributed specific credit to individual teachers. Principals also believed that in these low SES schools, it was very important that the school should provide a balance for what they described as a "negative situation of the home lives" of students, and expressed their strong beliefs concerning the necessity for teachers to establish and maintain positive interactions with students as a counteracting factor to these problematic home situations. The importance of the value of student relationships with teachers was supported by previous findings, which found a connection between

students' perceived positive relationships with teachers, and low SES students' subsequent increased behavioral and emotional engagement (Skinner et al., 2008).

Unfortunately, according to the principals in this study, not all teachers have demonstrated their ability to successfully relate with students and to positively influence student engagement with their school life. Although principals encouraged staff to develop these relationships, a few principals believed that certain of their staff lacked the deep affective capacity to interact warmly and in an educationally sound way with students, particularly with those students were experiencing stress within their home lives. This was especially meaningful in low SES schools, as students needed the sustained balanced classroom structure that could be provided by teachers who had personally gained control over their own emotional lives. This belief was endorsed by findings from Hamre, Pianta, Downer, and Mashburn (2007) who stated that students were less likely to develop conflict with teachers in an emotionally supportive classroom. Even more specifically, teachers influenced the amount and degree of conflict in the classroom through their emotional support (Schechtman & Yaman, 2012). The emotionally supportive classroom was identified as the principal component of teacher-designed stability to class atmosphere (Buyse et al., 2008). In agreement with this previous research, it has been found that the emotional competency of teachers can influence student relationships and guide their own practice (Harvey, Bimler, Evans, Kirkland, & Pechtel, 2011). Principals perceived that teachers who had emotional balance were not dependent upon the students for how they perceived their own emotions; therefore, they did not personalize negative interactions with students. This range of teacher abilities to foster high quality relationships with students agreed with

similar findings from Jerome, Hamre, and Pianta (2009). When principals discussed how they would encourage relationship-building between teachers and students, the most prevalent methods they utilized were modeling behaviors and attitudes, and providing professional development to staff regarding the development of students in low SES areas. However, principal support for staff who displayed the lack of emotional intelligence was seen as very difficult and ongoing, as some of these staff did not appear capable of a professional perspective on their negative interactions with students. The principals in the study concurred with prior research which stated that teachers who revealed a lack of emotional stability reported more conflict in the classroom then did other teachers on their staff (Hamre et al., 2007), as principals mentioned that these certain teachers followed a pattern of handling behavioral concerns by referring them to the office. The principals in the study did indicate that through modeling proper caring to students, they demonstrated to teachers their expectation of appropriate and desired behaviors, indicating an agreement with findings from a previous study that stated that teachers' emotional warmth can be learned and developed (Jerome et al., 2009). However, principals expected their teachers to be capable of interacting appropriately with students especially after these behaviors were modeled. They believed the teachers had to ultimately assume responsibility for their own emotional growth and to make necessary changes in their observable behaviors.

The principals in these studies focused on the importance of teachers' influence on student attendance. Specifically, students who were engaged in their work were more motivated to attend school. Student attendance was of specific concern to principals who not only talked about the influence of parents and parental motivation on

student attendance, but on further motivation for students to attend school. These principals believed that teachers influenced students both and emotionally, which positively affected the willingness of students to attend classes. Certainly, these principals believed that for any academic or emotional improvement by students to occur, they had to actually be physically present at school. Not surprisingly, research has strongly endorsed this belief that there is a significant relationship between student attendance and student achievement (Parke & Kanyongo, 2012; Roby, 2003; Spradlin et al., 2012).

Partner with the Community to Meet Students' Basic Needs

Low SES schools provide another dimension of complexity for principals, which is the lack of the basics of life for many students and their families. Often, principals decided to support students' basic needs with the intent to provide a stronger foundation for learning. The question then became what kinds of programs were needed, and how they were to be managed in terms of time and resources. Additionally, principals sought to increase resources or possibilities of support from parents and community organizations in general.

Resources for Students

In the context of low SES schools, the necessity to meet the physical needs of students was an important consideration for these principals. Certainly, these principals understood Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs and recognized the imperative to meet students' physical needs before any learning could take place. They discussed the

setting up or maintaining of programs that were designed to help meet the many needs of students. These programs differed in the services and resources they offered. Principals' attitudes toward these programs were varied dependent upon their evaluation of the amount and quality of service delivered by the service provider. For example, some programs may necessitate the school deploying teachers to monitor the program and to supervise the students. Therefore, this could increase the need for timetabling and supervision which would add stress on school staff and principals. Most programs mentioned by principals had been previously established, but the expenditure of time and resources was at times problematic. Even though these costs in time were an immediate consideration for principals, they were felt to be justified because they were instrumental in supporting the lower dimensions in the hierarchy of student needs, creating better conditions for learning to occur for students.

Another aspect of the role of principals in low SES schools was to allocate resources to the students in their schools. Principals were in agreement that they were given sufficient funding for learning resources. However, they believed there was need for more human resources, such as a full-time mental-health counselor for students. Certainly, the particular challenge to low SES schools includes aspects of student mental-health that are exhibited by problematic social interactions (Wright et al., 2006). Leitch (2007) concluded in her report of Canadian studies that poverty is an important determinant of both physical and mental health. She also stated that in Canada there was considerable student mental illness which was characterized by the tensions experienced with the impact of bullying, the feeling of anxiety and stress over the completion of school work, and psychiatric disorders (Leitch, 2007). One concern for

the principals in this study was the continual and ongoing need for school staff to support the needs of low SES students on an individual basis, and notwithstanding the time that is needed, the primary concern was the acknowledgment that the role of counselor is beyond the expertise of a professional educator. The focus on providing mental-health support for students in schools has been the topic of The Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science, and Technology (2006) who put forward recommendations that a concerted plan to identify and deal with the mental health needs of students should be made at school using a team approach that included teachers, social workers, and child/youth workers. Along with that recommendation was one that suggested time and resources should be given to teachers to learn those skills needed for early identification of mental-health issues in students. This acknowledgment of the need for further supports at school endorsed an older study of Keys, Bemak, and Lockhart (1998) in which concern was expressed even then that the design of school counseling programs could not adequately meet the critical needs of students. Therefore, the principals in this study acknowledged this greater need for further expertise and resources for teachers that they did not possess.

Expanding Parental Engagement as a Resource for Students

Principals in this study discussed their perceptions of the parents in their school communities, and their impact on students and staff. These viewpoints encompassed principals' judgments and beliefs concerning the attitudes of the parents. These principals believed that the students in their school shared their parents' characteristics and mirrored their values, a finding which was endorsed by Kennedy Green, Huerta and

Richards (2007). Principals believed that parental attitudes influenced students' perceptions of school and their subsequent behavior while attending school. This attitude was described by principals as parents not valuing education.

The primary indicators of a lack of valuing of education were discussed as demonstrated through irregular student attendance and the lack of homework completion. These issues were given importance as they were held by staff as examples of expected commitment to classroom academic efforts (Horvat et al., 2010). Low school attendance has been a measured variable in previous research studies concerning low SES students (Spradlin et al., 2012), which endorses the attendance concerns from the findings of this study. The lack of completed homework was another indicator of academic interest and commitment. McWayne (2004) was cited by Lee and Bowen (2006) for his description of supportive parental behavior at home, which he described as assisting with homework and other educational activities. A belief that parents of low SES students do not place a similar value for education was not recognized by all principals in this study, as some agreed with other researchers that all parents want their children to be successful in school (C. E. Cooper, 2010; Horvat et al., 2010; Lareau, 2011).

Certain principals ascribed what they called "poor parenting skills" to parents' lack of knowledge and immaturity. These value statements were determined by their perceptions of how parental choices impacted the students at school. Examples of this included the choices that parents made concerning nutrition and their allocation of financial resources. Parental influence was also assumed regarding the vocabulary and

conversational styles of their children. Principals also mentioned parental choices that were focused on their own ‘wants’ rather than what their children needed. This idea was endorsed by the assertion that these parents were like children themselves, and did not know how to parent.

Another attribution that was made concerned the behavior of students in the school. Certainly, it was found that parents who bring up children in low SES neighborhoods have a high probability of stress resulting from lack of resources and family conflict, and this conflict would affect their children both academically and behaviorally (Alexander et al., 1997; Amato & Cheadle, 2008). This certainly echoed Amato and Sobolewski (2001), who determined that familial conflict undermined the students’ willingness and ability to achieve. It was not surprising to note that principals assumed that students’ problematic behavioral and emotional concerns were associated with their home life, an assumption that was found to have validity in Amato and Cheadle's (2008) later research where they found that children who learn aggression from their families experience difficulties in sustaining positive social relationships because they lack the necessary social skills.

Unfortunately, the negative evaluative statements related to parents' behaviors and decisions tended to be broadly based, and often did not encompass knowledge of the restraints under which some families functioned. Issues such as parents undertaking multiple jobs impacted their abilities to supervise their children who, in turn, in many cases had to assume some parental roles, such as providing a range of care for themselves and for younger siblings. Generally speaking, principals establishing more

effective communication between school and home and facilitating staff awareness of home environments was a practice some, leaders adopted but it was not universal. This approach would do much to inform staff understanding and ameliorate misconceptions of how family circumstances impact the schools' functioning, and lessen negative value-laden statements based upon teachers' own societal standards, and perhaps engender an increased commitment to provide better support to students and families within these complex communities.

Because the family influence on students was considered powerful, these principals recognized the potential support that could be utilized for students by eliciting their engagement in decision-making regarding their children. However, most principals in this study revealed that parental engagement tended to be low in their schools. This lack of engagement most often was inferred from the observation that parents did not attend school functions, even during parent-teacher interviews. This issue was supported by Jesse, Davis, and Pokorny (2004) and McGee (2003) who discussed the lack of educational involvement from low SES parents. However, principals did list factors to explain this lack of interaction of parents in their child's school life. These were attributed to onerous working schedules or a lack of education. This was similar to a finding from Hill and Craft (2003) who asserted that low SES parents may not be able to help their children with educational endeavors such as homework if they themselves had low educational attainment. Some principals also stated their belief that some of their parents were not involved because they believed their presence was not necessary as they had total faith in how the school was responding to the needs of their children.

Clearly, a lack of two-way communication was considered detrimental to the process of schools and families working together on behalf of the children. Therefore, several principals spoke of the importance of developing positive relationships with families. They wished to establish trust between the school and parents so that they would be more assured of greater parental support with future issues with their children. Principals understood and accepted that a concerted effort must be initiated by themselves to ensure that communication was increased. This agreed with previous findings that suggested that the invitation for increased communication must come from the school (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005). Principals initiated this by making school events less threatening. In one case, parent-teacher interviews were replaced with an open house, in the hope that this would attract parents who would feel more comfortable receiving information, rather than engaging one-to-one with teachers. Other programs involved a formal timetabled program where teachers were expected to contact all parents on a monthly basis with positive news from school concerning their child. This was done because, at times, there was reluctance from teachers to initiate the conversation with parents because they feared the reception they would get from parents when they reported negative news to parents concerning their children.

Of course, the end goal was an increased trust and willingness to collaborate to ensure success. When principals wanted to engage parents, they also were unsure of parental reaction, so they deliberately engaged in small talk with parents before they arrived at the reason for the conversation. This was specifically to make the call more friendly in an effort to engage the parent positively. These findings echoed an earlier

study by Adams, Forsyth, and Mitchell (2009) who found that schools can deliberately create non-threatening social exchanges to increase communication. Additionally, Weihua and Williams (2010) agreed that school-initiated contacts with parents on non-confrontational topics created positive relationships, but added that negative associations developed when topics were about behavioral problems. Adams, Forsyth, and Mitchell (2009) discussed the ability of leaders to build and sustain parent trust by establishing an environment where respect was mutually shared. The principals in this study certainly wanted parents to trust that school decisions were created fairly and focused on what would help support success for their child. The long-term goal for engaging parents in schools was to enhance the supports they could offer for students.

Principals also commented on the challenges that some staff face in establishing workable relationships with parents. This was attributed to teacher unfamiliarity with the social culture of parents in low SES schools, and staff attitudes and perceptions. Staff assume an expectation of parental support that is recognized from their own culturally-based experience. Previous researchers endorsed this similar expectations of staff that parents should offer support to students by preparing their children for learning and to support the school when dealing with their children's' behavior issues (Horvat et al., 2010; Milne & Plourde, 2006). These behaviors were described as determinants for parents having a value for education. This statement found agreement with several researchers who discovered that school staff equates parental engagement or active involvement with valuing education (Hill & Craft, 2003; Lareau, 2011; Lott, 2001; Sirin, 2005). The response of some principals to educate their staff was to initiate planned professional development to heighten teachers' understanding of the

circumstances in which low SES parents live, with the goal of changing teachers' attitudes when they interacted with parents so that positive interactions with parents would be increased. They also modeled the communication which they wanted teachers to emulate.

Principals' perception of their roles varied in relation to their interactions with parents. Two of these roles were particularly identified by positive communication with parents and feelings of mutual goodwill. One of these roles involved principals who viewed parents as inexperienced or needing guidance. They enacted their role by offering support and advice to parents who accepted this assistance. This could be described as taking on a parental role with the parents themselves. Another role enacted by principals was that of a provider of needed goods and services to parents, where principals acquired necessary resources for parents by using their influence within the community. These principals were confident about these interactions, as they felt comfortable taking on those requirements for those roles, but also spoke positively about the parents. Their high self-efficacy beliefs were based on their previous successes, so experience was generally a factor for principals who reported acting in these roles.

Expanding Community Engagement

In this study, the supports that schools could provide for students depended partially upon community partnerships that varied in effectiveness. These principals agreed with previous findings that recognized the community as an important source of human and financial resources which has the potential for helping schools meet the

needs of students (Bryk et al., 2010). Indeed, notwithstanding the low SES context, principals in their capacities as leaders must create relationships with community personnel as well as others, and to must respond to the people in the community in order to create stronger ties of influence to benefit students (Gray & Streshly, 2008; Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2012; Seashore Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011). In this present study, the efforts of principals to establish community resources were in varied stages of advancement. These efforts ranged from an acknowledgment that it was an expectation to establish community resources but uncertainty of how this could be established, to a principal who personally had originated a partnership between the school, the police service, and social services to take care of the needs of the students. This case was notable because this relationship not only was still in existence several years after it started, but was recognized and replicated in the district as a standard of best practice. This creation of a partnership depended upon the ability of the principal to have the motivation to act upon his/her beliefs, to have communication skills to engage the other participants, and most importantly, to have the confidence and conviction to act outside of the existing boundaries of the district which tended to constrain individual action. Certainly, this may be beyond the capability of an inexperienced principal who may be focused on their own professional success within the existing district guidelines. In previous self-efficacy research, this particular personal characteristic of optimizing available resources was considered an attribute of self-efficacy (J. R. Smith, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Therefore, this study could state the conclusion that even though principals are socialized by each district into acting within existing

guidelines, self-efficacy for entrepreneurialism by principals should be supported and encouraged by that same school district.

Coping Mechanisms Supporting Continued Well-Being

Whether principal resilience is a characteristic that develops from stressors (Christman & McClellan, 2008), a trait of personal capacity (Gillespie et al., 2007), or process (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000a), it resulted in the ability for sustained effective leadership. Principals revealed their incentives that enabled them to continue to be effective in their professional practice. These were internal motivations and supports, such as a philosophy that promoted an ethic to care for low SES students in low SES schools, their personal attributes and coping strategies, in addition to utilizing external supports such as peer groups which may be provided by the district.

Moral Imperative

One of the strongest individual factors that sustained continued action was based on the principals' ethical and spiritual beliefs. This finding aligned with Fuller (2012) and Stephenson (2007) who discussed a moral imperative to continue make decisions to act based upon their belief of the necessity to make life better for students. In close alignment with Fullan's (1993) statement that good teachers have a moral purpose, the theme of "making a difference" was widespread among the interviewed principals, and indicated the essential nature of their motivation to do what they believed was right. This agreed with Sergiovanni (1992) who stated that individuals' intrinsic motivation to act morally was stronger than that of self-interest. These principals' motivation for

action was based upon the understanding that students in these schools were disadvantaged, and these principals understood that they could be the agent to create change for low SES students. This philosophy that involved a duty of care closely echoed the following declaration. "The moral purpose for educational leadership could be perceived as seeking to bring about social justice" (Fuller, 2012, p. 672). Even though having an ethic of care was evident in this study, only one principal described this as a “moral purpose”, which was explained as his motivation for continuing in his work, and he connected this value-laden motivator with modelling specific behaviors to reinforce this with his teachers. Other principals used phrases such as "servant leadership", "sense of vocation", sense of social justice, and "sense of purpose".

Personal Attributes

Principals identified their own attributes or attitudes which they felt influenced the belief in their success. They also self-identified a measure of self-efficacy and resilience. Certainly, self-efficacy has been considered a necessary attribute for individuals in their successful coping strategies (Rutter, 2006). These principals revealed that they believed that organization and diligence were the most important attributes for the success in maintaining the necessary daily administrative issues. It was also important for principals to be progressing toward identified goals and having high expectations in setting goals. This importance of setting goals was emphasized by O'Leary (1998) who suggested that resilience was promoted by the achievement of these goals. A similar conclusion was made by Masten and Obradovik (2008) who focused on the reinforcement of efforts by successful completion of goals.

It was also found that the principals in this study expressly stated that they exercised patience in their personal interactions with students, especially when dealing with behavioral issues. Principals' views on their own agency determined how they felt about dealing with negative staff issues. For example, principals stated patience as an attribute when dealing with negative staff issues, but this may have been because they did not invite conflict with staff and insist upon immediate change.

Principals also believed that an important attribute was determination; to stand their ground in the face of opposition, and to even be able to "fight battles" with students, staff, parents, subordinates, and community agencies because of what they believed was best for students. This was especially meaningful when this moral imperative motivated into conflict principals who would not choose to engage in negative interactions. Pratt-Adams and Maguire (2009) found that the satisfaction felt by principals in low SES schools motivated them to stay in this demanding job despite the high emotional costs that came from the commitment to students. Several principals in this study agreed with Osterman and Sullivan (1994) who stated that optimism was related to self-efficacy, and it was this optimism that allowed the principals to be flexible in their thinking and planning.

Coping Strategies

Sustaining this work was difficult for principals, and depended on the self-knowledge of each individual principal of what worked best to help effectively manage the workload and the stressors of the job. Pratt-Adams and Maguire (2009) stated that

resilience may have been created by principals in low SES schools when the "emotional costs" of school leadership are displaced by an alternative (p. 120), and the findings of this study indicate some ways in which principals manage this. This attention on being proactive rather than reactive to circumstances was an indicator of self-efficacy, where the focus of principals with high self-efficacy was on what they did well, rather than their failures, which exemplified Bandura's (1997) description of self-efficacy in action. Principals understood the importance of maintaining their emotional well-being (Miller & Daniel, 2007) in the face of sometimes debilitating workplace stress (Zellars et al., 2008). Principals used strategies such as setting limits to solving others' problems, knowing and utilizing their personal times of maximum productivity, and techniques for home/work separation. Some principals prioritized what was important in their lives by declaring that families were more important than work, and it was important to protect aspects of their work from interfering with life with their families. The realization of this fear that the stress of work would negatively impact family relationships was endorsed by Webber and Scott (2013), who found that this was one of many effects of workplace stress. The strategy of supporting a personal/professional balance was called "compartmentalizing", in which principals did not take work home in order to completely separate their work and family lives. Most deliberately spent more hours at work but discussed the importance of protecting their home life from the responsibilities or stress of work. It is important to mention that this self-knowledge for some hard-working principals often occurred after a traumatic life event, which caused a re-prioritization on their attitudes toward work, personal health, and family life. Of all the principals, only one chose not to separate his work life from home life, deliberately

bringing his work home because he felt that the students at his school needed him more than did his own children. Pratt-Adams and Maguire (2009) discussed the long hours spent by school leaders and their efforts to avoid taking work home. None of these principals practiced escapist techniques such as substance abuse, as was found in Webber and Scott's (2013) recent research, but a single principal defined alcoholism as a path that he chose not to follow.

External Supports

Even though district support was considered an important influence for self-efficacy during the interviews, this was not the case revealed by the qualitative data. District support did not score highly on the questionnaire in supporting principal self-efficacy, and was the lowest scored item in the Low SES category. The resiliency score for Relationships was surprisingly low as well. It could be assumed that in a semi-structured interview setting, circumstances were recalled that carried with them a great deal of emotion, which was often evident. The generality of the interview questions provided principals the means to explain their responses, which often turned into a recalling of events or storytelling.

Supports were needed when principals lacked the ability to accomplish goals on their own. The concept of support for principals was revealed as an important direct influence on their feelings of security or success in enacting their leadership roles. Principals determined the amount of support they needed by their perceptions of the amount of influence they possessed in their leadership practice. Any lack of control was

augmented by their external supports. Principals varied in their perception of their abilities, as well as the character and extent of support that they needed. The purpose of district assistance was to be used to support the principal by providing instruction and leadership development. An assumption would also be that the primary sources of support for principals from Central Office should most likely have been their immediate superordinates who also were responsible for their evaluation. However, this relationship was not universally considered supportive. Rather, some principals were challenged by last-minute demands requiring a quick response which undermined previously planned activities. Additionally, some principals were accused of not expending sufficient effort to make greater gains on their low provincial test achievement scores. Additionally, a comment referring to the district cancellation of a program that was considered extremely valuable for low SES students was made, indicating disillusionment with the perceived priority with how low SES schools were supported and resourced. District personnel, often superintendents, were seen as the enforcers of district practice and challengers of school leaders' decisions. Unlike Spanneut and Ford (2008) who defined the expectations of superintendents to act as instructional leaders to support their principals, most principals did not see district office personnel as helpful. One principal specifically stated that he received important support from the superintendent, but he felt that he was deserving of this because of his own past practices of good judgement. This principal could be considered highly efficacious, as his beliefs exemplified a finding from Evans (2010) who stated that principals with high self-efficacy demanded and received supportive relationships with Central Office.

The principals in this study valued external support in the form of peer groups, which strongly endorsed previous research which found that principals tended to interact with people who are similar in terms of work setting and there was evidence that experienced principals were sought for information and knowledge and beginning principals initiated interaction because they wanted knowledge and advice (Daly & Finnigan, 2011). This also echoed the statements of writers and researchers in the field of resilience who indicated that that resilience is related to positive interpersonal relationships (Bobek, 2002; Collishaw et al., 2007; Rutter, 2007). These peer groups were described by Daly and Finnigan (2011) as being comprised of one or more principals who could engage in informed conversation because of their similar roles, and interact with varying levels of trust. In this research study, this peer support was strongly valued by those who were involved in the form of interaction, but also was wished for by those principals who were without this kind of support.

These peer interactions were established in varied ways, and differed on individual or group interaction. There was agreement with recent research that described the purpose of mentorship as increasing protégés' knowledge of the district's organizational culture (Clayton et al., 2013; Zepeda et al., 2012). The principals in the study cited mentorship as an important support which allowed them to better understand the expectations and limitations for successful principal practice. District mentorship was described as a formal program where every newly-assigned principal was paired with a mentor. One district also established a position called "district principal". These were highly experienced principals who offered individual support to those principals at

schools (Hoffman, 2004). These principals helped with understanding district policy, regulations, and requirements.

Summary

This discussion highlighted the four key findings from this research study. The first topic is that principals experienced tensions in managing the competing leadership responsibilities. They were conflicted by the demands of management and leadership, and tried to find a balance in decision-making and the completion of these tasks so that they felt successful as principals. The low SES context provided an additional complexity for these principals as they made decisions based on their beliefs.

The second key finding was that the capacity of the staff for the two important aspects of their jobs, pedagogy and relational acumen, was a strong influence to principal self-efficacy. This was especially true in the low SES context where the academic or emotional relationship with the teacher had the potential to make a difference for that student. This influence had particular impact when staff appeared to lack the capacity for one or both of these aspects.

Another major theme was that principals attempted to increase the resources for students by expanding the potential for support. They evaluated student needs, experienced and initiated support from the community, and made efforts to increase parental support for students. Building relationships with parents was considered especially important as the increased communication also increased feelings of goodwill and shared values.

The last key finding was that principals utilized both internal and external supports so that they could continue effective leadership practices. Firstly, principals expressed a moral imperative to make a difference for the students in their schools. This was a very strong motivator to help sustain principals in their work. Secondly, principals identified some key attributes for principal resilience, such as being organized, a hard worker, patient, and optimistic. These principals also identified peer groups as a strong influence on their resilience. These principals generally did not find that those superintendents who evaluated them offered support, but instead were more challenging.

The behaviors of principals in the study illustrated the complexities of the role of leadership. Even though an attempt was made to define and list its complexities, leadership is multidimensional, individual, and ever-changing to suit the context. Therefore leadership is not served well by assigning to it only one definition. The principals in this study followed the perceived priorities of their roles, navigating between instructions from Central Office and their school communities, assisted by their personal priorities, skills, attributes, and learned experience, and supported by their beliefs of self-efficacy and their resilience to sustain their leadership practice in the complex context of low socioeconomic status schools.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This research study examined the influences on the self-efficacy of principals who lead low socioeconomic status schools. The research design was a two phase, mixed methods study which was underpinned by the pragmatic paradigm. Both qualitative (interviews) and quantitative (questionnaires) data were analyzed to further understand the degree and influences of self-efficacy, and to examine the methods utilized by principals to maintain their resilience and increase their efficaciousness of their leadership practices.

Review of the Major Findings

From the findings of this research study, four major themes revealed the primary influences on the self-efficacy of principals in low socioeconomic status schools. These were:

- staff capacity for pedagogical ability and relational acumen;
- provision to meet basic needs of students;
- tensions involved with competing leadership practices; and
- resilience, or personal capacity for coping.

Staff Capacity

The capacity of the teaching staff was an important influence on principals' self-efficacy in this study. The teachers' major responsibilities were identified as providing academic instruction and assessment for all students so that they develop the necessary

appropriate skills and knowledge for success. However, because some low SES students may come to school with significant behavioral and mental health issues potentially influenced by the family situation, principals also identified as their second major responsibility the ability of teachers to create supportive relationships with students. Teachers who possessed emotional ability and motivation to make positive connections with students thus provided the framework for building positive communication and trust between home and school.

Even though principals valued the capacity of their school staff to meet the needs of students in both of the academic and relational aspects of their interactions, this was not always the case. However, principals appreciated staff who had the ability to interact positively with students. Specifically, principals believed that the teachers who were "there for the kids" had the right mindset. This tended to be more important than the lack of teachers' pedagogical skills, because they considered a relational ability more of a character trait that was difficult to change, but they were confident their ability to provide instructional leadership and professional development to their staff to increase teachers’ skills in pedagogy.

Partnering with the Community to Meet Students’ Basic Needs

The second major theme that influenced principal self-efficacy was the necessity to ameliorate the effects of low SES by removing the acknowledged barriers to learning. Students in low SES schools often come to school hungry, and in some instances, in need of appropriate clothing. In many cases, because of severe emotional and

behavioral needs, they also required resources additional to those which were provided by the school. Principals were highly motivated by an ethic of care for students which supported their feeling of high self-efficacy in reducing the barriers for learning for students. This typically involved a food program which evidenced itself in a variety of forms, some of which were completely sponsored and effectively run by community organizations. These programs were perceived as very effective, valued, and perceived as compensating for the expenditure of resources. Community involvement strengthened the association between the school and the community. Therefore, the creation or sustaining of programming supports often resulted in high self-efficacy beliefs.

Community agencies or programs were seen as important resources when they could help the school provide support for students. For example, immigrant family services, mental health services, clubs, and before and after school programs were examples of community associations that were involved with students through the schools. Some of the programming involved formal partnerships that had already been established through the school districts. However, other principals initiated support from the community. The connections that were started by the principals varied in success and scope, primarily due to the ability of the individual principals as well as their willingness to take the risk of acting outside of the boundaries of district practice.

Tension in Managing Competing Leadership Responsibilities

The third major influence on principals focused on the dichotomy between how principals viewed the role of what they believed they should be doing, contrasted with how they actually spend their time. The two leadership roles of principals were defined as management and instructional leadership. Additionally, as previously reported, principals in low SES schools had the further responsibility of providing needed supplementary support for their students. The resulting operationalization of food programs or community partnerships was perceived as necessary but time-consuming, and influenced their role beliefs about leadership.

Management was defined as the work of administration and dealing with people. All principals, both newly appointed and experienced, prioritized their time on those necessary administrative activities for which they would be judged by their superordinates. However, dealing with low SES concerns as well as administrative issues often did not leave sufficient time for principals to enact instructional leadership. The principals realized the importance of instructional leadership, and some experienced a sense of disappointment because they felt that their time was not balanced between administrative duties and leadership functions; however, some experienced principals managed a combination of both. Those principals had gained a vast knowledge base what they needed to do as principals, and had already laid the foundation for instructional leadership activities.

The resulting tension felt by principals as they managed these competing leadership responsibilities was varied, dependent upon the characteristics of the

principal and the degree for urgency in dealing with those issues. Principals wished to do both jobs, and indicated higher self-efficacy for instructional leadership than for management issues. However, administration was more highly prioritized, and often was characterized by supervising student referrals at the office and communication with staff and parents.

Resilience

The fourth theme was identified by principals' coping abilities and strategies. Resilience was what influenced principals' persistence in their efforts toward successful working particularly within periods of anxiety. Resilience was conceptualized by principals as a state of mind wherein their perceptions of positive influences were stronger than their perceptions of the negative stressful influences, and was described in the study as "trying to keep the balance between the adding and taking away of energy or willingness".

The stress they encountered was the sum of the negative influences on principal self-efficacy: the lack of staff capacity and any resulting conflict, the lack of time to complete what were perceived as instructional leadership activities, the lack of support from superordinates who evaluated, the lack of knowledge of what they needed to do, and any lack of personal ability to effectively balance their work and home lives that resulted in additional conflict at home. How these influences affected each of the principals appeared to depend upon three protective factors. The first factor encompassed principal attitudes, beliefs, and motivation which determined how they

reacted to stress. In these schools, principals were motivated to act by a moral imperative, usually described as “making a difference” to students in their schools. The principals’ sense of agency was the second factor. In other words, if principals believed that they could take self-efficacious action to correct what they perceived as negative influences, those negative aspects would not possess the same degree of adverse influence as it would for those principals who saw problems as insurmountable. Experience was also an influence on self-efficacy, as principals gained knowledge and skill in methods to successfully address concerns. The third factor was principals’ confidence in their abilities to achieve their goals rather than to dwell negatively on the previous conflict or failure.

Principals also used coping strategies to help support their resilience, such as compartmentalizing professional and private aspects of their lives to achieve and maintain balance. Another individual support for principals was the observed spiritual aspect of their jobs which showed a deep principled belief in the importance of continuing their efforts in these schools. Developing a network of personal and professional supportive relationships and increasing staff capacity were ways that principals increased both self-efficacy and resilience.

The Quadratic Pathways Model

Principals are responsible for the achievement of the students in their schools. Their accountability to their stakeholders: students, parents, community members, the school district, and the education authority is always an important and guiding aspect of

principals' professional lives. For principals who work in low socioeconomic status schools, the accomplishment of their students is displayed in relief against those of schools in more affluent areas. These comparisons highlight the differences between the two contexts and are frequently articulated through overall differences in academic performance. Therefore, principals in low SES schools attempt to ameliorate any contextual influences on student achievement. These contextual influences occur as a result of a lack of a wide range of familial resources, and often the incidence of conflict in the home. Consequently, in order for students to be academically competitive, principals must first mobilize the resources of the school to provide students with what they need for academic and emotional readiness.

From the major findings of the study, the Quadratic Pathways Model (See Figure 6.1) was conceptualized as a four-component model with all pathways concluding at promoting student success, but initiated by the principal.

Purpose

The purpose of the Quadratic Pathways Model is to inform principals and district decision-makers of the various components that could enhance and sustain high principal efficacy and resilience, specifically focused on low socioeconomic status schools. This model may be used as a template by each school leader for focused evaluation of their existing reality in relation to: meeting the basic needs of students, increasing staff capacity, thereby enhancing student and parent/community engagement,

The Quadratic Pathways Model

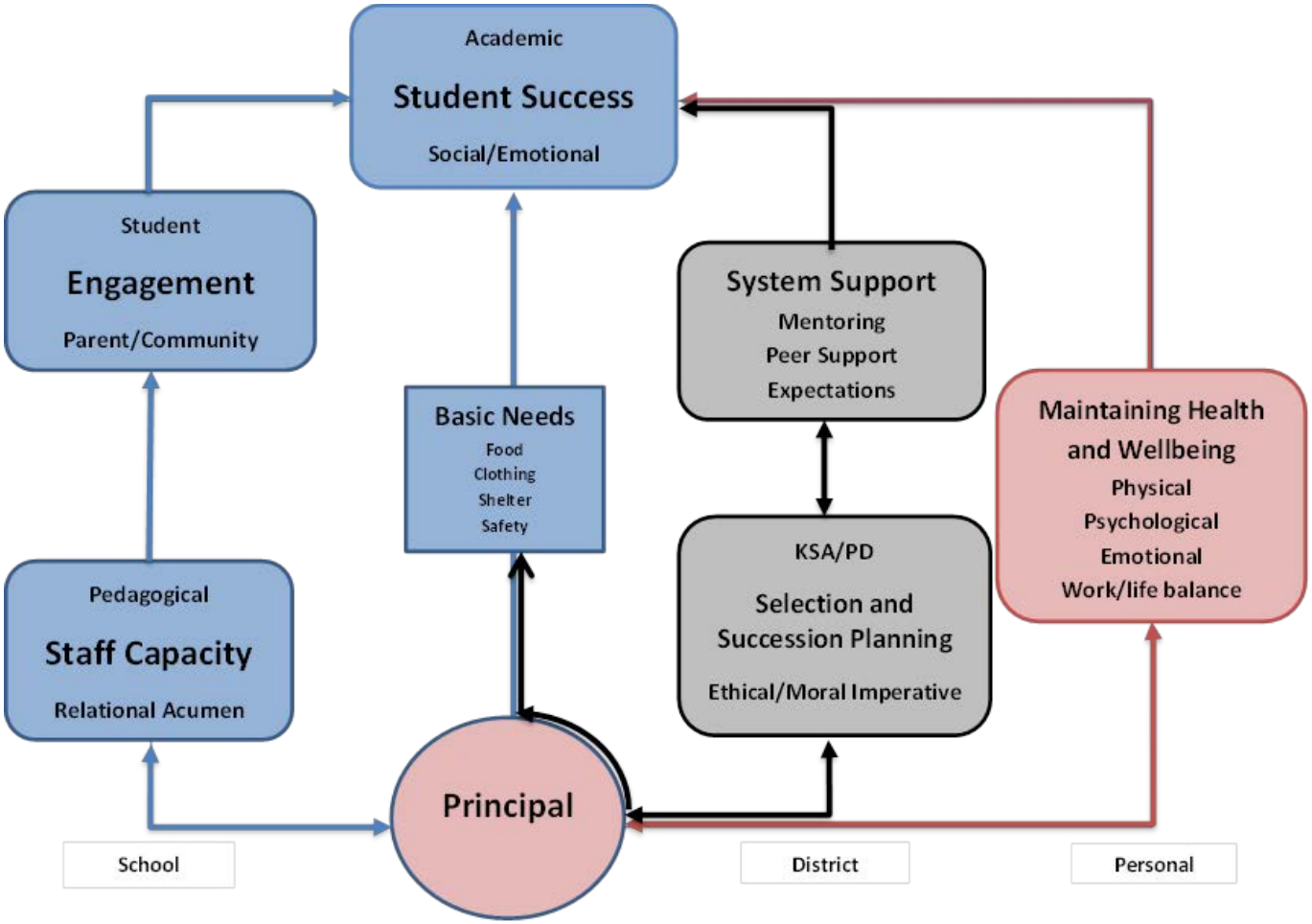

Figure 6.1: The Quadratic Pathways Model *Note:* KSA=Knowledge, Skills and Attributes, PD= Professional Development.

and increasing student achievement. This model offers a reframing of negative influences on principals' self-efficacy beliefs in these challenging contexts by conceptualizing these components as necessary pathways to follow for students to reach success

The secondary purpose of this model is to inform principal selection and succession planning in school districts. Additionally, this model encourages resilience in, and/or the maintenance of active leaders. School districts that ensure that principals have and maintain the intrinsic motivation to help students will benefit by potentially increasing the longevity of principals' effective practice in low SES schools. District support of low SES schools should be augmented by special provisions in terms of staffing. This will result in greater flexibility for low SES principals' staffing choices. This would also include increased District support for staff professional development. Recognition by the district of the distinctiveness of low SES schools would enable leadership development programming for principals specific to SES issues. Mentorship programs should be structured with mentors who are willing to share their expertise. Finally, support for principals should be redefined at the district level, whereby a non-evaluative position of "district principal" is initiated to offer ongoing support for principals.

Principal Pathway

One pathway, focused on the principal, explains the moral imperative leaders have to ensure that the 'basic needs' of students are met in order to progress them

towards success. The provision of basic needs for students is a result of principals' beliefs that supporting students in that way makes them more receptive to learning. The Quadratic Pathways Model (QPN) also illustrates the understanding that principals affect student achievement indirectly, through the influence of the principal on the teacher, the school environment, and policies and procedures. However, the principal does have direct influence on situations such as setting up school programming and arranging necessary resources both within the school and in the community. The principal also works at supporting teachers in their efforts to ensure a well-balanced, orderly environment for learning to occur. The school pathway describes school-based concerns and includes ‘Staff Capacity' and 'Engagement' leading to ‘Student Success'. The district pathway relates to influences from the school district. These include considerations for system leaders during principal selection and continuance processes to ensure the optimum leader is placed in each school. This pathway also consists of ‘System Supports’ which are in place to enhance principals’ knowledge and decision-making, as well as the feeling of strength as part of a group. The personal pathway deals with the personal responsibility of principals to monitor the conditions of their own health and wellbeing to create sustainability of good leadership in low SES schools. All four of these pathways must be followed to create optimal and continuous leadership with the view to promoting student success in low SES schools.

Principals have a duty to enact all expectations of their school system. All principals bear the responsibility of the academic achievement of students in their schools, which is the central premise of this model. School principals must act as instructional leaders in order to increase teaching and learning, evaluate teachers and

programs, maintain order and discipline, manage the school, cooperatively interact with the community, and ensure that students are meeting an acceptable standard of education. However, in low SES schools, there are many obstacles that lie in the way of student achievement. Principals attempt to meet these needs by utilizing the readily available resources, such as their knowledge, skills, and attributes, in addition to the resources of the school and the school district. However, these resources may not be sufficient to adequately address the needs of the school.

Principals have developed a range of efficacy beliefs gained through previous life/work experiences. However, when they are in the position of principal, they must establish a set of self-efficacy beliefs based upon their own experiences within the context of low SES schools as this context presents diverse challenges that influence efficacy. The school pathway of the QPM may be used as a template for principals to help determine their courses of action at that school. If staff capacity and engagement are already successfully established, principals will have a positive outlook when planning activities with staff. As professional learning communities gain strength, they further encourage teacher leadership and increase the focus on student achievement. However, principals must plan remedial action if they perceive the lack of staff capacity. This active leadership will provide an opportunity for further principal self-efficacy.

School Pathway

Staff capacity

The ability of the staff to meet the needs of the students has a substantial interrelated influence on both student success and the self-efficacy of the principal for accomplishing student success. Therefore, principals must identify the extent of staff capacity in both pedagogy and relational acumen as these are essential aspects in increasing student engagement and success. When teachers' actions indicate a lack of strength in either of these areas, principals will determine how this will be ameliorated, and then plan appropriate action.

When pedagogical skill is an identified weakness in the staff, principal may use a variety of methods for improvement. Using sources external to the school, the principal may decide upon professional development with topics focused specifically to meet the needs of teachers. The sources of professional development could be the school district or from the Ministry and include workshops, presentations, development of mentorships, and demonstration teaching. The role of the principal would be to encourage, facilitate, and monitor the staff's professional learning. Good teaching skills lead to student academic success. Therefore, staff must have a repertoire of instructional strategies and approaches to engage students in meaningful learning. In addition, staff must have a positive attitude toward professional development and the acquisition of their own knowledge with the view to ensuring the flow of cutting edge innovation back into the curriculum that they teach to students.

The mandate for staff to have relational acumen in low SES schools is unique, as generally students from these areas enter schools with significant concerns in both academic readiness and social and emotional engagement. These areas of concern may exist in tandem, as a tendency for problematic behavior may be exacerbated by poor self-esteem resulting from lower student academic achievement. Staff members must emotionally connect to their students so that students feel a sense of belonging, which promotes a positive disposition toward their efforts leading to academic success. The ability of the teacher to create a structure of safety and discipline within the classroom so that learning can occur is an aspect of creating firm but fair relationships which are conducive to engagement in positive learning environments.

The relational acumen of staff is comprised of their abilities and willingness to interact with students to establish a relationship with them. When students feel valued and liked by their teachers, they are motivated to gain further approval and acceptance by accommodating the wishes of their teachers. Principals encourage increased teacher-time with students on an extracurricular basis with activities such as coaching, clubs, dance, and music, and by outlining desired pro-social behaviors such as greeting students at the door and encouraging individual supports for those identified as vulnerable students. It is an expectation that school staff would establish and enforce clear boundaries for appropriate student behavior, as this provides structure and dependability for students, while simultaneously indicating that educators care about what happens to students. Principals must also clarify with classroom teachers their expectations of how they as administrators will interact with students.

It is in this aspect of "staff capacity" of the model where principals are responsible to ensure that staff are capable of, and willing to, enact their roles. Whenever principals perceive staff willingness for improvement, they must be prepared to support teachers through various strategies, including providing professional development or counseling, as well initiating the formal process and supports of teacher evaluation. When there is lack of progress or willingness to work toward school goals, or if the skills of the teacher may be best suited elsewhere, the principal may initiate a formal evaluation that may end in the termination of a teaching certificate, or act as a catalyst for teacher-initiated, principal-supported transfer.

Engagement

The aspect of ‘engagement’ is directed toward the students, as well as toward parents and the wider community. Student engagement is determined based on academic achievement and emotional factors, and is identified by student willingness and effort to attend school and to do the work required for success. However, many SES students exhibit lower academic achievement, ineffectual study habits, truancy, and difficulty in regulating their behavior to a standard that is acceptable in the school. Principals and staff must ensure that students want to come to school and view school as preferable to being elsewhere; thus, students see a personal value to education. Teachers must develop a positive relationship with students in order to influence student attendance, resulting in greater student achievement and feelings of success fostered by teachers’ instructional ability to engage and motivate students in learning activities.

Teachers and parents must work in partnership to ensure that students possess the optimum supports for success. Parents' value systems influence the belief systems of their children. Therefore, when parents and staff work in partnership and promote the valuing of education, the probability for student success is increased. However, a perceived difference in the value of education between educators and parents was assessed based on such factors as completed homework, positive parental attendance and interaction at school functions, and having high academic expectations for their children. The lack of parental engagement is attributed to several factors. The lack of frequent interaction with school staff may result from perceptions arising from the difference in parents' education or social class, where parents perceive themselves as being inferior or inadequate, less educated, or less articulate in the prevailing language. These parents may not believe they have any influence in changing conditions for their child/youth at school, and may feel that their opinions are not valued by school staff. At times, they may lack understanding of the school processes or messages due to language barriers and/or cultural differences. Any reluctance of both school staff and parents to communicate may result from uncertainty of how each stakeholder will respond.

Increasing parental engagement is a powerful strategy that can be used by principals to influence the home and educational life of students. Essentially, principals must create opportunities for parents to communicate with staff. This process would include staff involvement, and would vary in its expectations for parental interaction depending on the level of parental dissociation from their children's schools. This process could start with school presentations where parents only attend, and would work toward more opportunities for greater parental participation. The contribution of school

staff would also include the school expectation that staff communicate regularly with parents. Increasing parental engagement increases the level of trust between staff and parents, so communication becomes more effective. Greater involvement in school increases parental belief that they can exert influence on school decision-making. They are also able to offer more support to students, because their involvement creates a connection to the school that may result in an increased value for education. Positive parental beliefs about education influence those beliefs of their children. Therefore, principals who engage parents as partners in the educational life of their children have developed an educational resource for students. Essentially, the principal must make every effort to influence ongoing communication so that both parents and school staff understand the values of each group and share their aspirations for each student.

Resourcing basic needs

The QPM model specifically acknowledges that in low SES schools, the lack of basic needs of students will influence student achievement. In the hierarchy of needs theory, Maslow (1943) identified that human needs are tiered, and that the most basic needs must first be met before the higher-level needs can be satisfied. In low SES schools, students frequently come to school needing food, clothing, sleep, and psychological succor. It is not until these needs are met that students can be receptive to learning. In order to meet these needs schools could provide breakfast and/or lunch programs which can be resourced by community organizations or the school. Principals will need to consider aspects of resourcing for these programs, networking with organizations and businesses in the community, and staffing implications to monitor

such programs. Therefore, principals will need to demonstrate entrepreneurial expertise in order to establish initiatives and programmes that would provide for the basic needs of students in their community. This differs to the demands on principals in high socioeconomic schools who do not encounter the same issues.

Another aspect of meeting student's needs is the need for safety. This must be met before students can feel ready to learn. It is the principals' responsibility to consider students' physical safety and security, as well as their psychological safety to create a sense of belonging within their school. Physical safety and security comes from maintaining order and structure in the school, especially in the classroom. Teachers must be aware of the need for stability, predictability, and maintained, firm boundaries of acceptable behaviors for all. An important aspect of the relationship that teachers have with their students is that the teachers provide a stable learning environment, enforced by clear expectations and predictable consequences. Teachers who build that stability in their classrooms have students with increased feelings of security and belonging. Therefore, principals must ensure that teachers are aware of the importance of maintaining a stable balance for students, and that teachers act appropriately to ensure that this balance is met.

Student success

Student success in this model has been given two major definitions. The first of these is academic success which is usually the primary factor that is measured in schools as an indicator of good leadership. The second definition for student success is for students to overcome any emotional concerns that prevent success academically and

vocationally, as well as socially and emotionally. Both of these definitions of success are important, but often only academic achievement, in the form of Provincial Achievement Tests, is reported to the general public and to school communities. Schools are ranked in this manner and principals bear this accountability. There is no doubt that academic achievement is important. It offers proof of students' self-regulation and commitment to the acquisition of skills and the application of knowledge, and can lead to careers involving higher education and a higher standard of living for low SES students. However, the focus of academic achievement as the single pathway to a university is highly limited. Instead, academic success should be held to a broader definition that incorporates success as qualification within the technical or vocational fields. Therefore, the yearly reporting of academic success by principals to the District and to the community must incorporate a wider range of student-acquired knowledge and skills that are equally valued. Additionally, the responsibility of the District must be to communicate that all aspects of academic achievement - those that lead to university, technical, and vocational pathways, are recognized.

Principals recognize that education is a way out of poverty for low SES students in lower SES, because it leads to a greater range of life choices. When the definition for academic success is broader, it leads to a correspondingly greater scope of opportunity for education to "make a difference" for students. This more global focus on student achievement, evidenced by the provision of supports utilized by students at the school, would be dependent on students' needs. For example, highly developed partnerships with community supports would be formally developed as part of the school plan, and whether or not programs would be on or off campus would rely on student accessibility.

Principals may wish to widen their academic scope to create their own model of school function that consists of multiple pathways. Health programs, family planning programs, drug programs and child health programs are all examples of how schools can formalize these interactions.

District Pathway

An additional pathway to support for principals is through the system or school district. A brief overview of the model illustrates the perspective of the school district on continuous support of the principals they choose for their schools. In this model, the responsibility for selection and ongoing professional development and multilayered support resides in the district. The principal has a reciprocal responsibility to optimize those given opportunities for knowledge acquisition and skill development as the preparation for principal agency. The two topics for system intervention are "selection and succession planning" and "district support groups", and are further explained in the next section.

Selection and succession planning

Selection and succession planning is the first of two systems issues in this model. The first part is principal selection. One aspect of principal selection in low socioeconomic status schools that must be considered is principals' philosophical beliefs concerning leadership, having a moral imperative or duty of care for helping children, and possessing an understanding of quality education within that context, because these beliefs are strong motivators for sustained efforts which lead to resilience. Although it

could be argued that these aspects of selection are embedded in the process for hiring any principal according to the Principal Quality Practice (Alberta Education, 2008), it is especially imperative that extra care be given to selection of principals for low SES schools. This model shows that as part of effective and appropriate principal selection, candidates must provide evidence for practice supporting a stated philosophical belief promoting a duty of care for students. Additionally, there must be evidence to support their capabilities to create quality educational programming, clear communication skills, and exercising effective leadership with staff. They also must understand the constraints that may be present in low SES schools against success for students, and possess the personality and skill for entrepreneurship in accessing alternate resources. Another implication of the present study on future district practice is the consideration for the District selection committee to make an addition to the existing interview questions. Specifically, one addition may be to identify the philosophy of each principal candidate in order to more clearly assess the motivation of the individual in regard to leading low SES schools. Additionally, the necessary skills for staff development, communication, and procurement of resources may be identified so that the district selection committee can choose the candidate with the skills to be most successful in their appointed school. The preselection processes would involve an ongoing identification among school staff for potential leaders who have demonstrated that they possess the moral imperative for helping students.

Due to the importance that was placed on the two influences from staff on principal self-efficacy - staff capacity for good teaching practices and the ability to create relationships with the disengaged students and parents in low SES communities,

the results of this study offer support for the premise that low socioeconomic status schools should be acknowledged by the district as possessing complexities that do not occur in other schools. This suggests a need for the district to apply flexibility to its structure and practice regarding staffing - including support for teachers in the classroom so that these low SES schools are staffed with educators who demonstrate the willingness and commitment to teach in these schools.

In this model, it is understood that principal selection must be determined based on the needs of the school. Therefore, the leaders for low SES schools should be carefully selected so that their beliefs and skills would be best used to strengthen the chances for student success. It is important to mention that these schools should be staffed first with the best qualified leaders, rather than be the leftover schools that are available for the newly-appointed principals. In their decision-making, the administrative staffing process would have to negotiate more carefully between principal choice and the profiles of needed knowledge, skills and ability that are created by schools to indicate their requirements of their principals.

Succession planning focuses on the system development of professional expertise to increase the capacity of the knowledge, skills, and attributes (KSAs) for each principal to establish and sustain optimal conditions in low SES environment. In order to support the development of necessary principals KSAs, a regularly-scheduled program of professional development focused specifically toward principals in low SES schools is vital to increase understanding of the correct processes for engaging district support, as well as the existing support from community partnerships.

District support groups

Principals encounter and deal with many and varied complexities in their schools. In order to make student success possible, their efforts must be ongoing and sustained. District support to principals could comprise formal mentorship programs and informal peer support groups, as well as inform the expectations which district superiors have for principals who lead low SES schools. Formal mentorship programs can be established by the district for newly appointed principals and for those moving into the district in order to effectively socialize them into district principalship. These principals are matched with an experienced counterpart, based upon such school-based aspects as program availability, size, and in this case, SES. These programs could offer the availability of expert opinion, as well as district policy and practice. Therefore, the choice of mentors for newly appointed principals should be made with discrimination and with the understanding that low SES schools pose a unique complexity within the district. Mentorship programs will be successful if newly appointed principals are paired with experienced colleagues who are personally committed to ongoing participation in principal development, as well as also have the time and availability to provide support. However, mentors who are also practicing principals may not be able to make themselves available during critical circumstances. The district should make provision for the establishment of a position of "district principal", for example. The individuals who would hold this position would have extensive experience as a principal, but because these individuals do not run their own schools, they are immediately available for principals in crisis, or to assist efforts in prioritizing and goal-setting. This district support would bolster and improve initial decision-making, thus

providing an additional layer of knowledge support between the principal and the superordinate who is responsible for principal evaluation.

Peer support is an important component of systems support. In addition to the formal mentorship, principals seek out colleagues on a more informal basis for the sharing of information and advice. These professional colleagues may be in schools that share a similar population or are in neighboring communities. They also may be in feeder schools to the same high school or have similar grades in their school. In this model, the district will establish formalized smaller groups of principals who deal with similar concerns and common issues. This means that these meetings are organized and preplanned with principal input into the content of these meetings. The purpose of these meetings is to afford the expertise, time, and attention of the superintendent to deal with important common issues. The crucial issue of this model is the district acknowledgment that low SES schools have complex concerns that are specific to them. This means that the concerns of principals in low SES schools are often not addressed or discussed in depth in larger meetings where the purposes are to deal with the more universal concerns within the district. Established meetings that focus on the issues of low SES schools would allow for the needed time for discussion, thus providing authentic and needed support. Additionally, principals seek colleagues whom they trust, in order to build informal supportive structures for themselves, and principals could draw upon their colleagues based upon judgments they form from observing interactions within the larger formalized group.

District superintendents or personnel whose role it is to oversee and evaluate principals are an additional source of system support. In this model, the purpose of the superintendents is to support and monitor as well as evaluate. Their relationship to each principal would be a result of the delivery of clear expectations of the duties for which the school leaders are responsible, regular interaction with principals and availability for conferencing, as well as the establishment of themselves as trustworthy and professional. As well as offering acknowledgments for good performance, which are the source of self-efficacy beliefs for principals, superintendents use good judgment and knowledge of individual character to effectively and supportively deal with inadequate performance. Additionally, in the wake of failure, the superintendents would offer more extensive district resources to the principal to encourage future success.

Personal Pathway

Building resilience

The Personal pathway in the Quadratic Pathway Model focuses on the responsibility of each principal to maintain their own health and well-being. Particularly, principals must manage stressful situations at school. An example of potential stressors at work include dealing with staff who have not demonstrated the capacity or willingness to teach effectively, potentially resulting in conflict with the teachers' union as the principal goes through the process of formal evaluation toward teacher termination. Additional worrisome situations may involve the requirement for interactions with the families of those students who have contravened the expectations

of the school. Another ongoing concern for principals is being able to adequately complete all the requirements of the job in the time that is available to them. This psychological constraint may evidence itself physiologically, with poor eating habits, reduced fitness levels, and illness. Principals must be aware of how their bodies and minds react to stress, and take the necessary measures for maintaining good health. Principals, who wish to sustain their ability to effectively work in schools, must balance their home and professional lives, ensure maintenance of their physical and psychological health and thereby also uphold their emotional well-being.

Principals utilize various strategies for the prevention or alleviation of stress, some of which are negative. Substance abuse, for example, involves withdrawal from reality and subsequent family and workplace problems. Another negative strategy is the spending of excessive hours at school to complete work requirements. When this happens, the cost involved is the available time to social lives or families. Principals must have coping mechanisms in place to ensure an adequate balance between professional and social lives. An example of a coping strategy is to curtail long hours at work and limit or eliminate work done home so there is a clear delineation between school and home. Another effective strategy is involvement in activities of high interest, such as sports, fine arts, or leisure activities. During time away from work, involvement in the aforementioned activities heightens personal energy which provides sustenance during times of anxiety.

Given that stress is built into the job when one is interacting with and evaluating others, principals can expect and manage stressful situations in school. The first step for

principals to be able to successfully manage stress is to identify the causes of debilitating stress and take action to reduce the potential for it. This may be accomplished through shared leadership. For example, prior action taken to build the capacity of both the administrative team and lead teachers, so they are trustworthy and capable of dealing with some decision making, would alleviate stress for principals. Executive assistants can be extremely helpful in expediting yearly-required, selected documents for principals to review and update. Principals may also take a proactive approach to build capacity with teachers for dealing with student behavior. Further, principals would build the capacity in teachers for dealing with problematic student behavioral issues, and establish guidelines for teachers that delineate the sharing of these responsibilities between staff and principal.

Another form of stress can be found in schools where principals carry a timetabled teaching load. Principals will often do this because they possess the expertise, because they wish to continue a direct connection with students, or because they must teach to provide teachers with the necessary contractual time free from teaching. Often, when emergency situations or last minute mandatory meetings arise, teachers and students both are negatively affected by the lost teacher (principal) and instructional time. If principals must teach, careful timetabling must be done at the beginning of the year so that there is always an available teacher at the same time as principals' scheduled classes so that affected classes and teachers are not compromised.

Principals possess varied skills and experience when dealing with the many forms of conflict, so principals must also be aware of any personal shortcomings and

seek to gain skill in those specific areas. Principals are personally responsible to seek professional development for themselves in required knowledge and skills categories. This is important as the acquisition of knowledge in and of itself can not only reduce stress, but also improve an individual's perception of control in stressful situations.

Limitations of the Study

The small sample size of 42 participants in Phase 1 may be considered a possible limitation in this study. However, it comprised a return of 60% of the entire population of low SES principals from a stratified sampling of public school districts in Alberta. Therefore, it is possible to generalize an entire population based on the number of these responses. The subsample of principals who participated in the interviews necessarily represented a large percentage in the description of results. However, these principals were considered representative of the entire sample.

Another limitation of this study may be that the respondents were all principals of public schools in Alberta. It may be that principals in private or charter schools possess a different viewpoint than did those participants who were part of the study. However, it was considered that the majority of students who came from a low SES background would be attending public schools. Therefore, it is possible to say that the non-participation of schools other than public did not affect the generalizability of the findings.

The questionnaire that was used in the study to determine principal self-efficacy was the Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale (PSES) (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004).

A further possible limitation may be that the researcher made an addition to the PSES which was previously established and tested for validity (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004), and used in other studies (Daly et al., 2011; D. V. Evans, 2010; Lehman, 2007; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; G. D. Nye, 2008; Ream, 2010; Santamaria, 2008; Thomason, 2006; Wintering, 2008). Factor analysis was used by the scale developers to ensure that all items underneath each factor were testing the same construct. This resulted in an 18 item scale that established three factors: principal self-efficacy of Instructional Leadership, Management, and Moral Leadership. The questionnaire was used in its entirety, but seven additional items were added to represent the contextual dimension of low SES, based on previous research and literature. However, these items could not be tested by factor analysis to ensure that they did test low socioeconomic status context because there were insufficient participants for that function to be statistically valid. Therefore, self-efficacy was reported using descriptive data. In addition, all participants responded as principals of low socioeconomic status schools, providing a unique context for this instrument. The remainder of the scale was kept intact so that possible future comparison would be possible when the scale may be utilized.

Another limitation may be refusal to participate in this research on the part of the superintendent or designate in some of the districts that were approached by the researcher. This resulted in non-representation of some areas in Alberta, where principals may have offered an alternate viewpoint. However, the regions and districts that were included within the study were deemed to be highly representative of most low SES contexts across the province.

Another limitation may have occurred regarding the willingness of the principals in this study to participate. It may be that the participating principals felt a stronger need to participate and wanted their voices represented in this study more than those who did not participate. This may have been especially true for the selection of principals in Phase 2. Of the 13 interviewed principals, six immediately volunteered to participate, and all of the remaining seven readily agreed to be interviewed. In particular, the researcher was contacted by one of the participants because of an extreme willingness to share a set of personal beliefs. Therefore, the researcher concluded that this topic of research was highly emotive to some principals, thereby initiating a belief that the interviewed principals held very strong beliefs. The limitation may come from a concern that these principals who volunteered did not come from a random sample, but instead were self-selected and may not have shared the same beliefs as all the other participants.

Another limitation may be credibility of the participants, a criterion for judging qualitative research. But as is the case of all self-reports, one must assume the truthfulness of two aspects: the accuracy by which each respondent responds to the questions (Roberts et al., 2006), as well as the faithfulness of the researcher in reporting such truths. In other words, “there would be credibility if there is a correspondence between the way the respondents actually perceive social constructs and the way the researcher portrays the viewpoints” (Mertens, 1998, p. 181). It has been of the utmost importance of the researcher to ensure the accurate portrayal, from the understanding and interpretation of what the respondents actually reported. Therefore, various checks were put in place to ensure that the results accurately portrayed the data that was

presented. These safeguards involved the repeated review of the transcriptions of interviews, as well as the use and review of tables from the interview coding processes for the purpose of ensuring the presentation of the proper viewpoint of the participants.

Another limitation in this research study is that in the data collection of Phase 2, the semi-structured interview, the researcher has first-hand knowledge of the concerns of principals who lead low socioeconomic status schools. Therefore, this potentially brings to the forefront the issue of researcher bias. This would not be an issue on the accuracy of transcribing the recordings of qualitative data, because most of the interviews were audio recorded, leading to an accurate transcription. Therefore, the accuracy of their spoken words was ensured. However, the interpretation and presentation of the qualitative data relied on the understanding and judgment of the researcher. Because of this gatekeeping of data by one individual, intrinsic bias may sully the objective standpoint of the researcher. Specifically, that may mean that the interpretation does not relay reality of participant, but instead is created by the researcher (Torrance, 2012). Because this was a known variable, extensive efforts were made to reduce the likelihood of researcher bias, such as the coding process, in which the themes emerged iteratively from multiple sources, and from constant review of how the results were presented and discussed.

Implications of the Present Research Study

This research study identified the influences of self-efficacy and resilience on principals in low socioeconomic status schools, and presented a Quadratic Pathways

Model as a criterion for principals and school districts. The QPM may well serve as a model meant to maintain or raise self-efficacy beliefs of principals who practice their profession in low socioeconomic status schools in order to help them maintain the resilience to continue their practice. Principals may use this model to help design their own leadership practice using the stated components. School districts can utilize the understanding of the relevant criteria to assist in the creation of indices for informed principal selection, and the necessary supports for principals' resilience and high efficacy beliefs. High self-efficacy leads to resilience and perseverance, both necessary attributes to sustain efforts toward student achievement. Therefore, findings from this research study could inform principal selection and the specific supports needed for these principals to feel successful.

From the findings of the study, support for principals was crucial for maintenance of their effectiveness and self-efficacy. Some districts may choose to directly structure supports for principals, but a formal mentorship program must be considered in each school district, as this not only provides expertise in management, leadership, and administration of the district's policies and procedures, but acknowledges their willingness to support their appointed principals. Ongoing evaluation would determine the direction this program should take to meet the needs of beginning principals.

Another implication for school districts from this research study is the imperative for the provision of ongoing professional development for school leaders. The skills and knowledge of the principal can be developed so that these can be applied

in the enactment of the leadership role. The district can then transmit necessary information, but should also respond to the requests of the leaders for knowledge development in subject areas of the principals' choosing.

Theoretical Implications

The Quadratic Pathways Model is proposed as a template to help determine principal action in those schools. This conceptualization has adapted the key influences of principal self-efficacy in low socioeconomic status schools and has developed these into essential key indices for sustained effective leadership. As previously stated, one intent of the QPM is to provide principals in low socioeconomic status schools with the necessary components that must be in place to support student academic, emotional, and social success.

In this present research study, all principals wished to exercise leadership in both forms stipulated by the School Act: as instructional leaders and managers. However, often principals felt frustrated by how they enacted their roles, as they perceived their time was utilized by management issues, and felt that they did not fully enact their roles as instructional leaders. These principals identified instructional leadership with those actions that focused on facilitating teacher professional development, such as developing Professional Learning Communities, so that teaching was more effective and students made academic gain. Therefore, when principals did not spend their time developing teachers' capacity in PLC's, for example, they did not feel successful as

instructional leaders. These principals identified those components of the School pathway of the QPM: staff capacity for pedagogical ability and relational acumen; student, parent, and community engagement; and even providing for students' basic needs as negative influences on their self-efficacy for leadership, often because of the amount of time and energy that was expended when dealing with the concerns that emerged from these components. They envisioned that the need for principal intervention during these negative circumstances prevented the exercise of instructional leadership.

This research study proposes an expanded interpretation of instructional leadership practices focussed on removing the barriers for student achievement. For low SES schools, providing for students' basic needs is a necessary precursor to student success. Therefore, principals' actions that are focused on supporting these student needs are enactments of instructional leadership. Additionally, managing negative staff issues and promoting school engagement for students, parents, and within the community are topics that deal with instructional leadership. Consequently, principals must consider themselves instructional leaders when they engage in these actions.

To improve and sustain leaders' high self-efficacy, leaders must engage in intentional actions which have been broadly defined by the Quadratic Pathways Model. Therefore, sharing a vision and goal-setting with the school community will provide needed benchmarks for success that will inform self-efficacy beliefs. Principal agency is focused on what is now recognized as instructional leadership. This allows principals

to feel incremental successes as they follow these broadly defined pathways which provide supports for principals' resilience.

This expanded definition of instructional leadership which involves principal agency is focused on ongoing change and improvement. When principals engage staff commitment to improvement in pedagogy together with a shared vision of the organization, it provides the basis for the transformation of staff into leaders. Additionally, when principals show with congruent actions their values and beliefs to their followers, these authentic leadership practices allow the evolution of growth for themselves and others. Therefore, instructional leadership involves operationalizing needed change by exercising agency. The self-efficacy beliefs of leaders act as a motivator for action and an evaluator of success and necessary change. Consequently, the agentic role in instructional leadership is necessary for change resulting in student achievement.

Implications for Further Research

Principals in this research study revealed the major influences on their self-efficacy, as well as the supports for resilience. There were two circumstances that made this study unique in this field of educational research. The first was that the study was located in Alberta, and represented school districts throughout the province. This study was also contextually designed, so that data were specifically collected from those principals who led low socioeconomic status schools.

In this study, principals identified that the capacity of their staff for pedagogical and relational acumen was the strongest influence on both self-efficacy and resilience. Future studies on principal self-efficacy and resilience may identify common results, and provide further evidence to support the acknowledgment that low SES contexts impact principals distinctively.

This study was located in Alberta. Because education is provincially legislated in Canada, extending this research to include other provinces would provide a national perspective to this examination of the influences on the beliefs of principals in low socioeconomic status schools. Broadening this study to other countries would afford a global perspective to this concern of principals in low socioeconomic status schools. This would enhance collaboration of leaders to consider common strategies to sustain high self-efficacy and create a network of support. Extending this study to all principals in Alberta would offer evidence of either the commonalities of all school leaders, or else would place into relief the unique influences that are at play for leaders of low SES schools.

Conclusion

This research study identified the major influences on self-efficacy of principals in low socioeconomic status schools. These were found to emerge from three levels - the personal level, the school level, and the district level. At the school level, these included: the capacity of the staff for relational acumen and pedagogical practices, student and parent/community engagement, as well as the achievement of success for

students both academically and social/emotionally. Further to the necessity for student engagement, it was found imperative that there be provision of basic needs for low SES students. On the personal level, principals struggled to fulfill the expectation that they successfully exercise instructional leadership while they managed the multiple complexities of low SES schools. For principals, their knowledge, skills, and attributes were utilized to initiate principal agency. Principal efficacy beliefs were strengthened when they were not responding solely to unfolding urgent events on a daily basis. Principals' individual coping mechanisms, such as believing in a moral imperative, and enforcing a balance between home and work helped fortify and enhance their ability for sustained effective leadership. Additionally, supportive structures such as mentorship programs and peer support groups from the district scaffolded the ability of the principal to enact their roles. Resilience was increased by personal and district supports.

Leaders appointed as principals in low socioeconomic status schools must be successful in their goals for student success. Attaining high student achievement in low SES schools is especially difficult because of the added complexity within the school communities which include a lack of academic and emotional engagement and a lack of familial resources for students. Low SES students often display negative mental health issues due to stress in their homes, and a lack of incentive to be academically engaged because of low academic attainment. Generally, low SES students also seldom take part in out-of-school programming that encourages talents and interests. Low SES students must be provided with the supports necessary to enable them to be academically competitive with students who have not come from a low SES background. Supports include the provision of basic resources for students, staff that show high pedagogical

skills and relational acumen, and increased parental support for students. Consequently, focused on these necessary supports, principals must challenge the capacity of the staff and the beliefs of parents. Therefore, principals hold staff responsible for the extra skill and effort that is needed to overcome the academic and behavioral deficits of students, as well as to respectfully bridge the socio-cultural gap between the parents and the school.

With all of these additional demands, there is increased potential for feelings of failure, which may be the lack of success in meeting the goals for increased academic achievement of students. It may also arise from a general feeling of lack of accomplishment for realizing goals, or never feeling in control of time. However, in low SES contexts, principals must challenge the greater impediments that prevent student success. These include students' low achievement that stemmed from literacy-poor backgrounds, lack of proper nutrition, and emotional problems. When students start school but are already behind other students, principals must understand the context but also must undertake to ameliorate these impediments to success. In order to increase the resources for students, principals also must learn how to access community resources. Additionally, principals often must take action to increase the communication and trust of parents. Each of these concerns must be addressed so that students are better prepared for learning. Principals, therefore, need support to meet all of these expectations. The most influential support is the school staff, through which principals most often work to promote student success. The school staff can provide positive support in the form of their willingness to do the extra jobs, but when staff members do not show the capacity to undertake the work needed, this in itself becomes

a strong negative influence on principal self-efficacy. Also, the time taken in dealing with these issues is time not available to principals for the other urgent administrative demands. This leads to an additional concern for principals who, in order to complete the necessary activities for which they are responsible, often must lengthen their day. In order to increase their ability to sustain the skills to handle stressful situations and long hours, they have also used strategies to have a balance between home and work. Specifically, principals aimed to prevent the quality of their home lives being negatively affected by work. Conversely, if principals first choose to complete the urgent activities for which they are evaluated, there is less time for the activities designed to increase student achievement, such as building staff capacity. Therefore, principals must call upon their own knowledge, skills, and attributes, together with informed supports, such as trusted colleagues, and a personal philosophy that promotes continuous effort of doing all that they can do to help their students succeed.

The Quadratic Pathways Model also indicates the necessary support for sustaining principals as they effectively enact their leadership roles. An important support for principals was the existence of a moral imperative, which sustained the continued efforts of the principal. The QPM illustrates that this ethical philosophy is of importance to the district, and principal selection may be influenced by the stated existence of a philosophy. As well, the district helps to support the knowledge, skills, and attributes of the principal by providing professional development where needed, but it is important to note that the responsibility of accessing this belongs to the principal. District offered supports include formal mentorship programs and the personal interaction of each principal's superiors. Peer groups are either created by the district or

informally by the principal, but interactions with fellow professionals have a major influence on principals.

The QPM additionally includes the importance for principals to maintain good health in all aspects of their lives. Physiological health is enabled through exercise and diet, but psychological well-being can be aided through creating a balance of work and home life. Principals utilize their own strategies, but these should be focused on that which allows them to interact in a positive way.

The Quadratic Pathways Model therefore offers the possibility for role clarification for principals, and facilitates the creation of long-term goals. This is further enhanced by an expanded interpretation of instructional leadership for principals. This model also illustrates the necessity for supports for principals, and acknowledges what must be done in order to maintain and increase their self-efficacy for what they do to enact their many roles in low socioeconomic status schools. Therefore, the QPM illustrates the necessary components for sustained high principal self-efficacy, which is consequently important when the result of this is success for students in this highly complex context.

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Appendices

Appendix A.1: Study Invitation to Superintendents

Study Invitation

Dear [Superintendent]:

My name is Gail O'Neill and I am a doctoral student with the Graduate Division of Educational Research at the University of Calgary. I am conducting research on self-efficacy and resiliency of principals who lead in low socioeconomic status (SES) schools, and the influence that these characteristics have on their ability to lead schools in this context. Perceived self-efficacy is the belief in one's own ability to reach an expected level of performance, and this belief will impact the choices of action. For leaders in schools, resiliency means the ability to cope with the stresses that are foreseeable or unplanned, and to persevere to the conclusion of the task. This study about principals' self-efficacy has received formal ethics approval to undertake data collection with principals of low SES schools within the province of Alberta, having complied with the stringent guidelines laid down by the University of Calgary Ethics Committee.

I am writing this letter to invite you to participate as a member of one of the educational communities selected as part of the study. The purpose of this study of principal self-efficacy will be to yield insights about the beliefs of principals and how the school environment affects them. An additional aim of this study is to examine the qualities of resiliency and how these influence their leadership ability. This will also identify the characteristics which promote leadership success in low SES contexts.

Involvement of your school district will consist of the following components:

- The identification to the researcher of those schools within your District which are considered as having a low socioeconomic status
- Permission to invite all principals of identified low socioeconomic status schools to complete a written questionnaire and possibly participate in a semi-structured interview

The decision of each of the identified principals to respond will be kept confidential. Participation in the research is completely voluntary and each individual should feel no pressure whatsoever to accept this invitation. However, should you decide that the board can be involved in this study, I believe that there are important benefits for the educational community in this province. These include:

- the narrowing and strengthening the identification of beliefs that motivate behaviors of principals in low SES schools
- principals gaining in the understanding of resources available to them, from external providers, from within their school community, and from themselves. Only by identifying, then by understanding the origin and substance of their belief systems can individuals deliberately create higher self-efficacy for themselves, leading to improvements in practice for their staff and their school community
- ministry decision-makers recognizing the unique context of low SES schools, and may potentially provide monetary support over and above what is given generally to school districts in the annual budget
- administrators in boards aiding in the guidance of the selection of effective principals for identified schools within this context, in order to better facilitate success for the school and by providing the necessary understanding for the importance of both personal and emotional support for the principal when necessary, and for resource supports for the school

Thank you for considering my invitation to participate in this important research. Please let me know if you would like to participate in the study. My contact information is as follows:

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Gail O'Neill, University of Calgary

Appendix A.2: Study Invitation to Principals

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Study Invitation and Consent Form

Dear [Principal]:

My name is Gail O'Neill and I am a doctoral student with the Graduate Division of Educational Research at the University of Calgary. I am conducting research on self-efficacy and resiliency of principals who lead in low socioeconomic status (SES) schools, and the influence that these characteristics have on their ability to lead schools in this context. The data that will be collected will be used to inform a PhD project. Perceived self-efficacy is the belief in one's own ability to reach an expected level of performance, and this belief will impact the choices of action. For leaders in schools, resiliency means the ability to cope with the stresses that are foreseeable or unplanned, and to persevere to the conclusion of the task. This study about principals' self-efficacy has been reviewed and approved by the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board.

I am writing this letter to invite you, as the leader in a school that was identified as having low socioeconomic status, to participate in this 2-phase study. The purpose of this study of principal self-efficacy will be to yield insights about the beliefs of principals in this extremely complex context and how the school environment affects them. An additional aim of this study will be to examine the qualities of resiliency and how these influence leadership ability. This study will also identify the characteristics which promote leadership success in low SES contexts.

Your involvement, should you choose to participate, will consist of the following components:

Phase 1

- Completing a written questionnaire, which is estimated to take 15-20 minutes to complete

Phase 2

- Participating in a semi-structured interview that will be approximately one hour in duration

You may choose to participate in only the first phase of this study. Ideally, I would like you to do both. I feel that the interview will provide an in-depth response that would more fully capture this extremely important topic. Included in this package are the interview questions so that you are fully informed about the interview content, and that you have time to reflect on your beliefs.

Participation in the research is completely voluntary and you should feel no pressure whatsoever to accept this invitation. Participation in the study is based on informed consent, and may be withdrawn at any time without penalty or loss. Data that you have provided until the point of withdrawal will be retained and used in the study. Participation is completely confidential; known only to the researcher and her supervisor, and only group information will be summarized for any presentation or publication of results. In other words, the actual names of participants, schools, school districts, and school boards will be masked to better maintain participant anonymity. All questionnaires that are collected will be kept in a secured location and destroyed after five years. Please note that even though school board superintendents may be asked to identify schools that are classified as low SES as possible sites for the study, the superintendent will not be informed about which principals have chosen to participate. Should you decide that you would like to be involved in this voluntary study, I believe that there are important benefits for the educational community in this province. These include:

- all principals' increased understanding of the unique and complex context of low SES schools, and the impact of this context on the principals who lead them

- administrators in boards examining their current practice of the selection of effective principals for identified schools within this context, by providing the necessary understanding for the importance of both personal and emotional support for the principal when necessary, and for resource supports for the school

- ministry decision-makers recognizing the unique context of low SES schools, and may potentially provide monetary support over and above what is given generally to school districts in the annual budget

Your school district will receive a copy of the summary of the findings.

Thank you for considering my invitation to participate in this important research. By returning this questionnaire, you are indicating that you have understood and agree with the information given in the consent form found at the back of this package.

Returning the signed consent form indicates that you agree to participate in phase 2 of the study – the interview. I will contact you as a reminder or thanks for the return of your questionnaire. You will be contacted by me to request your participation for Phase 2. Any re-contact be made one time only. My contact information is as follows:

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. If you have any concerns about the way you have been treated as a participant, please contact the Senior Ethics Resource Officer, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403 220-3782), email rburrows@ucalgary.ca.

Sincerely,

Gail O'Neill, University of Calgary

Appendix A.3: Interview Consent Form

Interview Consent Form

Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:

Gail O'Neill

Graduate Division of Educational Research, Faculty of Education, Educational Leadership

Supervisor:

Dr. Shelleyann Scott, Associate Professor, Leadership

Graduate Division of Educational Research, Faculty of Education

Title of Project: The Influence of Self-efficacy on Principals' Capacity to Lead in Low Socioeconomic Status Schools

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

Purpose of the Study:

This study seeks to gather information on the influences of self-efficacy on principals of low socioeconomic status (SES) schools, and the impact that these may have on principals' capacity to lead these schools. The data that will be collected will be used to inform a PhD project from the University of Calgary.

What Will I Be Asked To Do?

All principals of schools that are considered to be low socioeconomic status in at least two school districts in Alberta have been invited to participate. This is a two-phase study. Participation in one or both phases of this study is completely voluntary, and results will be confidential. There will be no remuneration for participation in the study.

Phase 2 participation includes involvement in a semi-structured interview, either face-to-face or by telephone for your convenience. Duration of interviews is anticipated to be

around one hour in length, dependent upon the extent of your responses. This interview will involve your perception on elements of the principalship in low SES schools and its impact on you as the leader. The researcher will provide you with a summary of the research findings upon completion of the study. All data will be aggregated and no identifiers will be used to ensure complete anonymity and confidentiality.

Participation is based on informed consent, and may be withdrawn at any time. This will result in the immediate termination of your involvement in the study, the addressing of your concerns, and the expression of gratitude for your participation. Further debriefing will occur at your discretion. Data that you have provided until the point of withdrawal will be retained and used in the study as outlined in this consent form.

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?

Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to provide your gender, education, years of experience as an educator, years in your current position, the approximate number of students in your school, and the school's location.

There is a particularly important option for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. Audio taping would allow the most accurate record of your responses. Please put a check mark on the corresponding line that grants me your permission.

I grant permission to be audio taped: Yes: ___ No: __

Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

There are several possible benefits that may accrue to you, as principal, because of your participation in this study. You may become more informed about your own beliefs and perceptions as well as those of your peers.

All study data will be reported in an anonymous format and no personally identifying information will be included in the study reports. In addition, the actual names of participants, schools, school districts, and school boards will be masked to better maintain participant anonymity. Although it is impossible to guarantee absolutely that readers of reports of the study will not be able to identify individual survey respondents or their professional organizations, every attempt will be made to respect the privacy of survey respondents. That is, information will be reported in a summary form, rather than attributed to specific individuals. Also, the actual words of respondents will only be used when the identity of the author cannot be readily determined and when the words convey meaning in a particularly useful way.

Please note that even though board superintendents may be asked to identify schools that are classified as low socioeconomic status as possible sites for the study, the superintendent will not be informed about which school principals have chosen to participate.

Your school district will receive a copy of the summary of the findings.

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

Participation is completely voluntary and confidential. You are free to discontinue participation at any time during the study. No one except the researcher and her supervisor will be permitted to see or hear any of the answers to the questionnaire or the recorded interview. Only group information will be summarized for any presentation or publication of results. These data will be kept in a secured cabinet which is only accessible by the researcher and her supervisor. All recorded material, in paper, electronic, and digital forms will be securely stored for five years, at which time all will be permanently destroyed.

Signatures (written consent)

Your signature on this form indicates that you 1) understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) agree to participate as a research subject.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: (please print) _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date:_____

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Senior Ethics Resource Officer, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) 220-3782; email rburrows@ucalgary.ca.

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

Appendix B.1: Questionnaire Demographics

Self-efficacy Questionnaire for Principals of Low Socioeconomic Status Schools

This questionnaire is designed to understand the variables that influence a principal's self-efficacy. Your input is extremely valuable, and will add to the knowledge of the influences of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined as your own belief of subsequent success for each specific behavior. It has four sections. The first three sections require you to simply mark your response. The first section gives information on your individual professional situation. The second section gives information on your general beliefs. The third section focuses on the challenges that you may face. The last section requires you to provide further input, if you believe that important variables have not been included, and which are important to understand the complexities of the principalship in low socioeconomic schools. Your responses are totally confidential.

Section 1

1. Gender:
☐ Male
☐ Female

2. Total number of years as a professional educator (including this year)
☐ <5
☐ 5-9
☐ 10-14
☐ 15-19
☐ 20-24
☐ 25-29
☐ 30-35
☐ >35

3. Ethnicity:
☐ Asian
☐ Black
☐ Hispanic
☐ Caucasian
☐ FNMI (First Nations, Metis, Inuit)
☐ Other

4. Age:
☐ 25-34
☐ 35-44
☐ 45-54
☐ 55-64
☐ >64

5. Total number of years as principal (including this year)
☐ 0-1
☐ 2-5
☐ 6-10
☐ 11-15
☐ 16-20
☐ 21-25
☐ 26-30

6. Highest Degree completed:
☐ Bachelors
☐ Masters
☐ Doctorate

7. Total number of years as principal of the present school (including this year)
☐ 1-2
☐ 3-4
☐ 5-6
☐ 7-8
☐ 9-10
☐ 11-12
☐ 13-14
☐ 15 >

8. In how many schools have you been a principal?
☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4
☐ 5
☐ 6
☐ 7
☐ 8>

9. Did you choose this school in this area, or were you placed here?
☐ my choice
☐ District placement

10. In how many schools have you been placed as opposed to the school having been your choice?
☐ 0
☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4
☐ 5
☐ 6
☐ 7
☐ 8>

School Demographics:

11. My school is
☐ Public
☐ Private
☐ Charter
☐ Other

12. My school level is
☐ Lower Elementary K-3
☐ Elementary K-6
☐ Elementary-Junior High K-9
☐ Junior High 7-9
☐ Junior/Senior High 7-12
☐ Senior High 10-12
☐ K – 12 School

13. My school is
☐ Metro (Calgary, Edmonton)
☐ Small Centres or Rural

14. Number of students in my school

☐ <100
☐ 101-199
☐ 200-299
☐ 300-399
☐ 400-499
☐ 500-599
☐ 600-699
☐ 700-799
☐ 800-899
☐ 900-999
☐ >999

16. Estimated percentage of students who are refugee students:

☐ <10 %
☐ 10-19 %
☐ 20-29 %
☐ 30-39 %
☐ 40-49 %
☐ 50-59 %
☐ 60-69 %
☐ 70-79 %
☐ 80-89 %
☐ 90-100 %

15. Estimated percentage of students who are English as Second Language.

☐ <10 %
☐ 10-19 %
☐ 20-29 %
☐ 30-39 %
☐ 40-49 %
☐ 50-59 %
☐ 60-69 %
☐ 70-79 %
☐ 80-89 %
☐ 90-100 %

17. Rank in the boxes below the four largest populations in your school from 1-4, with 1 as the highest.

18. Place an estimated percentage of the school population on the lines beside the identified four population groups from question 17.

☐ Caucasian _____ %
☐ Black _____ %
☐ Chinese _____ %
☐ FNMI _____ %
☐ Japanese _____ %
☐ Korean _____ %
☐ Latino _____ %
☐ Middle Eastern _____ %
☐ Philipino _____ %
☐ Thai _____ %
☐ Vietnamese _____ %
☐ Visible minority, not included above _____ %

Appendix B.2: Resiliency Questionnaire

Section 2: Resiliency

"…the process of coping with disruptive, stressful, or challenging life events in a way that provides the individual with additional protective and coping skills than prior to the disruption that results from the event"

This section of the questionnaire is designed to help gain a better understanding of your general beliefs about yourself and your capacities.

Directions: Please indicate your degree of agreement about each of the statements below by **selecting** one of the six responses in the column on the right side. The scale of responses indicates a continuum, and ranges from 0 to 5. eg. ⓪ ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

Not true at all ⓪	**Rarely true** ①	**Sometimes true** ②	**Often true** ③	**True nearly all of the time** ④	**Undecided** ⑤

Reflecting on my past experience as a principal...						
1. I am able to adapt to change.	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤
2. I can make unpopular/difficult decisions.	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤
3. I am not easily discouraged by failure.	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤
4. I have maintained a strong sense of purpose.	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤
5. I have close relationships with others.	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤
6. I can achieve my goals.	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤
7. I take pride in my achievement.	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤
8. Coping with stress strengthens me.	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤
9. I can deal with difficult situations.	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤
10. I know where to turn for assistance/support.	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤
11. I have the capacity to multitask.	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤
12. I can influence students and adults (eg. teachers, parents, superiors).	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤
13. My interpersonal network helps me cope with stress.	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤
14. I can find the humor in most situations.	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤
15. When I make plans, I follow through with them.	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤
16. The principalship is a satisfying role.	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤
17. My spirituality aids my coping mechanisms.	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤

Appendix B.3: Self-Efficacy Questionnaire

Section 3: Self-efficacy

"Perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations"

This section of the questionnaire is designed to help gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create challenges for principals in their school activities.

Directions: Please indicate your opinion about each of the questions below by **marking one** of the nine responses in the columns on the right side. The scale of responses ranges from "none at all" (1) to "a great deal" (9), with "some degree" (5) representing the mid-point between these low and high extremes. You may choose any of the nine possible responses, since each represents a degree on a continuum.

Please respond to each of the questions by considering the combination of your *current* ability, resources, and opportunity to do each of the following in your present position.

"In your current role as principal, to what can extent can/do you..."	Not at all		Very little		Some degree		Quite a bit		A great deal
1. Facilitate student learning in your school	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
2. Generate enthusiasm for a shared vision for the school	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
3. Understand the parameters of your role as principal	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
4. Handle the time demands of the job	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
5. Manage change in your school	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
6. Promote school spirit among a large majority of the school population	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
7. Create a positive learning environment in your school	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
8. Raise student achievement on standardized tests	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
9. Promote a positive image of your school with the media	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
10. Motivate teachers	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
11. Promote the prevailing values of the	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨

community in your school									
12. Maintain control of your daily schedule	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
13. Shape the operational policies and procedures that are necessary to manage your school	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
14. Handle effectively the discipline of students in your school	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
15. Promote acceptable behavior among students	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
16. Handle the paperwork required of the job	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
17. Promote ethical behavior among school personnel	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
18. Cope with the stress of the job	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
19. Prioritize among competing demands of the job	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
20. Feel supported from my superiors	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
21. Reduce the barriers of learning for students (e.g. instituting breakfast/ lunch programs, clothing programs, etc)	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
22. Collaborate with community to ensure further supports for students(eg. counseling)	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
23. Ensure the safety and security of students	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
24. Develop respectful and trusting relationship with parents	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
25. Establish effective professional development in the school	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨

Appendix B.4: Short Answer Questionnaire

Section 4

18. What other variables have influenced your self-efficacy in your role as principal in low socioeconomic status schools?

19. Please describe how a principal can maintain a high level of self-efficacy in a low socioeconomic status school.

I thank you very much for your participation in Phase 1.

Phase 2: Invitation to participate in an interview.

Phase 2 of this study will be exploring in greater depth principals' unique perspectives related to the influence that low SES environments have on principal self-efficacy. Your particular view on this subject would provide valuable insight. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet with you for further discussion. I will contact you to personally invite your participation.

☐ I would like to receive a summary of the results of this study.

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

1. How do you feel about your role as principal in this low SES school?
    a. What do you see to be your main priorities in this context?
    b. What skill(s) do you perceive to be crucial to ensuring your effectiveness?
    c. In the case of multiple skills, please prioritize these (ie. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th etc.).
2. Low SES schools are unique environments which present particular challenges. What (contextual factors) most influence your self-efficacy in this school environment? (prioritize)
3. How does this low SES school influence your level of resilience?
4. How do you as principal influence student success in this low SES school? How do you define student success?
    a. How do/have you influence(d) student success?
    b. How do/have you ensure(d) student achievement?
5. How are low SES school contexts different from other schools?
6. Considering principal self-efficacy…what time period would be optimal for a principal to be in a low SES school? Please explain further.

Appendix D: Themes from Short Answer Questions

Table D: Themes from Short Answer Questions

Themes	Question 18*	Question19*	Total*
Previous Experience	26%	0%	26%
Principal Beliefs	31%,	60%	45%
Have a Purpose	14%	21%	36%
Make a Difference	0%	7%	7%
Understand Role	19%	52%	36%
Balance in Life	2%	12%	7%
Understand Student Needs	7%	10%	8%
Principal Attitudes/Attributes	8%	12%	8%
Humor	5%	12%	8%
Relationships	14%	2%	8%
Empathy	14%	0%	14%
Patience	0%	5%	5%
Positive Outlook	0%	5%	5%
Supports	62%	76%	69%
General	12%	12%	12%
Collegial	12%	14%	13%
Resources	14%	7%	11%
Staff	19%	33%	26%
District	10%	7%	7%
Mentoring	5%	5%	5%
Community	5%	5%	5%

Note: Responses show percentages of principals who indicated those themes
*Percentage is based upon 42 respondents