PRINCIPAL TURNOVER IN TEXAS, TITLE I HIGH SCHOOLS: A NARRATIVE MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

A Record of Study

by

JENNIFER STUMBAUGH

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Chair of Committee,	Gwendolyn Webb
Committee Members,	Susan Holly
	Andrew Kwok
	Brenden Bartanen
Head of Department,	Mary Alford

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ABSTRACT

The principal is the second most important factor contributing to student success. High levels of principal turnover affect student success. Principal turnover is more common in low performing schools and schools located in high poverty areas.

Regardless of the context of the turnover, little qualitative research exists identifying the conditions that lead to Texas high school principal turnover. It is not enough to know the frequency of turnover and its effects on achievement. We need to be able to prevent it.

Data was collected from eight former Title I high school principals. Participants completed the Maslach Burnout Inventory for Educators and participated in a semi-structured interview. Inventory results and interview transcripts were analyzed and coded for themes based on the conceptual framework including theories of motivation; self-efficacy and sense-making.

Title I high school principals leave the position due to high levels of burnout. The present study finds that while principals were satisfied with their pay, the hygiene factor of support led them to feel dissatisfied. Principals reported needing additional levels of support from central office staff and expressed concern over the time and overall demands of the job as well as its effects on their emotional well-being.

The areas principals identified as having low self-efficacy were areas in which they did not have sufficient training and support. There is also evidence that formal coaching and mentoring would improve overall self-efficacy, preferably by someone that

held his or her position as a Title I high school principal. The data does not fully support prior research that states that students' race or socio-economic status are contributing factors in a principal's decision to leave.

DEDICATION

I am not sure when the thought of earning a doctoral degree first entered my mind. I do know that I have been blessed to watch countless strong and fearless women do hard things my entire life. My mother lost her husband, my father, when I was just 14 years old. I watched her do everything in her power to ensure that my brother and I felt loved and supported. I remember having countless female teachers and leaders throughout school and at the start of my educational career that saw things in me that I did not see in myself. I remember the push from a female colleague to apply and seek a doctoral degree. I remember watching another female colleague as she endured the grueling coursework while working full-time and being the best wife and mother she could be. For me, the dream was never as much about the degree as it was continuing in the footsteps of so many before me, to be a strong woman that could do hard things. This dream became a reality after another strong woman, my grandmother passed away. Her generous gift after her passing has allowed me to complete this degree debt free. This degree is dedicated to strong women, may we be them, may we know them and may we raise them.

She is clothed in strength and dignity; and laughs without fear of the future. - Proverbs 31:25

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NOMENCLATURE

Title I	Title I Schools
TEA	Texas Education Agency
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
ESSA	Elementary and Secondary Success Act
LPI	Leadership Practices Inventory
NASP	National Association of Secondary School Principals

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There are a wide array of challenges currently facing public education. While some of those challenges are new, principal turnover has been a constant and present issue. The principal is cited as the second most important factor contributing to student success, falling only behind classroom instruction, making principal turnover an alarming issue (Leithwood et al., 2010). There are several ways in which principals impact student achievement whether through instructional leadership, creating and sustaining campus climate and culture, supporting improved teaching and learning, or the hiring and retention of teachers; the impact is profound (Bartanen et al., 2019; Grissom & Bartanen, 2019; Simon & Johnson, 2015). Principals play an important leadership role in students' academic achievements through their relationships with teachers and by creating a positive school learning climate (Price & Moolenaar, 2015b). Principals are the instructional leaders on campus, guiding curriculum and instruction within the school to accomplish the goals of teaching and learning (Sankey, 2017). Ultimately, principals are the key creators of pertinent experiences that are needed to ensure effective student achievement in a collaborative culture (Azaiez & Slate, 2017).

Principal importance is evidenced in current accountability practices in which school leaders are held accountable for school performance and often removed as part of school improvement sanctions (Li, 2015; Mitani, 2018). Nationally, over the past 20 years, we have moved from No Child Left Behind (NCLB) under President George W.

Bush, to Race to the Top under President Barack Obama, to the passing of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), also under President Obama. Each of these policies is centered on demonstrating improved student achievement through high-stakes testing. High-stakes testing and accountability have influenced the role that a principal plays on a campus (Grissom et al., 2021). While ESSA reduced some federal oversight and permitted slightly more local control in Texas, high-stakes testing and accountability have remained at the forefront. High-stakes testing has led to higher levels of principal stress, burnout, and turnover (Mitani, 2018).

In a recent national study by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and the Learning Policy Institute (LPI), 424 secondary school principals from across the nation were surveyed about their intentions to stay in the principalship, as well as the extent to which they experience conditions that research has shown relate to principal retention and turnover. The NASSP and the LPI followed the survey with six focus groups with 33 school leaders from 26 states. Forty-two percent of principals indicated they were considering leaving their position. The percentage of principals planning to move to a different school was higher for those in high-poverty schools and rural communities. The focus group data uncovered common factors considered by secondary principals when making turnover decisions. The results indicate that working conditions and district-level support, salary and compensation, high stakes testing and accountability, lack of autonomy in decision making, and lack of access to professional learning, were among the top factors for principal turnover. (Levin et al., 2020).

Fullan (2007) stated that only leadership could take us to improve student achievement. After years of research on factors that impact student achievement, the school principal remained one of the single most important factors in student success (Fullan, 2007; Leithwood, et al., 2004; Waters et al., 2003). Goddard et al. (2015) reported similar findings, specifically in high-poverty elementary schools. Instructional leadership was positively and significantly related to teachers' reports of differentiated instructional practices and differentiated instruction was a positive and significant predictor of student achievement. Hitt & Tucker (2015) defined five essential broad areas, or domains, of effective leadership practices that emerged in their review of research (a) establishing and conveying the vision, (b) facilitating a high-quality learning experience for students, (c) building professional capacity, (d) creating a supportive organization for learning, and (e) connecting with external partners. Principal turnover accounts for 24% of the outcomes related to low academics (Levin & Bradley, 2019). Dixon (2019) and Snodgrass-Rangel (2018) both found, in their review of multiple studies on principal turnover, two key outcomes followed a principal's departure from the position: reduced student achievement and lower teacher retention or turnover.

Knowing the impact of principal leadership on school success, principal effectiveness is also a common factor found in research on successful schools. It is also a frequent policy discussion when considering how to improve low-performing schools. Research indicates that the least and most effective principals tend to leave schools. The most effective are promoted to higher leadership roles while the least effective are dismissed, reassigned to other roles, or leave for another district (Grissom & Bartanen,

2019; Branch et al., 2009). Although principal turnover is altogether unavoidable, including retirement, promotions, and other life factors that involve relocation, a majority of studies found that frequent principal turnover hurts school performance (Bartanen et al., 2019; Beteille et al., 2012; Miller, 2013).

Principal turnover presents a challenge not just because of the important role that principals play but also because research on school reform indicates that true reform takes five to seven years (Fullan, 2007; Mascall & Leithwood, 2010; Seashore-Louis et al., 2010). For reform to lead to lasting school change, it needs to become part of the fabric of a school, not just another fad. In one study that explored the career paths of New York's principals, Papa et al. (2002) found that two-thirds of new principals leave the school where they started their careers within the first six years. The average time a principal spent on the same campus has decreased. Grissom et al. (2021) found that in 1988 the average public school principal had spent 6.2 years at his or her current school and that by 2016 that number had decreased to just four years. Nationally, 50% of new principals leave their role within three years of their employment (Superville, 2019). In Texas, 30% of first-year principals resign after one year on the job (Dixon, 2019). More than 1,100 Texas principals started their roles between 2009 and 2011, and researchers found after one year, 30% of the principals had left the position. From 1996–2008, the average tenure for Texas high school principals was 3.83 years (Young & Fuller, 2009). The collective rapid exit of new principals may potentially harm school improvement (Snodgrass-Rangel, 2018). True reform cannot be accomplished with the current level of principal turnover.

Principal turnover is found to be even more common in low-performing schools (Branch et al., 2009; Cullen & Mazzeo, 2008; Fuller et al., 2007), and schools located in high-poverty areas. In observing more than seven thousand schools in Texas over seventeen years, (Pendola & Fuller, 2021) found that short-term demographic changes are significantly associated with increased principal turnover, especially when those changes are in the proportion of students of color. Young and Fuller (2009) found that the percentage of economically disadvantaged students in a school is a major factor in how long a principal will stay on campus; high-poverty schools have higher turnover rates. When Young and Fuller (2009) looked specifically at secondary schools, they found that more than 20 percent of newly hired secondary schools in high-poverty schools leave after just one year. Similarly, principal retention is somewhat higher in suburban districts with higher numbers of White students that are not economically disadvantaged. Beckett (2018) used longitudinal data from the Colorado Department of Education to study principal turnover from 2010–2015. The findings indicate the percentage of students of color is the only variable predictive of principal turnover, with a higher percentage of students of color in a school resulting in a higher principal turnover.

Understanding principal turnover is important not just because it is a widespread issue but because the effect of principal turnover affects our most at-risk and vulnerable populations of students at higher rates than their more affluent peers. There is a significant amount of research on the impact of leadership and effective schools for low-income and minority students (Leithwood et al., 2004; Waters et al.,

2003). Trammel (2016) found that the trait of dependability was very important in leading schools where the achievement gap is being closed with economically disadvantaged learners.

It is also important to consider the changing socio-economic and demographic shifts we have seen in both the United States and specifically Texas. Nationally, the number of students identifying as White has decreased from 75 percent in 1988 to 53 percent in 2016. Students identifying as Hispanic have increased from nine percent to 23 percent during the same period (Grissom et al., 2021). Texas has seen the Hispanic population increase in public schools by 14 percent from 2011 to 2021. During the same period students identifying as White decreased by seven percent (TEA, 2021).

Principal turnover can mean many things, including moving to another school or district, retiring, exiting education altogether, going back to the classroom, or moving to a higher positionor role. For the present study, I focused solely on voluntary principal turnover, meaning that the principal left on his or her own accord, regardless of the reason why (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019). The present study focused on voluntary Title I high school principal turnover in Texas. In Texas, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) defines Title I schools as those whose student population is at least 40% free or reduced lunch. High school principals were selected over the elementary or middle school for two reasons. First, high school principal retention rates are lower than elementary or middle school principal retention rates. In a study of three separate cohorts of Texas principals, Fuller et al. (2007) found that high school principal

retention rates were lower than both the elementary and middle school cohorts in the same years (Table 1).

Table 1

Principal Three-Year Retention Rates by School Level

School Level	1995–1998	1998–2001	2001–2004
Elementary	56.1%	52.9%	50.7%
Middle School	47.8%	45.5%	45.4%
High School	41.9%	43.9%	41.1%

The second reason high school principals were selected relates to the accountability system in Texas. In 2018, the TEA made changes to the state accountability system placing the weight of the district's accountability rating almost entirely on the performance of its high schools (TEA, 2018). For this reason, it is difficult for a district to achieve an "A" rating in the Texas accountability system if the high school(s) in the district do not receive an A rating. The rating a high school received in most cases in the 2019 school year was never higher than the district's overall rating, meaning that districts rarely received a letter grade higher than the high school. Texas high schools are held accountable for End of Course passing rates, College, Career, and Military Readiness indicators, graduation rates, and attendance rates. The increased weight of high school accountability in the district measures increases the importance of having a strong and stable leader. Title I high

school principals must be capable of leading and closing achievement gaps among low socio-economic student groups.

Higher levels of principal turnover are found in high schools that serve large concentrations of low socio-economic students (Branch et al., 2009; Fuller et al., 2007). The impact of leadership and effective schools for low-income students and students of color has been established (Carter, 2000; Leithwood et al., 2004; Waters et al., 2003). Low-income students and students of color need a dependable leader (Trammel, 2016) in order close student achievement gaps. These principals must have an equity lens, particularly when leading schools with growing numbers of marginalized students (Grissom et al., 2021).

It is important to acknowledge that eliminating turnover is unavoidable and not all turnover is bad. Datnow and Stringfield (2000) discuss the importance of a smooth transition when there are leadership changes at a campus and the impact these transitions can have on reform practices and their ability to outlast leadership change.

Regardless of the context of the turnover, little qualitative research exists identifying the conditions that lead to Texas high school principal turnover. It is not enough to know the frequency of turnover and its effects on achievement. We need to be able to prevent it, especially among effective principals (Superville, 2019). To improve student achievement in low socio-economic schools we must work to have a stronger understanding of the conditions and factors that lead to principal turnover.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to examine the lived experiences of Title I high school principals and identify (a) the conditions and motivating factors that contribute to voluntary high school principal turnover on Title I campuses in Texas, (b) the levels of self-efficacy Title I principals feel they had while in the leadership role and (c) the levels of support high school principals wish they had while serving as the school leader. While not all turnover is bad, research indicates principal turnover can hurt student achievement, making it essential to minimize and combat turnover rates (Leithwood et al., 2008).

There are multiple ways in which principals impact student achievement whether through instructional leadership, creating and sustaining campus climate and culture, supporting improved teaching and learning, or the hiring and retention of teachers; the impact has repeatedly been found to be profound (Bartanen et al., 2019; Grissom & Bartanen, 2019; Simon & Johnson, 2015). The negative impact is increased in low socio-economic schools where research indicates that turnover rates are often higher compared to schools with lower concentrations of low socio-economic students (Young & Fuller, 2009; Beckett, 2018).

Significance of the Study

The qualitative exploration offers rich narrative data on the conditions that lead to voluntary Texas high school principal turnover. The current body of research on principal turnover is largely quantitative, with a few notable exceptions.

It is important tounderstand the context in which school turnover occurs; qualitative data can provide that context. Qualitative data opens extensive and more rigorous discussion around ways to mitigate conditions that lead to voluntary high school principal turnover. Further, qualitative research allowed me to capture lived experiences; to explore human behavior in its natural context (Hatch, 2002).

The qualitative research paradigm was selected for its interpretive and constructivist epistemology and for its ability to assist the research and the practitioner as they seek to improve their knowledge base. The objective is to obtain an in-depth and detailed understanding of principal turnover and to shed light on practices, systems, structures, and behaviors that perpetuate principal turnover. Creswell et al. (2007) explained that qualitative research is conducted to empower individuals to share their stories and to hear their voices.

Ferrarotti (1981) suggested that social abstractions, like the field of education, are best understood by examining the experiences of those whose work and lives are centered upon that which the abstractions are built. Interviewing provides an appropriate avenue of inquiry when the goal of the research is to understand the experiences of people involved in education.

The present study provides data on the lived experiences of Title I high school principals, the conditions that contribute to their voluntary turnover, and the levels of self-efficacy Title I high school principals had while serving in the role. In addition, it identified the specific types of support Title I high school principals wish they had.

Implications for administrator preparation and certification programs as well as district support staff exist. For example, principal preparation programs will be able to adjust their coursework in ways that will better prepare students for the most significant factors that principals attribute to their voluntary turnover. School districts will be able to profile the specific types of support Title I high school principals desire and work to construct support systems to offer those specific supports. The qualitative data will also allow school district support systems to be better prepared to meet the needs of Title I high school principals while developing future leaders from within their organizations. When creating leadership pipelines leaders can work to ensure future principals are equipped with skills that will increase self-efficacy and potentially mitigate turnover.

The present study was guided by the following questions:

1. What are the perceived conditions that contribute or lead to voluntary high schoolprincipal turnover on Title I campuses in Texas?

2. What levels of self-efficacy do Title I high school principals feel they had while in the role?

3. What kind of support do former high school principals wish they had?

Organization of the Study

The present study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One served as an introduction, identifying factors that contribute to voluntary high school principal turnover on Title I campuses in Texas. Chapter One also reported the purpose and significance of the present study as well as the three research questions by which it was guided. Chapter Two includes a review of the literature and previous studies related to principal turnover, both nationally and in the state of Texas. It explores the effects of principals, factors

contributing to principal turnover, and consequences of principal turnover. Chapter Two also includes the construction of the conceptual framework for the present study. Chapter Three provides details about the methodology employed. A summary of the case study qualitative inquiry approach introduces Chapter Three. The summary is followed by a discussion about my role, data collection, data analysis procedures, and information about the participants and selection process. Chapter Three concludes with a discussion of the standards of validation and evaluation used in the present study and a summary of the chapter. A discussion of the findings is presented in Chapter Four. Additionally, a brief profile of each participant is provided and a discussion of the themes and subthemes that emerged from the analysis of the data frame of the chapter. Chapter Five concludes the present study and presents the discussion, implications for practice, policy, future research, and conclusions.

CHAPTER II

LITERAURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter Two is a review of literature related to principal turnover, more specifically the effects of principal turnover and the factors that contribute to principal turnover. The literature review also focuses on research specific to Title I schools. The present study uses this body of research to frame the experiences of Title I high school principals in Texas.

A systematic review was conducted to ensure the review contains a large body of research (Popay et al., 2006). The following databases were used: ERIC, ProQuest, EBSCO, and Google Scholar. The research spans from as far back as 1996. It was important to reach this far back to include some of the first scholarship on principal turnover. The keywords used were: principal turnover, effects of principal turnover, principal effectiveness, characteristics of effective principals; principal impact on student achievement; burnout factors in principals; principal salary; principal perceptions; teachers' perceptions of principals; principal and teacher turnover; leadership and student learning; principals of low performing school, leadership in low socio-economic schools and leadership and school climate.

Eighty-nine articles were included in the review of literature on the effects of principal turnover and the factors that contribute to principal turnover. Table 2 indicates the author, date, and key findings of each study used in the literature review (Popay et al., 2006).

Table 2

Synthesis of Literature on Principal Turnover

Author	Date	Key Findings
Azaiez & Slate	2017	Principal tenure impacts student achievement
Baker et al.	2010	A principals relative salary compared to their peers impacts a decision to leave
Bartanen et al.	2019	Principals demonstrate influence on student achievement
Bartanen et al.	2019	Principal turnover decreases teacher retention and impacts student achievement
Beckett	2018	The percentage of students of color is a factor in principal turnover
Beteilliet et al.	2012	Teacher turnover increases after a principal turnover and principals prefer high achieving schools
Branch et al.	2009	Low SES schools are harder to staff
Boyd et al.	2011	Forty percent of teachers turning over cited dissatisfaction with leaders as a factor
Carter	2000	Low-income students need a strong leader to grow
Carver-Thomas & Darling –Hammond	2019	Teacher turnover is higher in Title 1 schools, but can be improved with strong leadership
Crowe & Matthews	1998	School leaders benefit from mentoring
Cullen & Mazzeo	2007	There is a link between student achievement and principal pay
Daily	2018	Principals impact teacher job satisfaction
Darling-Hammond et al.	2007	Principals must be instructional leaders
Datnow & Stringfield	2000	Leadership transitions must be smooth to avoid the negative effects of turnover
Davis & Anderson	2020	Half of all 1st year principals turnover within two years
DeMatthews et al.	2021	Teacher turnover increases in school experiencing leadership turnover
Dimke	2011	Attributes of high preforming high poverty principals
Dixon	2019	Principal turnover impacts student achievement and teacher turnover
Donnelly	2012	Effective leaders improve student achievement in Title 1 schools
Edmonds	1982	Five correlates of effective schools
Farley-Ripple et al.	2012	Autonomy in hiring practices is a factor in principal turnover
Friedman	2002	Principal burnout is linked to leadership being challenged
Fuller et al.	2007	Low SES schools are harder to staff
Fuller et al.	2007	Principal turnover is higher in schools with 50% or more low SES students
Fullan	2002	Principals impact school climate and trust
Fullan	2007	True reform takes 5 – 7 years

Table 3 - Continued

Synthesis of Literature on Principal Turnover

Author	Date	Key Findings
Gates et al.	2006	Principal turnover is higher is schools with a larger population of minority students and lower in large schools
Gates et al.	2003	Principal salary is higher in larger schools which may support lower turnover
Goddard et al.	2015	Strong instructional leadership positively impacts student achievement
Goldring & Taie	2018	Nationally principal turnover rates have reached 18%
Gray	2018	Principals must be instructional leaders
Grissom	2011	Principal impact teacher hiring and retention
Grissom et al.	2021	Principals have a substantial impact on student achievement
Grissom & Bartanen	2019	Principals play a role in teacher retention
Grissom & Bartanen	2019	Principal effectiveness as an impact of turnover
Hallinger & Heck	1998	Principals have a measurable effect on the schools they lead
Hanusheck	2016	Leadership can improve student outcomes in Title 1 schools
Hit & Tucker	2016	Leadership influences student achievement
Holme & Rangel	2012	Lack of shared norms and goals negatively impacts student achievement
Hoy & Miskel	2005	Leadership behaviors impact school climate and teaching and learning
Ingersoll	2004	Quality school leaders improve teacher retention on Title 1 campuses
Jensen	2013	Leadership can improve student outcomes in Title 1 schools
Kelley et al.	2005	Principals actions impact school climate
King	2002	Instructional leadership enhances teaching and learning
Ladd	2011	The most important teacher working condition is quality school leadership
Leithwood et al.	2004/19	Seven claims for successful leadership
Leithwood et al.	2008	Principal turnover has a negative impact on student achievement
Leithwood et al.	2010	Leadership is second only to classroom instruction
Leithwood & Riehl	2003	Leadership is about providing direction and exercising influence
Levin & Bradley	2019	Principal turnover impacts academic performance
Levin et al.	2020	Secondary principals don't feel adequately compensated for their work
Seashore-Louis et al.	2010	Student achievement doesn't improve without talented leadership
Maschall & Leithwood	2010	Principals have an indirect impact on student achievement through positive culture and climate
Marks & Pinty	2003	Principals foster relationships between staff and students and staff with each other

Table 4 – Continued

Synthesis of Literature on Principal Turnover

Author	Date	Key Findings
Mendels	2016	Principals must be instructional leaders
Miller	2013	Principals play a critical role in the well-being of students and teachers
Mitani	2018	Accountability requirements impact principal turnover
Murray	2021	School culture and climate impacts teacher perceptions
Ni et al.	2018	Central office control leads to principal burnout
Oberman	1996	Principal turnover is driven by lack of training and support
Padilla et al.	2021	Principal autonomy is a factor in successful Title 1 schools
Papa et al.	2002	Low salaries may impact principal turnover
Papa & Baxter	2008	Central office control leads to principal burnout
Parker et al.	2011	Shared leadership improves student achievement
Partlow	2007	Principals prefer working on high achieving schools
Paul	2015	An open school climate boosts student achievement
Pendola & Fuller	2021	Student demographics impact principal turnover
Perez	2015	Supportive leadership behaviors promote an open school climate
Price	2012	Principals establish and maintain school climate
Price & Moolenaar	2015	Principals shape learning climates
Procek	2012	Principals must focus on the schools culture and climate build staff autonomy
Reardon	2011	The income achievement gap is now more than double the black-white achievement gap
Roy	2019	Exemplary leadership practices impact school climate in Title 1 schools
Sanchez et al.	2020	Principals support of teachers improves school climate
Sankey	2017	Principals impact collaborative school culture
Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms	2011	Shared decision making lead by the principal improves student achievement
Seashore-Louis et al.	2010	Reform takes five to seven years
Simon & Johnson	2015	Teachers leave high poverty schools for more affluent schools
Snodgrass-Rangel	2018	Principal turnover impacts achievement and teacher turnover
Superville	2019	Nationally new principals serve a three-year tenure
Tekleselassie & Villarreal	2010	Autonomy is a factor in principal turnover

Table 5 - Continued

Synthesis of Literature on Principal Turnover

Author	Date	Key Findings
Trammel	2016	Dependability is exhibited in principals of high performing high poverty schools
Tran	2017	High school principals in California who were less satisfied with pay were more likely to leave
Waters et al.	2003	21 leadership practices that have a positive impact on student achievement
Waters & Marzano	2006	Principal autonomy leads to student achievement
Wells & Klocko	2018	Principals stress is linked to lack of support
Young & Fuller	2009	High school principals serve an average of four years; 20% of low SES principals leave after one year
Vahalik	2022	Transformational leadership qualities improves teacher retention

Turnover can be many things, retirement, demotion, promotion, or leaving the profession altogether. It can be forced or voluntary. For the present study, voluntary principal turnover was studied.

Voluntary turnover was selected for two reasons. Potential participants who experienced involuntary or forced turnover may be reluctant to speak about their experiences. Voluntary turnover was also selected to capture responses aligned with research questions one and three. The conditions that led to a turnover and the levels of support former principals wish they had requires the feedback, data, and lived experiences of those who chose to leave the position, not those who were forced out. Snodgrass-Rangel (2018) in her discussion of findings, called for researchers to seek consensus on how to measure turnover, accomplished by ensuring studies specifically seek to explore voluntary or involuntary turnover.

Principal Turnover

Nationally, according to recent National Center for Education Statistics data, principal turnover rates have reached 18 % (Goldring & Taie, 2018). Among Texas principals at all levels, close to 30% left campus after just one year from 1995–2001 (Branch et al., 2009). Davis and Anderson (2020) used data from Texas and found that half of all first-time principals who entered the field between 2008–2011 left within two years. Davis and Anderson also found lower rates of elementary principal turnover and those secondary principals were promoted more often. In addition, urban school principals exited the system at a greater rate than rural principals did.

Fuller et al. (2007) explored the career paths of Texas principals from 1994–2006 and found only 50 percent of principals remained at the same school for three years. Young and Fuller (2009), in their study of principal turnover between 1996 and 2008, identified that the average principal tenure was 3.83 years. When looking specifically at high school principals, research revealed the percentage drops closer to 40 percent while among principals that serve a majority of students considered low socio-economic status, the percentage falls even lower to nearly 30 percent (Fuller et al., 2007). More than 20 percent of new secondary principals in low socio-economic schools leave after one year (Young & Fuller, 2009).

A dearth of research on the role a principal plays in school success makes a solution to this disparity of turnover even more of a concern. Fullan (2007) points to the fact that true school reform takes five to seven years. For reform to yield long-lasting school change, it needs to become part of the fabric of a school, not just another fad.

True reform cannot be accomplished with the current level of principal turnover. Fullan (2007) specifically points to six years as critical at a high school campus. Therefore, if the average high school principal in Texas does not spend six years on campus, the change for sustained reform is low.

In Texas, the weight of a high school campus in the accountability system increased in 2018. TEA made changes to the state accountability system placing the greatest weight on the districts' accountability rating on the performance of its high schools (TEA, 2018). For this reason, it is difficult for a district to achieve an "A" rating in the Texas accountability system if the high school(s) in the district do not also receive an A rating. Furthermore, the rating a high school received, in most cases in the 2019 school year, was never higher than the overall district rating. Texas high schools are held accountable for End of Course passing rates, College, Career, and Military Readiness indicators, graduation rates, and attendance rates. The increased weight of high school accountability in the district's measures increases the importance of having a strong and stable leader capable of leading and closing achievement gaps among low socio-economic student groups.

The review of literature addresses the impact and or role that principals play in the success of a school and factors that have been identified as causes contributing to principal turnover. In addition, it explores the research on Title I schools, and the population being studied, and defines the conceptual framework for the present study.

Effect of Principals

Hallinger and Heck (1998) reviewed empirical data on the effect of principals and found principals have a measurable effect on the schools they lead. They went on to assert that principal leadership can make a difference in student learning, even though it is often indirect. Their review of research from 1980–1995 laid a strong foundation for the notion that a principal has the most impact on student learning by sustaining a school-wide purpose focused on student learning.

Recent studies found principals play a critical role in the well-being of students, and demonstrate significant influence on student achievement (Bartanen et al., 2019; Leithwood et al., 2008; Miller, 2013), school climate, and trust between students and staff and staff with each other (Fullan, 2007; Marks & Printy, 2003), and effective teacher hiring and retention (Grissom, 2011; Grissom & Bartanen, 2019). The following three effects of principals are explored in-depth; student achievement, school climate, and teacher hiring and retention.

Student Achievement

Leithwood et al. (2008) in an empirical literature review on leadership, identified seven claims for successful leadership. Two stand out as evidence to support the role of the principal in student achievement. School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on student learning and school leaders improve academic instruction indirectly and most powerfully through positive working conditions for staff. Achieving results through others is the essence of leadership, pointing to the indirect effect principals have on student learning.

In 2019, Leithwood revisited those seven claims to determine their applicability ten years later. Using data and research from the ten years Leithwood stood by the initial claim that school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on student learning but revised it to state that school leadership has a significant effect on features of the school organization which positively influences the quality of teaching and learning. While moderate in size, this leadership effect is vital to the success of most school improvement efforts.

The second claim that stood out in the original research, that school leaders improve academic instruction indirectly and most powerfully through positive working conditions for staff, had been revised based on research from 2008–2018. The research demonstrated the importance of the school-to-home relationship and communication. It was revised to state school leadership improves teaching and learning, indirectly and most powerfully, by improving the status of significant key classroom and school conditions and by encouraging parent/child, interactions in the home that further enhance student success at school.

Waters et al. (2003) completed a meta-analysis examining the effects of leadership practices and their impact on student achievement. Their study resulted in the McREL Framework, which identified 21 leadership practices that had a positive impact on student achievement. The 21 practices and their correlations are listed in Table 3. The stronger the leader's skills in using these practices, the stronger the correlation on student achievement. The Water et al. study sampled principals serving all types of schools, not just Title I or similar campuses.

Table 6

McREL Framework

Practice	The extent to which the principal	Avg. r	N Schools	N students	% CI
Culture	Fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation	.29	709	13	.23–.37
Order	Establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines	.26	456	17	.17–.35
Discipline	Protects teachers from influences that would detract from their teaching time or focus	.24	397	10	.14–.33
Resources	Provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs	.26	570	17	.18–.34
Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment	Is directly involved in the design & implementation of curriculum, instruction & assessment practices	.16	636	19	.08–.24

Table 7 - Continued

McREL Framework

Practice	The extent to which the principal	Avg. r	N Schools	N students	% CI
Focus	Establishes clear goals & keeps the goals at the forefront of the schools attention	.24	1109	30	.18–.19
Knowledge of Curriculum Instruction & Assessment	Fosters shared beliefs & a sense of community & cooperation	.24	327	8	.13–.35
Visibility	Has quality contact & interactions with teachers & students	.16	432	11	.06–.25
Contingent rewards	Recognizes & rewards individual accomplishments	.15	420	7	.05–.24
Communication	Establishes strong lines of communication with teachers among students	.23	245	19	.10–.35
Outreach	Is an advocate & spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders	.28	478	14	.19–.35

Table 8 - Continued

McREL Framework

Practice	The extent to which the principal	Avg. r	N Schools	N students	% CI
Input	Involves teachers in the design & implementation of important decisions/policies	.30	504	13	.21–.38
Affirmation	Recognizes & celebrates school accomplishments & acknowledges failures	.25	345	7	.22–.38
Relationship	Demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff	.19	497	12	.10–.24
Change agent	Is willing to & actively challenges the status quo	.30	479	7	.22-.38
Optimizer	Inspires & leads new & challenging innovations	.20	444	9	.11–.29
Ideals/beliefs	Communicates & operates from strong ideals & beliefs about schooling	.25	526	8	.17–.33
Monitors/evaluates	Monitors the effectiveness of school practices & their impact on student learning	.28	1071	30	.23-.34

Table 9 - Continued

McREL Framework

Practice	The extent to which the principal	Avg. r	N Schools	N students	% CI
Flexibility	Adapts leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation & is comfortable with dissent	.22	151	2	.05–.37
Situational Awareness	Is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school & uses this information to address current and potential problems	.33	91	5	.11–.37
Intellectual Stimulation	Ensures that faculty & staff are aware of the most current theories & practices makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the schools culture	.32	321	5	.22–.42

The Leithwood study demonstrates the impact principals have on student achievement. The practices with the highest correlation include; culture, fostering a shared belief and sense of community and cooperation; affirmation, recognizing and celebrating school accomplishments and acknowledging failure; change agent; willing

and actively challenging the status quo; intellectual stimulation; ensuring that faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school culture. It is important to determine if the practices with the highest correlation are in fact areas mentioned by Title I high school principals as areas for which they had low self-efficacy or areas in which they desired additional support.

Leithwood’s findings connect to additional research specific to Title I schools. Tramel (2016), in her study of traits and practices of principals, compared the leadership traits of high-performing poverty school principals to low-performing positive school principals. Trammel found that in high-poverty schools the trait of dependability was exhibited and identified in principals where the achievement gap was being closed with economically challenged students. Trammel also found the principal's perception was important to a school's success. Trammel concluded that being perceptive might help the principal relate effectively to factors or distractors that impact learner success within their respective schools. Dimke (2011) found similar results in an Illinois study of principals in high-poverty schools. Principals in higher-performing high-poverty schools were seen as inspiring vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart, more frequently than principals of low-performing high-poverty schools.

Waters et al. (2003) found that a highly effective principal could increase his or her students’ test scores up to 10 percentile points on standardized tests in just one year. Grissom et al. (2021) summarized the highest-quality quantitative studies that have

isolated the direct impact of principals on student achievement. They concluded that principals have a substantial effect on student achievement. Replacing a principal at the 25th percentile of effectiveness with one at the 75th percentile increases student achievement in both reading and math by nearly three months. Seashore-Louis et al. (2010) concluded a six-year study of leadership by stating that they had not found a single case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership.

School Climate

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) suggested there are two main functions of leadership rather than a role. They offered that those two functions include providing directions and exercising influence. Both help to establish a shared sense of purpose and vision. Procek (2012) found when a principal is focused on the school's culture and climate, building relationships, involving staff in decisions, and providing autonomy, staff felt comfortable expressing their opinions and took responsibility for decisions and the success of the school.

Murray (2021), through a series of interviews with elementary teachers, found clear links between the literature regarding principal influence on school culture and climate and actual teacher perceptions. Murray identified a clear relationship between principal behaviors and positive school culture and climate based on teacher perceptions. Three themes emerged as common in the data including relationships, communication, and shared leadership.

A qualitative study of high-poverty schools in Canada found that the principal must be committed to building shared leadership and a positive school climate with high collaboration which in turn fosters academic achievement (Parker et al., 2011). The research found that to build a positive climate, these high-poverty schools had at their core: excellent teaching and high-quality collaboration amongst teachers; parental engagement along with community partnerships; and shared leadership among administrators and teachers. In a similar study in the United States, Kelley et al. (2005) compared relationships between specific dimensions of leadership and measures of school climate in 31 elementary schools. In addition, principals' perceptions of their leadership were compared with teachers' perceptions of their principals' leadership. The research concluded that teachers' perceptions of their principals' effectiveness were related to school climate. When teachers believed that principals appropriately responded to situations, they also maintained high perceptions of a positive school climate. Hoy and Miskel (2005), in their book on leadership and school reform, explained that the leadership behaviors of a principal directly affect the climate of a school and correspondingly impact teaching and learning.

Research on effective schools often emphasizes the climate inside the school. According to Paul (2015), by creating an open school climate, principals can boost student achievement. When principals were facilitators and displayed characteristics of facilitators the climate was seen as open. On the other hand, a closed school climate lacked authenticity, and teachers and principals were often disengaged or unconnected (Paul, 2015). Even though poverty has a strong link to the school climate as well as the

underperformance of the students (Hanushek, 2016; Jensen, 2013), there is evidence of some Title I schools ability to demonstrate exceptional performance compared to others (Donnelly, 2012). In his study, Price (2012) demonstrated that the principal played a significant role in establishing a healthy school climate that in turn positively contributed to the achievement of students and school effectiveness, regardless of the demographics of the campus.

In a qualitative study of one urban high school campus principal, Perez (2015) found supportive leadership behaviors promoted an open school climate. Through focus groups and interviews, teachers indicated that supportive, approachable, shared leadership, and visionary behaviors resulted in a school climate exemplified by: (a) respect and engagement, (b) autonomy and recognition, (c) collaboration and innovation, and (d) socialization and personalization. This study is significant because it is one of the few studies to date that focuses on high school principal turnover and uses interviews. The findings validate the important role that principals play in setting the climate of a campus.

In a quantitative study of Title I high schools in Georgia, Roy (2019) found consistent and statistically significant correlations between teachers' perceptions of exemplary leadership practices and school climate in Title I high schools. The study compared the relationship between teacher-perceived school climate and principals' overall Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI). In addition, it addressed the relationships between teacher-perceived school climate and the five aspects of the principal's exemplary leadership practices (LPI subscales). The correlation found in this study

demonstrates that exemplary leaders can establish and improve school climate. Principals have a profound impact on school climate, the next section will address principals' effect on teaching hiring and retention.

Teacher Hiring and Retention

Teacher turnover continues to be an issue in the U.S. educational system and Texas. Teacher turnover disproportionately affects students living in poverty and students of color or historically marginalized populations. Teachers in these settings are 50% more likely to leave Title I schools and 70% more likely to leave schools with the highest proportions of students of color (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019).

The majority of current research focuses on teacher retention. However, Papa and Baxter (2008) found that urban and low-performing schools struggle to hire highly qualified teachers. Principals do not have autonomy in hiring; it is often highly dependent on organizational culture and structure.

Ladd (2011) found that the most important teacher working condition is quality school leadership. Quality school leaders, even those in challenging school environments, such as Title I schools, have a powerful impact on teacher retention (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Ingersoll, 2004). In surveys that assessed reasons teachers left or would leave the field, Boyd et al. (2011) found more than 40% of teachers cited dissatisfaction with the administration as a reason to leave. Over the years, there has been consistent research that indicates beginning teachers who report feeling supported by their administration through induction or mentoring are more likely to

persist in the field than those who did not feel supported by school leaders (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Ingersoll, 2004; Ladd, 2011).

Teachers who work with students daily are arguably the most critical workforce. Therefore, it is paramount that the perceptions they hold are consistently positive. Teachers need to feel supported by a strong and knowledgeable principal and feel like valued stakeholders. In their study on teachers' perceptions of leadership practices and of school climate Sanchez et al. (2020) found just how important the principal's support of teachers is to the establishment of school climate through effective leadership practices. When a positive school climate flourishes, student achievement follows. The principal and the teachers' attitudes, together, create an atmosphere for learning that has a great influence on school success.

When examining the relationship between principal characteristics, school level, teacher quality, turnover, and student achievement Fuller et al. (2007) found a pattern of association between higher teacher turnover and lower student outcomes coupled with less experienced principals. Principal characteristics influence teacher quality and turnover, which in turn affects student achievement. Their findings reflect the ongoing churn of less qualified staff in underperforming, higher poverty, and high minority schools in Texas. Leadership in Title I schools is explored in depth later in this chapter.

Several studies show teacher turnover increases after a principal leaves (Beteille et al., 2012; Miller, 2013). Bartanen et al. (2019) found principal turnover decreases teacher retention, which in turn increases the number of new-to-campus teachers in the year after the principal leaves. DeMatthews et al. (2021) used a student and employee-

level statewide longitudinal dataset from Texas that included all public K-12 schools from school years 1999–2000 to 2016–2017. The study estimated teacher-level models with school fixed effects, and then compared teacher turnover in schools leading up to and immediately following a principal's exit, to similar schools that did not experience principal turnover. Findings indicated teacher turnover increased in schools experiencing leadership turnover, and the effects were greater among high-poverty and urban schools.

Branch et al. (2009), in a quantitative study estimating principal effectiveness in Texas public schools, found the teacher transition rate was highest in schools with the least effective principals. The study also found that teacher exits were higher and principal quality lower in higher-poverty schools. While many researchers agree that principal leadership has had the most significant influence on teachers' decisions to stay in or leave their schools, Vahalik (2022) identified a gap in the literature related to what principal leadership practices influence teachers' decisions to stay or leave. In a qualitative study of one large urban school district in Texas, Vahalik sought to determine what transformational leadership elements principals utilized to retain teachers at their schools. In interviews with nine purposively sampled kindergarten through high school principals, Vahalik identified principals utilized all four elements of transformational leadership to retain teachers, including idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

Daily (2018) conducted a qualitative case study examining how principal leadership behaviors influence teachers' job satisfaction. Daily found several themes that emerged in her interviews of seven public high school teachers including democratic

leadership, support, authentic, collaborative, professional development, teacher appreciation, and an open-door policy were responsible for increasing teacher job satisfaction and decreasing teacher turnover rates. The results of her study demonstrated that principals could conclusively influence the satisfaction teachers feel when they foster personal development and autonomy, decreasing teacher turnover rates.

Factors Contributing to Principal Turnover

To ensure principals serve a longer tenure to increase their impact and improve student achievement, we must identify factors that cause principal turnover. Partlow (2007) found it difficult to ascertain the cause of high principal turnover rates. Young and Fuller (2009) found higher turnover rates are attributed to the most challenging situations on campus. Working conditions have become increasingly difficult and pay continues to lag, making it a challenge to keep high-quality leaders. Three factors stand out in the research: characteristics of the position, campus demographics, and principal salary (Crow & Matthews, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Fuller et al., 2007; Oberman, 1996; Padilla, 2021; Tran, 2017; Wells & Klocko, 2018).

Characteristics of the Position

In 1996, Oberman studied principal turnover on a large scale in Chicago. The findings point to the overwhelming shift at the time in the roles of principals. Gone were the days of managers and the lone decision-makers. At the time of the research, Chicago experienced a massive shift to site-based decision-making, giving stakeholders a seat at the table and a larger voice in the decisions and directions schools were moving. Unfortunately, with that shift, there was a lack of training and support for principals,

which was a driving factor in turnover. The new responsibilities principals faced related to site-based decision-making were expanded at a much faster pace than the support principals were given. Crowe and Matthews (1998) spoke to the impact that mentoring can have on educational leaders. They found evidence to support that school leaders at any stage of their career can benefit from mentoring. Leaders often identify other leaders as a key component of their growth or support system. Mentoring is not just for new principals, it benefits seasoned leaders and those embarking on a new journey with a new campus or a new role. Crowe and Matthews asserted mentorship provides leaders with companionship in what is often a very lonely role. It forces socialization and has proven to impact leaders' abilities to improve teaching and learning. The rapid changes that education brings could be combated with higher levels of support such as mentoring or coaching for principals.

The last 10–15 years have seen an increase in the trend to prepare principals as instructional leaders (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Gray, 2018; Mendels, 2016). Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) found institutions of higher learning are not adequately providing principal candidates with sustained, hands-on learning that prepares them for the demands of school leadership. King (2002) defines instructional leadership as anything that leaders do to enhance teaching and learning.

Principals can no longer rely on being good building managers; they must become the leaders of learning to effectively drive instruction on the campus (Gray, 2018). The Wallace Foundation (2012) found five key responsibilities for a school leader to lead a successful school. One of the keys is to improve instruction by focusing on the

quality of education in the school. Principals are instructional leaders when they create a culture within the school that supports continued professional learning for all stakeholders (Seashore-Louis et al., 2010). Further, when principals are instructional leaders student achievement increases.

A more recent study that focused on the working conditions, stress, and turnover behaviors of principals under No Child Left Behind found the nature of the position causes turnover. Mitani (2018) found higher levels of stress, brought on by NCLB requirements, caused higher levels of turnover, regardless of whatever state accountability might be in place. Mitani (2018) goes on to suggest that principals do not respond well to performance-based systems, implying policy changes should be made to mitigate high turnover rates. A one-size-fits-all approach to accountability does not take into account the various factors and dimensions that vary from school to school. It also does not measure the multitude of other responsibilities and dimensions that determine a school's true impact on students.

Wells and Klocko (2018) examined principal workplace well-being through the underlying components of stress and resiliency and found data to suggest that principal stress may result from an imbalance between the demands principals face and the resources available for dealing with those demands, rather than from the demands alone. Their study goes on to make parallels to the stresses faced by physicians, a much more broadly studied topic. Principals and physicians are under considerable pressure, putting their well-being at risk. Principals and physicians often report feeling isolated in their work. Principals work long hours, and many are subject to legal threats, public scrutiny,

and struggle with work-life balance. It can be a challenge for school leaders to seek emotional support, characteristics often found in physicians. It can be difficult for principals to set boundaries that can protect their personal life, and support ways that can support their resilience for the job. Principal burnout is reported when they feel their leadership is either rejected or challenged Friedman (2002). Through this decade of research, we see that principals report considerable stress in the areas of their work in which they feel unsupported or unprepared.

Autonomy is also cited as a factor in turnover. Principals who perceive their role includes higher levels of autonomy are less likely to turnover (Tekleselassie & Villarreal, 2011). Autonomy specifically related to hiring and firing staff is reported in a study by Farley-Ripple et al. (2012). The ability to make autonomous staffing decisions and budget decisions was a factor in principals' decision to remain on their campus. Oberman (1996) also found principals specifically stated the inability to hire and fire teachers related to their dissatisfaction and eventual turnover. Autonomy in the budget is also significantly associated with turnover rates of principals (Tekleselassie & Villarreal, 2011). Without autonomy in the budget, they are unable to adequately influence meaningful school improvement. Often, excessive central office control or centralization of funds hurts a principal's ability to manage change or reform (Ni et al., 2017; Papa & Baxter, 2008).

The role of the principal is dynamic, all-inclusive, and ever-changing. The push and pull lead to strenuous working conditions, making it a challenge to retain high-quality leaders. The role of the campus principal has morphed over the years to include

instructional leader, aspirational leader, team builder, coach, and visionary while still maintaining good management capabilities.

Campus Demographics (Title I Schools)

The socio-economic status of a campus also plays an integral role in principal turnover rates. Not only do schools with higher numbers of economically challenged students have higher principal turnover rates than schools with lower numbers of students with similar economic demographics, but data also shows that when a principal leaves their first economically challenged campus, they move to a school with a fewer number of economically challenged students (Clotfelter et al., 2007). In Texas specifically, Fuller et al. (2007) found that if a campus consisted of at least 50% economically challenged students, the principal was 16% less likely to remain at the school for three years when compared to campuses with lower numbers of economically challenged students.

In a quantitative study on principal turnover in Illinois and North Carolina, Gates et al. (2006) found turnover was higher in schools with a larger population of minority students. The racial makeup of the students was found to be a significant predictor of turnover. More specifically, the number of non-White students positively relates to the level of turnover. In both states, the percentage of the student body that is non-White is positively related to both the probability of moving schools and changing positions.

Branch et al. (2009) found that the principal skill set is more important in the most challenging schools, yet there is a larger variation in principal quality in higher-poverty schools. They also found that as the proportion of low-income students

increased the school was more likely to have a first-year principal and less likely to have a principal who had been at the school for at least six years. In higher poverty schools, there was evidence of the least and most effective principals being more likely to leave, the latter of obvious concern. However, the turnover of ineffective principals is just as concerning given Branch et al. found ineffective principals in high-poverty schools moved on to principal positions in other schools and districts.

Mascall and Leithwood (2010) made it a point to state that while research demonstrates principal turnover negatively affects student achievement, low student achievement may also lead to principal turnover. Low-performing schools often represent a negative working condition for a principal. Both Partlow (2007) and Beteille et al. (2012) found principals preferred working in high-achieving schools. A school's level of achievement influences a principal's decision to hold the position.

The negative impact of principal turnover is largest in schools with high concentrations of economically challenged students and schools with low levels of student achievement. Low-performing schools and those with economically challenged students experience both higher turnover rates among principals and struggle to attract experienced new principals (Beteille et al., 2012).

Principal turnover is increasing particularly in urban districts across the nation. Beckett (2018) used data from 2010–2015 to conduct a multiple regression analysis examining seven independent variables and their relationship to principal turnover in Colorado urban schools. The findings indicated that the percentage of students of color is the only variable predictive of principal turnover. A higher percentage of students of

color in a school resulted in higher principal turnover. Urban schools in Colorado experienced a change in leadership every 2.5 years and only 23.70% of principals stayed at the same school for five years. The findings suggested a need to transform principal retention practices, with an emphasis on schools with a high percentage of students of color.

In a recent mixed methods study, Padilla et al. (2021) explored the impact district leadership has on the success of a Title I school by studying a successful Title I school in South Texas. Common successful strategies included active support and flexibility in all school functions, such as curriculum, instruction, staffing, etc. There was no sense of authoritative top-down control on the part of the school district. Instead, schools and teachers were provided flexibility and autonomy, but within an environment of high expectations. The school district provided its organizational goals, expectations, resources, and services. It also infused flexibility so that each school, leader, and teacher could work toward maximum student success based on the needs of each school, reflecting Waters and Marzano's (2006) "defined autonomy."

A factor that is not found in prior research is the impact that Title I funding may have on Title I principal turnover. Again, because most of the research on turnover is quantitative, some numbers show turnover is higher in Title I schools. Qualitative data that explains these factors, including best practices and budgetary issues, does not exist.

Salary

Another consistent theme found in the research on principal turnover is pay. Research exists in most fields attempting to determine the effect that pay has on a

person’s decision to accept and stay in a job. The business world relies heavily on equity theory (Adams, 1965). Equity theory is based on what they and others put into their job and what is received as a result. If someone feels they work harder than someone else works and are paid less this could be perceived as a pay inequity. As far back as 1935, there is evidence of dissatisfaction with wages being the most listed reason for voluntary resignations across many job fields (Hoppock, 1935).

While little scholarship exists on pay satisfaction and principals, if we look to other fields, we see current research continues to reflect similarly. When looking specifically at medical representatives from pharmaceutical companies, for example, Vandenberghe and Tremblay (2008) found pay satisfaction predicted turnover. DeConink and Bachman (2007) when studying marketing managers found a similar finding. When managers felt their pay was fair, thoughts of turnover diminished.

While there is a wealth of research related to turnover and pay for teachers, Tran (2017) seeks to fill a gap in the body of knowledge related to high school principals in California, identifying a correlation between job satisfaction and pay. Many studies on pay have linked low salaries to principal turnover, however, those studies do not determine if the principal who left was satisfied with their job (Farley-Ripple, et al., 2012; Papa et al., 2002). Tran's (2017) study is unique in that it also examines the perceptions of the pay of their peers. He found that high school principals in California, who were less satisfied with their pay, were more likely to want to leave the position. Tran's findings are important because, as previously stated, the majority of the research on pay and turnover leaves out the salary satisfaction piece, making it difficult to

determine if principals exit for more money or leave because they are dissatisfied with their current position.

Cullen and Mazzeo (2007) explored the link between principal salary growth, turnover, and principal effectiveness, specifically in Texas. They found a positive relationship between salary and student achievement (Texas Accountability Ratings). They also found principals in high-achieving schools were less likely to leave. Findings like these have implications for staffing Title I schools which are often lower performing.

A 2010 study of Missouri principals (Baker et al., 2010) found a principal's relative salary, compared to their peers, influenced their decision to stay on campus. A relatively higher salary meant the principal was less likely to move to another school. Gates et al. (2006) found larger schools have lower principal turnover. Gates et al. (2003) found, that while larger schools tend to have more issues or challenges, principals in larger schools are paid more, suggesting that increased salary may be enough to keep principals of larger more complex schools in place.

In her study on principal turnover and NCLB sanctions Mitani (2018) found principals of schools, facing NCLB sanctions earn higher salaries than those not facing NCLB sanctions. The study found NCLB sanctions led to high levels of stress and increased turnover. The study was quantitative and does not explore whether a salary increase would have made the principal feel compensated for increased levels of stress. A similar study of ESSA implications has not been published. However, a more recent

student (Levin et al., 2020) did find high stakes accountability was still a factor in turnover decisions.

Salary and other compensation-related items were a factor in secondary principals considering turnover in a recent national study by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and the Learning Policy Institute (LPI) (Levin et al., 2020). The NASSP and the LPI surveyed 424 secondary school principals from across the United States. The NASSP and the LPI also conducted six focus groups with 33 school leaders from 26 states. Both the survey and the focus groups asked principals about their intentions to stay in the principalship, as well as the extent to which they experienced conditions that research has shown related to principal retention and turnover. The study found a significant number of secondary principals felt they were not adequately compensated for their work, factoring into their decisions to stay or leave. The study also found principal pay has not always kept pace with teacher pay. The next section of the literature review will cover the consequences of principal turnover.

Consequences of Principal Turnover

Research points to numerous consequences of principal turnover. The following consequences are explored: student achievement, school climate, and culture. After years of research on factors that affect student achievement, the school principal remained one of the single most important factors in student success (Fullan, 2007; Leithwood et al., 2004; Waters et al., 2003). Murray (2021) found clear links between literature regarding principal influence on school culture and climate and actual teacher perceptions.

Student Achievement

While most research labels a principal's effect on student achievement as indirect, some studies claim a more direct influence. The first looked at math and reading data in two states, Tennessee and Missouri, in the years after principal turnover on a campus. In the first year after a principal left a campus in Missouri, assessment data documents a consistent decline in math achievement for up to four years while for reading, this negative effect was seen for two years. In Tennessee, the negative effect was evident for one year in both math and reading (Bartanen et al., 2019).

Waters et al. (2003) used their ongoing meta-analysis on the effects of leadership practices and their relation to student achievement to create 21 leadership responsibilities they found had a significant impact on student achievement. The research found that leaders must be able to strategically implement change while also balancing the school's culture and norms. When done effectively they found a strong correlation between the leadership of the school and student achievement. The average effect size between leadership and student achievement was .25.

Grissom et al. (2021), examined six studies that used panel data studies and covered over 22,000 principals and found that a single standard deviation increase in principal effectiveness increases the typical student's achievement in math by .13 and in reading by 0.09. Grissom et al. put this into perspective by stating that the impact of having an effective principal on student achievement is nearly as large as the effect of having a similarly effective teacher. The study also defended previous research by

Leithwood et al. (2004), asserting that school leadership was among the most important factors that contribute to student achievement.

School Culture and Climate

While it may be difficult to find numerous studies that directly link principals to student achievement, an overwhelming amount of research demonstrates principals indirectly have a much larger impact. Maschall and Leithwood (2010) found they impact the school's culture, more specifically its values and norms, revealing a poor culture or lack of values and norms affects student achievement. More specifically, Walstrom and Louis (2008) found that shared leadership was an important factor in the high school setting specifically. Their study suggests when the power differential between principals and teachers is decreased, instruction is positively affected. When this shared leadership is present, teachers' working relationships with one another are also stronger and student achievement is higher. Consequently, each time a principal is replaced it takes time to build the rapport and trust between the leader and the teachers.

Bartanen et al. (2019) refer to these as disruptive effects of principal turnover. Principals set school goals and create campus expectations; they develop relationships with stakeholders both within and outside of the school. They create structures for staff that in turn lead to better teaching and learning and improved student outcomes. Each time principal turnover occurs there are changes to these goals and expectations. In addition, relationships must be built as structures ultimately change. Thus, turnover indirectly affects instruction, affecting achievement.

As Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms (2011) point out, it is not teachers or principals alone that improve schools; it is the collaborative, shared decision-making among all stakeholders. Shared decision-making, its processes, and frameworks aid this work and are led by the principal.

In a case study of five high-poverty high schools in Texas, Holme and Rangel (2012) found when looking at data from the three lowest-achieving schools there was an instability in both leadership and teaching positions, keeping each campus from the achievement of shared norms and goals. If schools did not have shared norms and goals, they could not meet high levels of achievement. However, the two higher-performing schools in their study maintained stable and consistent leadership, providing a context for the foundations of shared norms and goals.

It is evident from prior research that student achievement and the school culture and climate can be negatively impacted by principal turnover. It is again important to note that turnover is unavoidable and not all turnover is bad. When turnover occurs, there must be a smooth transition to minimize the negative effects. These transitions help ensure that reform practices that were in place can outlast leadership change. They ensure that any efforts that had a positive impact on student achievement and positive culture and climate are not lost (Datnow & Stringfield, 2000).

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a network or web for linked concepts. Often in the research of a complex phenomenon, it is necessary to not solely rely on a theoretical framework, but rather on the construction of a conceptual framework. Jabareen (2009)

states that to better understand a complex phenomenon, a multidisciplinary approach is required. He goes on to say, the advantages of conceptual framework analysis are its flexibility, its capacity for modification, and its emphasis on understanding instead of prediction. In their study, the research sought to understand the lived experiences of Title I high school principals to make meaning of their decisions to leave.

The conceptual framework for the present study include theories of motivation; self-efficacy and sense-making. Theories of motivation seek to make meaning of the choices people make. Self-efficacy is a person's own beliefs about their abilities to complete a task or in this case, be successful in their job or role. Sense-making is the process used to give meaning to experiences and knowledge, using multiple data sources. According to Mile and Huberman (1994), a conceptual framework lays out the construct, factors, and variables and makes relationships among them.

Theories of motivation seek to explain the choices people make. Voluntary turnover is a choice for a principal. When district-level administrators and superintendents understand human behavior and motivation in connection to a principal's job satisfaction, they more effectively meet their varied and unique needs, resulting in lower turnover rates (Web & Norton, 2003).

Abraham Maslow began his theory of motivation in the early 1940s, stating that human behavior is determined by biological, cultural, and situational needs (Maslow, 1954). The pyramid of needs starts with the most basic, the physiological, and moves to security, social, self-esteem, and finally self-actualization. Needs must first be met at the lower level for the attainment of higher needs. Similarly, once a need has been met, it

can no longer serve as a motivating factor. As a result, the next level of need becomes the motivator.

Another theory of motivation is Herzberg's (1968) theory which attempts to explain satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the workplace. Herzberg suggests that the factors that lead to job satisfaction are separate from those that lead to dissatisfaction. There are a broad array of motivation factors: achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and growth and there are hygiene factors; policy, status, working conditions, salary, and security. Motivation factors lead employees to feel satisfied while hygiene factors lead employees to feel dissatisfied. The two are not connected at all, meaning that an employee can be satisfied while also being dissatisfied. Herzberg's theory has been used numerous times to explore job satisfaction and turnover; therefore, it is a suitable framework for examining high school principal turnover.

Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to engage internal motivation, cognitive resources, and an understanding of the course of action needed to accomplish a job or task. It determines the level of effort people will expend and how long they will persist when faced with obstacles (Bandura, 1982). Self-efficacy is an important motivational construct. It affects choices, goals, emotional reactions, effort, coping, and persistence and it can change because of learning, experience, and feedback (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Therefore, self-efficacy is not just the knowledge of how to respond but the ability to execute (Bandura, 1982).

Bandura's (1982) research tells us that if self-efficacy is lacking, people tend to behave ineffectually, even when they know how to handle or complete the task or job. A

strong sense of self-efficacy allows one to withstand failures and uncertainty. Thought patterns and emotional reactions are influenced by self-efficacy. Low self-efficacy causes people to dwell on personal deficiencies rather than the task or obstacle at hand, creating stress that impairs performance. Those with strong self-efficacy focus on the demands of the situation and are pushed to greater performance when they face obstacles. In addition, increased self-efficacy is connected to increases in performance (Gist, 1989).

Self-efficacy is associated with work-related performance and the ability to manage difficult career-related experiences (Stumpf et al., 1987). The role of the principal is filled with complex tasks, difficult decisions, and high-stress situations (Whitaker, 1999). Over the years, it has become multilayered, filled with more and more responsibilities (Davis et al., 2005). When considering principals as change agents and leaders of reform, principals must have the skills and capacity to cope effectively with a rapidly changing environment (Fullan, 2002).

Research indicates that the least and most effective principals tend to leave schools (Bransch et al., 2012; Grissom & Bartanen, 2019). For this reason, it is important to understand the self-efficacy felt by both ineffective and effective principals. Bandura's theory predicts that if a person has high efficacy, they will have higher coping behaviors towards their surroundings (Bandura, 1993). Applying this concept to principal self-efficacy suggests principals, who believe they can effectively lead and make decisions in their school, and who have confidence in their leadership abilities;

provide a school environment that is more conducive to academic achievement and higher expectations (Gibson & Dembo, 1984).

Examining self-efficacy is, therefore, suitable when exploring high school principal turnover. In the present study, self-efficacy is related to the principal's leadership abilities. Self-efficacy, and principal self-efficacy specifically, refer to a principal's self-perceived sense of preparedness to lead and influence their schools' achievement (Bandura, 1977, 1993). Therefore, the present study examined the experiences of former high school principals through the lens of self-efficacy.

Sense-making is central because it is the primary place where meanings materialize that inform and constrain identity and action. The emerging picture is one of sense-making as a process that is ongoing, instrumental, subtle, swift, social, and easily taken for granted (Weick, 1995, 2007). In the context of principals, it is as if principals are making so many daily decisions that they have lost understanding of how they make sense of their decisions. The seemingly transient nature of sense-making belies its central role in the determination of human behavior. Explicit efforts at sense-making tend to occur when the current state of the world is perceived to be different from that which is expected, or when there is no obvious way to engage the world. High levels of principal turnover indicate there is a disconnect between perception and the reality of the job. Sense-making is about the interplay of action and interpretation rather than the influence of evaluation on choice. When action is the central focus, interpretation, not choice, is the core phenomenon (Weick, 1995, 2007). A conceptual framework is a plane of interlinked concepts that together provide meaning or bring understanding to a

phenomenon (Jabareen, 2009). The present study allowed me to better understand levels of self-efficacy in Title I high school principals as well as gather information on how they process and make sense of difficult or stressful situations. That information, along with knowledge of motivating factors of turnover allowed me to interlock these concepts, providing meaning and developing an understanding of Title I high school principal turnover to combat it.

Chapter Two provided a literature review related to principal turnover. Existing research on the effect of principal turnover on student achievement, factors that contribute to principal turnover, and consequences of principal turnover were reviewed. In addition, the conceptual framework was defined and discussed. Chapter Three provides the research methods. It also includes a description of the research design and analysis as well as techniques used to ensure validity and reliability.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the present study was to explore factors that contribute to turnover in Title I high school principals in Texas. The high school principal turnover rate from 2004 to 2007 in the state of Texas was 60.7% with an average tenure of 3.83 years (Young & Fuller, 2009). Current data on high school principal turnover is not available, the state of Texas does not track high school turnover yearly. The states only track principal turnover at all levels. Research suggests that principals have an impact on teachers, schools, and student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood et al., 2008; Miller, 2013). Fullan (2007) suggests principals must remain in a school for five years to affect change.

Chapter Three provides information on the participant demographics, the selection process, research method, and design. In the addition, both the data collection instrument and collection process are described. Finally, a summary of the data analysis process will be reviewed as well as possible limitations.

Three research questions guided the present study:

1. What are the perceived conditions that contribute or lead to voluntary high school principal turnover on Title I campuses in Texas?

2. What levels of self-efficacy do Title I high school principals feel they had while in the role?

3. What levels of support do former high school principals wish they had?

Research Methods

The present study was a narrative, multiple case study. The qualitative, case study approach was selected because it explores the life of the participant and includes one or more participants while allowing each to tell their own unique stories and experiences (Crewswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, the origin of narrative research is traced to psychology, which has strong ties to theories of motivation (Maslow, 1954).

Narrative stories have become a powerful tool in educational research. Preskill (1998) contends narrative stories are valuable ingredients in the journey to improve our educational systems. The stories serve as guides to the challenges, pitfalls, and triumphs that are education. Carter (1993) claims that life's narratives are the context that allow us to make meaning of our experiences as educators.

Demographics

I sought to include eight participants from multiple sites for the present study. Creswell and Poth (2018) state that while there is no one answer to how many cases should be included in a multiple case study, four to five cases are sufficient. However, to increase the generalizability of the present study I expanded the sample to eight individuals. All eight participants were former Texas high school principals that worked on a Title I campus for 1–5 years and voluntarily left the position.

I sought to include at least three participants from fast-growth districts. Fast growth districts are defined as districts with at least 2,500 students, enrollment growth over the past 5 years of at least 10%, and/or a net increase of at least 3,500 students (Fast

Growth School Coalition, 2020). While fast-growth districts face a wide array of struggles, principal turnover remains a primary challenge.

I sought a population that was representative of the demographics of Texas high school principals. There is no current data available on the demographics of high school principals in Texas. Currently, demographic data is only available on all levels of principals. As of 2018, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) reported that 64.5% of all principals in Texas were female while 35.5% were male. I assumed that those percentages differed slightly when looking at the demographics solely of high school principals. I attempted to recruit an equal number of men and women included for the present study. National research has found that women are 21% less likely to move schools and 19% less likely to leave the principal position than men (Tekleselassie & Villarreal, 2010). I sought to explore the possible differences in factors that led to turnover for women versus men. The TEA data on the gender of principals for the past seven years are shown in Table 4.

Table 10

Principals by Gender in Texas

Academic Year	Total	Female	Male
2020–21	8,719	5,793/66.44%	2,926/33.56%
2019–20	8,644	5,698/65.92%	2,946/43.08%
2018–19	8,469	54,89/64.81%	2,980/35.19%
2017–18	8,417	5,428/64.49%	2,989/35.51%
2016–17	8,296	5,286/63.72%	3,010/36.28%
2015–16	8,223	5,158/62.73%	3,065/37.27%
2014–15	8,164	5,110/62.59%	3,054/37.41%

According to the TEA, during the 2020–2021 school year, 58% percent of the principals in the state of Texas were White, 25% were Hispanic, and 14% were African American. All other races/ethnicities were under one percent. Principal demographic data has remained consistent for the past five years. Importantly, this data reflects principals in general and is not specific to a high school Title I campus. However, it gave me a guide to ensure the population studied matches the overall principal demographic the state of Texas. The TEA demographic data on principals for the past seven years is reflected in Table 5.

Table 11

Principals by Race/Ethnicity in Texas

Academic Year	Total	African American	Hispanic	White
2020–21	8,719	1,239/14.21%	2,222/25.48%	5,073/58.18%
2019–20	8.644	1,189/13.76%	2,186/25.29%	5,087/58.85%
2018–19	8,469	1,148/13.56%	2,055/24.26%	5,091/60.11%
2017–18	8,417	1,070/12.71%	2,019/23.99%	5,145/61.13%
2016–17	8,296	1,033/12.45%	1,961/23.64%	5,125/61.78%
2015–16	8,223	1,000/12.16%	1,946/23.67%	5,098/62%
2014–15	8,164	986/12.08%	1,880/23.03%	5,134/62.89%

*All other Races/Ethnicities were under 1%

Selection Process

Upon identification as a potential participant, as was asked to verify the following demographic information, ensuring they meet the criteria to participate.

1. High school principal
2. Title I campus
3. One–Five years in the position
4. Voluntary exit from the position

Snowball sampling was used for the present study. The participant was asked to recommend another principal that met all four criteria. Snowball sampling assists in finding participants that may not normally want to be found (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Potential participants could be wary of coming forward because of possible ramifications or the negative connotation associated with turnover. However, participants might know other former high school principals who could inform them about the benefits of the study, assuring them of confidentiality. The participants were asked to share my contact information with the potential participant, eliminating the sharing of personal contact information with me directly. The potential candidate then contacted me for entrance into the present study. The introduction email and assent form are included in Appendix A and B respectively.

Data Collection

Data were collected from two sources. The first source was responses to the Maslach Burnout Inventory for Educators (MBI). Participants completed the MBI for educators, responding based on their time as a Title I high school principal. The MBI is designed to assess three aspects of burnout; emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson created the Inventory in 1981. It is easy to administer, valid, and reliable (Maslach et al., 1986). Inventory results were compared and cross-referenced among cases looking for themes. The MBI Inventory is included in Appendix C.

The second, and primary, source of data was a 60-minute semi-structured virtual interview using a video conferencing platform. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and member-checked. Participants were asked to share real-life, lived experiences from their time as high school principals. They discussed struggles related to their roles as a high school principal and how those struggles affected their decision to

leave the high school principal position (Strake, 1995). Follow-up interviews were scheduled to gather additional information as needed. Follow-ups were done using various methods, including phone calls, email, or text messages, depending on the participant's preferences.

The semi-structured interview was selected as the primary data source because it allowed the participant to tell a story. According to Seidman (2019), telling stories is a meaning-making process. The interview process allowed participants to reflect on their experiences, give them order and make sense of them. Seidman goes on to elaborate that root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of the participant allowing them to make meaning of their experiences.

The present study took a phenomenological approach when interviewing. This approach emphasizes the importance of making meaning of experience. The interview included only open-ended questions, allowing me to build upon and explore the participant's responses. The goal was to invite the participant to reconstruct their experience through the interview process. The addition of three probing questions that were used throughout the interview process, to elicit more information, supported the ability to make meaning and dig deeper into the experiences of each participant. The interview questions are found in Appendix D.

Data Analysis

The present study utilized a cross-case analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The first step involved identifying issues within each case, a within-case analysis, followed by the analysis across all cases. Each participant was given a pseudonym that was used

throughout the present study. Each participant's responses to the MBI were compared and cross-referenced with other participants to look for common themes of burnout. Each participant had the opportunity to read the transcript of their interview and approve it for accuracy through member-checking.

A descriptive statistical analysis was conducted with the MBI survey data. I identified and categorized the demographic information of each participant as well as a summary of responses to each survey question. According to Leiter and Maslach (2016), a common approach to analyzing the MBI scores is to consider individuals as presenting at least one symptom of burnout if they have a score higher than 27 on the emotional exhaustion subset of 10 or higher on the depersonalization subset. Evidence indicates high scores on these two subsets can distinguish clinical burnout from those who are not clinically burnt out. A second accepted approach is to consider individuals as burnout if they have a score higher than 27 on the emotional exhaustion, plus either a score of higher than 10 on the depersonalized subset or a score lower than 33 on the personal accomplishment score.

Upon the completion of member checking, the transcripts were coded and organized by categories. Using a qualitative thematic strategy, overall themes were identified along with an area of difference and an area of agreement between various cases within the present study. I looked for themes based on gender as well as for themes within each race/ethnic group.

After each interview, I reflected in a reflexive journal on the interviews. This allowed me to make connections to my own experience as a Title I high school principal

while also ensuring that experience did not cause bias or predisposition. In addition, it allowed me to formulate follow-up questions.

Validity and Reliability

The semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed. The participants were asked to read and verify the transcripts for credibility and assurance (Yin, 2014). Each participant received a copy of his or her interview transcript and the initial analysis of the data to assist with member checking. Participants were asked to identify any corrections or omissions. Member checking helped maintain their confidentiality and ensure both the validity and reliability of the interview data (Hayes & Singh, 2011).

Limitations

Limitations are the built-in limits of the methods in the research (Hays and Singh, 2011). The possible limitations of the present study include the lapse of time between the principals' current position and their prior position that qualified them to participate in the present study. They may have limited recollection of the circumstances that influenced their decision to leave their prior position. In addition, the present research may be limited by the self-reporting nature of the data. Participants may minimize or embellish while completing the MBI or during the interview. Time and access to former high school principals also serve as possible limitations. High school principals are extremely busy and may not be as responsive to phone calls and emails from a stranger asking them to participate in a research study. However, using the snowball sampling method allowed participants to recommend other participants, giving them a personal connection or entrance into the present study. In addition, the research is

specific to Texas high school principals, making it difficult to generalize the results to a larger population.

Chapter Three described the reasoning for using qualitative methods as the methodological approach, the demographics of the participants, and the selection process. A description of the research design for the collection and analysis of the data was provided. The present study utilized qualitative techniques, including member checks and peer debriefing to ensure the validity of the findings. Finally, research limitations were presented.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Chapter Four presents the results of the present study. The purpose of the present study was to examine the lived experiences of Title I high school principals and identify (a) the conditions and motivating factors that contribute to voluntary high school principal turnover on Title I campuses in Texas, (b) the levels of self-efficacy Title I principals felt they had while in the leadership role and (c) the levels of support high school principals wish they had while serving as the school leader. The guiding research questions used to examine the lived experiences of former Title I high school principals were:

1. What are the perceived conditions that contribute or lead to voluntary high schoolprincipal turnover on Title I campuses in Texas?
2. What levels of self-efficacy do Title I high school principals feel they had while in the role?
3. What kind of support do former high school principals wish they had?

Eight former Title I high school principals participated in the present study. Each of the former Title I high school principals did not stay on the same Title I campus for more than five years.

The present study used a narrative, multiple case study approach, selected because it, qualitatively, explores the life of the participant and encompasses one or more participants while allowing those participants to tell their own unique stories and experiences (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, the origin of narrative research can

be traced to psychology, which has strong ties to theories of motivation, part of the conceptual framework for the present study (Maslow, 1954).

All participants completed the Maslach Burnout Inventory for Educators (MBI), a survey consisting of 22 statements related to levels of stress, burnout, and emotional stability. The MBI was designed specifically for educators. It assesses three aspects of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment.

All participants completed a semi-structured interview with 15 questions using the lens of self-efficacy and motivation. Follow-up interviews were done with three participants to ask specific questions about experiences discussed by other participants. Follow-up questioning was done to look for additional themes and parallels in experiences. In addition, follow-up questions were also asked via email, phone call, or text message to various participants as needed. Table 6 reflects the communication with each participant.

Table 12

Communication with Each Participant

Participant	Semi-structured Interview	Follow-up Interview	Additional Emails or Phone Calls
Robert Mendez	60–90 minute semi-structured interview	No follow-up interview needed	Two additional follow-up questions via email
Christopher Osa	60–90 minute semi-structured interview	No follow-up interview needed	Two additional follow-up questions via email
Linda Martinez	60–90 minute semi-structured interview	20–30 minute follow-up interview	Additional questions via text message
Marcos Sandoval	60–90 minute semi-structured interview	No follow-up interview needed	One additional follow-up question via email
Kim Spring	60–90 minute semi-structured interview	20–30 minute follow-up interview	Two additional follow-up questions via text message
Rosa Passament	60–90 minute semi-structured interview	No follow-up interview needed	On additional follow-up question via email
John Worth	60–90 minute semi-structured interview	20–30 minute follow-up interview	No additional follow-up questions needed
Jeremey Judd	60–90 minute semi-structured interview	No follow-up interview needed	Two follow-up questions asked via email

My Title I Experience

I had a unique lens from which to view and analyze the data collected. Nineteen of my 20 years in education were spent working in Title I schools in two different

districts. One was a small district serving about 1,600 students. The second district was a larger neighboring district with about 10,600 students. I began my career in administration as an elementary assistant principal, a position I held at two Title I schools. I also held the position of principal at two Title I elementary schools. I spent six years as a Title I high school principal. I have lived experiences, but I do not meet the parameters of the present study because I stayed at one Title I campus for more than 5 years. I reached a high level of burnout in my sixth year, resulting in my search for a different role within my district. I currently serve as the Director of Professional Learning.

I am a White female that served a campus that was 98% Hispanic with an enrollment of almost 1,600 students. Like two of the participants in the present study, I did not apply for the position of Title I high school principal. I was an elementary principal in the district and was asked to accept the position.

Participants

The participants in the present study were all former Title I high school principals in Texas who voluntarily left the Title I principal role after 5 years or less. Principal turnover presents a challenge because the research on school reform indicates that true reform takes at least five to seven years. For a reform to lead to lasting school change, it needs to become part of the fabric of a school, not just another fad. (Fullan, 2007; Mascall & Leithwood, 2010; Seashore-Louis et al., 2010).

I tried to mirror the demographics of Title I high school principals in Texas. Texas does not track the demographic of principals at each level (elementary and

secondary) therefore; I attempted to mirror the demographics of principals from all levels in Texas. I was able to collect data on the gender of high school principals in the United States. According to Zippa (2022), a human resources research company, 35.9% of all high school principals are women, while 64.1% are male. If the TEA did track gender in terms of elementary versus secondary, there would likely be more males in secondary principal roles than females. The gender breakdown of principals in Texas in the 2020–2021 school year was 66.44% female and 33.56% male. The participants in the present study were 62% male and 38% female, which is closely aligned with the national gender demographics.

The race/ethnicity of principals (elementary and secondary) during the 2020–2021 school year, as collected by the TEA, was 58.18% White, 25.45% Hispanic, and 14.21% African American, with all other races/ethnicities falling under one percent. Zippa reports that high school principals in the United States are 69.2% White, 13.9% Hispanic, and 9.7% African American. The race/ethnicity of former principals in the present study is 62.5% Hispanic, 25% White, and 12.5% African American. Again, the TEA does not differentiate the race/ethnicity of elementary versus secondary principals or Title I versus non-Title I principals. Therefore, there is no data available to determine if the population in the present study mirrors the population of Title I High School principals in Texas.

Each of the participants had a different journey in the role of the high school principal. For three of them, it was their first campus principal position. They had been assistant principals, but not a campus principal until becoming Title I high school

principals. Two participants were elementary principals before taking a Title I high school principal position and one of those two was both an elementary and middle school principal before their Title I principalship. Three of the participants had their first opportunity in the principal role at the middle school level before moving to high school. All eight participants had some type of previous educational experience in a Title I school, either as a teacher or campus administrator at some level. Only two of the participants held the position of assistant principal at a Title I high school before moving into the principal role.

Robert Mendez

Participant one was Robert Mendez, a Mexican American male. He served a large high school with approximately 2,200 students in a fast-growth school district. The district is located in a suburban area in Southeast Texas. His district serves 28,000 students and there were four high schools when he served in this role. He held this position for three years. He started his career as an elementary bilingual teacher. His first administrative role was as an intermediate school assistant principal. He had experience at the elementary level as an assistant principal before moving into the role of middle school principal for three years and, eventually, a Title I high school principal for three years. Robert did not apply for the high school position in which he was placed. He was reassigned to the role. He did not set out or have a goal to become a high school principal. He was happy at his middle school campus. However, he looks back on his three years as a Title I high school principal with fond memories and says it was

probably the best experience he had had in his career. He now serves in a leadership role in the central office of the same district.

Robert describes himself as a leader, able to be consistent, and one who treats those he works with as people, not just employees. He had this to say about his leadership style,

> Leadership is just consistency over time and treating people like people, not just employees. They are someone's mother, daughter, and/or parent.

Robert understood that he could earn the respect of teachers and staff by earning the respect of the students. He focused on building capacity with his students, allowing the students to tell his story, that their principal was invested in what they did and that he cared.

Robert felt that his time as a principal was a success and attributes part of that success to his view on how to treat people as a leader. Having the unique perspective of still being in his district he can see that at least one of the major reforms he led on his campus is still a priority and has continued to progress. When he moved to the central office role an assistant on his staff did not replace him on his current staff. He recalled having some input into the type of leader that would follow him.

A few months after transitioning to the central office, Robert had regrets and felt he may have made a mistake. He wanted to be in a role that was with students daily. His superintendent, at the time, listened to his concerns but told him his leadership was needed at the central office. He has since adjusted and is enjoying his new leadership

position. He appreciates the flexibility and control of his calendar that he has in his new role. In addition, he has more time for his family.

Christopher Osa

Participant two was Christopher Osa, a Mexican American male. He served two Title I high schools during his career. For the present study, we focused on his time at a high school that served approximately 600 students in a rural area in South Texas. The district served about 3,000 students and had one high school. After teaching and coaching for 17 years, he accepted a position as a high school assistant principal at a Title I Campus. After four years as an assistant, he applied for a high school principal position in a neighboring district at a Title I campus. He held this position for three years before moving to a larger Title I high school. All his experience in education is at the high school level. Christopher saw himself as a leader that always allowed teachers to do what they thought was best. He did not micromanage or pretend to have all the answers. He led with high levels of trust in his staff. He credited the first principal he served as an assistant principal for providing him with many opportunities to learn and grow. He had this to say about his leadership style:

> I was a teacher's leader, I really gave them free rein until they really got off track and then I had to pull them back in. I was never looking over people's shoulders and saying hey, what you are you doing, but if I saw something that needed to be addressed, I would address it.

Christopher exited the position to take a position at a larger Title I high school. He did not have a voice in the type of leader who replaced him, and it was not a member

of his staff. He did not recall if major reforms or efforts he had led stayed a priority after his departure. He was open about the fact that he did not feel his first principal position went as well as it could have. After moving to a larger district he realized he did not have the support he needed in the area of curriculum to be successful. Curriculum was not an area he felt was one of his strengths, something that might have played play a factor in turnover decisions, although it did not seem to be in Christopher's case. He was unaware of the lack of support until he moved to a larger district. In Christopher's case, the lure to a new position was the opportunity to lead a larger campus and the pay increase. In his eyes, it was a promotion to take a similar position in a larger school district.

Linda Martinez

Participant three was Linda Martinez, a Mexican American female. She served a small high school in an urban area in the Southeast part of Texas. The school had close to 500 students. The district served about 6,000 students and had two high schools. She held this position for three years. Her journey in education started as both an elementary and middle school teacher. Her first administrative roles were as an assistant principal of an elementary and then middle school campus. She was recruited to another district to become a Title I high school principal. The campus struggled with gang activity and needed a turnaround leader.

When asked about her leadership style Linda acknowledge that it had to shift when she moved into the role of the high school principal. She had to acknowledge to

her staff that she had no high school experience. She became more collaborative and had to lean on those around her more than she had in previous leadership roles. She stated,

> I knew I could not be naive to the fact that I did not have any high school experience. One of the first statements I made with my core team at the campus was to ask them where they felt they were experts, and I promised I would not disrupt that expertise during my first year.

Linda made it clear to her administrative team that she would learn alongside them, and she would not disrupt any systems that her administrative team felt were working for students.

Linda was very open about the fact that her turnover was attributed to a lack of support from the central office administration. Despite that lack of support, the campus made gains under her leadership both academically and in a reduction in discipline and gang-related issues. She did not have a voice in her replacement when she exited and did not stay abreast of what occurred at the school after she exited. She accepted a leadership role at a non-profit organization that supported public schools.

Marcus Sandoval

Participant four was Marcos Sandoval, a Mexican American male. He served a large urban high school in a fast-growth district in Central Texas. The district served over 60,000 students at 18 high school campuses. He held the position for four years. The campus had more than 2,500 students. Marcus had the opportunity to serve as both a middle school assistant principal and high school assistant principal before taking his first principal position at a middle school. Marcus considered himself a collaborative,

honest, and transparent leader. He felt those traits assisted him in the success he had as a Title I high school principal. The school saw strong academic gains under his leadership.

> What you see is what you get with me. I am also learner-centered and I want to develop learner-centered leaders on campuses.

Marcus recognized that there are times when you have to be directive. However, he believed that campus leaders, not just the principal, and those on the ground with the students are best suited to make most decisions. Marcus exited the position to take a central office position in a large urban district in another part of Texas. He was recruited for the position in large part due to his success at his Title I high school. He earned several statewide awards as a Title I high school principal. He has kept up with the campus and attributes the continued success to the buy-in he created with staff. The buy-in allowed them to maintain the work they started under his leadership after he departed. He now serves as a superintendent and heavily relies on his experiences as a Title I high school principal to ensure he offers the levels of support he desired and did not have while in the role.

Kim Spring

Participant five was Kim Spring, a White female. She served a Title I Early College high school in Southeast Texas for three years. The campus served close to 500 students. The district served about 35,000 students on five high school campuses. Kim started her career as an elementary teacher and took her first position in administration, as an assistant principal at a second through fifth-grade campus. After a few years, she applied for a high school assistant principal position, wanting to gain broader experience

for future leadership roles she hoped to hold. After four years as a high school assistant principal, she became an elementary principal. She held that position for seven years and was allowed to become a Title I early college high school principal.

Kim acknowledged that her leadership style evolved. By the time she became a high school principal she had evolved and become more collaborative, less directive, more self-reflective, and situational.

> It turned into more of a supportive coaching leadership style. If I needed somebody to make a change, I wanted to help them come to the realization that they needed to make that change on their own.

Kim felt positive about her time as a Title I high school principal and, like Robert, was not entirely ready to leave the position. However, she was asked to move into a leadership role at the district's central office. She felt that many of the systems she helped put into place are still thriving because the former assistant principal on the campus took her position. She was not sure those efforts would have sustained as a priority had anyone else taken her place. Kim stayed in her central office role for one year before taking a full-time position with an educational consulting company that offers many services to public schools, including leadership coaching. She now coaches leaders, something she did not have as a leader.

Rosa Passament

Participant six is Rosa Passament, a Mexican American female. She served a rural high school in South Texas for five years. The school had close to 1,200 students. The district served over 37,000 students on seven high school campuses. Rosa began her

career as an elementary teacher for three years and then transitioned to teaching middle school. She felt she found her place in middle school. After nine years of teaching, she became an assistant principal at a middle school, serving in that capacity for six years. Subsequently, she was given her own campus as a middle school principal and served in that capacity for seven years. Rosa had no intention of leaving her middle school campus and did not apply for a high school position. Instead, she was reassigned to a Title I high school during the summer break. She recalls being surprised about her reassignment. Once the shock wore off, she knew she was ready and was excited about the new challenge. Eventually, she realized she had accomplished what she needed to do at middle school and needed a new challenge. She was excited that her leaders saw her potential before she saw it in herself.

The high school to which Rosa was transferred had not met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for several years. It was the only high school in the district in that position. She remembered not knowing much about high school in those first few months. She felt she picked it up quickly and was able to make great gains ensuring the school met AYP after only one year.

Rosa described her leadership style as hands-on. She admitted she tended to micromanage. She was not hesitant to admit that and did not see it as a fault.

> If things need to get done, I am going to make sure they get done. There is nothing I would ask my teachers to do that I didn't do with them, like coming in on Saturdays, staying after school, and working during the holidays. We did it together.

Rosa exited the position after applying for a leadership role in the district's central office. She did not have a voice in selecting her replacement. The replacement was not someone who was serving her staff. She expressed concern about the current leader's ability to continue the work she started. If she had a voice, she would have selected a leader with similar hands-on traits.

John Worth

Participant seven is John Worth, a White male. He served two Title I high schools. For the present study, the focus was given to his time at a school located in East Texas comprised of approximately 1,500 students. He was the principal on that campus for three years. The district served almost 6,000 students and only had one high school campus. John was a high school teacher and coach before taking his first assistant principal position at a high school campus. All his teaching and administrative experience are at the high school level. In total, John had 15 years of high school principal experience but, as previously stated, his focus centered on his three years as a Title I high school principal. John considers his leadership style to be inclusive and collaborative.

> I would say what you see is what you get, and I am very consistent, not very emotional or reactive. I have a good poker face, most of the time people cannot tell if I am upset, happy, or sad and I think that has served me well through the years.

John did not realize how negative his experience on this campus was until he was removed from it. He took a position in another part of Texas, at a non-Title I high school

and has been on his current campus for six years. He has not kept in touch with the former campus and did not have a voice in the selection of his replacement. He is aware it was not someone who served on his staff. He knows the campus is still struggling to meet the needs of its population but does not have specific details beyond that.

Jeremy Judd

Participant eight is Jeremy Judd, an African American male who served as principal of a Title I high school campus in an urban area of Central Texas for three years. The school served approximately 1,300 students. The district served almost 11,000 students on two high school campuses. Jeremy began his career as a high school teacher and coach. He took his first administrative position at a middle school as an assistant principal. His first principal position was at an elementary campus. He spent time as a middle school principal at several campuses before opening a new Title I high school.

Jeremy is the only participant in the present study that chose to move back to the middle school level as principal, a decision made based on an emotional and stressful two years of leading a high school during the global pandemic and a very politically and racially charged period. He stated,

> I wanted to take a step back, so leaving the high school and going back down to middle school allowed me to do that. You know, Covid and leading through Covid really took a lot out of me. The political environment that kids were latching onto got the best of me. I needed a break.

When asked about his leadership style, Jeremy stated he had never been a micromanager and saw himself as more of a servant leader. He struggled with the fact that he does not feel he micromanages, however, he had a hard time delegating. He sought to let people do their jobs but, at the same time, admitted he was not a good delegator. He always wanted to do as much as possible to help his staff, emphasizing his identity as a servant leader.

When Jeremy decided to leave his position, he took a position at a Title I middle school, hoping to escape the pressure of the Title I high school role. He knew he was experiencing burnout and needed a change. He enjoyed his time at middle school and felt it would be a better fit as he neared the end of his career. However, that shift did not last long and within eight months, he accepted a position in another district as an Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources. He had just started that position within a few days of our interview. When asked if he felt that position would be less stressful than Title I high school principal he said, “Yes.” He went on to share,

> While it [the new job] would have stress, it will be a different type of stress…there really is no stress like the stress of Title I high school principal.

Jeremy also talked about how his move out of the high school principal role gave him more control over his calendar and non-working time, sentiments shared by Robert who also moved into a central office role.

> As a high school principal, if you are going to do the job well you have to be visible and a constant fixture in events and activities which is in many cases an 18-hours-a-day, six days a week situation.

Table 7 presents participant pseudonyms, gender, number of years on the Title I high school campus, size and location of campus, and race/ethnicity.

Table 13

Participant Demographics

Participant #	Pseudonym	Gender	# Years as a Title I HS Principal	Size and Location of Campus	Size of District	Race/ Ethnicity
Participant #1	Robert Mendez	Male	3 years	Suburban, fast growth district in Southwest Texas with about 2,200 students	28,000 students; 4 high school campuses	Mexican American
Participant #2	Christopher Osa	Male	3 years on the campus used for this study	Rural district in South Texas with about 600 students	3,000 students; 1 high school campus	Mexican American
Participant #3	Linda Martinez	Female	4 years	Urban district in Southwest Texas with about 500 students	6,000 students; 2 high school campuses	Mexican American
Participant #4	Marcos Sandoval	Male	4 years	Urban Fast Growth district in Central Texas with about 2,400 students	60,000 students; 18 high school campuses	Mexican American

Table 14 - Continued

Participant Demographics

Participant #	Pseudonym	Gender	# Years as a Title I HS Principal	Size and Location of Campus	Size of District	Race/ Ethnicity
Participant #5	Kim Spring	Female	3 years	Urban Early College High School in Southeast Texas with about 600 students	35,000 students; 5 high school campuses	White
Participant #6	Rosa Passament	Female	5 years	Rural district in South Texas with about 1,200 students	37,000 students; 7 high school campuses	Mexican American
Participant #7	John Worth	Male	3 years (on the campus used for this study)	Rural with about 1,300 students	6,500 students; 1 high school campus	White
Participant #8	Jeremy Judd	Male	3 years	Urban with about 1,300 students	11,000 students; 2 high school campuses	African American

Maslach Burnout Inventory

All participants completed the Maslach Burnout Inventory for Educators (MBI) prior to the semi-structured interview. The MBI is designed to assess three aspects of burnout; emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. The MBI was created in 1981 by Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson. It is easy to administer, valid, and reliable (Maslach et al., 1986). MBI results were compared and cross-referenced across cases looking for themes. Table 8 reflects each participant's response to the MBI questions.

Table 15

Burnout Inventory Questions

Question:	0 How often: Never	1 A few times a year or less	2 Once a month or less	3 A few times a month	4 Once a week	5 A few times a week	6 Everyday
I feel depressed at work	Linda Martinez Rosa Passament	Robert Mendez Christopher Osa Kim Spring John Worth		Marcus Sandoval Jeremy Judd			
I feel emotionally drained from my work			Linda Martinez	John Worth Robert Mendez		Christopher Osa Rosa Passament Jeremy Judd Kim Spring	Marcus Sandoval
I feel used up at the end of the workday	Rosa Passament		Linda Martinez John Worth	Robert Mendez Kim Spring	Christopher Osa		Marcus Sandoval Jeremy Judd
I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job	Rosa Passament	Linda Martinez	John Worth	Robert Mendez Kim Spring	Jeremy Judd	Marcus Sandoval	Christopher Osa

Table 16 - Continued

Burnout Inventory Questions

Question:	0 How often: Never	1 A few times a year or less	2 Once a month or less	3 A few times a month	4 Once a week	5 A few times a week	6 Everyday
I can easily understand how my students feel about things	Rosa Passament		Marcus Sandoval	John Worth	Robert Mendez		Christopher Osa Linda Martinez Kim Spring Jeremy Judd
I feel I treat some students as if they were impersonal objects	Jeremy Judd Robert Mendez Christopher Osa Linda Martinez Marcus Sandoval Kim Spring John Worth Rosa Passament						
Working with people all day is a real strain for me	Linda Martinez Rosa Passament John Worth	Robert Mendez Kim Spring		Marcus Sandoval Jeremy Judd		Christopher Osa	

Table 17 - Continued

Burnout Inventory Questions

Question:	0 How often: Never	1 A few times a year or less	2 Once a month or less	3 A few times a month	4 Once a week	5 A few times a week	6 Everyday
I deal very effectively with the problems of my students						Robert Mendez Marcus Sandoval Kim Spring John Worth	Christopher Osa Linda Martinez Rosa Passament Jeremy Judd
I feel burnt out from my work		Linda Martinez	John Worth	Christopher Osa Rosa Passament Robert Mendez Kim Spring		Jeremy Judd	Marcus Sandoval
I feel I am positively influencing other people's lives through my work				Jeremy Judd		Robert Mendez Christopher Osa Marcus Sandoval Kim Spring John Worth	Linda Martinez Rosa Passament

Table 18 - Continued

Burnout Inventory Questions

Question:	0 How often: Never	1 A few times a year or less	2 Once a month or less	3 A few times a month	4 Once a week	5 A few times a week	6 Everyday
I have become callous toward people's lives since I took this job	Robert Mendez Kim Spring Rosa Passament	Linda Martinez John Worth		Christopher Osa	Marcus Sandoval		
I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally	Jeremy Judd Kim Spring Rosa Passament John Worth	Linda Martinez	Robert Mendez Christopher Osa Jeremy Judd				Marcus Sandoval
I feel very energetic		Marcus Sandoval		Jeremy Judd	Robert Mendez Christopher Osa John Worth	Linda Martinez Kim Spring	Rosa Passament
I feel frustrated by my job	Rosa Passament	Linda Martinez John Worth	Robert Mendez	Marcus Sandoval	Jeremy Judd	Christopher Osa Kim Spring	
I feel I am working too hard on my job	Jeremy Judd	Linda Martinez	John Worth		Christopher Osa	Robert Mendez Kim Spring	Marcus Sandoval Rosa Passament

Table 19 - Continued

Burnout Inventory Questions

Question:	0 How often: Never	1 A few times a year or less	2 Once a month or less	3 A few times a month	4 Once a week	5 A few times a week	6 Everyday
I don't really care what happens to some students	Robert Mendez Linda Martinez Marcus Sandoval Kim Spring Rosa Passament John Worth Jeremy Judd	Christopher Osa					
Working with people directly puts too much stress on me	Linda Martinez Rosa Passament John Worth	Marcus Sandoval Jeremy Judd Robert Mendez Kim Spring				Christopher Osa	
I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my students				Marcus Sandoval		Robert Mendez Christopher Osa Linda Martinez Jeremy Judd	Kim Spring Rosa Passament John Worth

Table 20 - Continued

Burnout Inventory Questions

Question:	0 How often: Never	1 A few times a year or less	2 Once a month or less	3 A few times a month	4 Once a week	5 A few times a week	6 Everyday
I feel exhilarated after working closely with my students	Rosa Passament				Jeremy Judd	Christopher Osa Marcus Sandoval	Robert Mendez Linda Martinez Kim Spring John Worth
I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job						Robert Mendez Christopher Osa Marcus Sandoval John Worth	Linda Martinez Kim Spring Rosa Passament Jeremy Judd
I feel like I am at the end of my rope	Robert Mendez Linda Martinez Rosa Passament	John Worth Kim Spring	Christopher Osa Marcus Sandoval		Jeremy Judd		

Table 21 - Continued

Burnout Inventory Questions

Question:	0 How often: Never	1 A few times a year or less	2 Once a month or less	3 A few times a month	4 Once a week	5 A few times a week	6 Everyday
In my work, I deal with emotional problems very calmly				Christopher Osa		Linda Martinez Marcus Sandoval Kim Spring	Robert Mendez Rosa Passament John Worth Jeremy Judd
I feel students blame me for some of their problems	Linda Martinez Marcus Sandoval Jeremy Judd Rosa Passament	Kim Spring John Worth	Robert Mendez	Christopher Osa			

The participants were scored in each area, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The scale scores and total scores are listed in Table 9. A lower scale score is evidence of lower levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment.

Table 22

MBI Total Scores and Scale Scores

Participant	Emotional Exhaustion Scale Score	EE Total Score	Depersonalization Scale Score	DD Total Score	Personal Accomplishment Scale Score	PA Total Score
Robert Mendez	3	27	1.62	13	5.4	27
Christopher Osa	4.3	39	3.1	25	4.6	23
Linda Martinez	0.88	8	2.375	19	5.6	28
Marcus Sandoval	4.22	38	2.12	17	4.6	23
Kim Spring	3.2	29	2.12	17	5.6	28
Rosa Passament	1.55	14	1.5	12	4.8	24
John Worth	1.4	13	1.87	15	5.6	28
Jeremy Judd	3.33	30	1.37	11	4.5	27

The next section provides a narrative description of the MBI responses, scale scores, and total scores in each of the three areas.

Emotional Exhaustion

The emotional exhaustion scale had the widest range of scores. Two of the male participants Christopher and Marcus were at the very high end of the exhaustion scale. Specifically, they had feelings of being used up, fatigued, and emotionally drained once a week or more. They also reported feeling they were at the end of their rope once a month or less, much more often than the other participants who reported this feeling never or a few times a year. One male, John, and one female Linda were at the low end of the exhaustion scale. Six of the eight participants felt they worked too hard at least once a week if not daily. Three of the participants felt frustrated in their job at least a few times a month or more. The females in the present study reported having more energy than the males. Geographic location, size of the campus, and race/ethnicity did not play a factor in responses.

Depersonalized

There was one outlier on the depersonalization scale score that was higher than others, Christopher Osa. He was also very vocal in his interview about the job being lonely and often feeling alone. He discussed the need and desire to check in on his peers still in the role. It is also important to note that while Christopher had the highest scale score for depersonalization, he also worked at the smallest school district. Being in a smaller district, meant he had access to fewer resources and was forced to wear more hats. His varied role could have contributed to his stronger feelings of depersonalization.

Each participant cared about what happened to the students. All but one participant felt confident in their ability to consistently understand how students felt. The participants did not leave their position as Title I high school principals because they did not care about students. Each felt they could relate to the students they served and cared about them. Two participants had feelings of callousness toward others a few times a month or more, which was significantly more than the others were. Geographic location, size of the campus, gender, or race/ethnicity were not a factor in responses.

Personal Accomplishment

Overall, the participants all saw value in their work. They all understood the difference they were making in the lives of students. Most participants felt they were influencing other people through their work a few times a week if not daily. They felt confident in their ability to help students with problems. Participants also reported feeling exhilarated after having an opportunity to work closely with students. They also felt they dealt with emotional problems calmly. The decision to leave was not related to a lack of personal accomplishment. Geographic location, size of the campus, gender, or race/ethnicity were not a factor in responses.

Clinical Burnout vs. Non-Burnout

According to The National Academy of Medicine, a common approach to analyzing the MBI scores is to consider individuals as presenting at least one symptom of burnout if they have a score higher than 27 on the emotional exhaustion subset of 10 or higher on the depersonalization subset. Evidence indicates that high scores on these two subsets can distinguish clinical burnout from those who are not clinically burnt out.

There is a second accepted approach. Individuals are considered clinically burnt out if they have a score higher than 27 on the emotional exhaustion subset plus either a score higher than 10 on the depersonalized subset or a score lower than 33 on the personal accomplishment score.

Five of the eight participants met one of the two criteria described above to be considered clinically burnout. Robert Mendez, Christopher Oso, Marcus Sandoval, Jeremy Judd, and Kim Spring were considered clinically burnout. Rosa Passament, Linda Martinez, and John Worth were not considered clinically burnout. Gender may play a role in burnout. Prior research indicates there are more male high school principals than females. In the present study, two of three participants that were not burnout were females. Only one female participant was considered clinically burnout. Four of the five males in the study were considered burnout. Geographic location, size of the campus, or race/ethnicity were not a factor in the participants' label of clinical burnout or not clinically burnout.

The second research question in the present study asked about the perceived conditions that contribute to or lead to voluntary high schoolprincipal turnover on Title I campuses in Texas. According to the MBI responses, burnout is a factor that contributes to turnover. Five of the eight participants were considered clinically burnout.

The third research question in the present study asked about the levels of self-efficacy Title I high school principals felt they had while in the role. According to the MBI responses, the participants had high levels of self-efficacy and personal accomplishment when dealing specifically with students. Prior research, which is largely

quantitative, reflects the low socio-economic status of the students in Title I schools as a factor in turnover (Clotfelter et al., 2007; Fuller et al., 2007; Gates et al., 2006). Further discussion of this is included in Chapter Five of the present study.

After completing the MBI each participant was scheduled for a semi-structured interview. The next section presents the findings from the semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured Interviews

The 15 questions below were asked of all participants during the initial semi-structured interview. The probing questions that follow were used to elicit additional details and pull out the rich narrative data from each participant's lived experiences. The questions can be found in Appendix D.

From Conceptualization to Practice

Using the lens of the conceptual framework, which included theories of motivation, self-efficacy, and sense-making, several themes emerged from the research. Theories of motivation seek to make meaning of the choices people make. Self-efficacy is a person's own beliefs about their abilities to complete a task or, in this case, be successful in their job or role. Sense-making is the process used to give meaning to experiences and knowledge, using multiple data sources.

The themes found in the data analysis are organized according to the conceptual framework beginning with theories of motivation. There are two themes found within theories of motivation, Why Did I Leave and Walk In My Shoes. The next theme is connected to self-efficacy, I Was Prepared For This But Not That. The final theme is connected to sense-making, How Do I Spend This Money?

Why Did I Leave?

Theories of motivation seek to make meaning of the choices people make. Voluntary turnover is a choice for a principal. Herzberg's (1968) theory suggests that the factors that lead to job satisfaction are separate from those that lead to dissatisfaction.

Each participant enjoyed high levels of personal accomplishment according to the MBI responses. They felt satisfied by the work that they were doing in the lives of their students, and they knew that it mattered. It was meaningful work, yet each chose to leave that important work at a Title I high school campus after being there for less than 5 years.

Some research suggests principals leave because of salary (Farley-Ripple et al., 2012; Papa et al., 2002). The data collected in the present research does not sufficiently support that finding. While four of the participants moved into central office positions that were considered a promotion, two were offered the positions without applying for them, meaning they were not seeking a promotion or a higher level of pay. These considerations present a gap in quantitative research on principal turnover. Without the qualitative knowledge knowing that Robert Mendez and Kim Spring did not seek out a promotion, one might assume that the higher salary of a central office position motivated their decision to leave. Both Robert and Kim were asked to move into central office leadership because they were needed in that area. Both expressed having mixed emotions about making the move and even feelings of regret. Had they not been asked to move into the central office it is possible they would still be serving the same Title I high school.

Only two of the participants applied for and sought out promotions. In discussing these promotions, pay was not directly mentioned as a factor. When further probed, both participants shared they were ready for a new challenge, though not necessarily needing or wanting more pay.

Salary or pay was only directly discussed, without probing, by Robert. He said, "I think when you look at hourly, there is no way it was adequate, but I never felt like I was underpaid to a point that I felt undervalued." He shared that while he knew there were other high school principals in his area making significantly more money, he never felt he was underpaid or unvalued.

I wanted to follow up with additional participants to see if they held similar feelings. Through follow-up interviews and messages, I found that most participants had similar responses to Robert. While they were quick to say that the pay was not adequate, especially when you look at the number of hours they work, no one specifically felt they were not paid well enough to continue doing the work. For most, it was understood that, in education, one is never adequately compensated for the work, though one still chooses to do it.

Walk In My Shoes

A strong and consistent theme that emerged across multiple participants was the lack of a direct supervisor or mentor who had been a Title I high school principal. The dissatisfaction factor that led to voluntary turnover was not related to pay. The present research suggests the dissatisfaction that motivated the voluntary turnover was related to a lack of support from central office staff and the absence of a superintendent,

supervisor, appraiser, or formal coach who had walked in their shoes. They wanted to be coached or mentored by someone who had walked in their shoes. The theme emerged in several different ways but primarily when participants were directly asked what levels of support they wish they had from the central office. Six of the eight former principals interviewed were supervised by someone who had not been a Title I high school principal, or even a high school principal. The title or position that their supervisor held varied. For some, it was the superintendent and for others an area or assistant superintendent.

Kim Spring was able to go into exact detail on the type of support she wished she had from her direct supervisor, an assistant superintendent in her large urban district. Her direct supervisor had not been a Title I high school principal or a high school principal. Kim often felt the lack of support that was offered stemmed from her supervisor's inability to understand the complex role and all that it entailed.

> I wanted her to ask me those strategic questions to really get me thinking or just check on me. Ask things like are you thinking about this? Or are you looking at this issue? I am not sure she knew what to ask.

Kim went on to talk about how she felt strongly that weekly or biweekly support from someone who had been in her shoes and held her role would have led her to feel better about herself and the decisions she was making. She would have had higher levels of self-efficacy and might have even taken more risks or tried more innovative things. She also felt she would not have felt so alone. "I wish that she would have scheduled

weekly or even biweekly chats with me, where she would come over and literally walk the campus with me," Kim said.

At the time, Kim and her staff were on a college campus as an early college high school, not in their building. The students were completely integrated into the college campus, bringing many complex issues that Kim felt her supervisor and appraiser were not prepared to help her navigate. If the district did not have someone with this background or internal knowledge to offer the support she would have appreciated, the opportunity to have someone from outside the organization support her. She said she would have benefited from a formal out-of-district coach.

Without this support, Kim felt strongly she was working alone. "Sometimes I felt like I was doing the work by myself, even though I had a team, I still felt that I was doing a lot of the work by myself," Kim recalled. She would not have felt so alone if she had a thought partner that had done the work. Her sentiments are seen in her MBI responses. She is one of the five participants that was considered clinically burnt out. If she had regular support from a superior, other than when she called to ask for it, it is possible her burnout levels would have been lower.

It is also interesting to note that Kim did not apply for or seek a central office role. She was asked to transition to a new position and accepted. She stayed in the central office role for a year and then left the district to work for an educational consulting firm as a leadership coach. She now provides the coaching and support she was not offered to campus administration.

I specifically asked Linda Martinez if there was a certain kind of support or change that could have been made that would have led to her staying beyond four years. It is important to remember that Linda's administrative experience had always been in turnaround schools. The Title I setting, the additional work, and levels of support needed by Title I students, were not new to her. She thrived on this work and sought out the challenge, yet she felt completely unsupported by the central office. After four years, she decided to leave the position, the district, and public education altogether.

> I really wish they knew what it took, to change the school, to turn it around. Central office tried to minimize or simplify how you could run a school with this demographic. It felt like they did not even have sense of how hard we were working to turn the school around.

Linda was one of only two participants that were not considered clinically burnout. I attribute this in part to the fact that she was also one of only three participants that had spent her entire career in Title I schools. She enjoyed the challenge, and her heart desired to help students in need. Linda also came from a low socio-economic home, having faced many challenges as a child and teenager, stirring her desire to work with this population even more.

Rosa Passament worked in a district that also had non-Title I high schools. She felt not having a supervisor that had been a Title I principal led to her having to fight battles she should not have had to fight. Her district had magnet programs that were only being offered at the non-Title I campus, meaning students at Rosa's Title I school were not receiving the same experiences as the students across town in the more affluent area.

It also led to students looking for any option they could find to leave Rosa's campus and attend the magnet program at the non-Title I school. They often resorted to lying about their address. She did not feel supported by the central office.

> I had to fight tooth and nail for those magnet programs. I would not give up until I got what I needed for my students. I said, I am not the person for this job, you need to move me because I won't sit here and have you say no to these magnet programs. At the end of the day they just said, you know what she is not going to go away so just give her what she wants, let her deal with it.

Rosa eventually got all the magnet programs the non-Title I high school had, requiring she roll up her sleeves and make them work. She did this alone. It was made clear that she asked for the programs, so she had to make them succeed and her enrollment needed to increase if she wanted to keep them. She would not have had to fight those battles if she had a supervisor who had been in her role and knew what her students needed and deserved. The central office did not share the same desire to ensure there was equity between the Title I and non-Title I campuses.

For John Worth, not having someone who had been a high school principal in what he referred to as his "up line" led to mistrust and higher levels of stress.

> The challenge was the inability to trust some of my superiors. That was the bottom line. They just did not have any concept of how making a decision like that affects a high school campus and the master schedule and other systems.

Discipline was another area in which John felt like his superiors were improperly equipped to support him. They had not been in his shoes. Fights and gang activity were a

weekly occurrence on John's campus, and he did not have the support to properly discipline students. His discipline placements were often overturned, offering little help in deterring the activity.

> We probably had a fight a day or some kind of gang issue or drama to deal with, there was a lot of stress-related to that I was not prepared to deal with it or handle it. My superiors were not equipped to support me or guide me through that.

John had to rely on teachers or other campus members that had been on the campus, living this for many years but he felt it wasn't enough. He recalled a struggle to feel as though he was the leader his campus needed in this area. Having to rely so much on the staff he was supposed to be leading caused him to question his ability. After two years, he moved to a non-Title I high school and has been there for six years. The discipline and gang-related violence in almost nonexistent on his non-Title I campus.

For Christopher Osa, the position of Title I high school principal was lonely. He checks on those he knows are currently in the role. He attempts to give them the support or outlet that he did not have. There was no one in his district that had been a Title I high school principal.

> That job is lonely, especially when it is a one high school town. That is why I try to check on people still doing this work, sometimes they give me two or three words, other times I just let them talk for a while because I know how lonely that job is.

Jeremy Judd had an interesting perspective when it came to receiving support from supervisors who had walked in his shoes. He benefited from having a

superintendent who had been a high school principal and felt very supported and validated by his superintendent specifically. However, his immediate supervisor and appraiser, along with many who played a role in supporting the high school, had not been high school principals or even principals at all. Jeremy is the one participant who had a formal coach for part of his tenure as a Title I high school principal. However, that coach had never been a principal. His direct supervisor worked with middle school and high school principals in the district and had been a middle school principal. He often felt that caused issues and a disconnect.

> The high school principal needs a different level of support than middle school; I have done both jobs, I know. The high school accountability is a totally different system when it comes to graduation rates and College, Career, and Military Readiness (CCMR). We have to make sure these kids graduate.

Jeremy talked at great length about the difference in pressure and stress from the middle school to the high school level. He stressed that you cannot treat the middle school principal and the high school principal the same when it comes to levels of support, especially when talking about graduating kids and getting them to graduate.

Jeremy was specifically asked about the kind of support he wished he had from the central office to feel more supported and possibly stay in the role of Title I high school principal. He said, "They just don't understand what it's like unless they sit in that chair, so don't try to tell me you do or you can."

Each of these administrators would have felt more supported had they been supervised or formally coached by someone that had, at one point, held their position and sat in their chair or walked in their shoes.

Robert is one of the two participants who benefited from a superintendent and a direct supervisor who held the role of Title I principal, contributing to his high levels of self-efficacy. “I really don’t think you get it unless you’ve been a Title I high school principal, there is a difference from elementary and junior high, for sure,” he said.

I Was Prepared for This, But Not That

Self-efficacy is the belief in one’s ability to engage internal motivation, cognitive resources, and an understanding of the course of action needed to accomplish a job or task. It determines the level of effort people will expend and how long they will persist when faced with obstacles (Bandura, 1982). If one has a lower level of self-efficacy in a concept or task, one may not persist or focus efforts on the task. Self-efficacy is not just the knowledge of how to respond but the ability to execute (Bandura, 1982). If one has low self-efficacy, one is unable to do the work needed to reach a goal or solve a problem.

During the interview process, each of the participants was asked what aspects of the role of Title I high school principal they felt most prepared for and what aspects they felt least prepared. Responses were coded and analyzed to uncover themes across cases.

The Former Athletic Coaches

Three of the eight participants began their careers in education as teachers and athletic coaches. These three participants were also the only three participants who

answered the question, what did you feel most prepared for, very similarly. They each talked about their ability to build relationships, specifically with staff and lead teams. One other participant felt most prepared for relationships but it was the relationships with students she discussed. These former coaches all had experience leading teams of athletes. That experience prepared them to lead teams of teachers. They also felt it helped them understand how to build and support systems because they saw athletic teams as systems.

John Worth talked about the impact of his years of not just coaching and building athletic teams but also how being an athlete positively impacted his ability to be a good team member and to build a team when he became a principal. John had been part of teams his entire life. He helped build teams as an athlete and a coach.

> Although I did not know what I was doing at the time, I was learning, observing the head coach and how they conducted themselves, how they interacted with people. So, relationships, the understanding of, or at least, what I felt like my understanding was how to build a team.

John did not feel like any of the coursework he took in his master's program prepared him for systems thinking, he again attributed that knowledge to his career as a coach. "I think for me it really started in coaching, you have to build a system to be a successful coach," he said.

Jeremy Judd drew from similar experiences. He felt his time as a coach prepared him specifically for the role of a high school principal and contributed to his high levels of self-efficacy in building and supporting his staff.

> In coaching, you are leading kids and as a principal, you are leading teachers… I definitely think being a coach helped me as a principal, at all levels really but definitely at the high school level.

Jeremy also talked about having to check his ego at the door as a high school principal. "There is not room for egos on an athletic team and there is not room for an ego as a high school principal," he said. He went on to share that as a high school principal it is impossible to know and do everything, so he had to learn to depend on others.

For Christopher Osa he found his coaching experience prepared him to lead teams of teachers, especially when it came to setting high expectations of them. As a coach, he held his players to high standards. There were rules and expectations that, when broken, incurred consequences. These were the aspects of coaching and his experience with athletics that helped him when holding teachers accountable as well. He also talked about keeping both students and teachers happy. "As a coach you want your players to be happy, as a principal you want teachers and staff to be happy," he said.

Each of these participants was able to build and lead teams and hold people accountable because of their experiences and success with athletics and coaching. There were also similarities in the responses to what they felt least prepared for as they entered the Title I high school principal role. Two of the three former coaches discussed instructional leadership as being the role in which they were least prepared. In addition, John and Christopher had no elementary experience, only high school, before becoming high school principals. Discrepancies in experience will be discussed in a later section.

It is evident that as former athletic coaches they were given roles in the areas of discipline, attendance, or safety when they served as high school assistant principals. There were not given responsibilities or leadership opportunities that dealt with curriculum or academics. Their lack of experience as instructional leaders led to low levels of self-efficacy in that area when they became principals.

Elementary Experience

Five of the eight participants had some type of experience in their career at the elementary level. For one participant, it was three years of teaching with no administrative experience. Of the other four, two had been elementary assistant principals before moving into the Title I high school principal role and two served as elementary principals before transitioning to high school.

Elementary campuses are typically smaller administrators tend to wear many hats. Often, this leads to having more direct work with curriculum and academics, as an instructional leader, regardless of one's title. Jeremy Judd attributed his time as an elementary principal as the key to being a strong instructional leader at his large urban Title I high school. His elementary experience helped him understand the academic side of his role as a principal. He was familiar with looking at data, disaggregating it with teachers, and determining how to use data to drive instruction.

> If I had just gone from an assistant principal at a high school to principal, I think I would have failed or at the least needed a lot of district support with curriculum and academics.

When Jeremy was an elementary principal, he only had one assistant principal. "I learned so much at the elementary, you have to do it all at elementary, there is not anyone to delegate that work too," he said.

Kim Spring also served as an elementary principal before moving to a Title I high school. She acknowledged not being familiar with high school content, especially when it came to higher levels of math and science. However, she felt strongly that the academic spirit and focus of an elementary campus prepared her to navigate the academic challenges of a Title I high school. She spoke specifically of her experience at the elementary level collecting data, progress monitoring, and driving instruction from data. She knew to ask questions like, are kids growing, what are their weaknesses, how can we support them, and what interventions are needed?

Kim also had experience as a high school assistant principal but did not recall doing a lot of academic and curriculum work as a high school assistant. When she was an assistant principal at the high school level, there was one person in the specific academic dean role. The dean and principal focused on the school's academic and curriculum needs. The assistant principals focused on other specific roles or programs. Had she not served as an elementary principal, she does not know that she would have been the instructional leader she needed to be for her Title I high school campus.

Kim also realized that her time as an elementary principal allowed her to refine her leadership skills before taking on the larger challenge of a high school. As a first-year elementary principal, she remembered being very directive. She quickly learned that was not going to work.

> I had to really do some self-reflecting, I was not reflective while I was an assistant principal but becoming an elementary principal and not getting the results I needed, in the beginning, forced me to do that.

Kim felt she would not have been given the same grace she was given her first year as an elementary principal if she had been on a high school campus. "High school teachers are not as forgiving, they would not have been as patient with me and it would not have gone well," she said. Her time as an elementary principal prepared her for instructional leadership and allowed her to work on her leadership skills and become a better leader, the leader her future Title I campus would need.

Alternatively, of the three participants who had no elementary experience at any point in their career, whether in the classroom or administratively, two openly and honestly admitted they were least prepared to be the campus instructional leader.

John Worth spent his entire career as a high school teacher, coach, and eventually assistant principal and then principal. He felt unprepared for the instructional role the principal must play.

> As an assistant principal at a high school, I spent all my time on discipline and attendance. It was a full-time job. I was concerned I would not have enough knowledge; you are worried your staff is going to look at you and say this person does not know what he is doing.

John went on to talk about the steps he took to overcome those learning curves and deficits in his lack of academic and curriculum expertise. Again, because he was a good team builder he pulled on his coaching experience to rely on those around him to

fill in where his experience lacked. He was able to lean on others on his team that had that expertise and experience and was not afraid to be vulnerable about his lack of knowledge. He expressed how thankful he was to have a lead counselor. She was able to fill the instructional leadership gap for which he was unprepared. "She taught me, and I let her, we spent a lot of time together. I met with department chairs weekly, I was just a sponge that first year, learning," he said.

John realized he was not able to move the needle much instructionally or academically at his Title I campus. He was only there for two years and spent the first year trying to learn what he did not know. Had he not needed that year to learn, he could have made gains.

Christopher Osa also had to rely on his team-building and relationship-building experience from coaching to compensate for his lack of curriculum experience. Like John, his entire educational career was spent on a high school campus as a teacher, coach, or assistant principal. He served as an assistant principal at a large Title I campus with over 1,800 students and, as a former coach, he was relied upon to handle discipline. His principal at the time gave him many opportunities to learn and grow. However, those learning experiences were not in curriculum and academics. He was not ready to be an instructional leader when he took his first Title I principal position.

Christopher also spoke about how the lack of curriculum knowledge and experience affected his ability to improve test scores. Again, he pointed back to his limited experience in these areas as an assistant principal. He had to rely on others when he moved into the principal seat. He realized, after leaving the campus, that this affected

his ability to succeed at his first Title I campus. The campus was small, with only about 600 students and two assistant principals. In addition, the district was small and there was little curriculum and instructional support from the central office. He was not taught how to be an instructional leader.

> I did not realize what I was lacking until I moved to a larger district that had curriculum coordinators and specialists, then I really saw all that could be done. My first campus in the smaller district did not have all of that. I thought we were doing pretty good and then I quickly realized once moving on, we really were not.

As previously mentioned, Christopher had the lowest levels of self-efficacy and the highest levels of burnout on the MBI. He responded to that survey based on his time at his first, smaller Title I campus. His self-efficacy and burnout levels were impacted by the lack of curriculum and academic support the district offered him as a principal. He felt the pressure to be an instructional leader and was not able to deliver. These inadequacies contributed to his comments about feeling lonely, isolated, and doing the work alone. "There are only certain people that really understand how unsupported and alone you can feel," he said.

The third participant without elementary experience was Marcus Sandoval. Different from the first two participants without elementary experience, Marcus had both middle school assistant principal and middle school principal experience. He also served as a Title I principal in a large urban district that he labeled as very centralized. As an

assistant principal, he participated in assistant principal leadership academies that exposed him to every program and department in the district.

> As assistant principals, we learned a lot in those academies. We really got access to a lot of stuff, and they were very driven on formative assessments, reflecting, and iterating. That kind of stuff really led me to feel prepared when I moved into the high school principal role.

Marcus' experience indicates that the lack of academic and curriculum preparation or the ability to be an instructional leader that is often found in principals who lack time as elementary administrators can be overcome. Districts must provide intentional support early in an assistant principal's career. Marcus worked in a district that had support in place to prepare all leaders to be instructional leaders. "I don't always advocate for such centralization; however, it did prepare me to be an instructional leader and I know very few people that had the opportunities our district offered," he said. John and Christopher did not have those opportunities or supports, and it showed in their levels of self-efficacy, their ability to be instructional leaders, and the types of support, they desired.

The Females

Three females participated in the present study. Each spoke about systems when asked what they were least prepared to handle. They struggled to understand systems that were already in place on the campus. They struggled to understand how to begin the process of building better systems on the campus. Each of these leaders felt prepared to be instructional leaders. Each had past experiences that prepared them to be instructional

leaders. One served as an elementary principal. We established, based on findings from the present study that elementary experience led to stronger self-efficacy in curriculum and academics.

The other two female participants had been assistant principals at the middle school level and were given responsibilities and roles that handled most of the academic and curriculum tasks. Their experiences gave them higher levels of self-efficacy in academic and curriculum areas but led to low self-efficacy in systems. The systems work had been given to men on their previous secondary campuses.

Kim had been an elementary principal, but the systems needed at the high school level were different and more complex. She had served as an assistant principal at a high school but in an academic role. She was not involved in systems-related tasks. Linda, while a middle school assistant principal, was given instructional tasks and found that the systems work was left for the male principal or assistant principal. Rosa had been a middle school principal but like Kim, found the high school systems to be far more complex. All three females felt unprepared to build, understand or manage the complex systems at a high school campus.

For Linda Martinez, the systems she struggled to navigate and understand the most were those in the central office. She went so far as to make the realization that it may have been the district politics that made things so complex. Linda perceived politics to be a system she had to learn to navigate.

> My challenge was always understanding the politics of being a leader and how you navigate central office and their requests…that was the hardest and ultimately the reason I left.

For Kim Spring, the systems she spoke of were different. As an Early College principal, she was required to navigate both the systems of her high school as well as those of the community college. For both, she felt unprepared.

> I felt very weak and unprepared for dual enrollment and the relationship we had with our partner college and how to navigate that system. I did not understand how it all worked and that made me nervous.

Kim talked openly about not wanting to come across as a leader that did not have knowledge or answers about dual enrollment. While she did not mind saying she did not have an answer, she felt that she had to overcome a huge learning gap in dual enrollment.

For Rosa Passament, the systems she spoke of related to the master schedule. She quickly realized that the high school master schedule was more complex than middle school. As a former middle school principal, she felt confident in her ability to put systems into place that benefited students. When she moved to a high school, she had to learn how those systems worked before she could find ways to make them stronger for students.

> Going in there and not being from a high school and not having any kind of high school experience was tough. I had to learn all of these new systems, many of which were not working well for the school because they had not met AYP.

Rosa understood that she could not make changes to systems that were not working without having a strong knowledge of the master schedule, accountability, extra-curricular program, and all the other factors that impact a high school.

Overall, the female principals had stronger levels of self-efficacy in the academic and curriculum areas of leadership compared to the men in the present study. However, they had lower levels of self-efficacy in the area of systems. Systems was an area of self-efficacy for men, indicating gender, for participants in the present study, was used to assign roles and responsibilities on campus. The imbalance of assistant principal experience and/or exposure to all aspects of school leadership left the females unprepared for the important systems work and left the males unprepared for the academic and curriculum leadership, a holistic preparation needed when leading a Title I high school campus.

The MBI results indicate that the women were more prepared to mitigate and overcome the low levels of self-efficacy because they had lower levels of burnout. For the men, it led to higher levels of burnout and turnover. Further details are discussed in Chapter Five.

Discipline

Three of the participants discussed not being prepared for the discipline and gang-related activity that occurred on their Title I campuses. For Linda, gang-related deaths occurred on the weekend outside of school. She dealt with the aftermath of those deaths on Monday morning while also trying to get students to attend class and graduate.

> The first month that I arrived, every other weekend, there was a death of someone at my campus because there were rival gangs. There were often graffiti as a result of all of that. I was literally rolling up my sleeves, getting out the paint and painting the walls every Monday morning until it stopped.

Linda did not have a superior that faced those issues who could support and guide her as she navigated literal life and death situations. She recalled getting visits from supervisors who were more concerned about blank bulletin boards while she was trying to keep rival gang members from killing each other over the weekend. Linda had worked in Title I schools her entire career, but not at the high school level. Her experiences as an assistant principal comprised instructional leadership. She had done instructional work to help turn low-performing academic schools around and was prepared to do that at her Title I high school. However, she was not prepared for what she faced in terms of discipline and gang violence. The discipline and gang violence had to be addressed before she could move on to the academics and curriculum.

When asked about her most challenging moment or experience she shared a story about the day a student called her over the weekend to confess to a serious crime. He called her for help, and she had to tell him she would have to report what he shared with her to the police. "It was hard to think of what his life was going to be like after I made that call, but it was what I had to do," she said.

For Marcus, when asked about the best memories of his tenure as a Title I high school principal, he recalled a very specific event. Students were ready to defend him and keep a former student and known drug dealer from coming onto campus. The

student attempted to engage Marcus in a physical altercation. The interaction started in front of a small group of about 40 students. Marcus was escorting the former student off campus. The interaction was intense, inappropriate language was used and the student was physically aggressive and entered a boxing stance.

> The kid said I want to kick your ass and so I took off my earpiece, my radio, and my glasses. Another student said to me, sir are you sure you want to do this and I said if he wants to hit me go right ahead because state law says that once he puts his hands on me I get to defend myself.

Marcus recalled that as the situation escalated the crowd of students watching grew, but there was not any other staff coming to intervene. The student did not end up hitting Marcus; he ran and was intercepted by the campus police on the other side of the school. Marcus used that opportunity to ask the students watching if this was the kind of behavior they wanted to tolerate at their school.

> I turned to the students watching that day and said is this what you want your school to be is this who you want to follow? And at that moment the other students were like this is our school and we are tired of this. I do not think we had another fight for the rest of the year.

One might question why Marcus would tell this story as one of his best memories of his tenure as a high school principal, however for him it was a shifting point in his self-efficacy. He felt like he finally had a handle on how to deal with the intense discipline issues and gang-related violence that often consumed his time and the time of others on his campus. No one helped him with these issues. He did not have a thought

partner with whom to discuss those struggles. He had to learn as he went, and it was often not pretty. However, that event was the breakthrough he needed with students. Because of it, the violence dramatically decreased and his self-efficacy increased, giving him the ability to devote more time to the academic needs of the students.

John Worth brought a different perspective to the present study because he had been a high school principal on three campuses. Having moved onto a non-Title I campus, he could compare the differences in the role. He talked about not realizing the level of stress and burnout he was under at his Title I campus until he got out from under it. Fights and gang activity were a weekly occurrence on John's campus, and he did not have the support to properly discipline students in ways that would deter the activity from happening again. The previous campuses at which he had worked did not have this level of violence and discipline issues. "There were more Mexican Americans and African Americans in my Title I campus, I was coming from schools that were predominantly White, so I had to adjust the way I handled things," he said.

Daily fights or gang issues equated to drama that led to high levels of stress for John. Not only was not prepared to handle those issues but he felt he received little support from superiors. He had to rely on teachers or other staff members that had been around, those with stronger relationships with the students and the families. It was the only way to work on viable solutions to the issues. Regardless, he felt it was enough and felt little progress was made in that area during his tenure.

The present study included four principals in urban schools. Two of the four discussed discipline and gang violence when asked for what they were least prepared.

Kim Spring was an urban principal that did not mention discipline and gang violence. However, her campus was a smaller Early College High School. Jeremy Judd was also serving an urban campus and did not mention discipline and gang violence as an area in which he was least prepared. Jeremy referred to himself as a cleanup man. His district would move him into schools that needed a quick turnaround. He would come in and crack down on discipline first so that he and his staff could focus on teaching and learning. He had done this on several campuses, so it was not an area in which he felt unprepared.

Of the two White principals in the present study, one discussed discipline and gang violence as something for which they were least prepared. Kim Spring was one of the White urban principals with a unique campus. It was a small Early College High School. The second White urban principal was John Worth. John struggled to handle the discipline issues he faced with students of color.

How Do I Spend This Money?

In his book, *Sensemaking in Organizations*, Weick (1995) stated that anyone attempting to make sense of a situation relies on their perceptions, which are tied to previous experiences or knowledge. People pull their cues from information and observation. People cannot know everything and must operate with information that is likely reliable. Those elements are applied to shared meanings, which is what happens when a group of people make decisions about how to spend money.

In Texas, Title I schools are defined as schools where more than 40 percent of the student population qualifies for free and reduced lunch. Students qualify for free and

reduced lunch based on their household size and income. For example, in a household of four, if the family income is below $49,025, the students in the household qualify for free and reduced lunch. Each of the participants in the present study served as principals of a high school that met the definition of a Title I campus.

The label of Title I also comes with an additional allotment of federal funds. The additional federal funds have rules, laws, and research-based best practices attached to them. For that reason, some districts opt to reject the funding. Rejection is most common on high school campuses because they have a difficult time finding meaningful and impactful ways to spend money. That was the case for two campuses in the present study. The district made the decision not to accept the Title I funds even though the campus met the free and reduced lunch threshold.

For the remaining six principals the issue of Title I funds, and the complexities that surrounded spending them, was an area of frustration and stress. It was often an area where they struggled to make sense of the decisions being made at the central office.

Linda Martinez was open about her inability to have a voice in how the Title I funds allocated for her campus were spent. Linda worked in a large urban district where all the high school campuses were designated Title I. The district often funded district-wide initiatives with Title I funds, with no campus input. Programs, curriculum, and assessments were implemented throughout the district and paid for with Title I funds. Not having a voice in how Title I funds were spent caused Linda to feel as though the central office staff did not trust her.

> If someone at central office wanted to implement a new assessment and implement it district-wide and embed it into our campuses, I asked a lot of questions and that came across as me questioning their ability or judgment when it was really just me questioning to get clarification…these things did not work for our students and staff were frustrated.

Linda recalled several programs and assessments pushed out by the district that did not last long, resulting in a loss of money, time, and energy on the part of staff to learn and implement the failed programs. She often struggled with how to support central office ideas, while validating the feelings of her teachers who disagreed with the initiatives or assessments. "The teachers were very unhappy with many of these mandates," she said. "It was a challenge to make them feel supported while still trying to respect these Title I initiatives that were district led." The struggle ultimately led to her decision to walk away from the job. If her district had a process or system in place to ensure teacher or campus voice in Title I funding decisions, she would have stayed in the position longer.

Marcus worked in a large urban district that did not centralize Title I funds. Marcus was given the funds and could work with his staff to determine how to spend the funds to meet the needs of his students. However, the ideas generated by Marcus and his staff were often not approved by those that had the final authority on how Title I funds were spent. At the time, he was told the ideas he had were not allowable. He was naive and unaware of the many complex rules, laws, and guidelines that came with Title I funds. He did not know how to make sense of them. Often, after his ideas were rejected,

he had to return to the drawing board. After leaving his district and the Title I high principal role, Marcus became an assistant superintendent and eventually a superintendent. He now has a clear understanding of how Title I funds can be spent. He now feels he was lied to.

> When I was a principal, we just accepted what central office told us, and now, being a superintendent and dealing closely with finance, I am like, geez, they lied to us…they controlled Title monies in the way they allocated them and in how they allowed us to spend them. Now I realize it did not and does not have to be this way.

Marcus felt that finance often worked in a silo, and it needed to be broken down. He spoke about how this influenced his leadership in central office roles. Once he knew better, he made sure that there were systems in place that gave Title I principals in his district true autonomy with the funds. There are still rules and laws that must be followed but when principals came with unique or outside-of-the-box ideas; he ensured finance and federal programs worked alongside the principal to find solutions. If the ideas do not fit the Title I parameters rather than just saying no, he ensured staff worked together to make sense of the problem and the solution.

For John, armed with the perspective of being a principal on a non-Title I campus, he realized just how much more time the budget process takes when you are dealing with Title I funds.

> There are a lot more mandates, restrictions, and guidelines and all of those things. This is an added level of stress to ensure that you are doing everything by

> the book. Now that I am in a non-Title I campus… we can get back to making decisions that are best for students and not worrying about mandates.

John stated that on a non-Title I campus he can approach decisions from the perspective of what he felt was in the best interest of the students. He did not have to consider Title I guidelines. “There is always a level of disconnect from the district level to the campus level when it comes to budget, but it is definitely worse when dealing with Title I funds,” he said.

For Jeremy Judd, in a mid-sized urban district, his Title I budget was also a struggle and an area where he could not make sense of the mandates or the logic used by those who handled the funds. Jeremy understood that there were two sides to everything. He came coming from the student need side and the central office staff came from the compliance side. The two sides did not often agree.

> It was hard to pay for anything with Title I funds. I understand they have to protect the district but I just wish there was more transparency and better training. It was a pain and a challenge to spend that money and I think we could have found a common understanding if they were more open to conversation.

Christopher echoed Jeremy’s thoughts when he talked about the phases of Title I funding conversations with the central office. He explained how at the start of the year he received a large dollar amount as an allocation. He thought he could do great things with that amount of funds. As the year went on almost anything he tried to do with the funds was denied. By March, he would get phone calls asking him why he had not spent more of the Title I funds. When spending thresholds were not met central office

expressed frustration and became less strict in what they allowed. He struggled to make sense of the logic and the system.

Title I funds contributed to the levels of stress and burnout found in each of the six participants that received them. The disconnect between the campus and central office caused principals to struggle to make sense of how to spend Title I funds. Transparency, ideation, and dialogue between the central office and Title I high school principals will reduce the confusion, stress, and burnout. Further details related to coherency between the central office and principals will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Conclusion

Four main themes emerged from the data analysis. These themes were each connected to the conceptual framework. Why Did I Leave, and Walk In My Shoes were connected to theories of motivation. I Was Prepared For This But Not That was connected to self-efficacy. How Do I Spend This Money was connected to sense-making.

Why Did I Leave uncovered motivation factors that led to the decision to turnover. The theme labeled, Walk In My Shoes, was associated with the desire to have a leader, coach, or mentor that had held the position of Title I high school principal. Without mentorship, principals felt alone and isolated, only receiving help when they asked for it, as opposed to consistent and calendared support. The lack of intentional support led to feelings of dissatisfaction, even though they were satisfied with other aspects of their position. Failure in support influenced the participant's decisions to leave their Title I principal position.

The third theme that emerged from the data analysis was the impact of experience or gender on the participant's level of preparedness in certain aspects of the role. Participants who had served as athletic coaches had higher levels of self-efficacy in building systems and relationships. Those with elementary experience had higher levels of self-efficacy in being instructional leaders and improving academic outcomes for students. The females had lower levels of burnout overall and were better equipped for the stress and emotional challenges of the position. The findings are connected to self-efficacy in the conceptual framework.

The fourth theme from the data analysis was the struggle to spend Title I funds. Participants struggled to make sense of how to spend Title I funds. They often found their proposals rejected rather than having an opportunity to have discussions on ways they could spend their funds. Further, opportunities to ideate with finance and federal program departments were not offered. They did not see those in charge of Title I funds as thought partners in ensuring their schools helped students reach higher levels of academic success. The lack of coherency led to unspent funds, a lack of understanding or sense-making in decisions, and higher levels of stress and burnout among participants.

In Chapter Five, the findings, and their meaning, as they relate to theories of motivation, self-efficacy, and sense making are discussed. In addition, the chapter includes an exploration of the correlation to prior research. Finally, Chapter Five will include conclusions and implications related to the present study.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The present chapter provides a summary of the present study, a discussion of the findings, implications for future practice, and further research recommendations. These sections provide a stronger understanding of the findings discovered and presented in the present study. It provides information on the implications these findings have on the future of education, specifically the placement, support, and retention of Title I high school principals. Finally, Chapter Five includes a culminating statement on the purpose of the present study and what it attempted to find.

Summary of the Study

Higher levels of principal turnover are found in high schools that serve large concentrations of low socio-economic students (Branch et al., 2009; Fuller et al., 2007). The impact of leadership and effective schools for low socio-economic students and students of color has been established (Carter, 2000; Leithwood et al., 2004; Waters et al., 2003). Low socio-economic students and students of color need a leader that is dependable to close student achievement gaps (Trammel, 2016). These principals must have an equity lens, particularly when leading schools with growing numbers of marginalized students (Grissom et al., 2021).

It is important to acknowledge that turnover is unavoidable and not all turnover is bad. Datnow and Stringfield (2000) discuss the importance of a smooth transition when there are leadership changes at a campus and the impact these

transitions can have on reform practices and their ability to outlast leadership change.

Principals impact student achievement in both direct and indirect ways. The principal impact is compounded in low socio-economic schools. To improve student achievement in low socio-economic schools we must work to have a stronger understanding of the conditions and factors that lead to principal turnover. Strong understandings will allow for the mitigation of principal turnover.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to examine the lived experiences of Title I high school principals and identify (a) the conditions and motivating factors that contribute to voluntary high school principal turnover on Title I campuses in Texas, (b) the levels of self-efficacy Title I principals feel they had while in the leadership role and (c) the levels of support high school principals wish they had while serving as the school leader. While not all turnover is bad, research indicates principal turnover can hurt student achievement, making it essential to minimize and combat turnover rates (Leithwood et al., 2008). There are multiple ways in which principals impact student achievement whether through instructional leadership, creating and sustaining campus climate and culture, supporting improved teaching and learning, or the hiring and retention of teachers. Principal impact has repeatedly been found to be profound (Bartanen et al., 2019; Grissom & Bartanen, 2019; Simon & Johnson, 2015).

Research Questions

While interviewing former Title I high school principals to learn about their lived experiences, three research questions were answered:

1. What are the perceived conditions that contribute or lead to voluntary high school principal turnover on Title I campuses in Texas?

2. What levels of self-efficacy do Title I high school principals feel they had while in the role?

3. What kind of support do former Title I high school principals wish they had?

Theoretical Framework

Theories of motivation seek to explain the choices people make. Voluntary turnover is a choice for a principal. When district-level administrators and superintendents understand human behavior and motivation in connection to a principal's job satisfaction, they can effectively meet their varied and unique needs, resulting in lower turnover rates (Web & Norton, 2003).

Abraham Maslow began his theory of motivation in the early 1940s. He stated that human behavior is determined by biological, cultural, and situational needs (Maslow, 1954). The pyramid of needs starts with the most basic physiological needs and moves to security, social, self-esteem, and finally self-actualization. Needs must first be met at the lower level for higher needs to be attained. Similarly, once a need has been met, it can no longer serve as a motivating factor. As a result, the next level of need becomes the motivator.

Another theory of motivation is Herzberg's (1968) theory which attempts to explain satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the workplace. Herzberg suggests that the factors that lead to job satisfaction are separate from those that lead to dissatisfaction. A broad array of motivation factors exist, including achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and growth and there are hygiene factors; policy, status, working

conditions, salary, and security. Motivation factors lead employees to feel satisfied while hygiene factors lead employees to feel dissatisfied. The two are not connected at all meaning that an employee can be satisfied while still exhibiting dissatisfaction. Herzberg's theory has been used numerous times to explore job satisfaction and turnover. Therefore, it is a suitable framework for examining high school principal turnover.

Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to engage internal motivation, cognitive resources, and an understanding of the course of action needed to accomplish a job or task. It determines the level of effort people will expend and how long they will persist when faced with obstacles (Bandura, 1982). Self-efficacy is an important motivational construct. It affects choices, goals, emotional reactions, effort, coping, and persistence and it can change because of learning, experience, and feedback (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Therefore, self-efficacy is not just the knowledge of how to respond but the ability to execute (Bandura, 1982).

Bandura's (1982) research tells us that if self-efficacy is lacking, people tend to behave ineffectually, even when they know how to handle or complete the task or job. A strong sense of self-efficacy allows one to withstand failures and uncertainty. Thought patterns and emotional reactions are influenced by self-efficacy. Low self-efficacy causes people to dwell on personal deficiencies rather than the task or obstacle at hand, creating stress and impairing performance. Those with strong self-efficacy can focus on the demands of the situation and are pushed to greater effort when they face obstacles. In addition, increased self-efficacy has been connected to increases in performance (Gist, 1989).

The role of the principal is filled with complex tasks, difficult decisions, and high-stress situations (Whitaker, 1999). Over the years, it has become multilayered, filled with more and more responsibilities (Davis et al., 2005). When considering principals as change agents and leaders of reform, principals must have the skills and capacity to cope effectively with a rapidly changing environment (Fullan, 2002).

In the present study, self-efficacy is related to the principal's leadership abilities. Principal self-efficacy refers to a principal's self-perceived sense of preparedness to lead and influence their schools' achievement (Bandura, 1977, 1993). The present study examined the experiences of former high school principals through the lens of self-efficacy

Sense-making is a process that is ongoing, instrumental, subtle, swift, social, and easily taken for granted (Weick, 1995, 2005). In the context of the work of the principal, their constant decision making is attributable to the lost understanding of how they make sense of their decisions. Explicit efforts at sense-making tend to occur when the current state of the world is perceived to be different from the expected state of the world, or when there is no obvious way to engage the world. High levels of principal turnover indicate that there is a disconnect between perception and the reality of the job. Anyone attempting to make sense of a situation relies on their perception and these perceptions are based on our previous lived experiences. These previous experiences provide meaning and lead us to make decisions on what our work should be.

Methods

The present study was a narrative, multiple case study. The narrative, multiple case study approach was selected because qualitative research of this type explores the life of the participant and encompasses one or more participants while allowing those participants to tell their own unique stories and experiences (Crewswell & Poth, 2018). The sample for the present study included eight former Title I high school principals. Each voluntarily left their position within five years or less.

Data was collected from two sources. The first source was responses to the Maslach Burnout Inventory for Educators (MBI). Participants completed the MBI for educators, responding based on their time as a Title I high school principal. The MBI is designed to assess three aspects of burnout; emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson created the Inventory in 1981. It is easy to administer, valid, and reliable (Maslach et al., 1986). Inventory results were compared and cross-referenced among cases and themes were discovered.

The second and primary source of data was a 60-minute semi-structured virtual interview using a video conferencing platform. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and member-checked. Participants were asked to share real-life, lived experiences from their time as Title I high school principals. Follow-up interviews were scheduled as needed to gather additional information.

Findings

The findings of the present study are organized by the research questions. The findings are connected to the conceptual framework created for the present study. The conceptual framework includes theories of motivation, self-efficacy, and sense-making.

Conditions that Contribute to Turnover

The first research question, related to the perceived conditions that contribute or lead to voluntary Title I high school principal turnover, is connected to theories of motivation. There were two themes in the research that produced answers to this research question, Why Did I Leave and Walk In My Shoes. Participants identified challenging working conditions that contributed to turnover decisions. In addition, this research conflicts with prior research on the impact campus demographics have on turnover decisions.

Challenging Working Conditions

Young and Fuller (2009) found higher turnover rates are attributed to the most challenging situations on campus. Working conditions have become increasingly difficult and pay lags, making it a challenge to keep high-quality leaders. Three factors stand out in the previous research: characteristics of the position, campus demographics, and principal salary.

Principal burnout was reported when the principals felt their leadership was either rejected or challenged (Friedman, 2002). Principals have increasingly reported considerable stress in the areas of their work in which they feel unsupported or unprepared. The present study confirms these findings by confirming high levels of

burnout, lack of support from the central office, and specific support, or lack thereof, with spending Title I funds.

Mitani (2018) found that working conditions and stress, related to No Child Left Behind, cause turnover. The present study confirms those findings. The results of the present study indicate that Title I high school principals leave the position because of high levels of burnout. The MBI Inventory results found that five out of eight participants met the criteria to be considered clinically burnout.

An additional finding relates to gender, namely that gender may play a role in burnout. Prior research indicates there are more male high school principals than females (Zappi, 2022). In the present study, two of three participants that were not considered clinically burnout were females. Only one female participant was considered clinically burnout. Four of the five males in the present study were considered burnout. Geographic location, size of the campus, or race/ethnicity were not factors in the participants' label of clinical burnout. Females in the present study may be better suited for the working conditions and stress of the role.

The findings of the present study affirm a recent mixed-methods study that explored the role of the district in successful Title I schools in South Texas (Padilla et al., 2021). Common successful strategies included active support and flexibility in all school functions, such as curriculum, instruction, staffing, etc. There was no sense of authoritative top-down control on the part of the school district. The school district provided its organizational goals, expectations, resources, and services. It also infused flexibility so that each school, leader, and teacher could work toward maximum student

success. Integrating the practice of flexibility in a competitive environment reflects Waters and Marzano's (2006) "defined autonomy."

Salary is considered support and the present research supports the findings of Snodgrass-Rangel (2018) who found that the relationship between salary and turnover might be more complicated than what is captured in previous studies that do not consider the conditions under which principals left their positions. There is a specific need for qualitative research on the relationship between salary and turnover. Seven of the eight participants saw a pay increase when they left their Title I high school positions. The only participant that did not see a pay increase moved to a middle school principal position. Regardless of the role the other seven participants took, they all saw a pay increase. However, no participant stated that pay was a factor in his or her decision to apply for or accept a new position.

Herzberg's theory of motivation suggests that the factors that lead to job satisfaction are separate from those that lead to dissatisfaction. There are a broad array of motivation factors including, achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and growth and there are hygiene factors; policy, status, working conditions, salary, and security. Motivation factors lead employees to feel satisfied while hygiene factors lead employees to feel dissatisfied. The two are not connected, meaning that an employee can be satisfied while simultaneously dissatisfied. The present study finds while principals were satisfied with their pay, the hygiene factor of support led them to feel dissatisfied.

In the present study, four of the eight participants stated they left because they were dissatisfied with the conditions of their current position. It was a coincidence that

three of those four were able to find positions that also resulted in higher pay. While each participant felt they were not adequately paid for the number of hours they worked, none reported negative thoughts about their pay or used pay as a reason to leave the position. Yan (2016) found there has been a lack of research on how other job benefits and district policies and support affect principal turnover. The present research supports that finding.

As a former Title I high school principal I agree with the participant's thoughts on pay. The position requires 24-hour, 7-day attention. The possibility that the principal will be needed at any time and on any day is real. A principal is always “on-call.” There is no financial compensation that can match that volume of work. The findings of the present study suggest that if levels of support are in place, principals are less concerned with their pay.

Gates et al. (2006) found that larger schools have lower principal turnover. Gates et al. (2003) found that while larger schools tend to have more issues or challenges, principals in larger schools are paid more, suggesting the increased salary may be enough to keep principals of larger more complex schools in place. The present study did not find that the size of the school or the district correlated to fewer years in the role of principal. The principal that stayed the longest (five years) served a campus that fell at the midpoint of the group in terms of enrollment. The principal at the largest school in the present study stayed for four years while principals in much smaller schools only stayed for three years. The responses of at least two participants in the present study

indicate that principal turnover is lower in larger schools not because of pay but because of the increase in resources and support offered to principals.

I have served as a Title I principal in a small district and in a larger district. The level of instructional support I received in the larger district helped me to be the instructional leader my campus needed. When I did not know the answer to a curriculum or academic question, I knew whom to call to get the answer. In the smaller district, there was not anyone else to call. I had to be resourceful and find the answer on my own without the support of district staff.

Finally, the findings support the work of Wells and Klocko (2018) who drew parallels between educational leadership and health professionals. They examined principal workplace well-being through the underlying components of stress and resiliency and found data to suggest that principal stress may result from an imbalance between the demands principals face and the resources available for dealing with those demands, rather than from the demands alone. Principal burnout was reported when they felt their leadership is either rejected or challenged (Friedman, 2002). The present affirmed those findings. Each of the participants reported needing additional levels of support from the central office staff. Each expressed concern over the time and overall demands of the job took on their emotional well-being and their ability to have a life outside of work. Two participants specifically had defining moments that pushed them over the edge and led them to seek a new position. Five of the eight participants were considered clinically burnt out.

Campus Demographics

The data collected in the present research does not fully support prior research that states the race or socio-economic status of the students is a contributing factor in a principal's decision to turnover (Cullen & Mazzeo, 2008; Fuller et al., 2007; Gates et al., 2006). Each of the studies referenced above and most of the research on this topic is quantitative. The prior research lacks rich narrative data provided in the present study, data collected using qualitative multiple case study methodology.

The principals in the present study had high levels of self-efficacy when it came to working with the students in their schools and felt a great sense of personal achievement. Lack of support from the central office and not having a leader that had walked in their shoes played a larger role in their decision to leave. The stress was brought on, not by students but by superiors, and conflicting agendas or the lack of support they received. I do not argue that Title I schools are hard to staff, I question whether the phenomenon stems from the students and their backgrounds or because of the districts' lack of preparation of leaders as well as the support those leaders need once placed. Only one of the participants did not continue to work in a Title I setting both before entering their position and after. The students and their needs were not the deterrents.

Prior research has indicated that the socio-economic status of a campus also plays an integral role in principal turnover rates. Not only do schools with higher numbers of economically disadvantaged students have higher principal turnover rates than schools with lower numbers of the same students, but data also shows that when a

principal leaves their first economically disadvantaged campus, they move to a school with a fewer number of similar students (Clotfelter et al., 2007). The present research does not affirm this claim. Only one principal in this study exited a Title I campus for a non-Title I position.

In the present study, one participant moved to a larger Title I campus, one participant moved to a Title I middle school, one participant transitioned out of public education and into a leadership role at a non-profit organization that supported education and four participants were promoted into leadership roles at the central office. It is also important to note that of the four that were promoted to central office positions, only two sought out those positions. The other two were asked to move into the role.

Three participants discussed discipline. However, two of those participants spoke more about not being supported by the central office on discipline issues rather than the actual students. These two participants did not express frustration with the behavior of the students on their Title I campus, they expressed frustration with the lack of support related to their discipline decisions or how to navigate them.

My Title I campus did not have high rates of discipline issues or any type of gang-related activity. However, I did walk into the role of Title I high school principal with very low self-efficacy concerning handling discipline. While I had been a high school teacher for one year and a middle school teacher for two, I had no administrative experience at the secondary level. As a female, I often felt there was more pressure to ensure I maintained a safe and orderly campus because my ability to do so was in question. It appeared as though at least one participant, Linda Martinez felt similar

pressures. She felt it was important for her to roll up her sleeves and repaint walls after graffiti incidents. She needed to send a strong message that she would do whatever it took to get the gang violence and retaliation out of her school.

Levels of Self-Efficacy

The second research question, related to the levels of self-efficacy Title I high school principals feel they had, is connected to the self-efficacy piece of the conceptual framework developed for the present study. Bandura's (1982) research tells us that if self-efficacy is lacking, people tend to behave ineffectually, even when they know how to handle or complete the task or job. A strong sense of self-efficacy allows one to withstand failures and uncertainty. There is evidence that strong self-efficacy in instructional areas is related to elementary experience. In addition, the areas principals identified as having low self-efficacy were areas that did not come with sufficient training and support. There is also evidence that formal coaching and mentoring would improve overall self-efficacy, reflected in the emergent theme, I Was Prepared For This, But Not That.

Seven of the eight participants (87.5 %) felt they positively influenced the lives of others through their work a few times a week or more. Seven of the eight participants (87.5%) felt they could easily create a relaxed environment for students a few times a week or more. Six of the eight participants (75%) reported feeling exhilarated after working closely with students a few times a week, if not more. All eight of the participants reported feeling they have accomplished many worthwhile things in their job a few times a week, if not more. Seven out of eight participants (87.5%) reported

feeling able to deal with emotional problems with clarity a few times a week or more. These findings support the work of Boyce and Bowers (2016) who concluded that there are two types of leavers: satisfied principals and disaffected principals. Their findings suggest that many principals who chose to leave their school are satisfied with their job, and therefore job satisfaction on its own may not help distinguish between leavers and stayers. The issue is deeper.

Instructional Experience

According to Wahlstrom and Seashore-Louis (2008), the principal is the instructional leader in the building. They are expected to understand the tenets of quality instruction and knowledge of the curriculum. Prior research supports the increasing pressure on principals to deliver better instruction. Cheney et al. (2010) found there is an immense need for highly effective instructional leaders. There has been a trend to prepare future leaders as instructional leaders as opposed to administrators (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

In the present study, the participants with elementary experience as either assistant principals or principals had higher levels of self-efficacy in the area of instructional leadership. The participants with elementary experience felt more confident and prepared for discussions about curriculum, student data, and using data to inform instruction. With higher levels of self-efficacy in this area, the principals were more likely to engage in these activities. If high school principals are expected to be instructional leaders, districts could benefit from hiring or promoting experienced elementary principals into the role of Title I high school principal.

I was a Title I elementary assistant principal and principal before becoming a Title I high school principal and I had high levels of self-efficacy when it came to instruction. I knew what good teaching looked like. I was not afraid to lead planning sessions with teachers and worked to ensure that we had an instructional focus any time our campus gathered together in staff meetings or professional learning days. The campus saw gains in almost all areas we specifically targeted during any given year.

Training and Support

The semi-structured interviews validated the findings of the MBI survey by identifying specific aspects of the Title I high school principal role for which the participants felt unprepared. Feeling unprepared led to increased stress and burnout. Five of the eight participants discussed feeling unprepared and often unsupported when it came to things: understanding high school credits, dual enrollment, College, Career and Military Readiness (CCMR), and graduation rates. The constant change in the Texas accountability system also played a role in their lack of preparedness or support. These findings support the seminal work of Oberman (1996) in his study of Chicago public schools. He found that principal turnover was driven by a lack of training and support.

Coaching and Mentoring

A single participant had an opportunity to participate in structured leadership coaching during their tenure as a Title I high school principal. Those that did not, felt it would have benefited them and led them to feel more supported and confident in their work. In addition, six of the eight (75%) of the former principals interviewed were supervised by someone that had not been a Title I high school principal, or even a high

school principal. All participants noted the need for supervision, coaching, or mentorship by someone that had walked in their shoes as critical.

There is a lack of research on the benefit or need for coaching and mentoring outside of principal preparation programs for novice principals. Importantly, only two of the principal in the present study were first-year principals when they became Title I high school principals, yet they all expressed the need or desire for coaching or mentoring. Crow and Matthews (1998) found increasing evidence that shows school leaders, throughout all stages of their career, benefit from mentoring or coaching. Mentoring and coaching help socialize principals and gives them companionship in what is perceived by many to be a lonely role or position. The present research supports those findings.

In my experience, my direct supervisor was a superintendent who had not been a high school principal. However, a central office leader had, at one point, been the principal of the 9th-grade campus. He was a great support and sounding board to me when I had to make difficult decisions or deal with complex issues. As a result, I can relate to what each participant shared and experienced. Even though I had access and support when needed from someone who had held my position, there was no regularity in that support. I was often hesitant to call or burden them with the support I needed. If regular check-ins were calendared, I would have had stronger feelings of self-efficacy and confidence leading to lower levels of burnout.

Wells and Klocko (2018) examined principal workplace well-being through the underlying components of stress and resiliency and found data to suggest that principal

stress may result from an imbalance between the demands principals face and the resources available for dealing with those demands, rather than from the demands alone. Those findings were confirmed in the present study. There was evidence that principals did not feel supported by the central office, confirmed when participants were asked whether they would have liked more support from central office administration during their tenure as a high school principal. Seven of the eight participants said they would have benefited from formal mentoring or coaching which was not available to them while in the position.

Support

The third research question, related to the kind of support Title I high school principals wish they had, connected to the sense-making piece of the conceptual framework created for the present study. When principals are supported, they can make sense of the complex tasks and decisions they face. There were connections to the theme, Walk In My Shoes and How Do I Spend This Money.

How Do I Spend This Money

Six of eight participants spoke at great length about the struggle to spend Title I funds on materials and activities that would have a positive impact on student success, adding to the stress and work that contributed to their burnout. They did not have autonomy when it came to Title I funds. The lack of decision-making power supports the research that indicates that autonomy is cited as a factor in turnover. Tekleselassie and Villarreal (2010) found that principals who perceived they had more autonomy were 8% less likely to consider leaving the principalship or their schools. Oberman (1996)

interviewed principals in Chicago who had left their positions and found that they reported needing more autonomy in their schools to create their budgets and make purchases for the schools. Finally, Farley-Ripple et al. (2012) interviewed principals in Delaware who reported that having autonomy was a factor that kept them in their positions.

As a former Title I high school principal, I have complete respect for the laws and regulations that come with Title I funds and those whose job is it ensure they are followed. However, I can recall spending hours creating documentation to support the purchase of supplies that were to be used by math and science teachers on my campus to implement interactive notebooks. They needed composition notebooks, sticky notes, colored card stock, highlighters, and glue sticks. The federal programs department saw these expenses as office supplies and initially denied the request, even though it was supported by documentation from our state-adopted textbooks. I had to provide additional documentation, samples, and narratives about how these supplies would be used to create the interactive notebooks including research on interactive notebooks as a best practice. When those that are in support roles on campuses do not have classroom or campus experience, defending purchases often becomes more challenging given their lack of understanding.

Additional Findings

While not directly related to one of the research questions, it is important to note that the findings support the work of Datnow and Stringfield (2000) that asserts leadership transitions must be smooth to avoid the negative effects of turnover. Only one

of the participants felt they had any type of voice or impact on the selection of their replacement, though minimal. The others did not have the opportunity to suggest a replacement or even the type of leader that might best replace them. Only one person was replaced by someone that had previously worked on the campus. She was one of only two participants able to confidently say she felt many of the things she worked to improve continued to positively benefit students.

The participants in the study came from a wide range of districts. The smallest district represented served 3,000 students and the largest district represented served over 60,000 students. Two participants served in one high school district, two came from two high school districts and the others had four or more high schools. The size of the district did not play a factor or form a pattern in participants' responses. The need and desire for additional support, the love for the population they served, and the frustration with the inability to spend Title I funds did not differ based on the size of a participant's district.

Implications for Practice

I will identify implications for practice based on the four themes outlined in Chapter Four. The first theme was Why Did I Leave and the third theme was I Was Prepared For This But Not That. Both themes drive the first implication for practice. In the era of high stakes testing and given the heavy weight placed on high schools to perform, there should be a stronger focus on both preparing aspiring Title I high school principals and supporting them once they are placed. Districts need to develop a strong bench of leaders ready for this position. The principal is cited as the second most important factor contributing to student success, falling only behind classroom

instruction (Leithwood et al., 2010), making principal turnover an alarming issue. Principal turnover presents a challenge not just because of the important role that principals play, but also because of the research on school reform which indicates that true reform takes at least five to seven years (Fullan, 2007; Mascall & Leithwood 2010; Seashore-Louis et al., 2010).

In the present study, the principals that had higher levels of self-efficacy in academics and curriculum had elementary experience or benefited from an intensive leadership preparation program within their district. Waters et al. (2003) completed a meta-analysis examining the effects of leadership practices and their impact on student achievement. Their study resulted in the McREL Framework, which identified 21 leadership practices that have a positive impact on student achievement. One of the practices identified as having the highest level of correlation to student achievement was ensuring that faculty and staff were aware of the most current theories and practices and made the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school culture. If Title I high school principals do not have high levels of self-efficacy in these areas they will not be able to make the discussion of current theories and practices part of the school culture. Negating that discourse could hurt student achievement.

Districts should look to effective elementary principals with high levels of self-efficacy in the academics and curriculum to lead Title I high schools. They should build internal principal preparation programs that ensure aspiring principals are exposed to all areas of leadership, not just roles based on gender or district needs. When male assistant principals are boxed into discipline or systems work, they are not able to build their

academic and curriculum skillset. When female assistant principals are only given academic and curriculum roles, they are not allowed to understand the implications of discipline or systems thinking.

Only one of the eight participants in the present study participated in a formal leadership coaching program while serving as a Title I high school principal. The remaining participants cited it as a level of support they wish they had. Four of the participants stated it could have led to them remaining in the position longer.

Leadership coaching has become more prevalent in the past few years. Some districts outsource this type of support as a contracted service. Other districts have added internal positions to ensure principals have an internal coach. However, these two options for leadership coaching are not widespread and should be a consideration for districts, especially for Title I high school principals. If a district cannot offer to coach all principals, it should start with Title I high school principals. If the state of Texas and the TEA want to contribute to reducing the turnover rate of Title I high school principals and principals in general, they must consider a statewide program or designate and allocate funding for leadership coaching and mandate that it happen.

Title I high school principals want to be supported by someone who has walked in their shoes. The high levels of stress and burnout found in the findings of the present study, along with feelings of isolation and lack of understanding from superiors contributed to turnover decisions. Having someone in a support role that has been in the work is critical. While participants were eager to have a supervisor that

had held their position, we know this is not always possible. When it is not possible, a formal coaching relationship, whether internal or external can help meet this need.

However, simply offering the coaching is not the answer. The MBI results indicated five of the eight participants were considered clinically burnout based on their responses. These high levels of burnout indicate that formal emotional wellness and physical wellness program is needed on a large scale.

During the 2021–2022 school year, the Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA) piloted a program with a small group of superintendents and other district and campus administrators. This program used a wellness curriculum, WONDR, along with additional components to support the emotional and physical wellness of school leaders. In its pilot year, TASA and WONDR reported positive results from participants. A similar program or partnership should be considered by the Texas Association of Secondary School Principals (TASSP) to target high school principals. Districts should also consider a similar offering or partnership. Districts must begin to see high school principals, and all employees, as people rather than just employees. They must invest in their physical and emotional wellness. They must show leaders that they are willing to make that investment and give them time during work hours to focus on their physical and emotional wellness. Focusing on wellness will reduce burnout levels and increase retention rates of Title I high school principals.

Wells and Kolcko (2018) in their implications for practice suggested implementing mindfulness training and practice to cultivate resilience and leadership on the job as a serious consideration for principals. Mindfulness is also posited for qualities

that can improve the effectiveness of building capacity in principals. Selected qualities such as awareness, being present for what is occurring, compassion, listening, no reactivity, patience, and self-compassion are cultivated through mindfulness practice (Wells, 2016). Resilience is an important and needed component for educational leaders to build resilience in themselves and those they lead (Patterson & Patterson, 2001). The findings of the present study agree with this implication and suggest districts investigate supporting principals in these ways to reduce burnout and turnover.

In my district, my superintendent has noted the emotional well-being and physical health of principals as an area of concern. Before I had completed the research for the present study this concern was a part of regular discussion. My findings have amplified and validated his concern and we are currently working with two different vendors to implement an emotional and physical wellness initiative for all campus leaders this summer. Principals will have access to a wellness coach so that they can set personal and achievable goals to strengthen their emotional and physical health. The goal is for this practice to improve the retention rates of principals in my district.

When aspiring principals are better prepared for the Title I high school principal role, they will have higher levels of self-efficacy and remain in the position longer. When Title I high school principals are supported by someone who has held the position, they will feel supported and less isolated. When principals' wellness is a priority for the district and programs are put in place to support principals' wellness will increase and burnout levels will decrease.

The MBI results indicated that women reported lower ratings of stress and burnout than men did and they reported higher levels of energy and overall self-efficacy. These results have implications for recruiting and hiring practices. According to national data from Zippa (2020), secondary principals are 64.1% male and 35.9 % female. Further research is needed to determine if having more women in the role of Title I high school principal reduces turnover.

The fourth theme, How Do I Spend This Money produces implications for finance and federal program departments. The inability to spend Title I funds in ways that positively impacted students was a stress and burden for Title I high school principals. Participants reported the finance and federal programs departments as areas of central office from which they did not feel supported. The recommendation is that finance and federal programs departments be given opportunities to be embedded in Title I high schools, visit classrooms, talk to students and teachers and learn more about the day-to-day struggles that students and teachers face. Having these experiences as part of their training will give them first-hand knowledge of problems that could be mitigated with Title I funds.

In addition, training and support are needed for Title I high school principals on how Title I funds can be spent. Districts must bridge the disconnect between those on the campus doing the work with students and those who are experts in the rules, laws, and guidelines that come with Title I money. There must be consistent and clear communication and healthy dialogue between both parties. Healthy discourse will result

in the funds being spent in more effective ways. In addition, Title I principals will feel supported.

Implications for Superintendents

Since completing this work, I have had the opportunity to have a conversation with three Texas superintendents. Each superintendent has Title I high schools in their school district. They have each been encouraged and excited to learn about the findings and discuss the implications for their school districts.

We have discussed creating Title I Innovation Learning Labs allowing federal program leaders to spend time in classrooms, observing teaching and learning. We have discussed presenting more information on Title I guidelines to principals in meaningful ways. After these two respective learning opportunities, the principals and federal program leaders could then be led through dialogue, working side by side to find solutions to looming achievement problems. Work that brings principals and leaders together ensures three things: Title I high school principals will feel supported, Federal programs departments will know Title I funding thresholds will be met, and funds will be used in ways that improve student achievement.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of the present study was to identify conditions that led to Title I high school principal turnover and determine levels of self-efficacy and specific support that Title I principals wish they had. The MBI survey and semi-structured interviews served as the data collection instruments.

Six of the eight participants in the present study had exited the Title I principal role before the Covid-19 pandemic. The two participants that exited during the Covid-19 pandemic credited the increased demands and even the charged political climate with influencing their decision to seek a new position within education. The increased political pressures and issues related to social justice have also placed a higher level of stress on principals serving students of color. It is evident that additional research is needed immediately, specifically focusing on the impact of leading a Title I high school campus through a pandemic. It is evident from the present research that the Covid-19 pandemic and the current political landscape affected their decisions to leave.

The present study provided detail on the lived experiences of Title I high school principals. I focused on the high school level for two reasons: my personal experience as a Title I high school principal and the fact that principal turnover is found to be even more common in low-performing schools (Branch et al., 2009; Fuller et al., 2007; Cullen & Mazzeo, 2008). Time and capacity constraints limited the number of participants to eight. A full-time researcher, a grant, or an entity with access to funding would be able to extend the present study on a larger scale, providing even deeper insight into the lived experiences of Title I high school principals. Expanded research would help confirm or refute the findings and enact widespread reform on the supports provided. Further research would have the potential to improve Title I high school principal retention rates and the retention rates of principals in general.

Principal turnover has become a more widely researched topic however, it is still in its infancy and most research is quantitative. Most studies focus on principal

characteristics (e.g., age, gender, race, and experience) and school context (e.g., school size, school level, school type, urbanicity, and student characteristics (Gates et al., 2006; Loeb et al., 2010; Papa, 2007), and there has been a lack of research on how principal working conditions are associated with principal turnover. The present research only scratches the surface on the types of working conditions that are associated with principal turnover.

The present study refutes prior research that states the salary or demographics of the campus are a factor in turnover decisions. Salary was not noted as a factor in the decision to leave for any of the participants in this study. The demographics of students were never discussed as a concern or an area that participants felt unprepared. Participants had high levels of personal accomplishment when it came to students and knew their work was important. Additional research is needed to support the argument that salary and campus demographics are not turnover factors.

Conclusions

The findings of this study brought additional light to the already alarming issue of Title I high school principal turnover. The insight into the lived experiences of Title I high school principals indicates that they desire formal coaching and mentoring opportunities, they struggle with the financial constraints of spending Title I funds and they experience high levels of burnout.

The findings also refute prior research on principal turnover. While prior research has been mostly quantitative, it has indicated that both salary and the diversity and socio-economic status of the students are factors in turnover decisions. The

participants in the present study indicated the demographics of students on their campus did not contribute to their decision to turnover.

Coaching and mentoring are becoming a more common and widely practiced level of support and professional learning for leaders. However, it is still not a common practice or implemented in most districts across the state. A change in this area is needed.

Additional training and consistent communication between federal programs and Title I principals are needed. The disconnect prevents Title I monies from being spent in productive and innovative ways that can positively affect student achievement. The two entities must work together to ensure Title I funds are used in ways that affect student achievement. Training and communication can help ensure principals feel supported as well as improve learning outcomes for Title I students.

No longer can we consider employees as simply employees, we must see them as people and work to support their emotional and physical well-being. The emotional and physical toll of the Title I principal position is contributing to the high levels of turnover. Emotional and physical support systems must be put into place to reduce attrition levels.

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APPENDIX A

INTRODUCTION EMAIL

Good Afternoon,

My name is Jennifer Stumbaugh and I am an Ed.D. student at Texas A&M University. As you know, my information was shared with you by a mutual acquaintance as someone that meets the requirements for participation in my dissertation research, which is investigating the conditions that contribute to voluntary high school principal turnover on Title I campuses in Texas.

Study Title: Principal Turnover in Texas, Title I High Schools: A Multiple Case Study

Why am I being asked to be in this study?

You are being asked to take part in this research study because you served as a Title I High School Principal in the state of Texas for 1 – 5 years on the same campus and voluntarily left the position.

How long will the research last?

I am asking for about two hours of your time. The first twenty minutes, at your own desired time to complete at inventory, 60 minutes at an agreed upon time for a semi structured one to one interview using a video conferencing platform and approximately 20 minutes, at your own desired time to review the transcript of the interview after it is transcribed. In addition, a second follow up interview may be needed, it should not take more than 20 minutes.

What should I know about a research study?

Your participation in this research is completely up to you. It is your choice whether to be in this research study. If you decide you do not want to participate, no one will be upset and there will be no penalty. You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

I will take steps to limit the use of your personal information, including research study records, to only the people who have a need to see this information. Anything you share will be confidential, nothing collected will include your name or school district and any identifiable information will be masked.

I hope that you will consider participating and supporting work that will help aide in reducing turnover rates. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

APPENDIX B

ASSENT FORM

Study Title: Principal Turnover in Texas, Title I High Schools: A Multiple Case Study

Researcher contact information: Jennifer Stumbaugh – jstumbaugh@tamu.edu

Sponsor: Dr. Gwendolyn Webb

Why am I being asked to be in this study?

A research study is usually done to find a better way to help or treat people or to understand how things work. You are being asked to take part in this research study because you served as a Title I High School Principal in the state of Texas for 1 – 5 years on the same campus and voluntarily left the position.

Why is this study being done?

The study is designed to investigate the conditions that contribute to voluntary high school principal turnover on Title I campuses in Texas.

How long will the research last?

I expect that you will be in this research study for approximately a total of two hours. Twenty minutes, at your own desired time to complete at Inventory, 60 minutes at an agreed upon time for a semi structured one to one interview using a video conferencing platform and approximately 20 minutes, at your own desired time to review the transcript of the interview after it is transcribed. It is possible a second interview may need to be scheduled for follow up questions, this should not be more than 20 minutes, if needed.

What will I be asked to do in this study, if I agree to participate in this study?

If it is okay with you and you agree to join this study, you will be asked to

Complete the Maslach Burnout Inventory for Educators

Answer a series of questions and share your lived experiences as a Title I High School principal during a semi structured interview

Read the transcript of that interview to fact check it after it is transcribed.

What should I know about a research study?

Your participation in this research is completely up to you. It is your choice whether or not to be in this research study. If you decide you do not want to participate, no one will be upset and there will be no penalty. You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

What other choices do I have?

Instead of being in this research study, your choices may include not participating.

What happens if I say "Yes", but I change my mind later?

If you say yes know, you can still change your mind later without any penalty. Specifically, your choice not to be in this study will not negatively affect your right to any participant in a future study or your present or future status with Texas A&M University.

Could bad things happen to me if I join this study?

There is nothing bad that will happen to you although you may recall or share experiences from your time as a high school principal that are emotional. It is important

to minimize risk by not sharing personally identifiable names such as third party names or locations.

Could this research help me?

This research will not help you but we do hope to learn something new from this research. Someday we hope the information from this research will help other principals and reduce the overall high school principal turnover rate.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

I will take steps to limit the use of your personal information, including research study records, to only the people who have a need to see this information. I cannot promise complete secrecy.

Will I Receive Anything To Be In This Study?

No.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, about the research, talk to the research team at gwebb@tamu.edu

If your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team; or you want to talk to someone besides the research team; or you have questions about your rights as a research participant. you may call the Texas A&M University Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) by phone at 1-979-458-4067, toll free at 1-855-795-8636, or by email at irb@tamu.edu

Signature Block for Assent

Signature of participant Date

Printed name of participant

Printed name of person obtaining assent Date

Signature of person obtaining assent

APPENDIX C

MBI INVENTORY

For use by Jenny Stumbaugh only. Received from Mind Garden, Inc. on December 6, 2021

MBI for Educators Survey

How often:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Never	A few times a year or less	Once a month or less	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day

How often 0-6	Statements:
1. ________	I feel emotionally drained from my work.
2. ________	I feel used up at the end of the workday.
3. ________	I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.
4. ________	I can easily understand how my students feel about things.
5. ________	I feel I treat some students as if they were impersonal objects.
6. ________	Working with people all day is really a strain for me.
7. ________	I deal very effectively with the problems of my students.
8. ________	I feel burned out from my work.
9. ________	I feel I'm positively influencing other people's lives through my work.
10. ________	I've become more callous toward people since I took this job.
11. ________	I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally.
12. ________	I feel very energetic.
13. ________	I feel frustrated by my job.
14. ________	I feel I'm working too hard on my job.
15. ________	I don't really care what happens to some students.
16. ________	Working with people directly puts too much stress on me.
17. ________	I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my students.
18. ________	I feel exhilarated after working closely with my students.
19. ________	I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.
20. ________	I feel like I'm at the end of my rope.
21. ________	In my work, I deal with emotional problems very calmly.
22. ________	I feel students blame me for some of their problems.

(Administrative use only)

EE Total score: ________ DP Total score: ________ PA Total score: ________

EE Average score: ______ DP Average score: ______ PA Average score: _______

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APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

1. How did you become a high school principal, tell me about your journey to that role?

2. What do you consider your leadership style to be?

3. What aspects of the role did you feel most prepared for?

4. What aspects of the role did you feel least prepared for?

5. Is there a day, experience, or event that you can recall as one of the best moments of your tenure as a high school principal?

6. Is there a day, experience, or event that you can recall as one of the most challenging moments of your tenure as a high school principal?

7. Was that day, experience or event challenging because you were not prepared to handle it? If so why or why not.

8. Did you believe in your ability to make lasting change at your high school? Why or why not?

9. What factors lead to your decision to leave your position as a Title I high school principal?

10. Was there any one factor that stood out more than others?

11. In what ways did you feel supported by central office administration during your tenure as a high school principal?

12. In what ways would you have liked more support from central office administration during your tenure as a high school principal?

13. Is there anything about your time as a high school principal that we have not covered that you think is important for me to know?

14. Is there another Title I high school principal that meets the criteria that you think I interview?

Probing Questions

Tell me more about that?

Can you give me an example?

What was that like for you?