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Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

RESILIENCY OF SECONDARY PRINCIPALS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy

by

Suzanne M. Webb

July, 2015

Christopher Lund, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Suzanne M. Webb

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
DEDICATION	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ix
VITA	x
ABSTRACT	xi
Chapter 1 The Problem	1
Background of the Study	1
Problem Statement	7
Purpose	10
Importance of the Study	10
Definition of Terms	10
Theoretical Framework	13
Research Questions	14
Limitations	14
Delimitations	15
Assumptions	15
Organization of Study	16
Chapter 2 Review of Relevant Literature	17
Theoretical Framework	18
Historical Background/Context	21
Resilience	23
Stress	24
Coping	28
Summary	31
Chapter 3 Methodology and Procedures	33
Research Design and Rationale	33
Setting	36
Population, Sample, and Sampling Procedures	36
Human Subject Considerations	38
Instrumentation	39
Data Collection and Data Management Procedures	42

	Page
Data Analysis	44
Positionality.....	46
Chapter 4 Results	47
Demographics of Participants	50
Profiles of Participants and Schools.....	51
Presentation of Findings.....	56
Summary of Key Findings	83
Chapter 5 Discussion	87
Statement of Purpose.....	87
Research Questions	87
Research Design.....	87
Discussion of Key Findings	88
Conclusions	89
Implications.....	92
Recommendations for Future Research	94
Chapter 5 Summary.....	96
REFERENCES	98
APPENDIX A: Email Request for District Permission to Contact Qualifying Principals	107
APPENDIX B: Email Invitation to Qualifying Principals	108
APPENDIX C: Phone Conversation Script with Qualifying Principals.....	109
APPENDIX D: CITI Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative Certificate.....	110
APPENDIX E: Consent for Research.....	112
APPENDIX F: Interview Questions	114
APPENDIX G: Intellectual Property License Agreement to use Resiliency Scale.....	116
APPENDIX H: Resilience Scale (RS).....	119
APPENDIX I: IRB Exemption Letter.....	120

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Research Questions, Themes, and Researchers Influencing this Study	41
Table 2. Data Collection Strategies	43
Table 3. Demographics of Participating Principals and Schools	50
Table 4. Resilience Scale© Scores	56
Table 5. Strategies Used by Principals to Strengthen Resiliency and Cope with Stressors	84

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. The relationship between resilience, coping skills for stressors, and secondary principal longevity.....	9
Figure 2. Comparison of high performing secondary schools with long standing principals in LA county	49

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to everyone who has encouraged me to pursue my dreams.

Michael Dauer - you inspire me every day as you chase your dreams with 110% passion never allowing barriers to get in your way. I live vicariously through you, little brother. Love you! #goodtimes #jmjss

Mom, dad, Grandma and Grandpa Pocs, Grandma and Grandpa Sturtz, Jackie, and Jeff – even though long passed from this world, you have taught me how to maintain resiliency in the face of all types of adversity. You are my guardian angels.

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Dr. Linda Purrington - you talked me “off the ledge” every time I tried to withdraw from this amazing doctoral program because I did not think I could do it. You believed in me and would not let me quit. You run an amazing program and help doctoral students reflect and capitalize on their strengths. I have learned a lot from you and I am forever grateful.

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VITA

Academic Preparation

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Teaching Credential, Secondary Mathematics	1995
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Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District, Santa Monica, CA	
Principal, Lincoln Middle School	2008 – 2015
Assistant Principal, Malibu High School	2004 – 2008
BTSA Program Co-Coordinator	2002 – 2004
Mathematics Teacher	1996 – 2002
Beverly Hills Unified School District	
Mathematics and Technology Teacher	1994 – 1996

Publications/Presentations

<i>You Can't Always Get What You Want: The Revision of a Middle School Discipline Plan.</i> Action Research	2013
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Honors/Recognition

Continuing Service Award, SMMUSD PTA, Lincoln MS	2015
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Honorary Service Award, SMMUSD PTA, Malibu HS	2008
Teacher of the Year, SMMUSD	2002

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was two-fold: (a) investigate the lived experiences of secondary principals with more than 5 years' tenure in high performing public schools in Southern California as they relate to resiliency, and (b) explore their lived experiences as they relate to stress and coping. Studies show that secondary principals rarely stay at the same school site for longer than 3-5 years. Since known research on principal resiliency concerns primarily high poverty or low performing schools, a need was found to examine why secondary principals in high performing public schools stay longer than 5 years. Interviews with the 5 principals who qualified for this study revealed experiences that they felt strengthened their resiliency. Common themes included managing the workload, applying personal experiences, dealing with difficult staff, and interacting with challenging parents. Stressors identified by participants in this study included negotiating district office mandates, ameliorating parent concerns, fighting personal breaking points, and handling personnel issues. Coping traits identified in this study included having a supportive significant other, engaging in activities or hobbies, interacting with peers, and laughing with coworkers. Conclusions from this study confirm that principals who are able to prioritize conflicting job responsibilities, use personal experiences with adversity to handle stressful situations, and keep a healthy balance between their personal and professional lives demonstrate resilient characteristics and are likely to maintain an extended tenure.

Chapter 1: The Problem

Background of the Study

A school principal has many roles, responsibilities, and charges. There are numerous studies emphasizing the importance of a school leader's role that pinpoint various crucial responsibilities and charges that a principal must make as a priority. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of a 35 year span on school leadership and identified 21 responsibilities of school leaders that correlate with student achievement. They found that seven of these 21 research-based competencies are crucial for fundamental change in order to shift the direction of a school's way of thinking and acting. These seven responsibilities include: being knowledgeable of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; providing staff intellectual stimulation; fostering knowledge through staff readings and discussions; challenging what has "always been done" and convincing staff to try new innovations; constantly monitoring and evaluating to identify effective and ineffective practices; adapting as needed to the changes that arise; and communicating a strong set of beliefs (p. 5). Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) support Marzano and colleagues' assertions by identifying "three sets of practices that make up the basic core of successful leadership practices: setting direction, developing people, and redesigning the organization" (p. 8). In their report for the Wallace Foundation and according to the evidence they gathered and analyzed, Leithwood et al. found that leadership is second only to "teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning" (p. 3). Their evidence led to several conclusions on how leaders influence student achievement: through their influence on other people of the organization; by paying attention to teachers; identifying the schools mission and goals; and being able to prioritize amongst various features of the organization. In addition to effectively planning and employing research-based

competencies and the basic leadership skills recommended to move a school forward, principals must organize and prioritize how they spend their time. Secondary school principal's time must include using the most appropriate leadership style given any situation; examining and prioritizing a dwindling budget; focusing on uniting teachers who tend to isolate themselves in their separate academic disciplines; tackling the uncertainty of teenagers and their unique struggles; and addressing the specific needs of various stakeholders (Bolman & Deal, 2008; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; E. Fuller, Baker, & Young, 2007; Gates et al., 2006; Hallinger & Murphy, 2013; Hausman, Crow, & Sperry, 2000; Nixon, 2012; K. Patterson, Grenny, Switzler, & McMillan, 2012).

Effective principals at any level must embody a variety of leadership styles while planning for effective change and improvement and attending to the daily operations and running of a school. Because the principals are second only to classroom teachers in effecting schools and student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004; Waters & Marzano, 2007), many prominent theorists have suggestions and advice as to how leaders can be most effective. Collins (2001) claims that successful *level 5 leaders* must blend personal humility with personal will and exhibit dedicated perseverance by showing an intense commitment to doing what matters most despite any difficulties. Similarly, Greenleaf and Spears (2002) used the term *servant leadership* to describe how leaders should serve from a desire to help employees by putting themselves in contact with all aspects of the organization. Similarly, situational leadership, linked with the work of Blanchard, implies that good leaders are able to switch gears quickly and efficiently by adapting their style to the current maturity of their followers by telling, participating, selling, and/or delegating (Blanchard, Zigarmi, & Zigarmi, 1985; Blanchard, Carew, & Parisi-Carew, 2009; Bolman & Deal, 2008). In their work, Smith and Andrews (1989) identified four

dimensions of an instructional leader: resource provider, instructional resource, communicator, and visible presence. Elmore (2000) also emphasizes that school leaders should understand effective practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment and be able to work with teachers on the day-to-day problems related to these topics. Additionally, Bolman and Deal (2008) maintain that effective communicators must instinctively be able to reframe situations by “understanding their own strengths, work to expand them, and build diverse teams that can offer an organization leadership in all four modes: structural political, human resource, and symbolic” (p. 372). Furthermore, Dufour et al. (2008) insist that schools “need learning leaders – leaders fixated on evidence of learning” (p. 321). Principals must shrewdly identify which leadership style is most appropriate for different situations requiring an insightful elasticity and hardiness.

Along with determining his or her best leadership style, principals at every level must grapple with the fact that minimal funding for education across the nation is an additional reality, and pressure, for educational leaders (Baker, 2013). Rose (2012) completed a policy analysis entitled *Getting Down to Facts* investigating school funding, among other policies, in California. In her study, Rose asserts that in the state of California, Local Education Agency (LEA) spending levels are mostly set at the state level with just a few exceptions and that “this degree of state control limits the local property tax and leaves districts with limited capacity to raise local funds for school operations” (p. 3). California school finance history has had a lack of transparency, inequitable funding levels, and the sources of school funding have been unstable in terms of both revenue fluctuations and delays in the budgeting process (Rose, 2012). Rose (2012) further reports that funding formerly earmarked for professional development for teachers is now used to offset cuts so that staffing levels and instructional levels are not impacted. The California Department of Education (CDE) also confirms that the California budget continues to

be in constant turmoil and has faced a multi-billion dollar deficit since the 2008-09 school year and that California educational leaders have been faced with many program cuts, cutbacks in school personnel, and reductions of general funds (CDE, n.d.). “Doing more with less” comes “amid mandates on schools to double or triple student achievement” (Lewis, 2008, p. 547).

While both elementary and secondary principals struggle with balancing the various roles and responsibilities as leaders of their schools as well as constantly assessing the budget quandry, secondary principals in particular face tough leadership choices (Foley & Lewis, 1999). The characteristics of secondary schools “provide a number of challenges to the development and implementation of collaborative-based structures” (p. 234). Secondary schools are customarily departmentalized making it easy for educators to isolate themselves in their classrooms without collaborating outside of their discipline making it difficult for much needed professional interaction between general education teachers and special education teachers (Foley & Lewis, 1999). Heck (1992) completed an analysis of principals’ time expenditures and found that secondary principals tend to spend less time than their elementary principal colleagues on instruction, observing classrooms, and helping teachers use student results to improve programs (Heck, 1992; Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010).

Another challenge for secondary principals is that middle and high school years for students are marked by hormones and continual development of their pre-frontal cortex which controls impulsivity, decision making, and emotions (Bonnie, 2013; Nixon, 2012). Teen social problems such as drug abuse, violence, and family breakups ultimately influence the type of work principals are expected to do since these problems demand that principals spend more time with social service organizations rather than focusing on instructional leadership (Hausman et al., 2000; Kelehear, 2004; Smylie, Crowson, Chou, & Levin, 1994). These factors join the many

responsibilities of secondary principals which require resilient characteristics and personal stress management (Christman & McClellan, 2008; Hausman et al., 2000; J. Patterson, 2007; Richardson, 2002).

While acknowledging that “principals are now called upon to do more than ‘run a tight ship,’ provide an orderly environment, and ensure the happiness of the adults in the building” (DuFour et al., 2008, p. 307), the principal has been put in an “impossible position ... [due to] the increasingly unreasonable demands of the job” (Fullan, 2007, p. 168). In particular, high performing schools are typically highlighted for their high test performance, students matriculating to competitive universities and colleges, ample resources, low drop-out rates, and active parent involvement (Ray-Taylor, Baskerville, Bruder, Bennett, & Schulte, 2006). However, hidden in the testing data are student groups who are not performing as high as the rest of the school. Ray-Taylor et al. (2006) claim that “the challenge facing high-performing schools is to help teachers and administrators develop the skills and attitudes to enable all students to access and take advantage of what great schools offer” (p. 23). They found that high performing schools experience a difficulty in maintaining continuous improvement. Specifically, Ray-Taylor et al. uncovered the following six challenges of high performing schools: avoid sorting students by ability which can determine future choices; create a risk-taking culture giving the teachers courage to try to reach all students; not dismiss the small percentage of students who are not achieving which requires focusing on teachers’ relationships with and beliefs about students; principals and teachers should access, interpret, and own their student data and not ignore struggling groups; prevent a “this, too, shall pass” mindset and take the time to focus on a common mission; and find an urgency to improve. In summary, the emphasis is the urgent notion that “a school is no more successful than its least successful students” (p. 26).

In a study on characteristics of high performing schools, Reeves (2003) found five common characteristics across unrelated high performing schools as having “a focus on academic achievement; clear curriculum choices; frequent assessment of student progress and multiple opportunities for improvement; an emphasis on non-fiction writing; and collaborative scoring of student work” (p. 3). Reeves also established that high performing schools require the principal to be highly involved in order to maintain high performance by participating in evaluating student work, meeting regularly with students and parents to discuss achievement, and giving up faculty meetings so that teachers can spend more time collaborating and reviewing student work. These unique challenges faced by secondary principals of high performing schools are compounded with the competing demands of state-wide assessments, accountability reporting, and decreased funding all which can lead to stress.

When leaders are in a high state of stress, they are likely to create a culture that is under stress and “then a diagnosis of emotional collapse is inevitable” (Kelehear, 2004, p. 31). There is a notion that “without stress people have the tendency to be too relaxed, complacent, or nonchalant” (Sogunro, 2012, p. 666). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) defines the word *flow* as the enjoyment of a self-contained activity that is not done with an expectation of a future reward, rather for the reward of actually doing it. While it can be argued that “‘flow’ at work is enjoyable, people cannot stand high levels of challenge all of the time. They need to recover” (p. 160). One’s best functioning is disturbed when his or her tolerance has been surpassed (Sogunro, 2012). School leaders know that leading is a lonely job which can compromise their personal and professional health due to several stressors out of their control and so it is imperative that they develop resiliency traits and coping skills in order to conquer these

demanding job responsibilities and seek ways to face the inevitable stress that comes with the job (Kelehear, 2004; Okoroma & Robert-Okah, 2007; Reynolds & O'Dwyer, 2008).

Problem Statement

The complications that principals face such as difficulty in managing competing priorities, inadequate funding, and work overload require specific coping skills and resiliency traits to help prevent creating a culture under stress which can then breed frustrated and angry teachers and students. Unidentified stress can drain even the most successful school's personnel especial since the role of school leaders has become increasingly unbalanced and overwhelming (Fullan, 1998; Kelehear, 2004; Okoroma & Robert-Okah, 2007). A 2008 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics report indicates that increasing pressures on principals continue to lead to greater job stress requiring a need for resilient individuals in the principalship. According to the report, more than 35% of the 415,400 education administrators employed in America in 2008 worked more than 40 hours a week – typically closer to 60 hours per week.

Secondary principals, in particular, often work year-round and supervise school activities outside of the school day such as sporting events, dances, visual and performing arts, and parent meetings at night and on weekends. The large number of hours worked by principals can be credited to the wide range of responsibilities that principals have at school and in the community. In addition to being instructional leaders and building managers, today's principals must be skillful in budget matters in a society where state money is tight yet private schools abound (Burns, 2010; Epstein, 2011; Sogunro, 2012). Principals must skillfully and smoothly shift from one situation to another to address all of the roles they employ.

The US Bureau of Job Statistics also shows that growing demands on school principals creates job stress which can negatively affect a school's environment. This stress requires

coping skills that simultaneously regulate stressful emotions as well as provide insight as to how to change the situation causing distress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Fullan (1998) confirms that educational leaders who want to take on the challenge of making a difference and moving their staff toward substantial change must first gain appropriate coping skills in order to remain open to discussions and criticism yet do not “invite disagreement without attending to their own emotional health” (p. 4).

Friedman’s (2002) study showed that school principal burnout is related to observed work stressors such as teachers, parents, role ambiguity and job expectations. Burnout is described as a customary response to common emotional strain by dealing with the needs of others (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993). Reports on teacher resiliency show that conflict and stress can affect one’s physical health and psychological well-being which may then lead to changes in self-esteem, insomnia, unhealthy eating habits, depression, declining job satisfaction, and increased vulnerability to illness (Bobek, 2002; Brooks, 1994; Linville, 1987). Because it is impossible for any one person to have all of the expertise and energy to address all of the duties for which principals are responsible, stress and burnout appear to be inevitable for principals (DuFour et al., 2008)

Burkhauser, Gates, Hamilton, and Ikemoto (2012) completed a report for RAND Corporation exploring the perceived working conditions of first-year principals and the reasons for high principal turnover rates. They found the following:

76 small and/or rural school districts in Washington State, 56 percent of principals left their schools within five years after their initial placement (Elfers & Plecki, 2006). In Illinois, 63 percent of principals and, in North Carolina, 79 percent of principals left their schools within six years (Gates et al., 2006). (p. 3)

Studies on the longevity of principals across the nation show that principals leave their schools within the first three years of their tenure and principals with less than 5 years experience are 60% less likely to be retained (Burkhauser et al., 2012; E. Fuller & Young, 2009; Papa, 2007).

Studies show that principals all-encompassing and stress-causing responsibilities can negatively affect one's physical and psychological well-being however, there is minimal literature expressing how high performing secondary schools can combat their unique challenges and maintain their high performing status along with the resiliency needed, if any, by the principals of these schools (Brooks, 1994; Linville, 1987). Therefore, as shown in Figure 1, the phenomenon of secondary principals remaining at a specific school site for more than 5 years requires an investigation to determine the unique stress-causing responsibilities and difficulties of secondary principals in high performing public schools, if any, and discover the resiliency and coping traits required to successfully overcome adversity.

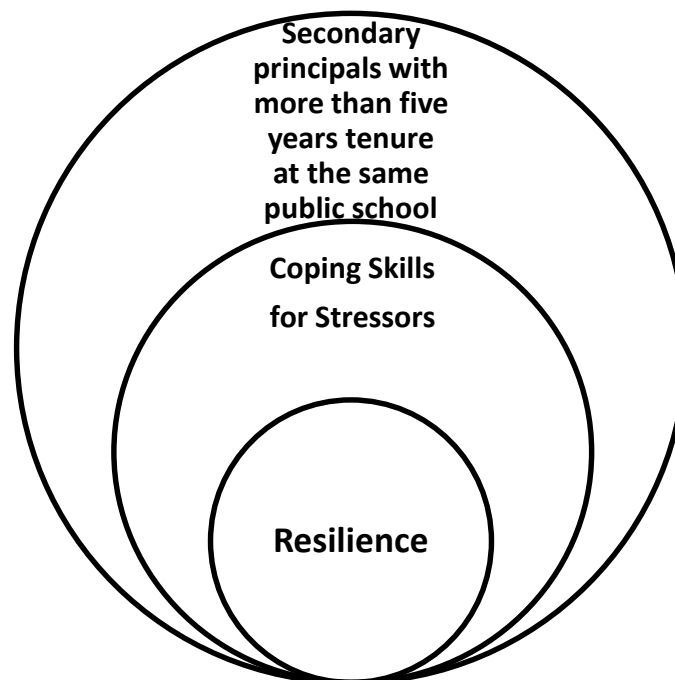


Figure 1. The relationship between resilience, coping skills for stressors, and secondary principal longevity.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study is two-fold:

- (a) investigate the lived experiences of secondary principals with more than 5 years' tenure in high performing public schools in Southern California as they relate to resiliency, and
- (b) explore their lived experiences as they relate to stress and coping.

Importance of the Study

The goal of this study is to uncover the resiliency traits required of secondary principals in high performing public schools in Southern California. The findings from the study will pinpoint the specific job responsibilities that these principals identify as stressors and the coping skills required to successfully conquer them. The results of the study will also help create systems for central office staff to support secondary principals with meaningful professional development around maintaining high performance, prioritizing conflicting job responsibilities, and preventing stress with specific coping strategies for optimal emotional well-being.

Examples of stress management and resiliency-building employed by the secondary principals interviewed in the study may provide current secondary principals in high performing public schools with specific steps in handling special stressors unique to their school population. The results of the study could possibly inform school districts of the emotional support and professional development needed to retain and support resilience in principals.

Definition of Terms

Academic Performance Index (API). The API is a single number, ranging from a low of 200 to a high of 1000, which reflects a school's performance level, based on the results of statewide testing. Its purpose is to measure the academic performance and growth of schools (CDE, n.d.). California schools have a goal of a minimum target API score of 800.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP is a set of “annual academic performance benchmarks that states, school district, schools, and subpopulations of students are supposed to achieve if the state receives federal funding” (EdSource, n.d.).

Adversity. The Oxford dictionary defines adversity as a “difficult or unpleasant situation” (“Adversity,” n.d., para. 1) and Fletcher and Sarkar (2013) add that when adversity is defined as “an event that predicts maladjustment it precludes the inclusion of many ongoing daily stressors under the rubric of resilience, despite a growing body of evidence to the contrary” (p. 14).

Burnout. Friedman’s (2002) research on principal burnout found that that school principal burnout is related to observed work stressors and is related to “unmediated stress – the experience of stress and a sense of lacking buffers and support systems” (p. 230). Friedman further explains that “burnout is perceived among organizational psychologists as a common response to chronic emotional strain caused by dealing with the needs of others” (p. 230).

Coping. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) identify coping as a method in which one manages stress regardless of whether or not one’s efforts alleviate that stress. Fullan (1998) acknowledges that it is necessary for leaders to have coping skills that manage the problems, challenges, and changes of school leadership. Reynolds and O’Dwyer (2008) defend Fullan’s idea and append that because principals continuously handle the typical daily stress of “dealing with students, staff, families, and other stakeholders” (p. 21), they must also make a priority of keeping additional causes of stress in check.

Local Educational Agencies (LEA). LEA is “a public board of education or other public authority within a state that maintains administrative control of public elementary or secondary

schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a state”(EdSource, n.d.). School districts and county offices of education are both LEAs.

Longstanding. For the purposes of this study, “longstanding” refers to principals who have been principals at their current school site for more than five years.

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). NCLB “increases the federal focus on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, including English learners and students who live in poverty” (EdSource, n.d.).

Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA). PSAA was passed in 1999 in the state of California, holding schools accountable for the achievement of their students (CDE, n.d.).

Resiliency. Resiliency is described as the ability to restore balance following a difficult experience and “integrate it into the backdrop of one’s total life experiences” (Langer, 2004, p. 612). It is used to describe one’s ability to adjust to varied situations and increase one’s competence in the face of adverse conditions (Braverman, 2001; Christman & McClellan, 2008; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013; Gordon & Coscarelli, 1996). Grotberg (2003) expands this definition and argues that resiliency is a transformative process which changes one’s personality to better handle future encounters with hardships.

Secondary Schools. “Secondary schools” to schools serving student populations of 6th grade through 12th grade.

Self-efficacy. Wood and Bandura (1989) describe self-efficacy as a person’s ability to tap into his/her motivation and cognitive abilities to ensure control over life’s events.

School Districts. For the purpose of this study, a school district will be labeled *small* when it contains one middle and one high school; *medium* refers to school districts with two

middle schools and high schools; and *large* refers to school districts with more than two middle schools and more than two high schools.

Stress. “A *stressor* is any stimulus or condition that causes physiological or psychological arousal beyond what is necessary to accomplish the activity or to deal with the situation. This excessive arousal is stress” (Franks, 1994, p. 4). The common theme that prevails across most definitions of stress is a focus on environmental events that threaten or harm the physical or emotional capacities of an individual (Lerner & Steinberg, 2009). The transactional definition offered by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) is that “psychological stress involves a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being” (p. 19).

Tenure. For this study, tenure will be defined as the length of time a principal has spent at a particular school site.

Theoretical Framework

Resiliency theory, as it pertains to the principalship, will provide a structure with which to navigate the numerous job responsibilities, conflicting priorities, and difficult decisions faced by secondary principals (Braverman, 2001; B. Fuller, Loeb, Arshan, Chen, & Yi, 2006; E. Fuller & Young, 2009; Greene, 2002; Greene, Galumbos, & Lee, 2004; Richardson, 2002). Ward (2003) explains that “resiliency is a concept that identifies and explains the critical coping skills used by individuals, families, and communities when they are beset by chronic or immediate difficulties” (p. 18). Ward’s definition of resiliency aligns well with the characteristics that secondary school principals need in order to appropriately navigate the never-ending complications and worries that come with their extensive job responsibilities. People who demonstrate resiliency have a high esteem for themselves and others, are value driven, use

coping skills appropriately when needed, accept reality, and are able to improvise (Braverman, 2001; Coutu, 2002; Henderson & Milstein, 2003; Palmer, 1991; J. Patterson, 2007; Ward, 2003). Ward goes further to explain that resilient people “have the ability to integrate coping skills and use them for long periods of time, although limitations and setbacks may be expected, followed by a return to high functioning” (p. 20). Christman and McClellan (2008) emphasize that resiliency can be considered a coping skill that refines “positive character skills, such as patience, tolerance, responsibility, compassion, determination, and risk taking” (p. 7) and changes one’s personality to better handle future encounters with hardship while Grotberg (2003) argues that tenacity is needed since resiliency is more transformative than a single coping trait. Greene, Galumbos, and Lee (2004) maintain that the resilience approach determines “what circumstances contribute to successful consequences in the face of adversity” (p. 76). This study aims to look at the stressors and circumstances that are unique to long standing secondary principals in high performing public schools in Southern California through the lens of resilience.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences, if any, of long standing secondary principals in high performing public schools in Southern California as they relate to resiliency?
2. What are the lived experiences, if any, of secondary principals in high performing public schools in Southern California as they relate to stress and coping skills?

Limitations

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) describe limitations of a study as items that “are not under the control of the researcher” (p. 133) and may have impact on the generalizability of the results. Participants of the study may not be able to accurately identify job roles and responsibilities

which cause them stress. Because the interviews took place in June, right after the end of the school year, the participants may only focus on the most recent stressors and coping rather than those that come up throughout the entire school year. Due to the busy lives of principals, another limitation is that identified participants may not have the time or desire to participate in the study. Because the parameters of the study are so specific – long standing secondary principals in high performing public schools – there may not be enough participants to make the qualitative phase (generalizability) of the study valid or reliable.

Delimitations

Delimitations are described by Lunenburg and Irby (2008) as “self-imposed boundaries set by the researcher on the purpose and scope of the study” (p. 134). There are four delimitations in this study. The first delimitation is that principals will be chosen based on whether or not they oversee high performing schools meaning that the school’s API score is 850 or higher. Schools with an API lower than 850 will not be included. Secondly, the study is limited to traditional public schools, which may inhibit the generalizability of results to private or charter schools. Because the participants in the study will be principals of public schools in Southern California, the results may not apply to the state or country as a whole. Thirdly, only secondary schools will be included in the study. Results may not be relevant to principals in high performing public elementary schools. Finally, results from this study may not apply to principals with five or less years of longevity at their high performing school site.

Assumptions

There are three assumptions in this study. The first is that the participants in the study are assumed to be honest and accurate in their survey and interview responses. Secondly, it is assumed that the selected principals will understand the concepts associated with resilience,

stress, and coping skills. The third assumption of the study is that the data that will be collected will accurately measure the experiences, resilience, stressors, and coping skills of the principals in the study.

Organization of Study

This research study is presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose and importance of the study, definition of terms, summary of the theoretical framework, research questions, limitations, delimitations, and assumptions of the study. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature including resiliency theory, the background of the principalship and its evolving job responsibilities, stressors of the job, and coping strategies. Chapter 3 describes the methodologies, research design, the selection of participants, instruments used, data collection, and data analysis procedures. Chapter 4 presents the study's findings and results. Finally, Chapter 5 provides a summary of the entire study, a discussion of findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2 Review of Relevant Literature

Increasing demands on principals continue to lead to greater job stress while long work hours, year-round schedules, and night and weekend supervision duties make the job all-consuming (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008). Friedman (2002) attempts to accurately describe what an average day for a principal might entail:

Student discipline, paperwork, presentations, classroom visits, deciphering NCLB, scheduling, attending parent conferences, and evaluating employees represent just the tip of the iceberg when describing a typical day as a principal. In fact, the words “typical” or “routine” fall short whenever describing the role of principal. (p. 45)

The obstacles that principals face: inadequate funding, work overload, and challenging working conditions require resiliency traits in order to prevent creating a culture under stress that hinders teaching and learning (Kelehear, 2004; Okoroma & Robert-Okah, 2007; Reynolds & O’Dwyer, 2008). Lindle’s (2004) autobiographical inquiry “pushed the definition of administrators’ stress into the areas of traumatic stress” (p. 378) due to the pressure that is simply natural to the position. Hoffman (2004) emphasizes that the reasons for difficulty in finding California school administrators is due to:

increased accountability expectations; diminished or static levels of resources to support reform efforts; greater administrator vulnerability to sanctions; the complex demands of government and the community; the sometimes slight or negligible difference between teacher and administrator compensation when viewed on a per diem basis; the necessity for leaders to spend a great deal of time meeting the demands of the job; media coverage of public education’s occasional errors; little coverage of our frequent successes; and chronic stress. (p. 35)

In their study on principal turnover rate, Fuller and Young (2009) claim that “principals, are expected to be proficient in a far greater number of roles than in the past” (p. 18) and the level of support hasn’t changed from 50 years ago even though the job is still structured the same.

The primary purpose of this literature review is to examine the foundations of resiliency theory; what researchers have revealed regarding the history of roles and responsibilities of principals; the meaning of resilience and what it entails; stressors of the principalship that may lead to burnout; and coping strategies needed for principals to maintain a balanced and healthy professional and personal life. To begin, resiliency theory and its origins will be examined and explained as a lens through which secondary school principals navigate and negotiate their unpredictable daily duties, district and state mandates, and leadership obligations. Next, a historical review of the principalship will be explored, how the role and responsibilities have emerged and evolved over the years, and the function of resiliency throughout to examine the traits that secondary principals must possess in order to be effective leaders. Then, the study's variables (resilience, stress and coping skills) will be explored in-depth to provide a solid understanding for the importance of this study. This chapter will conclude with a summary which will lay a foundation for the methodology, data collection, and data analysis for the study.

Theoretical Framework

Resiliency theory provides a structure to navigate the stressful conditions faced by school principals. Richardson (2002) describes three *waves* of resiliency that has transpired over time. The first movement began with phenomenological studies of children living in high-risk conditions in 1955 by Emmy Werner (Werner & Smith, 1992). Their studies yielded several qualities or “protective factors that help people go through adversity (i.e. self-esteem, self-efficacy, etc.)” (Richardson, 2002, p. 309). The second trend came from a pursuit for individuals to acquire certain identified qualities and labels the definition of resiliency as the process of “coping with adversity, change, or opportunity in a manner that results in the identification,

fortification, and enrichment of resilient qualities or protective factors” (p. 309). The third development has been considered a quest for finding the internal motivation to *bounce back*”res from adversity bringing up inquiries that are centuries old. Resiliency theory is described as the “motivational force within everyone that drives them to pursue wisdom, self-actualization, and altruism” (p. 309).

Exposure to significant stressors and demonstration of successful adaptation are considered to be the “cornerstones of resilience theory” (Braverman, 2001, p. 2). Braverman further explains that resilience is a collection of processes rather than just a fixed characteristic. Resiliency is also described as a set of qualities or reflexes that people cultivate through any sort of disruptions such as stress, immediate difficulties, and/or adversity, and that these qualities allow individuals to grow, build knowledge and self-understanding, and better persevere through future suffering (Ashton & Duncan, 2012; Coutu, 2002; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013; Grotberg, 2003; Masten, 2009; Pepe, 2011; Richardson, 2002; Ward, 2003).

Characteristics of resilient people have been the subject of many studies by researchers. Temperament, attitude, competence in daily functioning, clarity of purpose, personal efficacy, creativity, making meaning of hardship, patience, tolerance, responsibility, compassion, determination, capacity to spring back, and risk taking have all been documented as important personality traits to acquire in becoming resilient (Christman & McClellan, 2008; Coutu, 2002; Greene, 2002; Greene et al., 2004; Gupton & Slick, 1996; Henderson & Milstein, 2003; J. Patterson, 2007; Richardson, 2002; Wolin & Wolin, 2010). J. Patterson (2007) recommends that in order for principals to be resilient, they must encompass and use each of the *resilient* characteristics in every day routines of school life as well as lead from a clarity of purpose so that decisions will align with personal and professional values thereby strengthening their

resiliency. Resilient leaders rely on their experience, implicit knowledge, problem solving skills, and capacity to cope with stress and adversity to bounce back from hardship (Ashton & Duncan, 2012; Buzzanell, 2010; Masten, 2009; Richardson, 2002). Principal leaders must also face reality with “staunchness, make meaning of hardship instead of crying out in despair, and improvise solutions from thin air” (Coutu, 2002, p. 8). Because principals’ plans are constantly derailed due to continual interruptions, principals must spend a greater part of the day “maneuvering around obstacles and resolving various problems” (Friedman, 2002, p. 45). The obstacles referenced include, but are not limited to, student discipline, scheduling conflicts, disagreements, and other emergencies making resilient qualities imperative for principals to function with composure so that disconnections become more routine and less disruptive (Christman & McClellan, 2008; Coutu, 2002; Richardson, 2002; Rutter, 1999).

Greene et al. (2004) assert that individuals, especially leaders, become more resilient through personal and professional experiences and rely on their personal and professional communities to thrive. Buzzanell (2010) similarly states that “we communicatively develop resilience through the creation and maintenance of communication networks” (p. 6). Having relationships with caring adults, surrounding oneself with trusted confidants, using strong support networks, cultivating strong relationships, employing self-regulation skills, developing positive self-regard, and periodically recognizing small *wins* will get resilient individuals through troubled times (Braverman, 2001; Greene, 2002; Greene et al., 2004; J. Patterson, 2007; Steele & Steele, 1994). Similarly, Fletcher and Sarkar (2013) uphold that stressors arise from day-to-day interactions and are reconciled by the processes of appraisal and coping. Through his study on leaders responding to adversity in jobs filled with adversity, J. Patterson (2007) found that leaders can strengthen their resilience by making decisions that align with their values and

surrounding themselves with “trusted confidantes whom you can turn to in troubled times” (p. 21). Henderson and Milstein’s (2003) definition of resiliency perfectly describes what is needed for principal resiliency: “the capacity to spring back, rebound, successfully adapt in the face of adversity, and develop social, academic, and vocational competence despite exposure to severe stress or simply to the stress that is inherent in today’s world” (p. 7). Herrman et al. (2011) assert that “fundamentally, resilience refers to positive adaptation, or the ability to maintain or regain mental health, despite experiencing adversity” (p. 259). Principals’ roles and job responsibilities can easily become stressors and use of certain coping skills must be considered in order to foster resiliency (Greene et al., 2004; Ward, 2003).

Historical Background/Context

In the late 1800s, schools in New England began to sort students into grade levels based on age due to increased enrollment launching secondary schools. At this time, principals were teachers released from the classroom and received no formal training. The increase in student enrollment and staff size caused a growth in management and staffing responsibilities. The goal in the beginning of the 20th century was for the principal to use Frederick Taylor’s scientific management techniques by improving efficiency of teaching and learning and facilitating standardization of best teaching practices (B. Fuller et al., 2006; Koumparoulis & Vlachopouliti, 2012). During the 1960s and 1970s principals were seen as directors of large-scale categorical aid programs created by state and federal governments during a tumultuous period of civil rights legislation, busing and affirmative action, and national concern over the quality of American education (Super & Irons-Georges, 2006). Through his research on the views of the principalship, Hallinger (2011) found that the 1980s was the time of strong instructional leaders. In the 1980s, principals were also “viewed as leaders of teaching

improvements and as inspirers of warm, supportive ‘professional learning communities’ inside their schools” (B. Fuller et al., 2006, p. 5).

Since the 1990s, states have been holding schools accountable for academic outcomes, “usually as measured from standardized tests” (EdSource, n.d.). At the turn of the century, “principals were urged to embrace shared leadership” (DuFour et al., 2008, p. 310) and develop the capacity of leaders throughout the school. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) signed into law by President George Bush in January 2002, required states “to have accountability systems that hold schools, school districts, and the state as a whole accountable for improving the academic performance of students” (EdSource, n.d.).

Just before NCLB, at the end of the 20th century, California passed the Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA) authorizing the creation of “an educational accountability system for California schools with the primary goal of helping improve and measure the academic achievement of all students” (CDE, n.d.). Academic Performance Index (API) scores were developed from the PSAA giving schools a score between 200 and 1000 based on student achievement on a school’s standardized test scores in grades 2 through 11. Under state requirements, if a school meets participation and API growth criteria, it may be eligible for state and federal award programs (CDE, n.d.). The achievement of students has become a high stakes factor for schools and principals alike. In the early part of the 21st century, the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) and WestEd Agency developed the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders CPSEL including six standards by which California school administrators should abide (Association of California School Administrators [ACSA], 2004). The CPSEL includes six standards which embed cultural diversity and use of technology into: vision; a culture of learning for students and staff; safe learning environment;

collaboration with families and communities; personal code of ethics; and response to the larger political context. These professional standards enhance the multitude of duties required of California principals. J. Patterson (2007) calculates that the principalship will only get tougher and “require resilient individuals to take on the tasks if history is a reliable predictor” (p. 22). E. Fuller and Young (2009) capture this claim:

Moreover, principals are now expected to be business managers, instructional leaders, community engagement experts, data analysts, and even marketers for the school. Principals, thus, are expected to be proficient in a far greater number of roles than in the past. Yet, the job is still structured the same and the level of support is no different than 10, 20, or even 50 years ago. (p. 18)

Because the principalship has changed both in “complexity and the amount of work it requires,” it is important to emphasize that the role has become an “accumulation of expectations that have increased the complexity of the position” (Goodwin, Cunningham, & Eagle, 2005, p. 2). The work of the principal does not seem to be getting any easier. If “history is any predictor, the job may become even tougher” (J. Patterson & Kelleher, 2005, p.).

Resilience

Despite the wide range of responsibilities that the principalship has accrued over the last 150 years, the principal must demonstrate resilience by being “positive, focused, flexible, organized, and proactive” (Conner, 1993, p. 238). Because resilience involves internal factors such as temperament and attitude as well as external factors such as community well-being, Greene et al. (2004) consider resilience as a “multi-systemic phenomenon that can occur across a life span” (p. 6). In their study on resilience, Greene et al. found that people’s personal attitude is important to becoming resilient and that they become more resilient as “they develop and have access to resources” (p. 8) and build “caring relationships and strong support networks” (p. 78). J. Patterson (2007) notes that resilient principals acknowledge obstacles and shift to positive

outcomes rather than become discouraged by them. He goes on to note that principal resiliency is important because teachers, staff, students, and families rely on the predictability and stability of their leader to weather any crisis that arises.

People who demonstrate adaptive resiliency, according to Ward (2003), have a high concern for themselves and others. Ward goes on to liken flourishing resiliency to Maslow's self-actualization by describing a flourishing person as someone who "successfully integrates behaviors, coping skills, and life experiences; exhibits high self-esteem; and uses coping skills appropriately when faced with adversity" (p. 20). Resilient leaders must be clear about what matters most to them, personally and professionally, because aligning actions with values strengthens one's resilience (Froman, 2010; J. Patterson, 2007). People cultivate qualities so that most events become "routine and less likely to be disruptive – chronic stressors befall people who do not develop resilient qualities or have not grown through the disruptions in their life" (Richardson, 2002, p. 311). Resilient outcomes are most apparent when a person has positive, caring relationships with others; good self-regulation; skillful intelligence; positive self-regard; and intrinsic motivation to succeed (Braverman, 2001; Froman, 2010; J. Patterson & Kelleher, 2007; Pink, 2010; Zander & Zander, 2000).

Stress

Many people develop ways to overcome daily pressures while others rely on their personal resilience and personal strengths to carry them through crises. This works well for a while, however McKee, Boyatzis, and Johnston (2008) caution that "any strength taken to the extreme can become a weakness" (McKee et al., 2008, p. 59). Principals are responsible for meeting the rigorous requirements of NCLB, improving state test scores, managing limited school resources, and handling the day-to-day responsibilities of dealing with students, staff,

families, and other stakeholders. They must find ways to keep additional causes of stress in check (Reynolds & O'Dwyer, 2008). In a study conducted by B. Fuller et al. (2006), California secondary principals who experience stress and burnout were found to spend less time, as compared with principals in other states, on activities involving instruction and more time interacting with parents and managing teachers' concerns. Principals were also found to spend little time coaching teachers in instructional strategies and allocating more of their schedule on interacting with the district office, dealing with student discipline, and "working on compliance issues" (B. Fuller et al., 2006). According to Loeb, Kalogrides, and Horng (2010), the role of the principal is so complex that it is difficult to form an operational definition of an 'effective principal' due to "the difficulty in measuring competency in various aspects of this role" (p. 211). Sogunro (2012) affirms that the need for rapid reform during changes in "socioeconomic and political situations" yields evidence "that today's school principals operate in a stress-strained environment" (p. 664). Sogunro further emphasizes that stress is a "chronic phenomenon in school administration" (p. 666) with little being done to prepare future school administrators.

Throughout their careers, principals encounter a high degree of stress and conflict (Friedman, 2002; Lindle, 2004; Pierce, 2000; Reynolds & O'Dwyer, 2008; Sogunro, 2012). The job of educational leaders has become very complex and because principals' days are consumed with critical moments interrupted by more critical moments, their emotional health is constantly in a state of unrest (Fullan, 1998; Lindle, 2004). In a study conducted by Gravel (2006) it was found that nearly three-fourths of principals surveyed felt these daily interruptions precluded them from spending time on teaching and learning. Richardson (2002) adds that responding to these daily emergencies as well as having to address the "overall school climate, pedagogy,

content knowledge, and reform efforts...creates a uniquely intense dynamic, ripe with quandaries and puzzles for the principal to untangle” (p. 45). Moreover, the conflicting needs of various stakeholder groups intensify the principal’s overloaded job responsibilities of maintaining facilities, budgeting, implementing district mandates, and completing payroll. The accountabilities continue to grow without any taken away (Catano & Stronge, 2007; Hausman et al., 2000; Pepe, 2011; Smylie et al., 1994; Whitaker, 2003). DuFour et al. (2008) confirm that “no single person could address all the responsibilities principals have been asked to shoulder” (p. 311) while Lindle (2004) highlights that:

literature on therapeutic strategies for coping focuses on the suffering of students, their families, and the school staff, while marginalizing educational administrators as members of a privileged class that either does not or ought not feel any stress and trauma. (p. 379)

Stress that principals endure can be physically and emotionally harmful. Stress is a focus on events or conditions that “threaten, challenge, exceed, or harm the psychological or biological capacities of the individual” (Lerner & Steinberg, 2009). Seaward (2011) underscores the threat that stress can have on one’s health in his reference to the National Center for Health Statistics 2000 report:

human stress is indeed a health factor to be reckoned with...between 70 and 80 percent of all disease and illness is stress related, most notable coronary heart disease, cancer, the common cold, migraine headaches, warts, some cases of female infertility, ulcers, insomnia, hypertension - the list goes on and on. (p. 4)

While stress can cause very real physical and emotional ailments, some researchers and clinicians have a notion that a certain amount of stress can be good because without it “people generally have the tendency to be too relaxed, complacent, or nonchalant” (Sogunro, 2012, p. 666). However, Sogunro (2012) does caution that when the “level of tolerance is exceeded stress can become a nonentity and disruptive to optimal performance” (p. 666).

Reynolds and O'Dwyer (2008) confirm that "the demands of school leadership have been found to lead to high levels of stress" (p. 473) and consequently adversely affecting school climate as well as leadership effectiveness. West, Peck, and Reitzug (2010) report that principals' stress is heightened when demands place them in a submissive role to the central office. Requiring implementation of central office programs and initiatives with little to no support will consequently heighten principals' anxiety (Derrington & Larsen, 2012). Subsequently, Howley, Andrianaivo, and Perry (2005) ascertain that school districts in the United States are facing a crisis due to the difficulty in recruiting new principals. They reported that very few, if any, teachers interviewed seemed willing to pursue administration because it "is a source of considerable stress; daily and yearly hours are too long; and finally, family life suffers from the demands of the position" (p. 760). Pierce (2000) highlights the struggles of being a *Super Principal* in that

creating a learning community requires planned pursuit, yet principals can be easily consumed by everyday 'urgent but unimportant' matters. Their quandary is whether to learn to carve out time to supervise and coach teachers and work with them on professional development plans that support real school improvement, or to risk leading a disaffected, low-performing school community. (p. 1)

Besides having the burden to create learning communities that meet the needs of teachers and staff, secondary principals who educate middle and high school students require a specific strength to handle the unique characteristics of adolescence. Pepe (2011) summarizes how job responsibilities and stressors of the principalship can affect resiliency:

Now add in the rules and regulations for budgets, standardized testing, nutritional services, school security, facility maintenance, and classroom-size amendment reports, and now one can see why principals look more like bean counters rather than instructional leaders. The business of leading a school, its teachers, and students competes with the responsibilities of managing a school. Principals face mounting pressure to generate accurate reports, while simultaneously visit classrooms, mentor teachers, and meet with parents. Over time, these stressful conditions can erode job satisfaction, work commitment, and eventually a principal's resilience. (p. 114)

The erosion of job satisfaction, work commitment, and a principal's resilience implies a pathway to burnout. In a study including principals with high levels of burnout and principals with low levels of burnout reported that the teachers carry the highest impact on the principal's burnout in both groups and declares that "burnout is commonly related to unmediated stress – the experience of stress and a sense of lacking buffers and support systems" (Friedman, 2002, p. 230). McKee et al. (2008) define a special kind of stress, *power stress*, to burnout which over time can be debilitating. "It is inherent in a leadership role and can cause leaders to fall into the Sacrifice Syndrome - a vicious cycle of stress and sacrifice, resulting in mental and physical distress, burnout, and diminished effectiveness" (McKee et al., 2008, p. 36).

Coping

Coping is typically defined in terms of "realistic thoughts and actions which solve problems confronting the individual" (Edwards, 1988, p. 234). Fletcher and Sarkar (2013) uncovered in their research that "although resilience and coping are often used interchangeably, there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that these are conceptually distinct constructs" (p. 16). Coping is defined by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (p. 141). Principals need coping skills as they are faced with stress, trauma, and burnout which can potentially threaten their resiliency (Sogunro, 2012). Sogunro (2012) further claims that "a principal's lack of stress-coping tips undermines his or her effectiveness on the job" (p. 666). He likens a principal's lack of stress-coping techniques to "a soldier who knows how to fight but is not knowledgeable and skillful about how to defend himself or herself" (p. 666), implying that lack of coping strategies can undermine a principal's effectiveness on the job.

Kato (2012) defines coping flexibility as referring “to one’s ability to effectively modify coping behavior according to the nature of each stressful situation” (p. 262). Because principals’ daily interactions and challenges are constantly changing (Friedman, 2002; Hausman et al., 2000; Pepe, 2011), Kato’s concept of coping flexibility is indeed important for principals to encompass. Coping strategies can ultimately help individuals build and maintain resiliency (Braverman, 2001; Greene et al., 2004; Richardson, 2002). There are several coping strategies that experts recommend. J. Patterson (2007) recommends that individuals stay focused on being “value driven and not event driven in tough times” (p. 20) and several professionals maintain that relationships with caring adults, positive self-regard, imagination, creativity, and humor are important coping skills in facing adverse situations (Braverman, 2001; Friedman, 2002; J. Patterson & Kelleher, 2005; Ward, 2003). Polka and Litchka (2008) recommend that impulse control, problem-solving skills, sense of humor, internal locus of control, and personal competence as important coping characteristics for a principal to possess in order to become resilient to stress.

Establishing confidential and caring relationships is an important coping skill for principals to employ since principals do not need anyone to remind them that “the life of a principal, particularly during stressful times is a lonely place to be” (J. Patterson, 2007, p. 21). In a study of resilient leaders, J. Patterson found that these leaders “strongly advocate surrounding yourself with trusted confidants whom you can turn to in troubled times” (p. 21). Derrington and Larsen (2012) acknowledge that principals are able to “navigate troubled waters by building strong relationships and informal networks throughout the district hierarchy” (p. 70). When principals can display compelling political and people skills, “they work the system and know the right people” (Derrington & Larsen, 2012, p. 70) and can forge connections that will

get them through difficult situations. West et al. (2010) support the idea of principals actively surrounding themselves with a support network since “the loneliness and isolation of being in the principal’s position add to stressful conditions” (p. 260). One such support network that was introduced by Peter Senge, an expert on building learning organizations, in the late 1980s was the notion of “critical friends” (Costa & Kallick, 1993; Senge, 1994). Costa and Kallick (1993) thoroughly explain the meaning and purpose of critical friends:

A critical friend provides such feedback to an individual – a student, a teacher, or an administrator – or to a group. A critical friend, as the name suggests, is a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers a critique of a person’s work as a friend. (p. 49)

Principals are most likely too busy to reflect on their own practices and are usually isolated from one another, however, they can offset these habits of isolation by developing a critical friends network in their working relationships (Costa & Kallick, 1993). Without caring relationships, principals must “rely on his or her experience, tacit knowledge, and problem solving skills to bounce back from hardship” (Friedman, 2002, p. 48).

Christman and McClellan (2008) believe that coping skills will develop positive character traits “such as patience, tolerance, responsibility, compassion, determination, and risk taking” (p. 7). Successful coping skills can breed hope among principals and “principals with hope are much less likely to succumb to the daily stresses of the job” (Fullan, 1998, p. 4) because they can look at their problems from a different viewpoint allowing them to rebound. Fullan further declares that when leaders understand that having hope “is independent of knowing how things might turn out, it becomes a deeper resource. Leaders with hope are less likely to panic when faced with immediate and pressing problems” (p. 4). D. L. West et al. (2010) further find that urban principals “have operated and will continue to operate under the intense burden of purveying hope for success in school and life to those in exceedingly difficult circumstances” (p.

259) yet few of these school leaders have consistent channels for expressing their frustrations and need instead to sell hope to themselves.

In order to assist individuals in forging hope, Fletcher and Sarkar (2013) created a coping model to make the process of building resiliency easier. The basic foundation of their model is “that stressors arise from the environment an individual operates in, are mediated by the processes of perception, appraisal and coping, and, as a consequence, result in positive or negative responses, feeling states, and outcomes” (p. 15). They maintain that “coping should be conceived as conceptually distinct from resilience” (p. 16) and to distinguish coping as a means of becoming resilient. Edwards (1988) states that “coping is typically defined in terms of realistic thoughts and actions which solve problems confronting the individual” (p. 234) confirming that purposeful thought processes are to be considered coping skills rather than resiliency. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) also endorse the idea that coping skills need to be distinguished from resiliency and have identified two functions of coping in their research: controlling one’s stressful emotions and changing the condition of concern.

By utilizing positive coping mechanisms consistently, principals can better arm themselves with tools needed to combat “challenge, isolation, stress, and the loneliness of leadership” (Ashton & Duncan, 2012, p. 22). Reinforcing the importance of positive coping strategies needed by resonant leaders, McKee, Boyatzis, and Johnston (2008) dispel the myth that “great leaders thrive on constant pressure” and that instead the “best leaders manage the pressure through adopting practices of renewal” (p. 24).

Summary

Resiliency is a collection of processes where people accumulate qualities to survive and thrive as they experience stress, difficulties, and adversity. In addition to having strong values

that align with decision making, resilient leaders must also have access to communication networks and strong relationships in order to remain durable and robust. The historical context of the principalship shows continual build-up of a century of responsibilities that principals must juggle such as being managers of the school building and its employees; business managers of categorical programs and spending; instructional leaders; distributors and facilitators of shared leadership; and accountants of student achievement. Therefore the principal must exhibit resilience since his/her personal attitude, decision making, stress level and relational capacity can affect the school climate as a whole (Covey, 1989; Greene et al., 2004; McKee et al., 2008; J. Patterson, 2007; J. Patterson & Patterson, 2001). Because the non-linear, unpredictable, and multifaceted role of the principalship can easily cause stress, principals must be careful not to allow the pressure and enormity of the job erode their resilience. Since stress is the main cause for the shortage of principal candidates, principals must maintain a positive self-regard by nurturing relationships with caring adults; be value driven, imaginative, creative; and cultivate their sense of humor (Braverman, 2001; Friedman, 2002; McKee et al., 2008; J. Patterson & Kelleher, 2005; Ward, 2003). These coping strategies are key in becoming resilient.

Chapter 3 Methodology and Procedures

While there is extensive research on how a school principal's all-encompassing, stress-causing job responsibilities can endanger one's physical and emotional well-being, there is minimal literature outlining the job difficulties and stressors of high performing secondary public school principals and the resiliency traits and coping skills required to maintain longevity. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological qualitative study is two-fold: (a) investigate the lived experiences of secondary principals in high performing public schools in Southern California as they relate to resiliency, and (b) explore the lived experiences that may be found as stressors and the coping skills, if any, that are used to mitigate the identified stressors. The following two questions will guide this research:

1. What are the lived experiences, if any, of long standing secondary principals in high performing public schools in Southern California as they relate to resiliency?
2. What are the lived experiences, if any, of secondary principals in high performing schools in Southern California as they relate to stress and coping skills?

This chapter will explain the research design and rationale for this study.

Next, there will be a description of the setting of the study and how the participant population sample were determined. Then a section on human subject consideration will outline the confidentiality of the participants along with the minimal risks that participants encountered. This will be followed by explanation of the validity of the chosen instrumentation. Finally, the process for data collection, data management, and data analysis will conclude the chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

This qualitative study used a transcendental phenomenological approach to uncover the resiliency traits required of secondary principals with more than five years tenure in high

performing public schools in Southern California and pinpoint the specific job responsibilities that these principals identified as stressors along with the coping traits they used to successfully conquer those stressors. The purpose for choosing a qualitative approach to this study was to get detailed perspectives from long standing secondary principals in high performing public schools in Southern California as to how they have navigated the difficulties unique to their position. The use of qualitative research allows researchers to use holistic inquiry in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study with an inductive approach to data analysis and establish patterns or themes (Borg & Gall, 1989; Creswell, 2013). Because the goal of the study was to focus on the common experiences of a specific group, secondary principals of Southern California public schools who had more than five years of tenure in that position at the same school site, a phenomenological method was chosen to capture the *universal essence* of their common experience or phenomenon (Borg & Gall, 1989; Creswell, 2013; Leedy & Ormond, 2010).

There are several defining features of phenomenology. The main feature is an emphasis on a phenomenon as a single concept that a group of individuals all experience. It is imperative for the research to “adopt the ‘insider’s’ viewpoint” (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 389). Creswell (2013) states that “a phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon” (p. 76). Moreover, there are two main approaches to phenomenology: hermeneutical and transcendental (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Richards & Morse, 2013). Hermeneutical (or hermeneutic) phenomenology focuses on the participants’ lived experience and the researcher’s interpretation of those experiences (Creswell, 2013; Richards & Morse, 2013; Van Manen, 1990). Hermeneutical phenomenology allows the researcher to use his/her background and experiences to gain

meaning of the participants' shared experiences yielding a final document which "may include the personal assumptions of the researcher" (Laverly, 2003, p. 28). In this branch of phenomenology, the researcher embeds his/her biases and assumptions into the interpretive process. Transcendental phenomenology focuses less on the researcher's interpretations and more on a description of participants' experiences (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The researcher is required to *bracket* or purposely remove his/her biases and assumptions preventing the researcher from depending on his/her own knowledge of the phenomena in the interpretation of the participants' experiences. For this study, a transcendental phenomenology is selected so that the concentration is on the principals' perceptions of their lived experiences rather than the researcher's interpretation due to the researcher's personal experience with this specific phenomenon.

Creswell (2013) recommends that a phenomenological research approach include in-depth interviews. These comprehensive interviews provided substantial, noteworthy statements yielding a composite of structural and textural descriptions that offer an essence of the phenomenon. A semi-structured interview allows the researcher to delve deeply by using open-ended questions to obtain more complete data (Borg & Gall, 1989). Borg and Gall (1971) also emphasize that a semi-structured interview provides "the desirable combination of objectivity and depth and often permits gathering valuable data that could not be successfully obtained" using other methods (p. 214). Consequently, the phenomena in this study concerned the experiences of secondary principals who have maintained more than five years of tenure in their current position at high performing public schools and required in-depth, semi-structured interviews.

Setting

The context for this transcendental phenomenological study included secondary public schools in Southern California which were selected for two reasons: they were considered *high* performing because their Academic Performance Index (API) scores are 850 and above and these specific schools have principals who have more than five years tenure in that specific position at that specific school. The majority of secondary schools with an API of 850 are in the 90th percentile ranking of statewide schools in California meaning that the school's API is well above average as compared with other schools in the state (CDE, n.d.). Because secondary principals have “the lowest retention rates and shortest tenure, with only about half of newly hired principals staying at least three years and less than 30 percent staying for five years” (E. Fuller & Young, 2009, p. 3), long standing secondary principals of Southern California public schools with more than five years tenure at their current site is an ideal group for a phenomenological study.

The in-person interviews took place at a location chosen by the participant. All participants chose to be interviewed at their school sites in their offices or another preferred location on campus. The preference of the interviewees was honored to guarantee a safe and comfortable environment so that the participants felt most at ease in discussing potentially unpleasant topics regarding their school setting.

Population, Sample, and Sampling Procedures

The population of this study was comprised of a purposive sample. Lunenburg and Irby (2008) say that “purposive sampling involves selecting a sample based on the researcher's experience or knowledge of the group to be sampled” (p. 175) and that there needs to be clear criteria to provide a foundation. The study employed a combination of homogeneous and

criterion-sampling in that the participants meet the same criteria – all were secondary public school principals who had more than 5 years of tenure in Southern California high performing schools. This purposive sample was randomly selected in that the first five participants who responded to a request to participate in the study were chosen.

Eligibility for participation was determined through the California Department of Education website, www.cde.ca.gov; DataQuest, www.dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/; Ed-Data, www.ed-data.k12.ca.us/; CBEDS Online Reporting Application and Resources, www.cde.ca.gov/ds/dc/cb/cbedsora.asp; school websites; phone calls to school sites and district offices; and LinkedIn, www.linkedin.com, a professional networking website. Once qualifying principals were identified, an email (see Appendix A) and phone call was sent to that principal's district office to gain permission to ask principals if they were interested and willing to take part of this phenomenological study. An email invitation (see Appendix B) along with an explanation for the study and why each participant qualified for the study was sent to all of the secondary principals of high performing public schools in Southern California who have been principal at that particular school site for at least 5 years.

Creswell (2013) indicates that the sample size of a phenomenological study “may vary in size from 3 to 4 individuals to 10 to 15” (p. 78) while Leedy and Ormond (2010) recommend that there should be a “purposeful sampling of 5 – 25 individuals” (p. 146). The first six respondents were considered for the research process. Because one of the six potential candidates was going to retire within a day of being interviewed, that candidate was disqualified leaving five principals for the study. All participants responded to email.

Human Subject Considerations

The researcher received and passed a Graduate and Professional School Social and Behavioral Research online training curriculum for investigators and staff primarily involved in Social/Behavioral Research with human subjects (see Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative [CITI] certificate, Appendix D) required by Pepperdine University. All participants received a written document that outlined the purpose of the study and what was required of each participant as well as a section obtaining the participant's consent (see Appendix E). Participants were informed of the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Pseudonyms were used in place of participants' real names, as well as those of school districts, to protect confidentiality. The key for pseudonyms and identifying information was stored on a flash drive that was kept in a locked file cabinet. The information will be deleted five years after the study is completed.

The risks for participation in this study were minimal. While there were no physical or economic risks for participants, there may have been minimal risks psychologically, socially, and legally. Participation in the study did not require any physicality other than meeting at a location of the participant's choice. There was no cost for principals to participate in the study thereby eliminating any economic risks. The interviews may have triggered unpleasant, stressful memories from their principal-related job duties thereby causing psychological distress that may have impeded on the participants' social and/or professional lives. The legal risk for participants might have only been connected to their responses that revealed the participants' identity in relation to their school site or district office. Pseudonyms in reporting findings will minimize this risk. The indirect psychological and social benefits will outweigh any minimal risks to participants. The results from the study will assist in creating school-wide, district-wide, and/or statewide policies that assist and protect aspiring and current principals who experience adverse

situations in their positions. Secondary principals in high performing schools will be able to emulate coping skills shared by the participants of this study to overcome stressful situations.

Permission to conduct this study was obtained through Pepperdine University's Graduate and Professional School's Institutional Review Board as well as the review boards of the individual school districts at which the participants currently work. Remuneration was used to show appreciation of the participants' time and for any trouble in participating in the in-person interviews. Remuneration took form of gift cards in small denominations, no more than \$25. The only conflict of interest that might have arisen was the participation of secondary principals in the researcher's current school district; of which there were none thereby eliminating the conflict of interest. All copyrighted material was removed from the final draft of the dissertation after the completion of the final defense.

Instrumentation

This study employed a semi-structured, open-ended interview protocol that explored the experiences, insights, strategies, and recommendations of this purposeful sample of secondary principals in high performing Southern California public schools as well as a 25-question survey using the Resilience Scale (Wagnild & Guinn, 2011). Lunenburg and Irby (2008) suggest that "researchers can clarify specifics and recognize the phenomena through the eyes of the participants with deep rich descriptions of the phenomena, gathered through inductive, qualitative interviews" (p. 90). The conversations were driven by an original interview instrument written specifically to obtain principals' accounts of the job responsibilities they found demanding and/or stressful as well as any coping skills that they acquired in their tenure as school administrators to mitigate stated stressors. Moustakas, as referenced in Creswell (2013), recommends two main general questions to guide the interviews of a phenomenological

approach: “What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?” (Creswell, 2013, p. 81). The semi-structured interviews included two broad questions in addition to a few more questions helping to guide the conversations toward answering the posed research questions (see Appendix F). Each of the interview questions was composed to represent key themes as well as the researchers who have influenced the study (see Table 1). While some questions were developed in advance, follow up questions were used based on participant responses as the interview progressed. Leedy and Ormond (2010) state that “phenomenological researchers depend almost exclusively on lengthy interviews, perhaps one to two hours in length” (p. 141) and emphasize the importance of such interviews because these interviews can produce a great deal of information. The downfall of relying heavily on interviews is that when asked about past events, behaviors, or perspectives, “interviewees must rely heavily on their memories, and human memory is rarely as accurate as a tape recorder or video camera might be” (Leedy & Ormond, 2010, p. 148).

Cindy Kratzer, Ed. D., University of California at Los Angeles professor of qualitative methods and doctoral candidate mentor, was asked to review the interview questions for instrument construct validity. Lunenburg and Irby (2008) contend that construct validity “provides justification of the instrument being used in a research study and the appropriateness of the intended instrument interpretations” (p. 182). Dr. Kratzer helped formulate the questions in the original interview instrument to best represent the guiding research questions and to bring out the most desirable responses from the participants. The interview questions were then piloted with one former secondary principal of high performing public school, Mark Kelly, Ed.

D., who had more than 5 years' tenure at that particular school site in order to ensure the quality of responses needed to highlight the essence of the shared experiences.

Table 1

Research Questions, Themes, and Researchers Influencing this Study

Research Questions	Themes Addressed	Researchers
1. What are the lived experiences of long standing secondary principals in high performing public schools in Southern California as they relate to resiliency?	Resilience	Christman & McClellan (2008) Fuller et al. (2006) Fuller & Young (2009) Greene et al. (2004) Henderson & Milstein (2003) J. Patterson (2007) Pepe (2011) Richardson (2002)
2. What are the lived experiences, if any, of secondary principals in high performing schools in Southern California as they relate to stress and coping skills?	Stress Coping	Braverman (2001) Christman & McClellan (2008) Fletcher & Sarkar (2013) Friedman (2002) Fullan (1998) Lazarus (1999) McKee et al. (2008) Reynolds & O'Dwyer (2008) Sogunro (2012)

Wagnild and Young (1993) identified five underlying characteristics of resilience: a purposeful life; perseverance; equanimity; self-reliance; and existential aloneness. "These characteristics serve as the conceptual foundation for the Resilience Scale (RS). They designed a 25-item scale that was then reduced to the 25-item Resilience Scale and the more recent 14-item Resilience Scale (RS-14)" (Wagnild & Guinn, 2011, p. 19). Permission to use, administer, and interpret responses from the RS was obtained from Dr. Wagnild through a license purchase (see Appendix G). The RS was given to candidates who agreed to participate in the study via an email that contained the link to the RS website where candidates could get immediate feedback on their survey. Participants were then asked to reflect upon their results as defined in the interview protocol as outlined in Appendix E.

The link to the RS (see Appendix H) was given to participants through email prior to the face-to-face interview. After the survey was taken, participants received a response from the website interpreting the results per *The Resilience Scale User's Guide* (Wagnild & Guinn, 2011).

Data Collection and Data Management Procedures

Creswell (2013) and Moustakas (1994) agree that data collection in phenomenological studies should consist primarily, if not solely, of in-depth interviews with participants. While other forms of data collection can be used such as observations, journals, music, poetry, and art, the predominant data collection in this study will be interviews with one follow up interview, as needed, for extenuating circumstances, to capture the essence of the common experience shared by all participants (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Richards & Morse, 2013). The interviews were semi-structured allowing the participants to share their experiences in as much detail as possible without the boundaries of a formal, structured interview. Lunenburg and Irby (2008) recommend that only a few questions are developed in advance while “follow up questions are developed as the interview progresses based on participant responses” (p. 192). Leedy and Ormond (2010) recommend that the researcher “establish and maintain rapport” (p. 151) by showing compassion and interest through body language and neutral comments rather than revealing his or her own perspectives. The research questions and aligned data collection strategies are summarized in Table 2.

The purpose of the first interview question was for participants to compare their own perceptions of their resiliency with their RS score. The idea being that the researcher would have a starting point to the semi-structured questions by giving the participants specific data with which to share their stories.

Table 2

Data Collection Strategies

Research Question	Data Collection Strategy
1. What are the lived experiences of secondary principals in high performing public schools in Southern California that require resiliency?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview • Survey using the Resilience Scale
2. What are the lived experiences, if any, of secondary principals in high performing schools in Southern California as they relate to stress and coping skills?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview

Interviews were scheduled for 60 minutes at quiet, non-disruptive locations chosen by the participants. Interviews were conducted one-on-one in an area at his/her school site deemed safe by the participant with the intention of having an environment that allowed the participants to honestly share his/her experiences. The principals selected were interviewed in early June 2014. Before the interviews began, the researcher introduced herself and conveyed the purpose of the study. The researcher then shared her own experience as a secondary principal of a high performing public school for the past 6 years. The participants were then assured of the confidentiality of the information they shared and their freedom to withdrawal from the interview and/or study at any time. After the researcher engaged participants in conversation about their past experiences before becoming principal of their current school site, the remainder of the interviews involved questions that were open-ended with prompting, if needed, to encourage more thorough accounts of their experiences. While the interview instrument guided the flow of the interview, participants were free to deviate from the question and focus on what they wanted to share in terms of resilience, stress, and coping.

A digital recorder was used to ensure thorough documentation of the participants' responses allowing the researcher to maintain eye contact with participants, provide encouraging

gestures such as nodding and smiling, and give undivided attention to the participants. The researcher asked permission of the participants to use the recorder for the interview explaining that a recording device will allow the researcher to give her full attention to the responses so that she will not be distracted by taking notes. The researcher did not have to take notes of responses for any participants who were uncomfortable with being recorded. The researcher used reflective journaling after each interview to record personal thoughts and feelings to help “bracket out” any personal opinions or interpretations that may influence the data analysis.

Recordings of the interviews were sent to a third party, web-based company called Rev (www.rev.com) for transcription. Copies of the transcriptions were sent to participants to review and edit. Only one participant returned an edited transcript with spelling corrections. Data (audio recordings of interviews, interview transcriptions, and reflective journals) were kept on a flash drive and stored in a locked filing cabinet to which only the research had a key. After five years, the researcher will destroy all data.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data gathered in this transcendental phenomenological study was conducted simultaneously with the data collection, data interpretation, and note taking. Two participants took the Resilience Scale© on the website before the face-to-face interview with the researcher. Responses were scored immediately and sent to participants before the face-to-face interview. At the face-to-face interview, the researcher used the Resilience Scale User’s Guide to show and explain to the participants how the responses were scored. The responses to the 25-question survey yielded an overall score ranging from 25 to 175 where “scores greater than 145 indicate moderately high-to-high resilience, scores from 116 to 144 indicate moderately-low to moderate levels of resilience, and scores of 115 and below indicate very low resilience” (p. 76).

While the Resilience Scale survey was a starting point for the informal, semi-structured interview questions, there was a specific way in which to analyze the data collected. Creswell (2013) recommends the following approach for phenomenological analysis:

- The researcher describes his/her personal experiences with the phenomenon under study.
- A list of significant statements will be developed about how the individuals are experiencing the topic.
- Statements will then be grouped into larger units of information (or themes).
- A description of what the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon.
- A description of how the experience happened.
- A composite description of the phenomenon incorporating both textual and structural descriptions. (p. 193)

The final transcriptions of the individual interviews were uploaded into a computer software program called HyperResearch, a qualitative analysis software. Once the transcriptions were loaded into HyperResearch, the researcher input the variables and definitions for the study: resilience, stress, and coping. The software program allowed the researcher to search for certain key terms and phrases, based upon the study's literature review, that would best represent each of the three variables. The software program was then used to code examples of resilience, stress, and coping; generate reports for each variable; and analyze themes for each variable.

Since the central task during data analysis was to identify common themes in participants' descriptions of their experiences, Creswell (2013) recommends to do the following after transcribing each interview: identify statements that relate to the topic or theme, which Creswell calls *horizontalization*; group statements into categories that reflect the various meanings of the phenomenon as it is experienced; seek divergent perspectives by looking for and

considering the different ways participants experience the phenomenon; and lastly group the clusters by developing an overall description of the phenomenon as typically experienced by the participants. The HyperResearch software program was used to complete the horizontalization within and across all participants' interviews.

Positionality

Creswell (2013) states that the researcher must *bracket* himself or herself “out of the study by discussing personal experiences with the phenomenon” so that the researcher can set aside his or her personal experiences and focus on the experiences of the participants (p. 78). Moustakas (1994) agrees that it is important for researchers to set aside their personal experiences as much as possible in order to take on a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon. The researcher fits the criteria for the purposive sample of participants for the study: a secondary principal of a high performing public school in Southern California; long-standing by having more than five years tenure at the same school; experiences job responsibilities that are considered *stressors* similar to those expressed by the participants and unique to the secondary school site; and constantly searches for coping skills and techniques to endure the hardships of the job.

Because the researcher is actively involved in professional organizations and professional development opportunities, there was a chance that there be an acquaintance with one or more of the participants; but this was not the case. Journaling was utilized by the researcher to maintain her sense of objectivity so that she continued to focus on the experiences of the participants rather than her own.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological qualitative research study was to investigate and explore the lived experiences of long standing secondary principals of high performing public schools in Southern California as they relate to resiliency, stress, and coping. Because secondary principals rarely stay at the same school site for longer than 3-5 years (E. Fuller & Young, 2009) and known research on principal resiliency concerns primarily high poverty or low performing schools, a need was found to examine why secondary principals in high performing public schools stay longer than 5 years. This study sought to understand:

1. What are the lived experiences, if any, of long standing secondary principals in high performing public schools in Southern California as they relate to resiliency?
2. What are the lived experiences, if any, of long standing secondary principals in high performing public schools in Southern California as they relate to stress and coping skills?

This qualitative study utilized a transcendental phenomenological methodology. One-on-one interviews were conducted with five purposely-selected secondary principals of high performing public schools. The participating schools located in the Los Angeles County region of Southern California had an API score over 850 and the principals of the schools were required to have been principal at the school sites longer than 5 years. The interviews contained questions prompting the participants to share how they came to be principals of their current school; events in their personal and professional lives that they felt contributed to their resilience; events or occurrences that caused the participants stress in their role as principal; and the coping skills, if any, that they used to help mitigate any stressors. During the first portion of the interview, participants were asked to give their perceptions of the score they received from the Resilience

Scale© (Wagnild & Young, 1993), which they were asked to take before the interview. Only two of the five participants took the Resilience Scale© (RS). The other three participants stated that they did not have time to complete the RS. In those three cases, the participants were not asked about the RS but instead were give the working definition of resilience and asked to give examples of their experiences that they felt have strengthened their resilience. Then, participants were given the working definitions of stress and coping used for the study to help them identify experiences and/or activities that were pertinent to the study's purpose. In the third and final portion of the interview, participants were asked to give advice to a theoretical successor in terms of resiliency, stress, and coping skills.

The purpose for choosing a qualitative approach to the study was to get detailed perspectives from long standing secondary principals in high performing public schools in Southern California and to understand how they navigate the difficulties unique to their position. Because the researcher has six years' experience as a secondary principal of a high performing public school in Southern California, this allowed her to make an authentic and empathetic connection with participants on a personal and professional level.

The process for finding qualifying participants was lengthy. The California Department of Education website was used to identify secondary public schools with API scores over 850. Eighty-six out of the 445 secondary public schools in Los Angeles County fit the criteria (Los Angeles County Office of Education, n.d.). Since most school websites did not include the number of years of the principals' tenure, a variety of methods were used to discover the length of tenure of each of the principals at those 86 high performing secondary public schools. LinkedIn (a business-oriented social networking service) was examined, an internet search engine was utilized to find newspaper articles or any indication of when principals were first

hired at these school, and schools or school districts were contacted by phone to establish the number of years of each principal's tenure.

Out of the 86 high performing public secondary schools in Los Angeles County, the length of the principal's tenure was publicly available for 41 schools (see Figure 2). Of these 41 principals of secondary schools with an API over 850, 12 (or 29%) had more than 5 years' experience as principal at that school site. Since the researcher was included in the 12 qualifying principals, she excluded herself leaving 11 principals eligible for the study. These 11 principals were employed by eight different school districts. Each school district was contacted by email (see Appendix A) requesting permission to approach the qualifying principals. Five school districts with eight eligible principals gave approval, one school district with one eligible principal denied permission, and two school districts with one eligible principal each did not respond. Follow-up phone calls were made to the two school districts who did not respond to email to no avail leaving eight qualifying participants whom to contact.

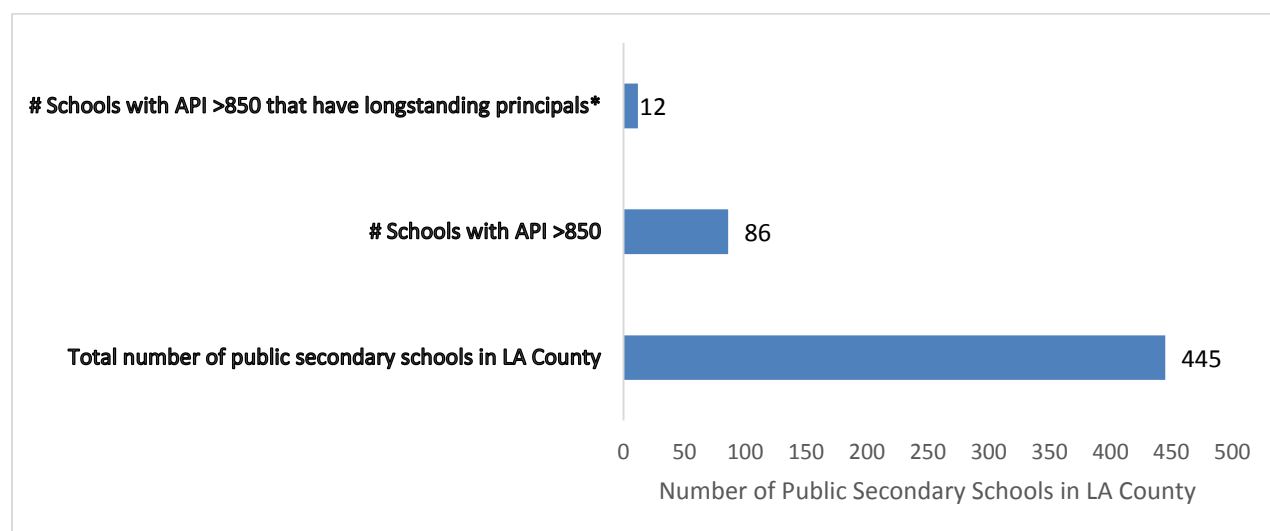


Figure 2. Comparison of high performing secondary schools with long standing principals in LA county. *Note.* The data that are publicly available for the length of principals' tenure is limited. This number indicates what was publicly available.

Demographics of Participants

Out of the eight principals who qualified for this phenomenological study, six agreed to be interviewed and two declined. Because one of the six potential participants was retiring the day after his interview was scheduled, he was eliminated from the pool leaving five qualifying and willing participants for the study. The demographics of these five principals along with their schools are outlined in Table 3. Pseudonyms were given to protect the confidentiality of the principals and the schools at which they preside diminishing any repercussions that might fall upon participants for partaking in the study.

Table 3

Demographics of Participating Principals and Schools

	School A Alice	School B Brett	School C Chris	School D Dave	School E Ed
Prior career before becoming an educator?	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
# of years as principal in career	6	7	21	6	9
# of years as principal at current school	6	7	10	6	8
# of Assistant Principals	3	1	1	1	1
# of Counselors	6	2	3	2	1
2013 Growth API	875	932	943	907	910
# of Students (2012-13 Accountability Report)	1211	947	1356	990	721
Student Subgroups					
% Black or African American	3	1	2	6	2
% Asian	6	65	9	14	45
% Hispanic or Latino	7	20	12	16	15
% White	80	10	64	57	26
% Free/Reduced Lunch	5	47	2	15	21
% English learners	2	24	1	6	18
% Students with Disabilities	8	12	12	9	13
AYP met for subgroups?	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Profiles of Participants and Schools

The following profiles of the study's participants and schools are general descriptions to maintain the anonymity of principals, schools, and school districts. The profiles include the researcher's initial perceptions and thoughts around the school and the participants.

Principal Alice and School A. Alice is principal of a high school in a medium sized suburban school district in Southern California where the median household income is \$120,397. Alice's secretary was friendly as she greeted the researcher and Alice was readily available with a smile. The interview took place in Alice's office with the door open. Alice's office and desk were very organized; papers and folders were neatly stacked on desks and bookcases. One wall of Alice's office was covered with large windows facing the front of the school, making the room bright with natural light. There was a large jar of pretzels on the table next to the door and a small round table with four chairs. Alice sat behind her desk for the interview. Alice was attentive, thoughtful in her responses, and quick to laugh.

Alice shared that she started out as a buyer for a retail company where she gained experience managing large budgets. Alice maintains that her experience in working with sizable budgets and dealing with manufacturers adeptly prepared her for her current job as a principal of a high school. Because sports and cheerleading are an important part of School A, Alice has used her retail experience in negotiating prices with various clothing and sports equipment companies. After several years in retail, Alice became an English and Theater Arts teacher and coached improvisation comedy teams. She then worked for one of the largest school districts in California, in terms of number of students, where she described her job as being a "change agent." Alice said her former position required her to go from school to school and present student data to staffs and help them make changes by creating smaller learning communities.

Alice learned from the experience the importance of maintaining a “this is not about you and it is not about me, it is about the data” attitude since most of her presentations consisted of dismal student achievement data. Alice was then sought out to be a principal for her current School A. Alice missed being at a school site and building relationships with students so she interviewed and subsequently was hired. School A had a revolving door in the principal’s office by the time Alice became principal. “When I first got here, the faculty wasn’t really used to having a principal and they would say that to me, ‘You know, like we just manage as if we don’t care who’s in that chair.’” Alice just completed her sixth year as principal at School A.

Principal Brett and School B. Brett is principal of a middle school in a small urban school district where the median household income is \$65,093. Brett’s secretary greeted the researcher with a smile and apologized that the principal was on the phone dealing with a summer school emergency. The interview was scheduled for 4:00pm and began 20 minutes late.

Brett’s presence was open and friendly throughout the interview. The interview took place in Brett’s office with the door left open. Brett apologized for keeping the researcher waiting and shared that he had to make arrangements for summer school which was unexpectedly taking place at School B in a few days and preparations needed to be made. Despite the alarming news and the researcher’s offer to postpone the interview, Brett insisted on continuing with the interview. Brett was quick to laugh and demonstrated a friendly relationship with his assistant principal whom he continually called over to join the conversation.

Brett’s desk, computer, and keyboard were covered with disheveled piles of paper along with multiple pictures of his wife and two children. Brett cleared off some space on the small circular table in the office so that he and the researcher could sit at the table for the interview.

Brett revealed that he was born and raised in Southern California, near School B, but left home to go to college across the country to “get away from distractions.” He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics and returned home to California to teach high school math. He was a successful math teacher and won teacher of the year, however seeing that his colleagues did not work as hard as he did made him want to go into administration. Brett became a dean and then an assistant principal in that same school district where he began his teaching career. He was approached and asked to apply for the principalship at his current school and was hired. School B has had over 20 principals since it opened its doors in 1956. To say that School B has had a high turnover in principals is an understatement. Brett just completed his seventh year as principal at School B.

Principal Chris and School C. Chris is the principal of a middle school in a small suburban school district where the median household income is \$149,000. Upon the researcher’s arrival, the main office of School C appeared empty. The researcher waited at the main counter, where a woman sat at a computer with her back to the counter. Chris came out of his office as the researcher was asking for the woman’s attention. The interview with Chris took place in a conference room located near the main office behind a closed door. There were pencils and paper on the table and a Civility Policy poster with meeting norms hanging on the wall.

Chris shared his background and noted that his college degree is a Bachelor of Fine Arts. Chris was in commercial advertising before beginning a career in education. While in advertising, Chris coached women’s soccer for a local high school. The principal of the school where Chris coached encouraged him to get his teaching credential. After obtaining his multiple subject credential, Chris taught third grade for a couple of years. He soon became bored, wanted more responsibility, and took on some leadership roles. Chris quickly discovered that he liked

being in charge, earned his administrative credential, and became an elementary assistant principal. After one year as an assistant principal, Chris became an elementary principal and then spent ten years as a principal of a high performing middle school in a neighboring district before becoming principal at School C. Chris has just completed his tenth year as principal at School C.

Principal Dave and School D. Dave is a principal of a middle school in a medium sized urban school district where the median household income is \$69,173. The three women in the main office of School D looked up and smiled when the researcher walked into the office. Principal Dave walked out of his office as the researcher identified herself. Dave was welcoming with a firm handshake. Dave led the researcher down the hall to a large open space with vending machines. The room appeared to be the staff lounge. Dave was polite, engaging, and very serious. There were a couple of times Dave felt the need to whisper parts of his responses.

Dave shared that he became a teacher out of state and then moved to California. Dave became a teacher at School D right after moving to California. While teaching, Dave earned his Master's Degree and his Doctorate in Education and found that he wanted to effect some sort of change. Dave felt that administration was the next logical step for him and he became an assistant principal at School D. Dave then went on to be an assistant principal at the high school in his current school district for one year. Since then, Dave became principal of School D. He just completed his sixth year as principal.

Principal Ed and School E. Ed is principal of a middle school in a large urban school district where the median household income is \$71,790. Ed's secretary was attentive and friendly. Ed greeted the researcher with a handshake and a smile. The interview took place in

Ed's office with the door closed. Ed's desk looked like a computer mechanic's work desk with bolts, nuts, wires, and pieces of equipment on the round table in the cramped office as well as on the floor. Ed's computer and phone were buried under the papers and hardware. Ed appeared to have a sense of adventure and laughed easily. He pulled his assistant principal into the interview at one point and asked her to share and confirm how much fun they have.

Ed moved overseas after college in hopes of getting a job translating technology documents but ended up teaching English instead. When Ed returned to the United States, a friend convinced him to substitute for her since she had breast cancer and needed someone reliable to cover her classes so she could get treatments. Because he had enjoyed teaching overseas, Ed agreed to substitute for his friend. Soon after, Ed went back to school, earned his teaching credential, and taught special education at an elementary school. Ed liked teaching special education students but as the job became all-consuming with paperwork, he asked to be transferred to a general education classroom. Ed was told the "only way you're going to get out [of special education] is if you move out" and that is when he decided to enter administration. He had assumed that being an assistant principal would be "the same as my special day class" because he would be working with the "behaviors...the ugly ones, the maladjusted." Ed felt prepared for administration.

Ed's first administrative position was an assistant principal for a middle school. Ed was hired in August, his principal had gone on a leave of absence, the school was under construction, there was no power, and there wasn't a master schedule. Having survived that experience, Ed feels that any experience since has been "nothing but for the most part a lot of happiness." After two years as an assistant principal, Ed then became principal of School E and just completed his eighth year as principal.

Presentation of Findings

The data analyses uncovered four themes for each of the three variables: resilience, stress, and coping. Evidence of all twelve themes is organized according to each research question and then by variable. While the researcher had intended for all participants to take the online RS, only two of the five participants actually did so (see Table 4). The three participants who did not take the RS stated that they did not have time to do so.

Table 4

Resilience Scale© Scores

	Alice	Brett	Chris	Dave	Ed
Took RS©	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
RS© Score	N/A	134	N/A	152	N/A

Resiliency and research question 1. What are the experiences of long standing secondary principals in high performing public schools in Southern California as they relate to resilience? Research documents that principal burnout can be caused by teachers, parents, and role ambiguity and job expectations and that resilient characteristics and personal stress management is dire (Christman & McClellan, 2008; Hausman et al., 2000; J. Patterson, 2007; Richardson, 2002). The following four themes emerged during the principal interviews as they explored their experiences: Managing the Workload, Applying Personal Experiences, Dealing with Difficult Staff, and Interacting with Challenging Parents.

Resiliency theme 1: Managing the workload. All five principals shared a personal motto that allows them to accept that they will not complete everything on their to-do list each day.

Alice. Alice tells her team to know when to “put the pencil down” and be present and attend to what is happening at the moment.

I have an expression that you have to know when to put the pencil down...I always tell my assistant principals, “If something happens to a teacher, you go immediately. It

doesn't matter. You go immediately. You have to send that message that staff is first and staff is family."

You always have to have your agenda and what you think is going to happen and then you have to know when to put the pencil down and just say, "That's not going to happen today."

Alice admitted that it is very difficult to balance managerial tasks with classroom observations. Her strategy is to get most of her classroom observations in December, before winter break. She also found an application for her Apple device that will allow her to easily take notes based on the California Standards of the Teaching Profession (CSTP) and therefore give meaningful feedback to teachers.

I tried to get [classroom observations] all done or not all of it done but I try to get to formal observations before winter break to really do a big push then and then when I come back and I just have a couple. I have found an App (Application for an Apple device) that I use that's called "Look For" and it's the most expensive app I've ever purchased. It was \$50 but it is completely organized [by] the California State Standards. You just go in and you just mark and then there's place for comments and it prints out and it's beautifully, well-organized.

Brett. Brett no longer goes to work on the weekends because working on the weekends takes time away from his family. Brett found that coming in on the weekends barely cut down his o-do list. Brett's mantra is "no weekends." He will, however, allow himself to stay at work until he completes projects that are required during certain times of the school year such as the Single Plan for Student Achievement and organizing administration of state testing. "No weekends. No weekends. It might be every 2 months when I have to leave here at 12. I call the alarm company, 'Okay, extend another hour. I'm going to be here.'

Chris. Chris has accepted that "somebody always hates everything" and that he is not going to please everyone. By using his values to drive decision-making and letting go of the things over which he has no control allows him to be productive. Chris realized that the amount of work for which he is responsible "is limitless." He forces himself to stop to keep a balance

between his personal and professional lives. Chris has also learned to prioritize by doing the tasks that are due first, stating, “I don’t think pressure motivates me. I look down the list and say, ‘What do I have to do tomorrow?’” He also stated,

I wish it was more of a balance but um, you know, you kind of work this job 24 hours a day and still not get it all done. And so you got to at some point just say “I’m leaving it.” I’m still fighting that battle but really it took my [medical condition] to kind of make more of a balanced life.

Dave. Dave’s goal is to leave work at work and accept that there will always be work to do. When Dave first became principal, he thought that the amount of work and responsibilities were outliers and anomalies. He has found that never-ending charges of being a principal is simply a way of life; or as he calls it “the new normal.” He does not bring his laptop home so that when Dave is home, he tries his best to be fully “present” with his wife.

I’ve really become pretty good at just leaving it behind when I go home, and focusing on my personal relationships, you know, instead of focusing on my job ... Um, you know, there’s times. I, I, I like to work here at the school, whether that means I come in on the weekends and stuff. I don’t like to bring a laptop at home. You know, and work at home. I, I find myself that I’m able to focus better when I’m here. So I’ll drive here to do whatever I need to do instead of, uh, sitting with my wife, you know, and I’m staring at a laptop.

Dave has also found that putting due dates of certain tasks in his calendar has helped him in keeping on top of important deadlines, stating, “Um, you know, it’s deadlines [that] motivate me ... my life is dictated by my Outlook calendar, and I set reminders for me before the deadlines approach. And, you know, that pushes me to get things done.”

Ed. Ed acknowledged that there are enormous amounts of goals to be achieved. Ed’s motto is to “pick the three most important and let the rest go because they will always be there.”

My first couple of years, I would be putting in 12-hour days. I would go home at 7:30 or 8:00 at night because there was just so much to do. I am now out of here at four on average. From 7:30am [until] 4. And I just have to do it. The stuff that ends up on the plate stays on the plate. You put your stuff that’s urgent upfront and the other stuff you just know it will get done.

Ed also divulged that multi-tasking, for him, is not productive.

I don't carry my phone with me. I think this is the most stressful tool in the world. The emails that bombard you and if you carry your phone, the texting that occurs...When I look at the district people, they're always plugged in. I've been in meetings and they're [focused] on their cell phones or smart things. And the multitasking is a lie. They are not in the moment. I only do one thing at a time. I don't try to multi-task.

Resilience theme 2: Applying personal experiences. All five principals revealed that they have had some sort of personal experience that has contributed to their resiliency by allowing them to be more value driven.

Alice. Alice lost her father at the age of three and her mother raised her and her sisters as a single mom. Alice learned that she needed to be strong, independent, self-sufficient, and confident.

My dad died when I was 3. I was raised by a single mom...My mother was a teacher and really raised us uh, with a great deal of strength and a belief that we could do whatever we wanted to do. I mowed the lawn. We did everything and so I really didn't grow up with any kind of like gender beliefs. We changed the oil in our cars and you know, did all those kind of things. Um, but my mom is real strong and you just get up every day and have a very strong work ethic.

Alice stated her belief that being a former theater teacher has allowed her to interact with various types of personalities, recalling, "I was a theater teacher. So I think theater teachers are super flexible and are used to working with people that are sometimes divas. And so I think that helps."

Brett. Brett learned to remove himself from distractions when he left home to go to college across the country so that he could focus on his education. He continued to focus on goals, which allowed him to become teacher of the year and rise up in ranks in his current school district. He was accepted into a prestigious doctoral program around the time of this interview.

Chris. Chris experienced personal adversity when he developed a medical condition that was life changing. Chris has supported his current significant other through her experience with breast cancer. These experiences have taught Chris compassion and empathy.

I guess the changing point in my life is, uh, ... the woman that I have kind of gone out with since [my divorce] um had breast cancer, and so I have that kind of perspective, and then, what is 5 years ago, 4, 5 years ago, I was diagnosed with [a life altering medical condition], so I have that experience and every one of those little pieces have opened up different things. I was always like let's hurry up and get rid of [struggling students or mediocre staff], ...[now] I have a lot more empathy. You know when you're starting to looking at [the] big picture here, a kid comes in, where his parents have this, or he's got a medical condition and the teachers going, "Well they didn't turn in their homework." I'm kind of like "So what." And now, that, that, um, you know there's nothing like being personally affected with stuff, but then it creates a whole different mindset for you.

Dave. Dave has had close family members die and has personally experienced divorce.

He feels that these experiences make him more human and empathetic; especially with parents.

I think in our position [as principals], whatever we have that can help us relate to others, and be empathetic to others, helps you as a leader and as a principal. Those life experiences that you go through will make you a better leader...I've had family members pass away and that strengthens you, you know? I've been through a divorce myself so when I have parents walk through my door, and they're saying "Well, it's difficult because of this," I've had that experience myself and it makes you more understanding of their situation. The longer you're in this position, the more years you are in it, the more experience you gather at the same time so it makes you a better leader.

Ed. Ed was asked by one of his former students to be at her deathbed so she could tell him what a positive impact he had on her as a teacher. Ed struggled to hold back tears while sharing the experience.

I knew I made a difference when I had a...I got a call, it was a former student from when I was in my last two years of teaching ... The [former student] recalled my classes [as] one of the best classes that she ever had; one of the happiest times that she remembers. Then, unfortunately...they had unplugged her. They wanted me to come over and see her before they did it. So that tells me I had an impact. So we do have an impact. Sometimes we're not always aware of it.

Resilience theme 3: Dealing with difficult staff. Four out of the five principals interviewed communicated that difficult experiences with employees have made them more

resilient. These four principals shared stories of having to intervene with teachers who they described as “bullies.” All four agreed that having to initially confront another adult about rude behavior was stressful at first but then became easier when they convinced themselves that the inappropriate behavior was wrong and had to stop.

Alice. Alice described a teacher who bullied other teachers as well as her own perseverance in handling the situation.

I had one teacher who went in to another teacher’s room and use some horrible language, obscene language and because she had had too many kids transferred into her ... class and she felt like she had more students than other teachers. So she went in to the Department Chair and just [reamed] her out with this obscene language. The Department Chair came to me and she just burst into tears. She should never have been treated that way. She was also the Union Rep and the other Union Rep came in with her ... I wrote her (the teacher who used the obscene language) a memo and I was really on her ... Another time that same teacher took a student’s phone and just ripped it out of his pocket and was berating him ... Consistently I just ... I just kept going at it and it was hard because she was tough, tough, tough as nails. She used to berate the secretaries when the copy machine broke down and I just made it really clear [that rude behavior is unacceptable] ... [it] built confidence with the rest of the staff that I was going to protect them and I wasn’t going to allow that kind of behavior. Once the students [and teachers] saw that [rude behavior] was not going to be okay she ended up retiring.

Alice had a somewhat similar experience with another teacher, a math teacher. After looking at school data, Alice noticed that there were a “significant number of students that weren’t doing well in Algebra and that [School A’s practice was to] put them back into pre-Algebra.” Alice was concerned about making these students repeat math.

So I said, I wanted to get rid of [pre-Algebra] and we really needed to look at the strategies that we’re using and she just became a bulldog in rage and cried and screamed at me ... I’m not screaming back but I kept trying to bring her to the data so that I could say it’s not personal. [Moving students backwards in math might be] great for teachers but what we’re doing isn’t working [for students] so we’ve got to look at other things. We battled for three years to the point that she called the Union. [The union] tried to write letters to 3 rid of me. So finally, the Union did a culture survey because I said to them, “You’ve got three people ringing the bell. And they’re pulling ... the fire drill.” So they said, “We believe that it’s just a small number of teachers but we need to do this research.” So they came out and ... [It] took them 3 days. They sat down with every single teacher. It was a huge culture of distress and the survey came out and they found

that it was a very small number of teachers that were unhappy and the majority of the teachers were really supportive of me and of the administrative team and felt good about the school and felt like it was in a really good place.

Alice has since given the Union Rep a free period each day so the two of them can meet and address any concerns before they become a problem.

Brett. Brett had a teacher storm into his office during a meeting and “literally yell” at him, berating him for a decision the teacher did not agree with.

I had one teacher in particular, who, you know, came in and yelled at me because ... she didn't like something I handled with one of [her students]. And I actually went up to her room later on that day ... and I go, “You know what? I really didn't appreciate you yelling at me like that. If there's any disagreements that we have, we have to work together and talk. But please understand, we're not going to be yelling at each other because I won't yell at you.” And I did it just like that, but it was really ... like, it kind of affected me. Like, I didn't know teachers were going to yell at me. I was like, “Whoa!” So, later on the next day, that teacher sent me a note and apologized. That was a really nice note.

Brett recalled what it was like during the first few years of his tenure, coming into School B following several short-term principals. He did not change many things, but instead he “took it in stride, kind of got the lay of the land.” After observing for the first year or two, he decided to make some changes. “Let's talk about how we can work through this, because I see this as being an issue because...” Brett reflected that “it took maybe 2 years but I think, in that process, I lost some staff members because the decision went against what they've been doing for years.”

In his first years at School B, Brett learned early on that teachers at School B were used to making their own decisions since principals did not stay very long. Establishing his authority with teachers who were used to making all of the decisions has helped Brett gain respect from his faculty.

I gained the respect and, not admiration, but at least the respect of the staff members that felt this wasn't fair and it's not been fair for a long time. We used to have a system of seniority for conference periods. And we're on teams here. So seniority for conference

periods was based upon the seniority of your collective team...Now, every year, your conference period rotates.

Brett described how inconsistent math placement practices were and that it was based more on teachers' recommendations than data. While Brett wanted to honor the processes that teachers had in place, he also saw the need for improvement and found the courage to make tough decisions to change practices.

Chris. Chris had a teacher who was very strict in enforcing his classroom rules on which he refused to budge.

I have a teacher [who is] very hard-nosed on certain things. You know, "This is my rule, and this is how it's going to be..." [This past] school year, towards the end of the year, ... [the teacher] didn't let the kid go [to the bathroom] the kid [had a bowel movement] in his pants ... The teacher [said to Chris], "I now understand what you're saying, because I will never hold a kid back from going to the bathroom again. I feel so bad because now the kids are teasing him." ... And I hate it, that's what it came down to but now he will be more receptive to [suggestion that I give him].

Chris learned from his early years as a principal that he cannot make everyone happy and that it is important to accept that fact and move on.

The biggest thing I had to learn was, somebody always hates everything. You really have to learn to not take anything, anything really personally. Um, always somebody, always going to complain about something, even if everybody else loves it, there will always be one person and I think we have a tendency, as principals, [to] want to fix things. We're always looking for those few individuals who aren't happy, and we try to fix them as opposed to just kind of saying, "Well you know what, I'm [going to] forget about you and just move on because most people are happy with this." And that's a thing that's taken me a little bit of my career to learn to do, and I still struggle with it now, but I'm much better at it.

Ed. Ed had an experience similar to that of Alice and Brett in terms of teacher bullying.

I had a number of students that felt they were being treated unfairly by teacher[s] whether it would be one of these wacky things like they were sent up to the office for not having a pencil when somebody else in the class didn't have to go to the office when losing a pencil or something. So we have a policy on our campus that if and when you're feeling that you're being treated unfairly, um, you need to comply with the reasonable request but afterwards find an adult to tell ... I had teachers who would ... call the kids "jackasses" which is not acceptable ... [I] would bring the teacher and the child [into my

office and mediate]. Um, the child would use their I-statements, ‘I didn’t like it when you called me a jackass. It made me feel hurt’ or whatever they want to say. Um, [once the teacher has to listen to this ... they will frequently say, um, “It wasn’t my intention to hurt your feelings. I thought I was being funny, and it won’t happen again.” And that’s changed the behaviors of teachers. Otherwise, I think they do think they’re funny. You know, it’s everybody else is laughing. Similar to a bully. You know, everybody is laughing. Even the victim sometimes is laughing but in reality it has not been ... That is not the case.

Ed found that teachers end up apologizing and the number of these types of incidents has dwindled in the last 8 years. Ed discovered early on in his tenure at School E that he needed to confront unacceptable teacher behavior.

Resilience theme 4: Interacting with challenging parents. Four out of the five principals reported that difficult interactions with parents have made them more resilient.

Alice. Alice quickly learned that the parent community of School A seemed to have a sense of entitlement. Alice found that clear, consistent communication such as citing California Education Code and redirecting parents to the source of concern, has helped in parent communication.

So in terms of resiliency, I think surrounding myself with people and distributing leaderships so it wasn’t just me doing [everything] and then trying to have those consistent expectations. I will always meet with parents and they know that. I will always, always meet with them. For the most part, they’re not going to get their way. I mean, if I can and it makes sense but it sort of has been a training. For example, when a parent calls me and they want to talk about a teacher, I’m very consistent about saying that they meet with the teacher first. “If you don’t want to meet with the teacher, I’ll have my assistant principal meet with you.” I really push them back and I...and you know, I write to them and say, “My belief is that solutions need to come at the closest point of where the problem is and I am not in the classroom so I don’t know what the situation is.” And for the most part, it works you know, eight times out of 10, and by the time it gets to me, then they’ve already really tried to resolve this ... [I also] try to [cite California Education Code] as often as I can with parents [to let] them know that ... I don’t always support the teacher but for the most part you know, in terms of their grade, the teacher has the right to grade and I am precluded from changing grades. So that’s where you need to do your work and so, over time I think being really consistent, the community knows that.

Brett. School B has many parents who are very demanding about honors level classes and grades. Brett learned that classes in the master schedule need to benefit students rather than meeting parent requests.

We used to have seventh grade algebra, and it was called Honors Algebra. Just for seventh graders. Then we had eighth grade algebra. And I have [only one class that seventh graders can take limiting scheduling “flow” in the master schedule] ... I can only put kids in this one class for algebra, and I’m thinking ‘why am I doing this?’ So I got rid of that class and now it’s just algebra. So for a seventh grader or if you are an eighth grader, you [get] algebra. You don’t get a special class. So that was a huge issue ... for the some of the parents because [the parents would say], “I don’t like my kid in the class with eighth graders.” So we had that conversation. The parent meetings don’t really get me nervous if I know that we are right.

Chris. Chris has learned “which battles to fight” and has committed to training his teachers how to handle angry parents.

In this community, with a high performing school, parents are so involved ... I have learned, and have done training [with] teachers on, what battles to fight [and] what battles not to fight. Most [of] the battles that [we] originally decided to fight, are [not battles at all], and it’s like, why even worry [about] this? Just [fix] the problem, move on.

Dave. Dave learned that he needs to maintain a calm demeanor when angry, belligerent parents storm into the office to complain. Even if his blood pressure rises, he knows that his staff is looking to him to address the situation, which motivates him to remain calm.

You’re dealing with a lot of discipline, and parents have different takes on that, and you are the school, and you’re imposing or dealing out a consequence to students. A lot of parents disagree with that in a lot of ways, and you have to have those conversations with those parents. It prepares you so ... that you’re better equipped to deal with parents that don’t necessarily see things the way you as the principal.

Like Brett, Dave also shared experiences of meeting with demanding parents.

I know come August, though, it’s when schedules are being dealt out. I’m going to deal with, you know, 100 parents asking for teacher changes, asking for advanced math classes, asking for honors. And I’ve dealt with it in the past, and I’ll deal with it in years to come. And uh, you know, again, I don’t get stressed out about that because I’ve gone through it so many times. And I know how to deal with parents and how to more effectively communicate with parents too.

Ed. At Ed's School E, Individualize Education Plan (IEP) meetings "have gone south historically" [before Ed became principal]. Ed found that using his special education experience and listening to parents, really listening, helps build positive relationships.

Those little things I think are really important. I like my IEPs when the meetings have gone south historically [before he became principal] and I am able to talk to the parents. Um, and we build positive relationships. We have a fair amount of advocacy in our community. And having them disappear, um, makes me feel good.

All five principals shared that there are always parent complaints at the beginning of the school year about teacher and class placement. All five principals said that it is something just to expect and know that you will get through it.

Stress and research question 2. What are the lived experiences, if any, of long standing secondary principals in high performing public schools in Southern California as they relate to stress and coping? Four themes emerged during principal interviews while exploring their lived experiences as they related to stress: Negotiating District Office Mandates, Ameliorating Parent Concerns, Fighting Personal Breaking Points, and Handling Personnel Issues.

Stress theme 1: Negotiating district office mandates. Alice, Brett, Chris, Dave, and Ed all agreed that when the district office requires reports, has new initiatives, or demands attention to matters that do not appear to be significant to the goings on at a school site, then stress settles in.

Alice. Alice thinks that School A and the entire district should be focusing on the implementation of the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and any directive outside of CCSS is unimportant. Alice expressed that having to bring the importance of CCSS to the district's attention is exhausting to her.

Another stressor can be the district office ... they are amazing but sometimes they just are going this way [motions one hand moving straight and the other hand going off to the right]. For example, with the change to the Common Core State Standards, it's huge and

all of the principals in our district ... took the superintendent out to lunch one day and we said, "The most important thing is the change to the Common Core - elementary through high school. When you're asking us to do this survey and this survey and this survey and all of these other things, it's too much. It's all these learning walk protocol things. It's just too much. You need to let us focus."

Alice also expressed stress when interacting with district office staff who do not have secondary experience.

We have other people here at the district office that don't have secondary experience and ... they don't get that secondary teachers are very different than elementary teachers. I think elementary teachers are just, "Okay. We're going to do this. Hey, that's great. Let's do this!" and high school teachers like to close [their classroom] door and do what they want to do. It was [very difficult] for me to be able to go back [to the Superintendent] and say, "You know, one thing that I really understand is the culture of my staff [and] I'm telling you they are done."

Brett. Brett's School B has an API score of 932 and all subgroups have met the Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) in terms of achievement yet his district is still demanding that School B make more strides in achievement for certain subgroups which makes Brett feel like a failure. Brett played a couple of voice mail messages for this researcher from one of the cabinet members at the district office. The messages were requests for meetings to discuss how to reach more students; no mention was made about the gains already achieved.

Brett expressed frustration with an apparent disconnect the district office seems to have with what happens at the school site, stating, "[It's stressful] when we have better things to do and we're called to do something else, and that usually comes from [the school district]." The day that this researcher interviewed Brett, he had just found out that summer school would be taking place at School B.

Summer school is stressful. But it's not something that we haven't done. ... We plan well. ... We have to have all our i's dotted [and] t's crossed. But when things happen that we haven't planned out because we weren't supposed to plan them out, and we're responsible for them, that creates the [most] stress. And then counting on that piece of the puzzle to fit, so the bigger picture looks like it's supposed to, and [district office staff] don't follow through on their end ... that's frustrating because that's a reflection on [Brett

and School B staff] because it's our site. So some things were supposed to happen Monday morning or actually Friday, that weren't happening, or, "Oh, hey. Yeah, we're using those tables for this." Like, "Why didn't you tell us? Because Monday's coming, guys don't work Saturday, Sunday, and I've got a thousand kids coming and I got two classrooms that need 20 tables, it just ... I got to have a place for those kids to sit."

Brett also gets frustrated with the lack of monetary support for certain programs that are needed to build student morale and school spirit, such as Associated Student Body (ASB). Brett said, "And you don't have an ASB person and the district doesn't pay for that [position] so I'm supposed to try to get somebody that can do ASB [for free]."

Chris. Chris was directed by his district office to write up a teacher for something in which Chris was not involved. It was a painful experience for both the teacher and Chris. Chris admitted that if he had the chance to do it all over again, he would simply refuse.

Writing people up ... [when] I know nothing is going to change is something I don't normally do ... [T]his past year, I ended up writing up a teacher for [the district office and it] really wasn't at my discretion ... If I had to do it again ... I would let [the district] know ... that I'm not going to [write the person up and] if they want to write the guy up, [the district can do it] and they take all the responsibility with it. ... I was just ... caught in the middle, and it wasn't something that was pleasant for me [or] for the other guy.

Chris also revealed that working with district staff who are not under his supervision, such as the grounds crew, is especially stressful. Chris has a vision of how School C should look in terms of curb appeal and the grounds crew, supervised by district office staff, are not meeting his expectations.

I would say that my big stressor is I have to depend on so many other people to do things and many times I'm disappointed in the result. I battle my grounds people every day about how lame they are and ... that becomes stressful for me because people complain [that] the front [of the school] looks crummy. ... All [the grounds crew] wants to do is mow the grass and that's it. Uh so this job takes a lot of depending on other people to do a successful job and if you have people that you can't really control and they're all union so it's impossible for me to do anything with them. Um, that's a stressor.

Dave. Each year Dave receives orders to make cuts in his master schedule, which usually happens within days of school opening requiring changes to a complicated master schedule.

Dave stated that while he adheres to such directives he gets irritated because a lot of time creating the master schedule gets wasted.

It's stressful saying you completed your master schedule and then you're told [by the district office] to cut three more sections. And then it's like back to the drawing board. Thank you for telling me that now after I've done this work. I, it, it sucks, you know, but you have to do it.

Dave shared that he is always being asked for something from the district office. He admits that it is aggravating to process these requests when he feels it takes away from what he really wants to do – observe classrooms. Dave stated, “Whatever I’m asked for... ‘We need your instructional minutes. We need your master schedule. We need, you know, whatever, your bell schedule. We need’ ...or, ‘Give me a report on this. Give me a report on that.’”

Ed. Ed declared that his district is “out of touch” with what schools need and doesn’t “find the district to be as supportive as you would hope.” Ed shared that he gets irritated with “the bureaucrats downtown that don’t have a real direct link to what’s happening at the school. I guess that would be the one ongoing frustrating thing and how to move around with that and make it work for me.” He has given up trying to buffer his teachers from what he feels are irrelevant mandates and has instead given to full heartedly committing to any directive given by the district even if he knows it is not in the best interest of kids.

When the district gives me something that I wasn’t expecting and it’s new, um, on top of the plate that is already pretty full, I haven’t appreciated that. When I first started, um, I would fight it ... It did not make me any friends with my [district] supervisor. It seems like the district likes ... shining objects and they go, “Oh! Let’s do this.” You know and like every other day, every other year [the district] seems to be going after a new fad or something. ... I play sometimes to the absurdity of it. But the district’s application of stuff is very, very frustrating because it seems to be shifting me off of the direction I think we should be going. That is probably the most frustrating.

Stress theme 2: Ameliorating parent concerns. A stressor that all five principals agreed upon is taking time dealing with parent complaints and apprehensions.

Alice. While Alice knows that parents need her attention, she struggles with having to put off her other job responsibilities to meet with parents who are unhappy with the teachers to whom their children have been assigned. Alice stated, “[Parents are constantly complaining that], ‘we don’t want this teacher.’”

Alice also shared that parents are very concerned about their children’s grades and will demand to meet even if the child did not deserve a high grade.

For example, the parent that was supposed to come in this morning, [the parent’s] student had wrote me this very long explanation of why she plagiarized on a paper ... I just commented [while being] very specific, citing ed code, being really, really clear [that] it’s not personal. Yeah. I spend a lot of time on that. It’s a big deal here.

Alice admitted to being wary when she first became principal because of the stories she heard about demanding parents at School A.

The parents were the reason that um, everybody told me not to come to this school. The parents were out of control, really entitled, ... [and] would run out the principals. ... I met with this [one parent and] she said, “You know, people in the office are really rude at your school and nobody treats me well whenever I’m there.” And I said, “Well, I want you to know that customer service is really important to me and we’re going to be the Nordstrom’s [of] customer service.” She [said], “Huh, surely you mean Neiman Marcus.”

When the researcher commended Alice on her vast amount of experience in handling different situations, Alice just shook her head and said, “I have battle scars. That’s what I have.”

Brett. Brett’s stress with parents comes from parents who want their children in the highest level classes regardless of the student’s ability. The parents will even argue “reverse discrimination” if their child doesn’t get the honors class.

So we give a test for seventh graders to get into algebra. If they score high enough, they get in there, [if not] then they don’t. No questions asked. Do not bring me their certificates, show me what math class they took, about their grade, class, I don’t care. So we have one parent who’s a math teacher in [a neighboring district] and he was upset because his son didn’t get [into] the class. He said, “Not fair.” And he had all these reasons, and “These Asians get into the class’ and because his kid is White, it’s not fair. It’s reverse discrimination!”

Chris. Both Alice and Chris have parents who are constantly wanting to choose specific teachers for their children. While Alice will not allow it, Chris finds it easier to just give parents the teachers they want. Chris, then, becomes stressed because he has to address the resentment from the teachers when they find out that students and families are opting out of their classes.

My theory is, I tell the teachers ... “If you have a doctor you don’t like, you don’t keep going to him, you have a store you don’t like, you don’t keep going in. So how come in education when a guy gets in your class, some blind draft that the kid just ends up in your class, we have to stick with that and if I move them it’s called teacher shopping?” ... So that’s kind, that’s kind of a stressor.

Chris admitted that there are certain parents who are never satisfied with any outcome. He finds them very irritating.

You always have a couple of parent stressors that are never [going away], you see their name on an email or on the phone ... you’re going to have to talk to them. And you know, they’re always mad about the same thing. And it’s, you’re [thinking], “I’m bending over backwards for you and you’re [not appreciating everything I’m doing.]”

Dave. Dave disclosed that he gets stressed by parents who come in angry and yelling. Even though Dave can anticipate such events, he cannot stop these angry visitors from elevating his blood pressure.

The parent part of our job is probably the toughest part... When you have an angry-yelling parent in your office, and they’re being belligerent, and, you know, first and foremost, I want to get that parent calmed down because I don’t want my office staff [or] students in the office being stressed out. So ... the blood pressure goes up, and that creates ... a stressful situation that needs to be addressed by myself. You know, we’ve had that ... happen a couple times each year. ... [We] deal with some belligerent parents. ... I’m more worried about the angry parent ... who is worried about child-custody issues ... coming up to the school because they can’t pick up their kid, and there are court orders say that they’re supposed to stay away. So, um ... That is more of a worry to me than the school catching on fire.

Ed. Ed communicated that parents start contacting him in June, right after the school year is over, wanting to know if their child has been accepted into accelerated math classes for

the following school year. He admitted to struggling with finding time to call them or meet with them and educate them on why their child may or may not be a good fit.

I'll admit this past Thursday was our last day [of school] and that was a very, very tough day. Our elementary schools decided ... [to] let everybody out early. My front office staff was slammed with parents trying to pull kids out. [At the same time], I had an incident that was very complex that I needed to be addressing along with getting ready for the promotion ceremony that evening. Then we had a parent who wanted to argue grades. That was a hard day to get out of and go, "Oh! I'm excited about coming back."

We have accelerated mathematics and every parent believes that their child's gifted and should be accelerated. And so starting in June, parents are calling and asking me whether or not their child has been accelerated and I won't know until August. And then I'll be getting more calls [in August] and then I have to sit down with them and I have to educate them as to why their child may or may not be a good fit.

Ed revealed that he finds himself spending a lot of time schooling parents about how School E, student learning, and the instructional programs work. Ed stated, "My job is to educate parents. They don't come with a handbook...the kids don't. And school is different than when [the parents] went [to school]."

Stress Theme 3: Fighting personal breaking points. Four of the five principals disclosed specific personal limits that when are crossed, make it difficult for them to overcome.

Alice. Alice finds that the news media can cause disruption on campus. One of Alice's teachers was shot at the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) and as the teacher was taken to the hospital, he first called his parents and then called Alice. Since the teacher's parents were out of state, Alice took on the caretaker role and left immediately to visit the teacher in the hospital. She also addressed the media who was clamoring to interview the teacher. Media vans camped outside of School A for 2 weeks making School A the number one news story that month. Having reporters stop at nothing to get an interview and then ridicule her for not giving certain reporters an interview was too much for Alice to handle.

So for probably almost two weeks, we were the top national news story and [at] one point we had the entire parking lot [in front of our theater filled with] news vans ... and [we were supposed] to keep school going and keep normalcy when you've got this media circus. I had um, one news station person write to me and said that it was ... an epic fail that she failed to get interview [with Alice and her teacher] and [that] I so unkind and blah, blah, blah and it just railed me. It was like, "This is not about you." She wrote the same thing to the [teacher] who was shot ... So news media can be a huge stress.

Alice also admitted that confronting negativity is an additional stressor.

Confrontation. I mean, [with] parents it's stressful. Probably the biggest stressor for me is negativity. If I'm in a meeting with people that are um, "No, that won't work. No, that won't work." Then, no, that won't work. [It is] very stressful for me to be in a room where there's a ton of negativity We were having interviews yesterday and um, one of the department chairs in the interview was trying to talk to my assistant principal about changing the master schedule and the candidate didn't know that this conversation was taking place but it's a very negative undercurrent and I finally had to stop and I had to pull her out and just say, "We're not having that conversation now. We're not doing this. It's not appropriate." I feel like when somebody else is ... one of my team is stressed then I start to feel stressed and I feel like it's my job to really protect people from negativity.

Brett. Brett disclosed that emergencies interrupted by more emergencies takes precious time away from preparing for upcoming events such as staff development. Having to re-prioritize last minute, even though he knows that there are more immediate concerns, is a huge stress for Brett. Brett stated, "You don't have time to do a lot of things you need to do during your day so you have to stay later to get those things done." He also recalled, "I think what's frustrating is wasting time. When we have better things to do and we're called to do something else." Additionally, Brett noted, "Professional development is stressful. Staff development days are stressful. Planning. Planning. ... I think that's the most stressful thing, is the meetings and the staff development [when I don't have the time to plan]."

Most importantly, Brett shared that he gets easily overwhelmed by the amount of work for which he is responsible. Even though Brett scored at the moderate level on the RS, he did not consider himself resilient and constantly described himself as overwhelmed and stressed out "when I'm overloaded with work."

Dave. Dave disclosed that he gets overwhelmed by the enormity of keeping students and staff safe in the event of an emergency. While he has had several close calls such as a thieves taking refuge on School D's campus and having helicopters hover overhead without any warning, he still struggles with just accepting that safety concerns will always come up unexpectedly.

I remember one time we had thieves. There was a robbery that occurred in our town here and there were helicopters and police cars trying to track down these thieves that ran out into the neighborhoods. Well, they came onto our campus, jumped the fence, running onto our campus.

There was a time when there were shootings going on in [the city in which School D is located] a couple of years ago, I think, regarding the man killing the cops. And, um, we had two helicopters hovering over our school, and basically, just the sound itself...for like, they were around our school for a couple of hours hovering, uh, news helicopters. And just the sound was causing a lot of fear in our students themselves and our teaching staff.

Other situations that cause stress is ... going into lockdown for [any] reason. That's always on [my] mind. I'm not worried about fires in my school, you know. ... every month we'll do a fire drill ... [and] we do lockdown drills a couple times a year. In my opinion, we should probably be doing [lockdown drills] every month, you know?

Ed. Ed stated that he struggles when there is more than one commitment that he must attend per week. Too many affairs taking place in the matter of one day or one week proves to be stressful for Ed. He and his team take great effort to only schedule one parent meeting, promotion activity, etc. however at the end of this past school year promotion, 8th grade dance, and a parent conference were all scheduled on the same day and Ed claims it was the second worst day as an administrator in his career.

And the multi-tasking is a lie, they're not in the moment. I think that would be stressful. So I only do one thing at a time, I don't try to multi-task. I try to keep my events down to like one event a day. I don't pile those on. Like Thursday I didn't really want to have a parent meeting with regards to grades on the day that I'm also doing the promotion and closing the school. ... It's the promotion ceremony and the dance afterwards. Ideally I would have those separate. ... So I wouldn't pile on a school dance along with an

assembly. I try to keep those separate as I can ... It's the idea of usually one big event, a week, if I'm doing something. ... It's stressful for everybody.

Stress theme 4: Handling personnel issues. Four of the five principals disclosed that dealing with staff issues is very demanding.

Alice. Alice shared stories of having to go through three cheerleading coaches in 6 years due to inappropriate interactions with students, the swindling of funds, and an underground operation with knock-off cheer uniforms causing a community uproar.

I had a cheerleading coach who ... this is crazy. I've had three cheerleading coaches. One, my first year who was not appropriate with students so we needed to get rid of him. Then we hired another woman who ordered uniforms and then the girls were all fit for the uniforms and then the uniforms came and the girls and their parents started coming in and said, 'These are not the uniforms that we ordered. These are you know, poorly made.' ... She had them knocked off and made. They were very poorly made and then she had them delivered to a fake address where she had set up and it was this whole big scam that she had going on. So we got rid of her but I mean, the parents were outraged and so just getting through that was you know, just really a struggle.

Alice also mentioned that dealing with classified staff can be stressful when you cannot change personalities and you have to make change.

I had to move [a secretary out from] being out where she was our um, attendance person and so she was you know, she was snappy with kids and snappy with parents and just yeah, she was really good at her job and, you know, she didn't want to talk to people. So I moved her into an office just completely isolated from everybody else which made the [other] secretaries really upset because they were like, "Oh, if you behave badly, you get an office." It took a while to explain that and then throughout that I made a lot of strategic changes moving people's offices.

While Alice has made great strides in dealing with difficult personnel, there are teachers who still have inappropriate behavior. Alice recalled an incident that happened right after the end of the school year when a teacher over-reacted to a situation and got the local media involved.

This [goes] back to some of our teachers [who] are still bullying. [A teacher] went up to the media specialist and said, 'You know, Nazis destroyed books and how are you any different?' and the media specialist came in and she was so shaken. I mean that wasn't all

that was said and she come in and she goes, “A teacher just called me a Nazi,” and she was so upset. This [other] teacher wrote me an e-mail and said, “Did you know that they’re doing this?” and I said, “Yes, I did know that. This is the reason, blah, blah, blah.” She said, ‘Well, I am outraged and I took pictures.’ So then I got an e-mail from the [local newspaper] writer ... and we always say we live and die by the [local newspaper]. ... So I got an e-mail from the writer from the (local newspaper) that I communicate with and she said, “So I understand you’re throwing away books. I’m outraged, blah, blah, blah.” So I had to write back and [explain]. ... It’s like managing stuff like that.

Alice admitted that having to properly train assistant principals is taxing, especially because she is had a high turnover.

I’ve had way too many assistant principals at this school. I have had to let go of three. It didn’t work out and the stress of having new assistant principals that are great but the training of the observations and the evaluations, that ... that is more stressful.

Brett. Brett, being the 22nd principal in the last 60 years, has had to negotiate with staff members who feel that they run the show. The details and legalities that go into a disciplinary write-up can take hours if not days to properly complete.

Writing up teachers is stressful for me. Not the part of talking to them about their behavior. It’s the write up. Yes, because you have to make sure it’s right. That it’s worded correctly, that you’re not missing something. Because I’ve had to write up a number of teachers. I mean, and it’s not fun. But it’s, it’s making sure I have the right words down. Because I can [tell] the teacher, ‘You did this wrong, this is why it was wrong, this is how it affected students’ but putting that all together in a write up for me is stressful.

The toughest part for me actually, I think, is the teachers that, you know, after they just had a write up and they say, “Well, you have it out to get me.” I don’t have it out to get you. “You think I like writing people up?” That’s one of the [things] I can’t stand, that’s my stress.

Brett also shared that when a teacher or staff member does something wrong and he has to be political in how he handles the situation, regardless of how much he disagrees with what the teacher/staff member has done, is very frustrating to him.

I am stressed when a teacher does something stupid that I have to [explain to parents or the community]. In terms of, if you do something that you know is wrong, I can’t go to the parents and say what you did was wrong. What the teacher did, that was wrong. That

was totally wrong. And, you know, I have to come up with a way, politically, to make sure that I'm protecting my teacher and my school and my district, while still getting across to the parents. So that's stress from the beginning, to figure out, "Okay, how do I come up with the right words to use...?"

Chris. Chris declared that he avoids navigating the write-up procedure as he feels it really doesn't make a difference due to teacher tenure laws and he feels it is a waste of time. Chris avoids the stress of disciplining teachers by appeasing parents by allowing them to "teacher shop." In turn, however, Chris must then answer to teachers about why he moves students out of their classes causing him stress.

This is why nobody wants to be in your class. This is why you have a class of 23 and everybody else has class of 33. [The teacher will ask,] "Well, how can you let people leave my class?" Because I'm tired [of] fight[ing] the battle every day of them coming in complaining about you. So I'm just moving them. ... So that's the stressor, [when teachers] feel like I'm giving in and not holding the line [with parents]... Certain teachers I know are stressors just because they're, they just need a lot of hand holding or they are just [rude] to kids.

Ed. Ed shared about a group of teachers that he calls the "toxic trio." Since he cannot fire them, he has decided to split them into different grade levels. Ed feels they are less toxic alone than they are together. Even still, Ed worries how they affect the rest of the staff.

It ended up being three people who would just breathe the air out of the room. They were sixth grade teachers and I would refer to them as the "toxic trio." The seventh and eighth grade staff did not actually like meeting with them. ... I found that when you broke them up and you work with them in smaller groups ... They had to participate and they had to be engaged. One of the three has [since] retired and the other two are far less toxic. You can actually be within five feet of them. But they were dreadful ... they wanted to control the campus and what they were doing was shredding through the rest of the staff.

Coping and research question 2. What are the lived experiences, if any, of long standing secondary principals in high performing public schools in Southern California as they relate to stress and coping? Four themes emerged in the principal interviews when exploring their lived experiences as they related to coping: Having a Supportive Significant Other, Engaging in Activities or Hobbies, Interacting with Peers, and Laughing with Coworkers.

Coping theme 1: Having a supportive significant other. All five principals shared that having an understanding significant other, spouse, or family was helpful in coping with the stresses of being a principal.

Alice. Alice and her husband have known each other since high school and are very close. Alice's husband and two children have been very supportive in her role as principal of School A. Because her husband works from their home, two miles away from School A, Alice meets her husband for lunch on some days as a reprieve. Just knowing that her husband is close by is reassuring to Alice.

I have very supportive husband who was my high school prom date. So we've been together a very long time. My husband showed up and you know, helped me build every set [when she taught theater]. Um, so I really have a huge support system around me. The best thing about my job right now, I live two miles from my parking lot to the highway, it's two miles. My husband works out of our house. So I can meet him for lunch.

Brett. Brett shared that his wife is not only supportive but will tell him if he is spending too much time at work and she has put a stop to him coming in on the weekends. Brett cares what his wife's feelings and tries hard not to hurt her.

If you're an effective principal, you're out, you're out and about [at] activities for the kids outside of school, you have your PTA meetings, you have your board meetings [and] it takes a lot out of you, family-wise. Luckily, I have a strong family structure; my wife is great. And she understands. I don't why she understands but she does.

Chris. Chris believes that his significant other is very supportive because she is a teacher and has her administrative credential.

I can say the girl I go out with, she's a teacher too so she has that knowledge that can talk about and in fact she has her administrator credential too. She has done some summer school stuff but she sees what everybody else does.

Dave. Dave looks forward to going home every day and spending time with his wife.

While Dave tries not to talk about work at home, his wife has been very understanding of the job's demands.

I vent to [my wife] every once in a while, and stuff like that, but I don't make it a regular thing. Um, you know, I'm always trying to stay positive. Uh, because I mean, if I came home and vented every day about whatever frustration I had that impact personal relationships and, you know, I don't want to do that with, to my wife, you know? And vice versa, you know. No one likes to be around a mooney person all day. So, um, I've really become pretty good at just leaving it behind when I go home, and focusing on my personal relationships, you know, instead of focusing on my job.

Ed. Ed revealed that his wife is very supportive and it helps him deal with the stress and uncertainties of the job. Ed stated, "On occasions I think my wife is very supportive and that's pretty immense. So if and when I do get in a jam, I can all her. So having an understanding spouse is important."

Coping theme 2: Engaging in activities or hobbies. All five principals stated that they make an effort to engage in some sort of activity or hobby away from work because it gives them something to which to look forward as well as a release.

Alice. Alice stated,

I rode my bike for a couple of years and that was really awesome because at the end of the day, I could ... just ride home...Almost always when I come home from work, I put everything down and I go into my studio and I um, I'm a quilter and I embroider. ... I'm doing something creative. I'm doing something that has nothing to do with work.

Brett. Brett gushed that he loves spending time with his children. Every day he focuses on seeing his children and it gets him through the day, "I want to see them. I just want to see them." He also finds that doing the shopping for the family helps with reducing stress. He stated, "I do the shopping so I go to Costco. That might be my relief...I go to Costco...and sometimes I take the kids with me." Brett shared that the more time he spends with his children, the happier he is.

Chris. Chris disclosed that he practices yoga and works out more for the management of his medical condition than to help with stress but that it helps all the same.

I would say I guess exercise and outside activities [help me cope] but yeah, I work out every morning but ... it's more for [my medical condition] as opposed to a stress reliever... It really it took my [medical condition] to kind of make more of a balance [between personal and professional time]. I now try to do one or two activities every uh, I want to say semester but it's not really semester, you know, I do parks programs or whatever ... And so you know it's something that you're kind of committed to and you go to. ... I found that if I don't make a commitment to it, I don't balance [personal and professional time] at all. I usually try to get season tickets to something like uh, we had season tickets to like ballet for many years and then we've done musical theater and so things like that.

Dave. Dave shared that going for walks with his wife along the beach are the best part of his day. Dave's school district has a "wellness program" where employees, of all levels, are encouraged and rewarded for exercising.

I walk with my wife a lot, you know. We live up in [a beach community], so we go for walks on the strands. ... But as far as regular exercise goes, you know, I'd say on the weekends for sure, and on the evenings, I go for walks, you know with my wife. [Dave's school district] has a wellness program ... that we have to, in trying to help people exercise and stuff. I'd say that's, that's something formal where we have different contests and prizes and stuff, trying to get people to exercise and, um ... That's for all employees. Not just administrators.

Ed. Ed revealed that he and his wife play kids' video games for fun.

Coping theme 3: Interacting with peers. Four of out the five principals shared that they have principal colleagues with whom they feel they can express frustrations and disclose experiences. Alice, Brett, Dave, and Ed declared that one of the best forms of coping is to network and communicate with colleagues who are principals.

Alice. Alice shared that while her school district is small and the district office employees, such as the superintendent, are very like to show up at games or plays, there are times when the district office seems to have goals that are not beneficial to school sites. She and the other principals in her district are very close. Most recently her group of principals shared

with the Superintendent how frustrated they were about the lack of time and attention to the new California Common Core State Standards. Alice stated, “This is the most important thing is the change ... It really did do some good.”

Alice also shared how she and her principal colleagues, together, were able to let the district office know about their frustrations regarding the lack of input from secondary school sites toward important decisions such as the academic calendar.

We tried it [ending first semester at winter break] for a year and then we [secondary principals] went back to the Board and the senior cabinet and said, ‘It’s just not good for us.’ We came up with a counter proposal. The ability to be able to go to senior cabinet and you know have that communication.

Brett. Brett stated that he has three principal friends with whom he can speak about hardships of the job. Brett even admitted that simply speaking with the researcher has made him feel “lighter.” Brett stated, “I love [his daughter’s] principal. I love her principal. We call each other.” A friend from Brett’s has recently become a principal and he enjoys connecting with her.

Because she’s a principal also. She just got, received her principalship, which is really cool because I was the one that got her to become a teacher. ... Because it’s just, it’s nice to have someone that’s been in that position to talk to.

In reference to taking part in the interview, Brett shared the following, “[Participating in this interview is] just so releasing, by the way. This is so great. I love [getting stressors] off my shoulders. I feel lighter, just so you know.”

Dave. Dave, on the other hand, stated that he relies on the ACSA monthly social activities to network and connect with other principals in different districts.

Probably the best place to, kind of, get together with other principals and, kind of, vent and talk about experiences is with ACSA and the Happy Hours that they have. ... Because you get to, you know, sit back and, in a relaxed atmosphere, talk to fellow administrators and stuff. And I think that’s, to me, that’s something that’s not taken advantage of by a lot of administrators. And they don’t even have to be members of ACSA ... I really encourage administrators to go to these events.

Ed. Ed disclosed that he is close with the other middle school principals in his school district and that they regularly connect and share concerns, stories, and situations and it helps reduce anxiety.

The [four middle school principals in Ed's school district], we have a lot of fun. So getting something [from the district office] that, that's like 'Oh man. I really don't want to do this.' Then we get together and we talk about it. And we make it so it's palatable, if you will.

For example, Ed shared that he gets ideas from his colleagues about how events, such as promotion, are arranged. Ed also shared that he and his colleagues provide emotional support for each other in terms of balancing the workload of the principalship and their personal lives.

So I had this conversation with my peers and just recently [a principal colleague] actually called me at home. He mentioned his wife was pissed off at him because he couldn't leave the campus to pick up his son and she wanted to go to a promotion ceremony. He says, "I can't I'm in the middle of a police thing and I can't." ... And I said that's um, it's very lonely and it sucks a lot. She will not understand it. So, buy her flowers.

Coping theme 4: Laughing with coworkers. Three of the five principals interviewed admitted that laughing with their colleagues makes stressful times more bearable. Alice, Brett, and Ed expressed that they rely heavily on laughter with their administrative teams. Not only did all three principals make jokes and laugh easily during the interviews with the researcher, they also shared stories of how laughing with their teams has helped them get through tough times.

Alice. Alice confided that she and her team keep a running list of stressful events that have happened throughout the year to laugh about later.

I surround myself with people [who] are very positive. We have a lot of fun – my administrative team. I have a tremendous team and we make each other laugh like I mean, even the teachers sitting on their interviews that we had yesterday. It was a marathon day of interviews and then between interviews they were just looking at us like, "I can't believe you guys crack each other up like this."

Alice also shared that she and one of her assistant principals like to take the school's golf cart on "joy rides" around the neighborhood when things feel a little too intense. She said at first it had been a joke but now it is something that they do regularly.

My assistant principal and I have a thing that we do when we just need to get away. We get in the golf cart and we go for a joyride [laughing all the while]. That's what we call it and we have two upper fields here and there's a back gate there and they're really winding [streets] and it's really, really pretty. We just get in our golf cart. We go right out the back gate. (Laughing)

Brett. Brett confided that periodically he and his assistant principal will listen to voicemails left by angry parents and teachers as well as by district personnel. They enjoy rehashing the "drama" and laughing about past stressful situations. They also have a "curse jar" where they put money when they've used inappropriate language. They both laughed hysterically while sharing their stories.

We cope by humor. We cope ... It's really a family. ... Coping really comes after the day is over. ... When the teachers are gone, and we can speak freely. And say what an ass so-and-so was... (laughs) Yes. I'll do it right now [put money in the curse jar]. I do it often. I have a five dollar bill in there because I had a really bad day. It's been a tough year. I'll put in [more].

Ed. Ed commented that he looks for the absurdity in every situation so that he and his assistant principal can laugh about it.

So you just met my assistant principal and I have four colleagues [the four middle school principals in Ed's school district] and we laugh at [each others' stories]. ... Frequently these situations that would cause stress or anxiety are actually funny in the absurd. I mean if you take it out of context, you- you're dealing with some of the stupidest things that when you look at it you go, "How can you not laugh at it?" So when you tell people this stuff, I mean it's just the fun or for good stories. It's just funny.

Summary of Key Findings

This phenomenological study of long standing secondary principals of high performing public schools in Southern California has produced several key findings. The five participants have been principals at their current school sites for more than 5 years. These principals were

chosen not only because they are considered *long standing*, but also because the schools at which they lead are considered *high performing* because their schools have an API score over 850, ranging from 875 to 943 out of a maximum possible of 1000. The participants fit the criteria of the phenomena for the study as they are secondary principals residing at their current high performing public school longer than the 3-5 year limit at which studies show principals leave their position.

The principals in this study shared specific strategies that they have learned to not only strengthen their resiliency but also cope with stressors (see Table 5). The lived experiences that these principals have encountered have yielded specific strategies that they use to handle the pressures of the job.

Table 5

Strategies Used by Principals to Strengthen Resiliency and Cope with Stressors

Strategy	Principal Behaviors
Resiliency - Managing Workload	<p>Alice: Set priorities; staff is like family and always comes first; you can apologize for anything; get observations in before winter break; and use the “Look For” application for iPad to do classroom observations</p> <p>Brett: Set priorities and stay late if needed; no weekends</p> <p>Chris: Set priorities – what is due tomorrow?; acknowledge that you are not going to please everyone</p> <p>Dave: Set reminders on Outlook Calendar to remind you of what is due; stay late at work so that you don’t have to bring the laptop (or work) home</p> <p>Ed: Set priorities by doing what is most urgent first; don’t carry your phone because multi-tasking does not work</p>

(continued)

Strategy	Principal Behaviors
Resiliency – Managing Staff	Alice: gives her union representative a free period so that s/he is free to meet daily to get ahead of problems
	Brett: makes an effort to be fair with all employees by rotating preparation periods each year by team
	Ed: conducts mediations between students and teachers by whom the students feel bullied
Resiliency – Difficult Parent	Alice: consistently refers parents back to the teacher for clarification and communication
	Brett: takes time to greet students and families at the front of the school every day
Coping – Laughing with Coworkers	Alice: takes a ride on school golf cart with assistant principal around surrounding neighborhood to laugh
	Brett: puts money in a curse jar when he and his assistant principal debrief the day
	Ed: looks for the absurdity in every situation to make it a funny story

Research Question 1 sought to understand the experiences of these long standing secondary principals in high performing public schools as they relate to resiliency. While all five principals had a variety of experiences that they believed have made them resilient, four common themes stood out with two of the four themes agreed upon by all five principals and the other two themes agreed upon by four out of the five principals. All five principals shared practices that help them with managing their work load as well as events in their personal lives that they believe have contributed to their resiliency while four of the five principals also shared difficult encounters with parents and occurrences with managing staff.

The purpose of Research Question 2 was to gain knowledge of the lived experiences of these long standing secondary principals of high performing public schools as they relate to stress and coping. In terms of stress, all five principals stated that implementing district office

mandates and handling angry parent complaints are difficult to manage. All five principals also shared personal examples of personal thresholds, when crossed become a huge stress in their job. Four out of five principals admitted that confronting staff misbehavior causes them anxiety and tension.

In terms of the coping skills that these principals identified, all five principals emphasized that having a supportive significant other and engaging in non-work related activities gave them pleasure and something (or someone) to which/whom to look forward. Four out of the five principals interviewed shared that interacting with colleagues who are also principals encourages them to get through difficult situations. Three out of the five principals confessed that laughing with co-workers is the coping strategy that gives them the most relief from work stressors.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Previous studies have well-documented the overwhelming roles and responsibilities for which principals are accountable (Bolman & Deal, 2008; DuFour et al., 2008; E. Fuller et al., 2007; Gates et al., 2006; Hausman et al., 2000; Nixon, 2012; K. Patterson et al., 2012). There is little research which defines how secondary principals of high performing public schools can manage their workload and stressors while maintaining resiliency and longevity in their positions. This phenomenological research study sought to discover the experiences secondary principals with more than 5 years' tenure of high performing public schools in Southern California found as strengthening their resiliency, identifying stressors and the coping strategies they used to mollify such stressors.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to investigate and explore the lived experiences of long standing secondary principals of high performing public schools in Southern California as they relate to resiliency, stress, and coping.

Research Questions

1. What are the experiences of long standing secondary principals of high performing public schools as they relate to resiliency?
2. What are the lived experiences of long standing secondary principals of high performing public schools as they relate to stress and coping?

Research Design

A qualitative, transcendental phenomenological study was employed for this study. Through purposive sampling, five participants were selected – secondary principals of high performing public schools in Southern California with more than 5 years' tenure at the same

school. Open-ended questions during a face to face interview were used to discover the lived experiences of these principals as they related to resiliency, stress, and coping. The recorded interviews transcribed and copies of the transcriptions were emailed to the participants for editing. The transcripts were then downloaded into a qualitative research software program called HyperRESEARCH where data was coded and categorized into themes.

Discussion of Key Findings

Twelve themes were revealed during the data analysis, four themes for each of the three variables: resilience, stress, and coping. Because there were only five participants, themes were created for topics discussed by three or more of the participants.

Research Question One. Four themes emerged relating to experiences that principals felt as having contributed to their resiliency. Two of the five principal participants took the RS as requested and reflected that they enjoyed taking the time to reflect on their own resiliency. Interestingly, the other three principal participants stated that they did not have time to complete the online survey. Adjustments were made to the interview questions to accommodate for three participants who had not taken the RS. In those three cases, the researcher gave the participants the definition of resilience and asked them to reflect.

All five of the principal participants who were interviewed this study felt that experiences in managing the workload and applying personal experiences have contributed to their resiliency. Four out of the five participants, Alice, Brett, Chris, and Ed, believed that their experiences dealing with difficult staff and Alice, Brett, Dave and Ed stated that interacting with challenging parents have also strengthened their resiliency as principals.

Research Question Two and Stress. All five principal participants willingly disclosed several stressors that they found challenging in their jobs. Three of the four themes that emerged

were concurred by all five participants: negotiating district office mandates, ameliorating parent concerns, and fighting personal breaking points. Four out of the five participants (Alice, Brett, Chris, and Ed) agreed handling personnel issues was also a stressor thereby creating the fourth and final theme under stress.

Research Question Two and Coping. In terms of coping strategies used by the principal participants to deal with the stress of the job, four themes emerged. All five participants agreed that having a supportive significant other and engaging in activities have helped them cope with the pressures and responsibilities of being principals. Four of the participants, Alice, Brett, Dave, and Ed, indicated that interacting with peers was a coping strategy that they used regularly. While only three out of the five participants, Alice, Brett, and Ed, declared that laughing with their coworkers was a positive coping skills used to deal with stress, it is included in the findings because of the link that laughter has been researched to have in overcoming stress (Braverman, 2001; Friedman, 2002; J. Patterson & Kelleher, 2005; Polka & Litchka, 2008; Ward, 2003).

Conclusions

The findings from this qualitative phenomenological study produce five conclusions regarding resiliency, stressors, and coping skills employed by long standing secondary principals of high performing public schools in Southern California.

Prioritizing job responsibilities allows principals to focus on what is most important.

All five participants in this study recognized that focusing on what they believe to be the most important responsibilities has helped them alleviate stress and build resiliency. Principals' plans are constantly derailed due to continual interruptions such as attending unplanned meetings, dealing with problems that arise, and addressing the needs of various stakeholders (DuFour,

DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010; Fullan, 2007; E. Fuller et al., 2007; Gates et al., 2006; Hallinger & Murphy, 2013). Principals who are value driven and make decisions based on what is best for kids best handle hardships such as managing competing priorities (Braverman, 2001; Christman & McClellan, 2008; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013; Grotberg, 2003). Being flexible is an important quality to have in order to be resilient as a principal (Conner, 1993).

Applying personal experiences with adversity promotes empathy which strengthens resiliency. All five principals shared personal experiences with adversity that they believe have made them more empathetic and resilient leaders. Alice lost her father when she was three and was raised without gender bias and with a strong work ethic. This has taught Alice that she is strong, can overcome disappointment, and persevering gets her past problems. Brett learned at a young age he had to remove himself from distractions in order to grow. Brett has carried that persistence into his job as principal by not allowing distractions to dissuade him from what he needs to do. Chris' battle with a life-altering medical condition has allowed him to experience vulnerability which helps him empathize with students going through tough experiences. Dave's familiarity with divorce and losing loved ones grants him to insight to identify with families struggling through similar circumstances. Ed learned that he makes a difference in students' lives when he was asked by a former student to visit her in the hospital on her death bed. These noted experiences have assisted participants in this study to persevere through challenging situations because they have learned that they have the inner strength required to do so. Resilient leaders rely on their experience, implicit knowledge, problem solving skills, and capacity to cope with stress and adversity to bounce back from hardship (Ashton & Duncan, 2012; Buzzanell, 2010; Masten, 2009; Richardson, 2002).

Having well-balanced personal and professional lives strengthens principals'

resiliency. All five participants have significant others whom they feel are supportive of their work as principals. All participants also engage in activities or hobbies that give them joy. Research shows that having relationships with caring adults, surrounding oneself with trusted confidants, using strong support networks, and cultivating strong relationships will get resilient individuals through troubled times (Braverman, 2001; Greene, 2002; Greene et al., 2004; J. Patterson, 2007; Steele & Steele, 1994). Integrated coping skills that are used for long periods of time allow resilient people to experience limitations and setback while still permitting a return to high functioning (Ward, 2003).

Negotiating district office mandates that are believed to conflict with school site needs is a stressor for principals. Alice struggled with making the new Common Core State Standards a priority at her school site when the district office is imposing surveys and multiple initiatives. Brett felt discouraged by last minute directives by the district office, such as putting summer school at his site. Chris was frustrated by being forced by district officials to discipline a teacher regarding an instance of which he had no direct knowledge. Dave battled last minute cuts by the district, which requires him to adjust and re-create a master schedule. Ed became exasperated by directives for his school to participate in certain programs, such as drug awareness programs mandated by the district, which he believed could do more harm than good to his community. Research shows that frustrated principals were found to spend little time coaching teachers in instructional strategies and instead allocate more of their schedule on interacting with the district office and working on compliance issues (B. Fuller et al., 2006). All five participants in this study attempted to communicate frustrations with their district office staff. Alice, Chris, and Ed had the confidence and belief that their school's priorities were more

important than the district mandates and addressed with district office staff. While Alice was able to convince the district that School A's needs must take precedent, Chris and Ed were not successful. Brett and Dave have not confronted their districts about frustrations. All five principals firmly believe that it is essential for district office staffs gain a better understanding of the needs of their school sites.

Ameliorating parent concerns is a stressor that keeps principals from focusing on teaching and learning. Alice is constantly cited California Education Code and recommended that parents contact teachers to help them understand the whole event about which they were concerned. Brett, Chris, and Dave found themselves navigating parent requests for specific teachers for their children. Ed stated that he regularly attended to parent complaints that their children deserved a higher grade than they earned. While all five principals found dealing with difficult parents as a stressor, they all also shared experiences with difficult parents had strengthened their resiliency. However, research shows that changing one's personality to better handle future encounters with hardship contributes to successful encounters with adversity (Christman & McClellan, 2008; Greene et al., 2004).

Implications

Research in this study shows that resiliency is considered to be a "concept that identifies and explains the critical coping skills used by individuals...when they are best beset by chronic or immediate difficulties" (Ward, 2003, p.18). One of the common stressors highlighted by participants in this study was having to negotiate district office mandates. By being aware of this perceived stressor, district office personnel can help strengthen secondary principals' resiliency and longevity by providing principals with access to the three specific coping strategies of which all five principal participants in this study specified as effective.

District offices should support principals in time-management and prioritizing. The first coping strategy identified by the secondary principals in this study was having a supportive significant other. Research has well-documented that having relationships with caring adults and cultivating strong relationships will get individuals through troubled times (Braverman, 2001; Greene, 2002; Greene et al., 2004; J. Patterson, 2007; Steele & Steele, 1994). The district office can help principals prioritize conflicting job responsibilities by providing time-management training and/or workshops. Time-management training can assist principals in identifying the most important responsibilities in which to tackle first, knowing the job duties that can be delegated to others, and recognizing which tasks are not urgent and can wait. By prioritizing their obligations, principals will then be better at balancing their professional and personal lives thereby allowing them to build stronger relationships with their significant others. Having open forums with district office staff to brainstorm solutions of the challenges of balancing district mandates with school site priorities will ultimately reduce anxiety and stress. Finally, by creating time for principals to meet in job-a-like groups to share strategies for time-management and prioritization; approaches for handling difficult parents; and procedures for dealing with difficult staff, the district office sends a strong supportive message to principals that their stressors will be addressed and conquered so that they can balance their personal and professional lives.

District office staff must make the balancing of personal and professional time a priority for principals. District office staff can honor principals' personal time and support principals in engaging in hobbies or activities by modeling resilient behaviors. For example, district officials can demonstrate a respect for principals' personal time by keeping district-initiated emails and requests within weekday work hours rather than sending out emails late at

night or on weekends. A reasonable amount of time, depending on the request, must be given for principals to respond to inquiries. Such requests should consider the amount of work days it will take for principals to complete the task, given all the other responsibilities endowed upon principals. Otherwise, a mixed message is sent causing principals to use personal time to complete district requests.

District offices should encourage and support principals to network with peers. The third research-based coping strategy that principals in this study found useful was networking with peers. It is authenticated that when leaders have access to resources, maintain communication networks, and surround themselves with trusted confidantes, they become more resilient (Buzzanell, 2010; Greene et al., 2004; J. Patterson, 2007). District offices should consider covering the cost for principals to join professional organizations such as the ACSA or the Association for School Curriculum and Development (ASCD). Such organizations sponsor networking events, workshops, and other affairs that include principals from different districts in specific regions. By paying for principals to be a part of an organization that holds regular networking events and workshops, districts send a strong message to principals that their work as school site principals and interacting with peers is highly valued.

Recommendations for Future Research

While this study provided a fascinating account of long standing secondary principals in high performing Southern California public schools, replications of this study should be considered in regards to two capacities: design and other areas of study. A replication of this study might include a more structured interview protocol to include specific research based stressors and coping strategies experienced and employed by principals. Research shows that certain factors not mentioned by participants in this study, such as budget and student discipline,

are documented stressors for secondary principals (Baker, 2013; Hausman et al., 2000; Kelehear, 2004; Nixon, 2012; Pepe, 2011; Rose 2012). A suggested reason the participants in this study may not have mentioned well-documented stressors such as budget and student discipline may be due to the timing of the interviews. Creating and allocating budget items tend to take place either April or May and are usually addressed again in August. Since these interviews took place after the school year had ended, the participants may not have had budget worries as an immediate concern. Similarly, dealing with student issues and discipline is highlighted during the school year are usually long forgotten by the week after school is over. While student discipline tends to bring up thoughts of fights, drug busts, and other severe instances, students in high performing public schools may not engage in such behavior thereby not being mentioned by participants as a stressor. Because the interview instrument for this study did not pinpoint such topics, another study might create interview questions that specifically ask participants to consider, address, and comment on research-based stressors and coping strategies.

A second recommendation for further research could include different topics of study. One interesting phenomenon to consider is the reason that principals leave after a typical 3-5 year tenure and the jobs to which they transfer. For example, the data collection in this study revealed that out of the 445 public secondary schools in Los Angeles County, 86 of those schools had an API over 850. Of those 86 high performing public secondary schools, only 12 schools publicized having principals more than 5 years' tenure. Exploring the movement of the other 74 principals may uncover information that could help school districts retain principals for longer than 5 years. Another consideration for a replication of this study might further explore the gender differences, if any, among long standing principals and how men and women deal with specific stressors. A third focus for a replication of this study might include a comparison of the

lived experiences of long standing principals in terms of resiliency, stress, and coping of principals in different counties of Southern California, in different regions of California, or in different states across the country.

Chapter 5 Summary

This qualitative, phenomenological research study sought to understand the lived experiences of long standing secondary principals of high performing public schools in Southern California as they relate to resiliency, stress, and coping. Five principals qualified for this study and were interviewed using an open-ended protocol to allow for authentic responses regarding their experiences. Analysis of the interviews revealed twelve key findings. Because the interview questions were open-ended, without prompting to specific experiences, stressors, or strategies, themes emerged authentically. Principals in this study shared experiences that have strengthened their resiliency over time resulting in four themes: managing the workload, applying personal experiences, dealing with difficult staff, and interacting with challenging parents. The principals disclosed four common stressors that challenge their resiliency: negotiating district office mandates, ameliorating parent concerns, fighting personal breaking points, and handling personnel issues. While sharing coping strategies that allay their stressors, principals agreed across four themes: having a supportive significant other, engaging in hobbies or activities, interacting with colleagues, and laughing with coworkers.

These twelve themes yielded six areas that all five principals agreed upon as building resiliency, difficult stressors, and helpful coping strategies. The six areas have generated six conclusions in response to the research questions posed for this study: experience with managing workload and applying personal experiences of dealing with adversity strengthens principals' resiliency; negotiating district office mandates which are incompatible with site needs and

ameliorating parent concerns are stressors for principals; and having a supportive significant other and engaging in activities or hobbies outside of work helps principals cope with stressors.

The findings and conclusions of this study hold implications for district office staff. District offices need to acknowledge the overwhelming job responsibilities that can overpower principals and provide support systems to help build principals' resiliency, alleviate stressors, and promote coping skills. Such supports from the district office should include training in time-management and prioritization; honoring and modeling respect for principals' personal time; and funding membership of professional network associations.

Recommendations for further research were recommended in two areas. The first area for consideration is creating an interview protocol that specifically targets researched-based stressors that affect principals and the coping strategies that are well documented in mitigating stress. This would allow the researcher to control the types of responses gathered. Another recommendation for future study would be in terms of expanding the area of study to investigating where principals go after a typical 3-5 year tenure; exploring gender differences in how principals identify and cope with stressors; and comparing the experiences of Southern California principals with principals across the state and/or country.

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APPENDIX A

Email Request for District Permission to Contact Qualifying Principals

Dear (name of school district personnel in charge of IRB),

My name is Suzanne Webb and I am Principal of Lincoln Middle School in the SMMUSD and I am also a doctoral candidate at Pepperdine University in the Graduate Studies of Education Leadership and Policy. The subject of my dissertation is “exploring the resiliency of secondary principals in high performing public schools” and I would like to recruit long standing principals, with more than 5 years tenure, at high performing public secondary schools in Southern California. (*potential candidate name*), Principal of (*school name*), fits the criteria for my phenomenological study.

Because I am in the process of applying to Pepperdine’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), I must submit approval from school districts where potential interview candidates are employed allowing me to contact those principals to see if they would willingly participate in my study. All participants’ identities will remain confidential and there will not be any identifying descriptions that link (*potential candidate name*) with (*school name and district name*).

The intent of my study is to discover the lived experiences of secondary principals in high performing public schools in Southern California as they relate to resiliency, stress, and coping strategies. Secondary principals rarely stay at the same school site longer than 3 – 5 years and most of the studies on principal longevity have to do with high poverty or low-performing schools. I would like to add to the literature by doing a student on secondary principals who have more than 5 years’ experience at high performing public schools in Southern California.

I believe the results of this study will help school districts better provide professional development and support to secondary principals since it usually takes 5 – 10 years for a principal to guide a school in positive change. I hope (*name of school district*) will allow me to contact (*name of potential candidate*) and ask if (*s/he*) would be willing to partake in my phenomenological study.

If you are not the person to whom I direct my inquiries, I would appreciate you pointing me in the right direction.

Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,

Suzanne

APPENDIX B

Email Invitation to Qualifying Principals

Dear Principal,

My name is Suzanne Webb, and I am a doctoral student at Pepperdine University. I am conducting research that explores the lived experiences of long standing principals (more than five years tenure) of high performing public schools (API of 850 and higher) in Southern California as they relate to resiliency in terms of identified stressors and coping skills used to mitigate identified stressors. Principals are second only to classroom teachers in affecting student achievement, however research tells us that secondary principals typically stay at one school site between 3 and 5 years. Being a principal is a demanding profession that places unique demands on the men and women who serve.

I am personally inviting you to participate in a phenomenological research study. As part of this research study, I am asking that you participate in one 60 minute face to face interview to better understand what lived experiences you encounter as a secondary principal of a high performing public school, what you identify as stressors, and the coping strategies you use to overcome these identified stressors. Before we meet, I will ask that you fill out a 25 question survey called the Resilience Scale developed by two Dr. Wagnild and Dr. Young (<https://www.resiliencescale.com>) which we will debrief in our face-to-face meeting. The survey will take approximately 5 – 8 minutes to complete. As a token of my appreciation, principals who participate will be remunerated with gift cards to Starbucks. I will also be happy to share summary findings of my results if you are interested

Participation in the study is completely voluntary and confidential (pseudonyms will be used to code your answers and all identifying information will be removed upon the completion of the data collection). This research protocol has been approved by the Pepperdine University Internal Review Board.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Data will only be accessible by myself and my dissertation committee. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Christopher Lund, Adjunct Professor, at Christopher.Lund@pepperdine.edu or Dr. Thema Bryant-Davis, Graduate and Professional Schools (GPS) IRB Chairperson, at [REDACTED]

Thank you in advance for considering participation in this dissertation research project. Do not hesitate to contact me with any questions at [REDACTED]

Suzanne Webb, doctoral candidate
Pepperdine University
[REDACTED]

APPENDIX C

Phone Conversation Script with Qualifying Principals

Hello _____,

My name is Suzanne Webb and I am a doctoral candidate at Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology in the Educational Leadership and Policy program. I am conducting research on the specific job responsibilities that long standing secondary principals (more than five years tenure) of high performing public school in Southern California find stressful along with the coping strategies, if any, used to mitigate such stressors.

You have been chosen specifically because you have been a principal at the same school site for more than five years. For this project I will gather data from secondary principals who have more than five years of tenure at a high performing public school in Southern California through individual, in-person interviews. The research will be supervised by my Dissertation Chair, Dr. Christopher Lund, Pepperdine University Adjunct Professor.

The purpose of this research study is to inform public school districts of the resiliency traits, if any, possessed by secondary principals in high performing Southern California public schools in addition to any identified job stressors and the coping skills used to mitigate them. The information generated will be used for academic research. All information obtained will be treated confidentially.

For this study, you will be asked to answer a series of open-ended, semi-structured interview questions. The initial interview may take 60 minutes and there may be a follow-up interview as well, pending extenuating circumstances. Your identity will remain confidential as I will be using pseudonyms and a coding process. I am happy to share results of this study with you, if you are interested.

Through this data I hope to learn what factors contribute to the resiliency of secondary principals, most specifically in high performing public schools.

You are free to withdraw your participation at any time should you decide to do so. I hope you will agree to participate.

**Answer any questions that may arise.

Thank you for your time!

APPENDIX D

CITI Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative Certificate

Graduate & Professional School Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher
Curriculum Completion Report
Printed on 12/15/2012

Learner: Suzanne Webb (username: suzannewebb)

Institution: Pepperdine University

Contact Information

Department: ELAP

Email: [REDACTED]

Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher: Choose this group to satisfy CITI training requirements for Investigators and staff involved primarily in Social/Behavioral Research with human subjects.

Stage 1. Basic Course Passed on 12/14/12 (Ref # 8821691)

Required Modules	Date Completed	Score
Belmont Report and CITI Course Introduction	12/11/12	3/3 (100%)
Students in Research	12/11/12	7/10 (70%)
History and Ethical Principles - SBR	12/11/12	2/5 (40%)
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBR	12/11/12	4/5 (80%)
The Regulations and The Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR	12/11/12	4/5 (80%)
Assessing Risk in Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR	12/11/12	5/5 (100%)
Informed Consent – SBR	12/11/12	5/5 (100%)
Privacy and Confidentiality – SBR	12/11/12	4/5 (80%)
Research with Prisoners – SBR	12/14/12	4/4 (100%)
Research with Children – SBR	12/14/12	3/4 (75%)
Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools – SBR	12/14/12	4/4 (100%)
International Research – SBR	12/14/12	3/3 (100%)
Internet Research – SBR	12/14/12	5/5 (100%)
Research and HIPAA Privacy Protections	12/14/12	3/5 (60%)
Vulnerable Subjects - Research Involving Workers/Employees	12/14/12	4/4 (100%)
Conflicts of Interest in Research Involving Human Subjects	12/14/12	3/5 (60%)

For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be

affiliated with a CITI participating institution. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI course site is unethical, and may be considered scientific misconduct by your institution.

Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.

Professor, University of Miami

Director Office of Research Education

CITI Course Coordinator

APPENDIX E

Consent for Research

Resiliency of Secondary Principals in High Performing Public Schools

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a study conducted as part of the requirements for a dissertation in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University. For this project I will gather data from secondary principals who have more than five years of tenure at a high performing public school in Southern California through individual, in-person interviews. The research will be supervised by my Dissertation Chair, Dr. Christopher Lund, Pepperdine University Adjunct Professor.

The purpose of this research study is to inform public school districts of the resiliency traits, if any, possessed by secondary principals in high performing Southern California public schools in addition to any identified job stressors and the coping skills used to mitigate them. The information generated will be used for academic research. All information obtained will be treated confidentially.

For this study, you will be asked to answer a series of open-ended, semi-structured interview questions. The initial interview may take 60 minutes and there may be a follow-up interview as well, pending extenuating circumstances. Your identity will remain confidential as I will be using pseudonyms and a coding process.

Through this data I hope to learn what factors contribute to the resiliency of secondary principals, most specifically in high performing public schools.

You are free to withdraw your participation at any time should you decide to do so. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at [REDACTED]. I hope you will agree to this opportunity. Thank you for your help.

For questions about your rights, please contact Dr. Christopher Lund at [REDACTED] or Dr. Thema Bryant-Davis, GPS IRB Chairperson, at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

Suzanne Webb
Doctoral Candidate

Dr. Christopher Lund
Adjunct Professor of Education

I _____, agree to participate in the research study conducted by Suzanne Webb under the direction of Dr. Christopher Lund.

Signature of participant: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX F

Interview Questions

Pseudonym of interviewee: _____

Location of interview: _____

Date of interview: _____ Time of interview: _____

Review the intent of the study and thank the participants for their time.

Remind the participants that you be recording the interview with an audio recording device in addition to taking notes. Let them know that they can request to stop the audio taping at any time.

<u>Research Question</u>	<u>Main General Questions</u>	<u>Possible Follow Up Questions</u>
1. What are the experiences of long standing secondary principals in high performing public schools in Southern California as they relate to resiliency?	Prior to this meeting you took the Resiliency Survey (Wagnild & Guinn, 2011). Reflect on your results as they relate to how you perceive your own resilience.	What resonated with you most? How do the results reflect your own perceptions of resiliency? How do you believe that resiliency impacts your daily work?
2. What are the lived experiences, if any, of secondary principals in high performing schools in Southern California as they relate to stress and coping skills?	What, if any, are the specific stressors in your current job? How do you cope with each?	Is this a recurring stressor? What specific coping skills do you employ to help mitigate this specific stressor? What, if any, stressors come up at different times during the school year? How do you plan for them? What specific coping skills or strategies do you use to address each? In terms of stress, is there a difference in working in classrooms vs. managerial tasks? Explain. Do you feel that you thrive on constant pressure as a motivating factor?

		Tell me more about how you balance your professional and personal lives.
<p>What advice would you give to an incoming principal in terms of building resiliency, which stressors to look out for, and the coping skills you recommend they use?</p> <p>Ask the participant what additional information, if any, they would like to share. Thank them for their time and participation.</p>		

APPENDIX G

Intellectual Property License Agreement to Use Resiliency Scale

**INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LICENSE AGREEMENT
Students & Residents of Developing Countries**

This Intellectual Property License Agreement ("Agreement") is made and effective this 3 June 2013 ("Effective Date") by and between The Resilience Center, PLLP ("Licensor") and Suzanne Webb ("Licensee").

Licensor has developed and licenses to users its Intellectual Property, marketed under the names "the Resilience Scale", "RS", "the 14-Item Resilience Scale", and "the RS-14" (the "Intellectual Property").

Licensee desires to use the Intellectual Property.

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual promises set forth herein, Licensor and Licensee agree as follows:

1. **License.**
Licensor hereby grants to Licensee a 1-year, non-exclusive, limited license to use the Intellectual Property as set forth in this Agreement.
2. **Restrictions.**
Licensee shall not modify, license or sublicense the Intellectual Property, or transfer or convey the Intellectual Property or any right in the Intellectual Property to anyone else without the prior written consent of Licensor. Licensee may make sufficient copies of the Intellectual Property and the related Scoring Sheets to measure the individual resilience of an unlimited number of subjects, for non-commercial purposes only.
3. **Fee.**
In consideration for the grant of the license and the use of the Intellectual Property, subject to the Restrictions above, Licensee agrees to pay Licensor the sum of US\$50.
4. **Term.**
This license is valid for twelve months, starting at midnight on the Effective Date.
5. **Termination.**
This license will terminate at midnight on the date twelve months after the Effective Date.
6. **Warranty of Title.**
Licensor hereby represents and warrants to Licensee that Licensor is the owner of the Intellectual Property or otherwise has the right to grant to Licensee the rights set forth in this Agreement. In the event any breach or threatened breach of the foregoing representation and warranty, Licensee's sole remedy shall be to require Licensor to do one of the following: i) procure, at Licensor's expense, the right to use the Intellectual Property, ii) replace the Intellectual Property or any part thereof that is in breach and replace it with Intellectual Property of comparable functionality that does not cause any breach, or iii) refund to Licensee the full amount of the license fee upon the return of the Intellectual Property and all copies thereof to Licensor.
7. **Warranty of Functionality.**
Licensor provides to Licensee the Intellectual Property "as is" with no direct or implied warranty.
8. **Payment.**
Any payment shall be made in full prior to shipment. Any other amount owed by Licensee to Licensor pursuant to this Agreement shall be paid within thirty (30) days following invoice from Licensor. In the event any overdue amount owed by Licensee is not paid following ten (10) days written notice from Licensor, then in addition to any other amount due, Licensor may impose and Licensee shall pay a late payment charge at the rate of one percent (1%) per month on any overdue amount.
9. **Taxes.**
In addition to all other amounts due hereunder, Licensee shall also pay to Licensor, or reimburse Licensor as appropriate, all amounts due for tax on the Intellectual Property that are measured directly by payments made by Licensee to Licensor. In no event shall Licensee be obligated to pay any tax paid on the income of Licensor or paid for Licensor's privilege of doing business.
10. **Warranty Disclaimer.**
LICENSOR'S WARRANTIES SET FORTH IN THIS AGREEMENT ARE EXCLUSIVE AND ARE IN LIEU OF ALL OTHER WARRANTIES, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO, THE IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY AND FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE.

11. Limitation of Liability.

Licensur shall not be responsible for, and shall not pay, any amount of incidental, consequential or other indirect damages, whether based on lost revenue or otherwise, regardless of whether Licensur was advised of the possibility of such losses in advance. In no event shall Licensur's liability hereunder exceed the amount of license fees paid by Licensee, regardless of whether Licensee's claim is based on contract, tort, strict liability, product liability, or otherwise.

12. Support.

Licensur agrees to provide limited, e-mail-only support for issues and questions raised by the Licensee that are not answered in the current version of the *Resilience Scale User's Guide*, available on www.resiliencescale.com, limited to the Term of this Agreement. Licensur will determine which issues and questions are or are not answered in the current *User's Guide*.

13. Notice.

Any notice required by this Agreement or given in connection with it, shall be in writing and shall be given to the appropriate party by personal delivery or by certified mail, postage prepaid, or recognized overnight delivery services.

If to Licensur:

The Resilience Center, PLLC

PO Box 313

Warden, MT 59088-0313

If to Licensee:

Name:

Address:

**14. Governing Law.**

This Agreement shall be construed and enforced in accordance with the laws of the United States and the state of Montana. Licensee expressly consents to the exclusive forum, jurisdiction, and venue of the Courts of the State of Montana and the United States District Court for the District of Montana in any and all actions, disputes, or controversies relating to this Agreement.

15. No Assignment.

Neither this Agreement nor any interest in this Agreement may be assigned by Licensee without the prior express written approval of Licensur.

16. Final Agreement.

This Agreement terminates and supersedes all prior understandings or agreements on the subject matter hereof. This Agreement may be modified only by a further writing that is duly executed by both Parties.

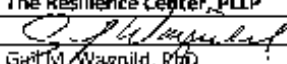
17. Severability.

If any term of this Agreement is held by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid or unenforceable, then this Agreement, including all of the remaining terms, will remain in full force and effect as if such invalid or unenforceable term had never been included.

18. Headings.

Headings used in this Agreement are provided for convenience only and shall not be used to construe meaning or intent.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Parties hereto have duly caused this Agreement to be executed in its name on its behalf, all as of the day and year first above written.

Licensee	The Resilience Center, PLLC
Signature:	
Printed Name: Suzanne Webb	Gail M. Wagnild, PLLC
Title: Student	Owner and CEO
Date: 29 May 2013	29 May 2013

29 May 2013

Dear Suzanne

Thank you very much for purchasing a license
to use the R5 in your research. I hope
that the enclosed materials will be useful
in your work.

Please write if you have any questions. I
wish you the very best!

Sincerely

Dr. Ferguson

APPENDIX H

Resilience Scale (RS)

Please read each statement and circle the number to the right of each statement that best indicates your feelings about the statement. Respond to all statements.

Circle the number in the appropriate column	Strongly Disagree							Strongly Agree						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. When I make plans, I follow through with them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I usually manage one way or another	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I am able to depend on myself more than anyone else.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Keeping interested in things is important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I can be on my own if I have to.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I feel proud that I have accomplished things in life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I usually take things in stride.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I am friends with myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I feel that I can handle many things at once.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I am determined.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I seldom wonder what the point of it all is.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I take things one day at a time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. I can get through difficult times because I've experienced difficulty before.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. I have self-discipline.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. I keep interested in things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. I can usually find something to laugh about.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. My belief in myself gets me through hard times.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. In an emergency, I'm someone people can generally rely on.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I can usually look at a situation in a number of ways.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. Sometimes I make myself do things whether I want to or not.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. My life has meaning.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. I do not dwell on things that I can't do anything about.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. When I'm in a difficult situation, I can usually find my way out of it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. I have enough energy to do what I have to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. It's ok if there are people who don't like me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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 "The Resilience Scale" is an international trademark of Gail M. Wagnild & Heather M. Young, 1993 (Wagnild & Guinn, 2011, p. 122).

APPENDIX I

IRB Exemption Letter

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board

June 11, 2014

Suzanne Webb

Protocol #: E0414D02

Project Title: Resiliency of Secondary Principals in Southern California: A Phenomenological Study

Dear Ms. Webb:

Thank you for submitting your application, *Resiliency of Secondary Principals in Southern California: A Phenomenological Study*, for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Graduate and Professional Schools Institutional Review Board (GPS IRB). The IRB appreciates the work you and your faculty advisor, Dr. Lund, have done on the proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations (45 CFR 46 - <http://www.nihtraining.com/ohsrsite/guidelines/45cfr46.html>) that govern the protections of human subjects. Specifically, section 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) states:

(b) Unless otherwise required by Department or Agency heads, research activities in which the only involvement of human subjects will be in one or more of the following categories are exempt from this policy:

Category (2) of 45 CFR 46.101, research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: a) Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and b) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit a **Request for Modification Form** to the GPS IRB. Because your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the GPS IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite our best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the GPS IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete explanation of the event and your response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the GPS IRB and the appropriate form to be used to report this information can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* (see link to "policy material" at <http://www.pepperdine.edu/irb/graduate/>).

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all further communication or correspondence related to this approval. Should you have additional questions, please contact Kevin Collins, Manager of the

Institutional Review Board (IRB) at gpsirb@pepperdine.edu. On behalf of the GPS IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thema Bryant-Davis".

Thema Bryant-Davis, Ph.D.
Chair, Graduate and Professional Schools IRB

cc: Dr. Lee Kats, Vice Provost for Research and Strategic Initiatives
Mr. Brett Leach, Compliance Attorney
Dr. Christopher Lund, Faculty Advisor