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PRINCIPALS AND EMOTIONAL LABOR

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DEDICATION

To my husband, who has supported me for the last 34 years with his relentless devotion, supporting and believing in me, and pushing me to my fullest potential. For my mother and late father who instilled in me the importance of getting an education and pursuing my goals.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Few institutions or organizations in America make a substantial, impactful impression on our society as a whole (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). The American educational system is one of them. The leader of our schools is the principal, an essential position (Fullan, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2004; Wallace Foundation, 2013). This role comes with a myriad of responsibilities (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015), which are emotionally demanding and lead to emotional labor.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore how principals experience and understand emotional labor in Title I elementary school settings by asking them about their daily interactions. In addition, I seek to understand how they manage emotional labor, if they do, and what experiences, if any, prepared them for dealing with it. This gained knowledge will assist in addressing the cited consequences of emotional labor on the position, such as stress, emotional exhaustion, burnout and leaving the profession.

The results showed that principals do experience emotional labor. However, they do not recognize it as such. The term “emotional labor” has not been codified within the profession providing a lexicon for discussions of experiences or methods of managing it. Principals need to be trained on ways to mitigate the negative effects of emotional labor.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	INTRODUCTION	1
	Statement of the Research Problem	6
	Purpose of Study	10
	Research Question	11
	Research Design	11
	Statement of Significance	11
	Delimitations/Assumptions	12
	Definitions	13
	Subjectivity Statement	14
II	LITERATURE REVIEW	16
	Introduction	16
	Emotions, Emotion Work and Emotional Labor	18
	Emotions in the Workplace	18
	The Foundation of Emotional Labor	19
	Emotional Labor-Gender, Race and Culture	22
	Principals and Emotional Labor	25
	Roles and Responsibilities of the School Principal	31
	Accountability	33
	Workload	34
	Teacher Recruitment and Retention	36
	School Safety	37
	Mental Heath	38
	The Need for Principal Preparation	39
	Principal Preparation Programs	40
	Principal Retention	45
	COVID-19	46
	Summary	49
III	METHODS	51
	Introduction	51
	Research Question	52
	Research Design	52
	Research Site	53
	Data Sources	55
	Data Collection	57
	Data Analysis	61
	Data Integrity/Trustworthiness	64
	Summary	65

IV RESULTS 66
Introduction 66
BUILDING COMMUNITY 73
Addressing Stakeholders 75
Accessibility and Visibility 76
Building and Maintaining Trust 80
Navigating the Position with Compassion and Empathy 89
UNSOLVABLE PROBLEMS AND UNACHIEVABLE GOALS 93
Academic Pressure 94
School Grades 100
Mental Health 105
School Safety 110
Parent Involvement 114
Difficult Parents 115
Teacher Retention and Recruitment 118
ATTEMPTING TO SURVIVE THE POSITION: SINK OR SWIM 122
Core Beliefs/Belief Systems 124
Faith and Family 132
On the Job Training/Mentoring 133
Principal Induction 137
Relationship with Region/District 140
Networking/Collaborating 141
Systems in Place 146
EXPECTATIONS OF THE PRINCIPALSHIP 147
24/7 Responsibility 148
Burnout 151
Workload 153
Well worth it-No Regrets 157
Summary 158

V DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS 161
Introduction 161
Summary of the Literature Review 162
Practical Implications and Recommendations for Practice 163
Limitations 171
Recommendations for Future Research 171
Conclusion 172

REFERENCES 174

APPENDICES 185

CONSENT 188

VITA 191

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Few institutions or organizations in America make a substantial, impactful impression on our society as a whole (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). The American educational system is one of them. However, in the United States, the current state of education has deprofessionalized educators as a whole (Milner, 2013). The corporatization of schools dates back to the twentieth century. Schools today are being called upon to run more and more like businesses (Howard & Preisman, 2007). "Parental Rights" (Foran, 2022) and "Students Rights" are common terms. Social Emotional Learning and Critical Race Theory have been challenged by parents who believe the public education system is attempting to control their children (Foran, 2022). Schools are to provide services and teach based on these rights. In addition, teachers and principals have been diminished due to the audit culture created by political agendas (Milner, 2013), which are pushing for more school accountability and assessments (Grissom et al., 2021), creating a culture of public humiliation to undermine public education generating uncertainty in parents regarding the public school system' ability to educate their children adequately and appropriately. With this, charter schools, school vouchers and school choice (Ladd, 2002) are being marketed to parents as solutions to problems facing the public school system. Meanwhile, as principals attend to the myriad of responsibilities (Aydoğdu & Bozkuş, 2023; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015) and array of internal and external stakeholders, these emotional demands are increasing the emotional labor (Maxwell & Riley, 2016) that exists within the position. This emotional labor is leading to exhaustion (Grandey, 2000) and burnout (Grandey, 2000). Therefore, it is important to

look at the current experiences of school principals and their experiences with emotional labor in an effort to understand how they can be supported to continue to lead our public schools. This chapter will introduce the role of the school principal, emotional labor, research problem, purpose of study, research question, research design, significance of this study, delimitations, assumptions, and subjectivity statement.

Principals

In a world of changing expectations due to political and social pressures, principals are ultimately held accountable for students' academic achievement. According to Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012), Lynch (2012), Mendels and Mitgang (2013), Miller (2013), Pannell (2015) and Reames (2010), an effective teacher is primarily responsible for increased student achievement, while an effective principal is only second as their impact is more indirect (Leithwood et al., 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015) such as establishing a conducive learning environment (Grissom, et al., 2021). However, within each school, the principal's effectiveness is more important than any single teacher (Grissom, et al., 2021).

The roles and responsibilities of principals are vast (Aydoğdu & Bozkuş, 2023). Principals are instructional leaders who are accountable to internal and external stakeholders for overseeing the implementation of state-imposed standards (Grissom, et al., 2021), ensuring achievement on high stakes testing (Grissom, et al., 2021) and faculty development (Council of State Chief Officers, 2008). They conduct teacher evaluations (Grissom, et al., 2021), recruit new teachers, are responsible for the retention of teachers, provide support for teachers, create working conditions that foster teacher success (Boyd et al., 2011; Ladd, 2009), and create a culture that promotes student learning (Council of

State Chief Officers, 2008). They are responsible for facility management (Council of State Chief Officers, 2008) and ensuring equity for all members of the school community (Council of State Chief Officers, 2008). In addition, principals perform as organizational managers devising school outcomes through the School Improvement Plan, monitoring results, establishing schools' reputation (Garza et al., 2014; Leithwood et al., 2004) setting the vision, all while engaging numerous stakeholders (Council of State Chief Officers, 2008). All of these and more are expected of "effective principals."

The terms "effective principal" or "successful principal" have been used throughout research studies (Leithwood et al., 20010; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). Among many of the definitions or lists that define an "effective or successful principal," communication, positive school culture (Habegger, 2008), accountability (Grissom, et al., 2021), managing people and cultivating leadership in others (The Wallace Foundation, 2012) are often cited. However, within these, there is no mention of emotional labor or a description that is equivalent. Emotional labor is part of the daily interactions that take place with students, parents, teachers, staff as well as external stakeholders (Maxwell & Riley, 2016).

The current realities of the position encompass broader expectations then principals have experienced in the past (Aydoğdu & Bozkuş, 2023). The relational component of the position has become even more important (Bridges, 2012; Wallace, 2010). The array of stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, region and district supervisors, politicians) that principals are accountable to adds to the workload (Maxwell & Riley, 2016). Leaders' effectiveness requires, not only meeting the substantial roles

and responsibilities expected of the position, but also that they meet the emotional demands (Maxwell & Riley, 2016). “The more stressful challenges faced by principals are those that are accompanied by high emotional demands. Of the five main sources of stress experienced by the principals identified by Gmelch and Swent (1984), two involved high emotional demands; interpersonal relations and intrapersonal conflicts” (Maxwell & Riley, 2016, pp. 484-5). These emotional demands require emotional labor (Maxwell & Riley, 2016).

Emotional Labor

In 1983, Arlie Hochschild coined the term “emotional labor” to describe managing emotions for a wage. In her book, *The Managed Heart: The Commercialization of Feeling*, she referred to emotional labor as “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display,” (Hochschild, 2012, p. 7) emphasizing compensated work that represents part of an employee’s job requirements (Hochschild, 1983; Humphrey, 2021) in response to display rules (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). Display rules are acceptable emotional responses that regulate employee behavior (Hochschild, 1983). Hochschild describes two ways of displaying and managing emotions as “surface acting” and “deep acting.” Surface acting requires the worker to maintain a smile regardless of any unpleasantries encountered with the customer. The outward emotions displayed are contrary to one’s inward emotions (Humphrey, Pollack & Hawver, 2008). Deep acting refers to intentionally altering one’s feelings to produce the preferred emotion (Grandey, 2000). This effort is the labor Hochschild is referring to is emotional labor. Emotional labor has been studied in various

industries hospitality, the restaurants, nursing, and teaching, as well as educational leadership (Humphrey et al., 2008).

Emotional labor has been gender-related since the term was coined in 1983 by Hochschild. Hochschild's studies included flight attendants and bill collectors, each following gendered roles in the workforce, and how their labor was commoditized. While flight attendants were trained to conduct themselves according to their acceptable gendered role as caretakers suppressing feelings of anger (Erickson & Ritter, 2001), bill collectors were trained according to their acceptable masculine roles to pressure debtors to pay up utilizing emotions such as anger or emotional detachment (Erickson & Ritter, 2001).

Since Hochschild's research, gender and its relationship to emotional labor has become popular topic of research (Blackmore, 1996; Erickson & Ritter, 2001; Ispa-landa & Thomas, (2019). Although the negative effects of emotional labor on men and women are mixed in previous research, one notable aspect of women experiencing more of a negative consequence due to the perception of their weaker status as compared to men, which exposes them more frequently to others' negative emotions (Erickson & Ritter, 2001). Interestingly, most research on emotional labor comparing men and women focuses on anger, which is associated with masculinity and control (Erickson & Ritter, 2001). However, while using other job classifications such as Hochschild's job classifications such as surface or deep acting, or interaction time, few gendered differences have been noted (Erickson & Ritter, 2001).

In addition to gender, studies on how race plays a role in acceptable emotions in the workplace have been conducted (Ispa-landa & Thomas, 2019: Wingfield, 2010).

Research on principals and emotional labor has been conducted with much of it outside of the United States: Australia (Maxwell & Riley, 2016), Ontario (Hauseman, 2022), and Asia (Karakus et al., 2021). Emotional labor has been studied in various industries (Humphrey et al., 2008). However, due to the consequences of emotional labor on principals, it is an important topic of study in the United States as will be discussed further in this chapter.

Statement of the Research Problem

Principals are required to attend and respond to their emotions and the emotions of others (Beatty, 2000). The work conducted by principals is inherently emotional and the proliferation of roles and responsibilities placed on principals only heightens the emotional labor required of these leaders to perform their duties (Cieminski, 2018; Hauseman, 2020; Oplatka and Hemsley-Brown, 2012). Beatty (2000) states "Reason itself is not free from emotional foundation and, even in the purest of intellectual moments, emotions are present" (p. 334). This attention requires emotional labor to be performed effectively in order for principals to be successful leaders of schools.

Current and past literature and research regarding principals' emotions and experiences tend to be siloed (McKay et. al, 2022), each targeting a specific aspect of principals and emotional labor. Although there is a broad study of research regarding principals and emotional labor through different theoretical, conceptual, and methodological approaches, they are being produced in isolation (McKay et al., 2022). However, what has been learned from previous research does provide a lens to what more needs to be studied. Therefore, I decided to look at how principals experience and understand emotional labor for the topic of this study.

I examined current and past research to gain insight into principals and emotional labor. I found that although there are studies that are related to principals and emotional labor, each takes a specific targeted approach. The following example will demonstrate their siloed approach and how, although beneficial to the research body at large, they fall short of providing a comprehensive understanding of principals' current experiences and understanding of emotional labor: Research conducted on educational leadership and emotions by Berkovich and Eyal (2015) focused on empirical studies published between 1992 and 2012. Berkovich and Eyal (2015) revealed three central themes that research has addressed during these years: factors influencing the leaders' emotions, leaders' behaviors and their effects on followers' emotions, and leaders' emotional abilities. This study indicates that emotional labor has consistently been a topic of discussion within educational leadership but that most of the research focused on the three areas previously mentioned. Furthermore, based on the years of published research that were studied, it does not illuminate the current experiences of school principals, nor does it provide specific insight to give a comprehensive understanding of principals' experiences with emotional labor. Karakus, Usak and Ersozlu (2021) focused on Asian literature regarding educators and emotions. Through the review of 862 articles published between 1990 and 2018, they found that most publications were related to student's emotions and emotional contagion based on interactions between students, teachers, and leaders. The least studied area was educational leaders' emotions and the consequences of these emotions on leaders (Karakus et al., 2021). This shows a need for future research regarding principals and their experiences with emotional labor. A quantitative study on leaders' emotional labor and the effects of that labor was conducted Maxwell and Riley in 2017. The study

explored emotional demands and the emotional labor consequences specifically focusing on burnout, well-being, and job satisfaction. While understanding the consequences of emotional labor are important, the experiences that lead to these consequences are also paramount. Tai and Kareem (2019) focused on school leaders emotional work and the consequences for school improvement and student outcomes through a quantitative study. While quantitative studies yield important information, they do not allow an in-depth understanding of principals experiences. Lakomski & Evers (2017) examine how school leaders interpret other's emotions and attempt to understand what other people want or need from them. However, they do not examine the emotions of the school leaders themselves. Berkovich and Eyal (2015) examined how school leaders' emotional work affects teachers motivations, emotions, and their effectiveness. Studies on the implications for principal recruitment (Rajah, et al., 2011) and principal retention (McKay, et al., 2022) has unveiled the importance of addressing the negative consequences of the principalship (Beausaert et al., 2016). Hauseman (2021) looked at how workplace conditions contributed to emotional labor in 13 secondary principals in Ontario through a qualitative study. She found that barriers for advocating for students, managing workplace conflict, and managing crises heightened principals emotional labor. However, Hauseman (2021) acknowledged, "Identifying the workplace conditions that contribute to principals experiencing heightened levels of emotional labor is an important first step in making the contemporary principalship a sustainable and attractive career path" (p. 16).

With all of this research, what seems to be missing is the big picture of principals' experiences which explain the labor and impact of being a school principal today (Grummell et al, 2019). In discussing past research, Mckay, McDonald and Longmuir (2022) stated, "Studies into emotions or emotional labor do not necessarily capture the bigger picture of the work of principals, in which emotions, relationships, expectations and discourses of care, and principals' own health and well-being are deeply interconnected (McKay, et al., 2022). Therefore, knowing how current principals experience and understand emotional labor is essential, which will be the focus of this study.

Current research indicates there is an increasing shortage and concern in the United States of retaining (McKay, et al., 2022) and recruiting (Lauder, 2000; McKay et al., 2022) highly qualified principals in these particularly important positions. Research supports that productively navigating their own and others' moods can heighten a leader's effectiveness. However, the labor involved in this process can be quite substantial and potentially lead to emotional exhaustion (Humphrey et al., 2008). Principal burnout (Maxwell & Riley, 2016) has become a prominent issue. Burnout is defined as "a state of emotional exhaustion with follow-on and/or corresponding effects of depersonalization and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment due to protracted experiences of workplace stress" (Maxwell & Riley, 2016, p. 4). Subsequently, statistics show that districts across the United States are having difficulty recruiting qualified, knowledgeable, and experienced professionals to assume principal positions (Lauder, 2000; McKay et al., 2022). Therefore, understanding how the emotional

demands placed on principals, the emotional labor associated with it and how any negative effects can be managed may assist in the retention and recruitment of highly effective principals. This begins with a comprehensive understanding of how principals experience and understand emotional labor, the purpose of this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore to how principals experience and understand emotional labor in Title I elementary school settings by asking them about their daily interactions. In addition, I seek to understand how they manage emotional labor, if they do, and what experiences, if any, prepared them for dealing with it. This gained knowledge will assist in addressing the cited consequences of emotional labor on the position, such as emotional exhaustion (Humphrey et al., 2008), burnout (Maxwell & Riley, 2016) and leaving the profession (McKay et al., 2022). The aim of this study is to add to the current body of scholarly literature and ignite other studies that will lead to the development of training for principals by universities or district preparation programs so that principals become better equipped to deal with the emotional labor that is prevalent within the position. Ensuring principals have the emotional tools they need, in addition to the technical skills, to keep up with current barriers is of utmost importance. In order for there to be a conversation about emotional labor, a definition of emotional labor needs to be codified specifically related to principals and the work that they do so that conversations can take place.

Research Question

The primary research question for this study is: How do principals experience and understand emotional labor in Title I elementary school settings?

Research Design

I approach this study through a qualitative design using a phenomenological approach. The study is based on the experience of 5 principals who work in a large urban school District located in the Southeastern portion of the United States. Each of the three interviews are comprised of multiple open-ended questions. This will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

Statement of Significance

Within the existing research there has been a calling for further research. For example, Maxwell and Riley, (2016) stated, "What is clear to us following this study is that emotional demands and associated labour are essential aspects of the school principal's role and, given their potential to interfere with both individual and school functioning, need more research attention (p. 13). The results of this study may add to current scholar research by highlighting the myriad of responsibilities assumed by principals. The results may also give insight to how a comprehensive definition of emotional labor specifically pertaining to principals may be developed. In addition, analysis of this research study may support past research and ignite future research in the field of educational leadership by providing specific insight on how today's leaders are being prepared for a principal position and how alterations to that preparation could

better prepare school principals in the future, specifically related to emotional labor. This would include researched-based coping strategies which may mitigate the consequences currently seen amongst principals such as emotional exhaustion and burnout. Implications may include changes to future coursework at the university level for education administration and leadership, district principal preparation programs and district professional development to support principals. For example, mindfulness (Collie, et al., 2020) and networking (McKay, 2022) have been cited as ways to reduce stress in other fields.

Delimitations/Assumptions of Study

This study is limited to five elementary school principals in one urban school district in the southeastern portion of the United States. The premise of qualitative research is not to generalize. Therefore, the data derived from the interviews is not meant to represent all principals but gives a glimpse into the experiences some principals face with emotional labor within their role. In addition, these participants work within Title I elementary schools. As each school is different based on the demographics and dynamics of the setting, data does not represent all elementary school, middle school, or high school principals, nor does it represent all Title I schools or non-Title I schools. Future research regarding emotional labor would need to be conducted with a larger number of participants to include middle and high school participants and non-Title I schools.

My assumptions as I conducted the research were that my participants would be open and honest with their answers due to confidentiality that I assured. In addition, due

to my role as an assistant principal, they would assume that I may have had similar experiences and could relate to their experiences.

Definitions

Emotional Labor- Emotional labor includes managing one's emotions, recognizing others' emotions and doing work to be successful in the interaction that takes place between the two (Mastracci et al., 2010), "The management of a feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display: emotional labor is sold for a wage and therefore has an exchange value" (Hochschild, 2012, p. 7), and "Influencing the moods, emotions, motivations, and performance of subordinates or followers" (Humphrey et al., 2008, p.153).

Emotional Demand-the pressures and expectations placed on individuals in their work or everyday life that require them to manage and regulate their emotions (Maxwell & Riley, 2016).

School Principal- A school principal is the organizational and instructional leader of a school.

Elementary School- Elementary school, as utilized in this study, refers to schools that have students from Pre-Kindergarten to fifth grade.

Title I- A federal program initiated in 1965 as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, is currently part of Every Student Succeeds Act. Title I schools receive federal funding allotted specifically to support student achievement in core subject areas

(reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies). The purpose of this funding is to improve the learning of children from low-income families "to close the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers" (Title I Administration website).

Educational leadership-refers to an educational system approach that unites everyone under a common goal and a core set of values. It is most closely associated with transformational leadership, a leadership style that emphasizes positive change and growth, and inspires workers to reach their full potential for the collective benefit of all.

Subjectivity Statement

Qualitative research requires a substantial amount of interaction between the researcher and participants. As Malterud (2001) claims, "[A] researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate and the framing and communication of conclusions" (pp. 483-485). As an educator of 28 years and current assistant principal, throughout the study, I kept my researcher bias in check through reflexivity at different points in the process, as this topic and experiences are of personal interest in my professional life (Ary, et al., 2014). I aspire to become a principal in the near future. Therefore, I am an outsider looking in to view the current situation. Throughout my years in the school system, I have never received training on emotional labor or methods to manage it. It is not a topic of conversations amongst colleagues. In fact, I did not have the vernacular to express some of my experiences based on not having the vocabulary to articulate my experiences. However, now that I

know what emotional labor is, I have come to recognize that I experience it in my current role as an assistant principal on a daily basis. As a researcher, I was interested in what scholarly research says about emotional labor, particularly in relation to principals. I also wondered why I've never received training on the relational aspects of the job, which is emotional labor. Therefore, I am completely aware of how close the topic is to my professional life and the need to ensure I was attentive to my own subjectivities throughout the research process. To me, this needed to be approached carefully since part of the learning involved with qualitative research is the intimacy between researcher and participant and remaining subjective throughout the study. My role as an assistant principal was be made transparent to my participants. According to van Manen (2016), "Subjectivity means that we are strong in our orientation to the object of study in a unique and personal way-while avoiding the danger of becoming arbitrary, self-indulgent, or getting captivated and varied away by our unreflected preconceptions" (p. 20). Although, at points in the interviews, participants sought agreement or approval of what they were expressing, I was careful to not add my experience, but instead ask probing questions for them to expound on their experience. Due to my knowledge, past experiences as an administrator and proximity to the topic of study, I bracketed by purposefully emptying my historiographic cup to accept the information presented as new refusing to assume what each was saying, instead encouraging participates to elaborate more by not giving any verbal or non-verbal cues that would support affirmations or negations. This allowed me to remain attentive throughout the interviews and not influence data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW
Introduction

As previously stated, emotional labor has been studied extensively in industries such as hospitality, restaurants, nursing, and teaching (Humphrey et al., 2008). Based on my professional aspirations, I was curious to see what had been found in the area of educational leadership, specifically related to school principals. As I began my quest for knowledge regarding emotional labor and how it directly applies to principals, I initially began my search with ERIC Proquest. I found research related to emotions, emotional labor in general, emotional labor related to gender and race and emotional labor specifically related to other fields. However, I quickly discovered that the research involving principals and emotional labor was limited through this database. As I continued my quest, I conducted a Google Scholar search encountering the same situation. A general search using the Florida International University Library unveiled some additional studies on emotional labor, including some literary reviews of research conducted. Overall, instead of research that focused on how principals experienced and understood emotional labor, what I found was scholarly literary research that sought to address consequences of emotional labor on principals such as stress (Hayes et al., 2022, burnout (Kaufman et al., 2021), emotional exhaustion (Berkovich and Eyal, 2015), problems with retaining principals (NASSP, 2020), etc. Scholarly research has been conducted on emotional labor in general by various researchers. As I found literature that generally informed my study (emotions, emotions in the workplace, leaders, and emotions, etc.), I examined each researcher's reference list to gain insight to other literature that could help inform my overall knowledge of emotional labor. Interestingly, I

discovered that researchers of emotional labor each cited one another in a tight circle. For example, Hochschild's original definition of emotional labor, surface acting, deep acting have been referred to numerous studies. I did find research studies that address police, nurses, hospital workers, nursing home workers, teachers, casino employees and leaders (in general). Being that principals are a form of leader, I also searched for emotional labor and leaders. In 2012, Humphrey stated, "Thousands of articles have cited how service workers use emotional labor, yet almost no research has been performed on how leaders use emotional labor" (p. 743). With the passing of 13 years since this quote, there is now more research on leaders and emotional labor. In addition to a few studies in the United States, I delved into studies conducted in Australia, Canada (Ontario), and Asia to gain insight to what other school systems have found related to emotional labor and principals. In addition, I gained knowledge from a study of teachers and emotional labor in the Northeastern section of the United States as a steppingstone for findings on emotional labor within the field of education in the United States.

This chapter provides an overview of literature on emotions in the workplace, emotional demands, the foundations of emotional labor, emotional labor regarding gender, race and culture**,** principals and emotional labor, the roles/responsibilities of the principalship, the contemporary conditions shaping the work of educators (accountability, workload, teacher recruitment, teacher retention, school safety, and mental health), and principal preparation, principal retention and the overall effects of COVID-19 on education and the principalship. Literature discussing how not managing the effects of emotional labor can have consequences on principals will also be introduced and later

expanded upon in Chapters IV and V. Throughout this review, I identify instances where existing literature assumes performances of emotional labor without explicitly naming it as such. Importantly, given my study focuses on Title I elementary schools and current school principals, I focus my review narrowly within the broader literature on educational leadership in general and the principalship specifically.

Emotions, Emotion Work and Emotional Labor-How are they different?

The terms "emotion and emotional labor" tend to be used interchangeably in some studies. The distinction between them can be messy for principals due to their public and private lives merging at times which creates a challenge for them to keep separate at times. However, Hochschild (1983) differentiated these two terms in her research. Hochschild clarified that emotion work takes place in private whereas emotional labor is performed in public for a wage (Erickson & Ritter, 2001). For the purpose of this study, I follow the guidance of Hochschild in recognizing that emotional labor is the labor performed for a wage. However, for these participants, emotional labor takes place in public and sometimes private as I explain in Chapter 4, their job is 24/7. Therefore, although they are not getting paid on the weekend, they are still working and experiencing emotional labor associated with work.

Emotions in the Workplace

For decades, workplaces were considered a "rational environment," void of emotion, "where emotion would get in the way of sound judgment" (Grandey, 2000, p. 95). Subsequently, over the last two decades, research has shown that leaders of organizations need to have emotional-related traits and use emotional-related skills to

manage others (Humphrey et al., 2008). Influencing others emotional reactions has become an important part of a leader's job and additional study is warranted in that area (Humphrey et al., 2008). Emotions are currently viewed as fundamental to experiences in workplace settings and, as such, are studied as relevant predictors of individual performance and organizational outcomes (Arvey et al., 1998; Brief & Weiss, 2002; Rajah, et al., 2011). In addition, managing the emotions of others ideally begins with managing one's own emotions (Rajah, et al., 2011).

As leaders of our schools, principals tend to the needs and emotions of a variety of stakeholders: students, parents, teachers, region, and district supervisors, simultaneously (Maxwell & Riley, 2016). In an effort to be everything to everyone, these emotional demands stacked upon one another lead to the topic of this study, emotional labor.

The Foundation of Emotional Labor

In 1983, Arlie Hochschild coined the term "emotional labor" to describe managing emotions for a wage. In her book, *The Managed Heart: The Commercialization of Feeling*, she referred to it as "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display (Hochschild, 2012, p. 7). According to Hochschild (1983), jobs with emotional labor have three criteria; (1) they require face to face or voice to voice contact with the public (2) they require the worker to produce an emotional state in the client or customer (3) they allow the employer, through training and supervision, to exercise a degree of control over emotional activities of employees" (Choi & Kim, 2015, p. 285). As previously stated, she describes two ways of managing

emotions as “surface acting” and “deep acting.” Surface acting requires the worker to maintain a smile regardless of any unpleasantries encountered with the customer. The outward emotions displayed are contrary to one’s inward emotions (Humphry et al., 2008). Deep acting refers to intentionally altering one’s feelings to produce the preferred emotion (Grandey, 2000). This effort is the labor Hochschild is referring to in emotional labor. Hochschild (1979), stated, “When deep gestures of exchange enter the market sector and are bought and sold as an aspect of labor power, feelings are commoditized” (p. 569). Hochschild proposes that this unpleasant exchange on the part of the laborer leads to burnout and stress (Grandey, 2000). Burnout leads to emotional exhaustion (Grandey, 2000) which in turn depletes the ability to bounce back, which will be addressed later in this chapter. Although Hochschild research was conducted focusing on wage laborers, with the coining of the term “emotional labor,” she initiated a discussion which had not been identified before raising “public and academic consciousness” (Grandey, 2000, p. 96).

Other researchers have a different take on emotional labor. Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) defined emotional labor as the act of displaying appropriate emotions, with the goal to engage in a form of impression management for the organization. They argued that instead of emotional labor requiring effort and stress as Hochschild proposed, surface and deep acting may become routine and effortless. They did however agree that if the expressions were not genuine, they could pose a need to dissociate from one’s identity (Grandey, 2000) creating a dissonance that could be harmful to one’s well-being (Humphrey, et al., 2008). On the contrary, Ashforth & Humphrey (1993) add a third way emotional labor can be performed through “spontaneous and genuine emotion”

(Humphrey, et al., 2008, p. 151). Morris and Feldman (1996) defined emotional labor as "the effort, planning, and control needed to express desired emotion during interpersonal transactions" (p. 987), which is consistent with Hochschild's tenant that "the management of emotions requires work" (Grandey, 2000, p. 96) and Humphrey's acknowledgement that it is "performed"; hence, emotional labor. However proposed, these researchers acknowledge that emotions in the workforce warrant study. In effect, as Grandey (2000) eloquently synthesizes these definitions, "emotional labor is the process of regulating both feelings and expressions for the organizational goal" (p. 97). Mastracci and Adams (2019) added to the conversation that emotional labor is "to express job-appropriate emotions and/or suppress inappropriate emotions" (Humphrey, 2021, p. 422). With all of these different definitions regarding emotional labor there continues to be conceptual ambiguity among research on emotional labor (Choi & Kim, 2015).

Morris and Feldman (1996) conceptualized the dimensions of emotional labor in terms of four distinct dimensions: frequency, attentiveness to display rules, variety of emotions required to be displayed and the emotional dissonance of expressing organizationally desired emotions that are not genuinely felt (Choi & Kim, 2015). Later, Brotheridge and Lee (2003) developed the Emotional Labor Scale which measures "intensity, frequency, variety of emotional display, surface acting, deep acting and duration of interaction" (Choi & Kim, 2015, p. 287). As of 2015, no agreement has been made on the dimensions of emotional labor (Choi & Kim, 2015).

Leaders' emotionality in the workplace has also been studied. A leader's emotionality in the workplace can influence the mood and behavior of employees (Hatfield, Cacioppo & Rapson, 1993). This antecedent is called emotional contagion.

Emotional contagion is “The tendency to automatically mimic and synchronize expressions, vocalizations, postures, and movements with those of another person’s and, consequently, to converge emotionally” (Hatfield, Cacioppo & Rapson, 1992, pp.153-154). This affects the organization as a whole as unconsciously, the leader can affect workers positively or negatively, which in turn affects their performance (Humphrey et al., 2008). In a study conducted by Westman and Etzion in 1999 of 47 principals and 183 teachers “contagious job-induced tension in the school environment”, cited the influence of emotions on schools’ emotional state (Poirel & Yvon, 2014).

Emotional labor hasn’t always been recognized as a negative. For example, in a study of 911 dispatchers conducted by Shuler and Sypher (2000), employees stated that “the performance of emotional labor is also intrinsically connected with the best and most rewarding parts of the job” (p. 50). The researchers noted that the workers felt this even with having to deal with sometimes unpleasant encounters. Therefore, the perspective of the person performing emotional labor also weighs in on the perspective of emotional labor. For some, it helps affirm their identity (Humphrey et al., 2015).

Emotional Labor-Gender, Race and Culture

Beginning with Hochschild’s research, emotional labor has always been associated with gender and gender roles. Hochschild (1983) studied flight attendants who were primarily female and their role as caretakers supporting others’ status and ensuring the well-being of others. She also studied bill collectors, who were primarily men, whose job was to decrease status and use fear tactics (Ispa-Landa & Thomas, 2019). Although

both performed emotional labor, the type of emotional labor prescribed matched their expected gender role.

Like Hochschild, Blackmore's (1996) qualitative study of principals through three research projects demonstrates how female principals' emotions are commoditized by expecting them to use emotional labor to market their schools, market themselves as professionals and follow governmental policies without question, although these policies went against the reasons these women took the position. The participants expressed that while the positive attributes of emotional labor such as caring and nurturing are acceptable for women, to show anger or any other emotion considered to be negative would position them in an unacceptable light. Yet emotions such as anger from men is considered "socially acceptable" (Blackmore 1996, p. 348). This study shows that while commoditizing the emotions of women within educational leadership, women are expected to govern their feelings to safeguard their "corporate identity" (Blackmore, 1996, p. 390) to match organizations acceptable displays of emotion.

In addition to gender, race has also been a topic associated with emotional labor as cited in Ispa-landa and Thomas (2019), Wingfield (2010) expressed that "White women…are subjected to racialized, gendered stereotypes that depict them as submissive and passive, but not angry" p. 263) whereas black women may have more liberty expressing anger and frustration.

In a multiyear, longitudinal study conducted in the United States by Ispa-landa and Thomas (2019), 21 female novice principals, collectively participated in 132 interviews. Eight of the women were white and thirteen were of color (Black and Latina). Ispa-landa and Thomas wanted to determine how race, gender, and emotion work among

principals. They found that the white women found authority and concern for others in opposition. In addition, white women were afraid to be seen as dictatorial. The researchers also point out that they were in Black and Latinx settings, so they may have felt like racial outsiders. However, for the women of color, showing authority and concern for others was not in opposition for them. Where emotional labor created "binds" for white women, women of color discovered that it led them to "freedom" in their thinking (Ispa-landa & Thomas, 2019).

The impact of emotional labor has been not only varied by gender and race, but also by culture. A meta-analysis of emotional labor and employee outcomes conducted by Humphrey (2021) compared the effects of emotional labor in the public, nonprofit, and private sectors, focusing on individualist and collectivist cultures, and noting the role gender plays when performing emotional labor. Two dimensions of emotional labor were analyzed: surface acting and deep acting. This random-effects meta-analysis of 175 primary studies and 545 correlations found that emotional labor has both positive and negative impacts on burnout and job satisfaction. Whether an employee is surface acting or deep acting determines the consequence. Findings of this study suggest that deep acting improves depersonalization, personal accomplishment, and job satisfaction. The study found less harmful impact in collectivist cultures compared to those in individualist cultures. Emotional is often discussed as a gender concept (Hochschild, 1983). However, across all four models, the moderator accounting for the percentage of women in a primary study sample was insignificant. Although this finding was surprising, previous research by Ericsson and Ritter (2001) found that even though women reported higher

levels of emotional labor they were not more likely to feel burned out than men. Gender and emotional labor in the public sector have been and continues to be a topic of exploration in research. Humphrey (2021) suggests the continued study of emotional labor on public servants to provide a more comprehensive understanding of their emotional reality.

Principals and Emotional Labor

As will be discussed later in this chapter, principals are experiencing increasing job demands (Cieminski, 2018; Oplatka and Hemsley-Brown, 2012; Wang et al., 2023). Their level of emotional demand has increased due to accountability measures, high-stakes testing, managing staff, and interaction with multiple stakeholders (Maxwell & Riley, 2016). In a study conducted by Poirel and Yvon (2012), administrative constraints were the highest source of stress with interpersonal experiences being second. According to Hauseman (2020), "Few (if any) job descriptions for the principalship acknowledge that principals must be able to manage their emotions effectively to be successful in the role" (p. 3).

Although school principals' roles and responsibilities encompass much more than management, which requires labor, other past studies give insight into the emotional demands that require emotional labor. Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) found that managers, service workers and human service workers more habitually preformed emotional labor than physical laborers (Humphrey et al., 2008). This seems to be due to the emotional and relational aspect of their position. Principals spend a great deal of time communicating with stakeholders, managing complex interactions and relationships

(Wang et al., 2023). Research shows that the role and variety of interactive situations has increased (Maxwell & Riley, 2017). In these interactions, principals must manage the emotions of others, as well as their own (Hauseman, 2020).

The effect of emotional labor is not new. However, emotionally charged situations have increased for principals (Wang et al, 2023). Wang, Pollack and Hauseman (2023) found that fast work pace, long hours and lack of time contributed to principals frustration and negatively impacts them and their schools. Through an on-line survey of 1,434 practicing principals in Ontario, Wang, Pollack and Hauseman (2023), uncovered that students discipline/attendance and working with parents were the two highest areas that participants noted that they spent time on and reported to be emotionally draining.

The interest of emotional labor and the consequences of emotional labor has been an area of interest for quite some time. Dating back to 2011, an empirical study was conducted through an on-line survey by Maxwell and Riley (2016) seeking to identify the relationship between emotional demands and burnout, well-being, and job satisfaction amongst 1,320 school principals in Australia across all states and grade levels. They researched the amount and types of emotional labor school principals used, and the positive and negative impacts of the strategies implemented using a five-level Likert scale. The results of this study are significant to the United States in that Australia tends to replicate our educational policies (Lingard, 2010). Thus, a replication of this study in the U.S. could possibly yield comparable results. Maxwell and Riley (2016) use Hochschild's surface and deep acting theory with a discernable difference with how surface acting can be displayed: hiding emotions or faking emotions. The results of this

study found that principals, when compared to the general population, “reported higher scores on emotional demands at work, burnout and job satisfaction” and poorer well-being (Maxwell & Riley, 2016, p. 1). Surface acting-Hiding emotions had an inverse relationship with burnout, well-being, and job satisfaction. Surface Acting-Faking emotions had an inverse relationship with job satisfaction [but did not affect burnout or wellbeing]. Deep acting demonstrated no significant associations with outcome variables.” (Maxwell & Riley, 2016, p.1). Job satisfaction amongst participants was comparable to managers in other unspecified organizations. Ironically, high job satisfaction and burnout coexisted, which has been seen in previous studies of school principals (Darmody, 2011). Maxwell and Riley (2016) reported that as emotional demands increased, emotional labor increased. The surface acting strategy found to be most implemented by participants was hiding their emotions rendering worse outcomes than faking, such as emotional exhaustion and a negative toll on their well-being. As cited by Joyce (2014), “The education industry health insurer reported that the cost of providing psychological services to their members doubled in the last five years” (Maxwell & Riley, 2016, p. 11). Therefore, Maxwell and Riley suggest that to avoid burnout and poor well-being, principals be explicitly trained on managing emotional demand. They also make it clear that the emotional demands and emotional labor need to be researched further (Maxwell & Riley, 2016). Emotional labor was coined in 1983 and more than thirty years later, it is still being suggested that it be further studied begging the question of what is so special about the role of principals, their workplace demands and conditions that it has not been addressed like other industries and professions. This is especially interesting due to the research that shows not being able to manage with

emotional labor is having a consequential effect on principals. “Research into principals’ emotions and experience tends to be relatively siloed - reflective of a general trend within educational leadership research more broadly (Heffernan et al., 2022, p. 2).

While Maxwell and Riley took a look at how emotional labor was performed based on emotional demands and the relationship between emotional demands and burnout, well-being, and job satisfaction, Hauseman (2022) gives more insight to the workplace demands and conditions that contribute to principals’ emotional labor. Hauseman (2022) conducted a qualitative study in Ontario on 13 secondary principals. She gives examples of the kind of demands she found that caused emotional labor. These include: advocating for students, work intensification, navigating policy and managing conflict within their workplace and crisis management. These principals explained that barriers such as lack of parental support made advocating for students difficult. Heightened workload due to increased responsibilities put in place by policy makers limited the time they had to work on their already overwhelming responsibilities. Unclear definitions of the position and the tasks and responsibilities associated with it and being flooded with bureaucratic concerns added to the nature of their workload. In addition, dealing with angry parents, unprofessional employees and customer service took time away from responsibilities such as instructional leadership within their buildings. Crisis management required emotional support of others often at the cost of attending to their own emotions. The study asserts that all of these took time away from using coping strategies to deal with emotional labor. However, it does not detail what coping strategies they are alluding to with the exception of one. The one coping strategy mentioned was a

system in place for principals to reach out through anonymous telephone help lines when they needed support. Hauseman (2022) questions if someone in need would self-advocate in that frame of mind. In the discussion of the findings, Hauseman (2022) states, “Rather than simply treating the symptoms that result from this heightened emotional labor, concrete efforts are needed to change the culture of the contemporary principalship” (p. 16). Hauseman (2022) asserts that short term changes to alleviate the emotional labor experienced in the role of principalship could be to include email and remote working policies, encourage work-life balance, implement a reduction of time on student supervision so that principals can tend to their other responsibilities, and professional development on conflict-resolution strategies. Hauseman (2022) suggests short term policy changes to attend to the emotional labor experienced by principal. She also mentions professional development on conflict-resolution strategies that can be taught to assist principals in managing emotional labor. With a more thorough understanding of principals’ experiences, roles and responsibilities, conflict-resolution strategies can be implemented.

Silbaugh, Barker & Arghode (2023) have a different take on how to mitigate the effects of emotional labor. They imply that strategies used to attend to emotional labor mediates the relationships between emotional intelligence and burnout. A quantitative study of 87 principals and assistant principals from 42 Northeastern county school districts conducted by Silbaugh, Barker and Arghode in 2023 aimed to determine if surface acting or deep acting mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and burnout utilizing the Maslach Burnout Inventory General Survey and Assessing

Emotions Scale. Results indicated that having higher level emotional intelligence led to less surface acting and more deep acting, which would cause less burnout amongst participants. Silbaugh, Barker & Arghode suggest professional development on emotional intelligence for principals as a proactive measure to mitigate burnout.

School leaders emotions are important. The positive emotions of leaders and the consequences of leaders' positive emotions on schools have been well researched (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017). In addition, we know the effect of leaders' negative emotions. However, "studies into emotions or emotional labor do not necessarily capture the bigger picture of the work of principals, in which emotions, relationships, expectations and discourses of care, and principals' own health and wellbeing are deeply interconnected" (Heffernan et al., 2022). More studies are suggested to see how principals deal with their negative emotions (Silbaugh et al., 2023).

In order to gain information pertaining to what an intervention could look like for principals, I decided to delve into studies that pertained to teachers and emotional labor to use as a steppingstone for more knowledge as it relates to the field of education. An intervention study regarding coping with emotional labor was performed on 97 teachers in three public school districts in the Midwestern United States (Weaver et al., 2019). The teachers were trained on what emotional labor is by being provided with definition and background of research. Then they worked in small groups focusing on coping skills. In addition, they were given pre and post intervention surveys. The response to the intervention was successful in that the participants praised the researchers for giving a name to what they had been experiencing, legitimizing their feelings. In addition,

implications of the study showed that they were able to connect emotional labor with their experiences and set goals of future coping responses. Although the participants were teachers, like principals, they deal with a variety of stakeholders which requires emotional regulation and labor. Principals begin their careers as teachers so they can relate to the role of a teacher and possibly had similar experiences with the emotional labor involved. This study gave me some insight of how evaluating the understanding of emotional labor and experiences with emotional labor for principals could assist in mitigating the effects of emotional labor, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Roles and Responsibilities of the School Principal

The roles and responsibilities of the school principal have changed and expanded since the creation of the position centuries ago (Wang et al., 2023). The term "principal," introduced in the 1800s, was an adjective that preceded the word "teacher" meaning that the person was a lead teacher (Kafka, 2009; Pierce, 1935), whose main concern was instruction (Mendels, 2012). However, since the initial articulation of a principal as a lead teacher, today's principals undertake many different roles and responsibilities than principals in the past (Wang et al., 2023). Change and reform (Kafka, 2009; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004) became the focus of principal's work in the late 1990's adding to the responsibilities that already existed, moving their responsibilities from those of a managerial position to a more transformational one (Fullan, 2016) adding responsibility such as accountability measures (Grissom, et al., 2021) high-stakes testing (Grissom, et al., 2021) , managing staff, and interactions with an array of stakeholders (Maxwell and

Riley, 2016). Hence, principal's roles and responsibilities have broadened even more than previous years (Aydoğdu & Bozkuş, 2023; Reid, 2021).

For decades, school reform has been a major topic of research (Acton, 2020). Changes are consistently taking place in education and principals need to keep up with them in order to be successful (Marzano et al., 2005). This continues to be the situation today. Political, social and student achievement expectations and demands placed on schools by policy makers, politicians, district leaders (Kafka, 2009) teachers, parents, and students (Fullen, 2014). Accountability measures, high-stakes testing, managing staff, and interaction with stakeholders (Maxwell and Riley, 2016) are some of the latest responsibilities that have been added. In addition, competition with private, charter and virtual schools and school choice have added marketing to their plate along with teacher retention and teacher recruitment (Sutcher et al., 2016) to an already wide spectrum of roles and responsibilities that fall upon school principals. School principals are held accountable by the District for meeting all expectations placed upon them. Principals in this State are evaluated using the Florida Principal Leadership Standards. Standardized testing scores, which will be discussed later in Chapter IV, are at the forefront of determining whether a school principal has met the needs of the students, the community and our society at large as principals are held accountable by the District and the State for student achievement (Pannell et al., 2015; Randolph & Wilson Younger, 2012). In short, they are responsible for all school operations (Lunenburg, 2010). These include: the academic achievement of students, the safety and wellness of students and staff

(Aydoğdu & Bozkuş, 2023), and staffing their buildings (Sutcher et al., 2016), as will be discussed in this chapter.

Accountability

In Florida, the state proclaims to use testing information to be able to service students more appropriately (Florida DOE ORDER NO. 2021-E0-02). The ultimate task and responsibility of meeting students' needs, and bridging learning gaps lies with each school's principal (Kafka, 2009). Hence, the level of pressure a school principal endures is often a direct outcome of these performance measures when they do not meet state and district expectations (Kafka, 2009). What follows are layers of accountability requirements (Grissom, et al., 2021). Each school is required by the Florida Department of Education to devise a School Improvement Plan, which details action steps that will be taken for student achievement and school culture and must be updated each nine-week period of the school year. District quarterly progress monitoring is conducted for all students. According to this District's Intervention Decision Tree, students who do not meet expectations fall into Tier II intervention requiring an extra thirty minutes in reading intervention daily. Students who do not make progress in Tier 2 intervention and students who were retained the previous year due to not meeting grade level standards fall into Tier 3 intervention, which requires an additional thirty minutes three times a week targeting specific reading deficiencies on top of the Tier II intervention daily. These intervention classes must be taught by a certified teacher with a Reading Endorsement (District Student Progression Plan, 2021-2022). As leader of the school, principals must ensure that all interventions are in place. Principals are responsible for monitoring student

progress and that interventions are taught by qualified teachers. School grades are a direct reflection of the principal's leadership. Principals are held accountable through their annual evaluations, which includes the school's academic progress, by the region and District. In addition, the state oversees school grades and progress. When schools are underperforming, they are subject to be taken over by the state. Principals can be demoted or moved to another school if their performance is not deemed acceptable. As the face of the school, principals need to lead and manage with confidence and certainty in the face of lots of uncertainty. This refers to the emotional labor Hochschild spoke of when describing surface and deep acting. Simultaneously, principals are charged with dealing with societal problems such as students' mental health (Kaluzeviciute-Moreton et al., 2022), physical health, and school safety (Aydoğdu & Bozkuş, 2023), and as such, need to learn how to lead in capricious situations as these issues manifest within their schools (Fullan, 2020).

Workload

As previously stated, principals are responsible for numerous roles and responsibilities. Past and current research acknowledge this and discuss principals' workload (Maxwell & Riley, 2016; Oplatka, 2017). "Workload" is defined as "a job demand or stressor that represents a consumption of energy in terms of time and psychological resources" (Goh et al., 2015, p. 67). A school principal is responsible to make sure that the school runs like a well-oiled machine in addition to addressing students' social, emotional, and academic needs. In addition, today's technological platforms such as social media, learning software and an overwhelming number of emails

keep principals tied to the job like never before in the history of the principalship (Hauseman, 2020). Berkovich and Eyal (2015) stated, “Lack of a clear end of the workday contributed to principals’ emotional exhaustion” (p. 140). The workload continues to increase and diversify. Workload encompasses specific tasks, but the part that is often overlooked is the emotional labor within the workload. In addition to the amount of work, as previously discussed, the spectrum of roles and responsibilities continues to expand. In turn, this expansion will increase workload even more leaving less time for addressing other emotional demands and the emotional labor associated with it. A large-scale survey of Ontario principals showed 86.5% feel they do not have enough time to complete work and 29% self-medicate to cope (Pollack et al., 2014).

Hauseman (2020) examined the workload of school principals in a recent qualitative study conducted on 13 secondary school principals from 10 different school districts across Ontario through semi-structured interviews. Hauseman explored how workload influences principals’ ability to manage their emotions effectively. The notion of work and Process Model for Emotional regulation (Gross, 2014) were used. Hauseman found three themes related to workload that make managing emotions more difficult: volume and complexity of workload, legal aspects of the position and being pulled out of building for meetings. As previously discussed earlier in this chapter, Hauseman (2020) points out that lack of professional development and training have previously been identified (Schmidt, 2010; Wallace, 2010) and are continued suggestions based on this research. As previously mentioned, there continues to be a limited amount of research regarding principals and emotional labor and suggestions for continued study for more

than a decade ago seem to not be heard by the research community. However, the consequences of not dealing with the negative effects of emotional labor persist.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention

In addition to academic accountability, marketing their school, being an instructional leader, managing the facility, evaluating teachers, and creating an equitable and safe environment conducive to learning (Grissom et al., 2021), principals are responsible to keep their schools fully staffed with qualified teachers (Boyd et al., 2011; Zuo, 2023). Teacher shortage across the United States has become a growing concern in recent years (McKay, et al., 2022). Due to demographic trends and economic changes, there is a growing need for new teachers, while the present supply is leaving the profession (Sutcher et al., 2016). Hiring teachers is another responsibility of principals. With current data systems available, hiring based on achievement data is now possible. However, in a survey conducted in Texas and Florida only 41 percent of principals responded that they used achievement data to a great extent in the hiring process (Grissom et al., 2021). Enthusiasm and team player were factors cited in other studies (Cannata et al., 2017). Studies conducted nationally have shown that the quality of school leadership affects teachers' decision to stay in the profession more than salaries (Learning Policy Institute, 2017). COVID-19, which will be discussed later, has also had an impact on recruiting and retaining teachers. "Teachers in Title I schools and in schools serving high proportions of students from low-income families and students of color have higher rates of teacher churn" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2018, p. 6). This is particularly interesting to me due to this study being based on elementary principals at Title I schools.

Lack of administrative support and leadership style have been reported in several studies as reasons teachers give for leaving the profession (Learning Policy Institute, 2017). Teacher turnover rates can be influenced by effective principals through building trusting relationships with teachers, including high-performing ones (Loeb et al., 2012) and weeding out low performing ones (Grissom et al., 2021). As will be discussed in Chapter IV, principal-teacher relationships are important. The recruiting and retention of teachers is yet another responsibility that adds to principals' emotional demand increasing emotional labor.

School Safety

In addition to the myriad of responsibilities previously mentioned, principals are responsible for creating a safe and nurturing environment that is conducive to learning (Jacobson et al., 2007). School safety has been a growing concern across our nation and other countries (Aydoğdu & Bozkuş, 2023). Media reports from shootings at Columbine High School, Sandy Hook Elementary School, and Marjory Stoneman Douglas have brought the school safety issue into homes across the nation. Due to the proximity of Marjory Stoneman High School to this school District, the reality of school safety issues lays heavily on District personnel, school administrators, teachers, parents, and students alike. However, it is school principals who are ultimately responsible for the safety of all of their students and personnel (Aydoğdu & Bozkuş, 2023) and their ability to function in a healthy environment (Taymaz, 1995). According to Maslow, in order to be able to fulfill other needs, one must feel safe, a basic need. This includes educational facilities (Aydoğdu & Bozkuş, 2023). Students must be not only physically safe but academically

and socially (Turhan & Turan, 2012). This includes violence, bullying and abuse (Donmez, 2001). Identifying and addressing these problems must occur to ensure students to feel safe and learn (Payne et al., 2003). Establishing a positive climate (Taymaz, 2003) and a well-developed security plan (Dew, 1995) is yet another part of principals' responsibilities. As safety weighs on the minds of many Americans, principals have an overwhelming responsibility to ensure their school and everyone within it is safe. The emotional demand is exacerbated by previous school shootings that have taken place as well as Covid-19, which will be discussed later. The emotional labor that comes from the demand for a safe environment requires principals to remain calm and in control physically, mentally, and emotionally over what transcribes within their building and external factors that could change a school's circumstance from one moment to the next. Safety starts within the school building. This leads into the next section, the mental health and well-being of students and personnel, another major responsibility of school principals, which needs to be monitored and addressed, often through risk and threat assessments.

Mental Health

The mental health crisis across the nation is and has been affecting school age children. As previously mentioned, principals are responsible for the health and well-being of their students. The pandemic has only exacerbated this issue. Isolation associated with COVID-19 along with students not receiving mental health intervention intensified metal health issues (Newlove-Delgado et al., 2021). The National Health Service: UK has reported a rise in mental health issues among children and young people

(Roberts, 2020) as seen in a report as mental health concerns increased in England between 2017 and 2020 (Kaluzeviciute-Moreton et al., 2022). “Principals may risk being emotionally drained by giving too much of themselves” as they are responsible for managing others stress and then their own stress (Hayes et al., 2022, p. 406) which directly speaks to the emotional labor Hochschild introduced that was discussed previously. Numerous studies show that depression, anxiety, and poorer wellbeing have all been associated with the pandemic not only in children but in people across the world (Chen et al., 2020; Cheng et al., 2021; Lloyd et al., 2023; Losada-Balter et al., 2021) as will be discussed later in this chapter. Increased workload (Maxwell & Riley, 2016), accountability (Grissom, et al., 2021), teacher recruitment and retention (McKay, et al., 2022), school safety (Aydoğdu & Bozkuş, 2023) and mental health (Kaluzeviciute-Moreton et al., 2022) have exacerbated the need for principal preparation that is effective in developing today’s principals.

The Need for Principal Preparation

Due to the new responsibilities added to the already vast array of principal’s responsibilities, principal preparation continues to be a growing concern, The need for principal preparation is not new. Dating back, The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, The National Commission on Excellence in Education’s report *A Nation At Risk* in 1983, The National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration in 1987, No Child Left Behind in 2001 and more recently, Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015, all concurred that educational leadership programs need to be overhauled for our schools to be effective. School accountability (Grissom, et al., 2021), high stakes testing

(Grissom, et al., 2021), stakeholders that need to be answered to, society needs such as school safety (Aydoğdu & Bozkuş, 2023) and mental wellness (Kaluzeviciute-Moreton et al., 2022) make preparation a more expansive task. The Council of Chief State School Officers revamped Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium and National Educational Leadership Preparation standards to bridge this gap. This led to a call for universities to overhaul course content and methods of preparing aspiring administrators addressing each state's standards. The Florida Principal Leadership Standards were created in 2005 and last amended in 2011 describing "skill sets, and knowledge bases needed in effective schools" (FLDOE, 2011). With this reconfiguration of standards, universities and preparation programs have attempted to prepare future principals for the roles and responsibilities. A comprehensive review of university and preparation programs would have to be conducted to know if this has actually occurred. However, within my research review on emotional labor, there was no mention of universities addressing it and little regarding principal preparation programs. However, past research has called for emotion and emotion work in principal training programs (Wallace, 2010; Wang et al., 2023).

Principal Preparation Programs

Formal principal preparation programs were established in the beginning of the twentieth century moving away from focusing on technical skills (Lashway, 1999; Pannell et al., 2015). With the passing of No Child Left Behind in 2001, schools and school districts were held accountable by the federal government for providing high quality public education and student achievement results for all students (Pannell et al.,

2015, Randolph & Wilson-Younger, 2012). Being an effective manager was no longer the focus of school systems as this accountability pressured school districts to develop strong instructional leaders (Reames, 2010; Pannell et al., 2015) who could ensure higher student achievement (Olson, 2007). According to Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012), as cited in Pannell et al. (2015), standards for administrators were developed by state and national organizations to address concerns with principal preparation programs focusing on "hands-on internship experiences, thematically integrated curricula, problem-based instruction, and closer partnerships with school districts" (Pannell et al., 2015, p.6). Again, principal preparation program organizers recognized a need to create programs that would address aspiring school administrator's needs (Lashway, 1999; Pannell et al., 2015). However, there is no mention of emotional labor or dealing with emotional labor according to Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012).

Although there is a consensus amongst policy makers and educational officials in 49 states that school leaders should be well-prepared and qualified, (Young, et al., 2002), qualifications to become a principal vary considerably across the United States leaving out performance criteria for effective leadership. According to Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2008), thirty-one states require successful completion of an approved preparation program. In general, most states require a degree/certification, passing of a state exam and some type of professional training (Johnson, 2016). Educational Leadership Programs must be accredited by the agency set for that state such as Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) or AdvancED (Johnson, 2016). They must follow the

agency's guidelines which affects curricula decisions. As stated previously, university standards have been revamped in recent years to keep up with the constant changes experienced by schools and leaders (Superville, 2014).

In 2012, the Wallace Foundation released a report identifying key pathways to better principal training starting with a more selective probing process to identify candidates. The Making of the Principal: Five Lessons of Leadership Training provides insight to actions that are promising to the making of strong school leaders across the nation. This early evidence might lead to lower turnover of leaders and higher student achievement. Providing curricula that focuses on improving instruction by effectively communicating, building high expectations and diagnosing problems allows leaders to improve student outcomes. Coursework includes action research, problem-based learning, and journaling to assist in applying theory to practice. Hands-on residencies afford aspiring principals the opportunity to analyze leadership decisions. Setting leadership standards guides traits of effective leadership leading to a better selection of candidates. Districts are providing their own training programs designed to meet their needs. States can design a pipeline that improves school leadership statewide. Mentoring and professional development continue throughout first years to provide support and guidance. Reliable funding for consistent training must be provided as a collaborative effort between districts and foundations. While these dominant technical and procedural approaches are needed, there is no mention in this report by the Wallace Foundation regarding emotional demands, principal preparation, or professional development to meet

emotional demands through approaches that will alleviate or address the emotional labor addressing the relational aspect of the principalship.

Effective principal preparation is a mutual concern among universities, states, and local school districts (Browne-Ferrigno, 2011). Principal preparation programs at the university levels are at the heart of training future principals. “Successful principals possess a strong knowledge base, the skill to apply that knowledge in the context of their school, and the disposition to use their knowledge and skill effectively” (Lauder, 2000, p. 24). However, there continues to be debate as to whether these programs are effective (Johnson, 2016); some say they are adequate (Duncan, et al., 2011) while others say they are inadequate (Hess & Kelly, 2007). While they excel at preparing aspiring school administrators for the technical aspects required of the position, there is seems to be a disconnect between theoretical knowledge (analytical thinking) and the social knowledge (social aspects) (Luttuca, 2012). In effect, Luttuca is speaking of the technical versus relational aspects of the position. She suggests building social knowledge by experience or simulating daily aspects of the position. These simulations could prepare principals for the emotional labor that will come with the position relating to this study.

Johnson’s (2016) study of current school principals and assistant principals from Florida and Georgia aimed to examine the effectiveness of the university programs on principals who attended one of 24 universities from 10 states from 2000-2015 (Johnson, 2016). The study included 25 questions regarding technical preparation programs. A Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree about program preparation and usefulness of preparation based on types of experiences offered (job-embedded and

district level preparation). Interestingly, and in in direct relationship with the purpose of my study, the last two questions were open-ended with one asking participants areas they would like to have had more preparation for. Overall results indicated that participants who attended a university at the latter end of the time span ranked their preparation as adequate or innovative as compared to the participants who attended university at the beginning of the time span who deemed their preparation as inadequate. This showed that university preparation seems to be doing a better job at preparing school leaders as time progresses regarding the technical aspects of the principalship. A common thread in adequate preparation throughout was school law and leadership whereas school finance/budgeting, data analysis and human resources were areas they would have liked more training. Eighty-four percent of participants participated in field experience. Overall, participants' responses indicated that the skills obtained in their university preparation courses have been useful. For 92% of participants, job-embedded learning experiences were more productive for them than university preparation, which shows the need for continued preparation beyond the university walls. On one of the open-ended questions regarding what participants would have like more preparation with 57 responses were given. "Budget" was listed 19 times, and "achievement data analysis" was listed 10 times. Interestingly, the other areas identified included "parental involvement, dealing with difficult parents, professional learning, stakeholder relationship, and human resources" (Johnson, 2016). However, there was no mention in the implications section for any of these requests for future relational training yet again showing that the relational aspects of the job of principals, according to this study, has not and will not be addressed in the future. This leads to the significance of my study on

how principals experience an understand emotional labor. My hope is that my participants experiences will add to scholarly literature and evoke a necessary response to the training of future principals on the relational aspects of the position, including emotional labor.

Principal Retention

In addition to academic accountability, staffing schools, safety and well-being concern for students which was previously discussed, two simultaneous challenges today's principals face are the amount of work they are responsible for and the kind of work necessary for the job. Hence, the retention of highly qualified principals has become a concern in education across America (McKay et al., 2022). "Principals may risk being emotionally drained by giving too much of themselves" as they are responsible for managing others stress and then their own stress (Hayes et al., 2022, p. 406) which directly speaks to the emotional labor Hochschild introduced that was discussed previously. Burnout and stress are leading factors causing principals to resign or retire. "A nationally representative survey of principals fielded in March 2021 found that 72 percent of principals reported that the burnout associated with the stress from their jobs was a moderate or major concern" (Kaufman et al., 2021). "A poll conducted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) in August 2020 found that pandemic working conditions had accelerated plans to leave the profession for almost half (45 percent) of surveyed principals and had caused almost one-quarter of surveyed principals to consider leaving the principalship for the first time" (NASSP, 2020).

As in other professions, principals deal with stress in different ways. According to a study conducted by Roesch in 1979 and replicated by other researchers found that spending more time at work was a main coping method for principals (Poirel and Yvon, 2014). However, in 2003, Abdul Muthalib found that discussing problems with colleagues was the most popular strategy amongst fifty principals (Poirel and Yvon, 2014). Past research has found collegial support to increase job satisfaction (Abraham, 1998), as will be detailed in the data within this study. In a study conducted by Hayes et al. (2022), a key finding was that principals used networking as a form of self-care during the COVID-19 crisis. This allowed them to problem solve and receive support from colleagues who were going through the same type of situations they were dealing with. In Chapter 4, I will refer more to networking. Using this research as an example of principals' self-care remedies to meet their personal needs brings attention to the need for principal preparation related to the relational aspects of the principalship and emotional labor specifically.

COVID-19

Although this study does not specifically focus on one recent period of education, I feel it is imperative to acknowledge that education across America has changed significantly since 2020. Therefore, participant responses reflect their experiences before, during and after the pandemic and will be addressed throughout this study as applicable. "The global pandemic has deeply shaken educational systems to the core, with the impact having directly affected some 1.6 billion students in more than 200 countries. The fact that more than 94% of the world's student population has been affected during this difficult and critical period clearly shows the extent of the pandemic's impact on global

education." (Karakose, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic affected the daily lives of people as lockdowns were implemented across the world (Lloyd, 2023). These lockdowns affected all areas of life including access to education and distance learning implementation canceling out traditional methods of teaching. "In one of the largest international studies undertaken on the impact of COVID-19, involving approximately 27,000 participants aged 8 to 17 years in 137 countries, researchers found that the most negative impact of the pandemic was felt by children and young people who were already vulnerable to breaches of their rights before the outbreak of COVID-19" (Lundy et al., 2021).

Needless to say, the roles and responsibilities of today's principals and the emotional demands and emotional labor that already existed, were compounded during and after COVID-19. In March 2020, all student' learning in this District went virtual due to the outbreak of Covid-19 and remained on-line through the second week of the 2020-2021 school year. Students and teachers left their buildings for Spring Break with no idea they would not return for months or longer. The transition from traditional learning to distance learning was something that had never happened in the history of education before. Distance learning proved to be challenging for many students, especially students who were already struggling academically, including students with disabilities (Pokhrel, et al., 2021). These challenges included lack of student and parent technical skills and isolation from peers creating mental health issues which will be discussed further later. Teachers and students transitioned to distance learning immediately with little training and support (Karakose, 2022). Studies on how this affected teachers and school administrators up to recent has been limited (Karakose, et al., 2021). As some restrictions

began to lift, for the 2020-2021 school year, in some Districts in Florida, parents had the choice of having their child return to the school campus or continue distance learning. Some students remained at home and were taught through distance learning while others reported back to the schoolhouse for face-to face instruction. This hybrid scenario was yet another adaptation teachers and school administrators needed to make as they taught face-to-face while simultaneously using on-line platforms (Pokhrel, et al., 2021) to connect with their virtual students. In addition, implementing safety measures such as social distancing, masking, sanitizing and good hygiene for their students was added to administrators and teachers' responsibilities, often times at the risk of their own health (Karakose et al, 2022). The mapping of student interaction assisted in tracing and identifying students who had close contact with infected students. Principals and assistant principals completed reports of students who were infected to keep the District abreast of the virus spreading and placed phone calls to the parents of other students who had had close contact with someone infected.

Although principals have worked through crisis situations in the past such as hurricanes, tornadoes, social disruptions, the pandemic was like nothing they had experienced before (Smylie, 2017). Principals needed to ensure students not only had access to education but were being fed when they were completing distance learning, and that teachers and staff were watching out for their well-being. Principals' roles intensified as they became a model for students, parents, and the community (Hayes et al., 2022). The grading of schools was also affected due to the pandemic. In my experience, with so many students not returning to school buildings due to health concerns, meeting the then 95 percent mandatory completion rate of testing required by the FLDOE did not happen

for some schools. However, this was not a loophole for schools to be unaccountable as the District used testing data to unofficially grade schools and proceed with accountability requirements. All students returned to the schoolhouse for the 2021-2022 school year.

Even with all of the research on the effects of the pandemic on education, principals and teachers, there is no mention of the emotional labor principals experienced and endured as they led their schools through this historical time. However, some research does cite psychological distress (Karakose, 2022).

Summary

In summary, principals today are dealing with an increasing number of roles and responsibilities. Whereas they were once seen as managers and required mostly technical skill and knowledge, today's leaders are involved with more relational aspects of the job such as communication with all stakeholders (Lashway, 1999; Pannell et al., 2015). Social pressures such as accountability (Grissom et al., 2021), high-stakes testing (Grissom et al., 2021), school safety (Aydoğdu & Bozkuş, 2023), mental wellness (Kaluzeviciute-Moreton et al., 2022), teacher retention and recruitment (Sutcher et al., 2016) have been a focus over recent years adding to the emotional demand requiring an increased amount of emotional labor within their position (Wang et al., 2022). Consequences of the enormous emotional labor that persists within the position is leading to emotional exhaustion (Grandey, 2000), burnout (Grandey, 2000) and principals leaving the profession (Humphrey et al., 2008; McKay et al., 2022). Although past and current research recognize that emotional labor exists among workers and specifically principals, research regarding the management of it and training to deal with it is limited.

In addition, university and preparation programs' main focus seems to be on the more technical aspects of the position. In Chapter III, I present the results of this study on five elementary school principals and their experiences and understanding of emotional labor.

CHAPTER III
METHODS
Introduction

As an assistant principal with aspiration of becoming a principal, I wanted my study to highlight a topic that seemed to be overlooked in the field of educational leadership. As I reviewed current and past literature on principal preparation, I noticed a gap regarding research specifically related to principal preparation and emotional labor. I noticed that although emotional labor had been studied in other fields, including classroom educators, the research is scarce on the leaders of our schools, principals. I considered whether quantitative research or qualitative research would yield the type of information that could potentially give insight as to how principals experience and understand emotional labor. I decided I wanted to learn from their first-hand accounts and experiences, which led to conducting a qualitative study.

This chapter is divided into several sections. After articulating the research question, I introduce my *research design* and supply the rationale for conducting this study using a phenomenological approach. In the following section, *data sources*, I provide the rationale for the study, describe the sampling and recruitment techniques as well as provide information about the characteristics of the study's participants. In addition, I provide the reasoning for using interviews as my data collection technique. In the next section, *data collection*, I explain my process of collecting data, including the development of the interview protocol, how interviews were structured and conducted, and how I interacted with the data between and after interviews. In the section that follows, *data analysis*, I provide an overview of the process I used to code and analyze data by compiling, disassembling, reassembling, and arraying, interpreting, and

concluding. In *data integrity/trustworthiness*, I explain my positionality to the research. I explain steps I took to ensure transparency and to keep my bias in check. In the section *statement of significance*, I provide insight as to why I chose this topic of study based on current needs in research pertaining to school principals. Lastly, I discuss delimitations and assumptions of study.

Research Question

How do principals experience and understand emotional labor in Title I elementary school settings?

Research Design

To understand any aspect in the field of education, it is important to provide a vehicle of inquiry that will allow participants to talk about their experiences (Seidman, 2019). To do this, I captured these experiences and understandings through a qualitative interview study utilizing a human research design encompassing three in-depth interviews (Seidman, 2019). "At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman, 2019). Questions involved the participant describing their experiences and understanding of emotional labor. All interviews were approximately an hour with a range of 23 to 67 minutes and an average time of 45 minutes. Although this is not a phenomenological study, a phenomenological approach was used in that "an experience has different meanings for each person" (Ary, Jacobs, Sorenson & Walker, 2014, p. 34) and as such I explored each participants thoughts and feelings as they relate to emotional labor at their particular work setting (Seidman, 2019). By asking participants to reconstruct their experience and then reflect on its meaning, I encouraged

participants to engage in [the] “act of attention” that then allows them to consider the meaning of the lived experience (Seidman, 2019, p. 19).

The advantage of a qualitative study is that it allows for an in-depth understanding of the participants experiences. As such, my aim is to document the experiences of each participant and establish commonalities among them.

Before initiating the research process, I requested approval from the Institutional Review Board at Florida International University. An informed consent form was devised detailing: An invitation to participate in my study, to what end, how, duration, participant risks, participant rights, possible benefits, confidentiality of records, information on how I intend to distribute the results of the research and contact information (Seidman, 2019). I developed and maintained professional rapport with participants representing their experiences accurately paying close attention to research ethics. My goal is to contribute to the education community by adding to the body of literature that currently exists shedding light on principal’s experiences with emotional labor.

Research Site

The research site selected for this study is a large, diverse urban school district located in the southeastern United States. As with other school districts, Covid-19 has left a gap in student knowledge and educational experiences. Linked to this is a concern for the mental well-being of students and the adults that teach and lead them. Teacher shortages are a major concern as private and charter schools seek to recruit public school students. Various vouchers have been approved to assist parents in enrolling their child in their “school of choice” whether that be within or even outside the public school system. In addition, this school district is among some that have been inundated with political

changes which over the past few years have directly affected the way our schools function and the role of the school principal. Teaching standards have been on a continual change cycle over the past ten years, which means that personnel are consistently being trained on new standards and the teaching resources provided by the county. The "Don't Say Gay" bill, critical race theory (CRT), an influx of immigrants registering into the school system, book banning, and student mental health care crisis are a few examples of this. These directly affect the way schools function, and the type of labor principals are facing which has exacerbated their emotional demands and workload (Maxwell & Riley, 2016).

I have chosen to study principals in this district because of my professional and personal ties to it. As an alumnus, I have worked within this school district for the past twenty-nine years: seventeen as a teacher, five as a reading coach and the later six and currently as an elementary assistant principal. The District is divided into three regions: south, central, and north. I have worked within two of these regions. All of my experiences have been at Title I schools. No Title I or any school is the same, and the population, diversity, and experiences within them differ as well.

Over the past twenty-nine years of service, I have built professional relationships which made recruiting prospective participants possible. For this study, I used the snowball effect. Snowball effect is when one participant leads to another (Yin, 2016). Snowball sampling "identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 158). To encourage participation, I felt that it was important that perspective participants understood beforehand the purpose of the study, procedures, time requested and were assured

anonymity. Because I wanted to ensure participants who would elaborate during interviews, I intentionally highlighted the need for participants who would articulate their beliefs and experiences. I initiated the recruitment process by contacting two principals who had been presenters at workshops for assistant principals that I had attended in the past. In our initial meeting, I discussed the importance of being open and honest throughout responses so that I could gather a comprehensive picture of the participants' experiences. Each participant agreed that they were willing and able to do this. I asked if they had any colleagues they felt would be interested in my topic of study. They each referred me to one of their colleagues. The fifth participant I recruited was a principal who was referred to me by an assistant principal colleague who told me she had learned a lot from working with him. Therefore, I decided to reach out to him. As previously stated, all participants agreed to participate without hesitation and completed all three interviews.

Data Sources

For this study, five Title I elementary school principals participated in a three-part interview. Of the five participants, three identified as female and two male. The participants were diverse in their ethnicities: one identified as white American, two white Hispanic, one Black American and one Black Haitian. Participants experience as a school principal ranged from 4 to 15 years. Experience as an assistant principal ranged from 4 to 14 years. Four of the five participated in the District's principal preparation program. Surprisingly, all five participants went to the same private university for Administrative Leadership and Supervision. To protect participants from being identified, I asked each to

choose a pseudonym. Participants for this study will be referred to as Kimberly, Winifred, Kelly, Jeff, and John throughout.

Table 3.1

Participant's Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Years of Experience as a Principal	Type of Administrative Leadership University
Jeff	Male	Black (Haitian)	7	Private
John	Male	White (Hispanic)	4	Private
Kelly	Female	White (Hispanic)	8	Private
Kimberly	Female	White (non-Hispanic)	15	Private
Winifred	Female	Black (American)	4	Private

As I sought participants for my study, I aimed to be inclusive of male and female participants. At the elementary level, the majority of principals are female. However, I felt that not including male participants would skew the data being that emotional labor may be seen and dealt with differently by different genders. In addition, I purposefully included participants from diverse backgrounds. Diversity is important to my study because it takes place in a district that is part of a diverse urban city. I thought inclusivity would bring about different experiences based on the way distinct cultures interpret situations and the way they address different problems.

As discussed previously, emotional labor is inherent in all work and settings. However, I chose to focus on Title I schools in this large urban school district because they tend to have some of our neediest children. Therefore, principals at these schools are likely to have experienced more emotional demand and labor perhaps shedding a better light on their experiences and understanding of emotional labor.

Data Collection

Seidman (2019) suggests a three-part interview for such phenomenologically-inspired studies. I wanted to ensure that the open-ended questions I used for each interview would provide participants an opportunity to openly express their experiences. I also wanted to ensure I would have enough information from each to gain a thorough understanding of their experience as a principal. After I developed the initial questions, I shared them with my committee members. My committee members reviewed them and made suggestions based on their experience conducting qualitative research and our conversation regarding my research question. Based on their suggestions, I developed the three sets of questions for the interviews. All three interviews were semi-structured lasting approximately 60 minutes each conducted through Zoom. The initial interview consisted of twelve questions, including sub questions, pertaining to becoming a leader, about typical experiences they face daily and the demands/pressures of the position (Appendix X). By the end of the first interview, I developed rapport, became knowledgeable of the background of the participant, gained knowledge of any educational leadership training, and became familiar with the participants work setting. After I reviewed the data from the first interview, participants participated in a second interview consisting of eight questions, including sub questions, to gain more in-depth

responses asking them to reflect on the experiences shared in the first interview (Appendix XX). The goal of the second interview was to allow the participants to respond to open-ended questions that will enable elaboration about what it looks and feels like to be in the shoes of the participant daily and in stressful situations, the demands, coping and what a good day means to them. These "open and expansive" questions gave participants room to provide in-depth answers (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009, p. 59). My hope was that these questions would shed light on the emotional demand and emotional labor that may exist in each participant's role and setting. After I reviewed the data from the second interview, participants participated in a third interview consisting of eight questions, including sub questions, to gain more in-depth responses asking them to reflect on the experiences shared in the second interview (Appendix XXX). The goal of the third interview was to allow participants to respond to open-ended questions that would enable elaboration focused on recurring challenges, accomplishments, regrets, and realizations about the position.

Due to time constraints and the workload of school principals, I conducted my research during the 2023 spring semester after regular school hours and during the 2023 spring break and the 2023 summer semester during and after school hours. After school hours, school buildings were void of students and teachers, which allowed participants to be more relaxed and available to participate in this study. One participant requested that the interview be conducted while in route home because of the time and traffic encountered in the late afternoon. Two others requested that some of their sessions be conducted over spring break so they would be able to focus on their responses from home. In the summer, participants had more time to be able to get away from usual daily

routines as less or no students were in their buildings. My initial goal was to interview up to six participants. I focused on the quality of the interviews as opposed to the number of them as is suggested by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009). However, once I reached a level of saturation, where I was learning nothing new in relation to the research question, I ended data collection at the end of the fifth participant's interviews (Seidman, 2019).

An initial phone call or in-person meeting was made to introduce myself, discuss the purpose and topic of my research and to request a brief in-person or zoom meeting with each potential participant. This contact allowed me to become familiar with the prospective participant's work setting (Seidman, 2019). I used this meeting to build rapport and answer any questions the prospective participant had about the research process. When participant agreed to participate, I sent the informed consent form via email and explain it in detail. Although Seidman does not suggest having this form signed in the initial meeting, I felt it will be more comfortable to discuss it in person or through a separate encounter because future meetings would be held on-line through Zoom. I felt the participant would be more likely to ask questions or show hesitations, which I was able to address immediately. Seidman (2019) shares the importance of prospective participants not feeling coerced and their understanding of the meaning of their agreement to participate including potential risks of being identified, although every means necessary would be taken to keep participants anonymous. When the potential participant agreed, I set up the initial day and time for the first interview through Zoom. A follow-up email was sent two days prior to the participant along with the Zoom log-in information. In addition, I had each participant complete a brief profile with contact information, personal information, years of experience and year of degree in educational

leadership, along with a pseudonym they are comfortable with me using when referring to them in my writing.

I wanted to ensure that the participants' words were recorded with precision and that the technology I used would be fail-proof, so I used three methods of recording the interviews, all with which were password protected and saved on a personal jump drive. Zoom was used to record and transcribe, Microsoft Word was used to transcribe, and Voice Memos was used to audio record the sessions allowing for easy access to listen to them repeatedly.

After the first interview, a second interview was arranged within a week's time. This gave me the opportunity to review transcription from the first interview to inform the second interview (Seidman, 2019). At this point, I decided if any part of the initial interview was something I would like the participant to expound upon for clarification or if a topic of interest stood out above others. The second interview required the participant to reflect on some of the experiences mentioned during the first interview in addition to planned questions regarding demands/pressures of the position, support, coping mechanisms, and feelings surrounding the position. After the second interview, the third interview was arranged within a week's time. Transcripts were reviewed and topics that required more probing were revisited along with pre-designed semi-structured questions.

I felt that each participant was comfortable and honest in the interview as it was being recorded and transcribed. Throughout the study, participants were reminded of their right to not have the interview recorded and that they could ask that the process be stopped at any time. No participant requested for the interviews to not be recorded and all participants completed each of the three interviews with no hesitation. Some of the

interviews had to be rescheduled due to participants unforeseen circumstances as their schedule in the role of the principal called for them to have an unscheduled parent conference or other professional/personal obligation. However, there were no hesitations to reschedule for a later date.

Data Analysis

To analyze the interview transcripts. I used the five phases referred to by Yin (2016) for data analysis: (1) compiling, (2) disassembling, (3) reassembling and arraying, (4) interpreting and (5) concluding. Yin advises that these phases would occur in a non-linear fashion as they have "recursive and iterative relationships" (Yin, 2016, p. 187). Seidman (2019) and Yin (2016) explain that organization of each participant's profile and transcripts is essential.

In Phase 1, I secured a manual filing system to retain all original transcripts along with the data backed-up on a jump drive and Voice Memos were retained on my password protected phone. I conducted a preliminary exploration by listening to the recordings and adjusting the transcripts for accuracy, rereading the transcribed interviews, and familiarizing myself with the data to make decisions about disassembling the data in Phase 2. As suggested by Yin (2016) and Seidman (2019), I created memos of ideas that came to mind as I attempted to dissemble the data and notated interesting findings, respectively. To ensure that my focus remained on the research at hand and that relevant data or opposing data was considered in the process, I referred to my research question throughout (Yin, 2016). I highlighted the transcripts in assorted colors according to possible themes in the "coding" process (Seidman, 2019, p. 133) using key terms and topics categorizing common experiences/feelings that seem to be common

threads connecting participants' experiences. This "open coding" allowed for me to form my initial categories. I also coded any outliers to ensure inclusivity of ideas that defy my own subjectivity (Seidman, 2019). In discussion of outliers, Miles, and Huberman (1984) suggest, "Researchers have to try to understand their importance in the face of the other data they have gathered" (Seidman, 2019, p. 135).

Upon a second review of the transcripts, I cut and pasted coded quotes onto a separate Word document using subheadings. I noticed similarities in responses as I transposed the data. By looking at repetition in codes, I devised my initial themes based on common overarching ideas that each could possibly fall under. Using "analytical coding," I combined similar codes to create my initial themes. Not sure that the themes I was creating would pan out, I made sure to keep the original coding above the data for each.

During Phase 3, the reassembling phase, I revisited each transcript along with the coded transcript to identify, alter and build upon themes based on reoccurring concepts and shared experiences. I included outliers at the bottom of the document to ensure I was inclusive of opposing or unilateral experiences. Following Yin's (2016) advice, "[I] need[ed] to take as many precautions to minimize or at least reveal biases, and three procedures helped avoid problems as well as stimulate [my] ideas about yet newer patterns: making constant comparisons, watching for negative cases, and engaging in rival thinking" (Yin, 2016, p. 210). By making constant comparisons of similarities and differences of the codes I had already developed, I became aware of new concepts or relationships that presented themselves and altered some of my organization of codes recreating themes. For example, some of the codes had experiences about COVID-19

within them. I decided to dedicate a separate section because of its importance in understanding the participants' experiences and responses. COVID-19 affected participants overall, not in just a few specific areas. Taking note of negative instances allowed me to delve deeper into outliers that initially seemed in alignment with other data. Negative cases enhance, broaden or and validate the patterns emerging in the data analysis. Rival thinking allowed for alternative explanations before making a conclusion (Yin, 2016).

In Phase 4, the interpreting phase, I created an outline of the conclusions I made based on the data. I revisited this outline several times and adjusted it to ensure data was positioned in a well-thought-out manner that would represent the larger meaning of context created by the participants. In addition, I listed conclusions that could be made by others addressing why I am not addressing them in my interpretation. According to Yin (2016), a cohesive interpretation is complete, fair, and empirically accurate, adds value to research in my area, and is credible (p. 221).

In Phase 5, the concluding phase, I used my research question, data collection, data analysis to solidify themes and the presentation of findings, consistently referring back to each part.

In Chapter IV, I cite the results of the data collected from the five participants in the study. Based on their experiences, I demonstrate how they are related to emotional labor. For the purpose of this study, I use the definitions/explanations of emotional labor introduced by three researchers: Emotional labor includes managing one's emotions, recognizing others' emotions and doing work to be successful in the interaction that takes place between the two (Mastracci et al., 2010) "The management of a feeling to create a

publicly observable facial and bodily display: emotional labor is sold for a wage and therefore has an exchange value" (Hochschild, 2012, p. 7) and "Influencing the moods, emotions, motivations, and performance of subordinates or followers" (Humphrey et al., 2008, p.153). In addition, I use Hochschild's definitions of surface acting and deep acting. "Surface acting" is when the physical expression one displays does not agree with our emotional state (Hochschild, 1983). In contrast, "deep acting" is when a worker "consciously modifies feelings in order to express the desired emotion" (Grandey, 2000, p. 96). These definitions/explanations used in combination articulate the current understanding in scholarly research of emotional labor. However, upon reviewing and analyzing the participants' experiences, there appears to be situations in which an experience seems to require emotional labor, but the current understanding of emotional labor does not capture the spirit of the situation presented. I provide an argument for these instances.

Data Integrity/Trustworthiness

In all qualitative studies, it is important to develop trustworthiness. I used different measures to ensure that my research was conducted and reported in a manner that is trustworthy. I was transparent in my research procedures throughout the study to create trustworthiness (Yin, 2016). While cutting and pasting from one document to another to organize the experiences of participants into categories, I ensured their words were not taken out of context. I kept a copy of the original recordings and transcripts. "By preserving the words of the participants, researchers have their original data. If something is not clear in the transcript, the researcher [] can return to the source and check for accuracy" (Seidman, 2019, p. 123). In addition, I conducted informal member checks

during the second and third interview to refine my understanding of information participants shared from previous interviews that needed clarification to ensure credibility. To ensure anonymity, I omitted identifying information from a few of the interviews that cited special characteristics or demographics of the school participants worked at and the names of people they mentioned as mentors or region personnel. Throughout the study, I kept my researcher bias in check through reflexivity at different points in the process, as this topic and experiences are of personal interest in my professional life (Ary et al., 2014).

Summary

In summary, in this chapter I described how I used a phenomenological approach to conduct a qualitative study through interviewing five principals to explore how they experience and understand emotional labor in their position as Title I elementary school principals in the southeast region of the United States. I described how I used the advice of Seidman and Yin to guide my research process. Recruiting through the snowball sampling method, I conducted three interviews with five participants. In Table 3.1 I illustrate the demographics of the participants. I provided an overview of the process I used to code and analyze data by compiling, disassembling, reassembling, and arraying, interpreting, and concluding. I described the thought process I used to develop themes based on the codes derived from the data. I explained my positionality to the research, the steps taken to ensure transparency, and the steps taken to keep my bias in check. I provided insight as to why I chose this topic of study based on current needs in research pertaining to school principals. Lastly, I discussed delimitations and assumptions of study.

CHAPTER IV
RESULTS
Introduction

This chapter discusses the analysis of the data I collected and the results of my research. I begin by detailing the overall key findings and then move into an explanation of the process used for developing themes. I then use the themes developed to inform my research question and specifically detail the participants' experiences and understanding of emotional labor pointing out key findings informed by each. Importantly, I use data from each participant to demonstrate what I understood as their experience and understanding of emotional labor. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key findings.

Through my analysis I developed eight key findings: (1) The participants all expressed their work requires emotional labor, though they rarely articulated it in those terms. Although, they clearly experience emotional labor throughout their work, they often did not understand their work in terms of emotional labor. (2) The participants' understanding of emotional labor did not appear different or separate from their understanding of their role as a leader. It is as if they assumed emotional labor was an inherent part of their job, not something that could be separated from/understood as distinct from their job. This might help explain the distinction between experiencing emotional labor and not explicitly understanding their work in terms of emotional labor. (3) When the participants did speak to the terms/components of emotional labor and their work, it was mainly through a description of surface or deep acting without name it as such. It appears the participants have no knowledge of the term emotional labor, surface

acting or deep acting, although their experiences implicitly describe these terms. (4) While the participants experienced emotional labor throughout their work, it was concentrated in particular areas (academic pressure, school grades, mental health, school safety, parent involvement, difficult parents, teacher recruitment and teacher retention), which can be seen through the development of themes. (5) The participants articulated a more nuanced understanding of the effects of emotional labor and the conditions requiring it than the aspects of work it engenders. That is, they noted the emotional aspects of their job and the consequences of it such as burnout, but articulated the specific labor required to confront those aspects to a lesser extent or in very general ways. (6) While the participants mostly were not able to articulate their experiences using terminology associated with scholarly articulations of emotional labor, they were able to articulate specific strategies or support mechanisms they used to confront the emotional aspects of their work. (7) Much of the participants' emotional labor was directed at areas of work they were not able to meaningfully influence within their role as principal. (8) Participants were unable to separate themselves as individuals from the work they are responsible for in their position, which added to the emotional labor they experienced.

The first major theme in this chapter-*Building Community*- discusses the participants experiences with emotional labor and understanding of it in relation to relationships with stakeholders as they highlighted the importance of visibility and accessibility, building and maintaining trust, and navigating the position with compassion and empathy. Participants provide insight into how they build community through their firsthand experiences. In a role where they are consistently "on," the emotional labor they

endure is often invisible and silent as they navigate relationships within and outside of the school. It is not the physical effort of maintaining these relationships but the emotional thought process and emotional labor that allows them to build community in their schools. Principals tend to manage the feelings of others above their own. This consistent managing of feelings of both others and their own. Key findings detailed in this section include: The participants all expressed their work requires emotional labor, although they often did not understand their work in terms of emotional labor. The participants' understanding of emotional labor did not appear different or separate from their understanding of their role as a leader. It is as if they assumed emotional labor was an inherent part of their job. It appears the participants have no knowledge of the term emotional labor, surface acting or deep acting, although their experiences implicitly describe these terms. The participants noted the emotional aspects of their job and the consequences of it such as stress and burnout, but articulated the specific labor required to confront those aspects to a lesser extent or in very general ways.

Whereas the first section details *Building Community*, the second major theme in this chapter- *Elephant in the Room: Unsolvable Problems and Unachievable Goals*- discusses the participants experiences with emotional labor and understanding of it through their experiences with academic pressure, school grades, mental health, school safety, parental involvement, difficult parents, and teacher retention and recruitment. These internal and external factors both contribute to the emotional labor experienced by participants as they are held responsible for things that are often out of their control. Key findings detailed in this section include: The participants all expressed their work requires emotional labor, though they often did not understand their work in terms of emotional

labor. The participants' understanding of emotional labor did not appear different or separate from their understanding of their role as a leader but instead as an inherent part of their job. While the participants experienced emotional labor throughout their work, it was concentrated in particular areas (academic pressure, school grades, mental health, school safety, parent involvement, difficult parents, teacher recruitment and teacher retention). The participants noted the emotional aspects of their job and the consequences of it such as stress and burnout, but articulated the specific labor required to confront those aspects to a lesser extent or in very general ways. Much of the participants' emotional labor was directed at areas of work they were not able to meaningfully influence within their role as principal. Participants were unable to separate themselves as individuals from the work they are responsible for in their position, which added to the emotional labor they experienced.

Whereas the second theme focused on *Elephant in the Room: Unsolvable Problems and Unachievable Goals*, the third major theme in this study-*Attempting to Survive the Position: Sink or Swim*- discusses strategies these principals currently use to navigate the emotional labor required of the position. This section includes core beliefs/belief systems, faith and family, on-the-job training/mentoring, principal induction, relationship with region/district, problem solving through networking/collaborating and systems in place. The participants explain their philosophy and experiences that serve as coping mechanisms. Key findings detailed in this section include: The participants all expressed their work requires emotional labor, though they rarely articulated it in those terms. The participants' understanding of emotional labor did not appear different or separate from their understanding of their role as a leader but

instead as an inherent part of their job. The participants articulated a more nuanced understanding of the effects of emotional labor and the conditions requiring it than the aspects of work it engenders. While the participants mostly were not able to articulate their experiences using terminology associated with scholarly articulations of emotional labor, they were able to articulate specific strategies or support mechanisms they used to confront the emotional aspects of their work.

Whereas the third major theme focused on *Attempting to Survive the Position: Sink or Swim*, the fourth major theme in this study-E*xpectations of the Principalship*-discusses participants experiences with emotional labor, their understanding of it and the consequences of emotional labor detailing the 24/7 responsibility, burnout, and workload, This section details how they currently feel about assuming their role as a principal. Key findings detailed in this section include: The participants all expressed their work requires emotional labor, though they rarely articulated it in those terms. The participants noted the emotional aspects of their job and the consequences of it such as burnout, but articulated the specific labor required to confront those aspects to a lesser extent or in very general ways. Much of the participants' emotional labor was directed at areas of work they were not able to meaningfully influence within their role as principal. Lastly, the participants were unable to separate themselves as individuals from the work they are responsible for in their position, which added to the emotional labor they experienced.

Data analysis was conducted in five stages, as is detailed in Table 1.1. As data analysis is a reiterative process, I reviewed the recordings and transcripts numerous times to develop codes through open coding, then coalescing codes and using abstraction to develop initial themes. Consistently moving through phases in the reiterative process, I

added codes, moved codes, renamed themes, rearranged themes until I reached a level of understanding. Table 1.1 shows the stages of data analysis and provides a description of each. Following this, Table 1.2 demonstrates my thought process while coalescing codes into themes.

Table 1.1

5 Stages of Data Analysis	Phase of Data Collection/Analysis
Stage 1-Compiling	Collect data through Voice Memo recording, Zoom transcript and Word transcripts
Stage 2-Dissassembling	Listen to Voice Memos and review/edit transcripts of interviews. I began the process of open coding.
Stage 3-Reassembling and Arraying	Relistened to interviews and read transcripts rearranging and coalescing codes and using abstraction to develop initial themes based on reoccurring concepts and shared experiences amongst participants.
Stage 4-Interpreting	Created outline of themes, renaming, and rearranging it until it best represented the context of participants' experiences.
Stage 5-Concluding	Used my research question, data collection, data analysis to solidify themes and organize presentation of findings. Added analysis of experiences.

Table 1.2

Initial Codes	Revised codes	Themes
teachers	accessible	Building/Maintaining
students	visible	Relationships
parents	relationships	
stakeholders	families	
communication	teachers	
availability	communication	
accessibility	trust	
culture	stakeholders	
service		
team		

social needs		
dealing with people		
challenging	Schools grades	Problems
teacher absences	Academic pressures	
academic challenges	Accountability	
parent expectations	Low performance	
responsibility	Mental health	
respect	Safety	
theory vs reality	Shootings	
tasks	COVID-19	
24/7	Emails	
teacher shortage	Phone calls	
stress-parents		
stress-safety		
mental health		
stress-school grades		
COVID-19		
threats		
stressors		
loyalty		
low performing school		
negative interactions		
trust	Faith	Coping
opportunities	Family	
collaboration	Pray	
24/7	Cry	
coping	Systems	
personality	Principal Induction	
therapy	Workshops	
service	Collaboration	
work ethic	Networking	
networking	Trusting groups	
weight		
COVID-19		
compassion		
empathy		
mentor		
core beliefs		
support		
loyalty		
handling stress		
consumes you		
incentives		
wish had known	24/7	Expectations
difficult	Emails	

sacrifice	Long hours
proud	Work from home
stress	Retirement
workload	Burnout
responsibility	
burnout	
weight	
happy	
carry stress home	
well-oiled machine	

BUILDING COMMUNITY

The first major theme in this study-*Building Community*- discusses the participants' experiences with emotional labor and understanding of it in relation to building community, the importance of building it, and the labor required to do so. This section provides examples of the participants' relationships with stakeholders, the emotional labor involved and their understanding of emotional labor.

As previously stated, emotional labor is inherent in many professions. Hochschild (2012) discussed it in wage workers such as flight attendants and bill collectors. Other scholars have acknowledged its presence in hospitals, restaurants, and other service industries. However, Gronn (2003) suggests that this may be more significant in a school setting. As I discussed in Chapter II, the role of a principal involves building and maintaining diverse kinds of relationship: student, teacher, parent, community, region, and the district. Education is a field of service, and the principal is responsible for serving and interacting with an array of stakeholders. As will be demonstrated in this section, a large part of the participants' emotional labor was spent building, mending, or creating relationships with others. As literature on leadership has acknowledged and as the participants articulated, to do this, leaders need to be visible and accessible to their

stakeholders. For these participants, communication with all stakeholders is a way to both lead and manage.

According to the participants, a principal's communication and accessibility are open to all stakeholders at any time during the day, beginning before they get to the work site and often continuing after they leave the worksite. For example, Winifred discusses communicating with parents at arrival and dismissal. As you will see in this section, an important dynamic is the knowing of the school principal and the school principal's knowing of an array of stakeholders. Getting to know and developing relationships with various stakeholders involves emotional labor because this means that principals are always "on," as will be seen throughout this chapter. In addition, participants noted that it is common for stakeholders to expect the principal's attention on demand, regardless of what they were currently doing. It is important to note, as previously mentioned, in order to "build community," a school principal must address all stakeholders, often simultaneously (Maxwell & Riley, 2016; Wang et al., 2022). Participants also discussed the importance of building relationships with the various members of the school community, including students, parents, classroom educators, support professionals, district leaders, fellow principals, and many others. Participants articulated that building such relationships required constant communication and endless accessibility. Both effective communication and being available to speak with school community members enabled principals to build and maintain trust, which was essential to both effective school leadership and one of the more onerous demands of emotional labor within their work. In addition, participants use compassion and empathy when dealing with

stakeholders, especially in recent times since the pandemic, as was discussed in Chapter II.

In addition, this section details the relationships (students, students' parents, teachers, school community, assistant principal) participants identified as particularly important, as well as examples of the circumstances that require the use of emotional labor required to attend to these relationships in particular circumstances. While not an exhaustive list of important relationships or the universe of circumstances influencing them, this section highlights instances where emotional labor is embedded within a core function of the principalship. As one of the key findings, the participants' understanding of emotional labor did not appear different or separate from their understanding of their role as a leader. It is as if they assumed emotional labor was an inherent part of their job, not something that could be separated from or understood as distinct from their job. Another key finding illustrated in this section is that participants all expressed their work requires emotional labor, though they rarely articulated it in those terms. That is, they clearly experience emotional labor throughout their work, but they often did not understand their work in terms of emotional labor.

Addressing Stakeholders

Principals are responsible for each student within the building (Jacobson et al., 2007). Participants discussed that the only way to ensure that all students' needs are met is to know them. The principal needs to know them socially, emotionally, and academically. Therefore, time must be invested to familiarize oneself with each student. Trusting relationships need to be built to allow students to view the principal as a safe source.

Elementary schools have an array of programs starting at age 3 (Pre-K) through fifth grade. Parents are seen by participants as partners in their child's/children's education. According to the participants responses, school vouchers and parent choice transfers play a role in parents' response to public schooling because it affords them an opportunity to take their child to a school of choice. Therefore, they have more ability than years before to enroll their child wherever they want, which puts them in a position of power at times. Teachers and other personnel are trained and work under the leadership of the school principal. Community members are a resource that often assist with school events. The participants explained that the role of the assistant principal is to assist the principal and personnel in ensuring that the school is run effectively and efficiently. Examples of participants experiences with these different stakeholders and the emotional labor involved with each will be addressed throughout this section.

Accessibility and Visibility

Participants' cited experiences with intentional accessibility and visibility, which occurred with all stakeholder groups. Each participant detailed examples of how they are accessible and visible, and how this resulted in a substantial amount of time and work in the constant performance of being "on." Winifred reflects on her accessibility to students and the importance of visibility, accessibility, and interaction. According to Winifred, children often do not understand barriers or protocols for getting an adult's attention. While these interactions could be seen as interruptions, part of the position in being a principal is that they are available to stakeholders during and sometimes beyond the school day. This experience demonstrates the comfort Winifred's students feel with her. Winifred shares how she interacts with the students in her building and her stance on

student relationships. Winifred details what happens from the child's standpoint. However, interestingly, she ignores the preparation she takes to ensure she is ready to receive them. Winifred stated:

> The students have to know that you care… I've opened a policy for students as well. [A] child will come to see me anytime. You can't interrupt your teacher in the middle of reading to come to see me, but a child can come and say, "I want to speak to the principal" and the office workers let them go and see me. The kids know: Knock on the door. Wait for me to say, "Come in." But then you have some new little young people who are kindergarteners who don't wait for the "come in."

Winifred explains that the students look for her for varied reasons ranging from treats to hugs. They expect to see her around the school and interaction is a normal part of her everyday routine. Her routine purposefully includes interaction time that she plans for. While some of Winifred's work can defined as requiring emotional labor, the other parts just emotions of good feeling. However, not all emotion or work causes emotional labor as would be described by Ashforth & Humphrey (1993). In this case, Winifred expresses it as part of the philosophy she holds to maintain relationships between her and her students. However, the preparation she does to be ready for the students does seem to speak to the definition of emotional labor by Humphrey et al, (2008) as Winifred "influences the moods, emotions, motivations and performance of followers," which would be her students. Winifred continues:

> They're looking for me, but they pretend like they have to go to the bathroom so they can come by because I have a red wagon. It's full of toys and I have candy. They want hugs just all these things, but I'm in a cafeteria with them every day. I get to see them. I get to talk with them. I interact with them because it can never be that you're off limits, not even to kids…Then I'm going to look at the cafeteria and I'm in the lunch line, bringing the lunches down for the kids.

Winifred states, "It can never be that you're off limits." This speaks to Winifred acknowledging that she is always "on" as previously discussed, which seems to add to

the participants' emotional labor as will be seen throughout this chapter. Winifred does not acknowledge that always being "on" is emotional labor but as stated as a key finding within the data, sees it as part of her position as a principal.

Like Winifred, Kelly also acknowledged the importance of knowing the students and the students knowing her through intentional visibility and accessibility. According to multiple participants, a principal's time is spent visiting classrooms, observing student learning and academic progress, as well as ensuring their safe arrival and dismissal daily. Kelly describes her relationship with the students:

> The students need to know you first and foremost. I've had people visit the school, and they say, "Oh, oh, the kids know you!" and I'm always like what kind of question or what kind of common is that? Of course, they know me! Oh, I remember one [visitor] told me. "Oh, you know, when you walk in the classroom all the kids know you. It's evident." What? Gosh! I don't understand how it's not evident. How are they not going to know who I am, or my name? I didn't understand that. But I guess some people don't leave their office, which I can see happening.

Like Winifred, making time in the day to interact with the students is an important part of Kelly's role. She makes a point to make herself, which affords her the opportunity to build relationships with the students. Relationship building takes time and consistency. Principals use emotional labor in these interactions as their days are encumbered by a multitude of responsibilities. Although Kelly does not acknowledge this as emotional labor, Hochschild's definition of emotional labor regarding "surface acting and deep acting" would most likely be implemented in some of these circumstances (1983). Kelly continued:

> I think is important that the kids know you. You need to find a way to make yourself visible. Be it on a morning announcements on the closed-circuit thing. Be it on the PA. The kids need to know that you're there at arrival, at lunch time, at

> dismissal, and not so much going in the classroom to teach, but that they see that there's somebody looking out for them when you're walking into the building, that the teachers have that relationship with you.

Kelly describes how this visibility allows her to push students to their potential by recognizing that what they are doing academically is important. Although her day is filled with other responsibilities, ensuring their progress is at the top of her list. In the delivery of her responses, she is, according to Humphrey et al (2008), "Influencing the moods, emotions, motivations, and performance" of not only the students, but the teachers as well. Kelly explained:

> You know you need to be in all grade levels, so that visibility is so important and that they know that you're interested in what they're doing. It's difficult to do it. But you know something as silly as: "I saw your screen minutes on i-Ready." Pick 2 or 3 kids that you know. In big schools it must be really difficult. The kids, that you see at arrival all the time, [I say], "Oh, I saw you did your i-Ready minutes yesterday. Keep it up." Something silly like that is gonna go such a long way. Not only with the students, but with the teachers too. They see you're interested in the students; you know the students. You need to be visible.

As previously stated, accessibility and visibility are an important part of the role according to participants. As paperwork is not an uncommon experience for principals as noted by the participants, a major part of their role is detailed by Winifred. She stated:

> Some people believe that the principals are in the building and in some secret office that nobody can touch them, nobody can communicate with them, and that they are off limits. If a parent comes and I'm not busy [I see them] because you deal with it now or you deal with it later. Bring them now. It's easier, because now it's 5 minutes versus an hour later or the next week it will be an hour. I think the visibility, being in the trenches with them makes a huge difference, talking to parents…So, it has to deal with being in their faces, being touchable, being accessible to them because a lot of principals are not.

Winifred states, "You deal with it now or you deal with it later." Part of her job of being "on" as a principal means she needs to respond to stakeholders in a timely fashion.

Another part is solving conflicts as they occur. This spontaneous interaction with a parent is emotional labor, although Winifred does not acknowledge it as such and sees it as part of her position, a key finding. Winifred can either "deep act" by feeling whatever emotion a parent wants her to display or she will "surface act" to manage the parent's emotion which relates to Hochschild's definition of emotional labor (1983). As she manages her emotions to conduct the meeting, she is also managing the emotions of the parents who have a concern attempting to be successful in the interaction. This would be in agreement with Mastracci's and her coauthors' definition as well (2010). Having the terminology to codify experiences would assist Winifred in describing her experiences with stakeholders. However, her experiences implicitly describe the use of emotional labor, which is another key finding within the data.

It is expected that principal's handle parent concerns in a timely manner. Parents are knowledgeable about their ability to go over a principal's head and call or email the region, district or even superintendent. This is not uncommon. This added pressure creates emotional labor on top of what already exists for principals.

Building and Maintaining Trust

According to the participants, principals spend a great deal of time building and maintaining trust with stakeholders. The participants feel that like accessibility and visibility, trust-building must be intentional and maintained to build community. In this section, I focus specifically on individuals and groups that participants noted were central figures in their experience of day-to-day relations of the principal. As will be presented, these relations involve emotional labor, as is implicitly described by the participants. As they address the needs of various figures and groups, they must maintain composure

(Berkovich & Eyal, 2015), another element of emotional labor which often leads to surface or deep acting.

Relationships with Students

Like Kelly and Winifred, Jeff likes to use his visibility not only get to know the students, but to motivate, encourage, relate, and build trust with students as well as other stakeholders. Jeff explained:

> Relationships with students, that's easy because they're a little bit more receptive to you embracing them. I have great relationships with students. I model in the morning. We're a team. I meet them, we all do a fist bump, when I see them, I say, hey, champ what's going on? Give me a good score. You know this encouragement. It's a lot of positivity, a lot of positive exchanges that happen with the students that makes it really easy as far as the students embracing me as far as having that presence where the students know that they have to behave in a certain way, the expectations are clear. That's the easiest part.

While Jeff does not acknowledge that what he is doing is emotional labor, by "influencing the moods, emotions, motivations and performance" of his students, Jeff's description of his experiences aligns with Mastracci and her coauthors' definition of emotional labor. Jeff is naturally being an effective leader. In addition, Jeff demonstrates that sometimes emotional labor can be rewarding.

Like Jeff, Winifred takes pride in doing the work that it takes to get to know her students and parents. And she does not mind getting out in the weather to do it. Literature regarding servant leaders refers to leaders working with personnel to get the work done (Greenleaf, 1991). Servant leaders work alongside, modeling, leading from within as opposed to top-down leadership, as a shared responsibility (Greenleaf, 1991). Although Winifred discussed the idea that principals are there to service the community, she does not call it servant leadership. But several of the responses Winifred shared showed her

engrained philosophy and execution of servant leadership. This is one example. Winifred explained:

> A lot of parents didn't know that I was the principal because I was at dismissal… I'm at dismissal every day. I'm at arrival. That's what I believe, it's what I've always done…I need to be where the parents are. And so, one of my connections with the parents is I'm out there with them. They see me rain, sleet, or snow, talking, communicating with them.

Winifred interactions that occur as part of her being accessible help create a connection to parents. Her statement of "It's what I've always done" demonstrates the key finding that participants view emotional labor as part of their position. Whereas being accessible seems like emotional labor according to Humphrey and his coauthor's definition (2008) because she is influencing moods, emotions, motivations, and performance of student's parents, it is genuine. Yet, it is also intentional, begging the question if she is using emotional labor. Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) would define this as emotional labor according to their definition of emotional labor as "spontaneous and genuine emotion." Making connections with students' parents makes things easier so when they do have a concern, they feel like they already have a relationship built with the principal which builds a sense of trust that they are going to be treated fairly and that their concern will be taken seriously and handled. Winifred does not seem to recognize that being accessible is emotional labor. However, she does recognize that being accessible is an important part of her position.

Relationships with Teachers

John discussed his perspective on building teacher relationships and the importance of ensuring that teachers know he cares. John stated:

> It takes time to build something. That's something that young administrators don't know. I was always such a people person who was so giving, and I thought that in a minute everything was gonna workout and it's not like that. You come in [as a new principal], people don't trust you. Just getting to know you, getting to trust you, there's this process that needs to take place. I'm not someone that comes in there and says oh let me see what I could do to change things. That's not who I am. I'm more like wait and see. Always building bridges, mending fences, always finding the path of least resistance. I've been doing that for a long time but now it's the most important thing ever because we have no teachers.

As passionate as John expressed his stance on the time and effort building relationships takes, he never seems to consider or mention the emotional work that comes along with it. He directly speaks to Mastracci and her coauthors explanation of emotional labor as John manages his emotions about what he would or wouldn't do, recognizes his personnel's emotions in that trust is a human process and that he is willing to do the work to ensure his interactions with them are successful (Mastracci et al., 2010). Although John speaks of his feelings and teachers' feelings, he never refers to it as emotional labor, but he does understand that both need to be managed to maintain successful interactions. John is cognizant of the effect his actions could have on teacher retention. As John states," "finding the path of least resistance" he further displays the emotional labor referred to by Mastracci and her coauthors by doing the work to be successful in his interactions (Mastracci et al., 2010). "Finding the path of least resistance" also calls back to Hochschild's definition of emotional labor in that, although not stated, at times John is going to need to perform surface acting or deep acting in his interactions to "find the path of least resistance" because each interaction will most likely be different causing a different response from him based on the situation. Not all interactions will be in agreement with his true emotion-surface acting (Hochschild, 1983). Some may call for

him to align his feelings-deep acting (Hochschild, 1983). However performed, based on John's response of "finding the path of least resistance," John understands he needs to find ways to manage these interactions. He understands that emotional labor is involved. However, he does not have the terminology to explicitly explain it in terms of emotional labor, which is a key finding within the data. John simply sees these interactions as part of his position, which is another key finding within the data.

While teacher retention will be discussed later in this chapter, it is important to note here that principals realize their behavior has an influence on whether teachers stay at their location or seek another. As previously discussed, teacher shortages and retention are a major concern across the United States. Due to demographic trends and economic changes, there is a growing need for new teachers, while the present supply is leaving the profession (Sutcher et al., 2016). John thinks about how his emotional approach could help or hinder his school's circumstance. Especially right now after the pandemic, John realizes building relationships is really important. John states:

> If you take this attitude that you're the leader and you're gonna crack the whip and take care of everything, you're gonna find yourself by yourself the following year because teachers have a million places to go, including schools that are a block from their house. The cost is expensive and building relationships and having great communication and relationships with staff is more important than ever. It's going to be more important next year because there are going to be more openings and there are going to be less teachers.

John reflects on his experiences, and how his behavior and interactions affect his workers. John demonstrates a nuanced understanding of the effects of understanding of emotional labor on his school, although he does not articulate it using scholarly terminology, which are both key findings. John "influences the "moods, emotions, motivations and performance" of his personnel by understanding the effect his leadership

could have on them if he approached them the wrong way (Humphrey, et al, 2008, p. 153). This aligns with Humphrey and his coauthor's definition of emotional labor.

School Community

Aligning with John's stance on how his behavior could have positive or negative outcomes for his school, Jeff was excited to share how things have changed in his community since he became principal at his location. Jeff realized that he needed to have an open attitude and environment to let community members in the school, in order to benefit from services that were being offered. This involves giving up the need to control everything, which Jeff has no problem doing. According to Jeff's experiences, Jeff understands the emotional labor involved in making his school a welcoming place where parents want to become involved. The act of reflecting on what he needs to give up and then implementing the response he needs in order to make them feel welcomed is emotional labor. He never refers to it as emotional labor, a key finding. However, the labor involved sheds light as he "influenc[ed] the moods, emotions, motivations and performance" (Humphrey, et al., 2008, p. 153). Once Jeff opened the doors to his community, his community members have stepped up and supported his school in numerous ways. Jeff explained:

> I have a lot of outside people come in and offer some type of service. We just did a beautification project in the front. They wanted 30 students and they wanted to do something with them. I have another community partner who likes to do food drives every other month and she's doing activities as far as Back to School. We have another group that comes in and does different activities with kids and the teachers throughout the year. Once you open the doors, the sky's the limit and again you give them that freedom to do what they need to do. And you don't hammer them, [because] they're gonna be turned off as far as that's too many restrictions. [Restricting them] doesn't set the tone and it's not the format for building relationships. So, my doors are open. We have one parent who sponsored

> Wing Stop. We had another parent who cooked for the teachers. That's good for the teachers.

Building relationships with parents has caused parents to expand their services beyond their own child's benefit. As community has been built, he explains that parents have broadened their reach and support of other parent's children as well. By managing his own emotions of control and letting go, Jeff has allowed parents to have a place to assist in the school community. Jeff stated:

> We've been able to build support in terms of our chess team. So instead of soccer moms, we have chess moms. Even if their kid is not in the tournament, they will come out to support the kids, so I thought it was a pretty moving and pretty big thing.

Jeff realizes that his leadership and relationships with parents has changed the school-community dynamic at his school. Having a welcoming attitude and an appreciation for what parents can bring to the table has shifted parents view of the school.

> My first year here we had parents cursing and basically yelling and saying that they hate the school. We rarely have those situations right now, so we have the opposite end where they're supporting and doing whatever they can to chip in. It's a good thing in itself to have a running PTA, something we hadn't been able to establish since I've been here, so I mean we have it going in the right direction.

Jeff understands that he must work with parents as opposed to against them. By meeting them where they are at, he has been able to create a fulfilling relationship with parents and the community. Understanding that he must be flexible and accept what is offered with open arms creates an atmosphere where parents and community members feel respected and validated. He understands that micromanaging every aspect of an event is not going to keep people wanting to be a part of his school community. These three examples of how Jeff has been able to turn around the way his community supports

his school directly relates to Humphrey and his coauthors' definition of emotional labor. Jeff has "influenc[ed] the moods, emotions, motivations and performance" (Humphrey et al., 2008, p. 153) of the parents in his community through emotional labor. Jeff's understanding of emotional labor is not different or separate from his understanding of his role as a leader. He describes it as an inherent part of his job, which is a key finding throughout the data.

Relationship with Assistant Principal

John and Jeff demonstrated the importance of building trust to maintain relationships with personnel and the school community has had on the school community at large. Another relationship that can positively or negatively shape the school community is the one between the principal and assistant principal. All participants shared the importance of having a trusting relationship with their assistant principal. Although assistant principals do have tasks and responsibilities, they are often separate from the principal. However, participants noted that the assistant principal is in the position to replace or assist with tasks and responsibilities that are assigned to the principal. Participants expressed their philosophy that the assistant principal should be informed, knowledgeable and ready to step in at any time and that in doing this they should receive the same level of respect as the principal from all stakeholders. The participants' responses notably informed their stance regarding the treatment of their assistant principals as they often refer to themselves in the assistant principal role in the past. To become a principal in this district, a person must serve as an assistant principal or equivalent role for at least 3 years. Therefore, all participants have had experience in the role as an assistant principal during some point in their careers. Winifred recalled:

> I worked for 2 administrators, who allowed me full autonomy to be the assistant principal to run the day-to-day operations of the school. Everybody is not afforded that opportunity, and I don't know why. I don't know what the hesitation or the fear is. But I have always had freedom to just go and do my job without question. What I had is what I gave [my assistant principal].

Winifred takes the time to get to know her assistant principal and create a bond. This is important to Winifred. Although she does not describe it as emotional labor, the intentional actions related to creating this bond demonstrate that she understands that she must do work to ensure that her team is on the same page. Lunch is a ritual that takes place every day. Not only with her assistant principal, but with her leadership team as well. Although they do share information not related to work, they also spend time discussing the work before them which keeps everyone aligned towards common goals. This experience speaks to Humphrey and his coauthors definition of emotional labor as she attends to managing the feelings of others during this bonding and professional time. In taking the time to relate to them and guide the work, Winifred is "influencing the moods, emotions, motivations, and performance of her subordinates" (Humphrey et al., 2008, p.153). Although this is emotional labor, Winifred does not cite it as such. Winifred sees this labor as part of being a leader in her position. However, her detailed and thought-through description of this consistent behavior and rationale for it demonstrates an understanding of emotional labor and its importance on the functionality of her team.

Participants acknowledged where the principal and assistant principal roles overlap or at least should overlap to share the responsibility of the school. Kelly discussed this emotional relationship. She compared the relationship to "a marriage" based on the time spent together and possible disagreements. She implicitly

acknowledged an understanding of emotional labor when she stated that at times, what is referred to by Hochschild (1983) as “surface acting,” is needed because no matter what is going on in the relationship, it is important for other personnel to see her and the assistant principal as a “united front.” By using “united front” she was referring to acting as though she and her assistant principal are on the same page, whether they are or not. This, according to Hochschild (1983), implies that either surface or deep acting take place, although she does not have the terminology to name them as such, which is a key finding within the data. She not only has to manage the feelings between her and her assistant principal but also that of her staff and community. This requires layers of emotional labor. Kelly explains:

> Relationship wise, of course you're gonna get upset at your assistant principal. Sometimes you're going to argue because it's like a marriage. Right? Sadly. You're at school more [than home] but you have to have that common goal for the school. And one thing I say to my assistant principal, we can be at ends, we're not agreeing on something or whatever, but outside, we have to show a united front because we're like the same person. Just like the kids say, “Oh, we have 2 principals.” The teachers have to say that as well. I think it's super important that the AP knows everything that's going on.

Assistant principals are assigned to schools by the District. It is up to the principal and assistant principal to make the relationship work. Sometimes this means that they are functioning from different philosophies or leadership styles. It is up to each team to make the relationship work for the benefit of the school.

Navigating the Position with Compassion and Empathy

Along with accessibility, visibility and building trust, navigating the position with empathy is another way participants build community and maintain relationships. In this

section, participants describe their experiences with emotional labor and their understanding of emotional labor.

Like Kimberly, Winifred, Kelly and John, Jeff gained his philosophy from his past experiences as an assistant principal. Relating to Humphrey and his coauthors' definition of emotional labor as "influencing the mood, emotions, motivations and performance of subordinates and followers," he uses his past experience as an assistant principal to guide his assistant principal and provide her with the autonomy she needs to do, learn, and execute whatever comes her way (Humphrey et al., 2008, p. 153). Jeff states:

> I do the same as my former principal did for me. They basically let me do it. They let me stick my hands into everything that was possible and so with my AP, it's the same thing. She can do the various things when it comes to budget, she understands some of the OPS (Office of Professional Standards) side of it, the operations aspects, she's included in a lot of conversations. So basically, if I'm not there, she can do it. She can do a lot and she actually had been baptized by fire in her first year as an AP. I was out with COVID the first week that she was appointed, so she was able to work from behind the cell phone and text messages. That's when [COVID] was a different strand [and I] was barely able to open [my] mouth and talk. She really got a lot of experience and just kept opening different experiences.

By providing his assistant principal with autonomy, Jeff provides an opportunity for his assistant principal to learn, make mistakes and grow, like he did.

The role of the school principal as previously stated, encompasses the care and well-being of others. In addition, the principal serves often as a mediator between relationships. A principal cannot function without a team. Each principal decides who will be a part of that team, and how they will function to move towards the vision. Kelly stated: "Building those relationships with people and the people within your own school, your teachers, creating a team, I think that's just really important."

Participants spoke about their experiences with personnel specifically related to life after the COVID-19 pandemic. As previously discussed, numerous studies show that depression, anxiety, and poorer wellbeing have all been associated with the pandemic, not only in children but in people across the world (Chen et al., 2020; Cheng et al., 2021; Lloyd et al., 2023; Losada-Balter et al., 2021). While many teachers and staff were dealing with things emotionally, participants detailed how they dealt with personnel differently than before COVID-19, as one expressed, "with almost kid gloves" to ensure they not only showed empathy and compassion but also so that they didn't lose their staff members during and after these difficult times. Participants provide different examples of their realities as principals.

One of the roles a principal plays involves giving instructional feedback to teachers. Jeff described how, lately, he has learned to deal with delivering feedback. He has learned the need for what Hochschild calls "surface acting" which is when the physical expression one displays does not agree with our emotional state (1983). He expressed that this is not his preferred style of leadership but has found it useful during and since COVID. He explained:

> How do I handle certain people? You have to have a different personality for every teacher. Some will accept the feedback. Others won't. So instead of the feedback, you may have to frame your whole discussion in another way. There are just some that are not receptive to anything, but they're very combative. So, you have to approach each one in a different manner.

Jeff expressed his emotional labor as he tried to figure out how to do his job of providing feedback while understanding his audience and what may or may not be receptive during challenging times. He needed to approach each person depending on his/her need and receptiveness. This exacerbated the importance of knowing his

personnel. His personnels' reaction is only one part of the emotional equation. The other half is his delivery and emotional response to them. Although he did not call this emotional labor, he demonstrated his thinking about how he needed to keep his emotions in check. Jeff stated:

> So, one thing you have to learn is you can't take it personal. You basically have to make sure that it's just the business as far how you interact with them. There's somebody that's going to give it to you. But their just upset or something's going on and you're gonna get that ugly side of the person, regardless of your position. You just can't take it personally. Once you take it personally, that's when you lose it. What I learned too as far as dealing with my teachers, your biggest strength is gonna be your restraint. That's gonna be your strength and your power. It's not going to be writing them up or having a meeting with them the next day, it's gonna be you being able to control your emotions and not respond. There's this thing I read. It makes sense. If it's not worth it in 72 hours, if it's not on your mind, let it go.

Jeff follows Hochschild's (1983) definition of "deep acting," a strategy used in emotional labor, as he consciously modifies his feelings to express the desired emotion, "restraint" as his biggest strength. In addition, he manages his emotions, referring to "It's just the business," as he simultaneously recognizes personnel was on edge due to the uncertainties that came with COVID-19. This follows Mastracci and her coauthors description of emotional labor as managing one's emotions, recognizing other's emotions, and doing work to be successful in the interaction that takes place between the two (Mastracci et al., 2010). Jeff's compassion and empathy require him to take responsibility of his own emotions as he addresses personnel that may not be managing their own.

Participants describe ways they ensure their personnel are treated with the respect. Some are able to pay personnel for their time beyond the school day. Principals are in

charge of their school's budget, so some are able to make sure they leave money available for hourly pay. John demonstrates an empathetic response to treating personnel fairly, understanding and appreciating them as humans as opposed to just workers. John expressed:

> My ESOL coach sometimes stays until five or six and if she does, she's going to get paid. I don't like people to work to the point where it hurts their personal life, you know their ability to spend time with their children so I'm very understanding of all that. If you work extra, you always get paid…. Some of these people are driving very far to be with me so I'm understanding of all that they gave up coming to the other side of town. There are openings everywhere. I always make sure that I don't take advantage and I even stop people who want to work more. I say no no, no, it's enough. I know people appreciate that I'm always looking for ways to reward them. I'll put money aside so if anybody has to work extra then they get paid for it. I think the teachers really appreciate that because these opportunities aren't always there.

In alignment with Humphrey and his coauthors' definition of emotional labor, John is "influencing the mood, emotions, motivations and performance of subordinates or followers" in this case, personnel (Humphrey et al, 2008, p. 153). He also seems to be following Ashforth and Humphrey's (1993) definition of emotional labor regarding "genuine emotion." In a large school District such as this, there really is no need for personnel to work without pay. However, it is up to each principal to manage their monies to ensure funds are left to pay for situations like these.

ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: UNSOLVABLE PROBLEMS AND UNACHIEVABLE GOALS

Whereas the previous section focused on *Building Community*, this second theme- *Unsolvable Problems and Unachievable Goals*- discusses the participants' experiences with emotional labor and understanding of it in relation to the internal and external demands that are placed upon school principals. A key finding in this section is that while participants experienced emotional labor throughout their work, the data showed it was

concentrated in particular areas (academic pressure, school grades, mental health, school safety, parent involvement, difficult parents, teacher recruitment and teacher retention). Academic pressure surrounding proficiency and school grades is not a new concept (Randolph & Wilson-Younger, 2012; Pannell et al., 2015). However, as each year passes, the demands increase (Aydoğdu & Bozkuş, 2023; Reid, 2021) with raised standards and changing definitions of proficiency. Under the Department of Education for the State, school grades are assigned to each school according to proficiency and other determining factors which will be discussed later. In addition, the current state of mental health of students, school safety, parent involvement, experiences with difficult parents and the recruitment and retainment of teachers all contribute to the emotional labor performed by principals as will be detailed in this section.

Academic Pressure

Participants experienced emotional labor throughout their work but concentrated in specific areas. Academic pressure is one of the areas. Although there was no direct question regarding academic pressure, each participant discussed it at length. In 2020, schools in this district moved to online learning at home due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Karakose, 2023). Not only were principals' responsibilities shifted, teachers' responsibilities were shifted as well. Teachers and students transitioned to distance learning immediately with little training and support (Karakose, 2022). Studies on how this affected teachers and school administrators up to recent have been limited (Karakose et al., 2021). Many instructional adjustments were implemented that year, which continued into 2021. Teachers were trained and simultaneously delivered instruction through programs such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and other computer programs. Many

students did not return to the school building for quite some time. As experienced by other districts in the United States, learning loss was seen in many of these students. In addition, some parents opted out of testing that year creating an inability to gauge learners' progress. Principals had an unprecedented responsibility to create and execute a different type of learning atmosphere for both students and teachers. While some schools saw success through their yearly assessments, it was evident in other schools that students had learning loss according to their assessment results.

The weight of school grades and student academic performance is placed on principals due to external, structural, and political pressures. Accountability measures have been put in place to ensure student academic achievement. This political pressure to maintain proficient school grades comes from the state, down to the districts, and then, down to the schools. Principals, as leaders of the schools, have the ultimate responsibility of maintaining a proficient grade. It lands on their shoulders. Jeff described what it is like to be the principal of a school that was identified as a "D" school. Jeff passionately illuminated:

> In a [low performing school] they look at the performance, the academic performance of the school. That's the first and only priority, that, and safety. The story of my school is interesting. We were an "A" and then there was a year that we dropped to a D. We were the only 'D" school. There were no F's at the time. Do you know the ostracism that we faced as far as having to deal with being the only "D" in the district? I had to face that on my own. There's nothing like that pressure.

Jeff describes the ostracism he and his personnel faced. "Surface acting" and "deep acting" as Hochschild (1983) refers to them, although not specifically suggested, was eluded to by Jeff as he referred to "having to face that on my own." As the face of the school, it is the principal who is often watched by personnel and staff. Jeff had to put on a

performance of sorts to not only manage his emotions, but express the desired one (deep acting), showing everything was under control. While Jeff experiences this emotional labor, he never describes it or understands it using scholarly terminology. However, Jeff does express that it's not a good feeling to be on his own describes how he needed to work through and manage his own emotions.

Participants spoke about how it is up to the principal to make challenging decisions about how to ensure the school will not only turn around academically, but how to lead the faculty and staff through whatever change needs to take place. It is up to the principal to determine what happened, devise a plan, and execute it hoping that the decisions made will prove successful in raising student achievement. Jeff continued:

> [Academic proficiency is] probably the ultimate pressure and then following the "D" there was COVID-19. The year after that we had to work harder than the other schools. Our school was a school being targeted or looked at as far as improvement, so we had to make sure the testing percentage of students, was high. We had to be an "A" "B" or "C" school. We ended up being a "C" school. Once you deal with that pressure, really all of the other stuff is nothing.

Jeff further described this experience and the work it took within himself to ensure everyone was on board: "It goes to saying that if a principal sneezes, the school catches a flu. So, I just had to have that right mindset so I [could] get these guys where I needed them to go." Jeff's stance refers to emotional contagion, which was previously introduced. Emotional contagion is "The tendency to automatically mimic and synchronize expressions, vocalizations, postures, and movements with those of another person's and, consequently, to converge emotionally" (Hatfield, Cacioppo & Rapson, 1993). In this circumstance, he described his acknowledgement and understanding about how his own emotions would affect his personnel's emotions. He expressed he needed to

encourage and motivate his personnel. Mastracci and her coauthors explain emotional labor is performed by managing one's own emotions, recognizing others' emotions, and doing the work to be successful in the interaction (2010). Jeff spoke about having "the mindset" to "get these guys where I needed them to go" which directly aligns with Humphrey and his coauthors' definition of emotional labor stating it is "influencing the moods, emotions, motivations, and performance of subordinates or followers." While Jeff is definitely performing emotional labor in this scenario, he never acknowledged it as such, which strongly suggests a lack of conversation about emotional labor within the field of educational leadership. This scenario also shows how the educational system places these end goals upon schools but fails to provide the resources to support the work it takes to ensure students reach a level of proficiency.

John, like Jeff, feels the pressure of being a [low performing] school. Although he did not have the academic learning loss experienced by Jeff, John spoke about the vulnerability of consistently having region and district personnel visit his school and scrutinize every aspect of teaching and learning in his building and the load he carries. John detailed:

> I think the biggest pressure comes from being an [low performing] school. We have visits all the time. Anybody [from the district] can walk into your building. They go into the rooms. They say, "Well what's going on here, what's going on there, what are you doing to address this?" They are smart people. I have a district [boss], he's a very smart man with curriculum and data. He comes in here and it's not just like, hey things are great. No. It's like really digging into things. He opens up folders. This is missing, we've gotta get this, we've got to get that. So that's an incredible pressure. We have instructional reviews where like 15 people scrutinize everything that's in your building. At the beginning of the year, they want this. They come see you again and they wanna see it. So, I think the greatest pressure comes along with being a [low performing] school. There are language barriers,

> and you cannot fail. That's the greatest, the greatest pressure. It comes from being one of these needy schools.

As in John's experience, as a principal in a low performing school, doors are always open to criticism and/or corrective feedback by internal and external stakeholders. This, understandably, is a vulnerable position to be in. A principal's daily work is up for inspection at any time. The school becomes a reflection of the principal and the principal's ability to be a change agent. Extra personnel and support from curriculum specialists are provided, which means that personnel are assigned to these schools. These personnel are not hired or chosen by the principal but instead provided by the District. John's use of the word "scrutinize" suggest that this is an uncomfortable experience. John expresses this uncomfortable experience but never relates it to emotional labor or shows an understanding of emotional labor. For him, this experience is just part of his job, a key finding. The managing of emotions through "surface and deep acting" as Hochschild (1983) refers to them, would seem to be inevitable as the face of the school, especially when under observation and inspection from both internal and external stakeholders, like John describes. However, John never speaks about how he manages his feelings regarding this experience.

As stated previously, each school's needs are different. Even though many are deemed Title I, reflecting the number of students on free or reduced lunch which gleans their economic level, there are often barriers specific to each school/community as was noted by multiple participants. John elaborated on what he means by "needy" school:

> I feel like I have to wage this battle to make sure that we're successful with the neediest students. My students are mostly Honduran or from the poorest countries in Central America. They all migrate to my area because it's where they have all the efficiencies and little rooms for rent, like the cheapest areas that you can live

> in. Schools in Honduras are only 5 hours a day. Honduras is like 150 days a year. So, these students come to us [and] it's just a different level of education. Education is not valued. They're wonderful little kids. Their parents are very humble. It's really very doable but our students they really struggle and it's not just a language issue, they pick up the language but it's just years and years before they came.

John compares his students to students that come from other countries where formal education is more consistent, and education is respected. He sees the language barrier as secondary to being raised in an environment where education is not an important value instilled in children.

This District takes immense pride in the diversity of students it serves. However, the system holding students who are new to the county to the same level of expectations shows a disconnect between reality and the level of accountability expected. The definition of proficiency is not different for these students on state assessments. John continued to explain:

> They could catch up if the students were coming from places where they have more formalized education like let's say Venezuela where they have a better educational infrastructure and where students are learning English. The transition for them is like two years. A transition for my students is not two years, it's a lot longer and with COVID and everything they also had to go through which there were no laptops at home…imagine over there. I really enjoy my school; it's the greatest job ever!

John seems to completely understand the task he has been set out to achieve, overcoming language barriers and making up for schooling time lost. Like Jeff, John is fighting against the political pressures placed on principals to meet a proficient standard of education while dealing with the realities of educating immigrant children who are learning in a completely different system then the one known to them, if they received education at all in their country. In addition, many of his students' parents came to this

country to flee political or other issues. Their current priority is survival. Survival in their minds means working as a means for providing. Education may not have a place in their minds or experiences. These layers of responsibility that include academic, social, and often times, emotional are added to an already complex position. But as John's responses illuminate, he receives the challenge set before him with a positive attitude and love for his career. Although he never acknowledges this as such, he uses emotional labor, according to Humphrey and his coauthors, to "influence the moods, emotions, motivations, and performance" (Humphrey et al., 2008, p.153) of his students and the entire school community. In addition, John does not discuss an understanding of emotional labor and just sees it as part of his job, a key finding.

School Grades

Another key finding from this study is the connection between emotional labor and the processes by which individual schools are graded by the state. The grading of schools has placed tremendous pressure on all stakeholders within our schools. The person who is ultimately responsible for student achievement is the school principal. The data from participants shows how real this pressure is. Apart from school safety, the academic performance of students within a school is the principal's ultimate job. Schools are assessed based on how students perform on these yearly academic tests. Performance-based grading is set forth by the State's Department of Education. Elementary schools get points for the number of students on standard curriculum in grades 3-5 who score at a proficient level in English Language Arts, math, and science (fifth grade only) and for the number of students who make learning gains from the previous school year in English Language Arts and math. In addition, they also get points for proficiency on the alternate

test that is given to students in grades 3-5 who are on modified curriculum. Accumulated points from these areas determine the school's grade.

Kimberly describes her experience with the external perception of a principal's performance based on the school's grade and the pressure and "emotional demand" related to that responsibility. As expressed by Berkovich & Eyal, 2015, she described looking for a composed, caring yet managed, solution. Kimberly stated:

> The grade of the school is very important, because that's how you're judged. If you're in an "A" school, then you've done a good job. You've been on top of everything. You're aware of what's happening. If the students do not perform at an "A" level it internally feels like, and it may be self-imposed: What should I have done? What could I have done? What didn't I do? How am I going to move them? You know, how am I going to place the children next year so that they're sure to move? So that's a big pressure.

It is interesting that Kimberly believes that the pressure is self-imposed. As Kimberly describes this emotional labor, she describes how she attempts to manage her own feelings through reflective questioning, working through each question to come to some sort of resolution that will allow her to succeed in the future. Kimberly never cites the term emotional labor, but the questioning technique seems to be a response to try and understand it and cope with it. This is an example of a key finding that principals have a challenging time separating themselves from their position. Principals, like Kimberly, believe that the school is a direct reflection of their work, when in reality there are many factors that are outside of their control. Of course, principals want to do a respectable job but how can they when they are expected to achieve goals which are often not within reach, especially on a state-imposed standardized test. Without proficiency in the English language, there is no possibility to earn a proficient score, although some of these

students are proficient in their home language. Is the problem the student or is the problem the way the system and assessments are designed?

Like Kimberly, Kelly discussed school grade and proficiency and implied experiences with emotional labor. However, Kelly's stance stemmed from having a high population of students with disabilities. She described the struggle of getting them on grade level, which is considered proficient. However, Kelly pointed out that these students are often more than one grade level behind their current grade. Kelly expanded on this by pointing out that bridging gaps in their learning is a slow and steady process and often growth does not show through standardized testing results. Kelly explained:

> The bulk of our school grade, and that's a big stressor, right? The school grade, not the students per se, because we can work with students all the time. We still see growth absolutely, but never to the point where they are proficient. Some of these students will not be proficient, and I understand they have to show growth, but they don't show the amount of growth that they need. If there's growth, it's not at the level they need…. I have that data to show they do grow, but not at the speed that all the other students are growing, or that the State deems them.

According to the participants, the pressure is overwhelming for principals, teachers, and students alike. Kelly's school has a large number of students in Special Education. Some with autism, some with specific learning disabilities. The expectations for students in the Special Education Program who are on standard curriculum are the same as their peers who are not in the program. Students in the Special Education Program do get accommodations such as extended time, or a small group setting to test in, but their performance is scored the same as their peers who are not in the program. Therefore, their results count toward the school grade as well. This is out of principals' hands as this is how the assessment program was designed by the State.

Kelly further explained how deep the pressure really is, surpassing her professional life and encroaching upon her personal life. Kelly explained:

> Well, the number one thing that keeps me up at night really is being lower than a "C." The school grade. To be honest with you, it used to be all the paperwork, everything that was due, all that stuff. But the main thing that keeps me up is that school grade. That is the one thing that that really scares me every year, because every year we're teetering.

The pressure regarding school grades and academic performance sometimes affects principals' ability to function in the present. Worrying about the future is common for principals. Kelly explained:

> I remember I was doing a leadership course at [a local university] and at the end we had to explain something like a stress. What are your concerns, or what are you scared of, or something like that. And I remember saying, you know I'm thrilled that we're an "A", but I know I can't celebrate that because I already know the following year, I'm gonna go down. I already know it because I already know the students that are incoming.

Like Kelly, Jeff has experienced pressure involving school grades. Jeff described how he felt when his school went down to a "D" and how the emotional labor affected him. He recalled:

> We go into denial, of course, because you don't know how and why it happened. It was disappointment. And you get a little bit of embarrassment. I felt that because you have people looking at you when there is no need. And you just gotta get over it quickly and just move on to try to figure out what you're gonna do so you don't become a "D" again. So, after the denial and the disappointment, it was time to get ready to go. It was something to work at and figure out how to overcome this issue.

As mentioned previously, principals are the face of the school. A key finding is that participants had difficulty separating themselves from their position. Jeff describes this embarrassment and feeling of ridicule that comes with not performing up to standard. He had to "manage his emotions" as described by Mastracci and her coauthors by

"getting over it quickly and just move on" so he would be able to "influence the moods, emotions motivations and performance of his subordinates" as Humphrey and his coauthors define emotional labor, to overcome this hurdle and work towards a future of improvement. Jeff never describes his understanding of emotional labor in any terms, how he was able to deal with the emotional labor or how he was able to manage his emotions. This supports the key finding that principals' understanding of emotional labor does not appear different or separate from their understanding of their role as a leader. It is as if they assumed emotional labor was an inherent part of their job, not something that could be separated from or understood as distinct from their job.

Interestingly, both Kelly and Jeff describe the work they need to do using "I." They never mention how the school system will assist as it seems they are left to solve the issue of school grade by themselves. Of course, they do have pressure coming from the school district and region, but they do not mention any form of support.

As previously stated, COVID-19 exacerbated the mental well-being of some of the students. Their performance in school showed it. Kimberly declared:

> There are children who lost family members during COVID. There are children who may come in on a given day to take a test, and they themselves, whatever was happening at home, it comes in with them, and they don't perform like what you expected.

By "recognizing others' emotions," Kimberly expresses that there is a reason some students aren't performing. Kinberly's job requires her to increase academic progress. However, Kimberly demonstrates an understanding of emotional labor according to her statement as she uses "deep acting" to modify her emotion of wanting them to succeed to have a more empathetic stance on the realities families and children

are facing in their daily lives. “Principals may risk being emotionally drained by giving too much of themselves” as they are responsible for managing others stress and then their own stress (Hayes et al., 2022, p. 406), which directly speaks to “deep acting” as part of emotional labor Hochschild (1983) introduced.

Mental Health

A key finding within the data is that the participants experienced emotional labor throughout their work. However, it was concentrated in particular areas, such as mental health. Four out of five participants described or gave examples of how the mental health of students and personnel led to emotional labor. While there was no direct question related to mental health, responses showed that the problem of declining mental health is a real concern. As previously stated, mental health has become a growing concern over the past decade (Kaluzeviciute-Moreton et al., 2022). Social media, lack of interaction, entertainment, etc. Increasing this, COVID-19 affected our world beginning in 2020. Isolation associated with COVID-19 along with students not receiving mental health intervention intensified metal health issues (Newlove-Delgado et al., 2021). Current literature supports that upon students and teachers returning to the schoolhouse after COVID-19, mental health issues became more evident than ever before (Kararose, 2022). Thus, addressing mental health issues in personnel and students has become a primary concern of many school principals, including these participants and exacerbates the emotional labor the role entails according to the participants’ responses.

According to the participants, mental health concerns not only include students, but personnel within schools. Kelly spoke about the realities of personnel struggling in

their personal lives and how the work environment can serve as a support mechanism. Kelly explained:

> If you have struggles in your personal life, you are going to bring it into school, without a doubt. So, it's important that in that school family, we're aware of those things, and there's things you're not going to share, obviously. But you know, when one person is down or letting them know that you're there, it makes a difference.

Kelly describes her experience with emotional labor involved in supporting personnel. By "being there," Kelly "influences the moods, motivations, and performance" of her personnel which is in agreement with Humphrey and his coauthors definition (Humphrey et al., 2008, p. 153). Kelly's response also shows "genuine emotion" which aligns with Ashforth and Humphrey's (1993) definition of emotional labor. She states "it makes a difference" alluding to her understanding and the benefit of emotional labor, although she never describes it as emotional labor.

Kimberly and Kelly's philosophy align as Kimberly explained the necessity of her "open door" policy and being available for personnel when they need her:

> If somebody asks to see you and wants to see you, you need to stop what you're doing, and you need to listen. If somebody has come to your door, or has caught you in the hallway and says, I need to talk with you, you need to really stop and meet them at that moment, if it's possible. If it's not possible, then before the day ends so that they have opportunity to share what has happened or is happening.

Principals' days are organized based on the needs within their buildings. Often times, whatever they had planned gets put to the side because the well-being of personnel and students comes first. Kimberly describes her experience of emotional labor as she attempts to "manage the feelings of others." She states, "You need to stop what you're doing" showing that she understands how emotional labor benefits others in need. In

addition, she is “Influencing the moods, emotions, motivations, and performance of subordinates or followers” (Humphrey et al., 2008, p.153) stopping to take the time to listen. This experience supports one of the key findings in the study that the participants articulate a more nuanced understanding of the effects of emotional labor and the conditions requiring it than the aspects of work it engenders.

According to the participants and research, principals are responsible for the safety of everyone within their building (Aydoğdu & Bozkuş, 2023). Identifying personnel that need support not only assists the adult but protects other personnel and the students from encounters that are unpleasant, to say the least. Kimberly dove into the responsibility she feels for making certain that personnel understand how they can get the support they need. Kimberly stated:

> Are we able to provide the support for the teachers that need support? Not just in teaching, but in their own personal lives? I think the Employee Assistance Program is amazing. There are great programs for the teachers, for administrators that are available and it's making sure everybody understands what all those programs are and how they work.

Jeff shared his experience in dealing with personnel and how he understands that his approach matters in making a situation better or worse in any given moment. Jeff described this emotional demand:

> The teachers are an interesting piece because now with the mental health crisis going on, you could see that some of these guys aren't well and again you have to be able to deal with them and handle them in a certain way, so they don't have a panic attack on you or have a panic attack on the students.

Jeff uses the term “handling them in a certain way” aligning with managing one’s emotions, recognizing others’ emotions and doing work to be successful in the interaction that takes place between the two (Mastracci et al., 2010). Although he never cites

emotional labor, Jeff shows an understanding about how his interaction can "influence the moods, emotions, motivations and performance of subordinates" (Humphrey et al., 2008, p.153) positively or even negatively.

Jeff spoke about how dealing with mental health has changed his usual leadership style to a more delicate approach. Jeff explained:

> The thing is knowing that people that are having crisis and issues at home, and just mentally, you gotta treat people with almost kid-like gloves. I was a big fan of feedback [about teaching] and having a difficult conversation [to improve teaching capacity]. So, it's different to where it just wasn't that time right now. And right now, we're finally getting to some normality. And I think now it's a time where you can start having conversations. But the feedback for them is [still] just criticism.

Although his overall typical leadership style is that of a "servant leader," he follows "situational leadership" at times. Situational leadership supports the idea that a different type of leadership is needed based on the current situation. He talked about recovering from the time of COVID and where he stands now regarding giving teachers feedback. He uses Hochschild's concept of "deep acting" as he attempts to align his feelings to understand where people are coming from and attempts to do his job with thoughtful responses. Although he does not state it, he seems to understand that the emotional labor he experiences matters and is important to the well-being of personnel based on how he approaches personnel with empathy and understanding.

As previously stated, the mental health crisis has not only been seen when dealing with adults. It also is evident in student behaviors. Schools are equipped with full-time school counselors and a mental health counselor who comes in at least one day a week. However, again, the person who is ultimately responsible for students' well-being is the

school principal (Kaluzeviciute-Moreton et al., 2022). As John explained, the problem is real. He stated: “There's a lot of issues with mental health. Like my school is leading right now in the region with threat assessments.”

Like John, Jeff has experienced problems with student’s mental health. Jeff described a situation that occurred in his school. As he told the story, the emotional labor of managing his own feelings through restraint was evident. Although it had not happened recently, his expression of the event still showed his dismay. He explained that a student threw an object at the assistant principal that left a huge bump on her head. His amazement of the situation was expressed when he stated, “This lady helps you, and this is what you do to her? It was mind boggling.…What do you do? How do you feel? It just was mind boggling. But it just shows you the state we're in as far as the mental health issues.” Although John was able to manage his emotions, he did not seem to have an understanding of the emotional labor he was performing. As part of his position as a principal, this could be because he is used to managing his emotions.

Like Jeff and John, Kelly is all too familiar with threat assessments and trying to make the right decision when it comes to determining the severity. She describes dealing with the student and then dealing with the student’s parents. When asked to recall a stressful day or situation, Kelly stated:

> Another stressful day is obviously what I mentioned before, when there's a threat assessment and a student make comments about, I want to kill myself… Those comments are, I don't want to say, common, but kids say those things and it's very stressful. So, you have to go through that whole [threat assessment] process, and sometimes the kids are saying, oh, that's not true. I just said that, and the parents are arguing with you because (they think) that's silly. Everybody says that. But you still have to go through the process, right? So those are very stressful, too.

> Really, there are so many of those right now that I can't really pinpoint one [situation], but they are stressful.

This is an example of how "Principals may risk being emotionally drained by giving too much of themselves" as they are responsible for managing others stress and then their own stress (Hayes et al., 2022, p. 406) which directly speaks to the emotional labor Mastracci et al. (2010) describe as Kelly tries to manage her own emotions and the emotions of others, simultaneously. Kelly describes her stressful day related to conducting a threat assessment. Although the word "stressful" was within the question posed, I find it interesting that she used the word "stressful" four times in her response. It seemed that just answering the question created emotional labor for her. I do not think she understands that the stressful feeling she had telling about her stressful day is emotional labor. If she did, I think it would have been easier for her to express the feeling instead of repeating the same word four times.

School Safety

A key finding within the data is that the participants experienced emotional labor throughout their work. However, it was concentrated in particular areas, such as school safety. Two out of five participants reflected on their experiences on multiple instances regarding school safety. Interestingly, although there was no direct question about school safety, these two participants described as something that is constantly on their minds weighing heavily on them. As the news media often points out, school safety is and has been a growing concern across the United States (Aydoğdu & Bozkuş, 2023). Principals are charged with many components of school safety. With the development of the Jessica Lunsford Act enacted in 2006, schools must screen any contracted agency working within

school buildings. Parents and community members are screened by scanning their driver's license through a Raptor machine before they are allowed access to enter the school building. This process alerts security, school administrators and the police department to sexual predators attempting to enter one of our school sites. As mentioned previously, in 2018, the Parkland shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in the southeastern portion of the United States, was yet another reminder for all educators that school safety needs to be at the top of the list of priorities. At least one school resource officer is assigned to each school for additional safety measures. Practice drills include emergencies such as fire, bomb, intruder, hostage, and tornado. It is mandatory for all schools to conduct and document monthly fire drills, monthly emergency evacuation drills and yearly tornado drills. Emergency scenarios are provided by the district to account for an array of possible situations that could induce an evacuation or lockdown. In addition, based on past and recent young athletes dying, Project ADAM was created out of the need to have a critical response team in the case of Cardiac Arrest. Each school has to pass a practice drill showing that the critical response team can perform CPR and use the Automated External Defibrillator (AED) machine in the case of an unresponsive person on school-site or school event. All of the aforementioned processes are the responsibility of the school principal to ensure implementation and consistent monitoring to ensure all are in place.

Kelly explained the persistent emotional labor associated with the responsibility of ensuring student and personnel safety and the precautions taken. She stated:

> Safety has always been an issue, because you have all these little bodies in your school that are being dropped off at your school. We're lucky that we all have a

> police officer in the front of our school. Not that that makes [a big difference] you know, because it's one, right? You still have a lot of other millions of things that can happen. But safety is a big concern. At the end of the day, [parents are] leaving all these kids with you, and you better make sure they go home the same way.

Kelly discusses the weight she feels regarding the responsibility of children placed in her hands. Kelly's description emphasizes the emotional hum that takes place within her on a daily basis. In alignment with Ashforth and Humphrey's (1993) definition of emotional labor, her response is "spontaneous and genuine emotion." This emotional weight seems to hold a space within her conscious as emotional labor. She continued:

> So that's a hard thing on you, and it weighs heavy. It weighs heavy, and not that you think about it every minute, because you know you'd be frozen in time. But it does weigh on you. Yeah, safety is a big thing. You have to keep on top of your drills, your threat assessments, your lock down drills monthly. And now we have the cardiac response team. Safety is a big, a new thing that we have to worry about.

Here she highlights the emotional weight, but also discusses the physical tasks that go along with it. Her description includes "hard thing," "weighs heavy," "big thing" again all seeming to amount to the emotional connection she has to safety and responsibility. As stated in one of the key findings, she sees this as a part of her job ignoring or unaware of emotional labor. However, she understands what the consequences of not following through, or getting it wrong could be.

Like Kelly, Kimberly expressed the emotional weight and responsibility of safety for personnel and students has evoked. She discussed both the emotional labor required and the physical labor. Kimberly explained:

> The pressures are extremely high as far as safety. It's very heavy on my heart-the safety of the students and the staff at the school. To be sure that: all doors are

> locked, to be sure that we're running all of our drills appropriately with the seriousness they need to have, to be sure everybody understands the emergency alert system, the cardio-Project ADAM, the safe zones, the usage of phones during these times of crisis. Being able to walk in each day…not just for the cleanliness, not just for the student learning but walking the building for safety-to-life issues at the facility, to look at the fencing around the property. Is everything locked at my school? We've got 22 gates!
>
> Kimberly describes ensuring safety within her building as "heavy on the heart."

As she spoke, she was able to rattle off all of these various aspects of safety like she had memorized them showing that these are constantly in her head like a checklist to ensure she attends to the overall safety. Although expressed in a calm and even tone, she herself was displaying, as Hochschild (1983) calls it, "surface acting" in that she was used to understanding and owning this massive responsibility while explaining it to others due to the years of experience. However, as I conducted the interview with Kimberly, unfortunately, the media announced another school shooting in the United States, which changed her "surface acting" to "deep acting" as the announcement was yet another instance of a principal's worst fear regarding the safety and personnel within their own building (Hochschild, 1983). What affects one school or school leader, often affects another. The constant reminder by current school shootings adds to the emotional weight principals experience. Kimberly expressed:

> I think the most challenging goes back to the safety of the people within the school, the children, and staff. Because just like what happened today, there was a school shooting in an elementary school. When you see that, it goes right back to that. The way that you feel and are you doing everything possible to keep the people within the building safe.
>
> I did not ask for Kimberly to clarify "the way that you feel" during the interview

as it only stood out to me in my analysis of the data. Either way, "the way that you feel"

could be her emotions about safety or her setting the expectation of the need for herself to provide a safe environment. I wondered if ignoring their emotions or not giving them a name could be another way in which principals manage their own emotion regarding these responsibilities within their thoughts and actions.

Parental Involvement

A key finding within the data is that the participants experienced emotional labor throughout their work. However, it was concentrated in particular areas, such as parent involvement. Although only one out of five participants delved into parent involvement deeply, all five referred to it as a concern. “Parents” were a constant topic of conversation as participants referred to them in multiple responses. A general question regarding dealing with stakeholders prompted this response. Kelly discussed the difficulty of getting parents involved in the school, especially when it comes to workshops regarding curriculum and academics. As Kelly stated previously, the curriculum demands have increased over the past ten years. The standards and assessments have also changed becoming more rigorous. Being at Title I school, Kelly has tried to use the resources provided by other community agencies to increase parent involvement. Kelly describes this struggle and the reasons she believes parents are not engaged:

> They're not engaged with the academic process at the school. We work a lot with different organizations that can come and assist the community. It has been difficult to bring [parents] in, especially these last few years. [The reasons parents are not engaged], I think lack of training and lack of education themselves. Right now, a lot of the families in my school are more about survival. They’ve gotta work. There's no time for them to come to school [often]. I mean they do come to meetings and things like that when we have.

Kelly recognizes how important it is to her for parents to be involved. At the same time, she recognizes the emotions of her students' parents as they do not have time to be involved. Even with this understanding, she elicits outside sources to attempt to get them involved, especially for those children who need it the most. Emotional labor includes managing one's emotions, recognizing others' emotions and doing work to be successful in the interaction that takes place between the two (Mastracci et al., 2010). This explanation of emotional labor describes Kelly's experience. However, she does not seem to recognize it as emotional labor or understand it as emotional labor. A key finding within the study is demonstrated here as Kelly seem to describe her experience as just a part of her job. Kelly continues:

> But you're always expecting, you know we're talking about the test that's coming up, everybody should come, and they don't, and then the ones that really need it don't come, and you try to reach out. It's hard. It's hard…. A lot of [parent conferences] are over the phone. And now, with Zoom, they all want to do it on their phone on Zoom. It's been difficult to bring them in.

You can hear the emotional labor in Kelly's response when she says, "It's hard. It's hard." She wants so much for her students and so much for her student's parents.

Difficult parents

A key finding within the study is that the participants experienced emotional labor throughout their work. However, it was concentrated in particular areas, such as difficult parents. One out of the five participants described in detail how difficult experiences with parents weigh on him. Although there was no specific question about difficult parents, the topic came up when this participant was asked about what keeps him up at night and stood out as a common theme among his answers to other questions as he expressed the

emotional labor involved explicitly. John describes how although many parents are very cooperative, there are extreme cases that weigh on him. These extreme cases create a weight of emotion. They add to the normal, everyday stressors of the role. John stated:

> The hardest thing is individual circumstances that you have with some of the most extreme student's parents. While with most of the students everything is great, it's manageable, and parents are reasonable, you often get these extreme cases that are just wild. Like a parent who doesn't follow rules, who feels they can curse you out wherever they want, curse out your staff. It's not the norm but it exists, and in those cases, just like a student whose behavior is just so outrageous, all of a sudden it will consume your time, your energy, your peace of mind. [It] just consumes everything. They are the most difficult thing I deal with.

John stated dealing with parent situations are not only time consuming but consume his energy and peace of mind. He prides himself on using what Hochschild refers to as "service with a smile" (Pugh, 2001) but there are those situations that are out of the norm, sometimes on-going because they stem from parent behavior that is not within his control. This is an example of what Hochschild describes as "surface acting," emotional behavior where the face you present is not in agreement with the way you feel. John discussed managing his emotions (Hochschild, 1983) as parents disrespect him or personnel. Here, John reflects on how he has gotten better at coping with difficult situations and dealing with the emotional demands of the position, but that he still takes them home. In his response, John seemed to have a complete understanding of the emotional labor involved with dealing with difficult parents. However, John has no knowledge of terminology he can use to convey it. Blackmore (2010) discusses this balance between emotionality and detachment. In addition, Blackmore claims "This mastery of emotion is critical to leadership:" (p. 643). John stated:

> When difficult situations come up: staff issues, students, or parents, the 1% things right, it doesn't happen all the time but it's just really odd those things are the ones that you still take home, and you think all the time about it. It was probably worse before when I was new. Now I take it more in stride. Like difficult situations, I still take it home and you often can't think about other things other than that.

John pointed out that respect for the school, its personnel and the rules set forth within it have no meaning for some parents. Participants discussed how this could be from the promotion of school choice through parent vouchers and social media adding to the sensationalism of schools being called out on their policies or actions. In addition, "Parent rights" and "student rights" are common terms nowadays. As mentioned in Chapter I and is further expanded upon in Chapter V, the deprofessionalism of principals and teachers has affected their value and respect level in the community.

Principals are required to follow District policies and procedures. When these do not align with parents' opinions, parents get upset which sometimes leads to foul language, raised voices and demands. John expressed his position is that he is willing to help any parent with a concern, but it is impossible to please everyone based on the parameters. He also stated that when making decisions, he can't just think of one student, but how other students will be affected by the decisions that he makes. This situation aligns with Hochschild's (1983) and Humphrey and his coauthors' (Humphrey et al., 2008, p. 153) definition of emotional labor in addition to the explanation from Mastracci and her coauthors (Mastracci et al., 2010). As John expressed that these are some things he takes home at night, he is continuing to perform emotional labor even during time for which he is not getting paid. However, his responsibility as a principal does not stop at the end of the workday. Another example of the key finding that principals feel that

emotional labor is part of their job. It really is 24/7, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Not Enough to Go Around-Teacher Retention and Recruitment

As previously mentioned, a key finding within the study is that the participants experienced emotional labor throughout their work. However, it was concentrated in particular areas, such as teacher retention and recruitment. Four out of the five participants referred to teacher retention and recruitment as a major challenge that weighed on them. The emotional labor participants experienced showed how teacher recruitment and retention is beyond their control but affects them daily.

Throughout the United States there have been teacher shortages (Boyd et al., 2011; Collie et al., 2020; Zuo, 2023) which has become a key source of stress for principals (Collie et al., 2020). In this District, after COVID-19, teacher shortages have become a major concern. Teacher recruitment from charter and private schools has also affected the public school setting. School principals are not only trying to recruit new teachers but retain the teachers that exist within their buildings as well (Sutcher et al., 2016). The emotional labor exhibited by school principals as shown within the data depicts the reality of schools' demands for teachers and the scarcity of teachers. The school principal is responsible for retaining, recruiting, and hiring staff to meet the needs of students. This takes a toll on the participants as is seen in their responses. Kelly stated, "I don't know where the breakdown went or how it occurred. We are in such a high demand for teachers. I don't see it. Everybody wanted to be a teacher. There were

millions of us at college." John expressed the same frustration as Kelly and gave insight to why schools have a shortage when he stated:

> There is a lack of desire to be in the profession. So of course, it will lead to not having many candidates and not having as many motivated candidates. Our pay has not been kept up with other jobs in society. Hence, we have hundreds of openings.

As discussed earlier, although this emotional labor does not match the published definitions or explanations I have presented throughout this chapter, participants' experiences trying to retain and recruit teachers displays perhaps a type of emotional labor specifically related to their position. Whereas it is their job to staff schools, their lack of influence in doing it is evident in their responses.

Hence, much of the participants' emotional labor was directed at areas of work they were not able to meaningfully influence within their role as principal, another key finding within the study. Contributing factors for not being able to retain or recruit teachers include social, political, and economic factors that are beyond their control. For example, politicians pushing vouchers and charter schools has had a heavy impact on the number of teachers there are to go around. As funding decreases, less teachers are able to be hired. This affects teacher salaries which are needed to keep up with inflation. Many young college bound students are not studying to be teachers based on salary alone.

In addition to not being able to hire, principals have not able to recruit current employed teachers for assignments outside of their normal work hours, before or after school. This concern has caused emotional labor amongst principals across the district. Kimberly expressed her frustration as follows:

> [I've needed] to have tutoring going on before or after school but have not been able to hire personnel that are willing to come in early or stay after. A lot of times you have personnel having to have two jobs, so they're working during the day in the school, and then they go to a second job after school in order to financially maintain their own family. Therefore, they don't want to work in the before or after [tutoring program], because it's less than what they're making [elsewhere]. So that becomes very frustrating to try to find personnel.

Schools with students who have special needs, like Kimberly and Kelly's school, need additional staff to meet their academic and behavioral needs. Teachers of special education have specific training which qualifies them to work with this unique and sensitive population. Kimberly expresses the weight of not having these qualified teachers placed on her as she tries to ensure students are serviced appropriately even before and after school hours. Again, this lack of autonomy speaks to the emotional labor exhibited by Kimberly as she states:

> It's also extremely frustrating when you have a large special needs school, and you need teachers to teach in those programs, and it's very hard to find teachers. There are not enough teachers right now to meet the needs of all schools. So that becomes very frustrating because you're constantly trying to reach out, to find somebody, to go outside of the box to try to bring in people.

Another example of a key finding regarding participants not being able to meaningfully influence within their role was shown as John talked about the responsibility of retaining teachers and the inability to do so. He spoke about the lack of control in keeping them no matter what environment he creates due to economic factors. John described this emotional labor when he stated:

> Other pressures include not being able to staff your school, which is a growing concern with every year that passes. There are openings everywhere. Teachers are leaving to the school next to their house. Teachers that I have had great relationships with no matter how great the relationship is, if the school makes you save X amount of money in gas and my school is more, teachers often leave regardless of how great the culture that you build, so staffing schools has become

> like a big problem this year. Most of the year I've been minus 6 teachers, most of them not classroom teachers. I have an ESE opening, CCHL opening, which is like a support position for ESOL students. I have an ESE position [open] and only one classroom teacher [opening] at this point. It's just been more and more difficult. Probably about 70% of the staff is new.

As John discussed, prices have gone up on everything to include rent, homeowner's insurance, gas, food, etc., families are finding it increasingly difficult to keep up financially. So, working closer to home assists in saving on not only gas but tolls that need to be paid to go across the urban area, as well as car maintenance. John specifically speaks about the economic reasons he has not been able to retain some of his teachers although he has done his part in trying to keep them which aligns with Humphrey and his coauthors definition of emotional labor: "Influencing the moods, emotions, motivations, and performance of subordinates or followers" (2008). John continued:

> Most of our teachers come through Teach for America [TFA], thank God! Thank God because it's really the primary way we are getting these young individuals. We pay for their college, but they are all out of field. I found out this year that my [curriculum] coach has become so important because you've got to train [these TFA teachers]. You've gotta train all of these teachers and often they leave in a short time because Teach for America is usually around two years. Some stay, some don't. So, coaching and the leadership team become more important.

Teach for America, initiated in 1990, is an alternative pathway teacher-training program that recruits college candidates into the teaching profession in low income urban and rural schools for two years (Anderson, 2020). At the end of the program, some stay. Others continue on their initial degreed path in various areas of study. Unlike other teachers, they receive a five-week teacher training (Anderson, 2020). Teach for America and other alternative pathways have been the topic of recent research and political debate

in regard to what type and how much training is necessary for teachers to be effective in the classroom (Anderson, 2020).

According to the participants, Teach for America has filled many of the teaching vacancies in this District. Principals, like John, seem to welcome programs like these. However, it is not a long-term solution for teacher recruitment and continues to lead educational institutions on a path of consistent turnover as participants leave the profession after the two years is up.

ATTEMPTING TO SURVIVE THE POSITION: SINK OR SWIM

Whereas the previous theme focused on *Unsolvable Problems and Unachievable Goals*, this theme's focus is-*Attempting to Survive the Position: Sink or Swim*. In this section, I illustrate the participants' experiences with emotional labor and understanding of it in relation to coping strategies and experiences such as on-the-job training and mentoring. Participants cited strategies they implement to deal with all of the emotional demands, emotional pressure and emotional labor associated with the responsibilities of being a school principal, although they never refer to their experiences using the term emotional labor. One of the key findings within the data is that participants were able to articulate the specific strategies they used to confront the emotional aspects of their work in very general ways. However, their coping strategies are in response to what they call stress, not emotional labor as they continue to show that the term is not within their lexicon. They cited using general strategies and strategies that were part of their general training beginning with their position as an assistant principal and then as a principal.

I directly asked participants how they manage or cope with the demands or stressors of being a principal. Do you have any daily practices or routines? Do you have any core beliefs that assist you? This chapter incorporates an array of methods participants used to manage or cope with the demands and stressors of the position. These include: core beliefs/belief systems, on-the job training/mentoring, the Principal Induction Program, networking/collaborating, family and faith, and organizational systems.

Core beliefs and belief systems are those beliefs that stem from childhood or life experiences. The participants described how they function within their core beliefs or belief systems in every aspect of their life, including their role as a school principal. All five participants cited strong core beliefs or belief systems that guide their philosophy as principals.

Faith and family affect the way people behave and how they deal with everyday situations, whether personal or professional. Three out of the five participants referred to family and/or faith as a way of coping with the daily toll the role of principal takes on them.

On-the-Job training experiences assisted all participants in learning what they needed to build their repertoire of knowledge to be a principal. Some of the on-the-job training took place when they were an assistant principal and some after they became a principal. Only a few of the participants were prepared by a principal preparation program. Mentoring was also discussed as a means of developing skills. Some participants discussed a Principal Induction Program designed by the district where

participants met monthly during the first year they became a principal for professional development.

The data show that all participants practice collaboration with other principals. In some instances, collaboration was part of a training they participated in. With all participants, it is what they rely upon when they need advice or want to brainstorm a solution. The participants stated that it also serves as a comfort to talk to other professionals who know what they are experiencing and understand the pressures involved with the responsibilities in the role of being a principal.

Having systems in place is a proactive method used to guide many businesses and households. Two of the five participants cited how having systems in place assisted them in navigating and coping with the emotional labor associate with being a principal.

Core beliefs/ Belief system

Participants were asked if they had any core beliefs or belief systems that help them manage their position as a principal. All five participants spoke about personalities initiated in childhood or developed as adults which have led them to be the type of principal they are today. They discuss how these core beliefs ground them in their sense of self, guide them to do the right things and help get them through each day. In addition, they shared personal feelings and information about their character.

Jeff reflected on a memorable experience in his childhood and associates it with his ability to have empathy and compassion for others, which was discussed earlier in this chapter. Jeff expressed:

> On a personal level, I had a mom that was sick. I had to watch her gradually walk, crawling and carrying her. I did that at the young age, as far as being that caretaker. So, the compassion and the willingness to help at all times, it's always been in me. It's been engrained in me, it's been training cultivated over the years, taking care of someone who is sick.

This statement explains Jeff's stance on dealing with and taking care of people throughout his responses, especially when it comes to mental health as was discussed earlier in this chapter. This genuine emotion is aligned with Ashforth and Humphrey's (1993) definition of emotional labor. Although this would not be considered emotional labor under Hochschild's (1983) definition because it wasn't for a wage, it would be considered to be emotion work because it is personal, and Jeff experienced it in his private life. However, he has been able to carry his private experiences and apply them to his work life as a principal.

As Jeff's stance illustrates, the role of a principal is that of a caretaker. One who takes care of an array of people on a daily basis. This extends from their professional lives often into their personal lives as the two often can not be separated. As discussed previously, communication and daily interactions with people are a significant role of the principal. Of course, the only way to be able to have these successful interactions as a principal to have a mindset that they are there to service the needs of others which all participants stated. They must also ensure that they are mentally in a place that allows them to have the diligence, care, and patience in dealing with others' needs requiring that their needs are met.

Jeff also expressed a core belief that calls for constant emotional labor when dealing with people: He stated, "It's still restraint at all times, I think my biggest strength

is restraint. It helps me not overreact or say something that probably is gonna cause irreparable harm." The emotional labor it takes to inhibit one's emotions is immense being that emotion is inherent is all of us. Jeff considers the emotions of others above his own emotions. As discussed previously, when the emotion being displayed is not in alignment with a person's true emotion, it leads to stress (Hochschild, 1983). However, this is what Jeff has learned works for him as a leader. Neither right nor wrong, just a way of coping. Jeff never refers to his interactions as emotional labor, however, it definitely aligns with "managing one's emotions, recognizing others' emotions and doing work to be successful in the interaction that takes place between the two" (Mastracci et al., 2010). However, with the statement, "It's still restraint at all times, I think my biggest strength is restraint. It helps me not overreact or say something that probably is gonna cause irreparable harm," he does seem to understand that he needs to manage his emotions to be effective.

Winifred reflected on her core beliefs of respect, modeling, and her philosophy of service as she stated:

> I believe that everyone should be treated with respect. I believe that the work environment should be a warm and welcoming environment, not just for students, but for staff as well…. I believe that if you do for one, do for all, or do for none…I believe in being an example. So, I'm not gonna go tell you how to do dismissal, I'm going to show you and work with you on how to do dismissal.

Although beliefs and belief systems are not emotional labor, the action that comes from them seems to be as participants discussed the work they do based on their belief systems. While some of it is physical labor, most of it involves others' feelings and the management of others' emotions, which calls participants to be mindful of the

management of their own emotions which aligns with Mastracci and her coauthors explanation of emotional labor (Mastracci, et al., 2010).

Winifred discussed what it means to be in the position and relates it to service. Winifred explained:

> I believe that there's a misconception about this position. It is not for us to be served, but for us to serve so that the work gets done. I think some people have that backwards, that we're sitting on some high throne, and everybody must serve us. Leadership is service. Not a servant. You have to serve others and so I believe wholeheartedly, it's serving the people.

Literature refers to Winifred's philosophy as being a servant leader. Servant leaders believe their job is to service the community in whatever fashion is needed. They are accessible and often work alongside their workers. Many principals see themselves as this type of leader. Servant leaders recognize the emotions of others and manage their emotions in response to others' needs as discussed by Mastracci and her coauthors (Mastracci et al., 2010).

Kimberly's philosophy is aligned with Winfred's. She believes school leadership starts with the principal. Kimberly stated, "As far as beliefs, I have a very strong work ethic, so I believe you [must] have a strong work ethic to be able to complete all tasks that are expected of a principal." Kimberly takes pride in her work ethic as this is what was ingrained in her by her parents at an early age. According to Kimberly, to not work hard is to not respect the position and the opportunity that has been given to her. That means working after hours and working on weekends, which Kimberly considers to be part of the position she accepted. This is an example of one of the key findings that

principals see emotional labor as just part of their job, not different or separate from their role as a leader. This will be addressed in the last section of this chapter.

Like Kimberly, Kelly grew up with parents who had good work ethic and full-heartedly accepts the premise that she will do whatever the position requires.

Winifred talked about her personality when it comes to responding to emergencies, her philosophy about happiness and reflected back on why she wanted the job in the first place:

> [Being a principal] is not easy. And I'm also not a person that I get scared really fast, or you know, it's not helter skelter. [If] there's a fire, I'm gonna give directives and let's get this done, you know. I don't panic. And so that definitely helps as well. But this job, this job is very, very weighted. It is. It is weighted…. I don't panic. A lot of people panic when things go wrong. I'm probably the calmest because somebody has to quarterback the place. We can all panic and fall out. Then there's no one leading the way. And so that has been my personality since a child.

As discussed previously, a principal's role encompasses many situations. Among them is responding to emergency situations as they may arise. Apart from being responsible to handle the emergency, as previously discussed, the principal is the face of the school. Principals must remain calm and have an in-control demeanor coordinating emergency responses and communication with parents and region simultaneously. While some situations may be life or death, others are managing situations so that they don't get out of hand like upset parents or personnel. At the end of the day, all of these are the principal's ultimate responsibility. And all of this, according to the three definitions/explanations by Hochschild (1983), Humphrey et al., 2008) and Mastracci et al., (2010), require emotional labor. Another example of a key finding that participants'

understanding of emotional labor did not appear different or separate from their understanding of their role as a leader. Winifred continues to explain:

> I handle stress well because I'm going to do one of three things. [I'm either] going to pray, want to cry or I'm going to laugh about it. I'll pick one. It all depends on what it is. Pray, cry, or laugh because I can't take it home. I can't wear it. I have to deal with it. Say what I need to say behind closed doors, then let it out and move on. I can't get stuck there, and a lot of people get stuck in a situation or in what happened, [or] I failed.

Winifred understands that she has to deal with this emotional labor that she refers to as "stress" and that "[she] can't wear it." By expressing her need to pray, cry or laugh, Winifred shows an understanding of this emotional labor and that it must be dealt with in order for her to be able to move on. She was able to articulate specific strategies or support mechanisms they used to confront the emotional aspects of their work, a key finding. Winifred refers to her characteristic of resiliency as part of her role. She also talks about how she manages her own emotions in the face of stressful situations. Then she relates it to her upbringing which seems to be her foundation for dealing with emotions and emotional labor. Winifred explained:

> Because of my spirituality and my religion as a Christian, I know that the joy that I have didn't come from this job. I came here with that joy. And so not this job, no personnel, no parent, no district, no region, no anybody is going to snatch the life and joy from me. As the principal, you have to fight every day to not be consumed with all of these things that are your responsibility.

As previously stated, the person can not be separated from the role. Some of what is brought in comes from past experiences while other things are learned as coping mechanisms. As in Winifred's case, spirituality that is ingrained in principals seems to provide them with the ability to keep going and have a sense that they can handle whatever comes their way, as will be shown later in this chapter.

Winifred also talks about ways of making things manageable and when and how to ask for assistance when needed. Although, in general, the principalship is often described as a lonely job, participants spoke about how they are not alone and how often rely on colleagues when needed as will be discussed further in this chapter. Winifred stated:

> So, you have to compartmentalize everything so that you could handle it, and it doesn't weigh you down. Ask for help when you need to. That's another problem. People don't want to ask for help. You need a network. You need to be able to pick up the phone and say, what is this? What are we supposed to do? I didn't know, did you know? Help me. Show me. Tell me. Explain it to me. I don't have so much pride that I will not ask for help, and a lot of principals do. They will not ask for help. They sit there, they drown utterly, say the job sucks.

All of the participants discussed needing support from colleagues at one time or another. This will be discussed further later in this chapter.

As previously discussed, literature has shown that emotions can not be separated from leadership. In addition, as is the case with these participants, life experiences and personality are often the reason why many school leaders become principals. Winifred shared her internal fight using her world view of how keeping a positive attitude drives her ability to be resilient and get the job done, whatever it may entail. She demonstrates and understanding of how it is important to manage her own feelings in several examples. She often uses football and the role of the quarterback to explain her stance in relation to the school. She compares herself to the quarterback who leads the team but at times gets sacked by the other team (emergencies, problems, relationships). She describes working through the emotion labor using her spiritual background of Christianity with prayer, tears, or laughter. However, what she is determined about is having the resiliency to move

on. She asserts that like a quarterback, it is a necessity to get back in the game, make it through and be ready for the next one. Like the other participants, she has no problem asking for assistance or aiding her colleagues to aid in coping. For example, Winifred shared a conversation she had with a new principal who asked Winifred for advice on coping with a situation. Winifred stated:

> Whatever happened, happened. Did you finish it? Did you fix it? Did you do what you would do? Yes, I said, move on. You're gonna have many more things to deal with. But you have to take it. You have to be Tom Brady. You rarely see him scrambling, and when you do it's because okay, wait a minute. This is, you know, I got to scramble a little bit.

Like Winifred, Jeff does not like to feel like things are out of control. The position calls for responding to a multitude of situations and often at the same time. Jeff explained what he does to help him feel like he is in control and how he works at managing is own emotions. Jeff expressed:

> I just focus on things that I can control or do things that I can control, because so many things are already out of control. [So, I try] doing things in control, like maybe organizing something, maybe picking up trash off the ground around the school, [or] just having that walk. [Then] I'm able to control something. It just makes me feel better.

A key finding, principals' lack of autonomy, was discussed previously specifically regarding teacher recruitment and retainment. That was only one example. By Jeff's response, it seems he feels the lack of autonomy often and has created his own methods of coping with it.

Like Winifred, Jeff does what he can to regroup and carry on. However, John takes another approach. John spends time fishing, often pulling over from his hour-long commute spontaneously. John also purposefully gets lost on-line browsing for watches,

one of his hobbies. Kelly copes differently. Kelly feels better when she is in the know keeping her cell and laptop close so that situations can be handled immediately. Kelly initially said she really didn't have a coping method but finally realized that the ability to be in the know allowed her to feel in control and she owned that as a coping technique. She stated:

> That work phone is always with me. I have two phones all the time. So, I make sure that I'm on, and knowing what's happening… I do feel better knowing it's been taken care of… I'd be a nervous wreck all night, thinking about what I'm going to do. I'd be making lists. This job is all based on personality and that's how you're going to run your school based on your personality.

The position being 24/7 will be discussed in detail later. Surprisingly, Kelly refers to the 24/7 experience as a coping mechanism. The void of knowing adds to her level of stress. While some would say "Ignorance is bliss," Kelly understands that everything that happens is her responsibility and functions from that. If there is something that she needs to address, she wants to know and do it right away. With this response, I have to ask myself, what does this type of consistent emotional pressure do the human experience? It's not just being responsible but functioning within always knowing you're responsible and functioning within that emotional place consistently, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Faith and Family

Another example of a key finding within the data is that participants were able to articulate the specific strategies or support mechanisms they used to confront the emotional aspects of their work. The participants cited they get support from faith and family. While support comes from colleagues, as will be discussed later in this chapter, it

also comes from home and from having a spiritual background. Two of the five participants expounded on this. Kimberly relayed the importance of having a support system at home when she stated, “I absolutely think having a strong family who supports the work that you're doing or a strong spouse that is able to give you the space and time that you need [is important].” Kimberly’s belief system is engrained in her faith as she illuminates:

> When I lay my head down at night, and I'm finalizing my prayers for the day, [it is important that] I feel that I've done the best I can with what I've been given. I think it's an honor to be able to serve, especially the children. and so that absolutely plays a part as far as having the strength and the courage to make the right decisions, the strength to follow through with it, and the faith that you’re walking the right walk with it.

Like Kimberly, Kelly referred to her family’s support. Because principals are always “on” Kelly talked about how this affects the way she functions in her personal life and that those closest to her understand her position and stance when it comes to being responsible:

> I take my computer everywhere I go, and I have my work phone. My family tells me you put it away, but they understand. (She laughs) So that's part of being part of my support. It's not just those people in the building. It's your family around you because it is a 24/7 job.

On-The-Job Training/Mentoring

All of the participants viewed on-the-job training and mentoring as essential to their preparation and success as principals and cited it as a way they have learned to cope with the effects of emotional labor. Additionally, the participants make no differentiation between emotional labor and their job, nor do they refer to it as emotional labor, all key findings in this study. No specific question was posed about on-the-job training or mentoring. However, participants included them in response to how they learned to be a

principal and survive as one. The phrase “sink or swim” was referred to be participants to describe some of their experiences. Scholarly literature on educational leadership shows that on-the-job training (Duncan et al., 2011) and mentorship (Yirci & Kocabas, 2010) are successful leadership preparation strategies.

Kelly shared how on-the-job training and a sink or swim situation prepared her for the role of the principal. Kelly stated:

> I think just being allowed to work with principals that allowed me to be a part of everything [assisted in preparing me]. So, when I became a principal…of course I was scared, but I wasn't like if anything was new. A lot of people say, oh, I don't know anything about budget. I don't want to do [it] because I don't know about budget. Well, I’m like that's not hard at all. I mean I've been doing it. There was a time…that my principal was absent…so I kind of had to take over a lot in the school by myself… and she trusted me to do that which meant a lot. So, when you're put in situations where you just had to do it, I felt like I had done it already.

Kelly did not have to imagine what it would be like to be a new principal as she had the opportunity to shadow her former principal who had been newly appointed. Kelly explained:

> [When a principal I worked with] started, she was a brand-new principal. So, both of us were learning together. I think, being put in the situation where you're doing the job anyway, I think that's what prepares you. I would hope that all the assistant principals are allowed to just do the same thing that a principal's doing in school.

Kelly reflects on her current situation with her assistant principal. Due to Kelly’s past experience with on-the job training, she ensures her assistant principal is exposed to her work to prepare him for the future. Kelly stated:

> Sometimes the kids tell me, oh, we have 2 principals. I don't want to correct them and say no, no, I'm the principal, but you know it's good that they see that because we could both do the same thing. At the end of the day, obviously the

> responsibility is on one person. But everything that I do, the assistant principal should be able to do.

As previously stated, the responsibility of it all lays on the principal. However, many principals take the time to train their assistant principals in the work they do. This was previously discussed when Kelly compared the relationship between the principal and assistant principal as "a marriage." Kelly manages emotional labor as she has to manage her emotions, especially if she and her assistant principal are not in agreement, at times. Kelly states that they need to be seen as a "united front."

Jeff had a similar experience as Kelly during his first assignment as an assistant principal. Jeff's former principal took an unanticipated leave which left him in charge. He described learning on the spot and being responsible for the whole school. He was in a sink or swim situation, but he took it in stride with his "I can do this" approach and learned as much as he could as fast as he could. Then Jeff was moved to another location and that is where he worked with a principal who filled in the gaps as a mentor. Jeff explained:

> [I learned] on the job… my first year. The next year I was moved, and I became an assistant principal under [an experienced principal]. And that is when I started learning different aspects of it, working alongside her, I started learning the discipline side of it. We started doing our school improvement plans together with teachers. I started understanding that budget aspect. One time I had to do the budget [by myself]. So, during that time I really started getting to know the ends and outs of it. So even my first year I could say, oh, I had to do all this. There was a lot of the technical aspects of the job that I didn't quite know or was exposed to but a few years under her, I was able to really learn the job in totality.

Like Kelly and Jeff, Kimberly had a similar experience with a principal taking her under her wing and soaking in all of the experiences and knowledge that awaited. Kimberly recalled:

> Walking in [a new building] in the beginning, whether as an AP or VP at a school, I sat back and watched what was happening and how it was done. And then at the end of the day, the principal would sit with me and reflect on how the day went, what we were looking for, what her goals were within the school and how was she going to get there. I think that's where I learned the most-through the principal that I was working with, somewhat like a mentor. So even though she was my boss, she mentored me, and it was the first time I had seen that style of leadership, [distributed leadership], within a school.

Previously, servant leadership was mentioned by Winifred, which is the philosophy that leaders are there to service the school community and work alongside them. Although Kimberly considers herself a servant leader, she learned the benefit of distributive leadership when she was an assistant principal and applied it when she became a principal. Distributive leadership is when leaders find other leaders in the building and bring them to the table to discuss their areas of strength to benefit the school community (Bolden, 2011). These two leadership styles are not necessarily mutually exclusive in that leaders can be both servant and distributed leaders at the same time.

Not all assistant principals have had the experience that Kelly, Jeff and Kimberly spoke about. Principals all have different personalities and styles. Fortunately, Kelly, Jeff and Kimberly's previous principals gave them the freedom and flexibility to learn, make mistakes, and grow. As previously discussed, studies on mentoring have shown it is an effective form of learning (Yirci, & Kocabas, 2010). However, as will be discussed in the next section, principal induction is also a vehicle for learning that some of the participants participated in.

Principal Induction

Three out of five participants credited the District's Principal Induction Program as essential to their preparation and success as principals. In recent years, newly assigned principals in this District have participated in a mandatory Principal Induction Program, which requires them to meet monthly for professional development over their first year and continues to offer support through their second and third year as principals. These meetings focus on developing new principals in a multitude of ways. Participants gained some technical knowledge and strategies to assist them in their position. Although emotional labor was not a part of their training, participants detailed how this program assisted them in finding support and providing support for others which participants did cite as ways they coped with the experiences they faced within the position. While the participants mostly were not able to articulate their experiences using terminology associated with scholarly articulations of emotional labor, they were able to articulate specific strategies or support mechanisms they used to confront the emotional aspects of their work, a key finding. Winifred shared how these meetings served as a starting ground for relationships she has still to this day:

> [These meetings were] definitely about building relationships with your staff and other principals. It's not task oriented, but definitely more relational in terms of being able to glean from someone else's experiences. What happened is that a group of us bonded, and we were able to share personal experiences. Because, remember, at the principal level, you don't get a chance to really fellowship. You go to meetings; you sit and take notes. That's what most of our trainings are. So where do principals get the time to really sit, talk, share with each other, and just get some insight about their situation, or a better way to do things? That doesn't exist so much.

As stated by Winifred, most training she had experienced previously focused on the technical aspects of the position. However, Winifred found that this was not the case with principal induction. Because of the programs focus on the relational aspect of the position, she was able to network. Winifred described the relationships she has built with colleagues and elaborates on how they support one another. Winifred stated:

> The cohort that I am in, there's this bond that was established. We also created a WhatsApp, so we're still in communication [years later] …It taught us to rely on one another and be a support. A lot of times I share things with them… [For example], someone is looking for teachers… Or I got a teacher that needs to transfer, I'll ask, anybody with any openings near this area? So, it has definitely created a resource, a tool for administrators to support one another.

Winifred, like other participants discussed the need for more interaction as opposed to what educator's call "sit and get" sessions where a new initiative is being explained or a task is detailed, and the participants listen and takes notes. As Winifred stated, in a position that is overwhelmingly busy, principals rarely get the chance to sit and have conversations with their colleagues about the realities of the position, concerns they have or simply have genuine conversations with others that understand the pressure and workload. Kimberly also discussed that she wished there were more sessions designed that gave principals the flexibility to collaborate with peers.

Like Winifred, the Principal Induction Program served as a starting point for Kelly's new relationships with other principals. Kelly points out that the relational aspect as opposed to the technical aspect is what served her needs the most. Kelly explained:

> [Principal Induction sessions] are really good. They're small groups. They allow for a lot of conversation. They give us a lot of different information. I enjoyed [Principal Induction], but again it's how much you get out of it, the people that

> you meet, how you communicate with those people, and it has to be done more at a personal level. Not [just] technical.

As discussed in Chapter II, principals are often trained on the technical aspect of the job but what seems to be missing is preparation for the relational aspect of the position (Bridges, 2012; Wallace, 2010). Kelly made mention of the Principal Preparation Program because it did address the relational aspect and by her response, it is evident that she thinks it is missing as well.

Jeff recalled a specific professional development experience which was part of the Principal Induction Program. He pointed out how some of the theory that was presented assisted him in making connections with his thinking and leaderships style. Jeff stated:

> [The District] had this cohort [we] went to at a university [in the city]. That was good because it was a network. It was a cohort of new principals, and we were able to get the research-based studies as far as leadership. I liked that. It was a one-week course. I thought that would be beneficial as far as learning some theory but would not be anything that you'd ever implement. [However], when you hear [the theories] and discuss [them], it validates some of your reasoning with some of your approaches when it comes to leadership.

Jeff is referring to an on-going effort where local universities coordinate with this District to support school administrators in keeping up to date with current leadership strategies and theories. They provide mandatory week-long sessions for administrators in the summer. Having the information and time to break down why principals make the decisions they make assisted Jeff in verifying the decisions he was making were grounded in knowledge and theory. Making sound decisions was a common topic amongst participants. They used words like “right” and “best” to describe the decisions they questioned when reflecting back on the day or a situation that occurred. According to the participants response, being able to talk out a situation with a colleague is

something that all of the participants relied on to self-check. The Principal Induction Program and support from local universities allowed the participants to continue to build collegial, trusting relationships with other principals.

Relationship with the Region/District

Although only one out of the five participants cited their relationship with the Region/District. Three of the five principals were from what is referred to "low performing schools." Principals not only build relationships with their peers, as previously discussed, but with their superiors, as John refers to them, as well. John discussed the relationship he has built with region personnel. He wants to make "good decisions" for his school and has trust in the District to lead him in the right direction. He has no hesitation in accepting feedback or following prescribed efforts. He wants to do what is "right" for his school, the students, and the District. This is how he embraces their support. John explained:

> If [low performing school support] comes and says we should try this, you try it. So, if things don't work well, you know you are faithful to the philosophy of the school system and the school board and the people that are in charge of it. So, if I were to say I think that's not a good idea, I'm gonna do it like this and things don't work out, then you're on your own. But if you follow what your superiors want, they understand, hey we tried this, it didn't work out, but it wasn't because of not trying or lack of effort. So, one thing that helps is to definitely follow what has been prescribed for you to do. So, I do that; I follow the opinions or desires or what they think are best practices.

John understands that one of his responsibilities is to ensure his students' academic needs are met. He is willing to do whatever it takes. He considers his relationship with region personnel to be part of the learning process as a principal.

Although the other participants did not cite the District/Region personnel, they all answer to them and take guidance from them.

Networking/Collaborating

Principals used networking and collaborating as a way of coping with the emotional demand and labor associated with the role. All five participants spoke at length about their support group. Kimberly discussed the importance of having a network to collaborate with to talk out concerns:

> I believe in having a group of networking principals so that if there are any questions or any concerns, or if we're not sure how to do something, as a collective group, we get together, and we talk.

Kelly uses a network of principals she trusts to self-check some of her decisions. Kelly expresses the importance of their experience and honesty in aiding her with stressors. Kelly said:

> When you feel like your day was a bad day, or you know you did something wrong, made a wrong decision, you run that by them, by the principals, and they'll [listen] and they're very honest. We're very honest with each other, so they'll tell me how they did something, or what they would have done, or they will tell me, you're fine. Don't worry about it. Because a lot of times you can guess all your decisions, just every situation is different.

Kelly discusses what I previously mentioned regarding the types of skills principals need. On the surface it may seem that technical skills would help them make it through the day. But as Kelly points out, situations and dilemmas are diverse based in the circumstance. This is where emotional labor steps in, and it seems there is no guide for that. Therefore, Kelly uses collaboration with colleagues to cope by getting feedback that

she trusts, which is a key finding that participants use support mechanisms to confront the emotional aspects of their work. Kelly states:

> So, it's not like a book that you could say, okay, for this I do this, right? That Code of Student Conduct is great, but really, it's not. You have to interpret a lot. It's up to interpretation. So, having people there to run ideas by is very, very important, and you know they are part of that group of people that I trust for that stressor.

Kelly uses the word "trust" a lot when referring to her network of principals. As previously mentioned, the participants were genuinely concerned with making the "right" decisions" or "doing the right thing." Each spoke about a group they use to confide in. Like with any situation, seeking advice or approval is a vulnerable thing. So even in the process of confiding or accepting advice, it seems emotional labor is used. Because principals take their job seriously, they look for others that align with their philosophy to discuss important topics or decisions and trust the information they get in return. Kelly also uses "stressor" which clearly shows she experiences emotional labor but did not understand her work in terms of emotional labor, a key finding.

Although John takes a different approach to move away from work and relax in order to cope with stressors, he admits his main technique is networking with colleagues. John began by stating:

> I like to go on eBay and hunt for my hobbies, always reading about cars. I love watches so I'm always hunting for things like that so I guess that's one of my hobbies that I will do every morning. I'll get all of these emails and things that are being sold so that's one of the little things [I do]. Like going fishing, right now I'm going fishing a lot. I'll be driving home, and I'll pull over and I'll go fishing but I don't do that all the time. I guess it's like removing a little bit of stress.

However, like Kimberly and Kelly, John also cites engaging with other colleagues as a strategy for coping. John explained, “But mostly it's confiding in friends and colleagues.”

Kimberly compares engaging with colleagues to be better than therapy when she states:

> I think this is beyond the life coach or talking to somebody. I think it's working with people that are within your line of work. They are experiencing the same thing you are and talking through it. Driving home, you may call another principal. Hey! How was your day? The answer is usually: I didn't stop but I didn't get anything done. That is the case on many, many days. The minute you walk into the building you don't stop. And yet at the end of the day when you go to a list to check off what you were supposed to do, countless times, [the unchecked list] goes home with you. And you work from there.

Kelly relies on colleagues with similar settings or environments to compare solutions to occurrences. Kelly understands that a solution for one setting may not work in another based on student population and needs. Therefore, she reaches out to colleagues who work in equivalent settings to brainstorm. Kelly clarified:

> [Colleagues] tell me what they would do in their school. Now I'm going to be honest… I have to reach out to people that have the same sort of incidents happening at their school. I had a big issue this year. Not a big issue, but a question about what I should do with all the ESOL students that were coming in, new students to the country. I'm like, should I? What do I do? I'm not going to call a school that has maybe 2 kids that are ESOL level one, that they're not even gonna have any idea. So, I reached out to schools close to me, to my friends that are around me. And we bounced ideas [off one another].

Kimberly expressed the need for more time to collaborate with other principals. Participants explained that they are consumed with their own building/setting, that during regular workdays, there is little, if any, time to converse with other principals. Kimberly finds these engagements greatly beneficial. Kimberly illuminates the importance of this type of interaction:

> I think administrators need to have the opportunity to work together and to collaborate and just talk. In some of our meetings where we've had that opportunity, the comments are always Oh my gosh! This was so nice! We wish we could do this more! Yeah, as opposed to just a meeting that may necessarily more informational than sitting down and really tackling what we're doing and what is happening.

Like Kimberly, Jeff detailed the importance of collaboration. Jeff described his support network. He not only talks about how he appreciates having it but that he believes principals need it in order to survive. He lit up when talking about his group of colleagues. I could almost see a weight lifted as he explained their bond. Jeff stated:

> It's a group of guys that we came up together as assistant principals. We have a name for each other! But we always socialize and as far as network and help each other out, they're a call away, or I'm a call away. We just feed off each other as far as providing the information needed. And then I got my other colleagues that I'm a phone call away or they're a phone call away. But when we call, we go on different changes as far as things happening professionally, even personally, and that type of support system helps you get through the day…I've always collaborated.

Networking was discussed by all of the participants as a need. There is only one principal within school buildings, and they have this tremendous amount of pressure and responsibility. Therefore, they go to others that can commiserate with them. Jeff continued:

> I always feel like in this type of job you need to network. You need to find people that could do things you don't want to do, or you can't do, and get the information needed. So that's just part of being resourceful with this job. You have to be able to pick up the phone and call somebody. If you can't, you're gonna be in trouble.

Interestingly, as previously mentioned, a common word used by the participants when talking about collaborating or networking was the word "trust." All five participants are experienced principals, but of course it is impossible to know everything. Kimberly discussed the importance of having colleagues she can "trust":

> It's just having somebody that's sitting in the same seat with the same philosophy and how they may see how to handle a certain situation. We discuss it together. We reach out. Every principal I know has a group that they trust and has the same belief system as far as philosophy, the work that needs to be done, and to do it the best you can.

Each participant, proud of their personal knowledge and the work that they do, included words like “trust,” “same philosophy” and “relationships that were built.” They all sought relationships that made them better at their position. Each seeking someone or a group to confide in expecting honest responses that would with validate or invalidate their thinking. Jeff discussed a situation where two employees who were spouses brought their home life into work. He had already decided on the action he would take to resolve the problem. He reached out to one of his colleagues and after having a conversation, he changed his plan of action. These participants are not seeking “attaboys” or just wanting to hear themselves talk, they are seeking advice from experienced, trusted colleagues to make sound decisions. It takes colleagues you can trust to be vulnerable enough to share thoughts and accept a different take on the actions initially thought were best for the school.

Networking and collaborating seem to be the participants number one way of dealing with emotional labor that comes with all of the responsibilities as principal. The process of thinking through and reaching out to a colleague also seems to require emotional labor. They don’t just reach out to any principal. They seek the one or ones that can understand their unique situation. They also seek a colleague they can trust.

Systems In Place

Another way principals cope with the array of responsibilities is by having systems in place. Two of the five participants detailed systems they have put in place. By systems, I am referring to a way of organizing or procedures that are put in place. Winifred discusses the types of things that are put on a principal's plate and the danger of not being organized. She is noticeably clear about the enormous responsibility that comes with the position and embracing all of it: the work, the responsibility and also the reward. Winifred shared:

> It's a lot of little things that if you're not careful, you'll have a bunch of hiccups. If you don't have systems in place, you'll have more problems than the ones that you're going to get anyway that come with the job. And with this job you're going to make mistakes. But what I have found out about this job is you can also fix it if you're honest. And so, the job is very weighted. It's a great responsibility. It's a rewarding responsibility, but you can almost feel the weight to the principal sitting right here. It sits right here. Not in a stressful way.

The ease with which Winifred was able to give examples of happenings that could all go off at the same time and how they all land on her shoulders was enlightening. These were real examples of how the simplest of things not being handled could turn into emergencies. Winifred continued:

> Everybody is depending on you: The sink is broken. We don't have paper. The stripping machine is broke. The speakers don't work over here. Somebody has ants over here. Somebody over here is being mean to somebody over here. They're not getting along. The back door won't lock, the gate chain is stuck, the grass isn't cut, the flag is not at half-staff, there's something on social media that's wrong. All of that is you. But some of that is systems. And you can prevent that [with the use of systems] …. This job is a lot.

Winifred shares what works for her. As previously mentioned, each participant has their own way of coping or dealing with the responsibility of their role.

> It does require a great deal of organization if you're going to be successful. And so, I keep a weekly planner. I have my monthly plan, but I keep a weekly plan, because a weekly planner, it sits on my desk… and then I can see my week. I know everything. I'm always building stuff, it's all ready. It's also on my Outlook. So, I'm a little caught between a new school and old school. I do like to write some things and see it visually. But then I also love the aspect of technology with a reminder.

In addition to her personal calendar, Winifred creates a weekly calendar of school events for personnel to refer to so that everyone is one the same page.

Like Winifred's ritual with calendars, Kimberly uses lists to prioritize and keep herself accountable: She stated, "[I sit] in the evening before the next day and create a list of what needs to be or must be done and then check it off as each item has been addressed."

EXPECTATIONS OF THE PRINCIPALSHIP

Whereas the previous section focused on *Attempting to Survive the Position: Sink or Swim*, this last theme focuses on *Expectations of the Principalship*. In this section, I reveal the current state of affair for our school leaders by providing specific examples from the participants' experiences regarding the expectations that are placed upon them. It speaks to how the participants respond to the condition and requirements of their position. As stated in the introduction of this chapter, a key finding within the data suggests participants all expressed their work requires emotional labor, though they rarely articulated it in those terms. That is, they clearly experience emotional labor throughout their work, but they often did not understand their work in terms of emotional labor. A school principal's roles and responsibilities do not commence at the beginning of the workday, nor conclude at the end. School principals are seen to be leaders in the

community. Therefore, their personal lives tend to not be their own and their behaviors reflect what their school stands for and the reputation that coincides with it. Another key finding within the data is that he participants had a hard time separating the emotional labor they experienced from their own identity.

As stated previously, the workload and demands faced by school principals is enormous (Maxwell & Riley, 2016). They are leaders, managers, caretakers, psychologists, accountants, etc. Add in all of the new laws, pressures from politicians, accountability and as discussed before, mental health and safety concerns, the role is often overwhelming with no relief in sight.

The aftermath of COVID-19 initiated what has been a consistent conversation about burnout in many professions. Due the overwhelming amount of work: intellectual, physical, and emotional, like other professionals and teachers, some school principals are leaving the profession before retirement age. Others, remain in the profession, but are taxed with burnout. Like teachers, there is a shortage of new principals to take their place (Humphrey et al., 2008; McKay, et al., 2022).

A 24/7 Responsibility

As stated previously, the responsibilities in the role of school principal are extremely demanding (Reid, 2021). Four out of the five participants used “24/7” to describe their position and explain the experiences it entails. According to the participants, principals have work phones that they are expected to answer whenever called. Anything that happens at a school before, during or after hours is their responsibility. Therefore, unlike some other professions, their time is never completely

theirs. In a split second, they could be considered to be “on.” Winifred gives insight as to why she refers to the position as 24/7:

> This job really is 24/7. At any given time, you can receive a phone call and you could be in Africa [or] Nova Scotia, wherever, it doesn't matter. You are responsible for that school, good, bad, or indifferent, present, or absent…I don't care how much people think that they aren’t. You are never not the principal because you can be on the beach, and if you're getting a call that the alarm is going off, something has to be done. Somebody has to move. Someone has to act…. This job is very demanding. It does not stop. You have to learn how to balance it and turn it on and turn it off. A lot of people don't know how to turn it off. I do what I can do.

Although Winifred tries to “turn it off,” Kimberly admits that this is not usually the way she is able to function. Kimberly spoke about the amount of work and pressure that is put on, not only herself, but other personnel as well. Kimberly finds herself taking work home in order to be ready for the next day, to meet deadlines, to assume full responsibility of everything that happens under her care. Not just during the workday but after hours as well.

> I think there's a lot of pressure, I'm going to say on administration, on teachers, on office staff, there's a lot…Can it be done within school hours? Some people get it done within school hours…. It’s not the kind of job, that at the end of the day you have finished it. It's just not. It's 24 hours, 7 days a week…. I think it is very difficult to get the job done within the school hours. Do I think it can be done? Yes. But what are you going to give up?

When Kimberly refers to “what are you going to give up,” she is referring to her time for family, friends, and self. Although principals do not legally work on Saturday and Sunday, many, like Kimberly spend this time catching up on whatever did not get done throughout the work week. Participants shared that in order for the school to function, things need to be planned in advance to let the teachers, parents and students and community know. Schools get audited for different accounts throughout the year,

they must be maintained and be exact. The number of emails that come in throughout the week need to be responded to or followed up on requiring additional work. For some principals, there is no “catch up” time throughout the year. These schools may have winter break academy, spring break academy, and/or summer school. Principals are 12-month employees. So, the weekends and evenings tend to be “catch up” time for many. With all of these responsibilities, they seem to experience emotional labor in regard to an enormous amount of work involved in their position.

Kelly provided two examples of how the position continues after hours:

> I don't think anyone truly understands that 24/7, until you're in this job because you can't really ever turn it off…. [For example], yesterday the AC in the cafeteria broke in the morning…Nobody came. So, I called my [boss]. This was already when I was leaving school. He called me like at 6:30 p.m. He tells me he'll call me back, so I was talking to him til 8 o'clock at night. You're 24/7. You want to make sure that all of this is ready for the next day.

As participants detailed, technology keeps them connected to their job 24/7. As previously mentioned, principals have District provided cell phones that they must tend to after hours. In addition to the phone, emails continue to come in after hours and on weekends. Emails from the District, Region, personnel, and parents. Kelly addresses emails from parents:

> You can't turn it off…. [Or] there'll be a parent that will send an e-mail in the middle of the night, like at 8:00 o'clock or 9:00 o'clock. You'd rather respond and kind of calm the waters. Why are you gonna let that fester? It's gonna get worse the next day and then deal with it the next day?

The responsible trait that exists in all five participants keeps them focused on their job 24/7. Although they may need a break like anyone else, their overwhelming dedication of service keeps them tied to the role. The emotional labor of knowing that

they are the ones ultimately responsible to their schools and students' success overrides everything else.

When asked what stressors keep him up at night, Jeff explained:

> [I'm up at night] when I'm working on something I'm trying to solve or a solution I'm trying to come up with, whether it's a class or grade level that is not performing like it's supposed to, or what strategy do I implement as far as moving people around, or hiring someone, [or] what can I do to get this grade level on target to achieve. Those are the type of things that keep me up because I'm always trying to figure out a solution. Are you going to make the right decision?

Unlike Winifred, Kimberly, and Kelly, Jeff was the only participant that explained that being on 24/7 works for him based on his personality and energy level. He stated, "I don't mind that, only because I'm wired all day, so I like it. It's intoxicating to try to figure out a problem to solve…I like that type of stuff. It keeps me busy."

Burnout

As previously stated, a key finding within the data is that the participants articulated a more nuanced understanding of the effects of emotional labor and the conditions requiring it than the aspects of work it engenders. That is, they noted the emotional aspects of their job and they consequences of it (burnout, fatigue, etc.) but articulated the specific labor required to confront those aspects to a lesser extent or in very general ways.

None of the five participants regretted becoming a principal. However, two of the participant's responses showed that the position has taken a toll on them. As previously stated in the literature review, "burnout" has been and is becoming more of a prevalent problem (Grandey, 2000). Here are some of the responses to the question about if there were any demands or pressures that made them regret being a principal.

Kelly explained her position:

> You don't regret it, but I'm ready to retire. I don't regret it but it's a job I don't see how, at least the person with my personality and the way I do things, can stay too long because it's not healthy. I like to be involved in everything. I like to know everything that's going on. If this is my school and I have to respond to it, I need to know everything, and it's very difficult.

She gave insight to some of the external factors that have affected her outlook on how much longer she sees herself remaining in the position. She shared:

> Everybody's (referring to principals) kind of tired. It's just a change of many factors. It's our communities, it's the changes in laws. It's the respect for the position. How you're treated not by the district or anything like that, but by everyone. Parents, my students, it's just a lot. It's a lot and a lot of people feel that way, a lot of people I know. I don't know if they'll act on it or retire, or they'll just stay in a job and be big grumpy people. I do know people that are fine. They're fine, they don't internalize so much of what's happening. They say, "Oh you know, we'll get better. It's fine." And yes, I've tried that, I can't do it.

Kelly discusses the idea of "her personality" and "internalizing" what is currently happening in education. I wonder if this could be the difference between principals who stay in the position for a long time and the ones who leave. I also wonder if personalities can be changed through training. Although Kelly does not speak of it, it sounds like the emotional labor of the position is what is wearing on her. Principals that are always "on" experience burnout. As previously stated, teacher retention (Boyd et al., 2011) and recruitment (Boyd et al., 2011) has become a major problem across the United States. Similarly, less teachers are going into administration which means we may have a principal shortage in the future.

Kimberly stated:

> It seems like what I learned was to have my family not expect as much for me at home because in all honesty, I was giving it all at work. There's a lot of principals and assistant principals that are giving it at work. They're not fitting in the

> exercise. They're not putting in the healthy food. They're not fitting in family time. I think it takes a real toll on a person's health. And yes, it's happening. Some are going back into the classroom. You can't do this and have little children.

As previously stated, a key finding is that the participants had a hard time separating their emotional labor from their own identity. For example, Kimberly, like all of the participants, takes immense pride in being in the profession for the right reasons and believing that her role is to make a difference in the lives of children and families. This core belief is shown by the emotional labor the participants endure when discussing making the "right decisions" for their schools. However, she also discusses the consequences to her family of her always being "on" and giving all of herself at work. Kimberly continues:

> Well, I mean, I guess anybody can show up and put out fires and go home and not worry about it. But for those who really went into this as a career, they just didn't come, and they didn't come for the money, but they came into it as a career to make a difference, it's a lot more. Everybody says it's a lot more than what they ever expected it to be. I have not spoken to a single person that has said, "Oh my gosh! This is a piece of cake!"

Principals are on salary. So, no matter how many evening or weekend events they attend, they never receive overtime or additional pay. Interestingly, no participant mentioned salary or compensation at all. Some principals are in charge of more people than CEOs and their pay does not reflect that level of responsibility. Not surprisingly, these principals' idea of service ignores the low pay compared to the responsibilities they have.

Workload

In line with burnout, workload (Maxwell & Riley, 2016) is a concern among school principals. As previously discussed, the workload is often not tangible tasks but

emotional and relational situations. Three out of the five participants discussed workload and how it takes a toll on their emotional well-being. Kimberly explained:

> You work hard. You put in a day's work. You had nothing to show for it. That's correct. Nothing on paper to show for it. Because you were counseling students, you were meeting with parents, you were putting out fires as they were happening within the school. You know it doesn't have to be anything major, but something that needed tending to, all of a sudden, you look up at the clock, and the day is over, the bell is ringing, and it's time for the kids to go home, and it's time for you to go home. So, it definitely takes a toll on principals both emotionally and physically.

Even in her response, Kimberly layers the work that is before her. Her description shows that the workload is never done because education has no stopping point like most jobs. Kimberly recognizes and understands that the work takes a toll on her emotionally. However, Kimberly does not describe how she manages it. For her and many others, the job is never done.

> It's with these tasks or concerns on top of the instructional piece and trying to close [learning] gaps with the students. It just becomes very concerning. And it weighs on you is a principal because you want everything to be the best it can be. And all the children to be serviced the best way they can be.

Kimberly, again, seems to be referring to emotional labor that seems to be specifically related to the position of the principal. "Service" as she describes it is not a task to complete, it is not technical. It is a comprehensive way of approaching the work one does. However, it takes the management of emotions, both one's own and others and interactions with others to bring it together. While this is in alignment with Mastracci and her coauthors, none of the three definitions/explanations I have been applying seem to capture the complete definition of emotional labor regarding principals according to these principals' shared experiences.

Kelly discussed theory versus reality when it comes to running schools. Often schools are told they should run like businesses. Kelly disagrees when she stated:

> I went to a workshop that they sent me to as a beginning principal. We were told that we were doing the job wrong. Our desk has to be empty. We shouldn't have any binders. All those binders should all be gone. Our desks should have a phone and maybe a little notebook. We shouldn't even have a computer. The computer should be your secretary's. [The principal's secretary] should be telling you where to go. All you're doing is, [for example] as they come to you to ask question about a field trip, say so and so is in charge of field trips. I'm sorry you should have seen this! All of us were like is this guy talking about the public school system. He was good, I mean it makes sense, but that cannot happen. We don't have staff for that. We don't have people for that!

Kelly like some of the other participants believe theory that schools should run like a business is the antithesis of the reality. Participants acknowledged that education is a relational field. Participants shared: Principals are on the phone, answering emails, meeting with stakeholders, looking at student data. As Winifred said, principals are not untouchable. They are getting the work done, their desk is often messy, their office is used to hold meetings, they are wherever the action is. And they are definitely not behind their clean desk waiting for their secretary to tell them what's next.

Jeff described the demands that are unrealistic:

> The demands come from the people on the outside they want your attention now and you may not be able to give it to them. You're busy. They think that you have to be in the office next to the phone and that's just not the case. It's a movement type of thing where you could be all over the place and one day you may not have the chance to be at the phone.

Jeff described what was previously referred to about having to respond to multiple stakeholders at the same time. He described it as an impossible task. When asked what you wish you would have known prior to becoming a principal, Jeff replied:

> You are responsible for everything. Everything falls on you. There's no way to escape responsibility or accountability. For example, unforeseen incidents like when two parents we're fighting in the parking lot. And of course, that's something you would think is out of your control. The way that it is handled at the school, it's your responsibility. You let that happen. How do you control that?

Earlier in this chapter, Winifred discussed how principals are responsible for their buildings whether they are present or not. Interestingly, Jeff adds to that sentiment when problems occur outside his building and have nothing to do with how he runs his school. This example displays how emotional labor affects Jeff as he has to handle his emotions about being responsible for external factors while, at the same time, handling it regardless. He had to tend to his emotions and the emotions of the fighting spouses and be successful in his interaction with them which speaks to Mastracci and her coauthors' explanation of emotional labor as managing one's emotions, recognizing others' emotions, and doing work to be successful in the interaction that takes place between the two (Mastracci et al., 2010). As previously discussed, much of the participants' emotional labor was directed at areas of work they were not able to meaningfully influence within their role as principal, a key finding. Jeff continues:

> I don't know if it's the pressure that we put on ourselves or pressure the upper level makes us responsible for and then the perception of it when it happens at the school is like you can't control the school. When you look at it from the outside looking in, it's like there's a narrative that this school is out of control. Administrators can't handle it. To me it's just not fair.

On top of handling situations, Jeff describes the emotion he feels about the reputation of the school and his reputation as a principal who is in control. Due to the nature of the job and it being a public service, public opinion weighs heavily on principals. In addition, a phone call to the Region or District becomes another problem

the principal has to handle because it all comes back to the school level because principals are ultimately responsible for handling the problems occurring at the school.

Well worth It-No Regrets

When asked if the participants had any regrets about becoming a principal, all of the participants stated that they had no regrets. On the contrary, they enjoy their position. Jeff stated, “Regrets? No, not really. You know the narrative that is [sometimes] created about you, they're not warranted. It's frustrating. But anything else? No!” Winifred expressed her love for the job when she explained:

> It is just that heavy. Yes, very, very heavy… But do I love it? I love being the principal. Not because of the power, but I am the person that is able to make a difference in how a child learns to ensure that they get what they need, to make sure that teachers are able to grow, and I'm able to make decisions that nobody else can make in this building.
>
> During my interview [a few] years ago [I was asked] what makes you a good candidate for the job? Why should we choose you? What are you gonna do different and why do you want to be the principal? So, the answer to the question of why I want to be the principal [is], I want to be the person to make the decisions.

John stated, “Nothing makes you regret it. Nothing!” But he worries about the next generation of administrators when he stated:

> If you need me to move the school over three feet, that's gonna be hard to do, but I'm going to do it. Even though it's concrete, whatever. Like when I talked to some people who are aspiring administrators, they will say I've been thinking about it. You need to go in headfirst. I always tell them it's gonna take a long time because there are reading coaches out there that are really, really, good and they want the job. You gotta jump in and be willing to do everything including saying you know I can't work near my home so I'm going to go to the other side of town. You do that and you're going to get a job.… there's like a lack of resiliency in people that are joining the workforce. I mean, there's still people that are very resilient and incredible.

Interestingly, the emotional labor within participants does not stop with thinking about the present. Each presented things in the future that concern them such as future school grades and aspiring principals. Jeff worries about the next generation of administrators as he wonders if they will be willing to do what it takes to get the job.

Summary

Together the key findings make it clear to me that the participants would benefit from a codified definition of emotional language and terminology associated with emotional labor to better articulate their experiences as principals. All five participants expressed their work requires emotional labor, though they rarely were able to articulate it in those terms. Although, their experiences demonstrated emotional labor throughout their work, they were unable to discuss and fully understand their work in terms of emotional labor. All five participants articulated a more nuanced understanding of the effects of emotional labor and the conditions requiring it but could not articulate the specific labor required to confront those aspects. It is evident that none of the five participants received training to assist in their knowledge or understanding of emotional labor, although they experienced it, had some understanding of it and had developed coping strategies or support mechanisms on their own. Participants had difficulty differentiating emotional labor from their position as a principal. When encountered with emotional labor, surface acting, and deep acting were commonly used. Emotional labor for the participants was mostly concentrated in specific areas: academic pressure, school grades, mental health, school safety, parent involvement, difficult parents, teacher recruitment and teacher retention. Much of the participants' emotional labor was directed at areas of work they were not able to meaningfully influence within their role as

principal, specifically related to teacher recruitment, teacher retention and other external factors. The participants, in a variety of situations, were unable to separate themselves as individuals from the work they are responsible for in their position, which added to the emotional labor they experienced.

The research question for this study is: How do principals experience and understand emotional labor in Title I elementary school settings? The participants clearly experience emotional labor throughout their work, specifically concentrated in areas such as building relationships and interactions with stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, community members, region/district personnel), addressing problems (academic pressure, school grades, mental health, school safety, parent involvement, difficult parents, teacher recruitment and teacher retention). However, they often did not understand their work in terms of emotional labor and were unable to use scholarly terminology to articulate it as such. In addition, although the scholarly definitions of emotional labor introduced in this study mostly apply to the work principals do based on the participants' experiences, these definitions and explanations do not seem to articulate a comprehensive meaning of emotional labor that is specifically aimed at the work principals do based on the overwhelming roles and responsibilities principals experience. With the coping and support mechanisms each participant individually implemented and the evidence within the study of the participants managing their own and others' emotions according to the definitions and explanations previously introduced, it is clear that the participants understand emotional labor the majority of the time. However, the participants demonstrated difficulty separating themselves as individuals from some experiences with

emotional labor demonstrating that their understanding of emotional labor is not comprehensive.

In the following chapter, I will discuss practical implications, recommendations for practice, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

Emotional labor is inherent in many professions. This includes principals. While the principal's role is often understood as primarily a technical or procedural position (Lashway, 1999; Pannell et al., 2015), a fundamental part of the position is responding to emotions, whether their own or that of others (Beatty, 2000). The work conducted by leaders is inherently emotional and the proliferation of roles and responsibilities placed on principals (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015) only heightens the emotional labor required of these leaders to perform their duties (Maxwell & Riley, 2016), as previously discussed. While technical preparation has been the focus of numerous research studies, and is needed to be an effective principal, managing, and coping with emotional labor (Humphrey & Pollack, 2008) and workload (Maxwell & Riley, 2016; Oplatka, 2017) is just as important. Therefore, my study aims to contribute to the literature pertaining to emotional labor by specifically looking at how principals experience and understand emotional labor in Title I elementary school settings. While emotional labor is acknowledged within scholarly research as something principals experience, there seems to be limited mention of methods for or training to deal with emotional labor for school principals. However, scholarly research does suggest that the consequences of not dealing with it are vast and detrimental to the position such as stress (Maxwell & Riley, 2016), emotional exhaustion (Grandey, 2000), burnout (Grandey, 2000), and leaving the position (McKay, et al., 2022). This is problematic due to the relational aspect of the position.

Summary of Literature Review

The literature review focuses on the increased number of roles and responsibilities (Aydoğdu & Bozkuş, 2023; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015) within the principalship and the relational aspects of the job, such as communication with all stakeholders. It details how pressures such as accountability (Grissom et al., 2021), high-stakes testing (Grissom et al., 2021), school safety (Aydoğdu & Bozkuş, 2023), mental wellness (Kaluzeviciute-Moreton et al., 2022), teacher retention (Sutcher et al., 2016) and recruitment (McKay et al., 2022) have been a focus over recent years adding to the emotional demand requiring an increased amount of emotional labor within their position (Wang et al., 2022). Scholarly research has unveiled the consequences of the emotional labor that persists within the position and how these consequences are leading to emotional exhaustion (Grandey, 2000), burnout (Grandey, 2000) and principals leaving the profession (Humphrey et al., 2008). The research reviewed recognizes that emotional labor exists among workers and specifically principals, yet research regarding the management of it and training to deal with it is limited. In addition, the research reveals that preparation programs main focus seems to be on the more technical aspects as opposed to the relational aspects of the position.

In addition, the literature review provides an overview of emotions in the workplace, emotional demands, the foundations of emotional labor, emotional labor regarding gender, race and culture**,** principals and emotional labor, the roles and responsibilities of the principalship, the contemporary conditions shaping the work of educators (accountability, workload, teacher recruitment, teacher retention, school safety,

and mental health), and principal preparation, principal retention and the overall effects of COVID-19 on education and the principalship. In addition to a few studies in the United States, I delved into studies conducted in Australia, Canada (Ontario), and Asia to gain insight to what other school systems have found related to emotional labor and principals.

Practical Implications and Recommendations for Practice

In this section, I provide a discussion of the implications stemming from each of my eight key findings and make recommendations for practice.

The participants all expressed their work requires emotional labor, though they rarely articulated it in those terms. Although, they clearly experience emotional labor throughout their work, they often did not understand their work in terms of emotional labor. The participants used alternate words to describe their experiences. Kelly used "stress." Kimberly, Kelly and Winifred described the load of responsibility in the principalship as "heavy." Kelly and Kimberly described how the responsibility "weighs" on them. The term "emotional labor" was initiated by Hochschild in 1983. Although other researchers have contributed to the definition through their research in other industries, current definitions do not capture the essence of what emotional labor entails or looks like in the role of a school principal. In order to truly articulate the emotional labor involved with being a principal, the term "emotional labor" needs to be codified and common language needs to be developed based on a more thorough understanding of the position and all that it embodies.

The participants' understanding of emotional labor did not appear different or separate from their understanding of their role as a leader. It is as if they assumed emotional labor was an inherent part of their job, not something that could be separated from or understood as distinct from their job. This might help explain the distinction between experiencing emotional labor and not explicitly understanding their work in terms of emotional labor. There is a need to better understand the emotional labor that exists within the position of not only elementary school principals but for principals at all levels. Although scholarly literature does express the importance of the position, the description of principals' roles and responsibilities varies based on purpose of the study. There needs to be more of a comprehensive understanding of the enormous responsibilities' principals face. This study delved into the responsibilities of principals in Title I elementary schools. However, not only are all Title I elementary school settings different, but middle and high school settings also come with diverse challenges. In addition, this study takes place in a large urban school district. Schools in different locations and different demographics have their own unique challenges. Therefore, more research is needed to unveil a broader understanding of principals' responsibilities based on location and demographics.

A focus on the consequence of not dealing with emotional labor would also need to be implemented. Currently, this District offers an employee assistance program, yet there is no proactive mechanism in place to assist principals with coping with the overwhelming responsibilities and workload that often lead to principals needing assistance later on. Notable, some of the participants commented that they found the interview process to be therapeutic. They expressed that they did not have anyone to talk

to on a regular basis that could relate to their position. Throughout the process, I ensured that I implemented ethical research practices by following the interview protocols, not leading any participant to responses nor affirming or negating their beliefs or feelings. An implication of this study is that principals may benefit from having someone to talk to consistently based on the participants' responses. This could be in the form of mentorship, professional development that is organized to give principals time for discussion with one another, or more networking opportunities for principals to engage with others in their position.

When the participants did speak to the terms or components of emotional labor and their work, it was mainly through a description of surface or deep acting without name it as such. It appears the participants have no knowledge of the term emotional labor, surface acting or deep acting, although their experiences implicitly describe these terms. Principals are unable to have discussions about their experiences if they do not have terminology to express them. Training focused on the relational and emotional realm of the position, according to participants, are either not provided or not substantial enough to make a lasting impact on principals. While Principal Preparation Programs held by the District or in collaboration with local universities are getting better at providing opportunities for principals to collaborate according to the participants, there needs to be more of a focus on building relationships amongst peers and an emphasis on the recognition of and understanding of emotional labor amongst principals.

While the participants experienced emotional labor throughout their work, it was concentrated in particular areas (academic pressure, school grades, mental health, school safety, parent involvement, difficult parents, teacher recruitment and teacher retention),

which can be seen through the development of themes. To rectify this, school boards or policy makers could alleviate the emotional demands placed on school principal by incorporating vice principals or other leadership positions in addition to the assistant principals that are already in place. Elementary schools are persistently understaffed, most have only one assistant principal that has as much on their plate as the principal. As detailed by the participants, the workload is overwhelming. Additional administrators or personnel need to be assigned to alleviate this workload. In addition, training on managerial styles that promote team building and delegation could assist principals in addressing the multitude of problems. This implementation could relieve the workload and emotional labor principals currently face.

The participants articulated a more nuanced understanding of the effects of emotional labor and the conditions requiring it than the aspects of work it engenders. That is, they noted the emotional aspects of their job and the consequences of it such as burnout and stress, but articulated the specific labor required to confront those aspects to a lesser extent or in very general ways. As mentioned previously, until a common language around emotional labor is codified pertaining to principals, it is not possible to have conversations, provide coping strategies or mitigate the consequences of not coping with it. In addition, four out of five participants discussed the how the principalship is a 24/7 job. Winifred pointed out that she is responsible for the building even if she is physically away from it. The consequences of this may lead to not being able to keep people in the position. Perhaps personnel should be hired for the sole purpose of responding to emergencies that arise after hours and on the weekends such as fire alarms, burglar alarms. Participants discussed that they have a cell phone that they

need to respond to 24/7. District policies could be implemented that phones and email responses are limited to work hours, giving principals the opportunity to function only during the workday taking off the pressure of what participants refer to as constantly being "on." This additional stress was not created by the participants or other principals but instead is a reflection of the policies and procedures that are currently in place. Principals need to be trained or retrained on work/life balance to assist them in alleviating the stress that accompanies consistently being or feeling like they are being "on." Formal training programs such as those at universities and professional development provided by school districts need to make emotional labor a common topic of discussion to help principals identify it and manage their emotions. Professional development on how to recognize and deal with the consequences of emotional labor would benefit not only principals, but all administrators and teachers.

While the participants mostly were not able to articulate their experiences using terminology associated with scholarly articulations of emotional labor, they were able to articulate specific strategies or support mechanisms they used to confront the emotional aspects of their work. Principals could benefit from training on managing their emotions and effective coping strategies or lifestyle changes that could aid in reducing stress associated with the position.

Much of the participants' emotional labor was directed at areas of work they were not able to meaningfully influence within their role as principal. This is an implication of policy issues that remove influence from the principalship. Decisions regarding testing and accountability are being made by constituents who have no idea what it takes to implement policies that are currently mandated. Accountability policies and practices

need to be assessed further to determine if they are effective methods. Constituents need to work collaboratively with school districts, school leaders and educators to make decisions that are researched-based and proven to lead to academic achievement and student progress. Feedback from educators and leaders needs to be included in these decisions. Instead of visitations set up to oversee what schools are or are not doing as John described, visits should be set up to determine the needs of schools and follow through on how policies that are currently in place based on theory are lived out in reality every day. This will allow constituents to make better decisions that are practical benefiting the students being served.

John, Kelly and Kimberly discussed the lack of teachers going into the profession. Teacher's salaries are not keeping up with the cost of living. Therefore, the salary of educators needs to be reviewed and increased in order to attract teachers into the profession. In addition, teachers that are new to the profession need support. While some districts do provide mentor programs for teachers, initiating more of these programs would assist in retaining the teachers we currently have.

All of the participants discussed how the position is 24/7. However, they never discuss the reality that they do not get compensated for working after hours, attending events at night or on the weekend or working from home. The same as the salary of educators needs to be reviewed, so does the salary of principals and other leadership positions within schools. Other professions pay for time that exceeds the workday. Principals should get the respect of pay to match the work they do that goes beyond the workday as well.

Another possible solution is instead of schools being headed by one leader, the school principal, schools can be manned by co-principals who share the enormous responsibility and workload. One could be assigned to the academic responsibility of the school while the other is in charge of addressing social and emotional issues like safety and mental health. For example, Kelly described how conducting a threat assessment consumed the time in her day. John discussed parent issues that consumed his energy and time.

The participants spoke of difficult parents and problems that stemmed from home life. Parents should be held accountable for student attendance (truancy), punctuality, behavior issues and addressing mental wellness. Currently all of these fall upon the school system to attend to and resolve. Although students are mandated by law to attend school from the age 6-16, parents are not held accountable for not ensuring their child attends school on a regular basis or arrives on time for instruction. Principals have no authority to hold parents accountable for attendance. Students can not learn if they are not in attendance. In addition, parents are not training their children to respect authority or behave in a manner that is appropriate in classrooms. Parenting classes should be mandatory for students with persistent behavioral problems or for students that have special needs that require specific behavioral strategies. Currently, principals are held accountable for each of these areas as they all need to be addressed in order for students to learn and progress.

Participants were unable to separate themselves as individuals from the work they are responsible for in their position, which added to the emotional labor they experienced. Kelly and Kimberly often spoke showing an inability to separate the work from their own

identities. Training on compartmentalizing could benefit principals. Ramifications of not addressing these practical implications will lead to difficulty recruiting principals in the future and retaining current principals due to burnout and exhaustion.

Importantly, as an educator with 29 years of experience in a school system, I understand that these practical implications and recommendations for practice only serve as a makeshift solution to problems that exist and have existed within school systems, which reach far beyond the principalship. As referenced in the introduction, the deprofessionization of educators in our society is problematic. The push for better educational institutions has led to the marketing of charter and school vouchers supporting political agendas aiming to pull away from public education and move towards a more private system. Instead of ignoring problems with the public school system, these problems need to be addressed.

School systems are and have been a reaction to society's ills. As educators, we need to engage in more reflective practices, which are often uncomfortable to address, to ensure policies are put in place to address areas in education that are dysfunctional. The rise of technocratic solutions has been put in place without resources to support these decisions. School principals have been put at the heart of contentions regarding effective teaching standards, curriculum, appropriate assessments, the number of assessments that benefit/harm student progress, parent/students' rights, etc. These tensions often pull principals in different directions with the goal of satisfying opposing constituents. Deficit ideologies are often at the heart of solutions monitored through micromanagement. Without a thorough review and understanding of the current state and functioning of our educational institutions, the recommendations offered in this study will only serve as a

band-aid proposing a temporary fix to an ever-opening wound. Other researchers agree. “Although ongoing professional development and time management skills are essential in developing resilience and ability to cope with emotionally draining situations among principals, addressing fundamental problems that lead to emotionally depleting situations need concerted efforts from all stakeholders rather than simply relying on individual principals to manage situations that are often beyond their control” (Wang, et al., 2023, p. 135).

Limitations

Interestingly, all of the participants went to the same private university for leadership and supervision courses. Conducting this study with participants who went to other private or public universities may yield different responses based on their training and experiences with emotional labor.

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for future research starts with providing a broader or contending definition of emotional labor, specifically looking at the position of the school principal. While the definitions presented by Hochschild, Humphrey and his coauthors and Mastracci and her coauthors do apply to many of the experiences the participants detailed in this study, the lack of influence in the position calls for a more codified definition. In addition, this study looked at emotional labor through a narrow prism. Recommendations for looking at the emotional labor within the role of principals may include: different settings (middle and high schools), how emotional labor is affected by gender and race, how emotional labor is dealt with based on gender and race, the

curriculum in formal preparation programs, and differing prospectives on emotional labor (teachers versus principals). As stated in the Chapter I, studies on emotional labor tend to be siloed. I propose looking at emotional labor through a broader lens incorporating these siloed studies to develop a more comprehensive understanding of emotional labor. In addition, I propose future research focusing on how schools can best be supported to address all of the students and the communities needs so that each is not functioning in isolation under one leader, the school principal. In addition, as previously stated, more research is needed to unveil a broader understanding of principals' responsibilities based on location and demographics.

Conclusion

Current and past research on emotional labor focuses on wage laborers or service industries. This study focuses on elementary principals in Title I schools. While other scholarly has shown principals experience emotional labor, this study further illuminates examples of how they experience and understand it. Results show that there is no doubt that they experience it. However, it is not a topic in educational leadership. Without a definition of emotional labor pertaining to principals and a discussion of it, future principals will not be able to be trained on what it is, how to recognize it and how to deal with it. Unfortunately, current principals are already seeing the effects of not having coping methods to deal with emotional labor. All of the participants had some type of coping method, but they were self-prescribed without any research to back them up. Further research needs to be conducted to determine if a more appropriate definition of emotional labor applies to principals and appropriate methods for dealing with it. Universities who service students in educational leadership programs and District

Principal Preparation Programs would most likely benefit from this research to better prepare future principals. The better prepared our principals are to manage the emotional labor related to the enormous roles and responsibilities, the more successful they will be at educating our students. Lastly, delving into problems that exist within schools systems will ensure a more stable, productive system to educate students in the future by highly qualified individuals, such as those in this study.

As an educator within a large school district, I have learned that "the one size fits all" is not how educators are to address students' needs. This is based on the individualized differences among students. I purpose that the same goes for our schools. School systems have recognized the need for additional services in each district such as mental health services, crisis teams, and police officers. However, being that some schools in this District are larger and more diverse than some of the cities in the United States, these shared services are not enough. I purpose that constituents work collaboratively to allocate for the resources needed to staff each school with these resources in order for principals to be able to do their job in a more efficient and effective manner. It is not realistically reasonable for one person, the school principal, to manage all that they are responsible for. We need to rethink the way schools and principals are supported, not only to decrease the emotional demands and labor involved, but to service our students and communities effectively.

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APPENDICES

Appendix X: Interview One Protocol

The purpose of this interview study is to explore how elementary school principals in Title I schools feel their training has prepared them for the principalship in regard to managing the emotional labor required to assist the county's neediest children. These questions will serve as discussion prompts for the interview. In order to ensure your anonymity, a pseudonym, chosen by you, will be used when referring to any of your responses in this interview.

Research Question: How do principals experience and understand emotional labor in elementary school settings?

Thank you for taking the time to share your history and experiences with me. Please answer each of the questions honestly and elaborate as much as you would like to. I have planned to record this conversation so that I can ensure I collect all information accurately and keep it in the context you are expressing. If you are not comfortable with me recording, please let me know and I can conduct this interview without it. If at any time you feel you would not like me to record, let me know. It is important to me that you feel comfortable so that the information you share is uninhibited. Only I will have access to these recordings and the transcripts of them. Both will be in a secure location. Do you have any questions before we begin?

For this interview, be inclusive of any pertinent information from your past experiences in the field of education and current position as a principal.

1. I want to hear about how you became a principal, but let's first start with how you became a teacher.
2. Tell me about how you learned to be a principal.
    a. …tell me about your graduate program training
    b. …tell me about any in-service principal training
3. Describe how you developed different leadership capacities as a principal?
    a. …working with teachers
    b. …working with district office
    c. …working with the community
    d. …working with your assistant principal
    e. …working with students and parents
4. Walk me through your average day as a principal
5. Describe the demands and pressures of being a principal

Appendix XX: Interview Two Protocol

The purpose of this interview study is to explore how elementary school principals in Title I schools feel their training has prepared them for the principalship in regard to managing the emotional labor required to assist the county's neediest children. These questions will serve as discussion prompts for the interview. In order to ensure your anonymity, a pseudonym chosen by you will be used when referring to any of your responses in this interview.

Research Question: How do principals experience and understand emotional labor in elementary school settings?

Once again, thank you for taking the time to share your history and experiences with me. Please answer each of the questions honestly and elaborate as much as you would like to. I have planned to record this conversation so that I can ensure I collect all information accurately in the context you are expressing. If you are not comfortable with me recording, please let me know and I can conduct this interview without it. If at any time you feel you would not like me to record, let me know. It is important to me that you feel comfortable so that the information you share is uninhibited. Only I will have access to these recordings and the transcripts of them which will be in a secure location. Do you have any questions before we begin?

For this interview, be inclusive of any pertinent information from your past experiences in the field of education and current position as a principal.

1. Last interview we ended with you describing the demands and stressors of being a principal, specifically let talk about how you manage and cope with these things.
    a. …do you have any daily practices and routines
    b. …do you have any core beliefs that assist you
2. Describe your support network and how they assist you managing your role as a principal.
3. Tell me how being in a Title I school influences the demands and pressures you face as a principal
4. Tell me about a stressful day that you consider memorable.
5. Tell me about what stressors keep you up at night.
6. Describe what constitutes a "good" day at work to you.
7. What makes you happiest at work?

Appendix XXX: Interview Three Protocol

The purpose of this interview study is to explore how elementary school principals in Title I schools feel their training has prepared them for the principalship in regard to managing the emotional labor required to assist the county's neediest children. These questions will serve as discussion prompts for the interview. In order to ensure your anonymity, a pseudonym chosen by you will be used when referring to any of your responses in this interview.

Research Question: How do principals experience and understand emotional labor in elementary school settings?

Once again, thank you for taking the time to share your history and experiences with me. Please answer each of the questions honestly and elaborate as much as you would like to. I have planned to record this conversation so that I can ensure I collect all information accurately in the context you are expressing. If you are not comfortable with me recording, please let me know and I can conduct this interview without it. If at any time you feel you would not like me to record, let me know. It is important to me that you feel comfortable so that the information you share is uninhibited. Only I will have access to these recordings and the transcripts of them which will be in a secure location. Do you have any questions before we begin?

For this interview, be inclusive of any pertinent information from your past experiences in the field of education and current position as a principal.

1. Considering all the aspects of the principalship that we have already discussed, tell me about the most challenging recurring difficulties of the role? (consider systems, personnel, political environment, etc.)
2. How is being a principal different than what you expected when you were a teacher?
3. What do you wish you had known prior to becoming a principal?
4. Are there any demands or pressures that make you regret being a principal?
5. Describe your greatest accomplishment as a principal.
    a. What are you most proud of?
6. What haven't we talked about that is important to your experience as a principal?
7. How has this interview process led you to any new realizations and/or reflections on being a principal?

ADULT ONLINE CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH

Emotional Labor in School Principals-A Qualitative Study

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Things you should know about this study:

- Purpose: The purpose of the study is to explore how elementary school principals experience and understand emotional labor.
- Procedures: If you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in two, one-hour semi-structured interviews on-line through Zoom.
- Duration: This will take about a total of three hours: three one-hour interviews.
- Risks: The main risk or discomfort from this research is minimal (no more than a person would encounter in their daily life activities) or no risk to the participant.
- Benefits: There is no main benefit to you from this research.
- Alternatives: There are no known alternatives available to you other than not taking part in this study.
- Participation: Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please carefully read the entire document before agreeing to participate.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to explore how elementary school principals experience and understand emotional labor.

NUMBER OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of 6 people in this research study.

DURATION OF THE STUDY

Your participation will involve a total of up to three hours: three one-hour sessions over a month's time.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in the study, we will ask you to do the following things:

- Sign an on-line consent form agreeing to participate in this study.
- Select a pseudonym which will be used to refer to you in the research.
- Participate in three, one-hour interviews over a month's time. Interviews will be conducted at agreed upon days and times through Zoom.

RISKS AND/OR DISCOMFORTS

The study has the following possible risks to you:

- Confidentiality is a minimal risk.
- To ensure your confidentiality, you will select a pseudonym, which will be used to refer to you in the research.

BENEFITS

The study has the following possible benefits to you:

- There are no benefits to you personally.
- Research conducted will benefit the field of educational leadership and possible assist in better preparation for future principals.

ALTERNATIVES

There are no known alternatives available to you other than not taking part in this study. Any significant new findings developed during the course of the research which may relate to your willingness to continue participation will be provided to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The records of this study will be kept private and will be protected to the fullest extent provided by law. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. However, your records may be inspected by authorized University or other agents who will also keep the information confidential. Additionally, you will select a pseudonym, which will be used to refer to you in the research.

USE OF YOUR INFORMATION

Your information collected as part of the research will not be used or distributed for future research studies, even if identifiers are removed.

COMPENSATION & COSTS

You will receive a payment of a $5 Starbucks gift card at the end of each interview for your participation. There are no costs to you for participating in this study.

RIGHT TO DECLINE OR WITHDRAW

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to participate in the study or withdraw your consent at any time during the study. You will not lose any benefits if you decide not to participate or if you quit the study early. The investigator reserves the right to remove you without your consent at such time that he/she feels it is in the best interest.

RESEARCHER CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions about the purpose, procedures, or any other issues relating to this research study you may contact Marsha Rogers at [redacted] or [redacted].

IRB CONTACT INFORMATION

If you would like to talk with someone about your rights of being a subject in this research study or about ethical issues with this research study, you may contact the FIU Office of Research Integrity by phone at 305-348-2494 or by email at ori@fiu.edu.

PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT

You will receive a consent form through electronic email. By agreeing on this consent form, you are acknowledging that that you have read the information on the consent form and agree to participate in this study. You agree that you have had a chance to ask any questions you have about this study, and they have been answered for you. By providing your signature below, you are providing informed consent. Send this consent to me at [redacted].

I, _____, am consenting to participate in this research study.

Date of consent: _____

VITA

MARSHA ROGERS

	Born, Miami, Florida
1990-1993	A.A. Degree Miami-Dade Community College Miami, Florida
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PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Lopez, S., Maestas, A., Mayorga, J., & Rogers, M. (June 13-16, 2016) Principals and Teachers Collaborating for Change. Discover ’16 Conference: Florida Association of School Administrators, Orlando, Florida, US.