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CAREER BURNOUT AND MINDSET LEVELS OF NEW YORK STATE
PRINCIPALS**

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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CAREER
BURNOUT AND MINDSET LEVELS OF NEW YORK STATE PRINCIPALS

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
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ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

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by

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ABSTRACT

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CAREER BURNOUT AND MINDSET LEVELS OF NEW YORK STATE PRINCIPALS

Christopher Korolczuk

Leading a school is a demanding job. Over 20% of school principals in the United States leave their position annually, especially in disadvantaged areas where consistent leadership is most needed (Battle, 2010; Snyder, de Brey, & Dillow, 2016). The myriad of responsibilities and external forces imposed on school principals oftentimes lead to career burnout, which adversely impacts the staff, students, and communities they serve. Dweck (2006) states that individuals who hold a growth mindset regarding their skills and intelligences view challenges, such as ones that may lead to career burnout, as opportunities for growth and development. However, research examining the relationship between career burnout and mindset levels of school principals is limited.

The present study examined current literature on the causes, symptoms, and prevention methods relevant to career burnout of school principals, as well as the history, benefits, and barriers of possessing a growth mindset. Additionally, quantitative methods were used to explore the relationship between mindset and burnout using Pearson's Correlation, t-tests, ANOVA and a hierarchical regression. Survey data from 170 New York State principals was collected using a demographic questionnaire, the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey (MBI-ES) (Maslach, Jackson, & Schwab, 1986), and the Dweck Mindset Instrument (DMI) (Dweck, 2006).

Findings show that New York State principals consistently reported high levels of growth mindset and low levels of career burnout. An analysis of the data found no statistically significant relationship between burnout and mindset for New York State principals, nor was mindset predictive of burnout when controlling for demographic and background characteristics. However, the difference in burnout levels based on school location was statistically significant, with upstate principals reporting more burnout than principals from Long Island, New York. Readers should interpret this analysis with caution since participants were a homogeneous group.

This exploratory study lays the foundation for future research on the relationships between the mindset, demographic, and background variables of New York State principals and their self-reported levels of career burnout.

Keywords: career burnout, fixed mindset, grit, growth mindset, leadership, principal, self-efficacy

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“Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.”

~William Arthur Ward

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"It doesn't matter how slowly you go, so long as you do not stop."

~Confucius

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Public education is the foundation of our democratic society. Within this context, it is school building principals who are the glue that binds together students, staff, communities, Boards of Education, and educational legislation. As leaders, school building principals must adapt to the changing world around them in order to stay relevant, remain effective, and last in their career field. The National Policy Board for Educational Administrators (2015) recognizes the high turnover rate nationwide for educational leaders as a result of the increasing complexities, responsibilities, and pressure associated with the job. The myriad of responsibilities and external forces imposed on a building principal oftentimes lead to career burnout. Burnout of educational leaders impacts not only the leaders themselves, but also the staff, students, and community they serve.

Psychologist Herbert Freudenberger first popularized career burnout in 1974 and the World Health Organization (2018) now recognizes it as a medical disorder under ICD-10 code (z73.0 – Burn-out state of vital exhaustion). Over 20% of public-school principals in the United States leave their position annually, especially in disadvantaged areas where consistent leadership is needed the most (Battle, 2010; Snyder et al., 2016). Data from the U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (IES-NCES, 2017) states that among principals who stopped working as a principal, eight percent left the field of education altogether. In addition, Battle (2010) found that the rate of leaving the principalship is twice as high for principals in schools with a high concentration of minority students and for principals

who possess the highest level of education (doctorate or professional degree). This demonstrates that both principals who need the most support and principals most qualified to lead schools successfully are leaving the position at high rates. Current research highlights the qualitative and quantitative need to reduce career burnout among public school principals.

Two mindsets that shape a leader's perceptions and ability to manage change, failure, success, effort, and obstacles are the entity and incremental intelligence theories. As per Resnick (1995), entity theorists believe that an individual's abilities are fixed and unchangeable. Conversely, Dweck and Legget (1988) contend that people who embrace an incremental view believe that intelligence, aptitude, and skills are malleable and can grow over time and under the proper conditions. Dweck (2006) has since named this a "Growth Mindset."

Purpose of the Study

The present study examines the relationship between the self-reported level of career burnout and the mindset and other demographic variables of 170 public school principals in New York State. The majority of current mindset literature focuses on student achievement; literature focusing on adult mindsets, especially in relation to career longevity of school building leaders, is lacking. Moreover, the majority of research related to career burnout in the field of education focuses on external and situational correlates rather than internal dispositions, such as mindset. This leaves a gap in the research literature.

Significance of the Study

If school districts are to obtain, maintain, and retain competent principals, they must first understand the factors that relate to career burnout. It is the hope of this study that the examination of career burnout in principals through the lens of mindset will lead to an increased retention rate. The majority of current research and public discourse related to career burnout focuses on external causes, and not internal correlates, such as mindset. In addition, the majority of mindset research focuses on students, and does not address adult leaders, thus leaving a gap in the literature. The cost to school communities for frequently replacing principals is significant and has financial, educational, and social justice implications. The School Leadership Network (2014) conservatively estimates that the financial cost for a school district to replace one principal is \$75,000, but this number can be much higher in poorer districts where turnover is higher. Understanding the relationship that a principal's mindset has with their level of career burnout can support career longevity and result in improved student outcomes. These improved outcomes can benefit all of society, especially impoverished areas where highly effective, long term, and consistent principals are needed the most. The potential for supporting low socio-economic communities in this manner aligns with the Vincentian Mission of serving the poor.

Principal Leadership

Roles and Responsibilities of the Public-School Principal

School building principals play a critical role in the success of schools, and therefore student achievement. Research indicates that school leadership is the second most influential school-level factor associated with student achievement (Clifford,

Behrstock-Sherratt, & Feters, 2012). Yukl (2006) defines leadership as “the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives” (p. 8). The Wallace Foundation (2013) states that the six primary roles of school building leaders include increasing student achievement, shaping a vision for academic success, creating a supportive learning environment, cultivating leadership in others, improving instruction, and managing people, data, and processes. Similarly, the National Policy Board for Educational Administrators (2015) outlines a research and practice-based approach towards understanding the relationship between student achievement and school leadership. The most critical components of this relationship that work interdependently include:

1. Mission, Vision and Core Values
2. Ethics and Professional Norms
3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness
4. Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
5. Community of Care and Support for Students
6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel
7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff
8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community
9. Operations and Management
10. School Improvement

Related to the ten critical components for effective leadership listed above, Bass (1985) identifies additional factors related to effective leadership, including charisma,

intellectual inspiration, individualized consideration, and treating employees as individuals. Although these two lists are lengthy, they do not comprehensively include all components and factors of effective school leadership, as there are multiple facets to the job that vary from school to school. However, these lists do highlight the enormity and complexity of being a school principal.

Need for Effective Principals

The literature documents that principals play a critical role in the success of America's schools. As leaders of our schools, principals profoundly influence student outcomes. A review of the literature by Xu (2018) concludes that there is a strong link between school principals and student achievement. Clifford et al. (2012) found that school leadership is the second most influential determinant of student achievement, following teacher quality. Recent research indicates that principals who are effective in their leadership role positively influence student achievement and school culture (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). More specifically, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) found that school principals contribute to approximately 25% of a school's total influence on a student's academic performance.

Research supports the need to retain effective principals and therefore decrease principal turnover due to career burnout (Bartanen, Grissom, & Rogers, 2019). Through a longitudinal study in Tennessee, Bartanen et al. (2019) found that ineffective principals leave the field of principalship for lower titled administrative positions, whereas highly effective principals leave the principalship at high rates due to promotion to central administration positions that are outside of the school building. A review of current

literature by Lemoine, McCormack, and Richardson (2014) found that the following are consistent behaviors that effective principals share:

1. Setting a direction and vision to reach academic goals for students.
2. Having high expectations for teacher and student performance.
3. Leading and evaluating curriculum, instruction, and professional development of staff for the school.
4. Creating an atmosphere of shared leadership with staff while collaboratively working towards a school's goals.
5. Creating a safe, orderly, and positive school environment that supports students learning.
6. Effectively managing time. This includes being visible around the school's campus and the community in order to foster strong relationships with all stakeholders, which can be very time consuming.

There is a correlation between the longevity of a principal and student achievement. The Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor (n.d.) indicates that New York has 20,670 school administrators. In addition, the IES-NCES (2017) indicates that the number of principals who have over ten years of experience has decreased since 1999. Simultaneously, the national average turnover rate for principals is 23%, and is even higher in disadvantaged areas (Snyder et al., 2016). Branch, Hanushek, and Rivkin (2013) found that principals in Texas with six or more years working at the same school have higher student achievement rates. These findings support the idea that more experienced principals bring greater value to the schools they serve, but schools lose this value if principals burn out early and leave the principalship. Whereas consistent

school leadership has proven to have a positive cumulative effect on student achievement over time (Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010), the reverse is true when principal turnover rates are high. These data support the need for obtaining, maintaining, and retaining experienced and successful principals.

In a study of principal and school-level effects on elementary student achievement, Brockmeier, Starr, Green, Pate, and Leech (2013) found that, behind teacher quality, leadership is the second most important factor related to student achievement. More specifically, they found that the length of time a principal was in their current position and principal stability positively correlate with student achievement. Each time a new principal takes over a school there is a period of adjustment. Miller (2013) found that, for the two years after a new principal joins a school, their student achievement scores drop, and it takes approximately three more years to get back to the school's original achievement levels from before the change in principalship occurred. This highlights the detrimental impact of frequent principalship turnover on student achievement. One of the many benefits of stable leadership and longevity within a school is that the principal intimately connects to, and interweaves with, the culture of that school. After a 30-year meta-analysis of research, Waters et al. (2003) concluded that the leadership practice most highly correlated with student learning, with an effect size of .33, was "being aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school, and uses this information to address current and potential problems" (p. 5).

Principals today are responsible for an almost insurmountable list of demands. To improve chronically underperforming schools, Woulfin and Weiner (2019) found that districts look to hire "turnaround" principals. Districts charge these school leaders with

changing the practice of educators and improving student outcomes in an almost superhero-like fashion. This study utilized institutional theory to explore the thoughts and experiences of seven aspiring principals in a turnaround leadership program over the course of a year. They concluded that, in addition to managerial, instructional, and social justice demands on principals, the construction of a thriving school culture through positive relationships is critical to the success of turning around a poorly performing school.

The need for effective principals extends beyond turning around low performing schools. In order to maintain the mission and achieve the vision of a school, the principal must use transformative leadership practices. Leithwood (1992) states that there are seven dimensions of transformational leadership, which include “building a school vision and establishing goals; providing intellectual stimulation; offering individualized support; modeling best practices and important organizational values; demonstrating high performance expectations; creating a productive school culture; and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000, p. 114). In addition, the National Policy Board for Educational Administrators (2015) identifies the creation of a professional community for teachers and staff as an imperative prerequisite to running an effective school. Elzahiri (2010) conducted a phenomenological qualitative study that examined the impact of leadership styles on teacher motivation. Through the exploration of lived experiences in relation to effective school leadership, this study concluded that effective leadership styles lead to increased teacher motivation, and therefore improved student performance. This in turn allows principals to meet the objectives and missions that their Boards of Education have charged them with meeting.

These results demonstrate the powerful impact that principals have on both staff success and student achievement. Similarly, a review of current literature on transformational leadership by Arnold, Turner, Barling, Kelloway, and McKee (2007) demonstrates the importance of the relationship between transformational leaders and positive school outcomes, including a decrease in career burnout. Hattie's (2009) study further supports this by identifying transformational and instructional leadership as major responsibilities of school principals, with instructional leadership having a major effect on student academic achievement. Yet, current literature examining the relationships between leadership style, mindset, and career burnout of school principals is minimal.

Barriers to Successful Principal Leadership

Almost 100 years ago, Pierce (1935) articulated that the role of a school's principal was to manage the day-to-day operations of a school, including busing, meals, transportation, fundraising, discipline, school finance, community relations, and human resource management. Yet, today the role of principal has morphed into much more. In addition to the traditional role as a school's manager, principals must now be the instructional leader of their school (Hoyle & Wallace, 2005). Outside factors such as business groups, politicians, and public opinion heavily influence the role of an instructional leader. These pseudo-educational influences may create barriers for the principal when striving to educate students properly. Through a review of current literature, Lemoine et al. (2014) identified five barriers principals face as the instructional leaders of schools, which include societal factors, the dichotomous role of principals, expectations of the principalship, knowledge of curriculum and instruction, and human relations.

Three societal institutions that have historically influenced America's youth include school, church, and home. Yet, as Americans move further away from church and home to influence children, the burden on public schools to absorb this responsibility increases. Research by the Wallace Foundation (2013) shows that schools have added programs to address issues previously handled by home or church, including sex education, suicide prevention, teenage pregnancy, and values. The addition of these added responsibilities detracts from student learning while adding to the work-related stress of a principal.

During the inception of America's public education system, building principals originated as the principal teacher of a school. This role then grew into managing the day-to-day operations of the school, and now includes being the instructional leader of the school. Today, principals engage in over 40 different types of daily tasks, including 30% of the day supervising students, 20% managing school finances and personnel, and only less than 10% of a day observing instruction in the classrooms (Horng et al., 2010). This allocation of time does not support the edict that principals must be the instructional leader of a school when only 10% of time is spent observing instruction. Until principals are able to devote more time to instruction, professional development of staff, and student learning, this time barrier will hinder their success as educational leaders.

Principals as instructional leaders must not only have a vision, but also be capable of putting this vision into practice. A student-focused vision includes identifying ways to meet the unique learning needs of all students, supporting teachers to understand the changing educational and community landscape, and increasing student academic achievement (Lemoine et al., 2014). However, principals are often bound by teacher

contracts, which limit the tools they are able to use in order to achieve and maintain this vision. A second unrealistic expectation of principals as instructional leaders is the allocation of resources. Principals need adequate time and financial resources to support their vision. Placing financial and human resource boundaries on principals limits their ability to realize their vision fully. As instructional leaders of schools, principals must possess an in-depth understanding of the principles of effective instruction and student learning. In addition, they need to have the ability to turn this knowledge into practice within the classroom. If principals do not have adequate time and resources to develop as professionals in these domains, then being an effective instructional leader is not possible.

Principals contribute to approximately 25% of a school's total influence on a student's academic performance (Marzano et al., 2005), and it is estimated that the financial cost to replace a single principal is \$75,000 (School Leadership Network, 2014). This demonstrates how turnover of the principalship has significant consequences for the entire school community. For this reason, it is imperative that effective principals do not burn out and leave their current schools. The current study will help to fill the gap in current scholarly literature concerning the relationship between career burnout and mindset of principals in New York State with the hope of reducing principal burnout.

Research Questions

Through the collection and analysis of quantitative data, the current study answers the questions below to address the gap that currently exists in professional literature:

1. Is there a significant relationship between feelings of career burnout and mindset for principals in New York State?

2. Are there differences in feelings of career burnout based on demographic and background characteristics for principals in New York State?
3. How much does mindset explain career burnout when controlling for demographic and background characteristics for principals in New York State?

Definition of Terms

- Career Burnout: The level of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment individuals report in relation to their career (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).
- Depersonalization: An unfeeling and impersonal response towards the recipients of one's care, treatment, or instruction (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).
- Emotional Exhaustion: The feeling of being overextended and chronically fatigued by one's work (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).
- Growth Mindset: A "mindset based on the belief that your basic qualities and characteristics you can cultivate through your efforts" (Dweck, 2006, p. 7).
- Implicit Theory of Intelligence: Two theories of intelligence exist. An incremental theorist believes that intelligence is malleable and can be developed. An entity theorist believes that intelligence is fixed and unchangeable (Dweck & Leggett, 1988, p. 262).
- Mindset: The self-perception that people hold about their abilities, talents, and skills (Dweck, 2006).
- Personal Accomplishment: Feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work with people (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

This chapter begins with an exploration of the theoretical framework of mindset theory. It then follows with a review of current literature on the causes, symptoms, and implications of career burnout in school principals. Finally, the chapter ends with a review of psychological underpinnings, benefits, and barriers related to growth mindset theory.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The present study explores school building principals' level of career burnout through the theoretical framework of mindset theory. In Plato's (1943) allegory "The cave," he describes a situation in which humans chained to the walls of a dark cave have a significantly limited ability to understand the reality that exists outside of their peculiar living space. One person escapes and is exposed to the vast realities that exist outside of the cave, illustrating how reality is created by an individual's experiences, beliefs, and assumptions. It is this construction of reality that makes humans unique. The combination of environmental factors in conjunction with genetic predispositions shape the lens or mindset we use to interpret and make meaning of the world around us.

As per Dweck (2006), a growth mindset is the belief that intelligence, abilities, and talents can be developed and improved under the proper conditions. The opposite is a fixed mindset, in which individuals believe that intelligence, abilities, and talents are fixed traits that cannot be significantly developed (Dweck, 2006). The mindset an individual possesses can greatly support or inhibit their ability to overcome obstacles and challenges in their professional and personal life. Individuals possess varying degrees of

both mindsets; however, more positive outcomes are associated with those who are not limited by the boundaries and rigidity of having a fixed mindset. By viewing challenges and obstacles as possible to overcome, and within one's control to a certain extent, school building leaders may more successfully lead their school. In addition, by viewing obstacles, challenges, and setbacks as normal prerequisites for growth, principals who possess a growth mindset may have lower rates of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and higher levels of personal accomplishment at work. As per the research of Maslach et al. (1986), these three entities are sub-scales of career burnout. Therefore, this study examines principals' feelings of career burnout through the lens of mindset theory.

Mindset, effective school leadership, and career longevity are important concepts intertwined with social justice. Social justice is the systematic fight to ensure that all humans have equal opportunities to develop their lives to their full capacity. Dweck's (2006) mindset theory reflects many tenets of social justice. The growth mindset theory assumes that a person has the ability to view their personal attributes as mutable and capable of change. As individuals fight for social justice, they must feel that they possess the capacity to be successful in order to continue their fight and strive towards obtaining their social objectives. To the contrary, Srinivasan, Dunham, Hicks, and Barner (2016) researched the detriments to society of possessing a fixed mindset while living within a caste system in India. The findings of their study indicate that Indians who identify closely with their caste possess more deterministic views of life, especially in relation to personal freedom and the malleability of social and intellectual traits, which resembles having a fixed mindset. To ensure equitable educational opportunities society would be

well served by ensuring that low-achieving and low-income schools have effective principals who are at lower risk of burnout and turnover.

Equitable educational opportunities are supported by Bartanen et al.'s (2019) research that explored the link between principal effectiveness and turnover. Using three sources of longitudinal data, their findings suggest that school districts should consider placing effective principals in low-income and low-achieving schools in order to lower the rate of principal turnover in these schools. Having effective principals who are not burned out and remain in these schools for longer periods of time will allow student achievement to improve. The current study serves to understand the relationship between mindset and levels of career burnout for principals in order to support student achievement, especially for those principals working with disproportionately underserved populations.

The retention of successful principals is especially critical in the most demanding educational environments. Supporting this claim, approximately 21% of principals leave their position in high poverty areas, which are characterized by 75% or more of the student population receiving free or reduced-price lunch (Goldring & Taie, 2018), as shown in Figure 1. It is the hope of the present study that understanding the relationship between mindset and career burnout in principals will encourage school districts to implement practices to retain principals by reducing their level of career burnout.



Figure 1. Principal turnover in 2016-2017 by poverty level. Source: Goldring and Taie (2018).

The conceptual framework of a dissertation refers to the logical sequencing and structuring of important concepts. These interconnected concepts create a comprehensive picture that identifies the main issues under the umbrella of the guiding theory, gaps in the current literature, and a rationale for the study. Figure 2 is a map representing the current study's conceptual framework.



Figure 2. Conceptual framework.

The conceptual framework in Figure 2 depicts the interrelationship between principals' mindsets, varying demographic variables, and levels of career burnout. The understanding of this relationship is pertinent because principals have a profound impact on student achievement.

Career Burnout

Causes of Career Burnout

The objective of school building principals is to support the success and achievement of all students. Since principals work with a team of professionals to support students, they are part of the human services field. Within this context, humans bring with them complex issues that are unique to each individual based on genetic and environmental experiences and influences. School districts often task principals with solving “wicked problems,” which refers to ones that are difficult to define and inherently unsolvable (Rittel & Webber, 1973). Continuously solving problems for others can be stressful and can lead to a lack of career engagement and burnout. Maslach and Jackson (1981) define career burnout as the level of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment individuals report in relation to their career. In addition, many complex issues that principals face originate outside of the principal’s domain. Approximately 90% of changes within academia occur *to* principals instead of *by* or *with* them (Patterson & Patterson, 2001). This shifts the control for solving complex problems out of the hands of principals, which can adversely impact their levels of personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion.

Kahn (1990), one of the first researchers to define the construct of engagement in the workplace, considers an individual engaged at work to the level that the “self” is fully deployed into a specific work-related task or role. This engagement can occur on a physical, emotional, or cognitive level. An employee’s level of engagement has a positive association with his/her commitment to the organization (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), which for a principal would be the school that they lead.

Engagement also relates to an employee's job satisfaction (Wefald, Reichard, & Serrano, 2011), physical health (Christian & Slaughter, 2007), and job performance (Schaufeli, Taris, & Bakker, 2006). Maslach and Leiter (1997) conclude that engagement and burnout are on opposite ends of a job-satisfaction continuum.

Freudenberger (1974) first examined the concept of career burnout. According to Maslach and Jackson (1981), career burnout is defined as "a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do 'people work' of some kind" (p. 99). Maslach and Jackson identify three sub-scales in relation to career burnout, which include depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and personal accomplishment. They describe depersonalization as an unfeeling and impersonal response towards the recipients of one's care, treatment, or instruction (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). From the perspective of a school principal, the recipients of one's care could include staff, students, community members, and administrative colleagues. Maslach and Jackson (1981) describe emotional exhaustion as the feeling of being overextended and chronically fatigued by one's work. This feeling includes a lack of energy, feeling depleted, and feeling too drained to face another day at work. Through a study of 128 school administrators, Friesen and Sarros (1989) found that workload was the largest predictor of emotional exhaustion for school administrators, accounting for 39% of the variance in this sub-scale of burnout and job satisfaction factors. Finally, Maslach and Jackson (1981) describe personal accomplishment as feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work with people; low feelings of personal accomplishment include having a negative self-evaluation of one's work with clients. Similarly, qualitative and quantitative research conducted by Judge, Thoresen,

Bono, and Patton (2001) concluded that principals are more apt to remain in a principalship when they feel satisfied with their personal accomplishments at work and are effective leaders. These three sub-scales of burnout are independent measures of burnout and do not cause or lead to one another (Friesen & Sarros, 1989).

Principals, who choose to work in the human services field, frequently assist others in solving difficult psychological, social, and physical problems. Oftentimes past trauma to the individual may have caused these issues. This exposure to others' trauma over extended periods of time is secondary trauma, which can have a significant adverse impact on the emotional state of these professionals (Sprang, Craig, & Clark, 2011). Although training in "self-care" is a mandatory part of training for mental health professionals in order to assist them in dealing with secondary trauma, this is rarely a part of training for principals (Crawford, Arnold, & Brown, 2014).

Symptoms of Burnout

Although symptoms of career burnout may vary in degree and specificity between individuals, the primary symptoms resemble a similar pattern. A lack of engagement and involvement in tasks and low levels of energy characterize career burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). According to national longitudinal principal retention data, those who leave the principal position report that their low level of job satisfaction was most highly correlated to a lack of enthusiasm (14.4%), a chronic fatigue (14.1%), and a feeling that the stress and disappointments involved in being a principal at their school are not worth it (13.3%) (Goldring & Taie, 2018).

Implication of Principal Burnout

Public schools in the United States of America face many challenges, including high levels of principal turnover. Turnover of principals can be a result of transferring to another school, gaining a promotion to a position other than principal, a demotion, or leaving the profession all together (Norton, 2003; Snodgrass Rangel, 2018; Stephenson & Bauer, 2010). Leading school improvement is time intensive, and research indicates that it generally requires five to seven years to see meaningful results (Fullan, 2001). One of the causes of principal turnover is career burnout. Therefore, if principals charged with increasing student achievement are burned out and turning over at a rapid pace, students will pay the ultimate price. Research by Miller (2013) found that student achievement decreases in the two years following the installation of a new school principal in North Carolina elementary schools. This highlights the impact that principal turnover has on student achievement.

Career burnout among principals not only has consequences for students, but also the communities the principals serve. Through survey research and correlational measures of school building administrators, Friesen and Sarros (1989) found that overall work stress positively correlated with career burnout. West (2018) investigated the level of self-reported career burnout among 119 principals in Alabama, examining the dimensions of depersonalization, exhaustion, and lack of personal accomplishment. The evidence reported in West's study shows that career burnout amongst principals is evident at all levels and can lead to adverse effects. This highlights the relationship between principal burnout levels and work-life job fit survey responses for elementary, middle, and high school principals. Career longevity would not only benefit the schools

and the students whom they serve, but also the personal health of the principal her/himself.

A review of current literature on the topic of principal turnover by Snodgrass Rangel (2018) identified several common consequences of principal turnover related to student outcomes. She found that research supports the adverse impact principal turnover has on graduation rates, teacher turnover rates, student achievement, and a school's culture. This is more pronounced within schools that have a high number of limited English proficient and minority students (Papa, 2007), as well as schools located in low socio-economic status communities (Partlow & Ridenour, 2008). When examining the impact of principal turnover on student achievement in public schools in New York City, Rowan and Denk (1984) found that new principals were associated with lower graduation rates in schools that recently faced a principal transition. A study of the relationship between North Carolina student achievement scores and principal turnover by Miller (2013), between the years 1994 and 2006, found that a four-year decline in student achievement oftentimes occurs before a new principal assumes responsibilities. Miller hypothesized that this may be a result of principals who plan to leave the school and put less effort towards supporting student achievement in their last few years. A self-identified limitation of this study was that it focused on elementary schools and did not contain many covariates, unlike the present study, which includes race, sex, mindset, level of school, and years of administrative experience. A longitudinal study of student achievement in Tennessee by Bartanen et al. (2019) found that principal turnover is associated with an average decrease in student achievement of .03 standard deviations the

year after a principal departs, further supporting the need to retain effective and consistent principals.

Burnout Prevention and Reduction

The loss of effective principals due to career burnout can be detrimental to students. Bartanen et al. (2019) found that a correlation exists between the effectiveness of principals, as measured by three separate sources of data, and their level of turnover. The less effective a principal is the higher their rate of turnover becomes. In order to improve this situation and increase principal retention while also reducing burnout, Norton (2003) makes five suggestions. First, school districts may want to adopt an official policy on personnel retention. Second, an action plan must accompany this policy. Third, school districts must monitor principal turnover. Fourth, in addition to having a district-wide retention plan, there must be individualized plans for professional development. Fifth, school districts must implement a specific plan for retention. Norton's study suggested that a portion of this practice include a two-way conversation with the principal to hear their thoughts and feelings on career aspirations, professional growth interests, and current job inhibitors. Lastly, school districts must evaluate this principal retention plan based on the goals and objectives of the plan and then revise it as the plan review indicates.

Career burnout of school principals often leads to leadership turnover at a school, which has detrimental effects on student achievement. The mixed methods research of Mascall and Leithwood (2010) suggested that school districts could reduce the turnover of principals by taking a thoughtful and coordinated approach towards leadership distribution. During this thoughtful approach to leadership distribution, one must also

consider the role that the isolation of a principal plays on career burnout. Stephenson and Bauer (2010) found that the isolation of new principals serves as a statistically significant predictor of physical and emotional burnout. Through a regression analysis of 186 first and second-year principals in Louisiana, they concluded that reducing role-overload and improving a principal's social support system leads to lower levels of career burnout.

The supervisors of principals play a critical role in creating a work environment that supports high levels of engagement, feelings of personal accomplishment, and low levels of depersonalization and emotional exhaustion. In many school districts, these leaders may include school board members, superintendents, and assistant superintendents. Serrano and Reichard (2011) provide a comprehensive list of ways that leaders can increase employee engagement and therefore decrease career burnout, as shown in Figure 3.

Designing Meaningful and Motivating Work

- Develop a compelling vision: tie employee actions to organizational and business unit vision
- Redesigning work to increase job resources
 - Top down: management can redesign work based on a job analysis
 - Create job I-deals: negotiate tasks and relational boundaries with employees
 - Job crafting: allow employees to exercise daily control over job tasks and relational boundaries
 - Team empowerment: empower teams to restructure work in alignment with individual strengths

Supporting and Coaching Employees

- Individualized coaching: provide individual coaching for employee development and to increase human capital
- Be supportive
 - Conduct regular performance reviews
 - Give appropriate feedback
 - Allow employees to participate in relevant decision making
 - Give clear access to rewards
 - Recognize employee accomplishment

Enhancing Employee's Personal Resources

- Job resources: provide access to job resources
 - Hold weekly resources meetings
 - Write explicit job descriptions
 - Incorporate resource management into performance review
- Personal resources: work to increase personal resources (e.g., PsyCap)
 - Self-efficacy: assign incrementally challenging tasks
 - Hope: encourage multiple pathways to goal attainment
 - Optimism: attribute successes to internal factors and failures to external circumstances
 - Resilience: coach employees to overcome setbacks

Facilitating Rewarding and Supportive Coworker Relations

- Build a culture of trust
 - Encourage frequent and open communication
 - Allow employees to own their mistake with fear of reprisal
- Create the "contagion" effect
 - Encourage frequent communication among employees
- Bonding social capital
 - Display relational behaviors

Note. job I-deals = job idiosyncratic deals; PsyCap = psychological capital.

Figure 3. Summary of evidence-based leadership strategies to produce an engaged workforce. Source: Serrano and Reichard (2011, p. 181).

In addition to increasing the engagement of employees, it is necessary for principals to maintain their resolve to support the students whom they serve. This commitment must not only be in the form of providing meaningful professional development for their staff but also in continuing their own professional development. Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, and Orr (2007) found that exemplary pre- and in-service programs lead principals to have more positive attitudes about their work and

to be more likely to remain at their jobs despite the numerous challenges they face. The results of this study highlight the need to find ways to decrease career burnout for all principals and not just for those identified as having specific qualities.

Mindset

Psychological Underpinnings

Mindset theory is a dichotomous construct that reflects one's beliefs about his/her own intelligence and abilities. As per Dweck (2000, 2006), we all have varying levels of fixed and growth mindsets, which are capable of change. A growth mindset is an incremental or malleable view of intelligence, whereas a fixed mindset is an entity or inherent view of intelligence (Dweck 2000; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). Carol Dweck's (2006) growth mindset theory is rooted in traditional behavioral and cognitive psychological theories. Behavioral psychology reflects the influence that environment has on one's actions, whereas cognitive psychology reflects the impact thoughts and feelings have on one's actions. This intersection of "nature" and "nurture" in relation to mindset highlights the importance of relationships, learning from errors, and self-efficacy for principals. When examining the principalship through this mindset lens, it is evident that great leaders are developed and not born. Numerous traditional psychological theories support the premise that humans are capable of change and improvement. This includes, but is not limited to, theories by Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Julian Rotter, Albert Bandura, and Alfred Binet. An important relationship exists between the above listed traditional psychological theories and Carol Dweck's research on mindsets that intersect educational leadership.

The concept that humans are striving to be fully functioning relates to Abraham Maslow's (1970) concept of self-actualization, in which individuals strive "to become everything that one is capable of becoming" (p. 46). Self-actualization is the pinnacle of a hierarchy of needs that motivates humans. Maslow felt that an individual must satisfy the demands of lower level needs prior to moving on to higher level needs in the hierarchy. Carl Rogers and his humanistic approach towards psychology also support the main tenets of the growth mindset. This branch of psychological theory explains that fully functioning people have control over their fate and must accept personal responsibility for the consequences of their choices, whether positive or negative. Rogers' model of psychotherapy emphasized the relationship between one's self concept and self-esteem. The process of personal growth should be ongoing throughout one's life. Summarized by Carl Rogers (1961), "Whether one calls it a growth tendency, a drive toward self-actualization, or a forward moving directional tendency, it is the mainspring of life" (p. 35). Self-actualized people generally have few friends but have deep connections with those with whom they have relationships. Both Carol Dweck and Carl Rogers agree that strong relationships with others are required to provide the foundation for growth.

The principle of conditioning is the base for traditional behavioral theories of psychology. According to Gerrig and Zimbardo (2002), conditioning is the way in which events, stimuli, and behaviors become associated with one another. Julian Rotter bridged the gap between behavioral and cognitive psychology with the development of social learning theory. This theory focuses on the idea that our behaviors influence our environment just as our environment influences our behaviors, as determined by what we expect outcomes will be. This expectancy is based on similar past experiences. Therefore,

if an individual's past experiences have reinforced a certain behavior, future experiences will likely reinforce the same behavior. According to Rotter (1966), a continuum exists in each of us reflecting how much internal or external control we have over the events in our lives, called locus of control. Individuals who think that they are in control over the events of their life possess an internal locus of control and are open to the ideas of opportunity and growth. However, if an individual has a high external locus of control, they do not feel that they can shape the events of their life. This fixed mindset will not nurture growth. Overmier and Seligman (1967) have shown that dogs subjected to and unable to escape from electrical shocks learned to be helpless over time. Even when the dogs could escape the shock, their past experiences shaped their present reaction, and they were resigned to the fact that their efforts would be out of their internal locus of control and therefore fruitless. Individuals who do not feel confident in their ability to alter the outcome of a situation will be less apt to grow, thrive, and achieve their goals. According to Dweck (2006), "Over time, the fixed traits may come to be the person's sense of who they are, and validating these traits may come to be the main source of their self-esteem. Mindset change asks people to give this up. As you can imagine, it's not easy to just let go of something that has felt like your "self" for many years and it has given you your route to self-esteem" (p. 235).

Changing from a fixed to a growth mindset is not an easy feat. To make this change, an individual must have a high level of self-efficacy. Like mindset, this is an intrinsic belief. Bandura (1997) concluded that for individuals to make this change they must be willing to expend the necessary effort, must believe that they can perform the actions needed for change, and must believe that their behavior will lead to the desired

outcome. When these three variables exist, people believe in their ability to effect change. As summarized by Burger (2015), Bandura felt that our daily actions are largely controlled by self-regulation, and that “although we often strive to obtain external rewards, we also work towards self-imposed goals with internal rewards... every time we face a new problem, we imagine possible outcomes, calculate probabilities, set goals, and develop strategies” (p. 358). School principals must face these steps; they must solve wicked problems that stand in their way of reaching both externally and internally imposed professional goals.

To understand the relationship between various personality theories and Carol Deck’s growth mindset theory, it is necessary to explore the premises of her research. As cited in Walters (2015), the inventor of the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) test, Alfred Binet, outlined the main idea behind the growth mindset when he stated, “A few modern philosophers assert that an individual’s intelligence is a fixed quantity, a quantity which cannot be increased. We must protest and react against this brutal pessimism... With practice, training, and above all, method, we manage to increase our attention, our memory, our judgment and literally to become more intelligent than we were before” (p. 3). This resembles the basic premise of Dweck’s growth mindset theory that claims humans have different initial talents, skills, and aptitudes. These basic qualities can be cultivated and grown through effort and other learned factors (Dweck, 2006). Contrarily, a fixed mindset assumes that our initial skills and abilities are incapable of change or improvement and are fixed traits. This is reminiscent of one of the major criticisms of Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytical process, in which he claimed that most of our personality traits are fixed by our adolescent years and are non-malleable. It is through

this fixed mindset belief system that some view challenges and prospective goals. Individuals who possess a growth mindset understand that everyone is capable of learning and developing their skills throughout a lifetime.

Implicit Theories of Intelligence and Growth Mindset Theory

Growth mindset theory is the belief that intelligence, abilities, and talents can be developed with effort, learning, and dedication. The opposite is a fixed mindset, in which individuals believe that intelligence, abilities, and talents are fixed traits that cannot be significantly developed (Dweck, 2006). The mindset that an individual possesses can greatly support or inhibit their ability to overcome obstacles and challenges in life. All individuals possess varying degrees of both mindsets but research indicates more positive outcomes for individuals who possess more of a growth-oriented mindset. By viewing challenges and obstacles as possible to overcome, and within their control to a certain extent, school building leaders may be more apt to face and conquer them. It is these challenges that school principals face on a daily basis and that have the potential to lead to burnout if not dealt with effectively.

According to Dweck (2006), our mindset is how we view personal qualities and characteristics. This mindset can either limit our potential or support our success depending on whether it is a fixed or growth-oriented mindset. An individual with a fixed mindset believes that characteristics such as intelligence, talent, personality, and creativity are fixed and cannot be changed or developed. On the other hand, a growth mindset is a belief that we can cultivate, grow, and develop our skills and talents. All humans have varying degrees of both mindsets. Key tenets that differentiate a fixed from a growth mindset include how an individual views challenges, obstacles, effort, criticism,

and the success of others. Therefore, it is imperative that educational leaders foster a belief that their students, their staff, and themselves can constantly grow and improve.

An important aspect of growth mindset theory is grit. As defined by Angela Duckworth (2016), grit is the combination of passion and perseverance, which research has proven to support achievement. The base of grit is the notion that effort is more important than talent to achieve success. Duckworth (2016) states that achievement directly correlates with one's passion and perseverance, and not solely talent. According to Duckworth, effort counts twice as much as talent or skill. This effort must be consistent for long periods of time. In order to be successful, individuals need to have a larger vision and something meaningful that inspires them over the long haul. It is also important to set and achieve small incremental goals along the path. With grit and a growth mindset, individuals are able to form strong relationships, learn from errors, and develop self-efficacy. The present study identifies and explores the characteristics of growth mindset in relation to principals' levels of career burnout.

Relationships. Many components lead to successful school leadership. One of the most important is the need for strong relationships between the leader, their colleagues, and those whom they lead. This is necessary because leadership is the leader's ability to galvanize a school community in order to obtain a common objective and unified vision. Through this process, the leader must leverage relationships in order to turn their vision into a reality. At the heart of any relationship is trust. In a public opinion poll of 10,618 Americans on how they view select groups of powerful leaders, the PEW Research Center (2018) found that Americans have the most confidence and trust in K-12 public school principals (Figure 4).

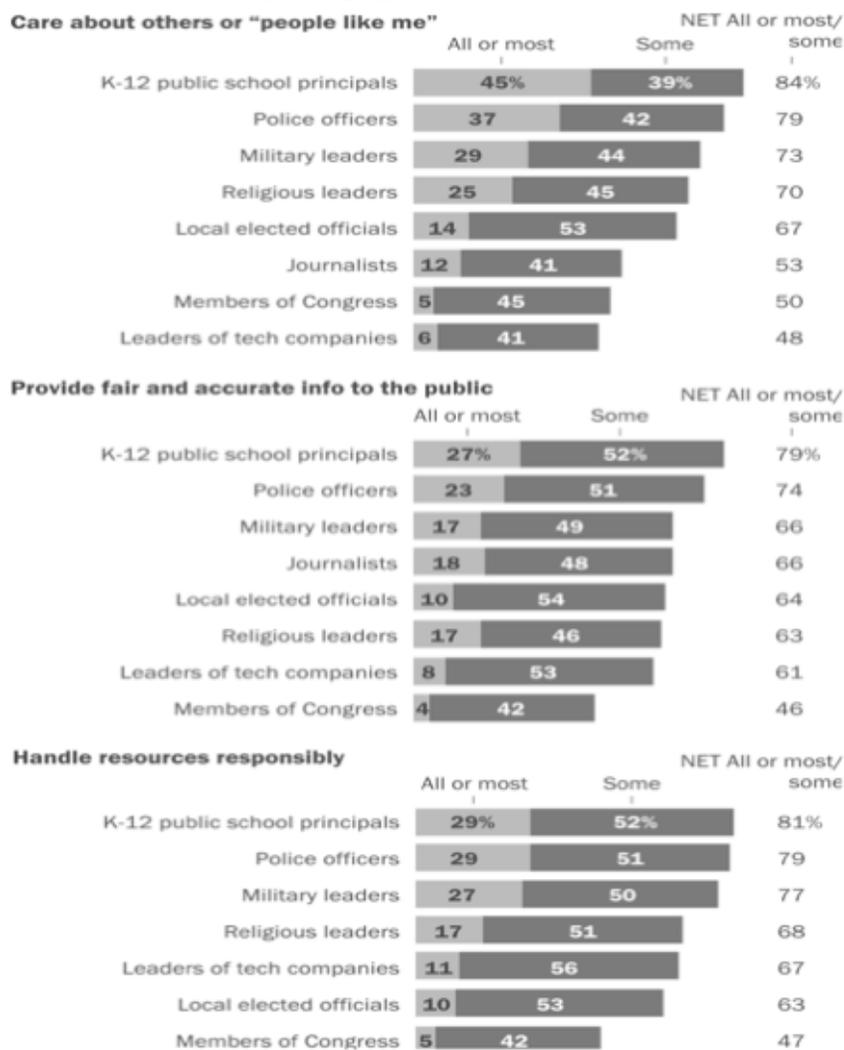


Figure 4. U.S. public confidence levels for various public service professions. Source: PEW Research Center (2018).

Trust between people allows for open, honest, and frequent communication, which is the foundation for a strong relationship and a positive work climate. A longitudinal study by Beusaert, Froehlich, Devos, and Riley (2016) investigated whether positive relationships with colleagues, supervisors, and other professional community members affect a principal's level of stress and career burnout. Using a best-fit model, data collected over four years on principals in Australia indicated that a strong positive relationship exists between stress and burnout for both secondary and primary school

principals. The results of this study are in line with previous research by Greenglass, Burke, and Konarski (1997) that demonstrates that educators who have strong relationships with colleagues report lower levels of depersonalization and increased feelings of personal accomplishment. Whitaker (1996) found that principals desire more formal and informal networks to brainstorm problems, reflect, and share experiences in an effort to support each other.

Learning from errors. Making errors is an inevitable part of life for any organization or person. Deng, Bligh, and Kohles (2010) define errors in the workplace as “unintended, potentially avoidable deviations from work-related goals” (p. 450). These errors provide individuals the opportunity to learn and grow. Dweck (2006) contends that the mindset a person holds about their ability to grow and change shapes their perception of failure, which could either promote or hinder their ability to learn from their errors. Hong, Chiu, Dweck, Lin, and Wan (1999) concluded that individuals who possess more of a growth-oriented mindset prioritize learning, including learning from errors. If an organization does not encourage learning from errors, it is then promoting a fixed mindset; thus, rather than taking ownership for errors, the organization may attribute failures to external causes. Dweck (2006) similarly clarifies that individuals who hold a fixed or entity mindset will focus on proving their intelligence to others by engaging in performance goals. By having a need to appear intelligent to others rather than being able to admit to and grow from errors, individuals with a fixed mindset limit their potential for growth and success.

Many organizations, including school districts, discourage errors and do not view them as opportunities to learn and grow. This has become increasingly apparent in New

York with the introduction of high-stakes testing, new teacher and principal annual personnel performance review systems, and the common core learning standards. Therefore, how organizations or individuals react to making errors varies widely depending on their unique cultural and leadership style. Yan, Bligh, and Kohles (2014) conducted a cross-sectional survey of 268 employees to examine the relationships between perceived leadership styles, the mindset of employees, and error learning. Through a hierarchical regression analysis, they concluded that mindset favorably influenced error learning, more so than leadership style. This study also concluded that positive leadership styles, such as authentic and transformational leadership styles, were better predictors of learning from errors than negative leadership styles, such as a transactional leadership style.

Self-efficacy. As defined by Albert Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is “the belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (p. 3). An individual’s level of self-efficacy affects many areas of her/his life, including how one deals with failure and endures challenges. This can have important ramifications for a school principal, including an impact on their level of personal accomplishment and how they face challenging situations throughout their daily work. However, one should not confuse self-efficacy with self-esteem. “Perceived self-efficacy is concerned with judgements of personal capability, whereas self-esteem is concerned with judgements of self-worth” (Bandura, 1997, p. 11).

Self-efficacy is an internal construct of motivation. However, outside environmental influences have an impact on these internal perceptions. Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) conducted the landmark Pygmalion study that examined future

expectancy effects. The term Pygmalion derives from a Greek myth in which an artist's desire for his masterpiece sculpture to come alive comes to fruition. In the Pygmalion study, researchers randomly assigned students in kindergarten through fifth grade to two groups. The researchers told the teachers of one group of students that they expected their students to "bloom" during the current school year and have great academic success, based on the results of a non-verbal intelligence test. The second group did not have these positive expectations for future success placed upon them. The study found that the students whom teachers expected to achieve greatness received higher expectations and more support, and therefore achieved higher results than the control group, even when no distinction between the two groups actually existed. This study demonstrated that having high future expectation of others is a powerful motivator.

Self-efficacy is not the belief that others can achieve complex and challenging tasks, but rather the belief that the individual her/himself can achieve a challenging task. Principals who have outside influences that promote their own internal expectancy for success may have a stronger ability to navigate successfully through challenging situations.

Benefits of Possessing a Growth Mindset

The mindset that leaders hold is their belief about the plasticity of their abilities (Dweck, 2006; Heslin & VandeWalle, 2011). Loftin (2016) explored the relationship between mindset and instructional leadership in schools through a quantitative correlational survey study. To achieve this, Loftin used a sample size of 351 to represent over 4,200 principals in Illinois. The two surveys used were the Kind of Person Implicit

Theory “Others” form for Adults by Carol Dweck and Hallinger’s Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale. The main two research questions of this study were:

1. How do principals’ implicit theories regarding other people predict instructional leadership?
2. How do principal characteristics and school district demographics predict the principles in implicit theories?

Loftin (2016) concluded that it takes more than just effort to demonstrate a growth mindset as a leader. However, if a leader expresses growth mindset ideas through their leadership then the likelihood of positive outcomes may increase. A significant relationship evident in this study was that as administrators’ years of administrative experience increased, so did their preference towards holding a fixed mindset. The author expressed a need for future research that explores other variables affected by the mindset of school principals. This further supports the need for the present study, especially when exploring whether a relationship exists between career burnout and mindset of principals.

Barriers to Possessing Growth Mindset

Possessing a fixed mindset, as opposed to a growth mindset, has powerful implications for those in leadership roles. The collapse of the multi-national technology company Enron in 2001 highlighted these implications. According to Dweck (2006), “Enron did a fatal thing: It created a culture that worshipped talent, thereby forcing its employees to look at and act extraordinarily talented. Basically, it forced them into the fixed mindset.... People with the fixed mindset do not admit it and do not correct their deficiencies” (p. 109). Many of Enron’s leaders had been told their entire life how brilliant they were and had attended prestigious universities, but they were unable to

admit mistakes that they made during their employ. It was felt that the admission of mistakes would threaten their own personal construct and therefore they chose not to do so. This type of groupthink occurs when a group values uniform consonance more than constructive feedback and change. It causes individual members of the group to follow the word of the leader unquestioningly and it strongly discourages any disagreement with the consensus. This also occurs when leaders do not connect with the people who work for them. With open communication not being valued within an organization, employees are not able to view mistakes and errors as growth opportunities, but instead act based on fear.

Roland Barth (2001) proposed, “How much are you prepared to risk of what is familiar, comfortable, safe, and perhaps working well for you, in the name of better education for others?... Failure is often far less painful and debilitating than the fear of failure. More important for educators, there is growth and learning in failure” (p. 290). Praising individuals for their fixed qualities makes it more challenging to accept constructive feedback, easier to develop a sense of entitlement, and more likely to lack the perseverance and grit needed to survive life’s many challenges. Leadership expert Warren Bennis (1997) summarizes this sentiment, indicating throughout his book *Managing people is like herding cats* that managers do everything right, but true leaders do the “right thing.” As educational leaders who oversee the development of staff, and not profit margins, principals have an ethical obligation to do the “right thing” and foster the personal and professional growth in everyone they lead, including themselves.

A social force that acts against this premise of growth mindset in today’s society is the emphasis on inherent talent as opposed to grit and effort. For example, when we

discuss professional athletes as “naturals” in their field, it minimizes and ignores their practice, dedication, sacrifices, and hard work. It is for this reason that we must be careful to recognize school leaders’ efforts and not their fixed personality traits or inherent skills. This connection between a principal’s achievements and their sense of personal accomplishment is critical to their longevity in the demanding field of educational leadership. Further highlighting the detriments of a fixed mindset on intelligence is Herrnstein and Murray’s (1994) theory on the bell curve of intelligence scores. They propose that intelligence is largely responsible for social stratification and that intelligence is an inherited trait, which makes the closing of racial gaps difficult. This fatalistic theory of intelligence does not consider the significance of the environment and the capacity to grow and develop that each individual in the world has.

Relationship between Mindset and Leadership

The majority of current literature on mindset and educational practices focuses on student achievement. Fewer studies address the relationship between mindset and educational leadership, especially for school principals. Yukl (2006) states that leadership is “the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives” (p. 8). This definition suggests that leaders hold the power to either foster or inhibit the success of individual employees and the organization as a whole depending on the leadership style and skills they embrace. Deng et al. (2010) conducted a study that examined the relationship between leadership behaviors and leadership styles. They found that two leadership styles that promoted learning from errors, which is a major tenet of possessing a growth mindset, are authentic and

transformational leadership styles. Regardless of which leadership style a principal may embrace, the principalship is a demanding job that would benefit from growth mindset-oriented leaders.

Critiques and Limitations of Growth Mindset Theory

Growth mindset theory is the belief that a person can improve their own intelligence and abilities when viewing them through a growth mindset lens. Although positive and inspiring, this theory is not free of criticism. This “can do” attitude of rugged individualism reflects the American ideals of our country’s founders. A major tenet of growth mindset theory is having high expectations of oneself, but this could also lead to a binary labeling of individuals (growth vs. fixed mindset individuals), leading to detrimental unintended consequences.

Carol Dweck references Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) to exemplify the power of positive expectations on individuals. In the Pygmalion study (discussed above), researchers told teachers that randomly selected students had special aptitudes and would bloom during the course of the school year. The researchers intended to determine whether teachers’ higher expectations for certain groups of students would correlate to higher levels of achievement among those students. The resulting data demonstrated that students whose teachers had high expectations for them had elevated levels of achievement compared to those in the control group. Although Carol Dweck used this study to support her theory of growth mindset, it conversely demonstrates the damaging impact of labeling individuals and treating them according to those labels. Critics of growth mindset theory argue that this potential for labeling students, based on growth or fixed mindset orientation, is one example of how the theory is rooted in deficit ideologies

and may ignore environmental and other adverse influences that impact an individual's level of achievement.

Deficit ideologies applied to large groups of people can have a devastating impact. Thomas (2018) states that school mindset programs disproportionately target racial minorities and impoverished students. This then perpetuates an individual's belief that they are plagued with deficits, adding to the fact that minority students and those of lower socio-economic status face exposure to additional environmental influences that others do not. Focusing solely on an individual's mindset as a method to boost personal achievement, and not including societal factors, reflects what psychologists call a fundamental attribution error. Although the theory is well intentioned, critics of growth mindset theory contend that this attribution can inadvertently perpetuate stereotypes and racism, blaming the victim for their lack of achievement. The fundamental attribution error, combined with adverse environmental factors, may subjugate minorities and lower socio-economic status populations.

Individuals of varying races and socio-economic statuses face different environmental influences. "Allostatic load" is the chronic exposure to stressful individual experiences or environmental challenges. Thomson, Kalayci, and Walker (2019) found that lower educational attainment and household income were significantly associated with higher allostatic load scores, after accounting for the effects of age and sex. These environmental stressors that may be overlooked when examining a principal's level of career burnout could include, but are not limited to, limited financial resources, space issues, high student to teacher ratios, low teacher wages, high rates of teacher turnover, and high levels of impoverished students. In these examples, the allostatic load is

preventing achievement, not necessarily a particular mindset. Mullainathan and Shafir (2013) claim that individuals who have an abundance of resources, and have few allostatic load stressors, have “slack.” It is this slack, or reduced number of environmental stressors, that allows individuals to devote more attention and energy towards their primary leadership objectives.

As per Malagon, Pérez Huber, and Velez (2009), the improvement and transformation of the relationship between race, racism, and power is a central tenet of critical race theory. Analyzing Carol Dweck’s growth mindset theory through this lens, it is evident that, in addition to a principal’s mindset, the scarcity of resources and fundamental attribution errors may also influence levels of career burnout. In addition, it is important to recognize the criticisms of mindset theory in order to flush out potential bias. It is critical that the mindsets of individuals, whether school principals or anyone else, are not labels attributed to one’s success or lack thereof.

Conclusion: Relationship between Prior Research and Present Study

The majority of current research and public discourse related to career burnout focuses on external causes, and not internal correlates such as mindset. In addition, the majority of mindset research focuses on students rather than adult leaders, thus leaving a gap in the literature. Therefore, the present study explores the relationship between self-identified mindsets and levels of career burnout in 170 principals. The participants are principals of public elementary, middle/junior high, and high schools in New York State, excluding New York City. The current study hypothesized that, for principals in New York State, there would be a significant relationship between self-reported feelings of career burnout and mindset.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

This chapter provides a description of the quantitative methods and procedures used in the present study. This includes the research questions, hypotheses, research design, data analysis procedures, participant information, instrumentation descriptions, procedures for data collection, reliability and validity of instruments, and ethical considerations.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

There is limited research that examines the relationship between mindset and self-reported levels of career burnout among school principals. Therefore, the purpose of this quantitative quasi-experimental study was to explore the relationship, or lack thereof, between these two variables as well as additional background and demographic variables. The following research questions and hypotheses guided this research study:

1. Is there a significant relationship between feelings of career burnout and mindset for principals in New York State?

H₁: There is a significant relationship between feelings of career burnout and mindset for principals in New York State.

H₀: There is not a significant relationship between feelings of career burnout and mindset for principals in New York State.

2. Are there differences in feelings of career burnout based on demographic and background characteristics for principals in New York State?

H_1 : There are differences in feelings of career burnout based on demographic and background characteristics for principals in New York State.

H_0 : There are no differences in feelings of career burnout based on demographic and background characteristics for principals in New York State.

3. How much does mindset explain career burnout when controlling for demographic and background characteristics for principals in New York State?

H_1 : Mindset explains career burnout when controlling for demographic and background characteristics for principals in New York State.

H_0 : Mindset does not explain career burnout when controlling for demographic and background variables for principals in New York State.

Research Design and Data Analysis

This study utilized a quantitative correlational research design to compare the distribution and variance of mindset scores with career burnout scores. Since there is a lack of current research associated with this topic, the study is exploratory in nature. Survey research was the most appropriate tool to answer the specific research questions for this study. Creswell (2014) suggests that survey research is appropriate when generalizing the thoughts, feelings, and attitudes from a smaller sample to a larger population, which was the premise of this study. Using this strategy allowed the researcher to make appropriate inferences from the survey data collected. Furthermore, studies in the social sciences oftentimes use this strategy when experimental studies are not possible.

To compare the distribution of scores, the researcher utilized bivariate correlations, t-tests, ANOVAs, and a hierarchical regression. The researcher implemented statistical controls to remove effects on the variability of scores that were not a result of the main independent variable of mindset. To determine statistical significance for all tests performed, the researcher used an alpha level of .05 (two-tailed). The researcher examined the significance of the results in both statistical and practical terms so that they could make meaningful inferences about the behaviors and feelings of principals. To partially fill this gap between the statistical and practical realms of research, the researcher examined the correlation coefficient, or effect size, which examined the magnitude and strength of the relationship between variables.

The primary independent variable for this study was the participants' self-identified mindset, which the researcher measured along a continuum ranging from "Fixed Mindset" to "Growth Mindset." Secondary independent variables include sex, years of administrative experience, years as principal, years in the field of education, type of school, level of school, geographic location of school, and race. The dependent variable was participants' self-identified level of career burnout. The researcher measured both career burnout and mindset using well-published self-administered surveys: the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educator Survey (MBI-ES) for career burnout and the Dweck Mindset Instrument (DMI) for mindset. Sub-sections of career burnout include Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment. The instrumentation portion of the current study describes these tools and corresponding subscales in depth.

The electronic survey used to gather data consisted of three sections. The first section solicited participant demographic information. The second section contained all questions from the DMI and the third section included all questions from the MBI-ES, both worded exactly as they are in the original instruments. The researcher presented the electronic survey to participants using the web-based platform Survey Monkey. To maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the data, the researcher did not ask participants to provide any identifiable information. Therefore, all results were anonymous.

The researcher exported data from the electronic surveys into SPSS and reviewed all data to ensure that it was clean, entered correctly, and correctly exported into SPSS. Some respondents answered only a portion of the total questions. Of the 223 surveys received from respondents, 53 were missing at least one data point. After listwise deletion, this study's analytical sample size was 170, which was 76.2% of the total cases collected.

Reverse coding of data was required for mindset questions 3, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, 15, and 16 and for burnout survey questions 4, 7, 9, 12, 17, 18, 19, and 21. This reverse coding was required because the numerical scoring scale ran in the opposite direction for these questions; reverse coding of these questions allowed for the maintenance of scoring consistency. Participants earned an average score for the entire DMI mindset survey and MBI-ES burnout inventory.

The researcher collected demographic and background data from respondents. These variables included sex, years in the field of education, years as a school administrator in any capacity, years as the principal at their current school, tenure, level

of school, type of school, geographic location, and race. The researcher listed sex as a binary variable of male and female. Years of work in the field of education, as an administrator, and as principal of their current school required a numeric response. Several respondents wrote their number of years of administrative service in alphabetic form, which the researcher converted to numeric form in order to conduct statistical tests. For whether the principal had earned tenure at their current school, the researcher transformed and recoded the responses into two groups, labelling the first group “tenured” and the second group “untenured.” Generally, New York recognizes tenure for school administrators after four years of successful work experience, with the approval of their school district’s Board of Education; however, a school board always has the ability to grant tenure sooner. Level of school choices for respondents included elementary, middle/ junior high school, high school, and “other.” The type of school was a binary variable, which included public or private schools. Geographic locations included Nassau County, Suffolk County, New York City, New York State – other than New York City or Nassau/Suffolk Counties, and outside of New York. Nassau County and Suffolk County are homogeneous groups with a combined sample size comparable to all other participants. Therefore, the researcher combined Nassau and Suffolk Counties and recoded them as the variable “Long Island” for the final analysis. For the statistical analysis, the researcher categorized race according to the United States Census categories of White/Caucasian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian or Asian American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander, or Choose Not to Answer. The researcher recoded the demographic variable of years as principal into a binary variable that centered around the median, which is a widely

accepted statistical practice. This resulted in two groups that were similar in size, one group having 0-6 years of experience as a principal while the other group had seven or more years. After the researcher reverse scored, recoded, and cleaned the data, they calculated descriptive statistics in order to determine the frequency, mean, central tendency, and variability of scores.

The study's first research question examined the relationship between feelings of career burnout and mindset levels for principals in New York State. To evaluate the relationship between these variables, the researcher conducted a bivariate Pearson correlation and found a correlation between the mean career burnout and mindset scores. The study's second research question examined the differences in feelings of career burnout based on demographic and background characteristics for principals in New York. The researcher accomplished this by comparing group means, using an independent samples t-test to determine if there were significant differences in principals' career burnout scores for variables with two levels, such as sex, tenure status, years as a principal at their current school, and location of school. Since the data for school levels violated the homogeneity of variance assumption, the researcher conducted a one-way Welch ANOVA to assess if mean burnout scores were different for principals at the three different school levels. Research question three examined how much mindset explains career burnout when controlling for demographic and background characteristics for principals in New York State. The researcher assessed this question using a hierarchical multiple regression and controlling for the demographic and background characteristics of gender, total number of years in the field of education, total number of years as a

school administrator, total number of years at current school, tenure status, level of school currently a principal of, and location of school.

Participants and Sample

For the purposes of this study, the researcher defined “principals” as leaders of public schools who were licensed as school building administrators by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) and had been appointed by their school district’s Board of Education to the title and tenure area of School Principal. A limitation of the research design that the researcher deliberately imposed was the exclusion of school principals who work in New York City’s Department of Education (NYCDOE). This delimitation existed because access to them was not available. As per the NYCDOE (2018), there are 1,606 school building principals in New York City that the researcher excluded from this study’s New York State population. Table 1 provides a comparison of demographics between the sample used for this study and the national and New York State populations of principals, not including New York City.

Table 1
Comparison of Sample-Population Demographics

Population	Number of Principals	Male	Female	Race
National	86,180	45.58% (39,280)	54.42% (46,900)	Black: 9.85% (8,490) White: 78.61% (67,750) Asian: .22% (190) Hispanic: 8.13% (7,010) American Indian: 0% (0) Pacific Islander: 0% (0) Other: 1.09% (940)
New York	2,644 • 4,250 NYS • 1,606 NYC	NA	NA	Black: 18% White: 69% Asian: 3% Hispanic: 10% American Indian: 0 Pacific Islander: 0
Current Study Sample	170	50% (85)	50% (85)	Black: 3.2% (7) White: 89.8% (94) Asian: .46% (1) Hispanic: 2.78% (6) American Indian: 0% (0) Pacific Islander: 0% (0) Other: 3.70 (8)

Note. NYS = New York State; NYC = New York City; NA = not available. Sources: IES-NCES (2017) and NYSED (2019).

Descriptive statistics for demographic and background characteristics of the present study's 170 participants are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Demographic and Background Characteristics of Study Participants (N = 170)

Characteristic	N	Percent
Sex		
Male	85	50
Female	85	50
Race		
Black or African American	5	2.9
White	153	90
Hispanic or Latino	5	2.9
Asian	1	0.6
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0
Unknown/Chose not to answer	6	3.5
Total Years of Principal Experience in Current School		
0-9	123	72.4
10-19	41	24.1
20-29	6	3.5
20 or more	0	0
Current Tenure Status as Principal		
Tenured	115	67.6
Non-Tenured	55	32.4
Level of School		
Elementary School	78	45.9
Middle/Junior High School	27	15.9
High School	47	27.6
Other	18	10.6
Type of School		
Public School	170	100
Private School	0	0
Geographic Location of School		
Nassau County, NY (Long Island)	58	34.1
Suffolk County, NY (Long Island)	13	7.6
New York City (NYC)	0	0
New York State - Not NYC or Long Island	99	58.2
Outside of New York State	0	0

Participants' years of work as a school administrator in any location or capacity, years of work in the field of education, and years of principalship at their current school were non-categorical ratio variables. Consequently, the mean, median, mode, and variability of scores were calculated and analyzed. The number of years spent in the field of school administration was a continuous variable with a range of 35, a minimum score of 0, and a maximum score of 35 ($M=13.58$, $SD=7.00$). Years in the field of education was a ratio continuous independent variable with a range of 48, a minimum score of 0, and a maximum score of 48 ($M=24.55$, $SD=7.37$). Years spent as principal in the participant's current school was a continuous variable with a range of 25, a minimum score of 0, and a maximum score of 25 ($M=6.9$, $SD=5.09$). Data for years spent as the principal in the participant's current school does not reflect a normal bell curve shape. Rather, the data represents a higher frequency of scores on the lower end of the range, and a steady decrease in frequency towards the upper end of the range. In practical terms, this demonstrates that as the years of a principal leading their current school increased, the frequency decreased. When examining the mean and range of total years that a principal has worked in their current school, it is evident that the majority of principals who participated in this study had between zero and nine years of experience as an administrator, which closely reflected the lower end of the range.

Sex, tenure, school level, geographic location of the school, and race were all binary nominal categorical independent variables. The researcher measured the independent categorical variable of sex as either male or female. This study had exactly 50% male ($n=85$) and 50% female ($n=85$) participants, which reflected the national norm. Other binary categorical independent variables included tenure, years of experience,

school location, and school type. The level of school that the participants worked at was a categorical variable with four levels, which included the categories of elementary, middle/junior high school, high school, and “other.” Race was a categorical variable that included Black, White, Asian, Hispanic, American Indian, Pacific Islander, and Other. When examining the race of participants in the present study, approximately 90% were white, while non-white participants, or those who did not identify their race, accounted for approximately 10%. Though the demographic questionnaire included race of participants, the researcher did not include this variable in the analyses comparing mean differences because the groups were significantly unequal in size.

For survey studies, it is critical to make meaningful inferences from a sample that represents the population of the study. Bartlett, Kotrlik, and Higgins’ (2001) research concludes that a ten to one (10:1) ratio should be satisfied, with a 5% margin of error, in order to choose an appropriate sample size for survey research. Therefore, this study attempted to survey 10% of the total number of principals in New York State, excluding New York City, (10% of 2,644 = 264), minus a 5% margin of error (5% of 264 = 13.2), which is approximately 251 school building principals. This approximation of a power analysis advises how likely the author would be to avoid a type II error as a result of failing to reject the null hypothesis. In an attempt to obtain the appropriate number of participants, the researcher utilized purposive sampling and sent surveys only to current New York State public school principals. Considering the total population of principals in New York State, excluding New York City, the present study’s sample size of 170 fell short of meeting the 10:1 ratio.

The sample included elementary, junior/middle, and high school principals. Random sampling was not possible for this study's sampling design. Instead, the researcher used purposive sampling to solicit building principals who were interested in participating in the present study. Principals across New York State, excluding New York City, were the target sample. The final study population included only principals across New York State who received an invitation to participate and filled out the survey in its entirety. One should note that during certain times of the year, or day, a principal might be too busy to complete a survey, even if it is applicable to their work and of high personal interest. Lastly, there might be principals who did not respond to the survey for countless unknown reasons. Therefore, only the respondents who chose to participate in this research study had their sentiments considered during the data analysis.

The researcher obtained the sample using professional networks. The professional organizations that agreed to share the survey electronically with their members included the School Administrators' Association of New York (SAANYS), the Council of Administrators and Supervisors (CAS), the Eastern Suffolk County Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), the Long Island Principals' Listserv, and the Long Island Association for Supervision and Curriculum and Development (LIASCD). The researcher asked these organizations to provide the survey website or QR code to the members of their organization who were principals. These organizations sent initial invitations to participate in the survey via email on or about October 26, 2019. In addition, 32 BOCES superintendents and assistant/associate superintendents directly received an email with survey information to distribute to their principals. Moreover, over 100 principals within Nassau County, New York received individual email invitations to participate in the

survey. The surveys were administered and accessible in a single stage from October 28, 2019 through December 1, 2019.

Instruments

Demographic Questionnaire

The electronic survey that the researcher provided to participants began with an informed consent explanation. Those participants who consented to participate in the current research project after reading the informed consent form continued to the demographic portion of the survey. These questions included sex, total years of administrative experience, total years of experience as principal in the current school, current tenure status, level of school they lead, type of school they lead, geographic location of their current school, and race.

Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey (MBI-ES)

The tool used to measure the dependent variable of career burnout was the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey (MBI-ES) (Maslach et al., 1986). This Likert style self-survey consists of 22 questions subdivided into three sub-scales. The three sub-scales of this survey are emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Maslach and Jackson (1981) describe depersonalization as an unfeeling and impersonal response towards the recipients of one's care, treatment, or instruction. From the perspective of a school principal, the recipients of one's care could include staff, students, community members, and administrative colleagues. Maslach and Jackson (1981) describe emotional exhaustion as the feeling of being overextended and chronically fatigued by one's work, characterized by a lack of energy and feeling depleted and too drained to face another day at work. Maslach and Jackson (1981)

describe personal accomplishment as feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work with people. When personal accomplishment is lacking they describe this as a negative self-evaluation of one's work with clients.

The Maslach Burnout Inventory Manual (Maslach et al., 1986) identifies items 1-3, 6, 8, 13, 14, 16, and 20 as corresponding with the burnout sub-scale of emotional exhaustion, items 5, 10, 11, 15, and 22 with the sub-scale of depersonalization, and items 4, 7, 9, 12, 17-19, and 21 with the sub-scale of personal accomplishment. The manual recommends using either the sum or average score for each sub-scale to represent a holistic view of a participant's burnout level. This study utilized the average method described in the manual. Although one can interpret scores for groups of participants or for individual participants, scores are not a clinical tool for diagnosing burnout. Instead, one should use scores for comparative purposes only. Because items 4, 7, 9, 12, 17-19, and 21 focus on low burnout traits, while the remaining items focus on high burnout traits, reverse scoring is necessary to obtain agreement among the scores. Therefore, a low score on any question will reflect a low level of career burnout, while a higher score will reflect a high level of career burnout.

The publishing company estimated that it would take a participant 15-20 minutes to complete the MBI-ES. However, data provided by Survey Monkey for the present study showed that it took the average respondent seven minutes to complete the survey in its entirety. This instrument uses a seven-point scale that ranges from zero to six, measuring how often a participant feels a certain emotion. The seven options include *Never (0)*, *A few times a year or less (1)*, *Once a month (2)*, *A few times a month (3)*, *Once a week (4)*, *A few times a week (5)*, and *Every day (6)*. Originally, there was only

one generalized form of this assessment to measure career burnout in all human service fields, including education. Newer surveys specific to various human service occupations offer increased reliability, including the version used for this study that is specific for individuals who work in the career field of education. The MBI-ES survey is included in Appendix C.

Dweck Mindset Instrument (DMI)

The tool used to measure the independent variable of mindset was the Dweck Mindset Instrument (DMI) (Dweck, 2006). This instrument measures a participant's view of their intelligence. The researcher selected this survey because of its applicability to adults, whereas most other mindset surveys are normed for children. The DMI contains 16 Likert style self-survey items on which participants rate their disagreement or agreement, choosing among six options. The six options include *Strongly Agree (1)*, *Agree (2)*, *Mostly Agree (3)*, *Mostly Disagree (4)*, *Disagree (5)*, and *Strongly Disagree (6)*. The researcher used this tool to measure the self-reported mindset level of participants. Because items 3, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, 15, and 16 focus on fixed mindset traits, while the remaining items focus on growth mindset traits, reverse scoring is necessary to obtain agreement among the scores. Therefore, a low score on any question reflects a fixed mindset while a higher score reflects a growth mindset. As noted by Stewart (2018), the Dweck Mindset Instrument (DMI) contains four items each relating to growth mindset for intelligence, fixed mindset for intelligence, growth mindset for talent, and fixed mindset for talent. The researcher calculated scores using the average method and the DMI survey is included in Appendix D.

Reliability and Validity of the Research Design

Validity refers to how suitable, beneficial, and meaningful data from an instrument is relative to what its designers intend for it to measure (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 2007). The same authors define reliability as stability, accuracy, and consistency of data obtained from a survey tool, such as the Dweck Mindset Instrument and Maslach Burnout Inventory.

Dweck Mindset Instrument (DMI)

The Dweck Mindset Instrument (DMI) measures the mindset levels of participants who complete the self-survey. This is what the present study is intended to research; therefore, this is a valid measure. This tool is high in face validity since the 16 questions all relate to the singular topic of mindset. Levy, Stroessner, and Dweck (1998) stated that the internal reliability score for the predecessor assessment, the Theories of Intelligence Survey, had a Cronbach alpha of between .93 and .95.

Although both surveys are valid and reliable, confounding variables exist. As mentioned earlier in this study, individuals of varying races and socio-economic statuses face different environmental influences. Allostatic load is the cost of chronic exposure to stressful individual experiences or environmental challenges. Thomson et al. (2019) found that lower educational attainment and household income were significantly associated with higher allostatic load scores after accounting for the effects of age and sex. These environmental stressors that may be overlooked when examining a principal's level of career burnout could include, but are not limited to, limited financial resources, space issues, high student to teacher ratios, low teacher wages, high rates of teacher turnover, and high levels of impoverished students.

The following are additional confounding variables that may have inadvertently affected the results of the present study:

- Level of support each participant received from their school district and supervisors
- Level of support each participant received from individuals in their personal lives, including family and friends
- Community involvement level at the school each principal led
- Personal situations outside of the school setting
- Culture of the school that each principal worked within
- The time of the year that the principal completed the survey

Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey (MBI-ES)

The Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educator Survey (MBI-ES) measures career burnout levels of school administrators and staff. Since career burnout is what the present study intends to examine, this instrument has high face validity. This tool is high in content-related validity since the questions listed under each of the three subsections relate to the subsection measured. Criterion-related evidence is high when compared with similar assessment tools. As per Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2019, pp. G-7 & G-9), reliability is the degree to which the scores obtained from an instrument are consistent measures of whatever the instrument measures. Cronbach alpha is a measure of internal reliability for tests administered only once to a participant.

Cronbach alpha estimates have been reported of .90 for Emotional Exhaustion, .76 for Depersonalization, and .76 for Personal Accomplishment by Iwanicki and Schwab (1981); .88, .74, and .72, respectively by Gold (1984); and .87, .76, and .84, respectively,

in a recent study of 492 teachers by Chang (2013). Some studies have found that the Depersonalization scale yields somewhat lower reliability estimates. For example, in a study of 771 Greek Cypriot teachers, the internal reliability estimate for Depersonalization was somewhat lower ($\alpha = .63$), while the reliabilities for Emotional Exhaustion ($\alpha = .85$) and Personal Accomplishment ($\alpha = .79$) were adequate (Kokkinos, 2006, p. 32). These scores indicate that internal reliability is strong. Jackson, Schwab, and Schuler (1986) performed a test-retest reliability that resulted in similarly strong scores of .6 for Emotional Exhaustion, .54 for Depersonalization and .57 for Personal Accomplishment. These slightly lower indicators of test re-test reliability may be a result of the time of year that educators took the original and post-test. The physical, emotional, and economic demands change over the course of a school year for individuals involved in education, which could lead to a fluctuation in test re-test scores. Several studies show evidence supporting strong validity for the MBI-ES (Byrne, 1994; Koustelios & Tsigilis, 2005).

Procedures for Data Collection

Prior to conducting this study, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of St. John's University gave approval on October 3, 2019. The publisher of the MBI-ES instrument provided copyright permission (see Appendix C). Since the DMI is a highly published instrument with no evident copyright restrictions, the researcher did not acquire copyright permission. As previously stated, the researcher utilized primary data for the present study and selected participants from the population of all principals in New York State who were accessible, excluding New York City. Individuals who expressed a desire to participate in the study accessed the electronic link, or QR code, that took them directly

to the electronic survey, which began with the introductory letter and consent information. The introductory letter (see Appendix B) describes to potential participants the purpose, requirements, and potential risks of the study so that candidates were able to provide informed consent. Following the participants' reading of the introductory letter, they had the ability to continue with the survey questions if they freely chose to do so. The subsequent sections following the introductory letter included the demographic survey, the Dweck Mindset Instrument, and the Maslach Burnout Inventory.

Participants received the electronic link to access the survey in two formats, including a scannable QR code and a website address link. Survey Monkey was the platform that hosted the survey questions, and is a program available free or for purchase on the internet that allows individuals to create cloud-based survey forms. As part of this program, Survey Monkey collects all data anonymously. The online survey was open to participants for one month, ranging from October 28, 2019 through December 1, 2019. Once participants submitted their responses through Survey Monkey, the researcher exported the data to IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The data indicated that of the 223 responses received, 53 did not fully answer every question. Therefore, through listwise deletion, the analytical sample consisted of 170 cases. For all cases in which the question required a numeric response but the respondent provided an alphabetical response, the researcher converted the responses to numeric values so they could perform statistical tests.

Ethics

It is the role of the IRB of each university to establish guidelines and practices to ensure all research is ethical and safe. To that end, the researcher closely adhered to the

procedures outlined in the St. John's University IRB manual. To ensure that this study was ethical, the researcher provided potential participants with information needed to make an informed decision. This included an introduction to the purpose of the study, relevant background information, procedures followed, potential risks to candidates, methods for maintaining confidentiality and anonymity and obtaining informed consent, and contact information for any questions or concerns. In addition, all data was anonymous and the researcher did not collect any personal identifying information.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine whether significant relationships exist between principals' self-reported levels of career burnout, mindset, and other background and demographic variables. This exploratory study sets the foundation for further investigations on the relationships between these variables.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter describes the results of the data collected in relation to the study's three research questions, which were:

1. Is there a significant relationship between feelings of career burnout and mindset for principals in New York State?
2. Are there differences in feelings of career burnout based on demographic and background characteristics for principals in New York State?
3. How much does mindset explain career burnout when controlling for demographic and background characteristics for principals in New York State?

Results for Research Question 1

The researcher conducted a Pearson bivariate correlation to assess the relationship between the independent variable of mindset ($M = 4.77$, $SD = .81$) and the dependent variable of career burnout ($M = 1.62$, $SD = .85$) for New York State principals. One hundred and seventy participants were included in the analysis. Preliminary analyses showed the relationship to be linear (see Figure 5), but not all variables were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's test, $p < .001$, and there were no outliers significantly affecting the data. Mindset scores clustered around the upper end of the range (1, 6) with a mean score of 4.77, while burnout scores clustered around the lower end of the range (.05, 4.18) with a mean score of 1.62.

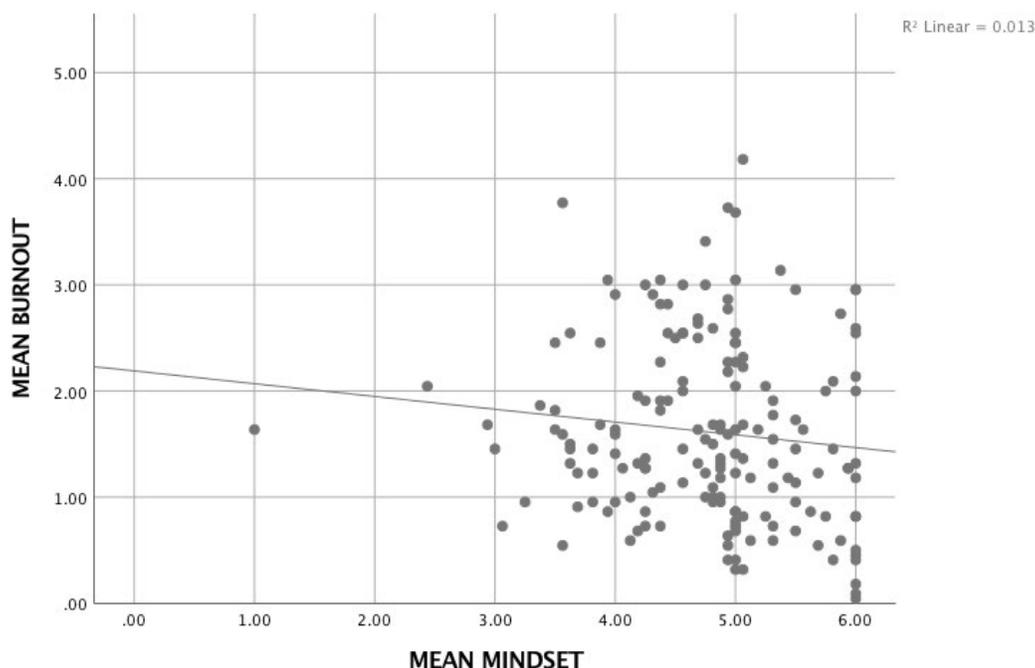


Figure 5. Correlation between burnout and mindset.

There was no statistically significant correlation between growth mindset and career burnout, $r(168) = -.115, p = .134$, with mindset explaining 1.3% of the variability in burnout scores at the .05 significance level (two-tailed). Therefore, the study failed to reject the null hypothesis for research question 1.

Results for Research Question 2

The researcher conducted a comparison of group means in order to assess any differences in feelings of career burnout based on demographic and background characteristics for principals in New York State. For variables with two levels, such as sex, tenure status, years as a principal at their current school, and location of school, the researcher used an independent samples t-test to determine if there were significant differences in principals' career burnout scores. There were no significant outliers in the data as assessed by inspection of each boxplot. The researcher assessed the distribution of career burnout scores by Shapiro-Wilk's test (see Table 3).

Table 3
Summary of Preliminary Analysis of Distribution and Homogeneity of Variance

Variable	Shapiro-Wilk's Test for Normality, <i>p</i> -value	Levene's Test for Equality of Variance, <i>p</i> -value
Sex		
Male	.008	.292
Female	.009	
Tenure		
Yes	.016	.583
No	.010	
Years as a principal at current school		
≤ 6	.023	.890
> 6	.014	
Location		
Long Island	< .001	.216
Upstate	.040	

Note. Alpha level is .05. Values < .05 for Shapiro-Wilk's Test suggest that one should reject the assumption that the data is normally distributed. Levene's test *p*-values > .05 suggest the homogeneity of variance.

For variables that were not normally distributed, Q-Q plots assisted in the decision to analyze the data using an independent sample *t*-test, as this test is fairly robust to deviations in normality. There was homogeneity of variance in burnout scores for all variables, as assessed by Levene's test of equality of variance (see Table 3).

The mean career burnout score for principals of schools in Long Island ($n = 71$) was 0.34 units (95% CI, -.14 to .40) lower than those in Upstate New York ($n = 99$). In addition, there was a statistically significant difference in mean burnout scores between Long Island school principals ($M = 1.42$, $SD = 0.80$) and Upstate principals ($M = 1.76$, $SD = .86$), $t(168) = -2.65$, $p = .009$. Therefore, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis that there is no difference in career burnout scores between principals in Long Island and

Upstate. The Cohen's effect size value ($d = 0.41$) suggested a small to moderate practical significance (Cohen, 1988).

The female ($n = 85$) mean career burnout score was 0.118 units (95% CI, 0.04 to 0.48) higher than the male ($n = 85$) mean burnout score. However, there was no statistically significant difference in career burnout scores between males ($M = 1.56$, $SD = 0.83$) and females ($M = 1.67$, $SD = .87$), $t(168) = -.91$, $p = .365$. Thus, there was a failure to reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference in career burnout between men and women. The effect size, calculated using Cohen's d , was small ($d = 0.129$) (Cohen, 1988).

The mean career burnout score for principals with tenure status ($n = 115$) was 0.13 units (95% CI, -.14 to .40) higher than principals who have not earned tenure ($n = 55$). However, there was no statistically significant difference in career burnout scores between principals reporting tenure ($M = 1.66$, $SD = 0.83$) and no tenure ($M = 1.53$, $SD = .90$), $t(168) = .94$, $p = .351$. Therefore, there was a failure to reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference in burnout score between principals who have tenure and those who do not. The magnitude of the difference in means was small ($d = 0.15$).

The mean career burnout score for principals working at their current school for six or fewer years ($n = 86$) was 0.03 units (95% CI, -0.29 to 0.23) lower than the mean career burnout score for principals working at their current school for seven or more years ($n = 84$). However, there was no statistically significant difference in burnout scores between individuals who have been principals for six or fewer years ($M = 1.60$, $SD = 0.85$) and those who have been principals at their current school for seven or more years ($M = 1.63$, $SD = .85$), $t(168) = -.25$, $p = .806$. Consequently, the results failed to

reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference in burnout score based on years as a principal at their current school. The magnitude of the difference in means was small ($d = 0.04$).

Based on the participants' responses to the demographic questionnaire, the researcher placed principals in one of four groups: Elementary School ($n = 78$), Middle or Junior High School ($n = 27$), High School ($n = 47$), or Other ($n = 18$). See Table 4 for a summary of career burnout scores for each group.

Table 4
Principals' Mean Burnout Scores Based on School Level

Level of School	<i>n</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	95% CI
Elementary School	78	1.57 (0.73)	1.40, 1.73
Middle or Junior High School	27	1.60 (1.04)	1.19, 2.01
High School	47	1.65 (0.94)	1.37, 1.92
Other	18	1.77 (0.79)	1.37, 2.16
Total	170	1.62 (0.85)	1.49, 1.74

Note. CI = confidence interval.

There were no outliers affecting the data as assessed by inspection of a boxplot. Using Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality to determine distribution of scores, career burnout scores for Middle or Junior High School, High School, and Other categories were normally distributed ($p > .05$), while mean career burnout score for the Elementary School group was not normally distributed ($p = .016$). The assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variance ($p = .015$). Because of this violation, the researcher conducted a one-way Welch ANOVA to assess whether mean burnout scores were different for principals at different school levels.

There were no statistically significant differences in the principals' mean burnout scores between the different school levels, Welch's $F(3, 53.59) = 0.35, p = .788$. The magnitude of the difference in means, calculated using eta squared, was small ($\eta_p^2 = .006$).

Overall, results indicate that there were no statistically significant differences at the .05 significance level for career burnout relative to demographic and background variables (sex, years of experience, tenure status, type of school), with the exception of school location (Upstate or Long Island, New York). Therefore, the study failed to reject the null hypothesis for research question 2.

Results for Research Question 3

The third research question examined how much mindset explains career burnout when controlling for demographic and background characteristics for principals in New York State. The researcher assessed this question by using a hierarchical multiple regression and controlling for demographic and background characteristics of sex, total number of years in the field of education, total number of years as a school administrator, total number of years at the current school, tenure status, level of school currently a principal of, and location of school. See Table 5 for sample characteristics, as well as Table 6 for full details on each regression model.

Table 5
Sample Characteristics

Variable	Mean	SD
Career Burnout	1.62	0.85
Growth Mindset	4.77	0.81
Total number of years in the field of education	24.55	0.38
Total number of years as a school administrator	13.58	0.00
Total number of years as a principal of the current school	6.90	0.10

Variable	N	%
Sex		
Male	85	50
Female	85	50
Tenure		
Yes	115	67.6
No	55	32.4
Location		
Long Island	71	41.8
Upstate	99	58.2
Level of school currently a principal of		
Elementary School	78	45.9
Middle or Junior High School	27	15.9
High School	47	27.6
Other	18	10.6

Note. N = 170

Table 6
Hierarchical Multiple Regression Prediction of Burnout from Demographic Characteristics and Mean Growth Mindset

Variable	Mean Burnout			
	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	β	B	β
Constant	2.49*		2.90*	
1. Sex (Male)	-.29*	-.17	-.31*	-.18
2. Total no. of yrs in field of edu	-.03*	-.24	-.03*	-.23
3. Total no. of yrs as admin	.00	.01	.00	.00
4. Total no. of yrs in current school	.01	.05	.01	.06
5. Tenure Status (Yes Tenure)	.22	.12	.22	.12
6. Level of School (Elementary)	-.27	-.16	-.26	-.15
7. Level of School (Middle School)	-.14	-.06	-.10	-.04
8. Level of School (High School)	-.02	-.01	.01	.01
9. Location (Long Island)	-.34*	-.20	-.30*	-.18
10. Growth Mindset			-.09	-.09
R^2	.110		.117	
F	2.19*		2.10*	
ΔR^2	.110		.007	
ΔF	2.19**		1.26	

Note. $N = 170$. No = number; yrs = years; edu = education; admin = administrator.
 Burnout = $2.90 - .31X_1 - .03X_2 + .00X_3 + .01X_4 + .22X_5 - .26X_6 - .10X_7 + .01X_8 - .30X_9 - .09X_{10}$. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

The researcher conducted preliminary analyses to ensure there were no violations of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. The first model, which included demographic characteristics alone to predict burnout, was

statistically significant, $R^2 = .110$, $F(9, 160) = 2.19$, $p = .025$, adjusted $R^2 = .06$.

Demographic characteristics explained 11.0% of the variance in mean burnout scores among principals. After the addition of growth mindset in the second model, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 11.7%, $F(10, 159) = 2.1$, $p = .027$. When controlling for demographic characteristics, growth mindset explained 0.7% of the variance in burnout, $R^2_{\text{change}} = .007$, $F_{\text{change}}(1, 159) = 1.26$, $p = .263$. In the second model, gender ($\beta = -.181$, $p = .036$), number of years in education ($\beta = -.229$, $p = .041$), and location ($\beta = -.177$, $p = .025$) were statistically significant. The regression equation for significant variables in the second model is $\text{Burnout} = 2.90 - .31X_1 - .03X_2 - .30X_3$, where burnout in (1) males is .31 units lower than in females; (2) each year worked in the field of education lowers the level of burnout by .03 units; and (3) Long Island is .30 units lower than those in Upstate.

In conclusion, although the results of the present study may not yield statistically significant findings on the relationship between a principal's mindset and their level of career burnout, the practical findings of the data collected and analyzed have significance, which the following chapter will explore further.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter discusses connections between the present study's quantitative data and prior research findings to foster a conversation regarding future research and practice. In summary, the present study found that principals in New York State do not have a statistically significant relationship between their self-reported level of career burnout and their mindset, nor was mindset predictive of burnout when controlling for demographic characteristics. Though statistically significant differences and predictions were not found, important practical information can still be gained and considered (Jacob, Doolittle, Kemple, & Somers, 2019).

Interpretation of Results for Research Question 1

Results from the current study have positive practical implications in the field of educational leadership. Findings indicate that principals in New York State cluster around the higher end of the range for mindset while they cluster around the lower end of the range for career burnout. The restriction in range of scores may suggest that principals in New York State who participated in the present study have little variability in mindset and burnout scores, possess a growth-oriented mindset, and report low levels of career burnout. More specifically, as mindset levels increase for principals in New York State, their levels of career burnout inversely decrease. This low level of career burnout for principals, in conjunction with having a growth mindset, supports career longevity, stable school leadership, and successful student outcomes, as outlined in Chapters 1 and 2.

A larger range of variability, coupled with a normal distribution of means for mindset scores, could have led to statistically significant findings. Yet, it would

simultaneously indicate that our schools are in a perilous situation. Variability of burnout and mindset scores would indicate that many principals are burned out and do not possess a mindset supportive of overcoming obstacles and challenges, which is necessary to lead a school successfully. This optimistic interpretation of results is further supported by the independent variable of mindset being negatively skewed and had a positive kurtosis.

The consistently high level of growth mindset reported by principals in New York State is promising. The vast majority of participants in the current study's sample reported scores at or below the mid-point between growth and fixed mindset levels. One can conclude that, by their very nature, principals are more likely to be growth mindset oriented. Individuals who enter the career field of education must be student-centered professionals who understand the nature of working within a human services field. Therefore, although the findings are not statistically significant, possibly more importantly, they have positive practical implications. The lack of significant findings may be a result of the research design having a limited sample with homogeneous characteristics, which will be explored later in this chapter.

Interpretation of Results for Research Question 2

The researcher conducted a comparison of group means in order to assess differences in feelings of career burnout based on demographic and background characteristics. For independent variables with two levels, such as sex, tenure status, years as a principal at their current school, and school location, the researcher used an independent samples t-test to determine if there were significant differences in principals' career burnout scores. Overall, statistical significance was not evident. However, this research question contained several sub-questions embedded within it based on varying

demographic and background characteristics. Statistical significance was only found between the mean scores for one of the seven background and demographic variables.

There was a statistically significant difference found between the mean burnout scores of Long Island and Upstate principals. Long Island principals showed a lower level of burnout compared to principals who lead schools located Upstate. Additionally, the effect size value suggested a small to moderate association between these variables. Potential reasons for this finding may include the geographic and financial variation between the two regions. Whereas Long Island is a geographically small and highly concentrated area with extremely high taxes that fund public education, Upstate New York does not share the same characteristics. However, even across Long Island great disparities of educational funding and opportunities exist. Upstate New York has land that is more rural and school districts that encompass large geographic regions. New York State's education department receives nearly the least amount of both State and Federal financial support because of the heavy reliance on local taxes to support public education (National Education Association, 2019). Consequently, inequitable educational opportunities and financial support are present across New York State. This finding is consistent with current literature showing that one in five principals from rural areas leave their positions annually, while only one in six leave in suburban areas nationwide (Goldring & Taie, 2018).

The demographic makeup of participants for this study was not representative of the population of principals in New York State. New York State principals are approximately 70% White and 30% Non-white. However, the principals who participated in the present study were approximately 90% White and 10% Non-white. The small

sample representing the Non-white principals restricted the comparison of means based on race; however, it still provides meaningful information. Future research may want to explore the reasons for this demographic disparity. Future research should focus on ensuring that race is more accurately represented in order to determine if any group differences exist. The results of a potential study like this may alter principal development and hiring practices with the objective of increasing principal racial diversity across the State and reaching parity with national and state norms.

Interpretation of Results for Research Question 3

The final research question examined to what extent mindset explains career burnout when controlling for demographic and background characteristics for principals in New York State. Findings indicated that mindset did not explain a significant amount of the variance in burnout after controlling for demographic characteristics. Although a precursory look of this finding is consistent with current research and may provide supporting evidence towards the argument that predictors of principal burnout are generally external factors (Levin & Bradley, 2019), it also demonstrates that when a significance test results in a high probability value, it means that the data provided little evidence that the null hypothesis is false. Adjusted R squared results indicate the strength of the model's fit. With a low adjusted R squared for both models of approximately 6% it can be assumed that noise or interference may have played a role in the insignificant findings. This could have been caused by too many independent variables being squeezed into the models. Future studies may want to consider using less demographic independent variables. Despite non-significant findings for research question three it cannot be conclusively stated that mindset does not predict burnout of principals in New

York State. The findings of the current study are different from what was expected, but make for thoughtful discussions about the study's limitations and recommendations for future research.

Relationship Between Results and Prior Research

New York State is the fourth most populated state in the country, with almost 20 million inhabitants. New York State principals are therefore responsible for the development of a large percentage of the next generation of citizens in our democratic society. Highly effective and long-lasting school leadership is critical. For this reason, results from the current study indicating that New York State principals consistently report high mindset scores are promising. Possessing a growth mindset reflects the belief that an individual's intelligence, skills, and abilities are capable of incremental change (Dweck, 2006). This favorable mindset is representative of having strong relationships with others, demonstrating an ability to learn from errors, possessing a passion and perseverance towards achieving long-term goals, and a belief that one can achieve challenging goals. Dweck (2006) also indicates that individuals who possess a growth mindset seek out and enjoy tackling challenges. Principals continuously face obstacles and challenges in their work, and therefore individuals who possess a growth-oriented mindset may be predisposed to entering the career field of educational leadership.

Current research shows that an equal percentage of individuals have an incremental or growth-oriented mindset in comparison to a fixed mindset (Dweck & Molden, 2013). However, the present study's sample of school principals from New York State did not demonstrate the same degree of variability. Mindset scores for the present study were found to be consistently above the rating scale's median score of three and

had a small standard deviation, which was representative of a tight clustering of high growth mindset scores. This deviation from previous research suggests that principals in New York State have an optimistic view of themselves in relation to their work.

Principals are responsible for creating and striving for a vision of academic success for all students (Wallace Foundation, 2013). Grit, which is a component of a growth mindset, is passion and perseverance for the attainment of long-term goals (Duckworth, 2016).

Therefore, it is not surprising that the principals who participated in the current research predominantly scored highly on the mindset scale. Some might argue that a high level of growth mindset is a prerequisite for becoming a successful principal.

Limitations

Recognizing the limitations of a study is critical. This is especially true for a study that is exploratory in nature. Implications related to the limitations of a study extend beyond the single study being discussed. More importantly, these limitations can be used to guide future research and support a more robust examination of the research problem. For this reason, the discussion of the present study's limitations is embedded in the following section that discusses implications for future research. The identified limitations of the present study include the exclusion of New York City principals, not considering student ecological differences, obtaining a homogeneous sample, self-selection bias, research design and sampling limitations, and the author's personal bias towards a growth mindset.

Implications for Future Research

The primary objective of this exploratory study was to establish a foundation for future research on the relationship between mindset and career burnout levels for public

school principals. Correlation studies examine relationships but do not imply causation. As a result of this being an original research study, the researcher recognized several limitations that should guide future research. Overall, this study found that no statistical relationship exists between the mindset of principals in New York State and their level of career burnout. However, the lack of statistical findings and limitations of the present study provide a tremendous amount of meaningful information that should guide future research.

The sample of 170 principals was relatively small in comparison to the 4,250 school building principals in New York State. Generalization of results outside of New York comes with sampling error concerns, such as how accurately the current study's sample represents populations both inside and outside of New York State. In addition, the sample did not include principals in New York City due to a lack of access, but these principals account for approximately half of all principals in New York State. Furthermore, this study did not examine the different types of students each school serves. Although there was a distinction made between elementary, junior/middle, and high schools, there was no distinction for the socio-economic levels of the students each school serves. Future researchers may want to include ecological variables, such as the percentage of students in the school who receive free or reduced lunch. Other ecological variables could include the culture and climate within the school, previous work experience of the principal, current level of support from upper management, parent involvement level, level of board support, and resources of the school district.

The current study's lack of variation in mindset and burnout scores limits the generalizability of results. The sample's burnout scores mostly clustered around the low

range, while mindset scores clustered around the high range. This limited the ability to assess the variance and the magnitude of the relationship between variables accurately, and also to predict future scores. Future research should consider replicating this study in a state other than New York, as New York has peculiarities that may have an impact on the findings. One such factor is that New York offers principals tenure. Underwood (2018) articulates that the trend is for states to remove or restrict tenure through practice and litigation. However, tenure provides a level of protection that diminishes the fear and anxiety of potential termination, which could influence one's level of career burnout. New York also has the highest per pupil expenditures and educational staff salaries in the country (National Education Association, 2019). This high level of spending increases the amount of resources available to support student achievement while also making employment opportunities extremely competitive. Elevated salaries in New York attract highly qualified candidates and increase competition amongst them. This can be a contributing factor in both retaining principals and decreasing feelings of burnout.

The homogeneous sample of this study limits the generalizability of results. This study had a homogeneous group of participants who were mostly current principals who were white, with few years of principalship experience, yet many years of experience in the field of education. It would be beneficial for future research to use a sample that is more racially diverse, has more variation in the number of years participants have been principals, and includes the principals of non-public schools. In addition, by only surveying individuals who are currently school principals, the study did not capture the sentiments of those who may have become so burned out in their career field that they

left the principalship position all together. A sample containing a greater diversity of participants may yield more variance in burnout and mindset scores.

Survey research reflects the views of an individual who agreed to participate in a study on a given topic. However, since results do not include the sentiments of principals who chose not to participate in the study a non-responsive bias is present. In addition, the present study asked participants to self-reflect and share their views of themselves, which has inherent challenges. Dweck (2015) identifies the phenomenon of a “false growth mindset” as a possible cause of inflated mindset scores. This false growth mindset occurs when an individual indicates that they have a growth mindset, yet their behaviors and words indicate otherwise. Dweck suggests that sharing with participants in advance that we each hold a certain amount of both fixed and growth mindset attributes may lessen their feelings of obligation to respond in a growth mindset-oriented manner. The researcher did not consider this idea during the present study, but its addition to future research might help to yield more accurate self-reporting results.

Participants received this survey between October 28, 2019 and December 1, 2019. For principals, this is a very busy time of year, generally followed by a week off just prior to the new year. The timing of the data collection could have impacted the results and response rate of the survey. In addition, it was not possible to identify principals who initially agreed to participate in the study, yet never completed the survey. This was because the researcher only collected surveys completed in their entirety from Survey Monkey for data collection and analysis. Future researchers may want to consider utilizing the partial surveys completed by participants. This behavior may be indicative of a specific mindset or burnout level that the current study did not capture.

The researcher obtained the sample through several professional organizations, including SAANYS, LIASCD, CAS, and Eastern Suffolk County BOCES listservs. It is possible that the members of a professional organization maintain similar beliefs, including mindsets and career burnout ideas. Due to being a purposive convenience sample, the principals who chose to participate in the study could limit the results and interpretation, as this study was unable to survey those potential participants who chose not to participate.

The author of the present study has a personal bias towards the belief in growth mindset. As a principal, father, and athlete who has overcome personal and professional obstacles and believes in each individual's limitless capacity to grow and improve, the author's own mindset may have had an inadvertent impact on the interpretation of current literature and study results. Similarly, being the principal of a demanding high school in Nassau County, New York could have created an inherent bias. Despite having this bias, the author carefully designed the current study to limit these biases from influencing the study's results.

Our mindset and attitude towards career burnout are capable of change. Through maturation and changing situational differences, what a participant reports today may not be accurate for tomorrow. Personal and professional events, such as stress, can affect how the individual interprets and reports their mindset and career burnout at that specific point in time. A longitudinal study might provide more consistent survey scores for respondents with less impact due to temporary situational events. In addition, the researcher measured mindset and levels of career burnout using a self-reported survey. Future researchers may want to compare the self-reported mindset of principals to the

principal's mindset as reported by their staff. This comparison may provide a more robust and diverse perspective on the mindset of principals.

Although this study utilized quantitative methods to investigate the research questions, qualitative methods should be considered for future research. Qualitative research would allow the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of career burnout and mindset through the lens of their subject(s). The open ended and naturalistic approach of qualitative research would provide a deeper understanding of the issue. A case study coupled with field observations would allow the researcher to truly capture the feelings individuals possess on these topics through an inductive process.

Implications for Future Practice

Principal turnover is a national problem that impacts high poverty and minority communities most significantly (Papa, 2007). Twenty-one percent of the principals represented in varying national samples left their job annually (Battle, 2010; Goldring & Taie, 2018). The present study did not explore whether participants were principals at a previous school or were contemplating leaving either their current position or the field of education altogether. However, it is telling that for the 170 participants in the present study the median number of years as principal at their current school was only six. From this data, one can infer that New York State has a cohort of principals with few years of principalship experience. If it takes five to seven years to make meaningful change as a principal of a school (Fullan, 2001), and student achievement drops the first two years following the installation of a new principal (Miller, 2013), then it would behoove New York State to develop practices to retain highly effective principals.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) found that exemplary pre- and in-service programs for principals led principals to have more positive attitudes about their work. In turn, these principals are more likely to remain at their jobs despite the numerous challenges that they face. Burnout is the level of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment individuals report in relation to their career (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). By providing professional development opportunities aimed at improving the mindset of principals, school districts may be able to help principals develop a more positive attitude about their work. In the words of Nietzsche, “He who has a *why* to live for can bear almost any *how*” (Nietzsche, 1998). The promotion of a growth-oriented mindset through professional development will increase one’s locus of control at work. This locus of control will bring more significance and personal connection to a principal’s work. Retaining effective principals through targeted professional development opportunities is imperative since research indicates principals are the second most influential force on positive student achievement (Hattie, 2009). For this reason, it is suggested that future practice consider increased professional development opportunities related to mindset and career burnout prevention.

Principals are in the career field of helping others including staff and students alike. They frequently expose themselves to others’ trauma by assisting in solving difficult psychological, social, and physical problems. This exposure to others’ secondary trauma over extended periods of time may have a significant adverse impact on the emotional state of principals (Sprang, Craig, & Clark, 2011). As previously mentioned, training in “self-care” is a mandatory part of training for mental health professionals in order to assist them in dealing with secondary trauma, however, it is rarely a part of

training for principals (Crawford, Arnold, & Brown, 2014). Future practice should consider integrating self-care strategies into principal development and certification programs in order to mitigate these stressors that may impact career burnout levels. The infusion of professional development opportunities related to self-care could lead to an increase in levels of personal accomplishment and a decrease in emotional exhaustion and depersonalization for principals, which contribute to a decrease in career burnout.

Principals must view work related obstacles as possible to overcome. Principals face insurmountable challenges on a daily basis that have the potential to lead to burnout if not dealt with effectively. According to Dweck (2006), our mindset is impacted by many variables including the strength of our relationship with others, levels of self-efficacy, and our ability to learn from our errors. The potential benefits related to the self-care of principal's as viewed through the lens of Mindset theory can have significant positive contributions to the professional field of educational leadership.

Conclusion

The current study contributes to our understanding of the relationship between the mindset that principals hold about their abilities to effectively lead schools in New York State and their level of career burnout. As an exploratory study, it established the foundation for future research on the relationships between school building leadership, mindset, and career burnout. "There is a tendency in the social sciences to overemphasize the statistically significant findings and to underemphasize the importance of clinically or social socially significant findings" (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). When looking through this lens, the results of the current study have practical significance. In summary, evidence from the current study indicates that principals in New York State generally

possess the growth-oriented mindset and low levels of career burnout required to increase student achievement.

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APPENDIX A: IRB AGREEMENT



Federal Wide Assurance: FWA00009066

Oct 3, 2019 2:57 PM EDT

PI: Chris Korolczuk
 CO-PI: Mary Ellen Freeley
 Dept: Ed Admin & Instruc Leadership

Re: Initial - IRB-FY2020-41 AN EXAMINATION OF THE DIFFERENCE IN CAREER BURNOUT BETWEEN NEW YORK STATE PRINCIPALS OF VARYING MINDSET LEVELS

Dear Chris Korolczuk:

The St John's University Institutional Review Board has rendered the decision below for AN EXAMINATION OF THE DIFFERENCE IN CAREER BURNOUT BETWEEN NEW YORK STATE PRINCIPALS OF VARYING MINDSET LEVELS.

Decision: Exempt

Selected Category: Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Sincerely,

Raymond DiGiuseppe, PhD, ABPP
 Chair, Institutional Review Board
 Professor of Psychology

Marie Nitopi, Ed.D.
 IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX B: INTRODUCTORY LETTER



School Principal Mindset and Career Burnout Survey

(Introduction and Consent Information)

Dear fellow principal,

The role of principal is one of the most critical in the success of educating students. We are the glue that bind students, Boards of Education, NYSED, staff, and communities. My name is Chris Koroleczuk and I am the principal of a high school in Nassau County, New York. I am also completing my Doctoral studies in Educational Leadership from St. John's University. To support our colleagues in the field, I hope to recruit approximately 420 principals from across New York State to participate in the current study, which will only require 8-10 minutes of your time.

Background Information: The purpose of the study is to better understand the relationship between the mindset of principals (growth vs. fixed) with their levels of career burnout. In other words, does how principals perceive the malleability of their skills, intelligence and abilities have a relationship with their level of feeling burned out in their career field? It is my hope that answering this critical question will fill a gap of knowledge that currently exists. Gaining insight into this relationship may help obtain and retain strong building principals, such as yourself, and in turn support student achievement and strengthen our local communities.

Procedures: The estimated time to complete the 45-question survey is approximately 8-12 minutes. The electronic survey can be accessed by the following QR

code:

or on the website <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PrincipalMindsetBurnoutQuiz>.

The survey will consist of three sections. This will include demographic questions (7 questions), the Dweck Mindset Instrument survey (DMI - 16 questions) and the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI-ES - 22 questions). Whereas the first section is multiple choice, the second two sections are Likert style questions. The survey will be available to complete between December 1, 2019 through February 1, 2020.

Risks: This study is correlational and not experimental. Therefore, there are no reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts to participants. Participation is strictly voluntary.

Confidentiality: All survey responses are anonymous. SurveyMonkey is the electronic platform being used to host the survey. SurveyMonkey does not provide any identifiable information, including IP address of participants to the researcher in order to further ensure anonymity. The researcher will not ask for, nor is there any mechanism on the survey, for respondents to provide any personally identifiable information. All data and records related to this study will be kept private and confidential and only be used for the purpose of the present study.

Informed Consent Information: Your willingness to complete the survey will indicate that you have read all of the information provided and consent to participate in this research study. The researcher's contact information is provided if any participant chooses to reach out on their own volition for any questions or concerns. Any information discussed will be held strictly confidential and not be recorded in any manner.

Contacts: You can reach either me at chris.korolczuk17@stjohns.edu or my mentor for this study, Dr. Mary Ellen Freeley, at freeleym@stjohns.edu for questions about the research, research subjects' rights and who to contact in the event of a research related injury. As well, you may reach the Institutional Review Board (IRB) coordinator for St. John's University at nitopin@stjohns.edu or at (718) 990-1440.

Once again, I truly thank you for considering participation in this valuable research and helping our profession. Lastly, I appreciate the great work you do as a building principal!

With sincere appreciation,

Christopher Korolczuk

St. John's University, Graduate School of Education

8000 Utopia Parkway

Jamaica, New York 11439

APPENDIX C: MASLACH BURNOUT INVENTORY – EDUCATORS SURVEY

Educators Survey

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

HOW OFTEN

0 - 6

Statements:

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

APPENDIX D: GROWTH MINDSET SURVEY

DWECK MINDSET INSTRUMENT

Directions: Read each sentence below and then mark the corresponding box that shows how much you agree with each sentence. There are no right or wrong answers.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Mostly Agree	Mostly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1) You have a certain amount of intelligence, and you really can't do much to change it.						
2) Your intelligence is something about you that you can't change very much.						
3) No matter who you are, you can significantly change your intelligence level.						
4) To be honest, you can't really change how intelligent you are.						
5) You can always substantially change how intelligent you are.						
6) You can learn new things, but you can't really change your basic intelligence.						
7) No matter how much intelligence you have, you can always change it quite a bit.						
8) You can change even your basic intelligence level considerably.						

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Mostly Agree	Mostly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
9) You have a certain amount of talent, and you can't really do much to change it.						
10) Your talent in an area is something about you that you can't change very much.						
11) No matter who you are, you can significantly change your level of talent.						
12) To be honest, you can't really change how much talent you have.						
13) You can always substantially change how much talent you have.						
14) You can learn new things, but you can't really change your basic level of talent.						
15) No matter how much talent you have, you can always change it quite a bit.						
16) You can change even your basic level of talent considerably.						

APPENDIX E: COPYRIGHT PERMISSIONS

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Susan E. Jackson: Manual, and MBI-GS, MBI-GS(S), MBI-HSS, MBI-HSS(MP), MBI-ES

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Vita

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