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Contributions of Doctoral Educational Leadership Programs to the Development of Leader Self-Efficacy

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Walden University
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Abstract

Contributions of Doctoral Educational Leadership Programs to the Development of Leader Self-Efficacy

by

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MA, University of Phoenix, 2008

BA, Point Loma Nazarene University, 1992

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Educational leadership programs have not often focused on leader self-efficacy (LSE) as a program outcome although self-efficacy has been considered a key component for successful leaders. Principals prepared through a doctoral degree were found to be more effective leaders than those without a doctoral degree and may be more skilled to build high-quality teacher teams resulting in higher academic student gains. The connection between participating in a doctoral program and building LSE was not understood. The purpose of this basic design qualitative study was to understand graduates' perceptions of how their participation in their education doctoral program developed their LSE as a current school leader and gather suggestions they had for how doctoral programs could develop LSE in school leaders. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy and Paglis and Green's three-dimensional construct for LSE served as the conceptual framework. A purposeful sample of 10 doctoral graduates from programs in a western state and who served as school leaders in K-12 schools, volunteered and participated in semistructured interviews. Data were analyzed using open coding, leading to the emergent themes of relationships, relevancy, reflection, and responsibility as important to the development of LSE. The results of this study may contribute to positive social change by providing insights for faculty and programs into how LSE can be developed through the curriculum in a doctoral program and, thus, enable effective leaders to positively influence teacher efficacy and improve student academic outcomes.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my three children - Zachary James, Ethan David, Madison Brean - and to my husband, Brent. To my brother, Brian Frey, thank you for always doing what's right and not what's easiest, following in Dad's footsteps. Thank you to my in-laws, David and Jeanne Kall, who have always been supportive of my journey. I also dedicate this to my parents and grandparents who set the example for understanding the power of education. Thank you to my parents, Clifford and Jacqueline Frey, for showing me resilience while completing your Juris Doctorates, and to my grandparents, Dr. Kenneth Frey (PhD) and Dr. Verna Frey (EdD), for instilling in me the ability to get an advanced degree at any age.

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I would like to acknowledge the importance of my family, specifically my husband, Brent, whose sacrifices and efforts made it possible for a mother of three to complete her doctorate. You took our kids to appointments, ran them to rehearsals, cooked for them, and cleaned. It would have been literally impossible to do this without you. Just as critical was your belief in me that completing this monumental task was not only possible, but certain for me. Without your unfailing confidence in my abilities, I couldn't have done this. Thank you, kids, for your patience with me these last few years. I love you!

Leaders have had a profound impact on my life in every avenue of my education career, some good and some to be able to learn what not to do. Through it all, I have steadfastly believed that leading with love and service first, is the best way to move a community. There are many who have shaped my journey of whom I would like to acknowledge, Dr. Deb Erickson and Dr. Jill Hamilton-Bunch, the Dean and Assistant Dean of Education in the graduate program of my university. To Mr. Danyel Kelly from the Fruitvale School District for his belief in me as a leader, his listening ear, and confidence in my ideas.

Lastly, I would like to thank my committee, Dr. Cheryl Keen, Dr. Kathleen Kingston, and Dr. Wade Fish, who provided incredible support throughout this process. I am truly grateful for having the support of such an amazing and strong committee so dedicated to guiding me to become a scholar. Thank you so much for the time, listening ear, and advice over these last couple of years. Thank you!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The leader of a kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) school has many challenges and responsibilities to lead its teachers, staff, and students towards success. In order to lead successfully, a principal needs to be a catalyst for change in order to enhance and transform the culture of the school positively towards the outcome of improved student learning (McKinney et al., 2015; Tingle et al., 2019). The effective leadership of a principal has been found to improve overall school performance (Fullan, 2014; Mesterova et al., 2015) as well as enhance the performance of troubled schools (Cordeiro & Cunningham, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2004; Mattar, 2012). Self-efficacy was found to be a key element in successful leadership (Dwyer, 2019). When a principal has high self-efficacy, they engage in challenging responsibilities and tasks, and even more important, they persist through barriers (Williams, 2020). Self-efficacy is a crucial perspective for a leader to be able to view themself in a principal's role and, therefore, motivate themselves as well as others to make the right choices and decisions (Bandura & Locke, 2003; Fowler et al., 2020).

Because the principalship is a complicated and challenging role, preparation is required to build the self-efficacy and competence necessary to fulfill the role (Allen, 2020). Principal preparation programs, professional development (PD) within schools and districts, leadership programs, and doctoral programs have all been a part of the preparation landscape for principals over the years in the United States. Principals prepared in doctoral programs have been found to be more effective in developing high-quality teacher teams, resulting in greater student learning gains (Allen, 2020; Fuller et

al., 2011; Ni et al., 2017). However, principal preparation programs and doctoral programs have been under fire for a lack of rigor and effectiveness to prepare leaders for success (Levine, 2005; Mango et al., 2019; Pérez & Breault, 2018; Perrone & Tucker, 2019). Many studies have researched what a successful school leader does (Gurr, 2017; Leithwood, 2012, 2019; Leithwood et al., 2017) but not how they learn and develop leader self-efficacy (LSE) in a doctoral program. In this study, I explored the perspectives of doctoral graduates and their development of LSE as a K-12 principal within their program.

In the following sections of this chapter, I discuss the background of the study, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the framework, the nature of the study definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and the significance of the study.

Background

Leadership has had various definitions depending upon the culture and the context with which it is used. Paglis and Green (2002) defined leadership as essentially a social influence process with a common goal in mind. Paglis and Green suggested the following definition, which they pulled together from common strands of other definitions: "leadership is a process of identifying a group goal and corresponding strategy, and influencing others to direct their efforts voluntarily in pursuit of it" (p. 216). Seibert et al. (2017) identified several specific activities tied to leadership: communicating, motivating others, planning, establishing direction, delegating, and coordinating tasks. Baroudi and

Hojeij (2018) believed that effective leadership is about the cultivation of the leader in others.

There is a close relationship between leaders and managers. Yukl and Van Fleet (1992), as cited in Paglis and Green (2002), found that although leaders and managers both carry out the responsibilities of their positions and delegate authority, only leaders are said to influence the commitment of their followers. Another difference between managers and leaders is the element of being a change agent (Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992). Where managers plan, budget, staff, and organize to solve problems, leaders are agents of change by determining strengths and weaknesses to find opportunities to assess the changes needed for not just surviving but thriving (Paglis & Green, 2002). Leaders lead others to commit to change while supporting their team to overcome obstacles that arise and get in the way (McCormick, 2001; Paglis & Green, 2002; Santora, 1992).

Administrators in U.S. public schools are required to earn an administrative credential, according to the requirements of their state (Grissom et al., 2017). One such option towards credentialing is a principal preparation program or leadership preparation program provided by a higher education institution to certify an educator as an administrator. Much of the literature in the last 2 decades on principal preparation programs and leadership development has discussed the need for reform of traditional university preparation programs, citing lack of adequate preparation for instructional leaders (Klostermann et al., 2015; Mango et al., 2019; Tingle et al., 2019). Klostermann et al. (2015) found that poor preparation stems from poor curriculum, inexperienced staff, easy admission processes, lack of evolution, and minimal field experiences. Due to the

increase of accountability in education, stemming from tighter budgets and philosophical differences in preparedness versus readiness, tension has built between school districts and universities (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). The financial responsibility for preparing principals has vacillated between both, adding to the challenge (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Levine, 2005).

Some of these leadership preparation goals are reflected in education doctoral programs, with completion resulting in a doctorate of education (EdD) degree. The EdD program (Perry, 2013) was introduced in 1921 by Holmes of Harvard University with the intention to train school leaders (Buttram & Doolittle, 2015), similar to the depth and breadth of medical or law school (Levine, 2005). The EdD provided education departments autonomy of curriculum as a way to separate themselves from other departments within a university (Buttram & Doolittle, 2015; Levine, 2005). The doctorate of philosophy (PhD) and the EdD have been debated as to which is the most appropriate for school leaders but have generally grown to be considered to equip leaders with either skills as a researcher or a practitioner (Elliott & Ware, 2019). The Carnegie Project on the Educational Doctorate (2009) was launched in 2007 in response to concerns of rigor and relevance in programs in order to help strengthen the educational doctorate. Universities were challenged through membership and partnerships to ensure the doctoral preparation programs tailored their design to the needs of the researcher or practitioner as well as to distinguish outcomes and expectations for candidates (Perry, 2013). However, there is little research regarding the development of LSE in an educational doctoral program;

therefore, I conducted this study to explore the perspectives of doctoral graduates and their development of LSE as a K-12 principal within their program.

Problem Statement

The research problem was that educational leadership programs do not intentionally focus on LSE as a program outcome (Seibert et al., 2017), although self-efficacy is considered a key component for successful leaders (Dwyer, 2019). The connection between participating in a doctoral program and building LSE is not understood and limited in research. McCormick et al. (2002) found that LSE predicted leadership behavior and distinguished leaders from nonleaders. LSE can be developed, and leadership development programs may be more effective if more was understood about the development of LSE (Mango et al., 2019). I conducted this study to help fill a gap in the research by exploring the perceptions of doctoral program alumni regarding how their educational leadership program supported the development of their LSE in their current role as a K-12 leader.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this basic design qualitative study was to understand graduates' perceptions of how their participation in their education doctoral program developed their LSE as a current school leader and gather suggestions they had for how doctoral programs could develop LSE in school leaders.

Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of educational leadership doctoral program alumni regarding how their program developed their LSE to navigate challenges as a current principal?
2. What are the perceptions of educational leadership doctoral program alumni regarding LSE in principals?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was drawn from Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy and Paglis and Green's (2002) three-dimensional construct for LSE. Bandura asserted that expectations of personal efficacy determined the initiation of coping behavior as well as how much work would be expended and for how long. Paglis and Green defined the construct of LSE and developed a three-dimensional measurement used in their study based on Bandura's social cognitive theory. Paglis and Green tested their LSE model that focused on manager's motivation for attempting the leadership of change and their assessment included direction setting, gaining commitment, and overcoming obstacles. Paglis and Green's model and Bandura's theory guided the development of some of the interview questions and probes and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

Bandura (1977) developed self-efficacy theory as part of the social cognitive theory. Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their ability to complete a task or respond to a challenge successfully (Bandura, 1997). Bandura (1982) suggested that four categories of experience develop self-efficacy: performance accomplishments, vicarious

experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional stimulation. I will provide more details on this theory in Chapter 2.

Paglis and Green (2002) further extended Bandura's theory of self-efficacy to leadership as a construct of LSE and developed a three-dimensional measurement that went on to be used widely. By exploring LSE more deeply, Paglis (2010) linked it to leaders' individual performance to collective efficacy in their schools and performance. The terms LSE and *leadership self-efficacy* are often used interchangeably in the field. I used LSE in reference to the design of the study and used the construct leadership self-efficacy if it was used by previous researchers whose studies I reviewed.

Nature of the Study

In this study, I employed a basic qualitative approach (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) because it was consistent with the exploration of doctoral alumni's perceptions of their development of LSE used in their K-12 leadership. The focus was on how students' doctoral learning contributed to their LSE. I collected data from 10 school leaders, who were recruited through convenience and snowball sampling, through one-on-one, semistructured, open-ended interviews. Data were analyzed by coding the interview transcripts to assist in creating categories and themes.

Definitions

In order for the reader to fully understand the terms used in the study, I define terms related to leadership as well as self-efficacy and its development in this section.

Collective efficacy: A "group's shared beliefs in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 477).

Leader development efficacy: An individual's belief in their ability to continually develop their leadership knowledge and skills, which in turn, determines the perseverance and resolve in meeting set goals (Bandura, 1982; Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Murphy & Johnson, 2016).

Leadership: A process identifying a group goal and corresponding strategies and influencing others to direct their efforts to voluntarily pursue it (Paglis & Green, 2002).

Leadership/leader self-efficacy (LSE): A person's judgment that they can successfully exert leadership by setting a direction for the workgroup, building relationships with followers in order to gain their commitment to change goals, and working with them to overcome obstacles to change (Paglis & Green, 2002, p. 217). Many researchers use the construct of LSE, and some use a similar definition to LSE, but not all.

Principal self-efficacy: A principal's judgment of their own abilities to plan a course of action in order to produce a desired outcome in the school they lead (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004).

Self-efficacy: An individual's belief in their capabilities to complete a task or respond to specific events (Bandura, 1986).

Teacher self-efficacy: A teacher's beliefs in their ability to positively impact learners (Hallinger et al., 2017).

Assumptions

This qualitative study was based on a few assumptions. I assumed that participants would answer all interview questions openly and honestly. Another assumption was that participants were aware of their career choice and what they learned from participating in a doctoral program to develop their LSE. Lastly, I assumed that the participants were willing to share their LSE experience and how they perceive their program impacted the development of their self-efficacy as a leader.

Scope and Delimitations

In this qualitative study, I focused on universities in a western state in which participants attended doctoral programs earning an EdD or a PhD. The specific focus was on alumni who graduated in the last 3–7 years and were currently in a leadership role in a K-12 school or district. To reach saturation, I intended to interview eight to 10 qualified participants who submitted consent forms. Leaders with less than 3–7 years of leadership experience in a K-12 school setting or that were still enrolled in a doctoral program were not selected as participants.

Limitations

This study was limited to the perceptions and experiences of leaders who graduated from a California doctoral program and may not fully represent the experiences of leaders across the country or with less than 3–7 years of experience. The results that emerged may not be transferable to similar populations due to the small sample size, although findings may have implications for further studies. This study was also limited to the experience of leaders in a particular time frame and may not be reflective of leaders

in other years, especially prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and virtual teaching. Participants all expressed a level of LSE prior to the participation in a doctoral program, creating a limitation to understanding the overall measured impact of their program on LSE.

A final limitation of the study was my possible bias as the researcher. Because I was an instrument in the qualitative study, research bias may have impacted the formulation of the interview questions, the collection of data, and the data analysis process (see Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2003). As a current advisor of administrative credentialing candidates, director of the university administrator preparation program, and a former K-12 school administrator, there may have been potential bias that may have led to inaccurate presumptions when listening to the participants' experiences as leaders. To limit the presence of bias, I used a reflective journal to document my thoughts and feelings throughout the study. Reflective notes can include the researcher's feelings, reactions, and initial interpretations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Significance of the Study

This study may fill a gap an understanding of educational doctorate leader preparation programs and graduates' development of LSE. According to Mango et al. (2019), the quality of leadership development is still under scrutiny and current leadership development has been largely ignored by practitioners. School leaders impact school outcomes in many ways, including teacher job satisfaction, faculty trust, teacher commitment, and student achievement (Hallinger et al., 2017; Zeinabadi, 2014). School leaders with LSE have been shown to effect student learning outcomes and teacher

commitment (Hallinger et al., 2017; Leithwood, 2012; Zeinabadi, 2014) The results of this study may provide insights for faculty and programs into how LSE is developed through the curriculum in a doctoral program that might enable effective leaders to positively influence teacher efficacy and, thereby, improve student academic outcome (see Schrik & Wasonga, 2019).

Summary

Self-efficacy is considered a key component for successful leaders (Dwyer, 2019) but is not focused on in educational leadership programs as an outcome (Seibert et al., 2017). Principals prepared in doctoral degree programs are more effective leaders than those without a doctoral degree and may be more able to build high-quality teams to achieve higher academic success (McCormick et al., 2002). However, the connection between doctoral program participation and building LSE is not understood (Mango et al., 2019).

Chapter 2 will include a literature review of research related to self-efficacy, LSE, principal self-efficacy, leadership development, and the sources of development. I will also describe the literature search strategy and conceptual framework in the next chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The research problem was that educational leadership programs do not intentionally focus on LSE as a program outcome (see Seibert et al., 2017) although self-efficacy is considered a key component for successful leaders (see Dwyer, 2019). The purpose of this basic design qualitative study was to understand graduates' perceptions of their education doctoral program and how their participation in their program developed their LSE as a current school leader as well as gather suggestions they had for how doctoral programs can develop LSE in school leaders. This study may help fill a gap in the research by exploring doctoral students' perceptions regarding how their educational leadership program supported the development of their LSE in their role as a K-12 school leader.

McCormick et al. (2002) reported that LSE predicted leadership behavior and distinguished leaders from nonleaders. They found that LSE can be developed, and leadership development programs may be more effective if more was understood about LSE development (McCormick et al., 2002). According to Ni et al. (2017), principals prepared in doctoral institutions are more effective leaders than those without a doctoral degree and may be more able to build high-quality teacher teams resulting in higher gains.

In this chapter, I discuss my literature search strategies and the conceptual foundation as well as provide a review of the extant research regarding LSE, leadership development, and doctoral degrees.

Literature Search Strategy

To locate literature for this review, I searched the Psych Info, ERIC, Education Source, EBSCO, Thoreau, SAGE, and Google Scholar databases using the following search terms: *education doctoral degree, self-efficacy, development self-efficacy, effective leaders, leader self-efficacy, leader development-efficacy, leadership development, instructional leadership, school administrator, school leader, district leader, teacher self-efficacy,* and *teacher commitment*. Results generated were generally small in number, with one to 24 articles resulting from combinations of the search terms listed above. Combining the terms *district leaders AND development efficacy AND leadership* and searching in EBSCO and Thoreau generated the largest result. From searching these terms and through detailed citation mining, more than 100 peer-reviewed articles and books were chosen to be included in this study. I identified germane scholarship by noting frequently cited authors and seminal texts and locating them in Google Scholar. Minimal research was found linking a doctoral degree with LSE. Yet, one researcher reported that principals prepared in doctoral institutions were more effective leaders than those without a doctoral degree (Ni et al., 2017).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was based on Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy and Paglis and Green's (2002) three-dimensional construct of LSE.

Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their capabilities to complete a task or respond to specific events (Bandura, 1997). As a construct, self-efficacy has its

theoretical foundations in Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory in which the author posited those psychological processes change the level and the strength of self-efficacy, no matter their form. Bandura asserted that personal efficacy expectations determine the initiation of coping behavior as well as how much work is expended and for how long which, became central in the social cognitive theory framework (Iroegbu, 2015). Self-efficacy measurement has three dimensions: level, generality, and strength (Bandura, 1997). Bandura (1982) also suggested four categories of experience that are used to develop self-efficacy; performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional stimulation. Many subsequent scholars have drawn on Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, including McCormick et al. (2002), who used it to develop the concept of leadership self-efficacy and LSE development.

Performance Accomplishments

Gilbert et al. (2018) found that an individual's self-efficacy increases when they are immersed in real-world experiences. Personal experience or performance accomplishments were considered by Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) to be the most influential on self-efficacy. A successful experience contributes to an individual's belief in their own proficiency in the future (Black, 2015). Task success that is achieved early and easily strengthens efficacy; however, if the task is too easy or unimportant and extensive support is needed, efficacy is impaired (Black, 2015). When a person perceives their performance to be a failure, their efficacy is lowered, as is their expectation of future success (Black, 2015). However, overcoming previous failures through determination and effort can strengthen self-efficacy (Bandura, 1973).

Vicarious Experience

Mastery is not the sole determinant of self-efficacy; watching others complete difficult tasks without adverse effects can create expectations from observers that they, too, will succeed with persistence and effort (Bandura, 1973). Professional confidence can be built by observing others in the same field who are skilled, admired, and credible (Black, 2015). Likewise, an individual observing failure in a similar situation to their own erodes self-efficacy, unless they perceive that their own skills are greater than those witnessed (Black, 2015). Gilbert et al. (2018) found that vicarious learning encourages critique, collaboration, and willingness to try new techniques. Vicarious experience is a less dependable learning source than personal experience, but at the same time, individual and isolated accomplishments develop a weaker and more vulnerable level of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1973).

Verbal Persuasion

Verbal persuasion is the most popular and accessible category of experience for developing self-efficacy (Bandura, 1973). Verbal persuasion is encouragement given in the form of feedback that may also include suggestions for improvement (Black, 2015). Feedback that is unfocused and too harsh may lower self-efficacy, but constructive and focused feedback is more likely to increase self-efficacy (Black, 2015). Feedback can also be useful through a mentor relationship in which an expert in a similar area supports and guides a person with less experience and can often mitigate low levels of self-efficacy and increase performance (Fox, 2018). However, self-efficacy is weaker if this is the only strategy used because personal experience is more authentic (Bandura, 1973).

Furthermore, verbal encouragement may contradict knowledge imparted by experience (Bandura, 1973).

Emotional Stimulation

Emotional stimulation that is stressful and that elicits emotion during a task can hinder the task's repetition and, therefore, affect perceived self-efficacy to repeat the task successfully (Bandura, 2015). High negative emotions can debilitate an individual's performance and create the perception that when they are calm, they are more likely to experience success (Bandura, 2015). Fear of a task generates further fear of impending failure, building anxiety that can also be debilitating. However, depending upon the individual and the situation, emotional stimulation with an increased heart rate or respiration may lead a person to perceive it as positive energy (Black, 2015).

According to the self-efficacy theory, a leader's belief in their ability to successfully fulfill their leadership tasks was a key success factor (Bandura, 1977). McCormick (2001) added a leadership approach to Bandura's social cognitive theory and called it the social cognitive model of leadership (see Figure 1).

Leadership Self-Efficacy Construct

Paglis and Green (2002) defined the construct of leadership self-efficacy and developed a three-dimensional measurement that included direction setting, gaining commitment, and overcoming obstacles to reflect a manager's self-perceived ability to successfully execute those behaviors required to effect change in the workplace. In their research, Paglis and Green established an LSE construct used to determine influences on leaders' judgments. The presented and empirically tested a model of LSE, its antecedents,

and the consequences in their seminal study. From the various definitions in research, they created the following definition of LSE:

> LSE is a person's judgment that he or she can successfully exert leadership by setting a direction for the workgroup, building relationships with followers in order to gain their commitment to change goals, and working with them to overcome obstacles to change (p. 217).

The LSE model, shown in Figure 1, guided Paglis and Green's research, with the LSE construct at the center of the model representing a leader's perceived ability to set direction, gain commitment, and overcome obstacles. Four categories of antecedents include those of individuals, subordinates, superiors, and organization.

Figure 1

Leadership Self-Efficacy Model

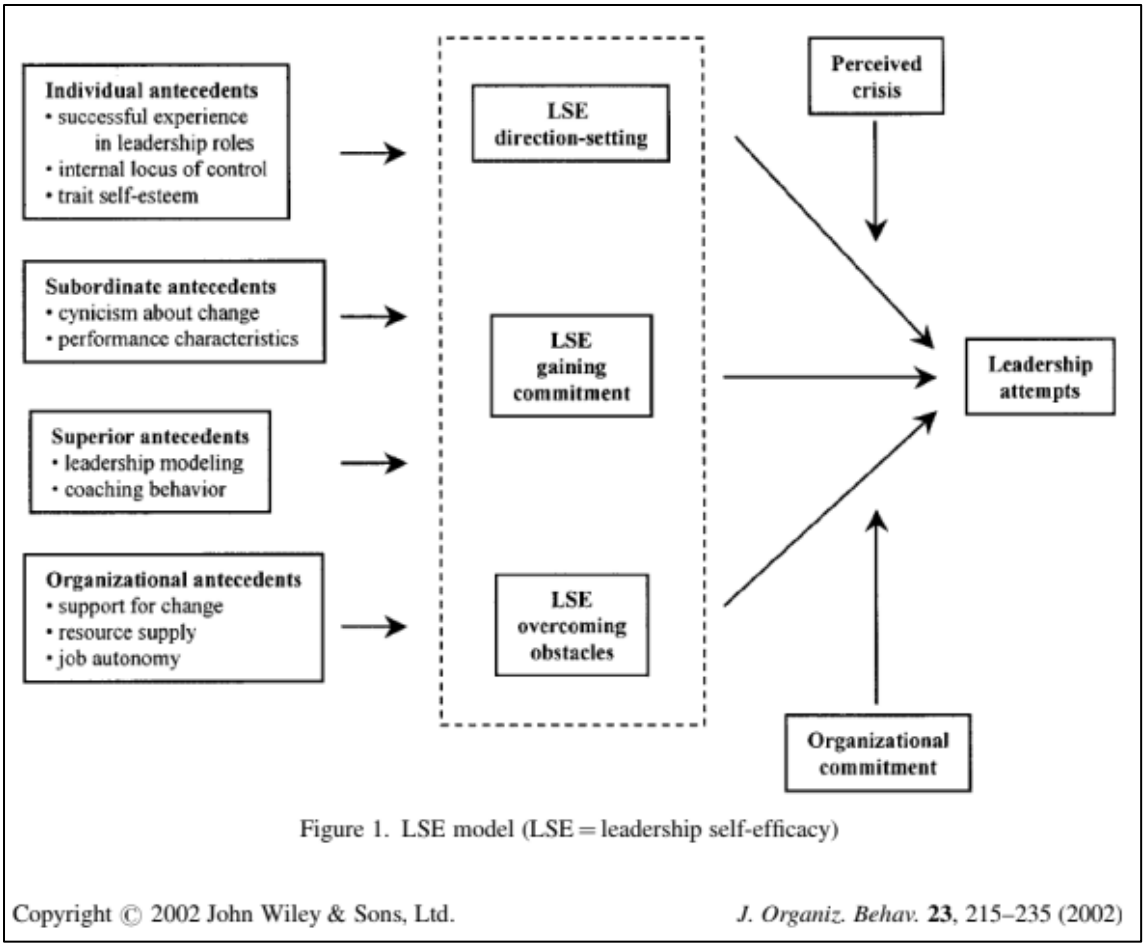

Figure 1. LSE model (LSE = leadership self-efficacy)

 J. Organiz. Behav. **23**, 215–235 (2002)

Note. From "Leadership Self-Efficacy and Managers' Motivation for Leading Change," by L.L. Paglis, and S.G. Green, 2002, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *23*(2), p. 217. Copyright @ 2002 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

LSE was used later by Paglis (2010) to explore the new concept more deeply, linking LSE with leaders' individual performance and collective efficacy in their schools and performance. A leader's relationship quality with subordinates has also been connected positively to LSE (Paglis & Green, 2002). Paglis suggested that rather than the past LSE research being a limitation, the flexibility of the measurement and definition was appropriate and consistent with the foundation and theory of self-efficacy.

Extensions of Bandura's Research

Hannah et al. (2008) introduced the concept of leader self and means efficacy, which is the ability of a leader's perceived capability to self-regulate motivation and thoughts drawing from assets or means within their surrounding environment in order to navigate current challenges within their context successfully. Hannah et al. established the first framework and theory for leader development to determine leader development readiness and examine ways to accelerate leader development. They included five constructs in their initial model of development readiness: metacognitive ability, self-complexity, developmental efficacy, self-concept clarity, and learning goal orientation. Development efficacy was used to refer to a leader's readiness to grow and improve (Hannah et al., 2008).

A multidimensional scale for measuring LSE based on Bandura's theory, the LSE scale, was developed by Bobbio and Manganelli (2009), and their results were first reported as a Leadership Self-Efficacy score based on Bandura's (1986) theory of self-efficacy. Machida and Schaubroeck (2011) studied the ways self-efficacy beliefs influence leader development and found that self-efficacy in leader development is more

complex than previously considered. They created a model of optimal leader development in relation to self-efficacy based on their findings.

Murphy and Johnson (2016) further discussed the concept of leader development and development readiness as stemming from LSE and *leader developmental efficacy* using assessment measures of both to target and improve leader development programs. A critical aspect of leader success includes a leader believing that their skills can be developed through successes and failures (Murphy & Johnson, 2016). Reichard et al. (2017) found that leader development efficacy, the belief of an individual in the ability to develop their leadership skills and understanding, predicted engagement and success in leader development.

Mango et al. (2019) found that leadership developers benefitted from assisting leadership learners in gaining higher development efficacy before or during a development program and from interventions for leadership development. Badura et al. (2020) found that LSE was positively related to motivation to lead while Leupold et al. (2020) found a positive relationship between participation in leadership development programs and self-efficacy. According to Mango et al., leadership quality is still under scrutiny, and current leadership development has been largely ignored by practitioners. As the connection between participating in graduate programs and self-efficacy development is not understood (Mango et al., 2019), previous studies assisted my own research. These dimensions of Bandura's and Paglis and Green's theories guided my literature review, interview questions and probes used in this study.

Empirical Literature Review of Key Factors

In the following review of the empirical literature, I analyzed research on LSE, principal self-efficacy, and leadership development-efficacy. In the first section I will examine the relationship between effective leadership and self-efficacy. In the next section, I explore the construct of principal self-efficacy and collective efficacy, beliefs that efforts as a whole will have a positive effect on the success of the school (Allen, 2020), and their impact on school achievement. In the final section I will examine research on the development of LSE in educational leaders in schools, districts, and graduate programs.

The Effects of LSE on Leadership

In this first section of the literature review, I present research regarding LSE, the outcomes for the leader, and those in their environment. The construct of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) was extended to leadership self-efficacy by Paglis and Green (2002). LSE has been defined as the "self-assessment of one's perceived capability to organize and implement action required to effectively lead organizational change to achieve a performance outcome" (McBrayer et al., 2018, p. 603). In Bandura's (1982) seminal work, social cognitive theory posits that LSE is the key cognitive variable that regulated leaders functioning in a dynamic environment. The higher level of perceived self-efficacy, the greater the performance accomplishments and therefore a predictor of behavior change (Bandura, 1982). In order to explore and better understand the leadership process, in this section I will focus on LSE and leader effectiveness, the leadership environment and collective efficacy, and the leader's self-view.

LSE and Leader Effectiveness

In a review of 25 years of research on LSE, Dwyer (2019) found that many studies report positive relationships with LSE and leader effectiveness, as well as with performance and behavioral ratings of leaders. LSE's specific influence on observers' ratings of leadership performance have been examined in several field studies and found a positive relationship with superiors' ratings (Chemers et al., 2000; Lester et al., 2011; Ng et al., 2008; Seibert et al., 2017) and peer ratings (Chemers et al., 2000). However, no relationship was found between LSE and subordinate-rated leader effectiveness, but LSE was positively correlated with self-reported effectiveness (Ali et al., 2018). Kwofie and Eku (2019) found that LSE also affected performance of those in their environment. In a study of 143 teachers and 82 headteachers in Ghana, Africa, 69% of survey respondents agreed/strongly agreed that the self-efficacy of leaders affected their effective performance at their job (Kwofie & Eku, 2019). In the relationship between LSE and their effectiveness, results indicated that LSE affected their performance on the job (Kwofie & Eku, 2019). Abou (2017) also found a significant positive correlation between overall LSE of first-line nurse managers and their leadership effectiveness.

Leadership Environment and Collective Efficacy

Past studies have shown positive results in the relationship between leadership and collective efficacy (Meyer et al., 2020). Cansoy's (2020) study of 293 teachers in Istanbul found a relationship between leadership and collective efficacy. Cansoy found a positive and significant relationship between school principals' leadership behaviors and collective teacher efficacy as well as a positive predictor of collective teacher efficacy

beliefs. Teacher efficacy can be enhanced by providing an environment of collaboration among peers and support from their principal (Sehgal et al., 2017). In a survey study of 575 secondary school teachers in India, Sehgal et al. (2017) found that principal leadership was positively associated with teacher self-efficacy. Principals who were involved with instructional and staff development had a strong positive effect on teacher collective efficacy and collaboration (Meyer et al., 2020). Meyer et al. also found a significant large direct effect between principal leadership and teacher collaboration from a sample of 630 German teachers.

In a qualitative study (Banks, 2019) of the influence of principal self-efficacy on collective efficacy, 14 preschool to grade 5 teachers from one school site and their principal were surveyed and interviewed using the Principal Self-Efficacy Scale (Hoy et al., 2006). In the 11 interviews and one focus group conducted, data showed experience as most prominently contributing to collective efficacy development (Banks, 2019). Three themes emerged that included relationship-based connections, climate, and shared accountability which teachers perceived had been provided by the principal as part of a relationship building and a collaborative environment (Banks, 2019). Through the creation of a collaborative environment, teachers perceived the principal provided opportunities for relationship development that resulted in capacity building (Banks, 2019).

High self-efficacy is also connected to the ability to cultivate the healthy relationships needed for collaboration and collective efficacy. In a qualitative study using open-ended interview questions of targeted top management employees at a five-star

hotel in Nairobi, Kenya, Kariuki (2020) found that individuals high in self-efficacy are seen to be high in leader-member exchange, resulting in effective leadership. Leader-member exchange theory (Northouse, 2016) asserts that it is the leaders' responsibility to cultivate healthy relationships between them and their followers and does not consider their traits in isolation but the interactions between them. high-quality leader-member exchange, characterized by extroversion, listening, involvement, reliability, and dependability, helped in the formation of employees' attitudes as well as affective commitment, which is thought to lay a conducive environment for leadership (Byun et al., 2017). High quality leader-member exchanges were found to create less employee turnover, more frequent promotions, and more positive performance evaluations as well as greater participation (Northouse, 2016).

LSE and Leader Identity

Leader identity has been proposed by scholars to be an important piece of leader development and reflect cognitive outcomes associated with leader development (Day & Dragoni, 2015; DeRue & Wellman, 2009). Identity, or self-view, is one's self-concept and evaluative judgement about oneself (Oyserman et al., 2012) that influence one's emotions, behaviors, and cognitions (Leary & Tangney, 2003). One of two conceptually related self-views was leader efficacy or one's level of confidence in his or her knowledge, skills, and abilities (Wood & Bandura, 1989b) associated with the act of leading others (Hannah et al., 2012). Leader identity and LSE were found to be central and fundamental to leader development, referred to as proximal outcomes of leader development compared to distal outcomes such as leader effectiveness (Day & Dragoni,

2015). Research shows that improving an individual's leader identity and their LSE increases their motivation to engage in leadership development and related experiences (Day et al., 2009; Miscenko et al., 2017). A change in one's self-perceptions of their leadership skills influence changes to their leader identity (Miscenko et al., 2017). Leadership development activities often offer cohort or mentorship opportunities. In a study of 46 in a mentor group and 25 in a nonmentor group, leaders who participated in mentor groups experienced a more positive change in leader identity and LSE than in the control nonmentor group (Ayoobzadeh & Boies, 2020).

Principal Self-Efficacy

As outlined in the first section of the literature review, LSE impacts one's perceived ability to implement action to effectively lead (McBrayer et al., 2018), and their behaviors and impact on their environment and its collective efficacy (Autry, 2010; Cansoy, 2020; Meyer et al., 2020). Self-efficacy specific to principals is limited in research, but Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) proposed that there are two types of self-efficacy as it relates to principals, LSE and leadership collective efficacy. Leadership collective efficacy was briefly touched on in the first section of the literature review related to the impact of leadership efficacy on the school environment and its collective members. This second section of my literature review will focus on LSE specific to the construct of the principal also called principal self-efficacy.

The second section of the literature review is organized into three components: principal self-efficacy development, the impact of principal self-efficacy on relationship building, and the outcomes of principal self-efficacy. The three components chosen to

organize this analysis of factors contributing to principal self-efficacy emerged through an iterative process of analyzing the included studies.

Principal Self-Efficacy Development

As principal's self-efficacy can be developed through homegrown district programs or in preparation or graduate programs (Versland, 2013), these various opportunities will be discussed in this section focused on leader development efficacy. In this first component of principal self-efficacy, principal self-efficacy development, the development and its impact on principals in general is the basis of the review of literature.

Existing literature suggests that PD may contribute to self-efficacy (Klassen & Chiu, 2011; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The link between self-efficacy and teacher effectiveness are well documented (Klassen & Chiu, 2011; Lewandowski, 2005; Ross & Bruce, 2007). Research regarding the impact of PD on school LSE is minimal and studies with links to each are scarce (Petridou et al., 2017). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2013) report, principals who report not to receive any PD were 1.4 times more likely to leave their schools than those who had some form of PD. Recently, more work has been done on finding a link from PD to principal self-efficacy. In a recent survey design study of 491 principals of varying experience, a significant correlation was found between ongoing PD and an increased sense of self-efficacy, as well as decreased levels of burnout (McColl, 2020). Moreover, novice and intermediate principals reported higher efficacy and lower burnout rates when they participated in coaching and mentoring PD opportunities (McColl, 2020). Veteran principals reported a

greater impact on LSE when participating in more content specific training as well as university coursework (McColl, 2020). The most significant impact in McColl's study across all groups was participation in professional learning networks. Regardless of the years of experience for the principal, ongoing PD had a significant impact on the ability for a principal to stay in the profession, and therefore increased their ability to impact student achievement (McColl, 2020).

Various principal efficacy scales have been developed, but two of the most used are the Principal Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004), and the Principal Self Efficacy Survey developed by Leithwood and Jantzi (2008). Allen's (2020) study of 67 aspiring principals using the Principal Self-Efficacy Scale found that principal self-efficacy levels were impacted by participation in a principal development program, specifically in developing their persistence that led to mastery of leadership skills. Versland (2016) also found that principal preparation programs can contribute to the development of principal self-efficacy by including mastery activities and providing opportunities to build relationships with others. Similarly, both Allen and Versland (2016) found that the cohort model within the program design was a critical component to engage mastery experiences while building relationships to build their principal self-efficacy.

High levels of engagement in the process of PD can positively influence the culture and climate of teaching and learning (Hoy et al., 2006; Williams, 2020). Principals who are engaged and knowledgeable were found to more accurately determine the ongoing professional learning needs of teachers (Koonce et al., 2019). In responses

from a survey and interviews, lack of competence or confidence in the PD process limited principal's engagement (Koonce et al., 2019). Gümüş and Bellibaş (2020) surveyed 130 Turkish principals impact of PD on principal self-efficacy using the Leithwood and Jantzi Principal Self Efficacy Survey. The results showed a positive and statistically significant but weak effect of PD on principal self-efficacy representing that principals with more days of PD experience have higher perceived principal self-efficacy than principals with fewer days of PD experience (Gümüş & Bellibaş, 2020).

In a survey and focus group study of 67 principals, seven elements stood out for participants as having the greatest impact on the development of their perceived principal self-efficacy (Allen, 2020); completion of a school-based leadership project, ongoing dialogue, job shadowing, a cohort program structure, reflection and feedback, expert presentations, and networking. Findings related to the importance of the adult learning theory (Knowles, 1972) in Allen's (2020) study also described the importance of adult learning principles including the timeliness of learning, choices of activities, self-directed learning, and knowing the big picture as part of their development of self-efficacy. Mau (2020) reported statistically significant higher levels of principal self-efficacy from principal participation in training in an 18-month study of principals. The cohort model was found to be impactful on the development of principal self-efficacy (Mau, 2020). Williams (2020) found similar results in her qualitative research in interviews with principals that cohorts provided a sense of belonging through relationships with colleagues, professors, and mentors. In the qualitative study interviews were conducted with principals regarding the impact of their preparation program on leadership self-

efficacy and found that preparation programs increased leadership self-efficacy as evidenced by increased confidence, a new perspective, and a sense of belonging (Williams, 2020). This increased principal self-efficacy was built through quality internships, relevant coursework, and feedback from mentors within the participation in a principal preparation program (Williams, 2020).

Several researchers have found that PD should be organized around Bandura's four main sources of self-efficacy development, mastery experiences, social modelling, social persuasion, and psychological responses (Koonce et al., 2019; Ross & Bruce, 2007; Versland, 2009). Koonce et al. theorized in a grounded study of 20 principals regarding PD that locus of control affects the ability of principals to effectively lead PD. In a study of 249 school and district leaders from 91 different school districts, findings supported that applying the social cognitive theory may be helpful in providing a frame to ensure intentionality, reflective planning and evaluation in pursuit of system goals (Koonce et al., 2019).

Principal Self-Efficacy and Relationship Building

The second main implication I found in literature was that a principal's self-efficacy is key to building relationships. As the act of leadership does not occur alone, relationships are a large part of day-to-day activities towards outcomes. First, relationships play an important role in student achievement. In a survey study of 2,570 teachers from 90 schools, Louis et al. (2010) found that when principals and teachers share leadership, teachers' working relationships are stronger and student achievement is higher. Secondly, A principal's self-efficacy impacts followers' attitudes and

performance as their experiences with each other are integrated into the environment (Allen, 2020; Chemers et al., 2000; McColl, 2020; Williams, 2020). Lastly, principals were found to need self-efficacy in order to build the relationships necessary to impact positive change (Louis et al., 2010; Williams, 2020), and to overcome obstacles (Versland, 2013). A sense of belonging was found to improve relationship building through connections with colleagues and mentors, especially as part of a cohort model (Williams, 2020). Williams' (2020) interview-based study of six principals found their confidence increased as evidenced through their overcoming initial self-doubt from the growth of principal self-efficacy. Fisher (2020) found similar results in an analysis of other's research, that interpersonal relationships were considered critical to the principal's self-efficacy.

Teachers are less likely to yield positive results if they are not enthusiastic about their teaching assignment or their morale is low (Martin & Jenkins, 2008; McKinney et al., 2015). In a study of 271 teachers, staff, and principals in National Blue Ribbon certified schools, both the academic and social connection between a principal and teacher played a role in their success (McKinney et al., 2015). The principals of these schools held characteristics in common that included tact, approachability, caring, sensitivity to the needs of others, knowing their teachers and staff, respect for others, the ability to listen, and the willingness to learn from others (McKinney et al., 2015). Teachers who were able to plan towards the end result and the task associated with it, were more likely to experience success (McKinney et al., 2015). School administrators cultivated teacher leaders through valuing input, building trusting relationships, and

allowing staff to take an active role in decision making (Visone, 2020). Both Visone and McKinney et al. studied efficacy in National Blue-Ribbon Schools and found that relationships were a critical part in the schools' success.

Outcomes of Principal Self-Efficacy

The final main implication found in the literature was that a principal's self-efficacy is key to reaching desired outcomes. Legislative mandates for the first time are requiring the evaluation of principals' work to also include the academic outcome of students, creating pressure for the success or failure of schools (Schrik & Wasonga, 2019). The era of the accountability movement requires the ability to pre-determine a principals' capacity to influence student learning (Schrik & Wasonga, 2019). In the Schrik and Wasonga survey study of 250 elementary school principals, findings indicated that both principals' self-efficacy and their outcome expectation correlated positively to student achievement, but acted independently of each other. In further analysis, a principals' outcome expectations were found to impact student achievement, but not principal self-efficacy directly (Schrik & Wasonga, 2019). Principal self-efficacy beliefs were found to determine whether a principal is able to make a difference in the performance of teachers and students in their schools (Hallinger, 2011; Hallinger et al., 2018; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004; Williams 2020) and whether they can fulfill their role as principal (Holmberg et al., 2016; Prussia et al., 1998).

In order for a principal to set tasks towards outcomes necessary for success, certain traits were found among successful principals that included developing

cooperative relationships, active listening, treating others with respect and dignity, the support of progressive decision-making, and providing effective PD (McKinney et al., 2015). Principals are responsible and expected to work positively towards many outcomes for the success of their school (McColl, 2020). For example, shaping the operational policies and procedures necessary to manage a school, raising student achievement, and handling student discipline effectively (McColl, 2020). McColl placed such activities in one of three categories, management skills, instructional leadership, and moral leadership. McColl suggested the role of the principal continues to evolve from a managerial role to more of an instructional leader. In the results of a survey study of 491 K-12 principals rating the level of principal self-efficacy required to complete the task, McColl found that the highest degree of principal self-efficacy from a list of eight skills, was the ability to raise student achievement. A correlation was found between efficacy and burnout that as efficacy increased, burnout tended to decrease (McColl, 2020). However, the association found between self-efficacy for instructional leadership and motivation to leave appears to be mediated through increased emotional exhaustion and decreased engagement (McColl, 2020).

In this second section of the literature review, three components of principal self-efficacy will be reviewed through the literature to include principal self-efficacy development, principal self-efficacy and the impact of relationship building, and outcomes of principal self-efficacy. In section three I will dig deeper into the development of principal's self-efficacy through various programs in schools, districts, and graduate programs.

The Development of LSE

In this final section of the literature review I will analyze studies related to several of the different opportunities' leaders can participate in to develop efficacy and its implications for leadership success. As outlined in the first two sections of the literature review, LSE has a three-way relationship between leader behaviors, the leadership environment, and leader cognitions; and principal self-efficacy development impacts relationship building and its outcomes. In this final section of the literature review, I will review settings that support the development of LSE. Leader development efficacy is defined as the belief in one's ability to continually develop their leadership knowledge and skills, which in turn determines perseverance and resolve in meeting set goals (Bandura, 1982; Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Murphy & Johnson, 2016; Stevens & Gist, 1997). In Reichard et al. 's (2017) theoretical model, leader development efficacy suggests the level of engagement and determination towards goals and experiences that render a rise in leader efficacy.

In a survey study consisting of three samples of leaders, Reichard et al. (2017) found that leader development efficacy predicted intentions to self-develop leadership above and beyond past leader development. In another study of leader development efficacy in construction apprentices and management, Johnson and James (2018) found that leader development does increase leader efficacy, but only when individuals performed well or for those who had higher dispositional mastery goal orientation.

In the seminal study reviewing existing theory and research on leader efficacy, Hannah et al. (2008) found that developmental efficacy affected leadership development

because it was the leader's judgment as to whether or not skills could be developed. Development efficacy is the segment of self-efficacy that is responsible for learning (Hannah et al., 2008). In a study of 314 masters of business adminstration private university students in Kenya, using the leadership development survey, Mango et al. (2019) found that as leader developmental efficacy increased, leadership development increased and when participants had low development efficacy scores, they also had low leadership scores. A significance was also found in developmental efficacy boosting leadership capacity (Mango et al., 2019).

Leader Development in Principal Preparation Programs

Recently, a few studies have emerged focused on the components that make up an effective principal preparation program and LSE. Williams' (2020) phenomenological study of principals found that leadership self-efficacy was built in principal preparation programs through the three components of coursework, internships, and mentorship along with the informal experiences of external support, intrinsic motivation, pre-leadership experiences, and work-life balance. In a study of 930 recent graduates from 29 university principal preparation programs, Ni et al. (2019) found high ratings for these programs' quality and their perceived learning experiences and preparation for leadership. Graduate internship experiences were significantly associated with self-reported overall leadership learning and cohort models created collective learning experiences (Ni et al., 2019). In a study of five exemplary principal preparation programs, components found to be most common in the programs were excellent faculty practitioners as instructors, university and district teaching partnerships, coherence of curriculum to current practices, pedagogy

based on adult learning principles, authentic internships, and formal mentoring or coaching (Johnson & James, 2018). In a review of 32 studies focused on the rural instructional leader, Hildreth et al. (2018) found that an education preparation curriculum developed in a collaborative effort between the university and a partnering school district was the foundation of building an effective leader.

Program experiences were found to create opportunities for relationship building, authentic leadership experiences, and practice persevering to build self-efficacy (Versland, 2016). Versland interviewed 292 principals regarding the impact of their principal preparation program on their development of LSE and found that through positive relationships, principals gained cooperation and commitment. The most effective way to establish learning communities was in cohort groups and then within the cohorts, efficacy was built through mastery experiences and vicarious learning as they collaborated (Versland, 2016). One of Davis and Darling-Hammond's (2012) components for an effective principal preparation program were a cohort model in which students enrolled and moved through coursework together. Studying with a cohort had a small, but positive relationship with graduates' leadership learning and was mediated through perceived peer relationships (Ni et al., 2019). A cohort model fostered peer relationships, building a sense of community and peer networks (Ni et al., 2019).

Other Principal Leader Development Opportunities

Many studies have researched what a successful school leader does (Gurr, 2017; Leithwood, 2012, 2019; Leithwood et al., 2017), but not how they learn, and more specifically, PD and its impact on principal success (Leithwood, 2019; Van Wessum &

Verheggen, 2019). Principal preparation can be provided in schools as PD through district support as well as through district leader development. Some districts have moved towards developing their own leadership programs, sometimes referred to as "grow your own" as a result of uncertainty in the preparation of principals in university programs (Taylor et al., 2014; Tingle et al., 2019). "Grow your own" may be more difficult in a smaller, rural district where resources and human capital are limited (Hildreth et al., 2018). Often rural schools' districts do not offer formal mentoring or coaching programs for school leaders in the same way they do for teachers (Hildreth et al., 2018).

Hildreth et al. (2018) suggested the tripartite continuous growth model for principals as their initial training in a preparation program built on authentic experiences, then first year support through induction with a mentor, and then ongoing reinforcement through PD. In a study of 59 principals who participated in their district's principal leadership program during their first year as a principal, results indicated that several components had an influence on leadership effectiveness (Tingle et al., 2019). These components included activities related to instructional leadership self-efficacy, influence on human capital, the influence of executive leadership, school culture, strategic operations, a mentor relationship, and building relationships with peers (Tingle et al., 2019).

In a study of the impact of principal PD on leaders' self-efficacy, four domains were investigated: setting directions, people development, organization redesign, and instructional program management (Mau, 2020). Sixty-five principals participated in an 18-month leadership academy and reported statistically significant higher levels of self-

efficacy related to all four domains (Mau, 2020). Design elements such as high-quality, research-based curriculum and cohort models were found to be critical components in principal self-efficacy growth (Mau, 2020). The Learning Policy Institute (Sutcher et al., 2017) analyzed peer-reviewed research that connected principal preparation and PD to improved school outcomes and found four components they called the building blocks of high-quality principal preparation and PD. These four building blocks included partnerships between districts and programs with focus on instruction, organizations and using data for change, applied learning and cohorts, and networks for collegial learning (Sutcher et al., 2017).

Leader Development in the Doctorate

In a study seeking to tie doctoral programs' preparation of school administrators to their results as a school leader, 25 school leader graduates of six elite programs reported intellectual stimulation, rich interactions with fellow students and faculty, and mentoring during and after their degree completion (Hoyle & Torres, 2008). Mentoring by faculty was considered to be the most impactful on their leadership success (Hoyle & Torres, 2008). Developing leadership skills for future roles was the number one reason students chose an EdD in leadership (Thomson, 2018). In a survey study of 37 participants regarding their EdD program benefits, Thomson found six distinct themes emerged including research skills, leadership development, enhanced earning and job prospects, credentials and recognition to become a change agent, and for personal change (Thomson, 2018).

Summary and Conclusions

Using the literature presented in Chapter 2, I provided an analysis of self-efficacy and its impact on leadership, specifically related to the principalship. I examined the effects of self-efficacy on leadership, principal self-efficacy, and the development of LSE. Recurring themes in the literature reflected LSE and its relationship between leader behaviors, the leadership environment, and leader cognitions as well as principal self-efficacy development and its impact on relationships and its outcomes. The conceptual framework provided two different theoretical lenses to understand self-efficacy through Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy and Paglis and Green's (2002) three-dimensional construct of LSE. This study may help this gap in research by exploring the perceptions of doctoral program alumni regarding how their educational leadership program supported the development of their LSE in their current role as a K-12 leader. Educational leadership programs do not intentionally focus on LSE as a program outcome (Seibert et al., 2017) although self-efficacy is considered a key component for successful leaders (Dwyer, 2019). Principals prepared in doctoral institutions are more effective leaders than without a doctoral degree and may be more able to build high-quality teacher teams resulting in higher gains (Ni et al., 2017). Building LSE in a doctoral program and their connection is not clear (Mango et. al., 2019). The results of this study may provide insights for faculty and programs into how LSE is developed through the curriculum in a doctoral program that might enable leaders to positively influence teacher efficacy and thereby improving student academic outcomes (Schrik & Wasonga, 2019).

In chapter 3, I review the methodology used in this basic qualitative design study. I also will discuss the data collection and data analysis plan along with issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic design qualitative study was to understand graduates' perceptions of their education doctoral program and how their participation in their program developed their LSE as a current school leader as well as gather suggestions they had for how doctoral programs can develop LSE in school leaders. In this chapter, I present a description of the qualitative research design, methodology, procedures for data collection, and the data analysis process. I also discuss my role as the researcher and how it relates to the data collection process as well as address issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Research Design and Rationale

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the perceptions of educational leadership doctoral program alumni regarding how their program developed their sense of LSE as a current principal?
2. What are the perceptions of educational leadership doctoral program alumni regarding how programs can develop LSE in principals?

For this study, I employed a basic qualitative research approach and used interviews to enable me to understand and make sense of participants' experiences (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This approach helped me focus specifically on leaders' perceptions of the development of their LSE as leaders. Because the basic qualitative research design is used to determine people's sense of meaning and is not guided by a specific or traditional philosophical assumption (Caelli et al., 2003), I chose this design to explore social and

institutional factors through interviews to collect participants' perceptions of how they relate to self-efficacy and leadership.

Role of the Researcher

In this study, I served as the sole researcher and main instrument of the data collection process. I am an educator in the southwestern United States in a school of education program at a private institution. I facilitated interaction with participants and created a context where the participants shared their perceptions and their experiences to gather rich data for analysis (see Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2003). I conducted interviews with participants using open-ended questions as well as follow-up questions during which I listened to participant responses and kept notes in a research journal. My current role as academic advisor to administrative credential candidates at the master's level may have impacted my analysis of the data in the study because bias can affect the trustworthiness and credibility of qualitative research findings (see Patton, 2015). For this reason, I used a reflective journal to document my thoughts during the interview process to assist in avoiding bias. Interviews were not conducted with any participants currently enrolled in the university program I worked in at the time of the study.

Methodology

In this section, I will provide a description of the methodology of the study followed by an explanation of the logic regarding participant selection, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

Participant Selection Logic

The criteria for participation in this study was current K-12 leaders in districts with at least 3–7 years of leadership experience who also graduated from a doctoral education leadership program in California. I identified leaders through social media and snowball sampling, and then after receiving Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to conduct the study, emailed them an invitation to participate. Upon receiving a response that they were interested in participating, I sent a letter of consent for them to agree to be a participant, which included information regarding the purpose of the study, expectations for the interview, identity protection, and interview details. Participants who decided to join the study could opt out at any time and were treated equally whether they completed the study or not. To ensure saturation, 10 qualified participants who agreed to the letter of consent were interviewed. The first 10 who met the qualifications and signed the consent form were selected for the study.

Instrumentation

Once I received IRB approval, 06-02-21-0989260, and participants were selected, I conducted audio-recorded, semistructured, open-ended, one-on-one interviews in order to provide response flexibility for participants and focus on the questions for me as the researcher (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Each interview began with an opening statement in which I provided the purpose of the study as well as a background of the study, and myself as the researcher. The open-ended interview questions (see Appendix) were based on the research questions and the conceptual framework and were further developed from practice interviews and feedback from the committee. For example, what did you first

believe about your ability to be successful as a school leader or principal as you began your doctoral program, and how do you think educational leadership doctoral programs can develop self-efficacy in school leaders? Open-ended questions were followed by probes that reflected possible influential factors analyzed in the empirical literature review.

Data Collection Plan

I planned on the interviews taking 45–60 minutes each to allow for any necessary stops that were required by a participant. Interviews took place on the Zoom application due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the interviews were audio recorded using Zoom, they were transcribed through use of the Rev transcription application. One follow-up question was requiredto complete the data collection. Once interviews were completed, I offered information regarding transcript copies. Participants were offered to exit the study during the debrief following the interview. I shared the transcripts with participants by email, allowing them 1 week to respond to any discrepancies they found. To assure confidentiality, transcriptions were password protected and will be saved for 5 years before being deleted. I emailed a copy of the transcript, a $20 Amazon gift card, and a note of appreciation to each of the participants.

Data Analysis Plan

I used notes to record key phrases and my observations regarding the participants' body language and emotional responses for my postinterview review of the transcripts. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the content of transcripts, and I followed the six steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2020): familiarization, coding, generating

themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up the results. I became familiar with the content through reading through my notes and transcriptions of the audio recordings several times. Each transcript was reviewed and coded through the use of MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software, to examine any similarities and compare any discrepancies. Key words were used for coding and then the codes were categorized to highlight key words across all interviews. I formed categories and related themes during several reviews of the transcripts to assure correct categorization as well as checked for themes that may have been overlooked.

Issues of Trustworthiness

To establish trustworthiness in this study, I focused on four key components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. It was important to the integrity of the study to ensure that these key aspects of trustworthiness were met.

Credibility

To establish credibility, I used notes to record key phrases, notes regarding body language, and emotional responses for postinterview review (see Saldaña, 2021). Processes, including maintaining consistency in each interview, journaling, and ensuring participant qualifications, were employed to establish credibility. Multiple interviews and the use of note taking allowed for triangulation among interviews responses. I asked the participants one follow-up question by email to ensure clarification and missed content. Participants were also provided the opportunity to review transcripts to check for accuracy and that their experience was captured correctly to ensure credibility.

Transferability

To establish transferability in this study, I used rich, thick descriptions of the participants, the setting, and the findings. Themes were created to establish transferability to look more broadly at the experiences reflected in the responses to refine the categories and avoid bias.

Dependability

To establish dependability, I reviewed the collected data to ensure that participants' responses were captured correctly and, therefore, were dependable as outlined by Merriam and Tisdell (2015). The transcripts were also reviewed by my chair and the participants to ensure dependability as well.

Confirmability

Lastly, to ensure confirmability, I used a journal throughout the data collection process to document the data as well as reflect on my own thoughts, values, and interest to check for bias. The collected data and my analysis notes will be stored for 5 years to ensure confirmability.

Ethical Procedures

Once IRB approval was obtained, I began recruiting participants and conducting interviews. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the study through getting informed consent from the participants before they took part in the study. The privacy of participants were ensured through the assignment of pseudonyms to disguise individuals as well as their universities and K-12 schools. Prior to agreeing to participate in the study, leaders were able to read the informed consent letter; ask questions; and if desired,

remove their name from the participation list. The informed consent form followed the guidelines of Walden University IRB. Recordings, emails, informed consent forms, and transcripts of the interviews were secured within my password-protected home computer to ensure confidentiality of records and then destroyed for ethical considerations.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I outlined the basic qualitative study design used to explore the perceptions of K-12 leaders' development of LSE in their doctoral programs.. The chapter also includes explanations of the methodology, participant selection, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis plans as well as the issues of trustworthiness in the study and ethical considerations. In Chapter 4, I will provide an overview of the results of the study in relation to the research questions.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic design qualitative study was to understand graduates' perceptions of their education doctoral program and how their participation in their program developed their LSE as a current school leader as well as gather suggestions they had for how doctoral programs can develop LSE in school leaders. The following two research questions guided this study:

1. What are the perceptions of educational leadership doctoral program alumni regarding how their program developed their LSE to navigate challenges as a current principal?
2. What are the perceptions of educational leadership doctoral program alumni regarding how educational leadership doctoral programs can develop LSE in principals?

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the results of the study in relation to the research questions. The chapter begins with a description of the study's setting and participant demographics. Next, it includes a discussion of the data collection and analysis procedures to include a summary of the methods used to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. Lastly, I present the results framed by the two research questions.

Setting

I collected data in 45- to 60-minute, one-on-one interviews by phone or Zoom. All virtual interviews were conducted in a place chosen by and comfortable for the interviewee, either at their school site, the district office, or their home. This process was

consistent with protocols for distance meetings still in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Demographics

The 10 participants were from the regions of Northern and Southern California, and all were educational leaders in a California school district at elementary schools, high schools, or district offices. All interviewees had been a principal from 4 to 16 years, with an average of 9 years of teaching and leadership experience. There were eight women and two men among the participants, with two of the principals ending their principalship and moving within the last year to lead at their district office to support district principals. The pseudonyms used for the participants as well as the private or public nature of their doctoral institution and their doctoral specializations are provided in Table 1. Other details, such as years serving as a principal and the doctoral institution attended, were not included to increase confidentiality. While participant recruitment materials included graduates of either PhD or EdD programs, only EdD graduates volunteered.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Institution	Specialization
Eric	Public	EdD in Educational Leadership
Karen	Private	EdD
Justin	Private	EdD in Organizational Leadership
Anita	Private	EdD in Educational Leadership
Cathy	Private	EdD
Caroline	Private	EdD in Organizational Leadership
Janet	Private	EdD in Organizational Leadership
John	Private	EdD in Organizational Leadership
Elizabeth	Private	EdD in Educational Leadership
Loren	Private	EdD in Educational Leadership

Data Collection

Recruitment took approximately 3 weeks after the first week of recruitment produced only two participants and no other responses. I requested to expand my criteria to all school leaders and participant experience for more than 2 years, which was approved by the Walden University IRB. During the 3rd week, eight other participants responded after I sent follow-up emails to contacts from the first social media recruitment. Participants were recruited first from social media and then through snowball sampling from contacts who had recommendations or passed the information on to other possible participants. School was wrapping up for the year in June and planning for the next school year was beginning; therefore, their schedules were busy. However, I was able to catch their availability between the two school years during a 1-week period of time and complete all 10 interviews. Two participants made leadership position changes in response to this last year and district needs. All of the participants have faced immense challenges in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and virtual learning to

include a teacher suicide and a student death. During my first interview, the participant who was a high school principal of a large school was interrupted to be told the news of a teacher's sudden death. We ended abruptly for him to deal with the crisis management that needed to be put in place. He was gracious enough to complete the interview 5 days later and share with me the process he followed to deal with the incident in their community and how the doctorate process helped make those decisions.

Data collection began in June of 2021 and concluded that same month. I interviewed a total of 10 participants, nine by Zoom and one by phone. The interviews took place over a 3-day period of time with a follow up 5 days later to complete the interview with the participant who had a campus emergency during our initial interview phone call. Contacts from university programs and doctoral programs sent emails to specific students asking them to participate. This step produced a quick group of 10 to interview over a few days of time. As the school year was wrapping up and a new one was beginning, principals had a short week between the two and I worked hard to be sure to catch them all during a time that was not as intense. All interviews were scheduled during traditional school hours to accommodate their site schedules.

Nine participants completed a Zoom one-on-one interview, and one completed a one-on-one phone interview lasting approximately 45-60 minutes depending upon the depth of answers provided, with probing questions added in case more detail was needed. I closely followed the developed interview protocol (see Appendix) with introduction questions prior to the research introduction and interview questions. However, in the second interview with the first participant that had to be cut short due to a campus

emergency, which was my last interview, I decided a follow-up question was necessary to wrap up the question regarding their LSE prior to their doctorate. I decided to ask whether he thought he would be as successful a leader without his doctorate and to explain. This was then emailed or texted to the other nine participants to request a response to this follow-up question with five responses from the 10 participants. In a few of the interviews, participants responded with the answer to the current question and not the one asked. In this case, I asked a probing question for this next question to be sure the response was detailed. All interviews ended by asking participants if they had anything they wished to add that they had not already mentioned in the interview. Several mentioned they appreciated the time to reflect on the impact of their doctorate on the development of their LSE.

I sent each participant a copy of the transcript of their interview and a $25 Amazon gift card as a thank you for their participation. Five responded by saying the transcript accurately reflected their responses, while the remaining participants did not respond. Their lack of response was assumed to indicate they were satisfied with the transcriptions of their interview. The school year was ending and the start of preparation for the fall after a year of virtual learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many talked about strategies for starting the new year in response to student's loss of learning and teacher stress. As this last year has been virtual learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, job responsibilities and schedules were not as they had been prior; therefore, much of what was discussed at the beginning of each interview were adjustments made during this time or challenges including deaths of those in their community.

Data Analysis

The aim of the data analysis process was to answer the two research questions. I used Braun and Clarke's (2013) six-step approach to thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke, thematic analysis finds repeated patterns of meaning within examined data. Data analysis began with open coding to determine themes from the responses of participants. I began by reading along in the transcript while listening to each interview recording to familiarize myself with the responses of participants and develop an overall context of the interview data. I focused on the relevant data and minimized attention to the unnecessary, beginning, background participant information. Next, I started Step 2 of Braun and Clarke's six steps of coding by highlighting various phrases or words that stood out in the transcripts. All audio and transcripts were then uploaded into MAXQDA, a computer-assistive qualitative data analysis software. In MAXQDA, I copied those various phrases or words that stood out into the software. From these, I generated a spreadsheet organized by interview questions and participants' responses that focused on the main points and common meanings that emerged throughout the data. The initial coding process kept data organized by interview question and resulted in 185 codes for Research Question 1, and 52 codes for Research Questions 1 and 2, collectively. I then reviewed the initial codes to remove duplicates or codes no longer applicable. A secondary review of the codes reduced the overall numbers of codes to 136 for Research Question 1 and 23 for Research Question 2. Ongoing analysis resulted in the reduction of some codes because some were closely related and could be represented adequately with a single code.

The third step in the analysis process involved grouping similar codes together so they were no longer organized by research quest to create themes, with each being given a descriptive name. The process continued until all codes for each research question were grouped in categories. A total of 13 categories were developed after examining similarities and differences. From the 13 categories, I identified four themesin which the 13 categories were narrowed down to become seven subthemes. Each theme and subtheme were associated with both research questions and each were given a descriptive name.

The fourth step was reviewing the themes for similarities and differences. Through this step, I confirmed and named the four emergent themes: relationships, relevancy, reflection, and responsibility. Then in Step 5, I continued to develop the themes by naming and defining the four themes and writing the summary for each. The final step of writing up the themes with extensive participant quotes from the interviews confirmed that the four themes were adequate to represent the data and answer the two research questions. An overview of the thematic structure is provided in Table 2.

Table 2

Overview of Thematic Structure

	Theme	Subthemes	Codes
RQ1 RQ2	Relationships	Faculty, cohorts	Family feel, connections, conversations, communication, feedback, observations, role-play, intentional, tribe, transparency, collaboration, encouragement, accountability, support, chair, faculty, networking, mentor, cohorts, group work
RQ1 RQ2	Relevancy	Practical & real-world scenarios, dissertation process	Ethics, practitioner, dissertation, data analysis, leadership framework/theory, systems analysis, political leadership, cerebral view, practical, real-world practice

RQ1 RQ2	Reflection		Imposter syndrome, strengths/weaknesses, emotional health, mental health, feedback, practices, self-exploration, problem-solving
RQ1 RQ2	Responsibility	Self-care, importance of the job, resilience	Self-care, organization, balance, priorities, navigate, importance of job, follow-up, well-being of others, resilience, time management

Evidence of Trustworthiness

I addressed four criteria to ensure the trustworthiness of the study: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In the following subsections, I describe each of these criteria and their inclusion in this study.

Credibility

To ensure credibility (i.e., that the study accurately represents the phenomenon under investigation), I included several methods. Prior to the participant interviews, I conducted four field test interviews with leader colleagues to ensure the clarity of the interview questions and their effectiveness in collecting related data. I also sought feedback from subject matter experts and my dissertation committee during interview protocol development. To establish credibility, notes were kept to record behaviors, mannerisms, and tones within the interview for postinterview review (see Saldaña, 2021). Processes, including maintaining consistency in each interview, journaling, and establishing participant qualifications, were carried out to ensure credibility. Conducting Ten participant interviews and the use of interview notes allowed for the triangulation of interview responses. I sent an email or text message follow-up interview question to the participants to provide clarification regarding their LSE prior to their program and after. Participants were emailed the transcript of their interview to check for accuracy and that their experience was captured correctly to ensure credibility. The lack of response from

some participants was assumed to indicate that they were comfortable with the interview transcription.

Transferability

To establish transferability in this study, I used rich, thick descriptionsfor the participants, the setting, and the findings. Although rich descriptions were included to describe the participants and their experiences, care was taken to maintain the confidentiality of their site and program. Themes were identified to establish transferability to look more broadly at the experiences reflected in their responses to refine the categories and avoid bias. Transferability is the inclusion of enough detail in the study description so that readers can visualize if the study methods may also be applied within their own setting (Patton, 2015).

Dependability

To establish dependability, I reviewed the collected data to ensure that participants' responses were captured correctly and, therefore, were dependable, as outlined by Merriam and Tisdell (2015). Through the additional review of the transcripts by my chair and the participants, dependability was ensured.

Confirmability

Lastly, to ensure confirmability, I used a journal throughout the data collection process to document the collected data as well as reflect on my own thoughts, values, and interest to check for bias. The collected data and my analysis will be stored for 5 years to ensure confirmability.

Results

This study sought to answer two research questions to explore the perceptions of educational leadership doctoral program alumni regarding how their program developed their self-efficacy as a current leader and how programs could develop LSE. Four themes, summarized in Table 2, emerged from data analysis and all four themes address both of the two RQs. All the themes are representative of what within their doctoral program the participants perceived contributed to building their LSE: relationships, relevancy, reflection, and responsibility. Subthemes tied to each theme were identified as follows:

- Theme 1: Relationships
    - Faculty
    - Cohorts
- Theme 2: Relevancy
    - Practical and real-world scenarios
    - Dissertation process
- Theme 3: Reflection (no subthemes)
- Theme 4: Responsibility
    - Self-care
    - Importance of the job
    - Resilience

In the following four subsections, I discuss each of the four themes with representative quotes from the data gathered from the 10 interviews. Because each of the themes addressed each of the two research questions, the findings are organized by

theme. Each interview provided rich detail regarding participants' experiences in their doctoral programs and the impact on the development of their LSE and their current LSE as well as what they recommend EdD doctoral programs do to enhance principals' LSE when those principals or aspiring principals are doctoral students.

Theme 1: Relationships

The first theme of relationships reflects both research questions pertaining to perceptions of educational leadership doctoral program alumni regarding (a) how their program developed their LSE to navigate challenges as a current principal and, (b) how educational leadership doctoral programs can develop LSE in principals. The repeated references to the impact of relationships on participants' LSE were coded 259 times, more frequently than any of the codes for the other three themes. Relationships and impact related to faculty were coded 155 times, and those related to relationships in cohorts were coded 109 times. The theme of relationships appeared in response to all the interview questions. The theme of relationships was the most dominant and was related to all participants' perceptions of the impact of the participation in cohorts through collaboration with fellow students and faculty as well as other colleagues outside of their program who provided accountability and support that all participants perceived increased their LSE. Participants perceived those relationships developed their LSE through interaction with other students, often in cohorts, through conversations, observation, role-playing, encouragement, feedback, accountability, support, mentorship, and transparency.

Faculty

Relationships with faculty and chairs were the most impactful on their LSE, as reported by nine out of the 10 participants. Anita was especially impacted by relationships with faculty.

> And when I was going to be the principal, they [the faculty] wrote my letters of recommendation and they're my…Those are the guys that did it. You know what I mean? So, it…Yes. I mean sure. Does that have an impact? Absolutely. The fact that there are two sitting superintendents on my dissertation committee telling me, "You got this, this is great. You're good to go. This is just the beginning." Yes. …. It helps your belief system, right?

Elizabeth shared the impact of the level of engagement faculty had with students, herself included, that increased her LSE.

> But they would know who you were, they would remember the papers you had written, they would ask you about your topic for your dissertation, they would know specifics about your ... project and how it was going. And just like their investment in me and my successes really made me feel like, "Oh, okay. If they think I can do it, I must be able to do it. Right?"

Elizabeth also shared how faculty influenced her efficacy as a student and a leader,

> We were told over and over and over again, "You can, you will, you can, you will, you can you will," there was no question at the end, like, "I could and I would and I did." And I think that was just built into the program throughout.

Others shared the impact of working closely together, side-by-side with faculty members and the importance of those day-to-day interactions, such as Caroline who said, “I mean, she invited us into her home at the end of our program. That’s huge to me. I was like, ‘are you kidding me?’” Caroline also said of that encounter, “It was an opportunity to see a really powerful woman that I could respect who was also self-confident enough to be vulnerable.” This example of a strong leader provided a role model for her to follow and build LSE. Justin also referred to the impact of the level of engagement of faculty: “The more the faculty would engage with you personally, whether it’s within a group setting or in a one-on-one setting, the more that happens, I think the more efficacy you gain.” John also referred to the impact of his dissertation committee on his LSE through building those relationships to now after his program being able to call them anytime for leadership advice.

Cohorts

Cohorts were the second most impactful relationship, as perceived among the 10 participants. Only for one participant of the 10, where cohorts were more important than faculty relationships. All programs attended by the participants were cohort-based. Cohorts were of varying sizes from five to 10 and were usually assigned by the university in the four programs represented by the participants, and for all participants their cohort became their support and encouragement through the program. Eight out of 10 participants shared the perspective that the support and encouragement was also impactful to their development as a leader in the program. Eric has suggested to other

leaders, the importance of finding support as a leader whether in school work or as a principal and said,

> I always advise them to get a tribe. Get a tribe and don't do this alone. Do this with a group. You might have two separate industries, it could be separate, my dissertation topic and yours are not even at the same ballpark, but if we could sit in the library and write together that's helpful. Or we can drive to school together and just vent about how my wife wants to kill me. Those things are really helpful.

John reflected on the importance of cohorts to his school work and leadership,

> And you need those other people there, along with you that are saying, "You got this, here's where I am in the process." It helps me to be able to help other people in my cohort, helped me to be able to help them with an assignment and probably helped some with that self efficacy of doing the right leadership work.

Some university programs attended by participants offered the option of a dissertation capstone which allowed cohorts to work together writing their dissertation all focused on the same topic. Cohorts would work together to write Chapter 1 and 2 collectively, then split off to collect their data targeted on a specific population, different from their cohort members. This proved to be an impactful choice with impact on their LSE for eight of the 10 participants, including Elizabeth who, when given the option at a workshop, said

> We had gone to one [workshop] that was specific to...[the] dissertation, and I'm like, 'This is the way to go!' Like, why would we not divide and conquer? We already know we work so well together. We trust each other. We all have very similar interests and what we would want to research.

John reflected on the impact of this time and research together as impactful on him as a current leader through continued relationships, "...I think the cohort model that we had was really strong. We have 10 people in my cohort and we still communicate, we still talk to each other."

Transparency was also valued within cohort relationships as a way to share concerns and learn from others. All 10 participants participated in a cohort model in some format. Justin referred to transparency in cohorts that led to increasing his LSE, by allowing him to safely ask questions and brainstorm outside of their school where they were principals,

> ...because they're not one of your teachers, they're adjunct or whatever, you get these spaces where you're with peers and you can really be honest and real, and talk about where you're struggling. And I think those experiences really help grow you...you're not alone in the struggle, but it's part of the normal process. And you come out stronger on the other end for it.

Caroline referred to vulnerability with others as a way to become comfortable with what you don't know as a leader,

> I think that it is really the idea of vulnerability…that idea of being comfortable not knowing what you don't know, that is something that I've been able to really intentionally do as a leader and model. That has gotten me so far in terms of not only how I feel about myself and my own self-efficacy, but in building that collective efficacy of my staff because when they see me being vulnerable going

> "You guys, there's a flipping pandemic. I don't know what I'm doing either, but we're going to do this together." That actually calmed them down.

Several participants mentioned the importance of relationships in cohorts and its impact on their group collective efficacy that led to LSE. Karen referred to her experience with others as,

> That family feel, and [we] went through the cohort and classes together and they spent a lot of time together. They had study groups, they were encouraged to hold study groups outside of class…being that close knit and again hearing each other's stories, leaning on each other. It was almost like a collective group efficacy.

Some suggested that the doctoral process and combined success as a current principal would not have been possible without these relational interactions through cohorts, mentorships, collaboration, group work, and networking. Due to the transparency, support, encouragement, and accountability provided through these relationships, participants said they were able to push through when times were difficult both on the job as a leader and in their school work. For example, Karen said, regular contact was important, that her cohort would, "...schedule an hour each day, call each other and check in with each other." Anita said,

> Because they help you whether you're struggling and you need that support they talk through it, or whether it's just being seen and recognized by being called or asked to do something. And I think those things all help develop efficacy. In a way it was most of them because they were engaged and interactive with me.

She also said that having a dependable work partner for classwork and the dissertation writing process in close proximity made a difference.

> That's what really got me through, was having a buddy to do it with. That was…And he's in a different program than me. We were just doing our dissertation at the same time. And so, it was just better, to be honest, to be able to meet somebody, because I don't know if I could have kept going every night to get everything done.

Anita referred to the increase in her LSE due to her collaboration and accountability through her buddy and cohort.

Every participant shared that cohorts and the relationships built in the cohorts were impactful to the completion of their program and their LSE as a principal. For example, Loren said,

> And so, I think feeling included with powerful, effective women and feeling like I was one of them and watching them and seeing how in touch they were with themselves and able to reflect on their own leadership and be candid and open about that and authentic, that was really important for me, every interaction I had with them. Completely different types of people, completely different skillsets but interacting with each of those people taught me something that I wanted to, a growth area for myself, something that I thought I could take from them and try to replicate.

Top coded for relationships included faculty and cohorts with categories of support, encouragement, conversations, observation, and communication that were

important within those relationships. The most impactful relationship, in the perception of six of the participants, was relationships with faculty and chairs.

Theme 2: Relevancy

The second theme of relevancy addresses all activities, projects, collaboration, and coursework participants considered to be relevant to current and future leadership placements. Of the 109 codes within this theme, practical experiences, real-world practice, and the dissertation process were most frequently evident in the interviews and are addressed below as subthemes. Nine out of 10 participants shared that relevancy of their doctoral program to their current role as a leader impacted their LSE.

Practical and Real-World Scenarios

Participants reported on the value of practical and real-world scenarios shared in their doctoral program. They described listening to the experiences of faculty or other leaders or acting out real-world situations with other students with guidance from faculty. For example, Loren shared an example of,

> being placed in a rigorous environment where you have to come up with answers quickly and then refine your answers. So that was something that we did, was, "Okay, you said that this way, let's try and say it this way." Or hearing somebody else say it in a better way really helped me kind of imprint and have a model for how I wanted to speak as a principal and how I wanted to portray myself. So that's one thing that I feel really grateful for from the program. I don't think I would have received otherwise.

Loren also reflected upon the real-time impact this activity had on her leadership during a school emergency due to floods in the area.

> I was just so grateful that I had been forced into these scenario types of conversations because I had ... NBC News come and show up at my school the day before we were evacuating and asked me, "So tell me about the floods and where are you going? And are the students going to be safe going to school here?" All these questions and talk about self-efficacy, I felt so comfortable just answering. I knew what not to say, because I'd been through this whole seminar about kind of what they're trying to get at, right? They're looking for anything that would be juicy that they repeat over and over again, right? And the idea of sharing the message that you want to share, whatever they ask.

Several participants shared that class time and conversations with other students and faculty generated examples and ideas for use in real-time. Janet said, "I can do this. I'm going to take all this stuff and implement it. And you know this is going to be great for my team. And I would get tons of ideas from those [conversations]."

An aspect of the curriculum considered impactful by all five participants from the same university was a project, separate from the capstone dissertation, that followed students through their program and was developed further each semester, building to a final presentation to share the impact of their change implemented on their campus. Loren explained the project as students needing to,

> Pick something within your organization that you would like to change, not just transactionally, not to just shift, but transform and so that is sort of what I'm

> referring to. We had to do it in other areas with needs assessment in the strategic plan, but that was something that we worked on for the whole 3 years, identifying needs and actually implementing the change and then showing the results of that change within your system. So being forced to actually select an area that you can have impact on and see it all the way through to fruition. And of course, if it's transformational change it's going to take years and years.

Loren also reflected that the project, "created a huge sense of self-efficacy…". At one university, immersions were held every 3 months with a cohort of students and faculty all together for an entire weekend with speakers, workshops, and networking. These immersions were separate from the project, and separate from the dissertation capstone. Cohorts rotated each immersion event to assure networking with new people each time. A faculty member served as a cohort mentor and followed the cohort through the program. Many talked about the fact that these times were stressful as a result of engaging with new people and practicing networking, but integral to their growth. Two participants spoke of the requirement to bring 100 business cards to share while mingling during this time. Caroline noted the anxiety and frustration of participating in this activity.

> We had to do a couple of other activities similar to that where we had to interact with people we didn't know, that really built me up. That made me realize, "I'm smarter than I think I am. I know more than I think I do," and it really helped, it helped build my confidence and validate…it was just validating to me.

Also mentioned regarding these immersions was the activity of creating an elevator speech in 20 minutes to then share out. Participants at both private and state universities

shared the positive impact of creating a pitch to market yourself that could be shared in the same time it takes to ride up an elevator.

Curricular Elements

Curricular elements considered most impactful to participants' LSE included the immersions, and a change project mentioned previously, but the dissertation process the work towards the final product was considered the most impactful. During immersions, the five participants who graduated from the same program, had the opportunity presented for them to choose to complete a dissertation together and was offered in a workshop. Others shared how motivated they were by researching a topic of great interest to them and that would directly impact their school site and community building their LSE. Loren said, "But I think the actual time researching and paying attention to the leaders that I was researching I feel like that for me, that was the biggest growth. And then that leads to the self-efficacy." Although the stress of her final oral dissertation was great, Caroline felt the practice of presenting her research was impactful to her LSE and said, "Doing that made me, that was an opportunity to realize, 'I know this stuff, I know this research. I know what I'm doing here.' So, just things like that that I could generalize to a greater sense of self-efficacy."

John expressed the impact of collecting his dissertation data through interviews with exemplary principals and that it was, "a great learning process for me and gave me ideas on what to change [in my school]." He also noted about his literature review,

> Doing all the research for that Chapter 2 of the dissertation kind of the collective body of research was impactful along with the interviews of the 10 principals. I

> mean that's something that I think is probably some of the best professional development I've actually ever done.

Loren said, "...my doctorate program forced me to consider all the things I needed for leadership in a condensed period of time." Caroline noted, "I believe it helped me be a more successful, strategic, and intentional leader without a doubt!" Janet shared, "I feel that the program helped me focus on my leadership and it helped to give vocabulary and theory to some of the things I did innately as a leader."

Theme 3: Reflection

The third theme pertains to the importance of reflection and self-exploration as mentioned by all 10 participants as impactful on their LSE. Each participant mentioned some learning more about their strengths and weaknesses and how to use them effectively as a leader. Anita valued the Gallup Organization Strengths Finder assessment and that learning more about herself was, "…life-changing because I find myself anytime, in difficult situations, going back to those strengths." Anita also shared that the assessment was detailed and explained ways

> that you could apply this strength with people with this kind of strength or people that don't have this kind of strength. You know, it's very in depth and it's very specific in terms of how to take your specific strength and use it in applicable situations.

The assessment helped her to, "use those strengths every single day to create positive content, to reach people, to make connections." In reflecting on the difficulty of the last year during the pandemic and school closures, Anita also shared that she

> felt very useful in a time where…I think as a principal, it could have been very dark in feeling un-useful, you know what I mean? And so, I felt very useful and felt very in control and I felt like I was creating a story, a narrative, by communications, right. That I had control over, and that was positive and beneficial to others.

Three of the 10 participants said that they used the strengths assessment with their own staff to build community and self-efficacy in their teams.

Reflection as a practitioner was mentioned by all 10 participants as part of their growth and development during their program towards more confidence as a leader. All programs required participants to complete regular written reflection followed by collaborative face-to-face sharing. This was reported to aid in learning from others and in building confidence. Six out of 10 participants expressed reflecting on doubts in their ability to complete a doctorate, but soon, through conversations with others and hearing their encouragement, were able to move forward and complete their program and capstone. Eric shared the impact and process of reflection and said,

> I think taking that deep breath. Really focused inward on what is it I'm trying to get out of this interaction? What does it look like, if it was better? And then how do I get that better? Doing that retrospective work internally.

All participants reported that reflection was also used to work through emotional and mental health issues as well as problem solving. One participant, Caroline, shared a time when she reflected on her responsibility as a cohort member and its impact on her LSE.

> And other people were just so invested and ready to do whatever that it did cause me to stop and reflect like, “Why am I the person that's holding up this process? Why am I the person that is giving everybody a hard time in the grand scheme of things, it's one day.” And so, it caused me to question, I guess, whether or not I could always be up for anything and I'm not sure if that's reasonable. I think everybody gets to have moments where they feel grumpy and everything else. But it was more witnessing other people having strong leadership in the moment and exhibiting positive behaviors where I didn't feel like I was and that decreased my self-efficacy because I thought that I'm not being a leader right now. I'm being grumpy.

Justin expressed the impact of reflection to his LSE by sharing his experiences with others going through similar circumstances as leaders and students

> Being in small groups where the goal of those was part of the goal is to share...sharing with folks that have life experiences knowing that you’re going through similar things...to share with other students that was really an interpersonal level but also with the same, you had that shared experience of coursework and the grind of it all. I think that was super helpful.

Theme 4: Responsibility

The final theme of responsibility was represented in comments from all participants, either related to developing their skills as a responsible leader or learning to be responsible for the challenging job of working on their doctorate as well as being a principal and balancing homelife. Analysis of data found responsibility included leaders

practicing and understanding responsibility as a school leader through coursework, faculty mentorships, learning from experts, and watching the success and responsibility of other leaders and peers in the doctoral program. There were 76 codes related to responsibility and subthemes with the codes most often mentioned were: follow through, the importance of the job, and resilience.

Follow Through

Seven out of 10 participants mentioned follow through in response to stress as critical to being a responsible leader and building LSE. Many challenges were mentioned as creators of stress while completing a doctorate while leading, including academic challenges, on the job and family commitments, and feelings of being overwhelmed in general. In order to remain responsible and face those challenges, follow through was reported as important to increase in LSE. In order to mitigate stress, follow through was shown through being organized, finding balance, focusing on priorities, understanding the importance of the job, following up on those in their care, time management, knowing when a break was needed to step away, and seeking the support and encouragement of others. All 10 participants completed their doctorate while in positions of leadership as a principal. Eric expressed the intensity of the time and the push to follow through on his responsibilities, “pulling all-nighters and then having to get to work, and, the role of a middle school assistant principal is very, very time consuming.” Elizabeth said, “the stress of doing the program in conjunction with everything else you have going on in your life” was overwhelming at times. Justin said, “there was a moment of ‘I don’t know that I can do the doctoral stuff. I don’t know that I can finish the program.’”

Although each participant was faced with a moment of either feeling overwhelmed or self-doubt, all shared experiences of employing follow through to help them push through. The main support for their capacity to follow through for all 10 participants was the support of others. Anita noted how a buddy helped her follow through,

> That's what really got me through, was having a buddy to do it with. That was…And he's in a different doctoral program than me. We were just doing our dissertations at the same time. And so, it was just better, to be honest, to be able to meet somebody, because I don't know if I could have kept going every night to get everything done.

Eric mentioned the support of faculty and an advisor that helped him follow through in those difficult moments.

> My professor of that class…, he's like…"No, I believe in you." And he's like, "I know you can do this. Don't quit." He goes, "I'll give you an extension, but just get it done." And then just hearing him say that ,I'm like, "You know what? I know I can get it done. My strength is deep. I'm not going to quit." So, I did get through the first semester.

Justin mentioned,

> Sharing with folks that have life experiences knowing that you're going through similar things and then some of them things were worse...so, to be able to share with other students the experience of the coursework and the grind of it all. I think it was super helpful.

Strategies for developing and increasing their sense of responsibility also included using chunking responsibilities or compartmentalization in order to follow through. Caroline said,

> I had to tap into that side of my brain, and compartmentalize my life. Like I would go to school and I would be a leader, and then I had to protect time to be a mom, and then my friend and I had a room at her house where we stole a whiteboard. We borrowed a whiteboard from my school and put it up on the wall, like a really big whiteboard, and we...would go in there and work together. Then I had to have that time protected for study. So, that is how I set it up to be successful.

Caroline shared the strategy of walking away when she and her colleague were too tired or overwhelmed. Either one of the could call it and say, they needed to walk away, "Because it actually helped us be more productive when we would make ourselves walk away." Another participant, Karen, mentioned the importance of a positive attitude, "Wow, this is an opportunity to learn and grow."

The Importance of the Job

Each participant mentioned in one way or another the impact on them of understanding the weight and importance of the job as a principal during the time they were a doctoral student. This was observed in many ways by watching others above them in leadership and teachers and staff on their campus that looked to them to lead. This realization pushed two of the 10 to get their doctorate with Justin noting, "I didn't know the rules of the game." One of the participants, Elizabeth, reflected on whether the importance of the job was for her,

> And so, I think, there were some points in time, where I was like, "If this is what being a leader feels like, I don't know that this is what I really want for myself." I don't know if this amount of stress, this amount of time commitment, this amount of people depending on me to make these huge decisions, I don't know if that's what I want if I can't find balance in my life, I don't know if it's worth it.' So, there were times where just the stress became so much. I don't know if it was the I didn't think I could do it, but I didn't know if I wanted to do it.

However, Elizabeth shared that through her cohort, she was able to get through these doubts and develop LSE

> And so, even with the girls in my cohort, we all found success in leading...and so, as the more successes you have, the more your kind of built up in your self-efficacy and feeling like, 'Yeah, I can do this.'"

Eric reported how he used his doctorate training to "Translate that training into my new role now of essentially running a small city, understanding of the different levels of communication." John expressed, "When you really understand the nuance and structure of explored or a game or an organization or leadership, then you really could become more of, not just the rookie, but the master."

Resilience

Five of the 10 participants mentioned resilience as a strategy for being responsible and developing LSE for their school site, family, and doctorate, including the resilience to complete a task and how that completion impacted their self-efficacy. Anita said,

> And so, I think the fact that I could finish [the doctorate] and do well in the coursework and complete all of it, for me gave me a tone of confidence in that I can do anything. Because, if I can survive this, being a full-time AP, a full-time parent, coaching my kids' sports, doing all that and finishing my doctorate, then it was...I can do anything. There is nothing anybody can say is too much work. I just don't believe it. There's not...

Elizabeth reported the impact of resilience and the completion of her program on her LSE after completion,

> So, it wasn't one specific event, but program over all that really had such a huge impact on my self-efficacy, that, in reflecting on that, and what I thought going in, I did. I thought going into it, 'I'm investing this money now, so that I can have the title, so that I'll be ready for a promotion later on down the road and that's how it's going to pay for itself.' I didn't really expect it to prepare me to be in a better position to coach future leaders coming up. Those were all parts of my self-efficacy that were impacted by the program as a whole.

John referred to it as grit, "hone in on the grit and the determination that anything's possible." Eric referred to resilience to make it through his program as impactful on his LSE, "...being able to navigate [my program], that was insurmountable in terms of preparing me for increased leadership and having to work full-time at my job and still putting the work in to complete this." John mentioned watching the resilience of others through difficulties as impactful.

> One of the people in our cohort had some medical problems crop up and so she had to put on pause everything for about a year. I think she just finished her dissertation this past year, or is very, very close to finishing at this point. So, there were some of those things too. Other people also had babies during the process, one was a mother and another one was a father during the dissertation process and for them to be able to stick with the coursework and things along with use, I think was impactful."

Completing a doctoral program also brought validation as shared by John, "I figured it would validate some of the things that I was doing. Give me some ideas to change on some of the other things and really help me know that I was doing the right things for my organization and doing it the right way." John also shared the impact on his resilience of working with others, knowing they depended upon you.

> When other people are counting on you it forces you along sort of, 'Hey, it's got to be done and it's gotta be done well,' because there's going to be people that are looking at it and people whose opinions you respect and value."

Loren said, "...my doctorate program forced me to consider all the things I needed for leadership in a condensed period of time." Caroline noted, "I believe it helped me be a more successful, strategic, and intentional leader without a doubt!" Janet shared, "I feel that the program helped me focus on my leadership and it helped to give vocabulary and theory to some of the things I did innately as a leader."

Summary

Four themes emerged from data analysis: relationships, relevancy, reflection, and responsibility. Within Themes of relationships, relevancy, and responsibility, subthemes were found to include faculty, cohorts, practical and real-world scenarios, program projects, follow through, the importance of the job, and resilience. All participants noted development in their LSE due to the participation and completion in their doctoral program. The first theme of relationships included the participation in cohorts with colleagues and faculty through projects that required collaboration, accountability, and support. The second theme of relevancy addressed all activities, projects, collaboration, and coursework to be relevant to participants current and future leadership placements. Third, participants felt reflection was critical to the development of LSE through self-exploration to understand how to use weaknesses and strengths and accept feedback from colleagues and faculty in order to reflect on experiences for repeated success and improvement. The final theme of responsibility was represented in comments from all participants, either related to developing their skills as a responsible leader or learning to be responsible for the challenging job of working on their doctorate as well as being a principal and balancing homelife.

All 10 participants believed they were good leaders prior to their doctorate, but after completion of their program, considered an advanced degree crucial to pushing them to the next level in leadership and success. The analogy of an athlete was used by John to represent before and after their program completion. John suggested that he was always a talented athlete, he just did not understand the rules of the game. To succeed and

win, he needed the training, this he considered his advanced degree. This repeated notion suggests that principals may believe they are capable without a doctorate, but realize after a doctorate how they would not be as successful without the advanced degree. This supports the notion shared by one participant that “you don’t know what you don’t know.”

In Chapter 5, I will interpret the findings with contextual framework guiding the study as well as the empirical literature examined in Chapter 2. The study’s implications and limitations, as well as recommendations for future research, will also be discussed.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic design qualitative study was to understand graduates' perceptions of how their participation in their education doctoral program developed their LSE as a current school leader as well as gather suggestions they had for how doctoral programs could develop LSE in school leaders. The research questions were:

1. What are the perceptions of educational leadership doctoral program alumni regarding how their program developed their LSE to navigate challenges as a current principal?
2. What are the perceptions of educational leadership doctoral program alumni regarding LSE in principals?

Four themes emerged during the data analysis process regarding both research questions: relationships, relevancy, reflection, and responsibility. In this chapter, I provide an interpretation of the main findings of the study. Limitations of the study and recommendations for further research are also presented. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications this study may have for positive social change for doctoral programs focused on leadership.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings from analysis of the data confirmed theories and studies related to self-efficacy and LSE as reviewed in Chapter 2. In this section, I provide my interpretation of the findings of this study based on the four themes of relationships, relevancy, reflection, and responsibility. I first interpret the four themes in relationship to Bandura's (1982) four categories of experience that can develop self-efficacy and LSE

(i.e., performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional stimulation), providing examples from the data that reflect the development of LSE in these four categories. In the subsequent subsections, I interpret the themes in the context of the three categories of empirical studies included in the literature review: research on LSE, principal self-efficacy, and leadership development efficacy.

Interpretation in Light of the Conceptual Framework

Bandura (1977) asserted that personal efficacy expectations determine the initiation of coping behavior as well as how much work is expended and for how long, which became central in the social cognitive theory framework (Iroegbu, 2015). Bandura (1982) suggested four categories of experience that can develop self-efficacy: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional stimulation. Many scholars have drawn on Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, including McCormick et al. (2002), who used it to develop the concepts of LSE and LSE development. LSE was used by Paglis (2010) to explore the concept more deeply, linking LSE with leaders' individual performance and collective efficacy in their schools and performance. All participants in the current study noted improved LSE, with the development of LSE related to their completion of a doctoral program being most mentioned. Participants noted that relationships, relevancy, reflection, and responsibility impacted their LSE.

McCormick et al. (2002) reported that LSE predicted leadership behavior and distinguished leaders from nonleaders. They found that LSE can be developed, and leadership development programs may be more effective if more was understood about

LSE development (McCormick et al., 2002). According to Ni et al. (2017), principals prepared in doctoral institutions are more effective leaders than those without a doctoral degree and may be more able to build high-quality teacher teams resulting in higher academic gains for students. This assertion from Ni et al. seems to be supported by the findings in the current study. All participants expressed the importance of their doctorate on their leadership's level of impact, stating that without a doctorate, their leadership impact may not have been as high. In the following subsections, I interpret each theme in light of each of Bandura's (1982) four categories of experience and Paglis and Green's (2002) extension of Bandura's theory to the more specific construct of LSE.

Relationships

This first of the four themes found in this study, relationships, confirms Bandura's (1982) four categories of experience research on self-efficacy. Paglis and Green's (2002) extension of Bandura's work establishing LSE as a construct is also reflected in participants' responses because relationships, through leadership modeling and coaching behavior, are considered superior antecedents in the LSE model. Through relationships, participants reported they were encouraged and supported towards completion of their doctorate, which is a performance accomplishment, the first of Bandura's components. For example, Elizabeth recounted, "We all found success in leading these projects along the way. And so, as the more success you have, the more mastery experiences you have, the more your kind of built up in your self-efficacy." Every participant emphasized the importance of relationships in developing their LSE through interactions with peers and

faculty. Relationships were also perceived as an important mitigation for the stress of completing the doctorate while meeting the responsibilities of work and home.

Bandura's second construct of self-efficacy, vicarious experiences, was found in relationships through participants experiencing vicariously through others they interacted with along the way. For example, Karen shared, "And I think talking through it, hearing other people's experiences whether it was successful or unsuccessful, it helped me realize, 'Hey, if they can do it, I can do it too.'"

Verbal persuasion, the third component, was an aspect of relationships with both faculty and peers offering verbal encouragement in the form of praise and feedback. Feedback that is unfocused and too harsh may lower LSE, but constructive and focused feedback is more likely to increase LSE (Black, 2015). This was evident in comments from participants, such as Eric who shared the comments of his professor who was also a superintendent, "Sometimes, just somebody saying, 'I see great things ahead for you.'" Justin shared, "And so if you had something right, that was great. If you had something wrong you got direction, which ultimately helps you feel like more of a scholar practitioner while you're doing that work."

Relationships can directly impact emotional stimulation, the last component, as explained by Bandura (1982), through the elicitation of positive and negative interactions. All participants shared positive relationships with faculty and peers pushed them forward in their progress towards completion of their doctorate. Relationships were considered by all participants to mitigate the stress of navigating school, work, and home. For example, Anita shared, "That's what really got me through, was to have a buddy to

do it with." Karen also shared the impact of emotional support through a faculty member who said "'I know you can do this, don't quit ... and then just hearing him say that I'm like, 'You know what? I know I can get it done. My strength is deeper. I'm not going to quit.'"

Relevancy

The second theme found in the study, relevancy, confirmed Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy in all four categories of experience. Gilbert et al. (2018) found that individuals' self-efficacy increased when immersed in real-world experiences. Participants' responses on the importance of relevancy in developing their LSE confirms Paglis and Green's (2002) finding of leadership modeling and coaching behavior as antecedents to LSE.

Personal experience, or performance accomplishments, Bandura's (1982) first component, were considered by Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) to be the most influential on LSE. Participants in the current study reported that their participation in relevant experiences and performance accomplishments were where they successfully developed their LSE. According to Black (2015), successful achievements that are not too simple, strengthen LSE, and tasks that are unimportant or too difficult can impair efficacy. Participants in the current study shared experiences where they were successful completing tasks relevant to their jobs. Once such experience, akin to a vicarious experience (the second of Bandura's [1982] components), was that of Eric who worked with faculty and peers to practice responses to emergency scenarios in class that were immediately relevant to their jobs as principals and then racticing his own responses with

guidance. Eric stated that, “Hearing somebody else say it in a better way really helped me kind of imprint and have a model for how I wanted to speak as a principal.” This directly impacted his ability to successfully navigate his own emergency on campus not long after when a flood affected the school. He felt confident to answer the questions of the news crew who came to his campus to interview him regarding the safety of students.

Mastery is not a sole determinant of LSE, but watching others complete difficult tasks through vicarious experience, Bandura’s (1982) second component, without adverse effects can create expectations from observers that they, too, will succeed with persistence and effort. This was found to be impactful to all participants through all activities, curricular elements, and research being relevant to their current placements. The most memorable included their capstone, a change project, immersions, and scenario role playing. Each of these elements allowed participants to see others completing relevant tasks successfully or unsuccessfully and learning from them. Loren said,

> But I feel like when you see people doing what you want to do or what you think maybe you’re good at and you see them doing it really well, it boosts your self-esteem and your ability to see yourself in that role and gives you something to model yourself after.

Loren also shared the negative experience of a classmate and its impact on her, “having some people pulled aside like, hey, you’re not pulling your weight, your grades or whatever you’re falling behind.” This motivated her to avoid that same interaction by working hard and keeping up with assignments.

Relevant verbal persuasion, Bandura's (1982) third component, was reported by each participant to impact their LSE through encouragement and feedback relevant to their daily site situations. Feedback given by faculty in class or in cohorts by peers were often directly taken back to their campuses and implemented the next day. Loren shared an experience from the feedback from faculty in one of her classes,

> It was from one of the leaders in one of our seminars that people fill in the blanks. In the absence of information, people will fill in the blanks. And so, sometimes we wait until we have everything just perfect and just so before we share information and that's when things go wrong.

Loren has adopted this advice and used it to manage the difficulties through school closures during the pandemic. Elizabeth noted that, "the conversations that we had and really how we pushed and challenged each other to learn and grow not just in the program but in our work capacities as well" made a difference in her LSE.

Emotional stimulation, Bandura's (1982) fourth component, was found to be impactful through emotional stimulation related to activities of the day, especially for one student. Karen found classes a break from the daily stresses to meet like-minded peers and experienced faculty in class who could support her directly in the issues she may be challenged by from the work day. She mentions the fact that, "class was like therapy," where she could share her concerns and discussions would then take place in groups or with the professor to directly support her response to the challenge. The stressful emotions from the day that students brought into class were listened to and discussed and solutions were offered, in return creating LSE for Karen to go back to her site the next

day and implement ideas developed in the context of the emotional support of her classmates and faculty.

Reflection

Reflection was the second most important theme impacting participants' LSE in this study. Reflection was referred to by some as a result of taking a strength assessment as part of their program to understand how to use their strengths and weaknesses as a leader, and by others as required reflection within each course related to their learning. Reflection relates to each of Bandura's (1982) four components of self-efficacy. However, the idea of reflection as considered important to participants' development of LSE is not evident in Paglis and Green's (2002) findings regarding LSE. However, it could be said, that the antecedents of successful experiences in leadership roles from Paglis and Green's LSE model could include reflection because it is built on Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory, which refers to vicarious experiences as impactful on LSE.

Participants in the current study reported many activities and tasks in their program, both big and small performance accomplishments, Bandura's (1982) first component, that provided opportunities for reflection directly related to their learning. Reflection provided opportunities for students to ask questions to improve their leadership and performance accomplishments, such as "how do I use these strengths to leverage this new opportunity or this new situation?" which was asked by Anita. The constant collaboration in cohorts and group work was found to provide a way for participants to reflect on their successes as a team and learn from them. Elizabeth

recalled, “I got to present the results of what I’m doing all along the way to my cohort and to my cohort mentor … the amount of success you felt with that, I think builds your self-efficacy as a leader.”

Individual and isolated accomplishments develop a weaker and more vulnerable level of LSE (Bandura, 1973). Participants reported regular conversations and interactions with faculty and peers discussing each other’s experiences and challenges, similar to Bandura’s (1982) second component of vicarious experience. Karen said, “And I think talking through it, hearing other people’s experiences whether it was successful or unsuccessful, it helped me realize, ‘Hey, if they can do it, I can do it to.’” Being able to reflect on the experiences of others, resulted in participants’ LSE increasing.

Every participant expressed the impact of conversations and interactions with one another and faculty within their programs on their LSE, reflecting Bandura’s (1982) third component of verbal persuasion. These words of encouragement and feedback had a positive influence, as expressed by Anita, “Words are meaningful and words have impact.” Janet stated, “I think every interaction you have impacts who you are and who you take into that space.”

Several participants expressed the importance of dialogue and reflection in doctoral classes contributing to their emotional stimulation and health, akin to Bandura’s (1982) fourth component, and helping them problem solve in their day-to-day jobs. Karen reflected on her appreciation for her Wednesday night class, saying “that was like therapy.” Spending that time with others in the classes who understood her challenges

and listened provided Karen with positive emotional stimulation to encourage her and help build her LSE in the areas she was struggling with that day.

Responsibility

The fourth theme found in this study to be impactful on LSE was responsibility. This reflects the understanding of the importance of the job of a leader, as well as the importance of being responsible to complete a job well done and confirms the four components of Bandura's theory of self-efficacy as well as Paglis and Green's (2002) findings that direction setting improves LSE.

Participants reported on the impact of performance accomplishments, Bandura's (1982) first component, as responsibility and their LSE. The process of completing a doctorate is time consuming, difficult, and full of challenges to prioritizing day-to-day life. Learning to be responsible to follow-through on the expectations was reported to be practiced regularly as participants worked in groups collaborating or listening to the advice and experiences of faculty or other experts. As participants were able to develop their abilities to responsibly complete expectations in their program, they reported were able to increase performance accomplishments at work, as a leader, as well. Responsibility fed into accomplishments which then built LSE. John said,

> And you need those other people there, along with you, that are saying, 'You got this, here's where I am in the process.' It helps me to be able to help other people in my cohort, helped me to be able to help them with an assignment and probably helped some with that self-efficacy of doing the right leadership work.

Through listening and watching others experience vicariously, Bandura's (1982) second component, either as a success or failure, participants reported they were able to increase their LSE. For example, Janet shared, "When you're seeing success and when you're working with others, if you're seeing success then it does provide that advocacy that you can continue to lead." Through vicarious experiences of success, participants were able to learn from others' responsibility and implement it into their own situation as a leader.

Through the supportive feedback of faculty and peers, similar to Bandura's (1982) third component of verbal persuasion, participants all shared experiences of improving the responsibility and understanding of the importance of their job. Anita remembered a faculty member's positive encouragement,

> Constantly texting, calling, and doing those things, it gave me a lot of confidence and he looked at me and said, 'You're going to be a principal really soon.' And I was like, 'I don't think so. I don't know if I could do it. I don't know.' And he looks at me and he goes, 'No, this is just the beginning.'"

This experience for Anita gave her confidence to be able to step up to the job responsibility and move forward successfully.

The ability to complete a task successfully requires responsibility to understand the amount of work and time it will take to complete the task successfully. This level of responsibility can be impacted through positive emotional interaction, Bandura's (1982) fourth component, with others in a cohort or small group. John mentioned this related to his group working on their thematic dissertation, "They probably most impacted me in

self-efficacy because I was working closely with them. And then once we went into the dissertation process, we met virtually like weekly at least, and had a group chat set up." John talked about parameters and goals set up by the group to responsibly meet the deadlines and complete tasks successfully. This developed his LSE as a responsible student and leader.

Interpretation in Light of the Literature Review

In the Chapter 2 empirical literature review, I analyzed research on LSE, principal self-efficacy, and leadership development-efficacy. In this next section I interpret the current findings in light of research on these three specific foci on LSE.

The Effects of LSE on Leadership

Participants in my study reported that LSE and the observation of others' LSE impacted their effectiveness on the job. Due to the participation in a doctoral program, some of the participants, all of whom were principals, were recognized for their desire to promote and given promotions in their districts. Eric said, "During the program, it wasn't uncommon to have one of my buddies … share that he just got promoted … that naturally let me know that, 'hey, my opportunity will be there.'" Kwofie and Eku (2019) also found that the LSE affected their effective performance at their job and that the relationships between LSE and their effectiveness affected their performance on the job.

Participants also reported they perceived that their own LSE impacted the collective efficacy of those around them in their program and those they led in their schools. Studies have shown a positive relationship between leadership and collective efficacy (Meyer et al., 2020). Cansoy's (2020) study found that there was a positive and

significant relationship between a principal's leadership behaviors and collective teacher efficacy as well as a predictor of collective teacher efficacy beliefs. For example, Caroline talked about learning to be comfortable with what she did not know in becoming a self-efficacious leader. When the pandemic began, this development of her LSE developed during her program allowed her to lead confidently in the early days of transitioning to virtual learning. She talked about the idea of "… being comfortable not knowing what I don't know … That has gotten me so far in terms of not only how I feel about … my own self-efficacy, but in building the collective efficacy of my staff."

Participants reported the impact of self-exploration and self-identity on the development of their LSE in their doctoral program. Leader identity and LSE were found to be central and fundamental to leader development in a study by Day and Dragoni (2015). Anita, for instance, found reflection important for herself, but also for her staff, which she initiates every year with her six assistant principals. "We go over our strengths and we talk about how we've grown and how do we leverage these strengths ... I would say if I was going to recommend anything, that self exploration is the most important thing." Leader identity has also been proposed by scholars to be an important piece of leader development and reflect cognitive outcomes associated with leader development (Day & Dragoni, 2015; DeRue & Wellman, 2009).

Principal Self-Efficacy

LSE impacts one's perceived ability to implement action to effectively lead (McBrayer et al., 2018). Self-efficacy specific to principals is limited in research, but has been researched by Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) as principal self-efficacy. Principal self-

efficacy has been suggested to develop through PD (Klassen & Chiu, 2011; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). For instance, John reported the impact of completing his capstone and the data collected during the process as "some of the best professional development...I've ever done." Principal PD has been found to have a significant correlation to an increased sense of LSE, as well as decreased levels of burnout (McColl, 2020). Veteran principals reported greater impact on LSE when participating in content specific training as well as university coursework (McColl, 2020).

Principal development programs specifically through a cohort model as part of a program design have also been found to be impactful LSE (Allen, 2020; Versland, 2016). Allen and Versland both found that this model was a critical component to engage mastery experiences while building relationships to build their principal self-efficacy. Participants also reported the impact of cohorts on the development of their LSE. Every participant shared that cohorts and the relationships built in the cohorts were impactful to the completion of their program and their LSE as a principal. Loren, for example, reported the impact of working with other strong women as impactful on the growth of her LSE.

Williams (2020) study found that principal self-efficacy was developed in principal preparation programs through an intersection of quality internships, relevant coursework, and feedback from mentors. All participants reported growth in LSE in each of these experiences. Although internships were not officially completed in each participants doctoral program, they all were full time principals during their program and all were asked to reflect on their work experiences or try a new project out in the school

site. This gave them the on the job experience that Williams referred to as quality experience internships. This on-the-job experience also facilitated reflection on its relevance to the coursework and invited feedback through faculty mentoring and cohort peers. Through completing their doctoral program while on the job as a principal, their LSE was developed and therefore supports the importance of using the adult learning theory (Knowles, 1972) to direct program design to include the timeliness of learning and self-directed learning (Allen, 2020).

The Development of LSE

Principals have different options to develop their LSE through their school, their district, and outside opportunities such as a university program. Reichard (2017) theorized in the study that leader development efficacy increases LSE. Leader development efficacy is the belief in one's ability to continually develop their leadership knowledge and skills, which in turn determines perseverance and resolve in meeting set goals (Bandura, 1982; Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Murphy & Johnson, 2016; Stevens & Gist, 1997). All participants expressed the idea that although they felt fairly confident as a principal prior to their participation in a doctoral program, they believed that through further development of their knowledge and skills, they would be more efficacious in their role as a principal. This desire for the development of their LSE led them to begin a doctoral program. For example, Justin used the analogy of an athlete, as he considered himself athletic, but did not yet know the rules of the game. He felt he could lead as a principal fairly well, but needed the continued development to understand the nuances of the role. This desire to develop LSE and his belief that his

skills could be developed, confirm Hannah et al.'s (2008) findings that development efficacy affects leadership development and boosts leadership capacity (Mango et al., 2019).

Johnson and James's (2018) study on principal preparation programs and LSE found several components to be most common in the exemplary programs. Some of these included excellent faculty practitioners as instructors, coherence of curriculum to current practices, pedagogy based on adult learning principles, authentic internships, and mentoring and coaching. Participants in my study also shared their perceptions of the positive impact of these components to the development of their LSE. Participants reported their LSE was developed through relationships with faculty, relevancy of course work to their current job as a principal, and feedback through the mentorships of faculty relationships.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations related to this qualitative study. Study participants were self-selected from those who responded first and met the criteria. Participants' ability to self-select served as a limitation to the study. The recruitment effort did not initially render responses from participants and I switched to email invitations as follow-up. I had several contacts who were faculty in an educational leadership department at their university. This personal invitation resulted in a heavy participation from one private university (six of the 10 participants). The limited variety of institutional characteristics of the universities and the curricular elements of the doctoral programs may not allow the findings to be transferable other public and private doctoral programs

within California and around the United States. The omission of leaders who did not see the invitation flyer or get an email invitation, including those who may not have checked their email during that time or social media, limited the sample. Participants all expressed a level of LSE prior to the participation in a doctoral program, creating a limitation to understanding the overall measured impact of their program on LSE.

The sampling criteria also served as a limitation for the study. First, the study sample did not include any students obtaining a PhD, only those obtaining an EdD. Omitting PhD students and graduates may have left out important insights into the development of LSE through doctoral work. Also, not comparing the LSE of participants before and after their program did not allow a fuller understanding of how LSE developed through their program. The decision to invite only principals with 3 or more years of experience to respond to the invitation may also have served as a limitation.

Recommendations for Future Research

Results of this study serve as an addition to the scholarly conversation regarding how to build LSE in a doctoral program. Having asked students to share their perspectives as a principal regarding their development of LSE from their program, this study was qualitative. Quantitative analysis using Paglis and Green's (2010) three-dimensional survey of LSE could be used to measure LSE before and after doctoral program completion, perhaps including EdD and PhD programs with different kinds of curricular designs and capstone requirements.

Future studies could examine leaders from other geographical locations and other state schools. Nine out of 10 participants were from private universities, therefore, the

representation from state schools was minimal. Future research could also include the study of advanced degree students who did not complete a dissertation, to compare the programs of those that completed their program, and those that did not to find the differences and consistencies. This may provide better insight into the dynamics affecting students who persist and students who did not push through to completion. Also, differentiating between specializations of program focus would be insightful to see the difference between an education supported leadership program and a noneducational leadership program, such as organizational leadership.

Further research would also be beneficial with first-year principals, the impact of completing a doctorate while a working principal, and principals who decide to quit administration. A case study approach would allow for observation during key curricular moments such as immersions and other activities that may support the development of LSE. Also, impactful would be interviews with cohorts, and their faculty, as these cohort relationships were found to be impactful on principals' LSE development. Another study could seek to understand the best size of cohorts for impact on LSE.

Finally, future research could explore the impact of principal LSE on equity of practice within schools and its effect on the collective efficacy of schools and their achievement gaps. LSE builds collective efficacy (Autry, 2010; Cansoy, 2020; Meyer et al., 2020) and collective efficacy has been demonstrated to positively predict students' academic achievement, which may address inequities (Bandura, 1993; Goddard et al., 2000). Also impactful, a quantitative analysis of participants measurement of LSE before and after their program.

Implications for Social Change

The task of developing leaders for schools today is an extraordinary and urgent need for the success of students across our country, especially after the recent impact of COVID-19 on student learning. School leaders will need to be ready to face challenges never faced before in education. The development of LSE may be one of the keys to building back lost learning for students of all needs and demographics. Preparing leaders for success is an investment.

Based on the results of this study, doctoral programs could place increased focus on relationships through cohorts and small groups as well as hire or train and support faculty who are willing to engage in their students' lives and build relationships. Programs also could benefit from all curricular tasks pointing to their students' day-to-day jobs as a possible means of leadership framework for LSE development. Programs should be regularly updating their content and curriculum to match the professional needs of the leaders currently in the field. Programs may also benefit from a focus on student self-exploration and reflection to provide students with more opportunities to reflect and assess and apply the information they have learned with their skills and talents.

Conclusion

K-12 leaders are facing many challenges and responsibilities as they lead teachers, staff, and students towards success (McKinney et al., 2015; Tingle et al., 2019). Principals have been found to be a catalyst for change in order to enhance and transform the culture of the school towards the positive outcome of improved learning (McKinney et al., 2015; Tingle et al., 2019). LSE was found to be a key element in successful

leadership (Bandura, 1986; Dwyer, 2019, Fowler et al., 2020, Paglis & Green, 2020). Principals prepared in doctoral programs were found to be more effective in developing high-quality teacher teams resulting in greater student learning gains (Allen, 2020; Fuller et al., 2011; Ni et al., 2017). With this study I wanted to explore potential causes for the development of LSE through a doctoral program for principals in order to find recommendations for programs to build successful leaders. My interest in focusing on doctoral programs increased due to the future addition of a doctoral program in my own university and my desire to prepare successful and effective leaders for my county schools and beyond.

Through understanding what postgraduate programs can do to increase LSE in school leaders, leaders can be better prepared for success to impact teachers' efficacy and that of their students. The building of LSE can be considered critical and timely in the wake of school closures in order to reverse the adverse impact on student learning

The doctoral graduates in this study perceived their program was impactful in developing their LSE. As a result of this impact, many attributed their moved from the principalship to leading administrators at the district level to their doctorate, and have aspirations to move to superintendency. Through the development of their LSE, leaders may also be effective in creating collective efficacy towards overall school success (Autry, 2010; Cansoy, 2020; Meyer et al., 2020). Based on the results of this study it appears that the participants' universities have effectively prepared students for impactful leadership in their schools and districts. Each of the participants shared successes in their schools both academically and relationally and several have promoted more than once

since the completion of their program. It is my hope that the result of this study will help focus programs on the importance of intentionally developing LSE to assure the development of competent and confident leaders for the students and their futures.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Participant's Name: _____ Date:_____

Interview Start Time: _____ Interview End Time: _____

Location: _____

Introductory Statement

The purpose of this basic design qualitative study was to understand graduates' perceptions of how their participation in their education doctoral program developed their LSE as a current school leader as well as suggestions they had for how doctoral programs could develop LSE in school leaders. Experiences related to challenges as a school leader are useful and how self-efficacy developed in doctoral programs. This interview process is scheduled to last approximately 45-60 minutes and will be recorded via audio while notes are taken with your permission. Do you have any questions in regards to the above-mentioned statement?

Research Questions

The following questions will guide the study:

1. What are the perceptions of educational leadership doctoral program alumni regarding how their program developed their self-efficacy as a current school leader?
2. What are the perceptions of educational leadership doctoral program alumni regarding how programs can develop self-efficacy in school leaders?

Interview Questions

Introduction (First five questions to be completed by the participant prior to the interview)

1. Tell me about yourself and your leadership site.

   a. How long have you been in leadership?
   b. How did you come to work for your current site and district?
   c. Tell me what the day in the life of a leader at your site looks like.
   d. In your experience, what have you brought to your role as a leader?
2. What do you think is the most important aspect of your job?
   a. What are your goals this year for your teachers and students?
   b. How did you come to work for your current site and district?
3. Tell me about your doctoral program and why you chose the program and your specialization?

Prior to my interview questions I would like to give you the definition of a term I will be using as central to my study, the term self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is one's belief in their capabilities to complete a task or respond to specific events This definition developed from Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. Bandura's construct of self-efficacy was further extended by Paglis & Green to leadership with Leadership Self-Efficacy and defined leadership self-efficacy as a person's judgment that he or she can successfully exert leadership by setting a direction for the workgroup, building relationships with followers in order to gain their commitment to change goals, and working with them to overcome obstacles to change.

Now, please think back to your doctoral program as you answer and elaborate on the following questions:

1. What did you first believe about your ability to be successful as a school leader or principal as you began your doctoral program? RQ1

2. Did specific kinds of instructional experiences have an impact on your self-efficacy? Please elaborate. RQ1
3. What components of your doctoral program assisted you in successfully facing leadership challenges in the last year? Cohorts/Mentoring RQ2
4. What specific kinds of course work had the most impact on your beliefs about being successful in your role as a school leader or principal? RQ1, RQ2

   Probing Questions:

   a. If not, what kinds of coursework had the most impact on your beliefs about being successful in the role of a school leader? RQ1, RQ2
5. What kinds of personal interactions did you have during your doctoral program that had an influence on your self-efficacy beliefs? RQ1

   Probing Questions:

   a. How did those interactions develop - were they a result of purposeful instruction or did they come about in another way? RQ1
   b. Were there specific faculty members who contributed to your self-efficacy development? RQ1
6. What people most influenced your self-efficacy beliefs while you were in the doctoral program? RQ1
   a. What were the reasons for their influence or lack of influence? RQ1
7. Were their experiences that other aspiring leaders had that affected your self-efficacy beliefs? RQ1
   a. How did their experiences influence you? RQ1

8. If you could do it again, what was the most valuable experiences or interactions that increased the development of your self-efficacy? RQ2
    a. If none, what specific experiences or interactions should be central to the program? RQ2
9. Was there a stressful element, experience or interaction in the program that caused you to question your belief in your ability to be successful as a school leader or principal? RQ1
    a. How could these experiences or interactions be mitigated to lessen the stress? RQ1
10. Were there any unplanned experiences during your program that contributed to your self-efficacy development? RQ1
11. How do you think educational leadership doctoral programs can develop self-efficacy in school leaders? RQ2
    a. What could doctoral programs do better to positively affect aspiring principals' self-efficacy development? RQ2

Closing Remarks, Debriefing, and Comments

Thank you for participating in this interview and therefore, contributing to my study. I will be sending you a transcript of our interview by email for you to review and confirm that I have captures your responses as you intended. Is the email I used to schedule our interview also the address to contact you with the transcript? If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me. If further clarification after our interview is needed, I will contact you by email to schedule a short 15 minutes follow up questions time. If you would like to withdraw from participating in this study, please let me know at this time. Thank you for your participation!