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Differences in Teachers' Self-Reported Levels of Gratitude Between High-Poverty and Low-Poverty Schools

By

Theresa M. Anderson

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of Bethel University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

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2020

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Abstract

Teacher turnover is a major issue in the U.S. education system because teachers are leaving the profession at astounding rates (Castro, Quinn, Fuller, & Barnes, 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Teacher turnover disproportionately impacts schools with higher numbers of students from predominantly low socioeconomic status backgrounds (Castro et al., 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Exploring gratitude, a positive psychology practice, may provide insight into attrition and teachers' well-being. The intent of this study was to explore the potential contribution gratitude may have as a tool to help teachers develop resilience in light of the complex and dynamic issues in education. Given the importance of schools' poverty levels in relation to differences in students' academic needs, teachers' levels of experience and credentialing, and the working conditions in schools, poverty levels of the school should be taken into consideration when evaluating teachers' well-being (Ávalos & Valenzuela, 2016; Danhier, 2016; Troy et al., 2017). This study explored differences in teachers' self-reported levels of gratitude between high-poverty and low-poverty schools and relationships between demographic variables and gratitude levels. No significant difference was found in teachers' self-reported levels of gratitude between high-poverty and low-poverty schools. However, data indicated a significant positive relationship with gratitude for female teachers, a significant, negative relationship for black/African American teachers, and a significant, negative relationship for teachers who intend to leave within three years for reasons other than promotion or retirement. Additional research to learn more about the relationships between teachers' well-being and the schools' poverty level is needed.

Dedication

With my deepest gratitude,

To my ever-loving and supportive husband, Craig – thank you for always being there, especially when I need you most! You have been very patient as I completed this crazy climb. I'm grateful for your enduring love and I look forward to many more years with you! I am thankful that God continues to bind us together, no matter where we are or what obstacles we face. I'm looking forward to our trip to France!

To my confident and caring son, Josh – your passion and will to make a difference is inspiring to me. Know that you have already succeeded! You are a such a wonderful, young man and I am incredibly proud of you. I thank God for giving you to me. I love your confidence countered with your ability to gently hold others up. Keep being awesome!

And to my spirited and grace-filled daughter, Kayla – you are sunshine and brighten my world. I am so thankful for your deep and passionate nature. Your enthusiasm is contagious and I am so glad I am your mom. You are such a gift from God, and I treasure your heart. I am excited to see what you will do with your many talents!

I love you all very much!

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I am indebted to my colleagues at Mounds View High School. Thank you to my principal, Stephanie Bruggers for providing me opportunities to grow in my leadership practice, and to Dr. Greg Martin, for your encouragement and celebrations at the many milestones. Thank you to Cheryl Braman, my mentor, support, colleague, and friend. You are the kindest person I have ever met, and I am so grateful for you. Thank you, Becky Allard, for your enthusiastic support of my endeavors. I admire your commitment to teaching.

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Thank you to the other three ‘musketeers’ who have walked this journey with me. Pam Patnode, Jill Fagen, and Kristi Flescher. I could not have completed this process without you. Your encouragement, advice, support, and friendship will be treasured for the rest of my life. Thank you for being inspirational, amazing women. What a fantastic legacy!

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Chapter I: Introduction

Teacher turnover is a major issue in the U.S. education system because teachers are leaving the profession at astounding rates (Castro, Quinn, Fuller, & Barnes, 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Between 19% and 30% of teachers leave the profession before their fifth year (Castro et al., 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019) and fewer people are entering the teaching profession each year, creating a gap between supply and demand and resulting in a significant teacher shortage in the United States (Castro et al., 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

Teacher turnover disproportionately impacts schools with higher numbers of students from predominantly low socioeconomic status backgrounds (Castro et al., 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Dee and Goldhaber (2017) noted teacher shortages have been concentrated in schools with high-poverty student populations as well as specific subjects, including special education and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math). These areas have been chronically and persistently difficult to staff, and efforts to address this issue through policy reforms have been unsuccessful (Dee & Goldhaber, 2017). With the teacher shortage, many schools with students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are forced to fill positions with novice, inexperienced teachers, or even uncredentialed teachers (through waivers or temporary permits) (Ávalos & Valenzuela, 2016; Barbarin & Aikens, 2015; Castro et al., 2018; Danhier, 2016; Darby et al., 2011). Schools with inexperienced and uncredentialed teachers could limit students' access to high-quality teachers, a factor that further widens the achievement gap (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). In 2016, approximately 50% of students in the United States attended a public school

classified as high-poverty (24% of schools) or mid-high-poverty (26% of schools) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). High-poverty schools have more than 75% of students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, and mid-high-poverty schools are those where the percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch is between 50.1% and 75.0% of students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

Socioeconomic status typically also has a negative effect on students' academic achievement (Dawson et al., 2019; Drukker, Feron, Mengelers, & Van Os, 2009; Galster, Andersson, & Musterd, 2010; Nieuwenhuis & Hooimeijer, 2016; Nieuwenhuis, Hooimeijer, & Meeus, 2015). Students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds have lower scores on standardized assessments (Heafner & Fitchett, 2015), lower graduation rates (Chaudry & Wimer, 2016; Egen, Beatty, Blackley, Brown, & Wykoff, 2017; Wodtke, Harding, & Elwert, 2011), and higher drop-out rates (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Barbarin & Aikens, 2015; Chaudry & Wimer, 2016; Hillemeier, Farkas, Morgan, Martin, & Maczuga, 2009; Wodtke et al., 2011; L. Wood, Kiperman, Esch, Leroux, & Truscott, 2017) than their peers from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. Children in financially disadvantaged homes and communities are often slower to acquire language skills, have fewer experiences that contribute to cognitive growth, have fewer school readiness skills, and typically have delayed phonological awareness and letter identification skills, which may increase the risk for difficulty in developing literacy skills (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Barbarin & Aikens, 2015; Hillemeier et al., 2009) and pose a significant challenge for teachers

working in high-poverty schools (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Barbarin & Aikens, 2015).

Teachers who work in schools with greater percentages of students living in poverty also face numerous challenges such as behavior management, which is typically more prominent in high-poverty schools (Ávalos & Valenzuela, 2016; Danhier, 2016; Darby et al., 2011; Edwards, 2016). Compared to low-poverty schools, teachers in high-poverty schools often have heavier teaching loads, fewer classroom resources, more students with special needs, fewer supports for students, and more students performing well below grade level or at-risk of failing (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; American Psychological Association, 2019; Ávalos & Valenzuela, 2016; Danhier, 2016; Darby et al., 2011). The burden of helping students in high-poverty schools (who need the best access to education to help with social mobility) often falls on the shoulders of the teachers (Barbarin & Aikens, 2015). Barbarin and Aikens (2015) commented,

> Teachers are currently under scrutiny and feel blamed for systematic failure to educate poor children. A high workload, a lack of support, individual blame, and a lack of control over factors that contribute to student difficulties are a recipe for teacher burnout. It is not surprising that experienced teachers are motivated to transfer to schools with fewer, more manageable demands and greater support (p. 104).

Teachers working in high-poverty schools should receive the most support so they can stay and remain engaged in the difficult and important work (Dee & Goldhaber, 2017). Students who have the greatest needs should be given access to the

most resources (including high-quality teachers); yet, they often are left with the fewest resources (support staff, title staff, facilities, technology, teaching materials, books, supplies, etc.) (Barbarin & Aikens, 2015; Ouellette et al., 2018).

Overview of the Study

Teachers are critical for helping students achieve academic success, especially for students of color and students in high-poverty schools (Aaronson, Barrow, & Sander, 2007; Gehrke, 2005; Palardy, 2015). The achievement gap has been the impetus for numerous policy reforms including the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 and the *Every Student Succeeds Act* of 2015 that seek to improve education through increased school and teacher accountability measures as reported through standardized test scores (Bonner, 2014; Gehrke, 2005; Strunk & Zeehandelaar, 2011). Several factors seem to contribute to the achievement gap such as students' families (e.g., lower economic and academic backgrounds of parents), and school-based inequities driven by student composition (e.g., lower average socioeconomic status of students, lower average achievement levels in reading and math, higher levels of student mobility, the prevalence of students demonstrating characteristics such as giftedness, special needs, or English language learners), and school factors (e.g., class sizes, access to resources, teacher qualifications, and teacher efficacy) (Bonner, 2014; Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012; Kraft et al., 2015; Palardy, 2015). However, compared with all of these variables, several researchers posited that teachers seem to have the greatest influence on students' achievement (Barbarin & Aikens, 2015; Barr, 2015; Bonner, 2014; Danhier, 2016; Edwards, 2016; Jiang, Vauras, Volet, & Wang, 2016; Strunk & Zeehandelaar, 2011). Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds

are more likely to achieve academic success when they are placed in classrooms with highly-effective teachers who hold high expectations for all students (Bonner, 2014; Gehrke, 2005; Kim & Seo, 2018; Palardy, 2015). The reverse effect has also been found; when teachers demonstrate ineffective teaching methods and have low expectations for a group of students, all students are more likely to do poorly, including students who possess high academic potential (Barbarin & Aikens, 2015). This tends to be even more prevalent in schools with high percentages of students from low socioeconomic areas (Barbarin & Aikens, 2015).

Successful teachers in urban schools who teach students in areas with high concentrations of poverty were found to employ practices, behaviors, and attitudes that enabled them to reach the students and increase academic achievement levels, sometimes by as much as a full grade level (Aaronson et al., 2007; Bonner, 2014; Gehrke, 2005; Palardy, 2015). Some examples of the practices and behaviors employed by successful teachers in urban schools include the development of relationships with the students, parents, and communities, self-awareness and self-reflection, a deep understanding of the urban school environment including the impact of poverty on student learning, knowledge of available resources in the school and community (e.g., after-school programs, meal options, mentorship programs, etc.), flexibility in teaching strategies and approaches, and persistence in holding high expectations for all students, especially students of color (Aaronson et al., 2007; Bonner, 2014; Brookhart & Rusnak, 1993; Gehrke, 2005). Teachers that demonstrated these behaviors and showed they believed in their students' abilities to be successful were able to overcome the barrier of poverty (Aaronson et al., 2007;

Bonner, 2014; Gehrke, 2005). Conversely, there may be an even greater negative effect that can become cumulative for students who have a succession of ineffective teachers (Palardy, 2015). Having effective teachers in schools with the greatest needs is a critical component for addressing the achievement gap (Aaronson et al., 2007; Bonner, 2014; Gehrke, 2005; Palardy, 2015).

Given the challenges in high-poverty schools, placing teachers with the least amount of experience in classrooms with the greatest needs increases the risk for teachers' turnover as teachers become emotionally exhausted (Danhier, 2016; Darby et al., 2011; Ouellette et al., 2018). Emotional exhaustion is one of the factors of burnout, which leads to teacher turnover (Ballantyne & Zhukov, 2017; Çevik, 2017; Lavy & Eshet, 2018). Emotion regulation is important for teachers because teachers' emotional competence, or the ability to regulate emotions, is positively associated with teachers' efficacy (Fiorilli, Albanese, Gabola, & Pepe, 2017; Frenzel et al., 2016; Hagenauer, Hascher, & Volet, 2015; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014), and negatively associated with stress and burnout (Chen, 2016; Lavy & Eshet, 2018).

Evidence-based practices and interventions can have positive effects on teachers' emotional regulation and resilience. Some practices can also reduce stress and burnout (Chan, 2011; Cook et al., 2017; Lavy & Eshet, 2018). Gratitude is a psychological characteristic that has been strongly and positively correlated with various measures of well-being including positive emotions (e.g., joy, pride, contentment), positive affect (an individual's proneness to experience positive emotions and have a positive attitude), and improved mood (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Lambert, Fincham, & Stillman, 2012). Grateful individuals tend to be happier

and more well-adjusted (Lee et al., 2018; McCanlies, Gu, Andrew, & Violanti, 2018; Watkins, Woodward, Stone, & Kolts, 2003). Researchers found that gratitude has a strong, inverse association with depression, physical aggression, and resentment (Watkins et al., 2003). Grateful experiences may actually counteract resentment (Watkins et al., 2003), alleviate feelings of stress, and reduce burnout by fostering positive emotions (Franks, 2015; Fredrickson, 2001; Lee et al., 2018). Gratitude has also been associated with positive reframing, which increases positive emotions (Lambert et al., 2012; McCanlies et al., 2018). Exploring gratitude, which is only one of many positive psychology practices, may provide insight into better understanding attrition and teachers' well-being.

In spite of the research highlighting the positive effects of gratitude interventions (Chan, 2011, 2013; Cook et al., 2017; Franks, 2015; Fredrickson, 2001; Lambert et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2018; Watkins et al., 2003), levels of teacher attrition have increased, and emotional labor continues to take its toll on teachers' well-being (Cook et al., 2017; Rumschlag, 2017). Exploring gratitude may provide potential insights into ways to help teachers develop resilience in light of the complex and dynamic issues in education. Given the importance of schools' poverty levels in relation to differences in students' academic needs, teachers' levels of experience and credentialing, and the working conditions in schools, poverty levels of the school should be taken into consideration when evaluating teachers' well-being (Ávalos & Valenzuela, 2016; Danhier, 2016; Troy et al., 2017).It is unclear from current literature if there are any differences in teachers' levels of gratitude across the contexts of schools with regards to poverty levels, although understanding teachers'

gratitude may help educational leaders learn how best to support quality teachers in achieving greater levels of happiness and well-being within their school's contexts. Understanding current levels of teachers' well-being within schools' contexts can help in the development of steps that could be taken to increase teachers' retention and reduce attrition in high-poverty schools. The purpose of this study was to explore differences in teachers' self-reported levels of gratitude between high-poverty and low-poverty schools, and to determine if there were any relationships between demographic variables and gratitude levels.

Background of the Study

Education is constantly changing. Keeping up with new laws, policies, and accountability measures requires flexibility, adaptability, and resilience for educators (Chen, 2016; Ellison & Woods, 2018; Gray, Wilcox, & Nordstokke, 2017; Hills & Robinson, 2010). Teaching is often referred to as one of the most stressful professions; in fact, 93% of teachers show characteristics of high-stress (Herman, Hickmon-Rosa, & Reinke, 2018). Often, the pressures of the teaching profession result in negative health consequences for teachers (Fujishiro, Farley, Kellemen, & Swoboda, 2017). There are also persistent problems educators and experts alike have been wrestling with for years such as the achievement gap (Klusmann, Richter, & Lüdtke, 2016), the effects of poverty (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Ainsworth, 2002; Ellison & Woods, 2018), a lack of resources, inadequate wages, diminishing benefits, increasing class sizes, increasing numbers of students with special education needs, ineffective training, lack of administrative support, a decreasing sense of autonomy and respect, and a pervasive lack of funding (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Ávalos &

Valenzuela, 2016; Avanzi et al., 2018; Barbarin & Aikens, 2015; Ellison & Woods, 2018; Glazer, 2018). It is perhaps auspicious to believe that researchers, policymakers or administrators will be able to find solutions to all of the issues in education. Rather than attempt to protect teachers from the onslaught of educational challenges, it may be better to focus on finding ways to equip teachers with skills and abilities to build resilience to enable them to persevere through the challenges (Fredrickson, 2001; Sheldon & King, 2001; White, 2016). Helping teachers develop personal reserves of positive emotions may help lead to a teaching workforce that is no longer feeling exhausted, disrespected, and powerless (Cook et al., 2017; Fredrickson, 2001, 2004; White, 2016).

Teacher shortages have become a frequent topic of conversation. In 2015, the teacher shortage in the U.S. was referenced in the news about 4,000 times Dee & Goldhaber, 2017). While a teacher shortage is not a new phenomenon, the dramatic growth of the shortage is causing alarm. During the years following the Great Recession, between 2009 and 2014, schools cut courses and eliminated many teacher positions (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). In 2011-2012, the supply of teachers was estimated to be higher than the demand. However, in 2012-2013, this ratio flipped, with an estimated shortage of 20,000 teachers (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). The teacher shortage grew quickly, quadrupling to an estimated 110,000 teachers in 2017-2018 (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). In addition, teacher preparation programs saw steep declines: between 2009 and 2014, teacher preparation programs experienced a 31% drop in enrollment while K-12 student enrollment increased year over year from 2008 to 2013 (Goldring, Taie, & Riddles, 2014).

In 2015, as the economy began to recover (Espinoza et al., 2018), schools began searching for teachers to replace those who had left or to refill positions that had been cut during the previous five years (Espinoza et al., 2018). The growth in demand for teachers has continued (Espinoza et al., 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Although there is conflicting data, some estimates project that by 2027, student enrollment in public schools in the U.S. will increase approximately 3% (Espinoza et al., 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Because of the reduced enrollment numbers in the teacher preparation programs and the high rates of teacher turnover, the current demand for teachers greatly exceeds the supply, and the gap is increasing (Castro et al., 2018; Espinoza et al., 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Some believe the shortage is reaching epidemic proportions, creating what is potentially considered to be a crisis. Every state has been struggling to fill openings each year (Castro et al., 2018; Espinoza et al., 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019). The magnitude of this shortage is persistent, significant, and growing, and appears to be even worse than previously estimated (Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

Although increasing student enrollment is a factor, the primary driver of the increased demand for teachers is teacher-turnover (Castro et al., 2018). Teacher-turnover is defined as mobility within the teacher workforce and it occurs in one of two ways. The first is through attrition, which is when teachers leave the classroom to pursue other jobs in education or outside of the field of education. The group of teachers has also been referred to as ‘leavers’ and accounts for 90% of the teacher demand (Castro et al., 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019). The second way teacher-turnover occurs is through migration, which is when teachers leave one school to go

to another school, shifting the shortage from one location to another. Teachers who migrate are sometimes referred to as ‘movers’ (Castro et al., 2018). Each year, approximately 16% of teachers either leave the profession altogether (8%) or move to a different school (8%) (Castro et al., 2018; Goldring et al., 2014).

The teacher shortage is not equally distributed throughout the country (Espinoza et al., 2018) and is more dire in some areas than others depending on a variety of factors, such as location, school level or subject areas (Castro et al., 2018; Espinoza et al., 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019). The rates of teacher shortages vary greatly by state and local markets. Some states have wide-spread, chronic issues trying to fill vacancies, such as California or Hawaii. Some states (Colorado and Oklahoma) only struggle to meet the needs in certain markets, such as rural or inner-city (Espinoza et al., 2018). The highest turnover rates are in the southern states (Castro et al., 2018; Espinoza et al., 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019). There are also variations by school level and specific subject areas, with STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and special education currently experiencing some of the most severe shortages (Castro et al., 2018; Espinoza et al., 2018). Recruiting quality teachers has been a longstanding challenge for some schools (e.g., urban schools) and in some subject areas (e.g., mathematics) (Espinoza et al., 2018). Past policy reform efforts and incentive programs to mitigate the high rates of attrition and low numbers of new entrants to the field seem to have fallen short, further exacerbating the teacher shortages (Castro et al., 2018; Espinoza et al., 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

In an effort to fill vacancies, many districts have resorted to hiring underqualified or non-credentialed teachers (Castro et al., 2018; Espinoza et al., 2018), which has created a disproportionate impact on schools enrolling higher percentages of students living in poverty. Policies designed to equalize access to quality teachers such as the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001) or *Every Student Succeeds Act* (2015) have expanded the issue of teacher shortages and increased pressure on all teachers to increase student achievement rates on standardized tests (Espinoza et al., 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019). These increased accountability measures have taken a toll on teachers' well-being, resulting in higher levels of stress and burnout than ever before (Castro et al., 2018; Espinoza et al., 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

Unfortunately, pressures from increased accountability are only one of many factors affecting teachers today. While retirements account for a small portion of attrition, two-thirds of teachers leave due to other issues including ineffective administrative support, inadequate preparation and mentoring to be effective in the classroom, inadequate pay, decreasing autonomy, increasing student-behavioral issues, and poor teaching conditions which may include inadequate facilities and unsafe neighborhoods (Espinoza et al., 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Glazer, 2018). Teacher-turnover also has a negative impact on student achievement (Heafner & Fitchett, 2015) and generates increased issues for teachers who stay when others leave (Espinoza et al., 2018).

Teacher turnover is also extremely costly. Teacher attrition is estimated to cost $2.2 billion per year and teacher migration is estimated to cost $4.9 billion per

year (Castro et al., 2018). The costs of turnover include separation costs, recruitment and hiring costs, and training costs (Castro et al., 2018). Retaining teachers would allow these funds to be used for other initiatives.

In Minnesota, the picture is similar. As of 2019, there were 133,945 people with one or more active teaching licenses (Wilder Research, 2019). Of all teachers with an active license in the state of Minnesota, less than half (47.5%) were teaching in a Minnesota public school in 2017-2018 (Wilder Research, 2019). Though this statistic includes teachers who retired prior to the expiration of their teaching license, those who were serving in non-instructional roles, and those who could be planning to return following a personal leave, the majority are those who were planning to stop teaching (Wilder Research, 2019). Similar to the national reports, Minnesota has struggled to fill positions with teachers with proper licensing in the areas of career and technical education, world languages, and science, technology, engineering, and math fields (Wilder Research, 2019). Approximately 3.8% of the positions were filled with non-qualified teachers in the 2017-2018 school year (Wilder Research, 2019). In the same school year, 91% of teachers were returning from the prior year, while approximately four percent were newly licensed and teaching for their first year (Wilder Research, 2019).

Every region in the state of Minnesota experienced an increase in student enrollment between 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 (Wilder Research, 2019). Hiring teachers was also an issue; 93.7% of districts reported teacher shortages were a problem in 2017-2018 (Wilder Research, 2019). Several districts (12.7%) reported cancellations of classes or course offerings due to the inability to staff the positions

(Wilder Research, 2019). At the end of the 2016-2017 school year, 7,000 teachers left their schools. Of these, 41.4% of teachers left for personal reasons (24.7%) or unknown reasons (16.7%), while 19.5% left to teach in another district, state, or country (Wilder Research, 2019). More research is needed to better understand why teachers are leaving the profession as well as to identify potential actions that may help with teacher retention in Minnesota.

Statement of the Problem

Attrition and migration (teacher-turnover) have had a negative effect on many schools in the U.S., especially those that serve greater numbers of students from financially disadvantaged homes (Espinoza et al., 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019); high-poverty schools have higher rates of teacher-turnover (Espinoza et al., 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Teacher-turnover is driven by a variety of things including inadequate preparation and mentoring support, increasing pressure from accountability policies, increasing behavior management issues, ineffective administrative support, decreasing autonomy, lack of self-efficacy due to low student achievement, negative teacher-student relationships, low salaries, and limited resources (Castro et al., 2018; Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012; Espinoza et al., 2018; Ouellette et al., 2018; Xuan et al., 2019). The drivers of teacher-turnover were positively associated with high levels of stress and burnout and low levels of self-efficacy (Ouellette et al., 2018).

While interventions to help limit student disruptions and increase student engagement may be necessary for improving classroom functioning, they were not found to be sufficient for effectively reducing teacher stress or promoting teacher well-being, especially in urban, high-poverty schools (Ouellette et al., 2018). Faced

with a substantial number of unfilled positions and often, limited options, schools often resort to hiring inexperienced, unqualified, or uncredentialed teachers (Espinoza et al., 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

Levels of burnout were highest in teachers who struggled to manage their negative emotions in front of students, suggesting that teachers with lower emotional competence or ability to regulate emotions has a positive association with burnout (Chen, 2016; Lavy & Eshet, 2018). Higher levels of emotional exhaustion were reported following intense, emotional interactions, confirming the connection between the intensity of negative emotions and burnout. Teachers with low emotional competence are at a greater risk for attrition due to teachers' emotional exhaustion (Danhier, 2016; Darby et al., 2011; Ouellette et al., 2018). Efforts focused on cultivating gratitude have shown promise for reducing teacher stress and burnout (Chan, 2011; Cook et al., 2017; Ouellette et al., 2018). Gratitude may help increase teachers' well-being, thereby increasing retention rates (Chan, 2011, 2013; Howells, 2014).

Given that schools with greater numbers of students with low socioeconomic statuses have higher teacher-turnover rates, a school's poverty level should also be taken into consideration when evaluating efforts aimed to increase teachers' well-being (Ávalos & Valenzuela, 2016; Danhier, 2016; Troy, Ford, McRae, Zarolia, & Mauss, 2017). Determining if there are differences between teachers' self-reported levels of gratitude across schools with different poverty-levels is a first step in better understanding teachers' needs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore differences in teachers' self-reported levels of gratitude between high-poverty and low-poverty schools, and to determine if there were any relationships between demographic variables and gratitude levels.

Research Questions

Two research questions were used to frame this study. RQ1: Is there a statistically significant difference between the gratitude levels of teachers from high-poverty and low-poverty schools? RQ2: Are there relationships between demographic variables (teachers' grade level, teachers' age, years of teaching experience, years at current school, first career or not, degree, race, gender, faith affiliation, intent to leave) and teachers' levels of gratitude?

Significance of the Study

Teacher attrition is only one of a magnitude of complex social challenges facing education in the U.S. and internationally. Although researchers have made promising findings related to ways to foster conditions where teachers feel supported, hopeful, resilient and effective, there is still much work to be done to implement effective and sustainable programs and practices (Anjum & Amjad, 2016; Avanzi et al., 2018; Ballantyne & Zhukov, 2017; Cook et al., 2017; Soulen & Wine, 2018).

In numerous studies, researchers have explored the vast educational issues stemming from teachers' emotional exhaustion and burnout (Avanzi et al., 2018; Becker, Goetz, Morger, & Ranellucci, 2014; García-Carmona, Marín, & Aguayo, 2019; Ouellette et al., 2018; Van Droogenbroeck, Spruyt, & Vanroelen, 2014). The development of positive psychology has introduced an opportunity to alter the focus of educational policies and efforts (Ballantyne & Zhukov, 2017; Chan, 2011;

Morrish, Rickard, Chin, & Vella-Brodrick, 2018; White, 2016). Rather than looking at factors of stress and burnout, positive psychology offers the chance to explore ways to optimize human functioning and encourage thriving (Fredrickson, 2001; Seligman, 2011a; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

For policymakers, understanding if and how a school's poverty level associates with teacher well-being may help to identify ways to reduce attrition. Additional research is also needed to explore the intersections of positive psychology and teacher well-being in conjunction with the various educational policies and accountability measures (Ávalos & Valenzuela, 2016; Glazer, 2018; Rumschlag, 2017; White, 2016).

For students, further research is needed to investigate connections between positive psychology practices and schools' poverty levels as it pertains to student achievement. Teachers' emotion regulation strategies may be helpful for increasing student achievement (Becker et al., 2014; Houser & Waldbuesser, 2017; Mahler, Großschedl, & Harms, 2018). The emotional contagion effect in the classroom seems to have an effect on students' emotions and subsequent student engagement and achievement (Becker et al., 2014; Hills & Robinson, 2010; Houser & Waldbuesser, 2017; Lohbeck, Hagenauer, & Frenzel, 2018). Additional insights gleaned through an exploration of teachers' emotions and positive psychology practices about ways to reduce teacher attrition rates would also help students. Furthermore, better understanding the levels of gratitude in teachers may be useful for informing how to approach teaching social-emotional skills to students, including gratitude practices.

For teachers and leaders, awareness of the potentially different needs for self-care and well-being based on the poverty level of the school may surface, as well as awareness of the differences in stress factors leading to decisions to leave the field. The present study may reveal an opportunity to better cultivate positive emotions and build capacity for resilience and well-being through proactive measures (Chan, 2011; Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Fredrickson, 2001).

Though several researchers have recommended the incorporation of practices designed to enhance teachers' well-being, implementation has been impeded by several barriers including limited reach and high costs (Çevik, 2017; Jiang et al., 2016; Lavy & Eshet, 2018; Lohbeck et al., 2018; Taxer & Frenzel, 2015; Yin, Huang, & Lee, 2017). Therefore, developing in-service programs designed to teach emotional competence may help teachers manage emotional labor, build resilience, and enhance well-being (Chen, 2016; Cook et al., 2017), while diminishing the need to focus efforts on reducing the negative consequences such as emotional exhaustion and burnout. This information would be extremely beneficial for school leaders as well.

There is also a need to develop programs or courses to help address emotion regulation skills for pre-service teachers as they enter the teaching force. This study may provide insights for future research into the different components or competencies that should be included in such a program, especially if the programs are focused on preparing teachers for urban education settings (Ballantyne & Zhukov, 2017; Çevik, 2017; Chen, 2016; Cook et al., 2017; Lohbeck et al., 2018; White, 2016).

While an abundance of literature exists on the benefits of gratitude (Anjum & Amjad, 2016; Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Kong, Zhao, You, & Xiang, 2019; Lambert et al., 2012; Watkins et al., 2003), there are very few studies that explore gratitude in education (Chan, 2011, 2013; Howells, 2014) and no studies that examine differences in teachers' levels of gratitude between schools with high-poverty levels and low-poverty levels. Understanding teachers' levels of gratitude may provide a possible avenue to help enhance teachers' well-being. This study fills a gap in the literature by providing insight into the role a school's context plays in teachers' well-being by exploring if gratitude levels vary. This study also revealed the need for additional research of causal relationships and additional contextual factors related to teachers' resilience. Before engaging in work designed to help teachers develop their well-being, it is important to first understand if there are differences in teachers' levels of well-being between schools with high and low poverty levels, and this study was an initial step in addressing this research gap.

It is possible to imagine a future for teachers that does not include burnout and attrition. Ideally, rather than striving to stop the flow of teacher turnover, the education sector could be focused on enhancing teachers' well-being, which may lead to increased effectiveness in the classroom, increased teacher retention, and ultimately increased student achievement in all school contexts.

Rationale

In addition to the efforts to increase enrollment in teacher preparation programs, it is important to find ways to retain quality teachers through programs designed to increase teacher well-being. Because retention in high-poverty schools seems to be more difficult (Espinoza et al., 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019), programs and efforts designed to retain teachers may need to be customized based on the poverty level of the school. A program designed to enhance teacher well-being may need to be tailored to a school's poverty level if the needs of the teachers are different. In order to understand if a tailored program is necessary, it is important to first understand if there are differences in teachers' levels of well-being.

There are numerous differences between schools with different poverty levels (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Barbarin & Aikens, 2015; Egen et al., 2017; Heafner & Fitchett, 2015; Hillemeier et al., 2009; L. Wood et al., 2017). There are also significant differences in teacher-turnover based on schools' poverty levels (Castro et al., 2018; Espinoza et al., 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Given these differences, it was hypothesized that there are differences in teachers' levels of well-being in schools with different poverty levels. Using gratitude as an indicator of well-being, this study sought to determine if there were differences in teachers' well-being based on a school's poverty level. Understanding if differences exist may aid in understanding how to approach retention efforts. Supporting a strong teacher force must be a priority in order to address student achievement gaps and teacher shortages.

Definition of Terms

Positive psychology. Positive psychology is a branch of psychology that aims to scientifically study the positive aspects of human strengths, characteristics, virtues, and optimal performance. Positive psychology starts with what is working and seeks to explore the elements that promote well-being, happiness, and life satisfaction (Fredrickson, 2004; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Sheldon & King, 2001).

Well-being. Well-being is a broad term encompassing multiple factors. In a recent review of the literature, researchers found 14 distinct constructs frequently used to define well-being, including happiness, vitality, self-awareness, significance, and connection. In this study, well-being is the term used to describe an individual's general sense of contentment, psychological health, and welfare (Longo, Coyne, & Joseph, 2018).

Gratitude. Gratitude is the term used to refer to an emotion, a trait, or a virtue that stems from an appreciation for benefits received from an experience, a situation, another person, or a non-person (i.e., God). It can also be used to express recognition of a sense of well-being not tied to a particular source or to describe a generally positive life-orientation (Layous et al., 2017; Morgan, Gulliford, & Kristjánsson, 2017; Wood, Gillett, Linley, & Joseph, 2008; Wood, Joseph, & Maltby, 2009).

Burnout. Burnout refers to the multi-dimensional psychological syndrome brought about by chronic emotional stress. It is characterized by the presence of persistent symptoms of emotional exhaustion, attitudes, and behaviors of cynicism or depersonalization, and a sense of inefficacy or lack of personal achievement

(Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001; Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009).

Emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion is the most obvious and frequently expressed symptom of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). It is one of three dimensions of burnout syndrome and is brought on by frequent and chronic stressors experienced at work. It can be from an imbalanced workload, disharmonious interpersonal relationships or both (Fiorilli et al., 2017; Maslach et al., 2001; Rumschlag, 2017; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014). It is negatively associated with student achievement (Klusmann et al., 2016).

Depersonalization. Depersonalization is one of the three dimensions of burnout syndrome. The dimension of depersonalization refers to the cynical attitudes and behaviors toward people at work expressed by those who are emotionally exhausted. Believed to be used as a coping mechanism, depersonalization allows an individual to detach from people at work or aspects of the job in an effort to reduce the emotional strain (Avanzi et al., 2018; Herman et al., 2018; Maslach et al., 2001; Rumschlag, 2017).

Personal achievement. Personal achievement is one of the three dimensions of burnout syndrome. This is often the most complex of the three dimensions to observe as it pertains primarily to one's self-evaluation of the personal achievement of goals, effectiveness in the job, and overall job performance. It is an individual's sense of self-efficacy as it pertains to work (Herman et al., 2018; Mahler et al., 2018; Maslach et al., 2001; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

Emotion regulation. Emotion regulation is the collection of processes individuals take to manage their emotions. Processes can alter their responses to the emotions and the displayed or hidden expressions of the emotions. Processes involve an appraisal of the emotions and regulation can affect the duration and intensity of the emotions (Jiang et al., 2016; Morrish et al., 2018; Yin et al., 2017). Emotion regulation can consist of conscious processes or unconscious processes (Jiang et al., 2016). Strategies used to regulate emotions can be healthy or detrimental to one's well-being (Jiang et al., 2016; Lavy & Eshet, 2018; Yin et al., 2017). Troy et al. (2017) posited that positive emotion regulation strategies that are beneficial to psychological health may be particularly important for students in a high-poverty school context as they provide them a measure of control of self-regulation amidst an environment where there is little else they can control (Troy et al., 2017).

Socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status is a complex indicator of the financial, educational, and social quality of an individual's life. It is comprised of several factors including income, employment, educational attainment, and social position. Poverty is one indicator of socioeconomic status; however, it does not provide the whole picture because it does not convey the access or lack of access to privileges afforded to certain groups of people, nor does it encompass the overall quality of life. Poverty is an indicator of low socioeconomic status. In this study, the term refers to a context or state rather than an individual's characteristics (American Psychological Association, 2019; Troy et al., 2017).

Free and reduced-price lunch/meals. Free and reduced-price meals are meals offered to qualifying-students under the National School Lunch Program.

Established in 1946 under the *Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act*, the National School Lunch Program is a federally funded meal assistance program for students in public, non-profit private schools, and child-care institutions (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2017). It is administered by the Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2017). Although it is not a direct measurement of a student's socioeconomic status, it does serve as an indicator of lower household socioeconomic status (Minnesota Department of Health, 2014; Minnesota Department of Oral Health Program, 2019).

Assumptions and Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. The first limitation was that it was not possible to isolate all variables impacting the measures of gratitude for this study beyond the differences in poverty levels of the schools. Because there are so many unique differences in the personal characteristics of teachers, and due to the cross-sectional design of this research study, no causal relationships can be inferred. This study only measured gratitude levels at a single point in time. It was beyond the scope of this study to explore the mindset of participants' responses to the gratitude questions or to examine changes in gratitude levels. The instrument was assumed to indicate a global measure of gratitude without identification of the participants' context or mental framework when responding or distinctions of the participants' understanding of the construct of gratitude (Wood, Froh, & Geraghty, 2010).

Another limitation of this study stems from the selection of the sample. The sample for this study was selected using a random sampling of teachers from one mid-western state. This sample is limited by both size and region and was not

representative of the total population of teachers in the nation due to these limitations (Patten, 2017). Due to the randomized selection of the population, the sample was likely not demographically representative of the total teacher population, and will, therefore, be subject to sampling errors (Patten, 2017).

A final limitation of this study was in the study design. This researcher intended to collect data through an emailed survey, which created a bias against those that may not have been able to receive the email messages due to inaccurate email addresses from the sampling frame, school email filters that prevented the emails from passing through firewalls, or those that were unable to access the survey in Qualtrics due to the blocking of some internet sites.

Nature of the Study

Teachers are a school's most valuable resource (Becker et al., 2014; Mahler et al., 2018; Soulen & Wine, 2018; Wiesman, 2016). To be effective, teachers must be able to manage stress and regulate emotions. The demands placed on teachers vary across schools and can be associated with the schools' poverty levels (American Psychological Association, 2019; Danhier, 2016; Darby et al., 2011; Troy et al., 2017). It is important to understand if the schools' poverty levels have any relationship with teachers' well-being so that efforts to improve teachers' well-being can be customized and targeted specifically to the potentially different needs. This quantitative study sought to identify differences, if any, between teachers' self-reported levels of gratitude across schools' poverty levels as well as to determine if there were any relationships between demographic variables and gratitude levels.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

Chapter two provides a review of the current literature. The philosophy and justification, research design, sampling design, data collection procedures, theoretical framework, and ethical considerations are provided in chapter three. Chapter four provides an analysis and examination of the results, and chapter five includes conclusions and implications as well as recommendations for future research opportunities.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

Teachers perform a critical role in society and are perhaps, the most important factor in student achievement (Mahler et al., 2018; Soulen & Wine, 2018; Wiesman, 2016). Effective teachers are under extreme pressure to work hard to identify and implement research-based practices to create programs to motivate students, prepare them for high stakes tests, and launch them into the 21st-century workforce (Chen, 2016; Rumschlag, 2017; Wiesman, 2016). Increased pressure on teachers comes from an era of constant reforms of standards, teaching materials, strategies, technology, testing, teacher evaluations, funding, and state and federal requirements (Chen, 2016; Lavy & Eshet, 2018; Rumschlag, 2017; Wiesman, 2016). As students become more diverse and complex, teachers struggle to adapt to support all students (Cook et al., 2017; Rumschlag, 2017; Wiesman, 2016), which often results in emotional exhaustion for teachers. Emotional exhaustion leads high-quality teachers to leave the profession, which has a negative effect on the students, especially those in high-poverty schools (Chen, 2016; Ellison & Woods, 2018).

It is impossible to eliminate all the various pressures facing teachers. Therefore, efforts should be focused on helping teachers build resilience so they can thrive in education, regardless of the school's poverty level. Teachers' resilience and job satisfaction are critical components for keeping teachers in the profession and maintaining school cohesion (Çevik, 2017; Ellison & Woods, 2018; Frenzel et al., 2016).

Education and the Role of the Teacher

Since the age of the Industrial Revolution, many say the role of the teacher has expanded, intensified, and come under substantial scrutiny (Mocanu & Sterian, 2013; Valli & Buese, 2007). There are varying viewpoints on this issue; for instance, some have argued that the role has changed very little. Teachers are still primarily isolated to a classroom with a group of students who are clustered according to birth date (Robinson, 2010). The role of the teacher is to impart knowledge to the students about a predetermined set of standards. Small adjustments have been introduced into the classroom, such as innovative teaching strategies designed to enhance the students' abilities to learn the material or the introduction of technology where students can learn more independently. For the most part, the buildings, furniture, structure of the school day, and the general role of the teacher are the same. From a broad view, this perspective is accurate, with students moving through the educational system as though it were like an assembly line (Robinson, 2010).

An alternative viewpoint highlights how the educational reform movement of the past two decades has had a noticeable effect on the role of teachers (Gray et al., 2017; Mocanu & Sterian, 2013; Valli & Buese, 2007). The introduction of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (1965) and the revisions such as the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001), and the most recent, *Every Student Succeeds Act* (2015) cultivated an era of high-stakes accountability in an effort to measure progress toward greater equity. Along with these policies, there has been a growing trend for inclusive classrooms, which widens the base of expertise needed by teachers to ensure success for all students. Navigating the complexities of ever-changing policies and the diverse

and compounding needs of the students has taken its toll on educators, as their responsibilities and assignments have significantly expanded (Gray et al., 2017; Valli & Buese, 2007).

Moreover, globalization and an increased focus on comparisons to international education efforts have increased the spotlight on the U.S. educational system, requiring a paradigm shift regarding the purpose of education and who it serves or fails to serve (Mocanu & Sterian, 2013). To adjust to this changing focus, the role of the teacher has shifted from that of one who imparts knowledge, to a facilitator of whole-child development, with a call to inspire and incite critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration in all students (Gray et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2012; Kraft et al., 2015).

In addition to developing students' academic skills, teachers are also responsible for developing students' emotional intelligence, which encompasses students' ability to manage their own emotions as well as the emotions of others around them (Mocanu & Sterian, 2013). Stemming from the call to focus on educating the whole child, which includes the physical, cognitive, behavioral, and emotional dimensions of students, additional forms of embedded curriculum have been added to the already heavy list of required subjects that must be taught (Chittooran & Chittooran, 2010; Gray et al., 2017; Valli & Buese, 2007). Values-based education or character-based education modules have been used as a way to improve the well-being of students by helping them with the development of their behavioral and emotional dimensions. More recently, a plethora of resources have been introduced under the realm of social-emotional learning (Brackett, Reyes,

Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2012; Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2011; Collie et al., 2012; Goldberg et al., 2018; Morrish et al., 2018; Ransford, Greenberg, Domitrovich, Small, & Jacobson, 2009). These programs have been deemed critical for students' physical and mental well-being, as well as for academic achievement (Brackett et al., 2012). Teachers are the primary implementers of these programs, which adds an additional component to their already unbalanced teaching obligations. However, teachers who have implemented the programs with fidelity have reported improvements in their own well-being (Brackett et al., 2012; Goldberg et al., 2018).

Teachers are being held accountable to prepare students for high-stakes testing designed to measure academic achievement. In addition, teachers are responsible for ensuring students' mental health needs are met (Brackett et al., 2012; Gray et al., 2017). With greater numbers of students with special education needs, teachers are challenged to ensure differentiation is occurring, so all students are learning. Factor in the rising incidences of children who have experienced trauma and the even more urgent need to ensure the safety of students, and it is not surprising that there are high rates of emotional exhaustion, stress, and burnout in educators (Gray et al., 2017). When considering that teacher pay is often low, and that many teachers incurred substantial school loans from their teacher preparation programs, teachers are prone to struggle (Espinoza et al., 2018). While the social-emotional learning curriculum has been shown to be beneficial for students' and teachers' well-being, teachers who are stressed perhaps need more support for themselves before they are able to support their students' social-emotional development (Brackett et al., 2012; Cook et al., 2017; Goldberg et al., 2018).

Teacher Attrition

In some situations for students, attrition of ineffective teachers may be favorable over retention (Dee & Wyckoff, 2017; Pennington, 2017). In other situations, poor school infrastructures or relationships with colleagues can cause teachers to be unhappy (Glazer, 2018) and teachers who are unhappy may do a disservice to students, making it better for them to leave the classroom. Attrition of ineffective or unhappy teachers may actually benefit students in the long-run, as it provides openings for more effective teachers to fill the positions (Dee & Wyckoff, 2017; Pennington, 2017). Under a revised program for teacher evaluation referred to as IMPACT, which rolled out in 2009 in Washington, D.C., 95% of ineffective teachers were dismissed or voluntarily left in the initial years of the program's introduction (Dee & Wyckoff, 2017; Pennington, 2017). An evaluation of the effects of the program in 2017 (eight years after its introduction) showed that on average, ineffective teachers were replaced by significantly more effective teachers (as measured by value-added growth in math and reading scores on assessments). This was especially true in high-poverty schools (Dee & Wyckoff, 2017). The results of this program support the importance of teacher effectiveness on student achievement, and the critical nature of ensuring programs are designed to retain quality teachers, versus all teachers. Therefore, it is important to consider that looking at attrition rates may only present a portion of the issue (Dee & Wyckoff, 2017; Pennington, 2017).

Although attrition is not deemed all bad, attrition of high-quality, effective teachers due to burnout, emotional exhaustion, or high levels of stress has a negative impact on students. Efforts to retain effective teachers must not be forgotten. In

Minnesota, recent efforts have been implemented to focus on the retention of effective teachers. A recently passed bill will funnel $1.5 million to expand teacher mentorship programs and the retention efforts of effective teachers (Omnibus Education Finance Bill of 2019, 2019). The funds are specifically designed to encourage school districts to develop mentoring programs for teachers who are American Indian or for those who obtain licenses in shortage areas (Omnibus Education Finance Bill of 2019, 2019).

Burnout has typically been noted as the leading cause of attrition of effective teachers; however, a recent study found that many quality veteran teachers left for a variety of other reasons (Glazer, 2018). After making significant investments in their careers, teachers who had strong beliefs in their efficacy asserted that subsequent policies or institutional requirements prevented them from continuing to be effective (Glazer, 2018; Gray et al., 2017; Saeki, Segool, Pendergast, & von der Embse, 2018). They reported that although they felt they had achieved a level of competence and effectiveness in the classroom, the increasing focus on standardized testing, mandated curricula, and increased accountability measures from both federal and state levels were compelling reasons for them to leave, as these things increased their stress levels (Glazer, 2018; Gray et al., 2017; Saeki et al., 2018), even though they had not yet demonstrated symptoms of burnout (Glazer, 2018).

Enthusiasm and motivation for the work of teaching as well as for the subject matter being taught also contributes to a teacher's decision to remain in the profession (Frenzel, Becker-Kurz, Pekrun, Goetz, & Lüdtke, 2018; Mahler et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Mahler et al. (2018) found a positive relationship between a

teacher's subject-specific enthusiasm and student achievement. Motivation and enthusiasm were as important to successful teaching as pedagogical and content knowledge, possibly because they provided teachers the opportunity to experience success in an area of interest to them (Jiang et al., 2016; Mahler et al., 2018). However, for teachers who lack enthusiasm and motivation for the profession or the subject matter, burnout may ensue which would shorten the longevity of their teaching career (Mahler et al., 2018).

Burnout

Burnout theory. The theory of job burnout has been evolving since the mid-1970s when the term became associated with a common social problem (Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001; Schaufeli et al., 2009). Burnout is a psychological syndrome originally studied in jobs involving caregiving or service-providing roles (Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli et al., 2009). Burnout is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion that develops from chronic and persistent work that requires emotional labor (Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001). Burnout is positively correlated to many physical and mental health issues including depression, anxiety, lower levels of self-esteem, increased absenteeism, and poor job performance (García-Carmona et al., 2019; Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001). When researching burnout, the most commonly referenced framework is the multi-dimensional theory of burnout, introduced in the early 1980s which posited that rather than a single factor, true burnout syndrome has three distinct elements or dimensions (Maslach et al., 2001).

The three dimensions which characterize burnout syndrome have been heavily researched in the field of education because of the high prevalence of burnout in teachers (Acheson, Taylor, & Luna, 2016; Avanzi et al., 2018; García-Carmona et al., 2019; Maslach et al., 2001; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014). The first dimension is emotional exhaustion, which is the most recognizable symptom of burnout. It is the most widely studied of the three dimensions, and the most frequently reported issue (Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001). Emotional exhaustion refers to the individual stress a person experiences due to chronic overload and depletion of emotional resources (Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001).

The second dimension of burnout is referred to as depersonalization or detachment and cynicism. Depersonalization is the relational or interpersonal dimension of burnout and describes a coping mechanism frequently used to deal with the chronic stress of job overload and emotional exhaustion (Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001). The cynicism or apathetic and sometimes callous attitude expressed by a person experiencing burnout allows an individual to detach from people or aspects of the job that are inducing or exacerbating the feelings of stress and emotional drain (Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001).

The third dimension of burnout is a lack of self-efficacy or reduced personal accomplishment, which is a self-evaluation dimension of burnout and has to do with how burnout makes people feel about their effectiveness or performance on the job (Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001). Reduced personal accomplishment causes individuals to feel incompetent and unproductive at work. Of the three dimensions, reduced personal accomplishment is the most complex

dimension, and the most difficult to examine because of the self-reported nature (Maslach et al., 2001).

Schaufeli, Leiter, and Maslach (2008) asserted two primary contributors lead to burnout. The first is the presence of a persistent imbalance between workload demands and available resources (Avanzi et al., 2018; Schaufeli et al., 2009; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014). The second contributor to burnout is when an organization's values are incongruent with an individual's values or when an organization's stated values are incongruent with the organization's actions. These incongruencies lead to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal achievement (Schaufeli et al., 2009).

Given the prominence of burnout in all fields, researchers developed a standardized scale for the measurement of burnout (Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001). Maslach and Jackson (1981) developed the most commonly used scale for measuring the multi-dimensional syndrome of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). Referred to as the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), the scale is used frequently for empirical research on the topic (Maslach et al., 2001). Shortly after the MBI's introduction, a second version was introduced (Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educator Survey) specifically for the field of education, as burnout was and continues to be a frequent problem for teachers (Maslach et al., 2001).

For the distinct concept of burnout to exist, all three dimensions (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment) must be present. Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leitner (2001) noted that five aspects provide further differentiation from other psychological issues such as depression. These five

elements include the presence of mental exhaustion or emotional fatigue, a more prominent focus on the mental or psychological suffering versus physical complaints, a clear association with work, the absence of prior psychological disorders before the onset of burnout symptoms, and the presence of negative attitudes and behaviors at work that lead to inefficacy (Maslach et al., 2001).

While there is much agreement about the effects and outcomes of burnout syndrome, the causes have been debated and several varying theories have emerged. One theory posited that burnout only affects those with an idealistic pursuit, as they work harder in an effort to achieve their goals, and become burned out when their efforts do not result in their expected outcomes (Maslach et al., 2001). Another theory implied that chronic stress leads to burnout, and occurs more often for those who have been in a job for an extended period of time (Maslach et al., 2001). Controversy also exists regarding which end of a workload imbalance leads to greater burnout—an overabundance of work, or an insufficient amount of work which results in boredom (Maslach et al., 2001).

Regardless of the cause of burnout, the outcomes of the syndrome tend to be similar. People who experience burnout typically have reduced commitment to the organization, decreased levels of job satisfaction, and frequently, high levels of attrition (Maslach et al., 2001). When educators burn out, it results in a social problem. Teachers are burning out at high rates, which leads to instability in the classrooms, teacher shortages, and ultimately, decreased student achievement (Castro et al., 2018; Espinoza et al., 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Various interventions and strategies have been introduced to address burnout (Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli &

Greenglass, 2001). Some have focused on the treatment of burnout (Acheson et al., 2016; García-Carmona et al., 2019; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014) while others have focused on prevention efforts (Chan, 2011; Cook et al., 2017; Fiorilli et al., 2017). The primary efforts of most of these intervention strategies are focused on the individual experiencing burnout in an effort to provide the person with enhanced coping skills (Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001). Many researchers who have explored burnout in teachers have emphasized the need to address the emotional needs of teachers to help reduce the effects of burnout on teacher well-being (Avanzi et al., 2018; Cook et al., 2017; García-Carmona et al., 2019; Herman et al., 2018; Rumschlag, 2017; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014).

Numerous studies have explored various other factors that correlate to burnout, including types of occupations, organizational factors, gender, age, race, employment trends, social support, leadership, workload, organizational identity, values, and emotions (Acheson et al., 2016; Fiorilli et al., 2017; Guglielmi & Tatrow, 1998; Herman et al., 2018; Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014). Researchers have also explored individual attributes, and have found that one's personal characteristics or attributes can predict the likelihood that an individual will burnout (Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001). In several studies, researchers found that those who had greater coping skills (Guglielmi & Tatrow, 1998; Herman et al., 2018; Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001), greater emotional competence (Acheson et al., 2016; Fiorilli et al., 2017), or higher levels of gratitude (Chan, 2011; Lee et al., 2018) tended to have lower levels of burnout.

Although important, focusing on the individual ignores the social context and organizational factors, which some have argued have a higher contribution to burnout (Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001). However, given the limited control people have over the social context or organizational stressors, enhancing peoples' coping skills or building resilience to help people deal with stress is a step toward addressing the challenge of burnout (Chan, 2011; Cook et al., 2017; Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001). In alignment with the introduction of positive psychology, researchers have shifted from a focus on the causes and underlying contributors of burnout toward an exploration of factors that contribute to work engagement and well-being (Schaufeli et al., 2009). To begin to understand these underlying factors, several studies have explored the teachers' emotions and their impact on teachers' well-being (Chen, 2016; Frenzel et al., 2016; Hagenauer et al., 2015; Jiang et al., 2016; Lavy & Eshet, 2018).

Emotions and Teaching

In education, teachers' emotions can be triggered by a multitude of daily events (Frenzel et al., 2018; Taxer & Frenzel, 2015). Teaching is an intensely emotional and physically exhausting job (Chen, 2016; Lavy & Eshet, 2018; Rumschlag, 2017; Taxer & Frenzel, 2015; Yin et al., 2017). Interactions with students, colleagues, parents, and administrators require teachers to often carry a heavy emotional load throughout the day, resulting in exhaustion, missed work, illness, and far too often, attrition (Çevik, 2017; Jiang et al., 2016; Lavy & Eshet, 2018; Rumschlag, 2017). While burnout is often the reason attributed to attrition of teachers, other personal and organizational factors can lead to intense emotions that

result in teachers choosing to leave the profession (Cook et al., 2017; Ellison & Woods, 2018; Glazer, 2018; Ouellette et al., 2018).

Based on numerous studies, (Çevik, 2017; Chen, 2016; Frenzel et al., 2016; Jiang et al., 2016; Lavy & Eshet, 2018; Taxer & Frenzel, 2015; Yin et al., 2017), it is important to seek to understand teachers' emotional regulation so that teacher burnout, emotional exhaustion, teacher inefficacy, and attrition, as well as the attributes associated with teacher well-being, can be better understood. Researchers suggested that understanding the emotions of teachers and the impacts of emotional regulation may help with finding ways to support teacher well-being (Fiorilli et al., 2017; Grund, Brassler, & Fries, 2016; Jiang et al., 2016; Lavy & Eshet, 2018).

Both positive and negative emotions are woven into nearly every aspect of a teachers' day (Frenzel et al., 2016; Jiang et al., 2016; Taxer & Frenzel, 2015). Teachers experience a wide range of positive and negative emotions from a variety of encounters and situations including interactions with students, peers, parents, society, administration, and personal and professional life imbalances (Becker et al., 2014; Chen, 2016; Taxer & Frenzel, 2015). In addition to the stress on teachers from work, personal issues including parenting responsibilities of their own, financial strain, conflicting teaching ideologies, and a lack of certainty in the position can add to the stress and emotional strain experienced by educators (Avanzi et al., 2018; Chen, 2016; Taxer & Frenzel, 2015).

Positive emotions in teachers have been correlated with creativity, passion, enjoyment, flexibility, well-being, student motivation and enthusiasm, student-teacher bonds, a sense of meaning and accomplishment, and self-efficacy (Frenzel et al.,

2018; Jiang et al., 2016; Lavy & Eshet, 2018; Lohbeck et al., 2018; Taxer & Frenzel, 2015; Yin et al., 2017). In addition to enhancing teachers' experiences of success, motivation and enthusiasm for teaching can generate a multitude of positive emotions (Gray et al., 2017; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Jiang et al., 2016; Mahler et al., 2018). Positive emotions can build up and help teachers develop resilience and endurance, allowing them to persevere (Ellison & Woods, 2018; Fredrickson, 2001). Positive emotions and passion displayed by teachers while teaching generated student enthusiasm, which can increase student achievement (Ávalos & Valenzuela, 2016; Becker et al., 2014; Edwards, 2016; Houser & Waldbuesser, 2017).

Negative emotions experienced by teachers were associated with reduced motivation, negative student experiences, anxiety, exhaustion, poor physical health, burnout, inefficacy, and job dissatisfaction (Jiang et al., 2016; Lohbeck et al., 2018; Taxer & Frenzel, 2015). Negative emotions resulted in more ineffective teaching practices and more classroom management issues which have been shown to lead to higher rates of attrition (Hagenauer et al., 2015; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Jiang et al., 2016). Three frequent emotions experienced by teachers are enjoyment, anxiety, and anger. In one study, researchers found significant differences in the two negative emotions of anxiety and anger between preservice and in-service teachers (Lohbeck et al., 2018). Preservice teachers reported higher levels of anxiety, and in-service teachers showed higher levels of anger (Lohbeck et al., 2018).

Emotional expression and emotional regulation influences teachers' resilience, efficacy in the classroom, student's learning, and teachers' behaviors (Chen, 2016; Frenzel et al., 2016; Lavy & Eshet, 2018; Lohbeck et al., 2018; Taxer & Frenzel,

2015; Yin et al., 2017). Teachers are often expected to regulate emotions in the classroom, and with colleagues, administrators, and parents in order to avoid the negative influences associated with negative emotions (Chen, 2016; Lavy & Eshet, 2018). Emotional labor has been shown to have a damaging effect on teachers' well-being and student achievement (Jiang et al., 2016; Lavy & Eshet, 2018; Taxer & Frenzel, 2015; Yin et al., 2017).

Although teachers work to manage these emotions, the contagion effect may also be at play, transferring the teachers' expressed and hidden emotions to the students (Becker et al., 2014; Frenzel et al., 2018; Houser & Waldbuesser, 2017). In several studies, researchers found that students would catch and mimic the positive emotions of their teachers when teachers displayed or conveyed their authentic positive emotions (Frenzel et al., 2018; Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1993; Houser & Waldbuesser, 2017). Based on the emotion contagion theory (Hatfield et al., 1993), if teachers, and thus students, are expressing positive emotions, it could follow that the classroom would be a pleasant and engaging place. Conversely, if teachers are expressing negative emotions, such as anger or anxiety, the students would reflect these emotions as well, creating an unhappy and stressful environment (Becker et al., 2014; Frenzel et al., 2018; Houser & Waldbuesser, 2017). However, the reverse transfer could also be true in that the students' emotions could also be caught and mimicked by the teacher (Frenzel et al., 2018; Hatfield et al., 1993). Therefore, it is critical to raise awareness of this theory with teachers and to equip teachers with the ability to regulate emotions without it leading to emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, it is important to understand teachers' perceptions of students' emotions as well as

teachers' self-perceptions in the classroom (Becker et al., 2014; Frenzel et al., 2018; Hagenauer et al., 2015; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Houser & Waldbuesser, 2017). Moreover, it is critical for teachers to practice self-care and incorporate time for rejuvenation and recovery (Avanzi et al., 2018; Becker et al., 2014; Frenzel et al., 2018; Gray et al., 2017; Grund et al., 2016; Houser & Waldbuesser, 2017; Ouellette et al., 2018).

Attention should be given to policy reform to help support teachers in maintaining balance between personal and professional life, and teacher preparation programs and professional development programs should be developed to help teachers understand and manage their own emotions as well as the emotions of others (including students and parents) (Becker et al., 2014; Chen, 2016; Frenzel et al., 2018). Teacher preparation programs should help preservice teachers develop content knowledge and subsequent confidence in their perceptions of their pedagogical skills to enhance their well-being (Cook et al., 2017; Lohbeck et al., 2018). Greater content knowledge and confidence may help reduce the anxiety new teachers stated they felt in the early years of teaching. Focusing on helping teachers feel confident may also reduce the high rate of attrition of teachers in the first five years.

Professional development programs should focus on helping teachers build resilience (Fredrickson, 2001, 2004) by providing practices and processes to help with reframing and intentional refocusing of thoughts toward things that bring about positive emotions (Acheson et al., 2016; Chen, 2016; Cook et al., 2017; Lavy & Eshet, 2018). Teachers should try to avoid expressing inauthentic positive emotions in the classroom and suppression of all negative emotions, as this typically results in

increased emotional exhaustion (Becker et al., 2014; Chen, 2016; Frenzel et al., 2018; Taxer & Frenzel, 2015).

There are two primary forms of emotional regulation strategies - deep acting strategies and surface acting strategies (Lavy & Eshet, 2018; Yin et al., 2017). Deep acting emotional regulation strategies are intended to change the experienced emotion by altering the perceptions of the preceding events and may include processes such as rethinking about a situation or event and looking for alternative explanations, which activates different emotions, or using self-persuasion to change the perceived emotion and display an acceptable emotional expression (Lavy & Eshet, 2018; Yin et al., 2017). Surface acting is used to avoid displaying negative or unacceptable emotions by intentionally showing a false or unfelt emotion. This often requires suppression of the true or natural emotions (Lavy & Eshet, 2018; Yin et al., 2017).

Researchers found that surface acting hindered the well-being of teachers, while deep acting may have helped maintain or even increase well-being (Lavy & Eshet, 2018; Yin et al., 2017). Though deep acting was not associated with decreased burnout, deep acting was associated with increased job satisfaction (Lavy & Eshet, 2018). Consequently, deep acting may actually decrease emotional exhaustion (Chan, 2011, 2013; Lavy & Eshet, 2018; Rumschlag, 2017; Yin et al., 2017). Given the emotional demands of teaching and the toll it seems to take on teachers' well-being, helping teachers increase positive emotions through the incorporation of simple daily practices such as expressing gratitude and practicing kindness are effective, proactive steps that can be taken to increase teachers' positive emotional regulation strategies (Çevik, 2017; Chen, 2016; Jiang et al., 2016; Lavy & Eshet, 2018; Lohbeck et al.,

2018; Yin et al., 2017). The theory of positive psychology is grounded in the idea of focusing on the positive aspects of well-being and growing or increasing those experiences that bring about wellness (Seligman, 2011a, 2011b; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The theory of well-being is rooted in the idea that an individual can achieve a state of maximum well-being, referred to as flourishing (Seligman, 2011a, 2011b). Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory described how positive emotions can lead to increased well-being. The theory of positive psychology (Seligman, 2011a; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), the theory of well-being (Seligman, 2011a, 2011b), and the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001, 2004) provided the theoretical framework for this study.

Theoretical Framework

Theories provide a foundation, scaffold, and lens for empirical research (Creswell, 2014; Roberts, 2010). A theoretical framework is the use of theory to define and guide a research study (Creswell, 2014; Roberts, 2010). Theory bounds the study by keeping the focus clear and providing constructs and links between elements in a study (Roberts, 2010). For quantitative research, an existing theory can be used to better understand how the variables are related (Creswell, 2014). For this study, the theory of positive psychology (Seligman, 2011a, 2011b; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001, 2004), and the theory of well-being (Seligman, 2011b; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) provided the theoretical framework.

Positive Psychology

The term positive psychology has been used to refer to a movement, a field, a science, and a theory. Seligman introduced the term in 1998 as a call to expand the field of psychology to focus on emphasizing the "understanding and building of the most positive qualities of an individual: optimism, courage, work ethic, future-mindedness, interpersonal skill, the capacity for pleasure and insight, and social responsibility" (Fowler, Seligman, & Koocher, 1999, p. 559). Following the launch of the term, positive psychology, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) were credited with developing the field of positive psychology. The movement has its supporters and opponents and has not been met without scrutiny. Opponents argued the theory or study of positive psychology was nothing new, as the topics had all previously been empirically studied (Kristjánsson, 2012). Supporters advocated for the benefits of focusing on the positive aspects of the wellness-enhancing variables (Kristjánsson, 2012), and have noted the clinical applications as well as the theoretical and research-based opportunities for positive psychology (Wood & Tarrier, 2010).

In contrast to psychology, which is rooted in pathology and based on the disease model of human functioning, positive psychology is based on the exploration of human flourishing and the development of thriving individuals and communities (Seligman, 2011b; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). It is both trait-based (individual traits and characteristics that allow a person to thrive) and state-based (conditions which support happiness versus unhappiness) (Seligman, 2011a; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Though the term is relatively new, the basis or foundation of positive psychology is not new (Chou et al., 2013; Seligman &

Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Prior to World War II, researchers explored concepts such as productivity and the identification and development of talent (Chou et al., 2013; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Then, driven by significant funding through grants, career options in the postwar labor market, and the nation's changing economy, the field of psychology shifted from humanities to psychopathology and healing (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Since that time researchers in the field of psychology have made huge strides in understanding and treating mental illness, but little has been done to understand human wellness (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The study of psychology has been somewhat narrowly focused on understanding peoples' responses to stimuli (Fredrickson, 2001; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Still relatively limited in formal acceptance in the field of psychology, positive psychology has emerged as a rich area for study (Chou et al., 2013; Seligman, 2011a; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The focus of psychology has been on identifying and curing individual suffering; the focus of positive psychology is on cultivating individual and collective well-being (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Numerous researchers have begun to seek a better understanding of the various factors that contribute to well-being (Chou et al., 2013; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) explained and summarized the expansion of the field of study to include the concept of positive psychology as "the study of strength and virtue… nurturing what is best" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 7). Positive psychology uses the primary elements of

the scientific method to explore the positive aspects of human experiences to better understand the complexity of the entire human experience.

Positive psychology and prevention. There are skeptics who question the potential impact or perceived benefits of the practice of positive psychology (Kristjánsson, 2012; Magyar-Moe, Owens, & Scheel, 2015). However, positive psychology does provide promise in that it opens up an opportunity to consider the prevention of mental illnesses (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Fredrickson, 2001; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Wood & Tarrier, 2010). Although prevention was an area of concern prior to the positive psychology movement, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) asserted that the focus of prevention from the perspective of positive psychology is different than the focus of prevention from the perspective of psychology. Psychology's view of prevention centered on the development of systematic competencies to prevent certain behaviors or actions from occurring due to mental illness (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). For example, researchers may have sought to determine what policies or practices would prevent people from causing harm to themselves or others, or what methods of treatment might prevent a person from experiencing a mental break.

Positive psychology breaks from the pathology model and has a different entry point for prevention. Positive psychology provides an option to look at the prevention of the actual mental illness prior to needing to prevent adverse reactions or behaviors (Kirschman, Johnson, Bender, & Roberts, 2009; Magyar-Moe et al., 2015; Seligman, 2011a; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). No specific issue or

pathology must be present in order to explore the possibilities within the field of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Positive psychology begins by looking at individual strengths and capabilities. Researchers are delving in to better understand how some people have certain characteristics or virtues that serve as a buffer against mental illnesses, especially depression and anxiety (Magyar-Moe et al., 2015; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). These characteristics or virtues may be able to be taught or developed, especially as a way to help adolescents develop coping skills and resilience (Kirschman et al., 2009; Seligman, 2011b). Positive psychology seems to have an endless opportunity to explore concepts such as optimism, hope, happiness, or gratitude, and the potentially limitless benefits associated with these types of concepts as they relate to human flourishing (Seligman, 2011a, 2011b, p. 20; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Though positive psychology has shown much promise for moving the field forward by amplifying strengths rather than repairing weaknesses, it is not the intent of this study to posit that simple practices (such as gratitude exercises) will serve to resolve the complex and critical issues in education. Rather, this study provides an opportunity to take a step into exploring if there are any possibilities within this newer field of positive psychology to help move toward greater well-being for teachers. The field of positive psychology is vast and covers numerous areas of opportunity for exploration and continuing research. It is the intent of this study to use the theory of positive psychology as a foundation for examining the role gratitude may play in teachers' well-being, within the context of the poverty level of the school

in which they teach. Following this study, many more questions will need to be examined in this unexplored realm of positive psychology and education.

Broaden-and-Build Theory

Fredrickson (2001) posited that the role of positive emotions is greater than just serving as an indicator of well-being or flourishing. Positive emotions can actually produce well-being or flourishing both in the moment the positive emotions are being experienced, and in the future when positive emotions are retrieved or called to mind (Fredrickson, 2001, 2004).

The balance between a person's positive and negative emotions can be a predictor of subjective well-being. Subjective well-being is a concept that is frequently debated in the positive psychology field (Angner, 2010; Diener, 1984). For this study, subjective well-being refers to the self-appraisal or judgment of one's current state of well-being or happiness. Measurements of subjective well-being typically include three factors: life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect (Angner, 2010; Busseri, 2018; Diener, 1984; Jovanović, 2015). The three factors of subjective well-being are impacted by the balance between an individual's positive and negative emotions (Fredrickson, 2001). Negative emotions typically trigger a limited, specific set of action responses (e.g. fear typically triggers the actions of fight or flight). Positive emotions (such as joy or pride) produce an unlimited, broad range of thought-actions (or ideas about what actions one could take). For example, joy might trigger thought-actions such as singing, hugging, smiling, shouting, dancing, sharing, jumping, etc.). Fredrickson (2001) referred to the effect of positive emotions

as broadening the thought-action ideas or expanding the potential actions that come to mind upon experiencing the positive emotion.

In addition to expanding the thought-actions, positive emotions build up as a sort of reserve, which can then be drawn from in the future (Fredrickson, 2001, 2004). The thought-actions that are generated by positive emotions help an individual build their physical, social, and intellectual skills or personal resources (Fredrickson, 2001; Lavy & Eshet, 2018). These personal resources are considered enduring and can be drawn upon whenever they are needed, regardless of the emotion being experienced or whether the situation or event is positive or negative (Fredrickson, 2001, 2004). A reservoir of personal resources serves the individual to help them overcome adversarial situations more easily than one without these enduring personal resources. Those who experience more positive emotions are then more likely to have a greater reserve of enduring personal resources to draw from, should the need arise (Fredrickson, 2001, 2004; Lavy & Eshet, 2018).

Fredrickson (2001) further hypothesized that the broadening effect of a positive emotion could be beneficial in countering a negative emotion. This idea was referred to as the undoing hypothesis. Based on this idea, a positive emotion, which cannot be simultaneously held with a negative emotion, could serve to release one from limited thinking due to the broadening effect of the positive emotion (Fredrickson, 2001, 2004). Furthermore, psychological and physical well-being could be improved through the cultivation of positive emotions, which could help individuals cope with or overcome negative emotions (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Fredrickson, 2001, 2004; Lavy & Eshet, 2018).

In addition, Fredrickson (2001) noted evidence that positive emotions that can build up over time, may increase psychological resilience. Through reciprocal experiences of looking for positive meaning in adversity, positive emotions were produced. These positive emotions then increased one's ability to find positive meaning in certain challenging situations. This cycle generated an upward spiral toward well-being, which Fredrickson (2001) referred to as broad-minded coping. Positive emotions and broad-minded coping build on each other, enhancing an individual's well-being (Fredrickson, 2001). What remains unclear is whether resilient individuals employ positive emotions intentionally or unintentionally, or whether there is any awareness of the undoing effect, or downward spiral when a resilient person experiences a negative emotion (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Fredrickson, 2001, 2004).

The broaden-and-build theory is unique in that it examines positive emotions instead of negative emotions. Very little research has focused on positive emotions because prolonged and intense negative emotions have been shown to pose a threat to individuals' well-being as well as to society (Fredrickson, 2001, 2004; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Therefore, research related to responses (intentional and automatic) to negative emotions (e.g., fear), the role of the amygdala, which triggers the autonomic physical responses and the release of stress hormones, and identifying and managing the issues and symptoms associated with negative emotions has been more of a priority in the psychology field (Fredrickson, 2001; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

One important distinction that should be mentioned is the difference between moods and emotions. Emotions are attached to something (an event, a person, an object), where moods are not attached to anything. Emotions are short experiences that occur when meaning is associated with or attached to something (Fredrickson, 2004). Given the long-term benefits derived from fully experiencing positive emotions, individuals should seek to cultivate positive emotions as a way of developing well-being and psychological growth, versus seeking to have a positive mood. For teachers, positive emotions can lead to increased job satisfaction (Avanzi et al., 2018; Chan, 2011, 2013) and greater levels of enjoyment of life (Frenzel et al., 2018, 2016; Lohbeck et al., 2018; Taxer & Frenzel, 2015). In the classroom, emotions have a contagious effect. When teachers experience positive emotions, students often experience positive emotions, which then increases the teacher's enjoyment, spurring even more positive emotions (Becker et al., 2014; Frenzel et al., 2018; Houser & Waldbuesser, 2017). In order for an individual to truly flourish, the ratio of positive to negative emotions must be greater than three to one (Fredrickson, 2001, 2004).

While focusing on increasing positive emotions may be considered a good way to increase one's temporary state of well-being, the idea of maximizing one's overall well-being, or creating a state where individuals are truly flourishing requires exploration of one additional theory, the theory of well-being (Seligman, 2011b). Positive emotions are one of five pillars needed for an individual to flourish, which according to the theory of well-being, is a more sustainable and resilient state of being than a temporary state of happiness (Seligman, 2011b).

Theory of Well-Being

The theory of well-being is a relatively new construct that provides a benchmark for maximum well-being, which is the foundation for positive psychology (Glanz, 2015; Seligman, 2011a, 2011b). The theory of well-being is a revision of the early descriptions and components of positive psychology which revolved around the concept of happiness based on fleeting moods and a focus on increasing life satisfaction (Seligman, 2011a, 2011b). The theory of well-being is based on five measurable elements: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievements or accomplishments (Glanz, 2015; Seligman, 2011a, 2011b). When these five elements are present and maximized, they lead to flourishing, which leads ultimately to flow or a state of being whereby people are thoroughly engaged in an activity that employs their greatest strengths, allowing them to face the most difficult challenges (Seligman, 2011b, 2011a). The five pillars that make up the model for flourishing (referred to as PERMA) work together and require engagement with others, which is different than the happiness theory which does not rely on any external interactions or relationships (Seligman, 2011a, 2011b). One of the beginning suggestions for experiencing this state of flourishing is to practice gratitude exercises (Seligman, 2011b).

Gratitude exercises are credited with increasing well-being and lowering depression. (Howells, 2014; Seligman, 2011; Wood et al., 2008, 2009). Gratitude contributes to well-being because it increases the positive emotions when recalling a benefit received from someone or from an experience or situation. Expressing that gratitude can improve engagement with others and the relationships. Being grateful

also can generate a sense of meaning or purpose, and recalling accomplishments or achievements can also be associated with gratitude, especially when considering that others may have contributed to the accomplishments or achievements (Layous et al., 2017; Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013; Seligman, 2011a, 2011b).

Gratitude

Gratitude is a broad term used to describe a trait, an emotion, a state, a disposition, a construct, and a moral value (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Franks, 2015; Kong et al., 2019; Morgan et al., 2017; Watkins et al., 2003; Wood, Gillett, et al., 2008; Wood et al., 2009). Narrowing down a definition for the purposes of this study required consideration of the extent to which gratitude is believed to play a role in teachers' well-being. Gratitude has been strongly associated with well-being (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Morgan et al., 2017; Wood, Froh, & Geraghty, 2010; Wood et al., 2009). Gratitude has also been linked with pro-social behaviors (Morgan et al., 2017; Walsh, Boehm, & Lyubomirsky, 2018; Wood, Joseph, & Linley, 2007), better sleep, and decreased levels of depression and anxiety (Wood et al., 2010, 2008; Wood, Joseph, & Linley, 2007).

The broadest definition of gratitude encompasses eight different aspects. Those who demonstrate a high indication of one aspect typically demonstrate all eight aspects (Wood et al., 2010). The aspects include: variations in the individual experiences of gratitude (in terms of intensity, frequency, and density); a sense of appreciation for others; an awareness of the tangible and intangible things one has or has access to; a sense of awe or amazement when experiencing something of beauty or grandeur; frequent behaviors or verbalization of gratefulness; frequent present-

moment awareness and appreciation for non-social moments and experiences; the realization of the impermanent nature of life whereby one appreciates the given moment without taking it for granted; and the sense of appreciation for circumstances when one considers how it could be worse (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2013; McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002; Wood et al., 2010; Wood, Maltby, Stewart, & Joseph, 2008). This broad definition was referred to as a higher-order gratitude or a grateful life orientation (Wood et al., 2010). A person with a grateful life orientation is also one who could be described as having a grateful disposition (Lin, 2014; McCullough et al., 2002; Watkins et al., 2003; Wood et al., 2010, 2007; Wood, Maltby, et al., 2008).

One of the primary benefits of a grateful disposition is the association with pro-social behaviors. Wood, Joseph, and Linley (2007) posited that those who are aware of the benefits received from others will tend to be more aware of how others are willing to provide help and support. Subsequently, when support is needed, grateful people are more willing to seek out assistance (Layous et al., 2017; McCanlies et al., 2018; Wood et al., 2007). Several researchers have found a significant and positive correlation between gratitude and relationships (Frenzel et al., 2018; Howells, 2014; Layous et al., 2017; Lin, 2014; McCanlies et al., 2018; McCullough et al., 2002; Wood, Maltby, et al., 2008). The correlation between gratitude and relationships is especially beneficial for teachers who frequently feel isolated in their individual classrooms (Collie et al., 2012; Fiorilli et al., 2017; Mocanu & Sterian, 2013; Valli & Buese, 2007).

Gratitude has a significant history as a topic of interest for ancient philosophers and current researchers alike (Clay & Stearns, 2019). While it has been a common practice to teach children to say 'thank-you' in exchange for something received and to express thoughts of gratitude for everything from political freedoms to appreciation in academia in the form of acknowledgments, the study of gratitude and its many benefits is still relatively unexplored as it relates to well-being (Leithart, 2014). However, there has been a recent resurgence of the topic of gratitude as a focus of empirical research studies, new age philosophies, and self-help books (Ivtzan & Papantoniou, 2014; Leithart, 2014). Gratitude has become an important factor in the field of psychology in what could be referred to as the well-being movement (Clay & Stearns, 2019). In several studies, gratitude has been positively related to increased well-being, increased happiness, and greater prosocial behaviors (Giacalone, Paul, & Jurkiewicz, 2005; Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013; Salvador-Ferrer, 2016). Some researchers have found that gratitude practices may be more beneficial as introductory activities for increasing well-being than other positive activities such as doing acts of kindness (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013), perhaps because the gratitude activities may result in positive emotions that trigger an upward spiral (Fredrickson, 2001, 2004) and drive increased attention on relationships with others (Kee, Tsai, & Chen, 2008; McCanlies et al., 2018; Watkins et al., 2003).

Several researchers have also found a strong, inverse relationship between gratitude and depression (McCanlies et al., 2018; Troy et al., 2017; Wood, Gillett, et al., 2008). Potentially because of the association between gratitude and prosocial behaviors, in a study of police officers who served under extreme conditions during

Hurricane Katrina, social support and gratitude were found to be negatively associated with symptoms of depression and positively associated with satisfaction with life and resilience, even in the face of trauma (McCanlies et al., 2018). In another study, Lee et al. (2018) found that gratitude was negatively associated with stress and two of the burnout scales, emotional exhaustion and cynicism, in firefighters. The findings from these studies suggest that gratitude may not only enhance well-being but serve as a protective factor against burnout and depression (Lee et al., 2018; McCanlies et al., 2018; Troy et al., 2017). Finally, gratitude has been shown to increase an individual's willingness to help another and was found to be positively associated with an attitude of compassionate love, defined as concern for humanity (Singh, Salve, & Mhaske, 2018). Considering the dynamic and expansive issues facing educators today, gratitude may potentially be beneficial for reducing stress and emotional exhaustion. Developing a grateful disposition through intentional practices of gratitude can be a factor in cultivating resilience and well-being, especially if practiced over time and in conjunction with other positive psychology practices (Chan, 2011, 2013; Cook et al., 2017; Fredrickson, 2001; McCanlies et al., 2018; Wood et al., 2010, 2009).

Positive Psychology-Based Programs and Interventions

Happiness in the workplace. Some researchers have posited that the long-held assumption that success begets happiness may also be alternatively true, in that happiness precedes success (Chan, 2011, 2013; Walsh et al., 2018). Some authors contended that rather than striving to achieve success as a precursor to achieving happiness, efforts may be better allocated to the implementation of practices and

interventions that support the development of happiness (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013; Walsh et al., 2018). Happiness, defined as the frequent experience of positive emotions such as joy or contentment, has been strongly associated with higher levels of job satisfaction (Çevik, 2017; Chan, 2011; Walsh et al., 2018). Happier people showed a tendency to perform better, have a higher commitment to their jobs, have more positive relationships with coworkers, and have lower instances of absences from work or experiences of the symptoms of burnout (Walsh et al., 2018).

Although happiness sounds like it can produce a number of benefits for employees, some researchers have argued there can be the potential for too much happiness, as people who rated themselves as being at the pinnacle of happiness tended to be less successful at work than slightly less-happy people (Layous et al., 2017). This is perhaps because extremely happy people may not feel socially connected to others or they may be less motivated to engage in prosocial behaviors which could ultimately reduce their overall happiness (Layous et al., 2017; Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013).

However, numerous studies have found that people derive significant positive benefits from engaging in intentional practices intended to increase well-being (Gray et al., 2017; Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013; Ross, Romer, & Horner, 2012; Wood, Joseph, & Maltby, 2009). Intentionally implementing simple gratitude practices has shown to be helpful in combating stress and depression by cultivating social support (Lambert et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2018; McCanlies et al., 2018; Wood, Gillett, Linley, & Joseph, 2008; Wood et al., 2009).

Layous et al. (2017) posited that gratitude practices are especially beneficial for fostering well-being because, in addition to promoting positive emotions and a sense of support from others, expressions of gratitude may incite feelings of motivation to strive to make changes from a sense of indebtedness (Layous et al., 2017). Though most people consider the feeling of indebtedness to be a negative emotion, it is important to note that negative emotions are not all bad. In some circumstances, negative emotions, like indebtedness, play an important role in optimal human functioning and can serve as an impetus for engaging in prosocial behaviors (Layous et al., 2017; Walsh et al., 2018).

Interventions and well-being programs for teachers. Responses to interventions and programs designed to help individuals optimize well-being have been met with varied results. Several factors can be associated with the reasons for the differences in the results. For example, individual attributes such as motivation, effort, beliefs about the interventions or programs, and cultural norms likely contribute to how a person responds to activities designed to induce feelings of happiness (Layous et al., 2017; Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013; Walsh et al., 2018; Yin et al., 2017).

Several professional development programs aimed at helping teachers manage stress became available following the turn of the century's introduction of positive psychology such as The Inner Resilience Program (IRP), Cultivating Awareness and Resilience (CARE), The Greater Good Education Program at the University of California, Berkeley, and Stress Management and Relaxation Techniques (SMART) from PassageWorks. Some of these programs are still in existence (e.g., The Greater

Good Education Program, CARE), while others have dissolved (e.g., IRP) or morphed into consulting practices (e.g., SMART) (CREATE, 2019; PassageWorks Institute, 2014; University of California, Berkeley, 2019). In spite of the benefits touted by researchers of these programs on enhancing teacher well-being, beyond this handful of programs there seems to be a lack of information about the implementation of positive psychology practices with educators or pre-service teachers (Ballantyne & Zhukov, 2017; Cook et al., 2017). Researchers have also implemented programs in research and found favorable results, however, the programs or activities have yet to become mainstream (Chan, 2011, 2013; Cook et al., 2017; Howells, 2014). Responses from teachers to some of the programs have been positive with teachers indicating their intentions to continue using several of the practices beyond the course (Chan, 2013; Cook et al., 2017). In addition, mentoring programs with intentional, focused assistance for new teachers also seemed to be helpful for building resilience (Cook et al., 2017; Soulen & Wine, 2018).

While exploring the individual elements of well-being for teachers is important for improving retention rates, understanding the context in which teachers work may also be important for providing insights about challenges that impact teachers' abilities to build resilience and well-being (Darby et al., 2011; Ellison & Woods, 2018; Johnson et al., 2012; Kraft et al., 2015). At the very least, it is important to consider differences in the environments and conditions in which teachers are employed as a factor in understanding their well-being. It is possible that some conditions or environments may require different attitudes or skills for

resilience than other environments (Johnson et al., 2012; Kraft et al., 2015). One way to examine differences in schools is through the lens of a school's poverty level.

Socioeconomic Status

Overview. Socioeconomic status is comprised of multiple factors including income, educational attainment, financial security, and social class (American Psychological Association, 2019; Troy et al., 2017). A person's socioeconomic status impacts all facets of one's life, including physical and mental health, educational achievement, and social development (American Psychological Association, 2019). In the U.S., socioeconomic status has a significant impact on society. From healthcare distribution to family structures, housing, employment rates, crime, taxes, and social welfare programs, socioeconomic status affects the quality of life for all (American Psychological Association, 2019).

Socioeconomic status is measured by one's access to resources and opportunities as well as one's power or ability (real or perceived) to change that access or the circumstances. Socioeconomic status is not used as a descriptor of an individual but is associated with one's social context (American Psychological Association, 2019; Troy et al., 2017). Those in lower socioeconomic statuses have reduced access to resources, fewer choices, and limited control over the environment (American Psychological Association, 2019; Troy et al., 2017). It is usually difficult (but not impossible) for a person to change the social context. Education is considered a critical factor to help individuals move from a lower socioeconomic status to a higher socioeconomic status because it provides them with the tools and skillsets to be able to get a higher paying job (American Psychological Association, 2019). There

is a significant inverse relationship between poverty level and educational attainment. As educational attainment increases, poverty levels decrease. Over 25% of those who have less than a high school diploma lived in poverty. With a high school diploma, this percentage dropped to 11% living in poverty. With a bachelor's degree, only 3.6% of people lived in poverty (Minnesota Department of Health, 2014).

Free and reduced-price lunch. Determining an individual's socioeconomic status is complex and involves measuring multiple factors and characteristics (Minnesota Department of Health, 2019; U.S. Department of Commerce, 2019). A measure used as an indicator of socioeconomic status is the free and reduced-price lunch program, which provides an estimation of the percentage of students from lower-income households in schools in the United States. Signed into law by President Harry Truman in 1946, the *Richard Russel National School Lunch Act* established federal funding for meal assistance for public and nonprofit private schools and home childcare institutions (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2017). Low or no cost nutritionally-balanced meals (breakfasts, lunches, and snacks) are provided for students in qualifying families based on income levels or students with a status of homeless, migrant, runaway, or foster child, or for children in state- or federally-funded preschool programs (e.g., Head Start) (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2017). In 2018-2019, almost 30 million children in the nation (approximately 57% of students) participated in the meal program (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2017, 2019).

Schools are classified into four poverty categories based on the total percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (National Center for

Education Statistics, 2019; U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2017). The four categories are: Low Poverty (0-25.0% of students qualify); Mid-low Poverty (25.1%-50.0% of students qualify); Mid-high Poverty (50.1%-75.0% of students qualify); High Poverty (75.1% - 100% of students qualify) (Minnesota Department of Health, 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). In most schools in Minnesota, families must opt-in to receive the benefits, and enrollment is required each year. Families with incomes that are at or below 130% of the poverty level qualify for free-priced lunches. Families with incomes that are between 131% and 185% of the poverty level qualify for reduced-priced lunches (Minnesota Department of Health, 2019).

In the state of Minnesota, about 37% of students in public schools opted-in to the program for free or reduced-price lunch in 2017-2018 (Minnesota Department of Health, 2019). Of the total student enrollment, 28.5% of students (over 237,000 students) qualified for free lunch and eight percent (over 67,000 students) qualified for reduced-price lunch (Minnesota Department of Health, 2019). Almost 70% of these qualifying students were enrolled in urban schools (Minnesota Department of Health, 2019). It is estimated that four out of ten public school students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (Minnesota Department of Health, 2019).

Though this measure is highly correlated with child poverty, it is not a measure of percentages of students in poverty. From the 2013-2017 census data, it is estimated that 12.3% of the nation lived in poverty (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2019). In the state of Minnesota, an estimated 9.5% of people were in poverty (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2019). This percentage varies greatly by county; some

counties have over 20% of persons living in poverty, while other counties have just four percent (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2019). Although the free and reduced-price lunch measure does not provide a direct indication of total child poverty, this measure is considered to be an indicator of the percentage of students from lower-income households (Minnesota Department of Health, 2019) and provides a way to categorize the schools.

Poverty and neighborhood schools. Poverty impacts communities and neighborhoods in many ways. Impoverished neighborhoods often have an elevated risk for health problems for youth and adults (Barr, 2015), increased episodes of violence and negative social interactions (Minh, Muhajarine, Janus, Brownell, & Guhn, 2017), high levels of unemployment, and numerous single-parent households (Fauth, Leventhal, & Brooks-Gunn, 2007). Neighborhoods of families with low socioeconomic status frequently have reduced access to needed resources such as quality schools, health care services, physical access to fresh food (i.e., urban food-deserts), or positive community development opportunities. (Minh et al., 2017; Morrissey, Oellerich, Meade, Simms, & Stock, 2016; Widener, Metcalf, & Bar-Yam, 2011). Because of these challenges, teachers in schools located in areas of high poverty must confront students' non-academic issues prior to working on meeting their academic needs (Kraft et al., 2015). This places an extraordinary responsibility on teachers of students in high-poverty schools. High-poverty schools tend to have high numbers of students who are from low socioeconomic status households, which also means these schools are likely underfunded and unequipped to support the students' various needs (Barr, 2015).

In addition to this burden, teachers who work in urban, high-poverty schools face a unique form of uncertainty about the students and the context in which they teach (Kraft et al., 2015). Students come to school with high academic needs, often testing several years behind peers from advantaged schools (Ainsworth, 2002; Barr, 2015; Dawson et al., 2019). They also have negative beliefs about their abilities and fears about the educational system developed from experiences of racial or ethnic discrimination. Many carry stress from daily life in which they may have to endure food insecurity, physical, verbal, or mental abuse, inadequate or unsafe home environments, and potentially dangerous routes to and from school (Chittooran & Chittooran, 2010; Johnson et al., 2012; Kraft et al., 2015). Many of the students have experienced significant trauma and would benefit from mental health support and aid from social services (Chittooran & Chittooran, 2010; Johnson et al., 2012; Kraft et al., 2015). In addition, teachers must contend with high rates of tardiness, truancy, and learning disabilities (Kraft et al., 2015). All of these issues contribute to the high rates of teacher attrition (Johnson et al., 2012; Kraft et al., 2015).

Socioeconomic status and educational achievement. The effects of poverty on educational achievement have been well researched (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Ainsworth, 2002; Barbarin & Aikens, 2015; Chittooran & Chittooran, 2010; Minnesota Department of Health, 2014). Students who live in poverty tend to perform worse in school than those from more advantaged homes (Barr, 2015; Nieuwenhuis & Hooimeijer, 2016; Nieuwenhuis et al., 2015; von Stumm, 2017). Socioeconomic status has a profound effect on student achievement in terms of lower test scores (Barr, 2015; von Stumm, 2017), more difficulty with reading (Aikens & Barbarin,

2008) and lower high school graduation rates (Chaudry & Wimer, 2016; Wodtke et al., 2011). Other problems disproportionately affect the poor as well, including teenage pregnancy, obesity, premature death due to gun violence, and a host of other health-related issues (Schroeder, 2016).

Before any academic work can be accomplished, the students' basic needs for food and safety must first be met. Combined with the growing pressures for increased achievement on standardized tests, teachers are likely to experience higher levels of stress in high-poverty schools (Johnson et al., 2012; Kraft et al., 2015; Nieuwenhuis & Hooimeijer, 2016). However, even more importantly, schools with greater numbers of students from low-income homes tend to have more deficient, inferior work environments (Johnson et al., 2012). In addition to the challenges of meeting the diverse needs of learners in high-poverty schools, researchers found that teachers' turnover was driven by the conditions of the work environment (Johnson et al., 2012; Kraft et al., 2015). The context in which teachers work is a critical factor in their intentions to stay or leave the field (Johnson et al., 2012; Kraft et al., 2015).

In spite of efforts to reduce segregation, residential segregation persists and the negative effects of impoverished neighborhoods carry into the schools that serve these communities (Ainsworth, 2002; Minh et al., 2017; Nieuwenhuis & Hooimeijer, 2016). Coupled with a lack of structural, political, and social supports, teachers are left feeling frustrated, insecure, and unsuccessful (Johnson et al., 2012; Kraft et al., 2015). Consequently, some teachers struggle to educate the youth in impoverished neighborhoods, and without adequate supports, they leave (Johnson et al., 2012; Kraft et al., 2015).

However, this burden does not seem to affect all teachers in the same way. In one study, some teachers expressed a greater sense of success in working with youth in high poverty (Kraft et al., 2015). They described their role as more demanding, yet, more rewarding (Kraft et al., 2015). Researchers also found that some students in high-poverty neighborhoods excelled in spite of the residential communities in which they resided due to a variety of factors including the presence of positive role models, the effect of collective socialization (or the expectations of the community about acceptable behaviors, homework, parenting, etc.), the influence of peers, or the possession of characteristics that enabled resilience (Ainsworth, 2002; Dawson et al., 2019; Nieuwenhuis & Hooimeijer, 2016; Nieuwenhuis et al., 2015). These findings suggest that there may be opportunities to explore these elements further in an effort to learn more about what seems to help some youth and teachers thrive in spite of the socio-economic contexts of the students.

The issues facing educators today are vast and complex. Exploring the various characteristics, behaviors, and conditions that may be impacting teachers' resilience is one potential way to begin addressing the high rates of teacher turnover and burnout. Identifying and implementing the findings from the field of positive psychology into the field of education may provide significant opportunities to better understand the issues, improve the work experiences for educators, and ultimately, positively impact the educational experiences for students. This study was a first step in exploring the relationship between a school's poverty level and a teacher's level of gratitude as a measure of well-being.

Chapter III: Methodology

Philosophy and Justification

This study investigated teachers' self-reported levels of gratitude and explored if any differences existed between teachers' levels of gratitude in schools with high poverty versus low poverty. In addition, this study explored relationships between demographic variables and teachers' gratitude levels. Measuring gratitude levels provided insights regarding one aspect of teachers' well-being within the context in which they work. This study employed a quantitative methodology with a cross-sectional survey design (Creswell, 2014; Orcher, 2017; Patten, 2017), to collect data about teachers' levels of gratitude using a tested scale, the Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ6) (McCullough et al., 2013; McCullough et al., 2002). Quantitative research is the best design when relationships between items can be measured using quantifiable measures (Orcher, 2017). The data was analyzed using a *t*-test to compare the means of teachers' gratitude scores between high-poverty and low-poverty schools. A regression analysis model was run with the demographic data to provide insights into the potential relationships between demographic variables (i.e., teachers' grade level, teachers' age, total years of teaching experience, total years teaching at current school, if this is the teacher's first career, highest degree earned, race, gender, faith affiliation, intent to leave) and teachers' gratitude.

A school's poverty level, which is based on the percentage of students who are receiving free or reduced lunch, can potentially be predictive of teachers' well-being (Ainsworth, 2002; Drukker et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2012; von Stumm, 2017). Teachers in high-poverty schools face different challenges than teachers in

low-poverty schools (Darby et al., 2011; Johnson et al., 2012; Kraft et al., 2015; Ouellette et al., 2018). Teachers in high-poverty schools have greater challenges with managing students' behaviors and increasing students' achievement levels (Gray et al., 2017; Ross et al., 2012) and the intensity of these challenges is oftentimes higher in schools with high poverty than in schools with low poverty (Hagenauer et al., 2015; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Jiang et al., 2016; Taxer & Frenzel, 2015). Given these differences across schools' poverty levels, it was hypothesized that there would be differences in levels of teachers' gratitude as a measure of well-being. Because many of the factors of the school and environment cannot be changed, an opportunity exists to focus on that which can be affected, teachers' well-being (Cook et al., 2017; Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013; Troy et al., 2017; Wood et al., 2007). Helping teachers achieve greater life-balance and well-being may help them build resilience (Avanzi et al., 2018; Fredrickson, 2001, 2004). Having higher resilience may enable teachers to better manage stress and counter the negative consequences of emotional labor (Avanzi et al., 2018; Cook et al., 2017; Gray et al., 2017; Ross et al., 2012).

Before implementing programs to help teachers, knowing if there are differences in levels of well-being should be determined so that programs might be better tailored to meet the needs of the teachers. Therefore, the purpose of this research study was to discover if there were any differences in levels of teachers' gratitude between schools with high-poverty levels and low-poverty levels. Additional data was gathered regarding specific demographic variables (school's grade level, teacher's age, total years of teaching experience, total years teaching at current school, if this is the teacher's first career, highest degree earned, race, gender,

faith affiliation, and intent to leave) with the goal of analyzing the data using regression models to understand the associations gratitude may have with different variables. The study sought to investigate and then numerically describe any potential associations that existed between the variables using a quantitative, cross-sectional, web-based survey design to gather measures of teacher gratitude at a single point in time (Creswell, 2014).

Research Design Strategy

Quantitative, cross-sectional survey research design requires consideration of several factors including the methodology, procedures, instrumentation, ethical aspects, population and sampling techniques (Creswell, 2014; Muijs, 2011; Roberts, 2010). A six-item survey was used to measure gratitude (McCullough et al., 2002). In addition, demographic information was collected from teachers. The survey was very brief, with an estimated completion time of fewer than five minutes. The population for this study was all teachers in Minnesota (N = ~53,000) (Minnesota Department of Education, 2019). The sampling frame was obtained from the Minnesota Professional Education Licensing and Standards Board. Using Qualtrics, a random sample of 12,501 teachers was selected from the sampling frame in two waves – 2,500, and then 10,000. The survey and corresponding message were sent through Qualtrics to the randomly selected participants via email. The original estimate for survey response rate was between 25%-30% (Baruch & Holtom, 2008). However, actual response rates were just under seven percent, requiring a second wave to be sent out. In total, 744 completed surveys were returned.

Theoretical Framework

For this study, the theory of positive psychology (Seligman, 2011a; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), the theory of well-being (Seligman, 2011a, 2011b) and the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001, 2004) provided the theoretical framework. Within the field of positive psychology, the well-being theory suggests that the construct of well-being has five elements that can be measured and cultivated to achieve optimal well-being, which is referred to as flourishing (Seligman, 2011b). The well-being theory posits that all five elements are important and contribute to the definition of well-being (Seligman, 2011b). The five elements include positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement. People develop optimal well-being from differing degrees of each of the elements (Seligman, 2011b).

Supporting this idea of cultivating well-being, the broaden-and-build theory suggests that positive emotions (one of the elements of well-being) trigger a broad range of thoughts and actions a person might take in response, as opposed to negative emotions, which trigger a narrow range of thought-actions (e.g., fight or flight) (Fredrickson, 2001). Positive emotions may also provide a future benefit because they build an individual's 'reservoir' that can be drawn from when the person is faced with adversity or stress (Fredrickson, 2001, 2004). According to the broaden-and-build theory, people who have built up strong reservoirs of positive emotional experiences are better able to handle stressful situations without it having an adverse effect on their overall well-being (Fredrickson, 2001; Seligman, 2011a).

Practicing gratitude as an exercise has been shown to increase well-being and lower depression (Seligman, 2011b). Gratitude can also be measured and can be an

indicator of an individual's well-being (Lin, 2014; Wood et al., 2010, 2009). Using the theory of well-being as a framework, this study sought to determine if there were any differences in teachers' levels of well-being (using gratitude as a measure) in schools with different poverty levels and among different demographic indicators including school levels, teacher's age, total years of teaching experience, total years teaching at current school, first career teachers, different degree achievement levels, race, gender, faith affiliations, and intent to leave. The broaden-and-build theory suggests that exercises designed to cultivate well-being, such as gratitude exercises (Seligman, 2011b; Wood et al., 2009), generate positive emotions that broaden the thought-actions that a teacher can take when experiencing the positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001, 2004). In addition, the experience of these positive emotions can build the teacher's reservoir of personal resources that can be used in the future when the teacher is confronted with challenges (Fredrickson, 2001, 2004). Having this reservoir of personal resources can minimize the impact of stressors on the teacher's well-being.

When teachers enter the teaching workforce, they are placed in a school context of either low-poverty, where less than 50% of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, or high-poverty, where 50% or more of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. There are many differences between the two school contexts in terms of resources and student needs (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Barbarin & Aikens, 2015; Chittooran & Chittooran, 2010; Johnson et al., 2012; Kraft et al., 2015). It is not known if the school context affects teachers' well-being differently, thereby impacting their choice to stay (retention) or leave (attrition or migration), as illustrated in Figure 1, Conceptual Framework.

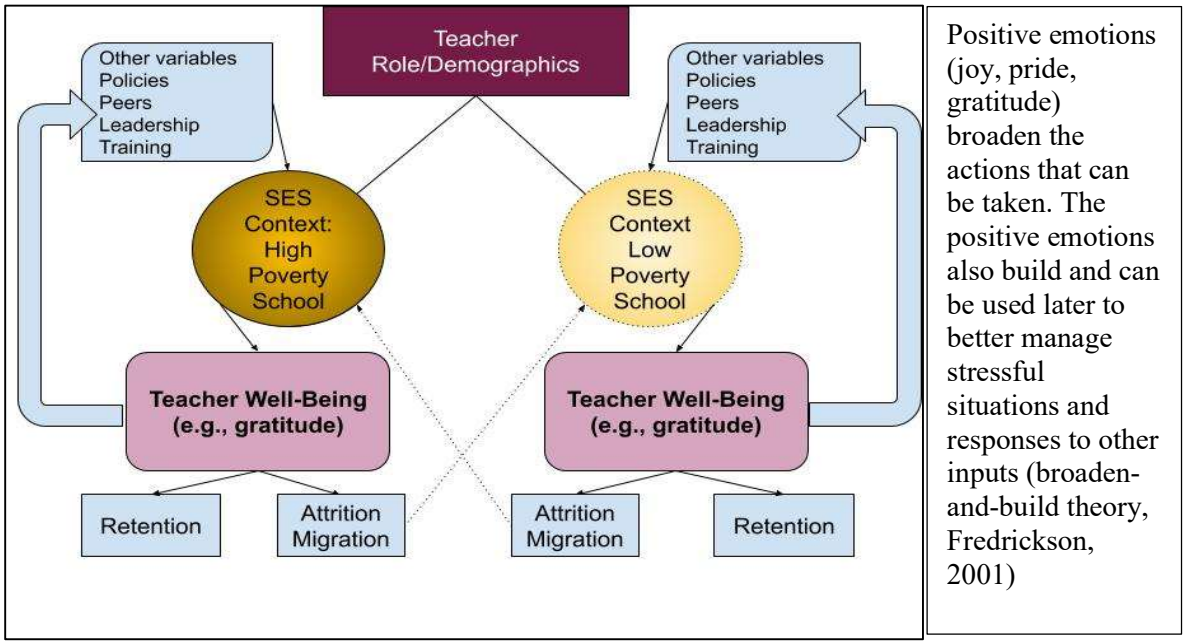

Figure 1- Conceptual Framework

Depending on a teachers' level of well-being, factors impacting their work, such as policy changes, relationships with peers, leadership, levels of support, training, funding, etc., (which are different depending on the school's poverty level), may trigger different emotions. According to the broaden-and-build theory, if

teachers have low levels of well-being, they may experience more negative emotions. This, in turn, limits their thought-actions and further lowers their well-being. However, if teachers have higher levels of well-being, they may experience more positive emotions (or have better emotion regulation skills), which would build up their personal reserve of resources that could be accessed at a future point when faced with a challenging situation, which would lessen the likelihood of their emotions leading to burnout or decreased well-being, and ultimately attrition (Fredrickson, 2001, 2004).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Several studies have iterated the high rate of attrition of teachers (Acheson et al., 2016; Ávalos & Valenzuela, 2016; Glazer, 2018; Herman et al., 2018; Ouellette et al., 2018; Rumschlag, 2017). In addition, current literature highlights the difficult nature of working in high-poverty schools (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Barr, 2015; Darby et al., 2011; Drukker et al., 2009; von Stumm, 2017). Because high-poverty schools typically employ a greater number of novice teachers (Castro et al., 2018; Espinoza et al., 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019), and because of the intense emotional labor experienced by teachers (Acheson et al., 2016; Avanzi et al., 2018; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014; Yin et al., 2017), especially novice teachers (Ávalos & Valenzuela, 2016; Castro et al., 2018; Soulen & Wine, 2018), it was hypothesized that teachers in high-poverty schools would experience lower levels of gratitude. Based on this, the following research questions and related hypotheses were explored in this study.

Research Question 1/Null Hypothesis:

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant difference between the gratitude levels of teachers from high-poverty and low-poverty schools?

$H_0$1: There are no differences in levels of gratitude between teachers working in high-poverty schools and low-poverty schools.

Research Question 2/Null Hypotheses:

RQ2: Are there relationships between demographic variables (teachers' grade level, teachers' age, years of teaching experience, years at current school, first career or not, degree, race, gender, faith affiliation, intent to leave) and teachers' levels of gratitude?

$H_0$2a: There is no relationship between grade levels and teachers' levels of gratitude.

$H_0$2b: There is no relationship between a teacher's age and the teacher's level of gratitude.

$H_0$2c: There is no relationship between a teacher's total years of teaching experience and the teacher's level of gratitude.

$H_0$2d: There is no relationship between a teacher's total years of teaching at their current school and the teacher's level of gratitude.

$H_0$2e: There is no relationship between teachers who are teaching as a first career and their level of gratitude.

$H_0$2f: There is no relationship between teachers who are not teaching as a first career and their level of gratitude.

$H_0$2g: There is no relationship between a teacher's highest degree earned and the teacher's level of gratitude.

$H_0$2h: There is no relationship between a teacher's race and the teacher's level of gratitude.

$H_0$2i: There is no relationship between a teacher's gender and the teacher's level of gratitude.

$H_0$2j: There is no relationship between a teacher's faith affiliation and the teacher's level of gratitude.

$H_0$2k: There is no relationship between a teacher's intent to leave and the teacher's level of gratitude.

Variables

The independent variable for this study was the poverty level of the schools. If the percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunches is between 0% and 25.0%, schools are considered to be Low Poverty. If the percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunches is between 25.1% and 50.0%, schools are considered to be Mid-low Poverty. Schools with a percentage ranging from 50.1% to 75.0% of students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunches are categorized as Mid-high Poverty, and schools with percentages ranging from 75.1% to 100% of students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunches are categorized as High Poverty. Additional independent variables included selected demographics of teachers including the level of the school at which they teach, race, age, gender, number of years teaching, number of years at current school, if teaching is their first career, intent to leave, and faith affiliations (if any). The dependent variable for this

study was the level of gratitude as measured by the gratitude questionnaire (McCullough et al., 2002) which used a computed mean across six item-ratings, with two of the items reverse-scored.

Instrumentation and Measures

The Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6). The Gratitude Questionnaire Six-Item scale (GQ-6) is a short, Likert type self-report instrument designed to measure one's likelihood or disposition to experience gratitude in daily life (McCullough et al., 2002). Sample statements include: "I have so much in life to be thankful for" and "I am grateful to a wide variety of people" (McCullough et al., 2002, p. 127). Participants respond to six items on a scale of one to seven, where one equals 'strongly disagree', and seven equals 'strongly agree'. Two items (items three and six) are reverse-scored to reduce response bias. McCullough, Emmons, and Tsang (2002) developed the scale for research. The scale was published in a scientific journal for use in the public domain for non-commercial research without needing to contact any of the authors for permission (McCullough et al., 2002).

The Gratitude Questionnaire Six-Item scale has been used as a dependent measure in several other studies (Giacalone et al., 2005; Ivtzan & Papantoniou, 2014; Kee et al., 2008; Salvador-Ferrer, 2016; Singh et al., 2018; Sun, Sun, Jiang, Jia, & Li, 2019). Researchers have examined relationships between gratitude and yoga (Ivtzan & Papantoniou, 2014), internalizing and externalizing behavior problems in youth (Sun et al., 2019), and even consumer sensitivity to corporate social responsibility (Giacalone et al., 2005). In all of these studies, gratitude was found to have a relationship with the independent variables. Gratitude levels as measured by the GQ-6

scale have been found to vary based on some demographic variables such as gender (Salvador-Ferrer, 2016), spiritual affiliation (Giacalone et al., 2005; Ivtzan & Papantoniou, 2014) and culture, particularly collectivist versus individualist cultures (Kee et al., 2008; Valdez, Yang, & Datu, 2017). Overall, the GQ-6 Gratitude Questionnaire has been used extensively as a valid and reliable instrument for measuring dispositional gratitude in a variety of contexts (Froh et al., 2011; McCullough et al., 2002, 2013).

Evaluating a scale's validity and reliability is important for determining if the scale is appropriate for use in a research study (Creswell, 2014; Orcher, 2017). Using structural equation models and confirmatory factor analyses, the authors demonstrated the GQ-6 scale's construct validity as a robust, single-factor measure of gratitude, distinct from other similar but related constructs with strong psychometric properties (McCullough et al., 2002). The scale correlated strongly with other measures of gratitude (McCullough et al., 2002). The researchers conducted confirmatory factor analyses which revealed positive correlations with spirituality and religiousness, empathy and prosocial behavior, forgiveness, happiness, vitality, satisfaction with life, optimism and hope (McCullough et al., 2002). Gratitude was also found to be negatively associated with depression, anxiety, materialism, and envy (McCullough et al., 2002). The researchers also measured the reliability of the scale, finding evidence for high internal consistency ($\alpha = .82$; McCullough et al., 2002).

Sampling Design

A study's population is defined as the group a researcher is interested in studying, and more explicitly, the group to whom a researcher would like to be able to apply generalizable findings (Muijs, 2011; Roberts, 2010). A sampling frame is a specific list of that population (Creswell, 2014). The population for this study is active K-12 public school teachers in Minnesota (*N*=~53,315) (Minnesota Department of Education, 2019). A sampling frame for this population was obtained from the Minnesota Department of Education which included email addresses for survey dissemination. For large populations, it is typically not possible to study every person due to limited resources, geographical distribution, and accessibility (Muijs, 2011; Orcher, 2017). Additionally, problems can arise if the entire population does not participate or is unreachable (Muijs, 2011). Therefore, this study used a subset selected from the population (Muijs, 2011; Orcher, 2017; Pyrczak, 2014). A study's credibility and the generalizability of a study are dependent on the quality of the researcher's process for selecting a sample (Patten, 2017; Roberts, 2010). Ideally, the sample should be unbiased, of adequate size, and representative of the total population to which the study would be generalizable (Muijs, 2011; Orcher, 2017; Patten, 2017). The best way to obtain an unbiased sample is to use a random sampling process which gives every person in a population an equal chance of being selected (Muijs, 2011; Orcher, 2017; Patten, 2017). For this study, the sample was randomly selected by setting up a random selection from the sampling frame in Qualtrics. The total sample size was 12,501 teachers selected in two independent waves. With a population of approximately 53,315 K-12 teachers in the state of Minnesota

(Minnesota Department of Education, 2019), a sample of 593 was needed to achieve a 95% confidence level with a confidence interval of four (Creative Research Systems, 2012; Creswell, 2014; StatPac, Inc., 2017b). After accounting for bounced and undeliverable emails, the survey response rate was 6.7%, and 744 responses were completed and able to be analyzed.

After Institutional Board Review approval was obtained from Bethel University, the online survey was disseminated. The survey was distributed through an online program (Qualtrics) which offers several advantages including anonymity, privacy, cost-effectiveness, ease of distribution process and convenience for collecting data electronically. Furthermore, online surveys prevent issues such as data tampering, inadvertent associations with participants, or potential inaccurate transfers of data into an electronic system for analysis (Creative Research Systems, 2016).

Only licensed teachers who were working as K-12 teachers in the state of Minnesota were selected to complete this survey. There were approximately 50,000 active teachers in the state of Minnesota (Minnesota Department of Education, 2019). The survey was sent to a random representative sample of 12,501 potential participants.

Data Collection Procedures

Using Qualtrics, the survey was emailed out to selected participants. The survey was field-tested prior to disseminating the questionnaire to selected participants. After receiving IRB approval, teachers that were emailed the survey were randomly chosen from a sampling frame. To protect participant privacy, no personal identifiers were collected or recorded within the questionnaire. Qualtrics did

not collect any IP addresses traceable back to participants. A follow-up e-mail reminder to non-respondents was scheduled and sent three days after the initial e-mail. The survey was available for a total of two weeks. Typically, with internet-based surveys, 90% of the respondents will complete the survey within three days (StatPac, Inc., 2017a).

Field Test

To ensure the survey performed as intended, five people who were not potential recipients for the intended study were asked to complete the survey in August 2019. The researcher's three committee members, the research course instructor, and a research course peer were asked to field test the survey and the Qualtrics survey link was sent to them. The field test provided an opportunity to see how the data looked when collected and ensured it provided information as expected. Field testing also ensured the wording of survey items was clear, that all potential and viable responses were available as options, and helped to determine the amount of time the survey actually took (Creswell, 2014). The survey was expected to take less than five minutes to complete, though there was no time limit. The field testers confirmed the survey took less than five minutes. A field test may also expose potential questions about the context of the survey items and in this instance, allowed the researcher to ensure the instructions and expectations were clear before sending the email and survey out to actual participants (Creswell, 2014). Following the field test, any needed adjustments were made to the survey.

Data Analysis

Upon closure of the survey, the data was analyzed using the following steps. First, data was uploaded into SPSS. Any coding changes were made to make the data usable for analysis (e.g., two items needed to be reverse-coded). Then, report information was analyzed regarding the number of responses received and the number of responses not received. This information was described in a table format. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The means, standard deviations, and range of scores of the six gratitude questions were calculated for the total group as well as for all independent and dependent variables (poverty-level stratum, school's grade level, teacher's age, total years of teaching experience, total years teaching at current school, if this is the teacher's first career, highest degree earned, race, gender, intent to leave, and faith affiliation).

T-tests were used to further analyze the responses to the gratitude questions by poverty-level groupings. A *t*-test is used to compare a pair of means to determine if the difference between the means is statistically significant (Creswell, 2014; Orcher, 2017; Patten, 2017). The data was checked for reliability and internal consistency by Cronbach's alpha statistic (Creswell, 2014) and additional regression assumptions were checked to ensure they were not violated. Finally, linear regression models were run with the dependent and independent variables to see if any relationships existed between the variables. Data was analyzed using SPSS 14.0 statistical software (2005) to test the hypotheses.

Ethical Considerations

Research in the field of education is complex. In addition to ensuring ethical standards are met, there are numerous ethical codes, regulations and federal laws that must also be followed (Creswell, 2014; Roberts, 2010). The Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) provides researchers the opportunity to engage in a reflective review of these considerations, responsibilities, and obligations when preparing a research study. In addition to meeting the requirements for a dissertation, the researcher completed the CITI training. In addition to adhering to the laws and regulations, this researcher completed this study at the highest ethical standard.

Educators are privy to a large amount of private information. They are required to provide consideration regarding the use and management of this information. Educators must handle private information about students and families with care and abide by rules and regulations governing the use and sharing of information. The survey for this study did not include any requests for identifying information that could tie an educator to a particular school or to any students, and the collected data was password-protected. Data that was collected from participants was housed on a personal computer in SPSS with password protection as well as in cloud-based storage in Qualtrics, also password-protected. Qualtrics captured the information in an anonymous manner (Patten, 2017; Roberts, 2010). The data will be maintained for a minimum of five years following the completion of the dissertation defense in accordance with the data retention requirements for behavior and social sciences research data (American Psychological Association, 2010).

This researcher developed and followed a plan for protecting the privacy and the confidentiality of participants (Creswell, 2014; Roberts, 2010). The researcher took appropriate precautions regarding the risks to the privacy of the participants (Muijs, 2011; Roberts, 2010). This is critical when thinking about asking participants questions that could cause potential conflicts of interest (Creswell, 2014; Patten, 2017). It is the belief of this researcher that none of the questions in the survey presented any conflicts of interest, and the privacy of the individuals was protected as the data was collected anonymously.

It is critical to ensure participation is truly voluntary and informed consent is obtained (Creswell, 2014; Orcher, 2017; Patten, 2017; Roberts, 2010). Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and optional. The email informed participants that their submission of the survey served as their informed consent. Participants were informed they could discontinue or opt-out at any time without any penalty. Care was taken to minimize risks and maximize beneficence for participants through careful wording and conscientious dissemination of the survey (Creswell, 2014; Orcher, 2017; Patten, 2017; Roberts, 2010).

There are three core concepts in the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979) to protect research participants: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Flipp, 2014). Under these tenets are requirements for researchers to obtain informed consent and secure approval from institutional review boards (Flipp, 2014). To ensure compliance with these guidelines, this researcher met these requirements by obtaining approval from the Bethel Institutional Review Board. To prevent ethical issues, the

researcher was cautious to avoid selectively disclosing data, failing to accurately and completely disclose the purpose of a study, putting undue pressure on individuals to participate, failing to provide equal and just treatment for all participants, misusing expertise to influence participants, plagiarizing, failing to maintain confidentiality or privacy of participants, and failing to consider the sharing and storage of data (Creswell, 2014; Patten, 2017). In addition, mindful consideration was given to ensuring accurate reporting of the findings, developing conclusions, and avoiding any potential conflicts of interest for publication or dissemination of data following the study (Creswell, 2014). Through the use of Qualtrics, the researcher was able to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of respondents.

This study sought to determine if there were statistically significant differences in teachers' self-reported levels of gratitude between high-poverty and low-poverty schools and explore if there were relationships between demographic variables and teachers' gratitude levels as a first step in understanding how teachers may best be supported in developing resilience and well-being within the contexts in which they work. Currently, there are no studies that examine the relationship between teachers' levels of gratitude and the school's environment or poverty level. This study helps fill that gap in the research and provided insight into variances in the well-being needs of teachers. The hope is that this information will help in developing a better understanding of positive practices to aid in teacher-retention efforts in the United States.

Chapter IV: Results

The purpose of this research was to determine if there were differences in teachers' self-reported levels of gratitude between high-poverty and low-poverty schools and explore if there were relationships between demographic variables and teachers' gratitude levels as a first step in understanding how teachers may best be supported in developing resilience and well-being within the contexts in which they work. This chapter provides descriptive data and inferential statistics organized around the two research questions used to frame this study:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference between the gratitude levels of teachers from high-poverty and low-poverty schools?
2. Are there relationships between demographic variables (teachers' grade level, teachers' age, years of teaching experience, years at current school, first career or not, degree, race, gender, faith affiliation, intent to leave) and teachers' levels of gratitude?

Samples

The survey was administered through Qualtrics to a random and anonymous sample of K-12 licensed teachers in the state of Minnesota. The database obtained on August 30, 2019 from Minnesota's Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board included email addresses of all Minnesota licensed K-12 classroom teachers who were teaching in a public school during the 2018-2019 school year. The list was filtered, removing emails of teachers who only held special education licenses or related services licenses (i.e., speech-language pathologist, school social worker, school psychologist, school counselor, school nurse). The list was further filtered to

remove teachers who held administrative positions or taught at either the pre-K level or adult basic education level. Finally, after removing duplicates, the remaining population frame included 47,736 email addresses.

The survey was sent out in two waves as the initial email wave did not yield enough completed surveys to be able to run parametric analyses. The first wave was sent out on November 30, 2019 to a total of 2501 emails, of which 4.9% (*n*=123) bounced. A follow-up email was sent out five days after the initial email to the 2372 nonrespondents, of which 5.1% (*n*=122) bounced. From the first wave of emails sent, a total of 163 surveys were completed, for a response rate of 6.9% (versus the desired return rate of 20%-30%). To achieve a 95% confidence level with a confidence interval of four (Creative Research Systems, 2012; Creswell, 2014; StatPac, Inc., 2017b), a total of 593 completed surveys were needed. Upon consultation with the researcher's advisor, a second wave was sent on December 14, 2019, to a sample of 10,000 teachers (excluding those from the first wave). Of this total, two emails failed and an additional 3.6% (*n*=358) bounced. A reminder was sent out three days later to nonrespondents from this sample. The second wave generated an additional 633 responses (6.7% response rate), for a total of 799 responses. Of these, 93% (*n*=744) contained complete data for analysis. For a population size of 47,736, a sample size of 593 was needed to have a confidence level of 95% with a confidence interval of 4. The 744 cases with completed responses exceeded the required sample size.

The survey responses were exported and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 14.0 (2005). The data were cleaned to remove all preview attempts, unneeded variables, and cases that were

missing significant amounts of data. Two items that were reverse coded on the Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ6) were recoded, and a mean score of the six gratitude questions was computed into a new variable. Additionally, the free and reduced meals percentage variable was recoded into a new variable from four groups into two groups; those with 0%-50% of students receiving free/reduced meals and those with greater than 50% of students receiving free/reduced meals. Descriptive statistics were analyzed and a *t*-test was run to determine if there were any significant differences in gratitude between low-poverty and high-poverty schools. Finally, the data was cleaned and run through a regression model to determine if any relationships existed between the demographic variables and levels of gratitude.

Descriptive Statistics

The total number of surveys sent out was 12,501. Of this number 3.9% (*n*=483) bounced or were undeliverable. An additional ten people responded via email that they were no longer teaching (i.e., left the field or retired before their license expired). The total response rate is estimated at 6.7%. Descriptive statistics were calculated to determine the counts, percentages, and if applicable, means and standard deviations of participant demographics including teacher's age, total years of teaching experience, years at current school, race, faith affiliation, first career or not, degree level attained, intention to leave, and the school's grade levels.

School's grade levels. Of the 744 responses, 37.8% (*n*=281) were from elementary schools, 18.5% (*n*=138) were from middle schools, and 37.0% (*n*=275) were from high schools. The remaining 6.7% (*n*=50) were from various combined grade level schools.

Teachers' demographics. Participants were asked to identify their age from a series of ranges. Responses spanned across all age-range options with 2.6% (*n*=19) of participants indicating they were between the ages of 21-24 and 1.1% (*n*=8) participants reporting an age of 65 or older. Most teachers ranged in age from 35-44 years old (34.0%, *n*=253) and 25-34 years old (33.2%, *n*=247).

Teachers were also asked to indicate if teaching was their first career. The majority (75.9%, *n*=565), reported that yes, teaching is their first career. Teachers were also asked to indicate the highest degree they had attained. The majority (77%, *n*=573) indicated they hold a master's degree or higher.

Teachers were asked to select how many years they had been teaching as a licensed teacher as well as how many years they had been teaching at their current school. Just over half (56%, *n*=417) of the teachers had been licensed for more than ten years, with the same number of participants reporting having taught at the same school for more than ten years.

Participants were asked to indicate various demographic characteristics including gender and race. Female participants comprised 71.1% (*n*=529) and 94.5% identified as white (*n*=704). Of the total participants, only 1.1% (*n*=8) reported their race as Asian, 0.9% (*n*=7) identified as Black or African American, and 0.3% (*n*=2) identified as American Indian or Alaska Native.

Respondents were asked to indicate any faith affiliations through a free-response question. Just over half of the respondents (53.6%, *n*=399) reported a faith affiliation of Christian. Participants were also asked to indicate if they had any intention of leaving their current position within the next three years. A total of 23.1%

(*n*=172) of respondents stated they did have the intention to leave in the next three years due to reasons other than retirement or promotion. A summary of participant demographics can be found in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Participant Demographics

Variable		n	%
Gender			
	Male	213	28.6
	Female	529	71.1
	Transgender	1	0.1
	Prefer not to answer	1	0.1
Race			
	American Indian or Alaska Native	2	0.3
	Asian	8	1.1
	Black or African American	7	0.9
	White	704	94.6
	Other	2	0.3
	Prefer Not to Answer	5	0.7
	Other - Middle Eastern	2	0.3
	White/Other	3	0.4
	Asian/White	2	0.3
	American Indian or Alaska Native/White	4	0.5
	Black or African American/White/Other	1	0.1
	American Indian or Alaska Native/Black or African American/White	1	0.1
	Other/Mixed Race	2	0.3

White/Prefer Not to Answer	1	0.1
Age		
21-24	19	2.6
25-34	247	33.2
35-44	253	34.0
45-54	155	20.8
55-64	62	8.3
65 or older	8	1.1
Total years of teaching as a licensed teacher		
0-3 years	54	7.3
4-5 years	84	11.3
6-10 years	189	25.4
11-15 years	185	24.9
16-20 years	97	13.0
21-25 years	71	9.5
26+ years	64	8.6
Years at current school		
0-2 years	122	16.4
3-5 years	193	25.9
6-10 years	186	25.0
11-15 years	129	17.3
16-20 years	54	7.3
21-25 years	37	5.0
26+ years	23	3.1
Highest Degree		
Bachelor's degree	171	23.0
Master’s degree	542	72.8

Professional degree	20	2.7
Doctorate	11	1.5
Total Sample	744	100.0

Free/Reduced Price Meals

Participants were asked to identify the category that best describes the current percentage of students who qualify for free/reduced-price meals at the school where they primarily teach based on the Minnesota Report Card data for 2019 enrollment (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). A total of 27.7% (*n*=206) of participants indicated 0-25% of students qualified for free/reduced price meals, 38.6% (*n*=287) indicated 25.1%-50% of students qualified, 19.6% (*n*=146) selected 51.1%-75.0%, and 14.1% (*n*=105) reported 75.1%-100% of students qualified for free/reduced-price meals.

Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ6)

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 7-point Likert scale for six questions regarding gratitude. Items 4 and 6 were reverse coded on the questionnaire and the researcher recoded these items in SPSS. Descriptive statistics were analyzed including the mean, range, and standard deviation for the GQ6 mean score (McCullough et al., 2013; McCullough et al., 2002). The responses ranged from 2.17 to 7.0 (a range of 4.83) with a mean of 6.07 and a standard deviation of 0.893. The six-item scale showed good internal consistency with a Cronbach alpha coefficient $\alpha = 0.753$. Table 4.2 lists the descriptive statistics for variables used in analyses.

Table 4.2

Descriptive Statistics for Variables Used in Analysis

Categorical Variables Used in Analysis	*n*	%	Coding/Range
Free/reduced meals 0-50%	493	66.3	0 = 50.1-100%; 1 = 0-50%
Intention to leave	172	23.1	0 = no; 1 = yes
Taught less than 10 years at current school	327	44.0	0 = no; 1 = yes
Female	529	71.1	0 = male, 1 = female
Licensed more than 10 years	417	56.0	0 = all others; 1 = yes
Hispanic	11	1.5	0 = no; 1 = yes
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	0.3	
Asian	8	1.1	
Black	7	0.9	
White	704	94.6	
First Career	565	75.9	0 = no; 1 = yes
Christian	399	53.6	0 = no; 1 = yes
Masters or higher	573	77.0	0 = no; 1 = yes
School Level Elem	281	37.8	0 = no; 1 = yes
School Level Middle	138	18.5	
School Level High	275	37.0	
Age over 45	225	30.2	0 = no; 1 = yes
Continuous Variables Used in Analysis	M	SD	Coding/Range
Gratitude	6.07	.894	0.0 to 7.0

Statistical Analysis

To prepare the data for statistical analysis, all incomplete responses were removed and demographic variables were recoded into two classifications. Research question one asked: Is there a statistically significant difference between the gratitude levels of teachers from high-poverty and low-poverty schools? It was hypothesized that teachers in high-poverty schools would experience lower levels of gratitude. The null hypothesis ($H_0 1$) stated there are no differences in levels of gratitude between teachers working in high-poverty schools and low-poverty schools. The independent variable was the two levels of free/reduced meals (0-50% and 50.1%-100%). The dependent variable was the average gratitude level. An independent *t*-test was performed on the data with a 95% confidence interval to determine the mean difference between teachers' self-reported gratitude levels based on free/reduced meals groupings. An alpha level $p < .05$ was used to determine statistical significance. The results suggested that there were no significant differences in teachers' self-reported levels of gratitude between high-poverty schools and low-poverty schools, $t(742) = -0.014$, $p > .05$. Therefore, the null hypothesis failed to be rejected (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3

Independent T-test for Gratitude Levels Based on Free/Reduced Meal Levels

	t	dif	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error Difference	CI	
						Lower	Upper
Gratitude Mean (GQ6)	-.014	742	.989	-.00100	.06935	-.13715	.13516

Research question two asked: Are there relationships between demographic variables (teachers' grade level, teachers' age, years of teaching experience, years at current school, first career or not, degree, race, gender, faith affiliation, intent to leave) and teachers' levels of gratitude? The hypotheses for research question two were:

$H_0$2a There is no relationship between grade levels and teachers' levels of gratitude.

$H_0$2b: There is no relationship between a teacher's age and the teacher's level of gratitude.

$H_0$2c: There is no relationship between a teacher's total years of teaching experience and the teacher's level of gratitude.

$H_0$2d: There is no relationship between a teacher's total years of teaching at their current school and the teacher's level of gratitude.

$H_0$2e: There is no relationship between teachers who are teaching as a first career and their level of gratitude.

$H_0$2f: There is no relationship between teachers who are not teaching as a first career and their level of gratitude.

$H_0$2g: There is no relationship between a teacher's highest degree earned and the teacher's level of gratitude.

$H_0$2h: There is no relationship between a teacher's race and the teacher's level of gratitude.

$H_0$2i: There is no relationship between a teacher's gender and the teacher's level of gratitude.

$H_0$2j: There is no relationship between a teacher's faith affiliation and the teacher's level of gratitude.

$H_0$2k: There is no relationship between a teacher's intent to leave and the teacher's level of gratitude.

The researcher analyzed the data using a linear regression analysis. The overall regression for the model predicted gratitude was statistically significant, $F(16, 727) = 1.859$, $p < .05$ and the model explains 3.9% of the variance in gratitude (Table 4.4). The model suggests teachers who intend to leave their profession in the next three years for reasons other than retirement or promotion had significantly lower gratitude than teachers who did not express an intention to leave ($\beta = -.116$, $p < .01$). Additionally, Black/African American teachers had significantly lower gratitude compared to other teachers ($\beta = -.106$, $p < .05$). Finally, female teachers had significantly higher gratitude compared to their colleagues ($\beta = .104$, $p < .01$).

The researcher examined the variance inflation factors, scatterplots of standardized residuals against the standardized predicted values, and histograms of standardized residuals. The variance inflation factors were less than 10 and the scatterplots suggested that assumptions of homoscedasticity were not violated. The researcher examined a histogram of the standardized residuals and discovered the data were non-normally distributed. The researcher also examined the matrix scatterplots and discovered the relationships between the predictor and outcome variables were relatively linear. The researcher also found the residual errors were consistently independent across the model (the Durbin-Watson value was 2.2);

therefore, the results of these analyses suggest the regression assumptions were not violated. (See Table 4.4.)

Table 4.4

Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
	β	Std. Error	β	*t*	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.220	304		20.443	.000		
Teaching first career	-.040	.082	-.019	-.495	.621	.866	1.154
Intent to leave	-.246	.079	-.116	-3.102	.002**	.945	1.058
American Indian or Alaska Native	.292	.344	.032	.847	.397	.953	1.049
Asian	-.310	.338	-.040	-.915	.360	.694	1.441
Black or African American	-.824	.326	-.106	-2.530	.012*	.750	1.333
White	-.354	.231	-.075	-1.531	.126	.545	1.834
Taught Less Than Ten Years	.023	.077	.013	.303	.762	.728	1.374
Female	.204	.074	.103	2.755	.006**	.937	1.067
Masters	.090	.082	.042	1.103	.270	.894	1.118
Hispanic	-.056	.284	-.008	-.198	.843	.899	1.113
Elem	.059	.138	.032	.429	.668	.237	4.221

Middle	.045	.147	.020	.306	.760	.321	3.114
High	.015	.138	.008	.110	.913	.237	4.219
Over 45	-.070	.082	-.036	-.854	.394	.742	1.347
Faith	.092	.067	.051	1.364	.173	.941	1.063
Free/Reduced-Price meals	.003	.034	.003	.087	.931	.924	1.083

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, dependent variable: GQ6MEAN

The model failed to reject the null hypothesis for research question 2a ($H_0$2a) there is no relationship between grade levels and teachers' levels of gratitude; 2b ($H_0$2b) there is no relationship between a teacher's age and the teacher's level of gratitude; 2c ($H_0$2c there is no relationship between a teacher's total years of teaching experience and the teacher's level of gratitude; 2d ($H_0$2d) there is no relationship between a teacher's total years of teaching at their current school and the teacher's level of gratitude; 2e ($H_0$2e) there is no relationship between teachers who are teaching as a first career and their level of gratitude; 2f ($H_0$2f) there is no relationship between teachers who are not teaching as a first career and their level of gratitude; 2g ($H_0$2g) there is no relationship between a teacher's highest degree earned and the teacher's level of gratitude; and 2j ($H_0$2j) there is no relationship between a teacher's faith affiliation and the teacher's level of gratitude. However, the null hypotheses were rejected for 2h ($H_0$2h) there is no relationship between a teacher's race and the teacher's level of gratitude; 2i ($H_0$2i) there is no relationship between a teacher's gender and the teacher's level of gratitude, and 2k ($H_0$2k) there is no relationship

between a teacher's intent to leave and the teacher's level of gratitude. (See Table 4.5 for summary of research results.)

Table 4.5

Summary of Research Results

Hypothesis	Result	Test	Summary
($H_0$1) There are no differences in levels of gratitude between teachers working in high-poverty schools and low-poverty schools	Failed to reject	*t*-test	No statistically significant difference.
($H_0$2a) There is no relationship between grade levels and teachers' levels of gratitude.	Failed to reject	Regression	No statistically significant difference.
$H_0$2b: There is no relationship between a teacher's age and the teacher's level of gratitude.	Failed to reject	Regression	No statistically significant difference.
$H_0$2c: There is no relationship between a teacher's total years of teaching experience and the teacher's level of gratitude.	Failed to reject	Regression	No statistically significant difference.
$H_0$2d: There is no relationship between a teacher's total years of teaching at their current school and the teacher's level of gratitude.	Failed to reject	Regression	No statistically significant difference.
$H_0$2e: There is no relationship between teachers who are teaching as a first career and their level of gratitude.	Failed to reject	Regression	No statistically significant difference.
$H_0$2f: There is no relationship between teachers who are not teaching as a first career and their level of gratitude.	Failed to reject	Regression	No statistically significant difference.

$H_0$2g: There is no relationship between a teacher's highest degree earned and the teacher's level of gratitude.	Failed to reject	Regression	No statistically significant difference.
$H_0$2h: There is no relationship between a teacher's race and the teacher's level of gratitude.	Reject	Regression	There is a statistically significant difference for Black teachers who have much lower gratitude than other teachers (β = -.106, p < .05)
$H_0$2i: There is no relationship between a teacher's gender and the teacher's level of gratitude.	Reject	Regression	There is a statistically significant difference for female teachers who have much higher gratitude than their colleagues (β = .104, p < .01)
$H_0$2j: There is no relationship between a teacher's faith affiliation and the teacher's level of gratitude.	Failed to reject	Regression	No statistically significant difference.
$H_0$2k: There is no relationship between a teacher's intent to leave and the teacher's level of gratitude.	Reject	Regression	There is a statistically significant difference Teachers who intend to leave have much lower gratitude than other teachers (β = -.116, p < .01)

Summary

Chapter four included analyses on data including the demographic variables of gender, years of teaching experience, race, first career, educational level, faith affiliation, and intent to leave, as well as inferential statistical analysis on the research instrument, research questions and corresponding hypotheses. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 14 (2005) from a total of 744 Minnesota K-12 licensed teachers. Based on the evidence, no significant difference was found in teachers' self-reported

levels of gratitude between high-poverty and low-poverty schools. However, the null hypotheses related to gender, race, and intent to leave could be rejected, as the data indicated a significant positive relationship for female teachers, a significant, negative relationship for Black/African American teachers, and a significant, negative relationship for teachers who intend to leave within three years for reasons other than promotion or retirement.

Chapter V: Findings and Recommendations

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore differences in teachers' self-reported levels of gratitude between high-poverty and low-poverty schools and examine differences in demographic variables and levels of gratitude. Gratitude has been shown to provide significant benefits for well-being including positive emotions, positive affect, and improved mood. (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Lambert, Fincham, & Stillman, 2012). Gratitude has been linked to increased levels of satisfaction and happiness (Lee et al., 2018; McCanlies, Gu, Andrew, & Violanti, 2018; Watkins, Woodward, Stone, & Kolts, 2003) as well as reduced levels of depression, physical aggression, resentment, stress, and burnout (Franks, 2015; Fredrickson, 2001; Lee et al., 2018; Watkins et al., 2003). With high levels of attrition creating a teacher shortage, finding ways to increase teachers' well-being is important. Exploring gratitude as one of the many positive psychology practices, may lead to a better understanding of the issue of teacher-attrition and provide insight into practices that enhance teachers' well-being.

Teachers in high-poverty schools are at an increased risk for burnout given the difficult circumstances in which they work and the populations with whom they work (Ávalos & Valenzuela, 2016; Danhier, 2016; Troy et al., 2017). As such, this study sought to explore if there were differences in their gratitude levels so that potential methods designed to improve teacher well-being could be customized based on the poverty level, if needed. To date, there is very little research exploring teachers'

levels of gratitude, and no research has examined differences in teachers' levels of gratitude between high and low-poverty schools.

A survey consisting of the Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ6) (McCullough et al., 2013; McCullough et al., 2002) and teacher demographic factors was used to collect quantitative data on gratitude levels in K-12 licensed teachers in Minnesota. The sample consisted of 744 teachers who teach at various school levels including elementary, middle, and high schools in the state. The response rate of 6.7% was much lower than the expected response rate, resulting in the survey being sent out in two waves, one to a total sample of 2501 teachers and the second to a total of 10,000 teachers, excluding those who were in the first wave. Potential reasons for the lower response rate may have been due to the timing of when the survey was sent out, the fact that the first survey question required teachers to look up their school's percentage of students receiving free or reduced meals, or because the recipients were simply not interested in participating in a survey. No incentive was offered in exchange for the participants' time, which may also be a reason for the lower response rate than originally anticipated.

The survey was opened by 11.5% of the population (n=1389). Of that number, 57.5% (n=799) submitted the survey. Out of the total submissions, 93% (n=744) were completed and able to be analyzed. Using SPSS 14.0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences, 2005), data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Each statistical test was analyzed and hypotheses were either rejected or failed to be rejected based on the results.

Research Questions

The two research questions used to frame this study were:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference between the gratitude levels of teachers from high-poverty and low-poverty schools?
2. Are there relationships between demographic variables (teachers' grade level, teachers' age, years of teaching experience, years at current school, first career or not, degree, race, gender, faith affiliation, intent to leave) and teachers' levels of gratitude?

A *t*-test was used to explore the mean differences in teachers' self-reported levels of gratitude between high-poverty and low-poverty schools. The results showed that no significant difference exists. A regression analysis was used to explore differences in demographic variables and levels of gratitude. The model suggested teachers who intend to leave their profession in the next three years for reasons other than retirement or promotion had significantly lower gratitude than teachers who did not express an intention to leave ($\beta = -.116$, $p < .01$). Additionally, Black/African American teachers had significantly lower gratitude than other teachers ($\beta = -.106$, $p < .05$), and female teachers had significantly higher gratitude compared to their colleagues ($\beta = .104$, $p < .01$).

Conclusions

Research Question 1: The results of an independent samples *t*-test used to explore the mean differences in teachers' self-reported levels of gratitude between high-poverty and low-poverty schools indicated that no significant difference exists. This was not surprising given the gratitude levels of the teachers who responded to

the survey were non-normally distributed. Further analysis did show indications that teachers who had higher intentions to leave also had lower levels of gratitude. Additionally, the data indicated that teachers who worked in high-poverty schools had greater intentions of leaving within the next three years due to reasons other than retirement or promotion. Although their gratitude levels were not significantly different, teachers in high-poverty schools are likely to be at higher risk for attrition. Though it was not the intent of this study to explore these connections, this study supports the findings of researchers who have recommended the incorporation of practices designed to enhance teachers' well-being (Chan, 2011, 2013; Cook et al., 2017; Howells, 2014).

Research Question 2: A linear regression model indicated a negative, significant difference for teachers who intended to leave their profession in the next three years for reasons other than retirement or promotion. They had significantly lower gratitude than teachers who did not express an intention to leave. This finding suggests there may be opportunities to implement programs that help teachers build resilience. The results also indicated a negative, significant difference in gratitude levels for Black/African American teachers. This finding suggests the need to further explore gratitude levels and other measures of well-being for teachers of color. Additional insights may help in retention efforts for Black/African American teachers. In addition, the regression analysis indicated a positive, significant difference in gratitude levels for female teachers compared to their colleagues. This finding indicates a potential opportunity to explore differences in gratitude or other

measures of wellbeing in non-female teachers to determine if there are any implications for retention efforts.

Implications

The data from the present study indicated that additional research is needed to understand how poverty levels of a school impact a teacher's intention to leave the school. Gratitude is only one measure of wellbeing. Additional studies comparing burnout and poverty levels in schools should be conducted to further understand teachers' attrition. It would also be beneficial to conduct qualitative studies to understand teachers' intentions to leave in relation to a school's poverty level. The results from this study also revealed a need to explore additional measures of wellbeing to determine if other indicators would identify reasons teachers intend to leave or if well-being practices would have an ability to change their intentions to stay or leave. This study was not able to provide any causal relationships. Therefore, it is not possible to determine if teachers' intentions to leave are lowering their levels of gratitude or if their lower levels of gratitude are increasing their intentions to leave. Intent to leave as a variable could be further explored in future studies of teachers and should be included in longitudinal studies in schools of various poverty levels as well as qualitative studies. It may be interesting to conduct a longitudinal, quasi-experimental study of teachers who indicate an intention to leave to see if implementing gratitude practices would impact retention efforts.

As policymakers work to identify ways to increase teacher retention, barriers to implementation of positive practices designed to increase teachers' wellbeing must be removed, especially for high-poverty schools (Çevik, 2017; Jiang et al., 2016;

Lavy & Eshet, 2018; Lohbeck et al., 2018; Taxer & Frenzel, 2015; Yin, Huang, & Lee, 2017). In addition, teacher preparation programs, especially those who are preparing teachers for urban education settings should incorporate programs designed to teach emotional competence to help teachers manage emotional labor, build resilience and enhance well-being (Ballantyne & Zhukov, 2017; Çevik, 2017; Chen, 2016; Cook et al., 2017; Lohbeck et al., 2018; White, 2016).

Previous studies have indicated that higher levels of gratitude result in greater levels of wellbeing and that people who intentionally engage in practices intended to increase wellbeing derive significant benefits (Gray et al., 2017; Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013; Ross, Romer, & Horner, 2012; Wood, Joseph, & Maltby, 2009). Several researchers have made progress in identifying ways educational leaders can improve conditions for teachers so that they feel more supported, hopeful, resilient and effective. However, little has been done in terms of widespread implementation of the research-based programs and practices for teachers (Anjum & Amjad, 2016; Avanzi et al., 2018; Ballantyne & Zhukov, 2017; Cook et al., 2017; Soulen & Wine, 2018). In general, the benefits of gratitude have been well-researched (Anjum & Amjad, 2016; Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Kong, Zhao, You, & Xiang, 2019; Lambert et al., 2012; Watkins et al., 2003), however, gratitude in teachers has only been explored by a few (Chan, 2011, 2013; Howells, 2014). Furthermore, no previous studies could be found that examined differences in teachers' levels of gratitude between schools with high poverty and low poverty. This study fills a gap in the literature by providing an exploration into the effect a school's poverty level has on teachers' well-being. This study contributes to the body of knowledge that explores

how positive practices can be used to explore ways to increase teachers' wellbeing (Fredrickson, 2001; Seligman, 2011a; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). It has become critically important for teachers to develop a greater awareness of their different needs for self-care and well-being. Additionally, teachers must be provided with tools and resources to help them manage their stress and well-being so that fewer teachers choose to leave the field. Although the present study did not reveal any significant differences in gratitude levels of teachers based on a school's poverty level, future studies may reveal other insights that help teachers cultivate positive emotions and build capacity for resilience and well-being through proactive measures (Chan, 2011; Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Fredrickson, 2001).

Although no significant differences were found in gratitude levels across poverty levels of the schools, this study did reveal the need for additional research of causal relationships and additional factors related to teachers' well-being and intentions to leave. This study was an initial step in addressing this research gap. Additional research is needed to explore the opportunities for incorporating positive psychology practices for teacher well-being in conjunction with various educational practices and accountability measures (Ávalos & Valenzuela, 2016; Glazer, 2018; Rumschlag, 2017; White, 2016).

Additional exploration of the connections between positive psychology practices and schools' poverty levels as it pertains to student achievement would also be helpful. Previously researchers found that teachers' emotion regulation strategies are important for increasing student achievement (Becker et al., 2014; Houser & Waldbuesser, 2017; Mahler, Großschedl, & Harms, 2018). In addition, researchers

have found that teachers' emotions have an effect on students' emotions, and subsequent student engagement and achievement (Becker et al., 2014; Hills & Robinson, 2010; Houser & Waldbuesser, 2017; Lohbeck, Hagenauer, & Frenzel, 2018). It is possible that additional research into practices that positively impact teachers' emotions may also produce findings that impact student achievement.

Limitations and Delimitations

Several limitations should be noted in reviewing the findings and implications of this study. One major limitation of this study was driven by the sampling procedure. Patten (2017) noted that sometimes random samples can also result in inaccurate proportions compared to the population. In these situations, statistics and an increased sample size can reduce sampling errors. However, even increased sample sizes cannot reduce errors caused by sampling bias (Patten, 2017). In this study, only teachers in Minnesota K-12 public schools were included in the sample population. Caution should be used in interpreting the results or in making generalizations.

This study was conducted using a cross-sectional survey design, which presented additional limitations in that gratitude levels were only be captured and measured at a single point in time for each participant (Muijs, 2011). Given that an individual's circumstances can change significantly over time, gratitude levels as a measure of well-being can also fluctuate significantly over the course of one's teaching career. Changes in gratitude can be affected by personal or professional situations and relationships as well as by the attitudes and emotions experienced by the participant at the time the survey was being completed.

Another limitation was that teachers were not asked to provide context for their responses to the gratitude questions. Their responses could have been indicative of their gratitude toward their jobs, personal lives, or general affect. Additionally, measurement of a complex, psychological construct such as gratitude is difficult and hard to isolate (Morgan et al., 2017; Wood, Maltby, et al., 2008). Because gratitude has been used to describe a state, an emotion, a trait, a virtue, and a life-orientation (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Kong et al., 2019; Wood, Maltby, et al., 2008), this study's results should be interpreted with caution.. Although researchers found the GQ-6 Gratitude Questionnaire to show good validity and reliability (McCullough et al., 2013; McCullough et al., 2002), other instruments may capture different aspects of gratitude as well.

This study also has several delimitations. There were no questions pertaining to aspects associated with burnout, such as organizational issues or social contexts, which include relationships with others at work (Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001; Schaufeli et al., 2009). This study also did not address workload imbalances, financial burdens, emotional competence or the current state of well-being of the participants (Avanzi et al., 2018; Chan, 2011; Fiorilli et al., 2017; Lavy & Eshet, 2018; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2014). This study did not explore how teachers recover from strain in the workplace (Grund et al., 2016) or what role their organizational identity plays in their self-efficacy (Avanzi et al., 2018; Ballantyne & Zhukov, 2017). These factors all may have had an influence on teachers' self-reported levels of gratitude.

Concluding Comments

This study sought to investigate whether there were any differences in teachers' self-reported levels of gratitude between high-poverty and low-poverty schools. Additionally, the researcher wanted to examine if differences existed in demographic variables and levels of gratitude. Many previous studies have found a correlation between gratitude and various measures of well-being including positive emotions, positive affect, and mood (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Lambert, Fincham, & Stillman, 2012). There are numerous pressures facing educators today. In spite of the various efforts to improve conditions for teachers, it is impossible to eliminate all of the issues that impact a teacher's decision to leave. However, continued efforts focused on helping teachers build resilience and increase well-being should be implemented. Regardless of a school's poverty level, teachers' needs for well-being must be addressed so that schools can retain teachers and maintain cohesion for the benefit of the students (Çevik, 2017; Ellison & Woods, 2018; Frenzel et al., 2016).

The findings of this study show that teachers' levels of gratitude did not differ significantly between high-poverty and low-poverty schools. However, the research results did indicate that teachers who intend to leave do have significantly lower levels of gratitude. Additionally, the data showed that Black/African American teachers also had significantly lower levels of gratitude than other teachers. Finally, the data revealed that females had significantly higher gratitude levels than their colleagues.

Further research on causal relationships may provide additional insight into correlations between teachers' well-being and attrition. Additionally, research on other factors of well-being of teachers would provide valuable information regarding how to develop programs that increase teachers' resilience and well-being and ideally, reduce attrition and job dissatisfaction of educators.

Gratitude is a complex construct that has been shown to be strongly associated with well-being (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Morgan et al., 2017; Wood, Froh, & Geraghty, 2010; Wood et al., 2009). While there has been copious research on gratitude and its many benefits, it has only recently become a focus of empirical research as it is related to well-being (Leithart, 2014). Regardless of the context, researchers agree that finding ways to increase one's level of gratitude is beneficial for all. As teacher retention programs continue to evolve, perhaps gratitude practices will be incorporated and poverty levels of schools will no longer be a distinguishing characteristic for educators.

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Appendix A

Dear Colleague,

Hello! I hope this email finds you well! I am Theresa Anderson, a fellow Minnesota teacher. I am currently working on my doctoral degree in education at Bethel University and I am requesting your assistance with a short survey for my dissertation. The survey should take less than five minutes to complete, though there is no time limit. Thank you in advance for your consideration in helping me with my research.

If you are willing to participate, please **follow this link to the Survey:**
${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
${l://SurveyURL}

If you are curious, the Minnesota Department of Education's Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) provided me with a list of emails of currently licensed teachers in the state of Minnesota for anonymous and random distribution of this survey. As a licensed teacher in Minnesota working in a traditional public school, you were randomly selected as a possible participant! As such, you are invited to participate in this study to explore differences in teachers' self-reported levels of gratitude between schools with different poverty levels and across demographic variables. I hope to determine if there are differences in the levels of gratitude as a measure of teachers' well-being so that future work can be centered on supporting specific needs of teachers based on the social context in which they work.

The survey consists of six questions pertaining to levels of gratitude, two questions regarding the school where you teach, one question regarding your intentions to stay, and nine general demographic questions. All responses will be confidential and your information will not be shared with anyone. Only aggregated information will be reported and there will be no identifying information associated with any of the survey responses to you, your school, or your email. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only. If interested in the results of this survey, you may contact me using the information below to request a copy.

There are no anticipated risks associated with your participation or any expected benefits or incentives. Participation is completely voluntary and you may choose to opt-out or quit at any point in the process. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw at any time, you will not be penalized in any way and your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with Bethel University. One automated reminder email will be sent to non-respondents in

approximately three days. No follow up contact will occur after that and the survey will close in 2 weeks.

This research project has been approved by my dissertation committee at Bethel University and is in accordance with the requirements set forth for Human Research by Bethel University's Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about the research or research participant's rights or wish to report a related injury, you may contact the researcher - Theresa Anderson at 612-483-4012, or Faculty Advisor, Erica Hering, Ed.D at 651-635-8035.

By completing and submitting this survey, you are granting consent to participate in this research.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. Your participation is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,

Theresa Anderson, MBA, MA
Doctoral Candidate, Bethel University

Link to survey: ${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:
${l://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}

Appendix B

Follow-Up Email

Dear Prospective Study Participant,

This is a reminder regarding a request sent approximately one week ago seeking your assistance with a short survey regarding levels of gratitude in teachers. The survey will close in one week. If you are able to assist me with this study, it would be greatly appreciated!

If you are interested in participating, please **follow this link to the Survey**:

Take the Survey.

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
https://bethel.qualtrics.com/jfe/preview/SV_ebooZI1O1TooF8x?Q_CHL=preview

Your participation is completely voluntary and you may choose to opt-out or quit at any point in the process. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw at any time, you will not be penalized in any way. There are no anticipated risks associated with your participation. The survey should take less than five minutes to complete, though there is no time limit.

If you have any questions about the research you may contact the researcher - Theresa Anderson at 612-483-4012, or Faculty Advisor, Erica Hering, Ed.D at 651-635-8035.

By completing and submitting this survey, you are granting consent to participate in this research. Thank you in advance for your consideration. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

No future requests regarding this survey will be sent. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Theresa Anderson, MBA, MA
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix C

Before you begin the survey, you will need to know the percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals at your school. If you do not know the percentage of students at your school who qualify for free or reduced-price meals, please follow the instructions below to identify this information before beginning the survey. Once you have this information, please go back in to the survey to complete it.

To find the percentage of students who qualify for Free/Reduced-Price Meals at your primary school, please open up a new tab, and go to: https://rc.education.state.mn.us/#mySchool/p--3

1. Search to find your school. 2. Select the **My School** heading 3. Select **Who Are the Students?** 4. Select **Demographics** 5. Look under **Enrollment by Other Criteria** (located beneath the demographic information). 6. Find the **Percent of Free/Reduced-Price meals.**
Please select the category that best describes the **Percent of Free/Reduced-Price meals** at your school.

- ❍ 0%-25.0%
- ❍ 25.1%-50.0%
- ❍ 51.1%-75.0%
- ❍ 75.1%-100%

GQ-6 Gratitude Survey and Demographics for Teachers

For each of the following items, select the statement to indicate how much you agree with it.

(Source: McCullough, M. E., Emmons, R. A., & Tsang, J. (2002). The grateful disposition: A conceptual and empirical topography. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 82*, 112-127.)

I have so much in life to be thankful for.

- ❍ Strongly disagree
- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Slightly disagree
- ❍ Neutral
- ❍ Slightly agree
- ❍ Agree
- ❍ Strongly agree

If I had to list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list.

- ❍ Strongly disagree
- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Slightly disagree
- ❍ Neutral
- ❍ Slightly agree
- ❍ Agree
- ❍ Strongly agree

When I look at the world, I don’t see much to be grateful for.

- ❍ Strongly disagree
- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Slightly disagree
- ❍ Neutral
- ❍ Slightly agree
- ❍ Agree
- ❍ Strongly agree

I am grateful to a wide variety of people.

- ❍ Strongly disagree
- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Slightly disagree
- ❍ Neutral
- ❍ Slightly agree
- ❍ Agree
- ❍ Strongly agree

As I get older, I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events, and situations that have been part of my life history.

- ❍ Strongly disagree
- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Slightly disagree
- ❍ Neutral
- ❍ Slightly agree
- ❍ Agree
- ❍ Strongly agree

Long amounts of time can go by before I feel grateful to something or someone.

- ❍ Strongly disagree
- ❍ Disagree
- ❍ Slightly disagree
- ❍ Neutral
- ❍ Slightly agree
- ❍ Agree
- ❍ Strongly agree

Please indicate the level of the grade(s) you primarily teach.

- ❑ Elementary (Grades K-6)
- ❑ Middle (Grades 6-8)
- ❑ High School (Grades 9-12)

What is your age?

- ❍ 21- 24
- ❍ 25 - 34
- ❍ 35 - 44
- ❍ 45 - 54
- ❍ 55 - 64
- ❍ 65 or older

How many years total have you been teaching (as a licensed teacher)?

- ❍ 0-3 years
- ❍ 4-5 years
- ❍ 6-10 years
- ❍ 11-15 years
- ❍ 16-20 years
- ❍ 21-25 years
- ❍ 26+ years

How many years total have you taught at the school where you are currently teaching?

- ❍ 0-2 years
- ❍ 3-5 years
- ❍ 6-10 years
- ❍ 11-15 years
- ❍ 16-20 years

- 21-25 years
- 26+ years

Is teaching your first career?

- Yes
- No

At this time, do you have any intention of leaving your current position in the next 3 years for reasons other than retirement or promotion?

- Yes
- No

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? (If you're currently enrolled in school, please indicate the highest degree you have received.)

- High school degree or equivalent (e.g. GED)
- Some college, no degree
- Associate degree (e.g. AA, AS)
- Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)
- Master's degree (e.g. MA, MS, MEd)
- Professional degree (e.g. MD, DDS, DVM)
- Doctorate (e.g. PhD, EdD)

Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to answer.

How would you describe yourself? (Please select all that apply.)

- ❑ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ❑ Asian
- ❑ Black or African American
- ❑ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- ❑ White
- ❑ Other _____
- ❑ I prefer not to answer.

How do you self-identify?

- ❍ Male
- ❍ Female
- ❍ Transgender
- ❍ Non-binary: Do not exclusively identify as male or female
- ❍ I prefer not to answer

Please list any faith affiliation(s) you have.

_____

Appendix D

Permission to use survey:

> "The scale was published in a scientific journal for use in the public domain. You do not need to contact any of the authors for permission to use these scales in non-commercial research. You may not use the scales for commercial purposes without permission" (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002, Appendix A, p. 2)

McCullough, M. E., Emmons, R. A., & Tsang, J. (2002). The grateful disposition: A conceptual and empirical topography. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 82*, 112-127.

Appendix E

Institutional Review Board Approval

BETHEL UNIVERSITY

Theresa Anderson <theresa-anderson@bethel.edu>

Theresa Anderson IRB proposal approval

Craig Paulson <craig-paulson@bethel.edu> Wed, Nov 6, 2019 at 10:34 PM
To: Theresa Anderson <theresa-anderson@bethel.edu>
Cc: Erica Hering <e-hering@bethel.edu>, Bethel University EdD IRB Proposal <edd-irb-proposal@bethel.edu>, Tracy Reimer <t-reimer@bethel.edu>, Jessica Daniels <j-daniels@bethel.edu>, Mary Whitman <m-whitman@bethel.edu>

Good evening Theresa,

Your IRB proposal has been approved by our Bethel University Education Level II IRB Committee with the approval code of 110619-01. Once you receive approval by Erica Hering (your dissertation advisor), you are authorized to begin your research.

Best wishes

Craig

Craig Paulson, Ph.D. Professor, Bethel University 651 635 8025 cpaulson@bethel.edu