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Lived Experiences of Middle School Principals in Richmond County, Georgia

Janina Collins Dallas
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THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN RICHMOND COUNTY, GEORGIA

by

JANINA C. DALLAS

(Under the Direction of MICHAEL D. RICHARDSON)

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examined the behavior of middle school principals as well as the various leadership behaviors and procedures that middle school principals utilize on a daily basis. A review of literature was completed concerning the areas of middle schools, middle school principals, and the history of leadership.

The research question for the study was, “What are the lived experiences of middle school principals in Richmond County, Georgia?” The research design for the study was quantitative. Semi-structured interviews were completed. The data were disaggregated according to themes and patterns. The population for the study consisted of nine middle school principals in Richmond County, Georgia.

After data collection, the researcher found nine common themes. Each of these themes was discussed in terms of supporting or not supporting the review of literature. The majority of the findings of the study supported the findings of previous studies as outlined in the review of literature. A major contradiction in the findings was the fact that none of the principals in the study felt a need for more professional development concerning the middle school principalship and community involvement. Additionally,
none of the principals in the study saw paperwork, lack of staff, funding, space, facilities, and planning time for teachers as obstacles.

INDEX WORDS: Middle school principals, Leadership behavior, Lived experiences, Leadership style
THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN RICHMOND COUNTY, GEORGIA

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

STATESBORO, GEORGIA

2006
THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN RICHMOND COUNTY, GEORGIA

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Craig Dallas, my loving and supportive husband
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Introduction

In the past twenty years, educators have endeavored to create middle schools that are distinctive and that attend to the needs of adolescents (Bradley & Manzo, 2000). The middle school concept came to the educational forefront during the 1950s and the 1960s when educators began to question whether or not junior high schools were meeting the needs of the students. It was believed by the reformers that a much better way of educating the middle school student would be to focus on the positive aspects of the junior high school’s curriculum; such as the core subjects and guidance programs, as well as exploratory and vocational programs, and add the concepts of team teaching and interdisciplinary teaching (Manning, 2000). Middle school administrators found themselves on the defensive because many schools failed to accomplish their objectives in terms of academics.

Another criticism of the middle school concept was the curriculum. The Third International Mathematics and Science Study released in 1996 reported that the American curriculum in the middle school was “a mile wide and an inch deep” (Bradley & Manzo, 2000, p. 3). Some of the problems which have been discussed are low expectations for student work, assignments of a trivial nature, and enormous amounts of worksheets (Johnston & Williamson, 1998). The teaming concept brought about problems when teachers on different teams have different academic standards.

Educators have spent a large amount of time creating middle schools. These schools typically consist of teams of teachers, interdisciplinary curricula, and advisory periods (Bradley & Manzo, 2000). Middle school curriculum has been closely examined since the
1990s (Manzo, 2000). The curriculum is intended to be responsive to the needs of the students in terms of developmental and socialization needs. However, according to Manzo (2000), the curriculum is instead “shallow, fragmented, and unchallenging” (p. 15).

The transitional time between elementary school and high school brings about many changes in the student. In addition to the physical changes taking place in the body of the student, psychological changes are also taking place (Portner, 2000). Peer pressure and a desire for independence, as well as being self-critical and fantasizing, are common during this time. The student is in a constant struggle to resolve conflicts. These adolescents “…are trying on new personas every day. Like, they want to be a vegetarian. It may only last six hours, but they are very passionate about it” (Portner, p. 39).

Since the middle school student is unique both physically and psychologically, a teacher must be prepared to deal with these competing forces (Portner, 2000). Many of the teachers assigned to middle schools have no specific training in the area in which they teach. In addition to the lack of specialized training, many middle school teachers are unprepared to cope with the demands of students in this age group. “Middle school is the catchall place where they put the people in” (Bradley & Manzo, 2000, p. 10).

Some teachers lack the skills to be effective in terms of team teaching, flexibility, and understanding the characteristics of young adolescents. Since the students are at different levels of maturation, the teacher must consider individualized instruction. In addition to considering the individual needs of the students, middle school teachers are required to take a team approach in terms of teaching and planning. This team approach may call for interdisciplinary teaching, block scheduling, adviser-advisee sessions, and exploratory arts (Bradley & Manzo, 2000).
Principals in some middle schools may also lack the necessary training and management skills to effectively manage and understand the middle school student (Deigmueller, 2000). Some principals are moved from elementary schools or high schools to the middle school. Statistics, as gathered by The National Association of Secondary School Principals, have confirmed that a majority of middle school principals are not trained for middle school and do not understand the middle school concept (Deigmueller, 2000).

In addition to a lack of training, middle school principals encounter many obstacles that are also presented to the elementary school principal and the high school principal. These obstacles can present themselves in the form of high-stakes testing. A principal may find it difficult to motivate teachers and encourage creativity when the teachers feel threatened because of testing demands (Elmore, 2000). Teachers may also feel threatened because high income families may choose to seek alternate forms of education in an effort to find more resources for their children. In contrast, a principal may also have to deal with the poverty factor in economically depressed areas while attempting to raise academic standards. The principal must also balance administrative duties with teacher concerns and student issues (Elmore, 2000).

Middle school administrators face the aforementioned challenges and many more. Additionally, school personnel in Georgia must incorporate new requirements in the middle school curriculum as outlined by Georgia House Bill 1187 (Georgia Legislature, 2000). Some of these changes include adding 30 minutes to the academic instructional time during the school day. Based on test scores, those schools not performing at the 65% level or above will be placed in school improvement by the State Department of Education (Georgia Department of Education, 1999). Administrators must ensure that all teachers are certified in
a specific area of concentration by 2006. The 2001-2002 school year brought the requirement to provide a minimum of five hours of instruction in language arts, mathematics, social studies, and other academic subjects. Those students who perform below grade level, as determined by the Office of Education Accountability (OEA), will be provided with additional academic instructional time, while those students performing at or above grade level may be provided additional time for further advancement or instruction in other academic areas. If a middle school receives a score below the established standards, all additional time will be spent in academics which would result in the elimination of exploratory classes and physical education (Georgia Legislature, 2000).

The State of Georgia has approximately 429 middle schools (Georgia Department of Education, 1999). Will these middle schools be going away in the near future? According to the statewide Evaluations of Georgia’s Middle Grades Program of 1999, the answer is no. This report found there is good reason to continue funding and support for Georgia’s middle schools. Also, this evaluation stated that changes need to be made in how the middle school program operates and how it is funded (Georgia Department of Education).

In addition to funding and operational changes, the statewide evaluation found many more interesting aspects of middle schools in Georgia. One finding concerned the attitudes of teachers. It was reported that, in schools where teachers support the middle school concept, student gains are significantly higher in reading and math (Georgia Department of Education, 1999). These gains in reading and math were also demonstrated in schools where teachers work together in interdisciplinary teaching. The state evaluation of Georgia’s middle school program made many recommendations (Georgia Department of Education, 1999). One such recommendation is offering survey classes that are aligned with high school
courses offered by the local school system. A total of ten exploratory courses must be
offered to the middle school student during a three-year middle school period, and foreign
language courses were recommended as an option for students (Georgia Department of
Education, 1999).

With all of the changes taking place in the regulations for middle schools, it is
imperative that an administrator in the middle school setting be prepared to rise to the
challenge. Because of the close relationship that principals develop as they work with
teachers, flexibility is essential (Gallegos, 1998). As a principal works with teachers and
students, he or she may need to act decisively by using strong directives or rely on past
experiences and intuition.

A principal should be aware of his or her own personal leadership style and how this
style impacts his or her followers. Principals influence teachers, staff, and students by what
they do, not by what they say (Hipp & Bredeson, 1995). Madsen (1997) found that principals
might view themselves as visionary, risk-takers, and consensus builders. The visionary
leader concentrates on long-range planning and develops a collective school image, while
the risk-taker is more concerned with strong organizational value, change, and leadership for
change (Madsen, 1997). The consensus builder concentrates on incorporating competing
views in long-range planning while maintaining openness and responsiveness.

A principal should examine his or her attitude toward leadership (Barnett & Monda-
Amaya, 1998). Principals may feel that the educational establishments have not adequately
prepared them for the demands of visionary leadership. Principals may perceive their
competence, in terms of leadership, linked to staff development, academic degrees, and
teaching experience (Foley & Lewis, 1999). Experience may be gained through a
commitment to continued growth in terms of skill acquisition and demonstrating involvement as a learner (Hallinger & Greeenblatt, 1989).

Leadership style may be affected by the demand for change in contemporary society (Bowman, 2000). Appropriate leadership style should be paired with the correct change demand in conjunction with disruptive challenges. Gallegos (1998) found that leadership style should be flexible because there is no leadership style that fits every situation. Depending upon the situation, it is the job of the principal to determine the appropriate type of leadership style to employ (Gallegos, 1998). Rutherford (1984) felt that leadership style does not exist in isolation. There is no situation that requires a particular leadership style. When a principal has a clear vision for his or her school, they will normally exhibit visible leadership in order to achieve their vision. It is not always incumbent for a principal to change his or her style when presented with a particular situation. Rather, a principal changes his or her behavior in order to facilitate school improvement. Hartzell and Bass (1988) recognized that principals needed to adjust their leadership styles in conjunction with the situational demands of their schools. Casimir (2001) further supports this idea by finding that the perception of leadership can depend upon the leadership behavior that immediately precedes or follows an action. A leader may change his or her behavior or employ different combinations of behavior which can send a variety of messages. These combinations of behaviors may range from pressure to socio-emotionally-oriented leadership, and principals may use informal and less directive strategies at any time that can be altered with change demands (Casimir, 2001). The principal is charged with exhibiting leadership within the school organization. Therefore, the leadership role of the principal is crucial in terms of a
school’s success (Duttweiler, 1986). Depending upon the members of the organization, the behaviors of the leader may vary in terms of interaction (Bass, 1981).

The topic of leadership has been of continuing interest to researchers because the principal exhibits leadership within the school organization. Sergiovanni (1967) stated that the principal should be “teacher-centered” as well as “task-oriented.” The “teacher-centered” behavior could be manifested as supportive supervision, effective communication, and group effectiveness. In contrast, “task-oriented” behavior concentrates on organizing and planning work in conjunction with goal achievement.

Hanson (1973) found that leadership style could be thought of as a particular behavior that may be emphasized when the leader wishes to motivate his or her group to accomplish some goal. In contrast, when the principal leads in an inappropriate manner, the goals will not be met and it will be difficult to have a positive relationship with teachers and staff.

Statement of the Problem

In order to reach the middle school student, middle school principals must be innovative in their approach to the educational needs of the diverse student population. Principals at this level must be able to deal with student issues such as varying levels of parental guidance and support, role identity, self-confidence, motivation, and communication. Middle school principals must carefully screen teachers in order to insure that prospective teachers recognize the needs of the students in this age group and are able to effectively teach to those needs. It is the administrator’s task to effectively utilize faculty and staff to create an effective learning environment for students.
One important factor in the relationship between a principal and faculty is the leadership style of the principal. When the middle school principal examines his or her leadership style, they will become more aware of the differences or perceived differences that can affect the delivery of a quality education to students and provide a positive work environment for teachers. Also, the principal will be provided with a varied knowledge of leadership styles that can enhance them both professionally and personally.

This study is important to contemporary education. The nation is faced with a vast teacher shortage in conjunction with an aging teacher population. This study will enable principals and personnel directors to better match prospective teachers with principals in an effort to create a more effective teaching environment which retains and recruits effective and competent teachers.

This study is also important to the researcher because it will allow her to gain insights into her own personal leadership style. In addition, the study will assist the researcher in determining leadership style practice and how these practices impact her role as a principal and her relationship with teachers.

Research Questions

The proposed study is designed to answer the following question: What are the lived experiences of middle school principals as related to their leadership style and behavior? The following sub questions will help answer that question:

1. What behavior do middle school principals exhibit?
2. Are there any characteristics such as level of education, years of experience, or size of school that impact the principal’s behavior?
3. What drives the behavior of the middle school principal?
4. What makes middle school principals unique?

Importance of the Study

This study is important in order to determine if there is a particular leadership style that middle school principals prefer to practice. This issue is important because of the current teacher shortages and the need to retain and recruit teachers. This study will help fill a void in the current professional literature concerning the relationship between leadership style and various sub-factors.

This research study will enable administrators to gain insights into their personal leadership styles. Principals will have the opportunity to examine differences in their preferred leadership among sub-groups of factors such as gender, age, education, and years of experience. With this research available, administrators will be able to make more effective and informed decisions in assigning various school duties and responsibilities in conjunction with teaching positions. This study will fill the void in the literature concerning the uniqueness of the middle school principal. Also, this research will enable the researcher to make informed career decisions.

Procedures

In the development of this research study, the research question, as well as sub-questions, was developed. Next, a review of literature was conducted in an effort to determine findings of previous research. The researcher created a self-made instrument. The study was submitted to the Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board for approval. When the Institutional Review Board approved the study, the researcher contacted the participants and arranged a time for interviews to be conducted. These interviews were conducted at the convenience of the participants.
Assumptions

The study was based on the following assumption: the subjects will answer the questions honestly and without regard to answers that are possibly expected.

Definition of Terms

A list of terms is given below.

**Adaptability** – ability to encourage confidence and risk-taking.

**Change** – modification of a person;

**Convenience sample** – participants in a study who are chosen because of the ease in which they can be interviewed.

**Flexibility** – ability to manage, change, and/or adjust depending upon the situation.

**Leadership style** – characteristics based on core values and beliefs that can be flexible in nature.

**Lived experiences** – experiences unique to an individual.

**Middle School in Georgia** - any school containing grade 7 to 8 or grades 6 to 8 inclusively.

**Principal** - person holding the top administrative job in a school.

**Rural**- Outside of the city.

**Suburban** – Resembling a suburb or its residents.

**Task**- an organization’s mission, purpose, or goal.
Summary

This study examined the behavior of middle school principals. Additionally, this study examined various leadership behaviors and procedures that the middle school principal utilizes on a daily basis.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter will focus on middle schools. Next, the differences between elementary school principals and high school principals, as compared to middle school principals, will be discussed. Leadership and selected leadership theories will be addressed, in conjunction with the challenges faced by middle school principals.

Middle Schools

The following table outlines the review of literature as related to middle schools.

Table 1: Studies Describing Middle School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DeVita (1970)</td>
<td>Defined middle school by referring to structure of student-centered environment considering student needs as well as potentials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-structure of student-centered educational environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romano (1973)</td>
<td>Middle school philosophy more effectively serves intellectual, emotional, and physical needs of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-philosophy of middle school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-emphasis on developing individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan (1993)</td>
<td>Nature of student determined curriculum, learning skills, teaching strategies, guidance, and learning experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-curriculum should focus on cognitive stages of development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGlasson (1973)</td>
<td>Programs to be the best offering a program of transitional education to facilitate changes occurring in elementary and middle school programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-described middle schools as programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-transitional programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Middle schools need freedom to operate independently from philosophies and expectations of elementary and high schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weller (1999)</td>
<td>Middle schools need freedom to operate independently from philosophies and expectations of elementary and high schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Middle schools were generally positioned in a school system between elementary schools and high schools. Bondi (1972) described middle school as “a program for students no longer children and not quite adolescents” (p. 9); “a self-contained school provided a four-year course for either 8 to 12 or 9 to 13 [chronological age]” (Burrows, 1978, p. 21); “a system of educational development for the 10 to 14-year-old age group” (Grooms, 1967, p. 4); and “an educational hybrid [that] exists in three types from eight to twelve, nine to thirteen, and ten to thirteen” (Edwards, 1972, p. 1).

More comprehensive definitions of middle school have included environment, philosophy, program, and architecture. DeVita (1970) saw middle school as a structure of a student-centered educational environment that considered the needs of the students as well as potentials. Romano (1973) built upon DeVita’s work and stressed that the philosophy of middle school should be the primary focus. Romano said that the main difference between middle schools and junior high schools were that the middle school addresses the intellectual, emotional, and physical needs of the students. A greater emphasis was placed upon developing individuals in conjunction with instructional pace and states of development. With more emphasis being placed on individuals, Jordan (1993) felt that the middle school curriculum should focus on the cognitive stages of development in order to formulate appropriate curriculum, learning skills, teaching strategies, guidance, and learning experiences.

McGlasson (1973) found that middle schools would best be described in terms of programs. These middle school programs offered a transitional education that coincided with the changes between elementary school and high school. Weller (1999) found that in order for the middle school transition to be successful, schools should have the freedom to operate
independently from the philosophies and expectations of elementary school and high school.

In order for middle schools to be successful, McGlasson (1973) found that emphasis should be placed on desirable aspects of both elementary school and high school. Murphy (1965) described middle school in terms of the physical setting. Middle school should be used between elementary school and high school. The design of the middle school building should be considerate of the purpose for middle school.

Middle school could be characterized in many ways. Weller (1999) saw middle school as containing child-centered, self-paced programs; variable class scheduling configurations; exploratory and enrichment programs; interdisciplinary teaching and planning teams; independent study; adviser-advisee programs; intramural sports; social development; and auxiliary programs. George and Shewey (1994) felt that middle schools should be centers of teacher empowerment that emphasize team organization, teacher-based guidance activities, and flexible use of time. Zepeda and Mayers (2004) saw middle school as a system that has flexible scheduling with a student-centered curriculum. Middle schools should exhibit shared decision making, interdisciplinary teams, exploratory emphasis, and active instruction.

Because of preadolescent growth and social patterns, middle school must not only provide academics, but socialization and emotional stability (Weller, 1999). Educational programs developed in middle school should be child-centered with a strong emphasis placed on the learning needs of the adolescent student (Weller, Brown, Short, Holmes, DeWeese, & Love, 1987). School leaders and teachers in middle school should have a clear knowledge of goals and objectives in regard to the middle school concept (Weller, 1999). According to Alexander and George (1981), the middle school principal should have the role
of a facilitator. Similarly, Edington and DiBenedetto (1988) believed that the principal should have the ability to effectively communicate with his or her staff and the principal should be a facilitator of learning.

The rationale for middle school was research-based with an emphasis placed on human development phases, learning, and intellectual development in adolescents (Weller, 1999). These middle schools had been established to address human development in terms of physical, emotional, intellectual, and social (Weller, 1999). In middle schools, leadership style, as demonstrated by the principal, was an important factor in determining the successful implementation of essential concepts of a true middle school.

Middle School Principals

This table outlines the review of literature as related to middle school principals.

Table 2: Studies Concerning Middle School Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brown, Pethel, and Culbreath (1978)</td>
<td>Middle school challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burrows (1978)</td>
<td>Opportunity and Leadership Antenatal Leadership Style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander and George (1981)</td>
<td>10 exemplary characteristics of middle school administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valentine Etal (1981)</td>
<td>Proven ability to work well with students, interact with students and peers, respect for dignity and worth of individuals understanding students’ skills, and positive methods of classroom control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cushman (1992)</td>
<td>Qualities of principals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teske and Schneider (1999)</td>
<td>Responsibilities of the middle school principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doud and Keller (1998)</td>
<td>Leaders growing leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grubbs, Leech, Gibbs and Green (2002)</td>
<td>Characteristics of middle school principals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When middle school administrators were polled by Valentine, et al. (1981), concerning the desired personal qualities of middle school teachers, such characteristics included the ability to work with students and bring out the most from a student’s best capabilities. In addition, the middle school principal should be able to constructively interact with students and peers while exhibiting a respect for the dignity and worth of individuals.
The middle school principal should be able to understand the level of student skills, abilities, and interests as well as project a positive self-concept. According to Valentine, et al. (1981), positive methods of classroom control and discipline were preferred by principals when teachers used a variety of learning strategies and taught good communication.

The role of the principal in a school can vary depending upon the school. According to Cushman (1992), the most effective schools have a strong building principal. Cushman further stated that principals are architects and idea people who lead others to analyze and reflect. Principals work to develop a clear and consistent school culture that promotes support for the school (Teske & Schneider, 1999). Contemporary principals work to develop and nurture potential leadership in staff members (Doud & Keller, 1998).

Elementary school principals tend to work in schools that have child-centered classrooms (Cushman, 1997). Teachers have the time and opportunities to coach students through projects that relate to real world situations without the distraction of ringing bells. There are large amounts of money placed in federally-supported remedial programs with an emphasis on reading and language (Boyer, 1983). In contrast, high school principals spend the majority of their workdays in face-to-face interchanges with faculty, staff, and pupils. Much of their time is spent on school management.

Grubbs, Leech, Gibbs, and Green (2002) found that the typical middle school principal is a white male who averages 47 years of age. The majority of these principals have 11 years of teaching experience and 11 years of administrative experience. Middle school principals possess backgrounds consisting of experience as teachers, counselors, and in non-administrative duties (Petzko, 2002). When asked who the most influential person was in their administrative style, 49% stated that it was another principal. The majority of
these middle school principals have a master’s degree in administration and supervision, but a little over one-third of the principals had taken no specific courses dealing specifically with middle school. According to Petzko (2002), over one-half of middle school principals included in her study voluntarily participated in professional development programs.

The description which follows presents some of the challenges confronting middle school principals. Brown, Pethel, and Culbreath (1978) touched upon some of the challenges and responsibilities facing today’s middle school principals:

The middle school principal has, perhaps, the greatest opportunity and challenge of all building level administrators to offer leadership. The middle school movement across the nation, with its emphasis on a more individualized and humanistic approach to transient, has provided this potential. The principal of the middle school can be sure that he will share many of the responsibilities of both the elementary and the high school principal. However, he can also anticipate a new sphere of activities, interactions, and responsibilities unique to the middle school. As in any organization, the need for leadership exists. It is the principal who remains in the leadership position with power over more problems. (p. 14).

Burrows (1978) spoke about opportunity and leadership at the middle school level. He specified the type of leadership required as being unique to the setting:

Middle schools have the opportunity to innovate as no other type of school at present has. The authoritarian head issuing pronouncements and directives is not likely in this situation to lead educational advance. All middle schools which are breaking ground successfully are lead by heads who proceed by
consultation, discussion, and the achievement of a substantial measure of staff unity (p.177).

Alexander and George (1981) researched middle schools across the nation. In their research, Alexander and George found that successful middle school principals have the following ten characteristics:

1. Use of a maximum number of opportunities for person-to-person communication with faculty, students, and parents;
2. Are enthusiastic about the school, the students, and the faculty;
3. Emphasize the values and uses of goal setting and goals in all elements of the school program;
4. Seek opportunities to secure and use feedback about their own performances, as well as each aspect of school operation;
5. Praise faculty, staff and students whenever praise is due. Avoid embarrassing students, faculty, and staff members before other persons but provide constructive criticism when needed;
6. Reward performance of students and faculty and staff members by the most appropriate means available, including salary increases for employees when possible;
7. Eliminate conditions, including disruptive students and faculty members, which are inimical to the effective performance of others;
8. Conduct meetings skillfully to achieve their purposes; and
9. Participate in faculty work assignments such as monitorial duties. (Alexander & George, 1981, p 261).
There are many drawbacks to the position of the middle school principal (Bobroff, Howard, & Howard, 1974; McGee & Blackburn, 1979). In a 1972 survey of 350 middle school principals, Bobroff, Howard, & Howard (1974) asked what was the major obstacle to effectiveness. Approximately 90% of the middle school principals stated that there was a lack of understanding of the age group and a lack of specialized training for principals. Also, middle school principals felt that societal permissiveness and discipline problems, coupled with poor selection of principals, contributed to ineffectiveness.

McGee and Blackburn (1979) listed 18 administrative disadvantages for middle school principals. Some of these disadvantages include:

1. A non-traditional master schedule;
2. Potential teacher personality conflicts as related to team teaching;
3. Diminished textbook orientation as related to parental objections;
4. Differences between team programs;
5. Delegation of responsibility;
6. Increased paperwork and time requirements;
7. Community involvement;
8. Feeder and receiver of school communication issues; and
9. Lack of staff (pp. 42-43).

A study completed by Petzko (2002) indicated that contemporary middle school principals face many of the same challenges. In her survey of middle school principals, Petzko (2002) found that principals described 10 roadblocks that prevent them from doing the kind of job they want to do. These roadblocks were:
1. Time required by administration detail at the expense of more important matters;

2. Lack of time for self;

3. Regulations/mandates from state/district governing boards;

4. Parent apathy or irresponsibility about their children;

5. Inability to obtain funding;

6. Resistance to change;

7. Problem students;

8. Insufficient space and physical facilities;

9. Inability to provide teacher with time for planning and professional development; and

10. Variations in the ability and dedication to staff. (p. 12).

Additionally, middle school principals stated that they needed more professional development, better recruitment, more comprehensive university preparation programs, and mentors (Petzko, 2002). Mizelle (1999) found that middle school principals are challenged by their teachers and that teachers felt the success of the school was solely the responsibility of the principal (Brown, Claudet, & Olivarez, 2004). Grubbs, Leech, Gibbs, and Green (2002) found that middle school principals need more course work in reading instruction, early childhood development, and the nature of the middle school student, as well as a knowledge of the pedagogy and general content areas. Camblin (2003) found that low teacher expectations, less effective instructional strategies, and less counseling contact created roadblocks for success in the middle school. Williamson (2000) found that middle school principals need to have reduced isolation as related to
school violence and disgruntled teachers. Additionally, a risk-free setting would provide middle school principals with the opportunity to focus more on the immediate problems faced in their schools. Lastly, middle school principals need more professional development focused on real world experiences, more support from the central office, and more time for personal reflection.

History of Leadership

The following table outlines the major literature sources related to leadership.

Table 3: Studies Describing Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Schriberg, Lloyd, Schribert and Williamson (1997) | Historical perspective on leadership  
<p>|                                             | -history of leadership           |
| Gross and Herriott (1965)                  | Traits of leaders                |
|                                            | Carlyle’s Great Man Theory: personality traits and situational factors |
| Organ and Bateman (1986)                   | Identify leadership behaviors affecting worker performances and productivity of the organization |
| Feidler and Chemers (1984)                 | -productivity of workers         |
| Bass (1981)                                | Leaders have strong drive for responsibility and task completion |
| Hemphill (1955) Halphin (1959)             | Department heads who are good administrators scored high on LBDQ initiating structure/consideration 4 quadrants |
|                                            | Minimal amount of low consideration and high structure |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Likert (1961)</td>
<td>Management patterns</td>
<td>Pattern of management high producing managers, employee centered, job centered, systems approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blake and Morton (1985)</td>
<td>Model for identifying 2 separate dimensions, people and production, 5 leadership styles in 4 quadrants</td>
<td>Managerial Grid Concern for People Vs. Concern for Production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blake and Morton (1964)</td>
<td>Model for identifying 2 separate dimensions, people and production, 5 leadership styles in 4 quadrants</td>
<td>Managerial Grid Concern for People Vs. Concern for Production</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Leadership came to the forefront in ancient Greece and was mainly utilized for military purposes (Schriberg, Lloyd, Schriberg, & Williamson, 1997). The leader was both a harmonizer and a teacher. Plato believed the leader was a self-interested human being who possessed the ability to convince others to trust him or her. This leader was strong, cunning, and charismatic.

Carlyle’s “Great Man Theory” studied an individual’s personality traits and situational factors (Gross & Herriott, 1965). Gross and Herriott (1965) further stated that “social scientists and practical men of affairs are intrigued with the phenomena of leadership. Yet, despite a considerable body of speculative and scientific writings on its meaning, its determinants, and its effects, our understanding of the knowledge of the nature and correlates of leadership remain quite limited.” (p. 1). Ohio State University began studies in the late 1940s and early 1950s under the direction of Stogdill, Fleishman, and others (Organ & Bateman, 1986). The major purpose of the studies was to identify leadership behaviors, which affected the performance of workers, which in turn affected the productivity of the organization (Fiedler & Chemers, 1984). A list of
1,800 items describing the behavior of leaders was developed and the list was reduced to 45 items in 9 categories. Based upon these themes, the first Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire was developed (Bass, 1981). The Ohio State University Leadership Studies made two significant contributions to the literature. First, they produced a number of questionnaires to measure leadership behavior. Second, they identified two dimensions of leadership behavior. These two dimensions included initiation of structure and consideration.

The first dimension, called initiation of structure, included behavior such as having subordinates follow rules and procedures, maintain high standards for performance, and making the role of the leaders and followers explicit. The second dimension, called consideration, incorporated behavior such as helping and doing favors for subordinates, looking out for the welfare of followers, explaining procedures, and being friendly and available. Initiation of structure involved actions which defined leader and follower relationship, establishing or defining standards of performance, specifying operations procedures, and determining who does what. Consideration was related to the leader’s attitude toward followers, the warmth of the relationship between the leader and the followers, the leader’s willingness to listen, and the degree of mutual trust between the leader and the followers. Since these two dimensions were relatively independent, a leader’s behavior was characterized by either or both.

In a study in which Hemphill (1955) used the Leaders Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ), it was determined that department heads’ leadership styles were both low in consideration and high in structure. Hemphill (1955) contended that a minimal amount of both types of behavior is needed for achieving a good reputation and that an
excess of one type of behavior does not make up for the lack of the other. This finding was confirmed in Halpin’s (1959) study of the relationships between teachers, superintendents, and board members of 50 Ohio superintendents.

In the Michigan Studies, Likert (1961) investigated the general pattern of management of high-producing managers. He found that they focused their primary attention on the human aspects of their subordinates problems and on building effective work groups with high performance goals. These types of managers were called “employee-centered” in contrast to “job-centered” who kept constant pressure on productions and were found more often to have low-producing sections. Likert (1961) observed that the high-producing supervisors made the job objective clear to their subordinates and gave them the freedom to do the job. From his study, Likert (1961) identified four systems of leadership and management which included: System 1 - exploitative authoritative; System 2 - benevolent authoritative; System 3 - consultative; and System 4 - participative. With regard to decision making and the influence process within managerial systems, Likert (1961) maintained that effective decisions required highly motivated, coordinated behavior toward organizational goals.

System 1, called “exploitative-authoritative,” was characterized as using the motivation of economic rewards, combined with punishment and fear. This resulted in hostile attitudes of subordinates. There was distrust and the followers were in a subservient role. There was great dissatisfaction with their group membership, supervision, and own achievement. Production was low, but turnover and absenteeism were high. This leadership style was structured, task-oriented, and authoritarian.
System 2, “called “benevolent-authoritative,” was characterized as still using economic rewards as motivators. Workers’ attitudes ranged from hostile to favorable and they were moderately dissatisfied with their membership, supervision, and achievement. Communication was downward with policy decisions made at the top. Production was fair, but turnover and absenteeism were high. This leadership style was structured and task-oriented, and the goals of the organization had a higher priority than the needs of the followers.

System 3, called “consultative,” was characterized by making use of economic, as well as intrinsic rewards for motivation. There was some worker involvement in decisions and the followers’ attitudes were favorable and cooperative. Satisfaction was down and up, with broad policy made at the top and specific policy made at the lower levels of the organization. Production was good and turnover and absenteeism were moderate.

System 4, called "participative,” was characterized by using the full range of motivation and compensated the follower through participation. Worker attitude was strong and trustful. Satisfaction with group membership, supervision, and achievement was high. Communication goes up, down, and laterally within the organization, which resulted in decision making being widely spread through the organization. This leadership style consisted of teamwork, trust, and open communication.

Likert (1961) predicted low worker productivity from a leader in System 1, who is referred to as being job-centered since he or she is concerned with keeping workers busily engaged with the details of their jobs. In the opposite end of the leadership continuum, high productivity was associated with an employee-centered supervisor who is part of System 4. Likert (1961) made a comparison of employee-centered and job-centered styles and found
that leaders who were employee-centered generally led work with greater productivity and greater employee satisfaction.

Blake and Mouton (1964) developed The Managerial Grid which was a model for identifying two separate dimensions of leadership. These two dimensions consisted of a concern for people and a concern for production. Five leadership styles were determined based upon concern for production (task) and concern for people (relationships). These leadership styles were located in four quadrants. Managerial Style 1, 9 is characterized by the manager that has a low concern for production but a high concern for people. This manager feels that the attitudes and feelings of people are important and works to bring about harmonious relationships in order to promote a pleasant work environment. Managerial Style 9, 1 was focused on the underlying assumption that people need to be watched and told what to do. The manager is the authoritarian. Managerial Style 1 was characterized as having low involvement with people and a minimum amount of communication. Lastly, Managerial Style 9, 9 was characterized by a high concern for people and production. Involvement by everyone was important.

Hersey and Blanchard (1982) found that a number of leadership behaviors may be effective or ineffective based upon a given situation. Hersey and Blanchard (1982) identified the Situational Leadership Theory as a curvilinear relationship between task behavior, relationship behavior, and maturity. Maturity was defined as the ability and willingness of individuals to take responsibility, the ability to set and obtain high goals, and the experience of the individual and/or group. Hersey and Blanchard (1982) believed that the amount of support and direction a leader provides is dependent upon the maturity of the followers to complete given tasks.
Hersey and Blanchard’s (1982) Situational Leadership Theory predicts an interaction between the leader-member relationship, the leader-task behavior, and follower readiness in determining leader effectiveness (Fernandez & Vecchio, 1997). The focal point of the Situational Leadership Theory is on the given behavior of the leaders in relation to the followers. The more a leader can adapt his or her leadership behavior to the given situation, the more effective he or she will be in influencing members of the organization (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988). As a result, the leaders must always be conscious of the situation and the changing followers’ perceptions. The leader can only be effective if the leadership style meets the demands of the situation.

The Situational Leadership Theory included both task and relationship behaviors. Hersey and Blanchard (1982) contended that these behaviors were very similar to consideration and initiation of structure. The leader utilizes task behavior to provide followers with specific directions in order to complete a task. In terms of relationship behavior, the leaders assure comfort to the followers as they work with other members in the organization and the situation presented at a given time.

The four leadership styles identified by Hersey and Blanchard (1982) are telling, selling, participating, and delegating. The telling style is a high-task, low-relationship style that concentrates on achievement and spends a small amount of time providing leaders’ support to followers. At low maturity, followers are unable and unwilling to take responsibility. They are insecure. One way communication style is utilized where the leader must direct the employee concerning task accomplishment.

The selling style is a high-task, high-relationship style. The leader concentrated on both the accomplishments of goals as well as the socio-emotional needs of the followers. At
low to moderate maturity, followers possess some competence, but have low commitment. They have started to learn about a given task and are willing to take responsibility; however, they lack the skills for completion of the task. The leaders must sell the employee on how to complete the task. Two-way communication between the leader and the follower occurs during this time. This style requires that the leader provide encouragement and asks for input from the followers. The selling approach is an extension of the telling approach because it requires the leader to be direct in making final decisions regarding the accomplishment of tasks (Northouse, 1997).

The participating style requires the leader to take a high-relationship, low-task style. The leader focuses on providing supportive behavior to the followers in order to accomplish given tasks. Moderate to high maturity followers have moderate to high competence, but they may lack commitment to the wants of the leader. They have the skills but question their own ability to complete the task by themselves because they are insecure. The leader must participate and support the followers’ efforts to use their possessed abilities. The leader provides the followers with input as to how they are doing in regard to completing the task and provides recognition and social support to the followers. Decision making is shared but the leader is available to resolve any task completion issues.

Finally, the delegating style makes reference to low-relationship, low-task behaviors. The leader believes that the followers are able to act alone, which leads to less task input and socio-emotional support from the leader. Followers are at the highest level of maturity. They are able, willing, and have a high degree of commitment to task completion. The leaders must delegate to followers because they are mature and able to accomplish the
task on their own. Once the task is identified, followers take responsibility for accomplishing the given task.

Fiedler’s Contingency Theory (1967) made a distinction between task-oriented behavior and person-oriented behavior. Leaders vary depending upon the task or the person. The organization’s effectiveness was dependent upon the relationship between the personality of the leader and the situation. The style of leadership employed was related to the quality of relationships between the leader and the followers, as well as the structure of the task in conjunction with the leader’s power. Fiedler believed there were two leadership styles that consisted of task-motivated, in which the leader was concerned about productivity, and relation-motivated, in which the leader was concerned for people. The leader felt satisfaction from the task-motivated style because of task performance, while the leader felt satisfaction from the relationship-motivated style because of gains made in interpersonal relationships. Fiedler found that the leader should be paired with a situation that fits his or her personality. The organization’s effectiveness was dependent upon the relationship between the personality of the leader and the situation. The style of leadership employed was related to the quality of relationships between the leader and the followers, as well as the structure of the task in conjunction with the leader’s power.

Summary
This chapter has reviewed the literature concerning the areas of middle schools, middle school principals, and the history of leadership. Each of these areas was discussed for the purpose of allowing the researcher to gain an understanding of the current research as related to the study. The review of literature showed that middle schools are distinctive in nature and need to be places of learning that address the needs of the total child. According
to the review of literature, middle school principals are unique and are charged with understanding the middle school child as well as the traditional roles associated with the principalship. Lastly, the review of literature showed that leadership style and behavior can be demonstrated in a variety of methods.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Researches have shown that a variety of leadership styles exist. However, the literature does not show how these varieties of leadership styles are specific to middle school principals. This researcher will attempt to determine which qualities, traits, and/or characteristics make middle school principals unique. Principals should be aware of his or her leadership style, which will arm them with the knowledge of how to best incorporate various leadership styles in order to become more productive both professionally and personally. When the middle school administrator examines his or her leadership style, they can become aware of the differences or perceived differences that can affect the school in terms of quality education and the work environment of teachers.

Research Questions

The research question for this study is: What are the lived experiences of middle school principals as related to their leadership style and behavior? In addition to the overarching research question, sub-questions will address the following areas:

1. What leadership style or styles do middle school principals exhibit?
2. What is the relationship between a middle school principal’s level of education and his or her exhibited leadership style?
3. What is the relationship between a middle school principal’s years of experience and his or her exhibited leadership style?
4. What is the relationship between size of school and a middle school principal’s exhibited leadership style?
Research Design

The research design chosen for this study will be qualitative. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998), qualitative research “…is field inquiry in its own right. It crosscuts disciplines, fields, and subject matter. A complex, interconnected family of terms, concepts, and assumptions surround the term qualitative research” (p. 2). Qualitative places the focus on process and meanings as opposed to quantitative research which focuses on measurement and analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Qualitative research is “pragmatic, interpretative, and grounded in the lived experiences of people” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 2). According to Marshall and Rossman (1998), there are eight characteristics of qualitative research:

1. It is naturalistic.
2. It draws on multiple methods in regard to humanity of the participants.
3. It is emerging and evolving.
4. It is interpretative.
5. It views the social worlds as holistic or seamless.
6. It engages in systematic reflection.
7. It is sensitive to personal biographies and how these personal experiences shape the study.

In comparison, Merriam (Creswell, 1994, p. 145) reported that there are six characteristics of qualitative research. These include:
1. "Qualitative researchers are concerned primarily with process, rather than outcomes or products.

2. Qualitative researchers are interested in meaning – how people make sense of their lives, experiences, and their structures of the world.

3. The qualitative researcher is the primary instrument for the data collection and analysis. Data are medicated through this human instrument, rather than through inventories, questionnaires, or machines.

4. Qualitative research involves fieldwork. The researcher physically goes to the people, setting, site, or institution to observe or record behavior in its natural setting.

5. Qualitative research is descriptive in that the researcher is interested in process, meaning, and understanding gained through words or pictures.

6. The process of qualitative research is inductive in that the researcher builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, and theories from details."

The researcher has chosen the qualitative research method because it is more person-centered. Also, the researcher perceives qualitative as the best method to collect data in order for the research questions and sub questions to be studied more truthfully and soundly.

In addition, the qualitative method will allow the researcher to develop a framework that is thorough, concise, systematic, manageable, and flexible. The parameters to consider are setting, actors, events, and processes (Creswell, 1994) with the leadership experiences of middle school principals.
Population

The population for this study will consist of middle school principals in Richmond County, Georgia. Nine middle school principals will be selected for in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The Richmond County school system is located in the Central Savannah River Area and consists mainly of an urban population. The Richmond County school system has 34,400 students. Of the 34,400 students, 8,513 attend middle schools. This school system consists of 59 schools, 9 of which are middle schools.

The population for this study was chosen for two reasons. The first reason is convenience. According to Miles and Huberman (1999), this method “saves time, money, and effect but at the expense of information and credibility” (p. 78). To combat the possibility of a lack of information and credibility, the population for this study was chosen for criterion purposes. Because all of the participants in the population meet the same criterion of being a middle school principal in the same district, quality assurance is more closely met. This researcher’s site selection and sample population was chosen due to accessibility. In addition, the researcher believes that the gained information will be adequate and that efficiency will be ensured (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The participants were chosen purposefully because they can answer the research question and sub questions (Creswell, 1994). Also, participants are appropriate informants because they possess the knowledge, understanding, and experiences that the researcher needs in order to conduct the study. A brief description of the middle schools follows:
Table 4: Description of Participant Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of school</th>
<th>Type of school</th>
<th>Population of school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Augusta Middle School</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenn Hills Middle School</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>1,165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hephzibah Middle School</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>1,051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langford Middle School</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morgan Road Middle School</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sego Middle School</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit Creek Middle School</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tubman Middle School</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutt Middle School</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>632</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The population was identified for the study because it represents a range of experiences, backgrounds, educational levels, and types of schools. Richmond County is a large, complex school system; therefore, these results cannot be generalized to other school systems.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation for this study will be a semi-structured interview that incorporates direct, as well as indirect questions, (Tuckman, 1988). The researcher will develop interview questions that reflect the available research literature and that will answer the research questions. Marshall and Rossman (1999) describe interviewing as
“conversations with purpose” (p.108). By employing this method, the participants will be able to express their views and the responses will be valuable and useful. Also, the researcher will be able to obtain a large amount of information in a short period of time (Marshall & Rossman).

Each of the participants in the study will be personally contacted by the researcher. An appointment time will be established at the convenience of the participant. The researcher will conduct an in-depth, semi-structured interview based on a research protocol developed from the available research literature. The interview questions are listed below:

1. What is more important to you in terms of leadership: structure or consideration?
2. How important is it for you to be a good listener?
3. Do you consider yourself to be employee-centered or job-centered?
4. Are you more concerned with task or people?
5. Does the amount of support and direction you provide depend upon your teachers?
6. Do you adapt your behavior in a given situation? How?
7. In what circumstance do you utilize task behavior?
8. In what circumstance do you utilize relationship behavior?
9. Does your behavior change depending upon the task to be completed?
10. How does the quality of your relationship with a teacher relate to your leadership behavior?
11. Are you more task-motivated or more relation-motivated?
12. Do you feel middle school should be more child-centered or more team-centered?
13. Does your school strike a balance between academics and socialization?

14. What is more important in the classroom: a variety of instructional strategies or good communication?

15. How does your leadership behavior compensate your teachers?

16. Are your teachers involved in the decision-making process?

17. How do you communicate ideas to your teachers?

18. How do you eliminate conditions that disrupt the educational process?

19. How do you deal with the obstacle of a lack of understanding of the middle school student?

20. As a middle school principal, what is the biggest roadblock that you face?

The following table shows a graphic representation of how each of the interview questions was developed. The first column in the table is the interview question, the second column shows the literature source, and the third column reports the question answered.
Table 5: Literature Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Question</th>
<th>Literature Source</th>
<th>Research Question Answered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What is more important to you in terms of leadership: structure or consideration?</td>
<td>Bass, 1981; Fiedler and Chemers, 1984; Organ and Bateman, 1986</td>
<td>Question 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. As a leader, how important is it for you to be a good listener?</td>
<td>Bass, 1981; Hemphill, 1955</td>
<td>Question 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you consider yourself to be employee-centered or job-centered?</td>
<td>Likert, 1961</td>
<td>Questions 1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Are you more concerned with task or people?</td>
<td>Blake and Mouton, 1964</td>
<td>Questions 1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Does the amount of support and direction you provide depend upon the maturity of your teachers?</td>
<td>Fernandez and Vecchio, 1997; Hersey and Blanchard, 1982,1988</td>
<td>Question 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How do you adapt your behavior in a given situation?</td>
<td>Hersey and Blanchard, 1982</td>
<td>Question 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. When do you utilize task behavior?</td>
<td>Hersey and Blanchard, 1982</td>
<td>Question 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Question 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. When do you utilize relationship behavior?</td>
<td>Hersey and Blanchard, 1982</td>
<td>Questions 1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Does your behavior change depending upon the task to be completed?</td>
<td>Fiedler, 1967; Hersey and Blanchard, 1982</td>
<td>Questions 1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. How does the quality of your relationship with a teacher relate to your leadership behavior?</td>
<td>Burrows, 1978; Fiedler, 1967;</td>
<td>Questions 1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Are you more task-motivated or more relation-motivated?</td>
<td>Alexander and George, 1981; Fiedler, 1967</td>
<td>Questions 1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Do you feel that middle school should be more child-centered or more team-centered?</td>
<td>Alexander and George, 1981; Brown, Pethel, and Culbreath, 1978; George and Dewey, 1994; Weller, 1999</td>
<td>Question 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. What is more important in the classroom: a variety of learning strategies or good communication?</td>
<td>Valentine et. al., 1981</td>
<td>Questions 3 and 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. How does your leadership behavior compensate your teachers?</td>
<td>Alexander and George, 1981; Likert, 1961</td>
<td>Question 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Do your teachers produce more when they are involved in the decision making process?</td>
<td>Likert, 1961; Petzko, 2002</td>
<td>Question 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. How do you sell your ideas to your teachers?</td>
<td>Hersey and Blanchard, 1982; Northouse, 1997</td>
<td>Question 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. How do you eliminate conditions that disrupt the educational process?</td>
<td>Alexander and George, 1981</td>
<td>Question 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
19. How do you deal with the obstacle of a lack of understanding of middle school students?  
Bobroff, Howard, and Howard, 1974; Williamson, 2000  
Question 1

20. As a middle school principal, what is the biggest roadblock that you face?  
Camblin, 2003; Petzko, 2002  
Questions 1-4

Data Collection

Tesch (Creswell, 1994, p.153) stated “the process of data analysis is eclectic; there is no right way.” Because qualitative data are eclectic, the researcher is able to open possibilities and alternative explanations. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), “alternative explanations always exist; the researcher must search for identity, describe them, and then demonstrate how the explanation offered is the most plausible of all” (p. 157). These data will be categorized into major themes which may include “setting and context codes, perspectives held by subjects, subjects’ ways of thinking about people and objects, process codes, activity codes, strategy codes, relationship and social structure, and pre-assigned coding systems” (Creswell, 1994, p. 156). The researcher will attempt to get the respondents to tell their story in a way that will answer the research questions. An expert panel reviewed the questions. Once all of the subjects in the study has been interviewed, the data will be transcribed and reviewed. Next, the data were coded and disaggregated according to themes and patterns. In order to insure validity, a qualified person will review the questions and the gathered data to determine themes and patterns.
Summary

This chapter has focused on the procedures that will be followed in order for this study to be completed. The research question that is to be answered is: What are the lived experiences of middle school principals as related to their leadership style and behavior? The research design chosen for this study is the qualitative research design. This design was chosen because it will allow the researcher to thoroughly examine the data, as well as categorize the data in a manner that is useful and replicable. The population for this study consists of middle school principals in Richmond County, Georgia. This sample was chosen because it is convenient and accessible. The sample participants were chosen because they possess the knowledge, understanding, and experience that the researcher needs in order to conduct a meaningful study.

The instrumentation for this study is semi-structured interviews. After completing the review of literature, the researcher will construct a list of questions. The raw data collected from the interviews will be reviewed and categorized into themes. Lastly, another researcher will review the data in order to assure that the materials have been categorized in a consistent manner.
CHAPTER 4
DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

After receiving approval from the International Review Board (IRB), the researcher made appointments to visit and interview each of the subjects in the study. There were nine respondents in the study. All of the interviews were conducted at the participants’ schools. Each interview took approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour.

After each interview was completed, the researcher transcribed the interview tapes. Each subject/respondent was given a number based on the order of the interviews. The researcher examined the transcribed interviews for the purpose of identifying common themes. The researcher found eight common themes within the interviews. These themes consisted of: communication and listening, balance vs. non balance, knowing yourself, knowing your teachers, task, views of the child-centered vs. team-centered, roadblocks and obstacles, and decision-making. The transcribed interviews were sent for independent review to Dr. Michael Richardson, Professor of Educational Leadership at Georgia Southern University. Dr. Richardson found one additional theme: the inherent conflict between leadership and management. Following is an analysis of the interviews.
Table 6: Demographics of Respondants:

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<th>Respondant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
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Theme One-Listening and Communication.

All of the respondents stated that it was important to be a good listener, but some of the respondents felt that listening was important for a variety of reasons. Respondents 1, 2 and 3 reported that it is important to be an active listener and to practice good listening skills. Respondent 1 stated:

“It is very important as a leader that you have active listening and engage in it and ensure that you show proper listening skills to the speaker” (2006, p. 2).

Respondent 2 stated:

“Very important, but sometimes you don’t hear what you think you hear. It is also important to be a good communicator but not just a good listener. I think good communication skills are more important in how you deal with people because you know that you can talk with some people in a different way than you can talk with other people. Some people you can give a general
idea, they will get it done. Others you have to give step by step in writing or it will not get done” (2006, p.12).

Respondent 3 stated:

“It is very important. I say once again that as a first year principal I wasn’t that good of a listener. But sometimes as you sit back and listen, you get a better understanding of where they are and what their needs are rather than how you see it and what you think they should have. Listening is a very key component. The more you listen, the other person sees that the more you care about their situation” (2006, p. 12).

Respondents 5, 6, 7 and 8 reported that listening shows people that you care about them because you are taking the time to listen to them. Also, these respondents reported that listening and communication enables a principal to give a wealth of knowledge in terms of instructional ideas and the day to day operations of the school. In addition, these respondents reported that a principal had to have initiative enough to know what people are saying without verbalization.

Respondent 5 stated:

“For students and for parents both, I feel that if they feel like you take the time to listen you care about them and they will do better in the long run if you can just take a moment to listen to them. I know that parents and students appreciate it because sometimes they are told to hush and move on but they have a lot of good valid points. Through watching, listening, trying different things, talking to them, giving them changes and experiences. I hope I do it
through role modeling, I hope I do it with enthusiasm whether I agree with it or not. We use a lot of trial and error” (2006, p. 22).

Respondent 6 stated:

“I think it is an extremely important and I have a very liberal open door policy which also has changed from my training, because I have a lot of very capable and competent people with a wealth of experience and I would be foolish not to listen to them. I like to get the basics and make the decision. I have developed my listening skills a little better. I communicate ideas by meetings, leadership teams, and, if it will affect the entire school, I will have a meeting that includes all staff including cafeteria and custodial staff. I’d rather them hear it from me. I try to foster an open door policy that emphasizes trust among the faculty and one of caring” (2006, p. 28).

Respondent 7 stated:

“Very important because the only way you can measure the heartbeat of your building, staff, students, and parents, you have to listen to what they are saying. That doesn’t mean you only have to listen to words, but you have to be intuitive to understand what is going on in your school and in your community. We communicate several ways. One is committee meetings, small study groups, faculty meetings, sometimes we have team leader meetings to discuss ideas to iron out wrinkles. We sometimes read and have discussions and apply information to our situations. We use many ways of communication. The problem we find is not the communication it’s whether or not it is being received and accepted” (2006, p. 32).
Respondent 8 stated:

“It is highly important to be a good listener. Sometimes when people are speaking you need to listen to what they say and what they don’t say. People don’t always tell you exactly what they mean. Sometimes they don’t know, sometimes they do. You have to be perceptive enough to try and understand their needs, what they are trying to say, and what you need to do in a given situation. Daily bulletins, faculty meetings, team leader meetings, and we have a focus group that will look at curriculum instruction so we communicate in different ways. Lesson plans, comments on the lesson plans, notes in their boxes a variety of ways” (2006, p. 36).

Respondent 4 reported that it was important to listen but did not elaborate on why listening is important. Respondent 4 stated:

“Very important. A variety of ways…face-to-face is the best; however, I use memos, emails, and a newsletter that I generate that gets distributed to the teachers. Instructional strategies and I have a section called “caught doing good.” When I hear about things going well I put that on there” (2006, p. 20).

In contrast, Respondent 9 reported that part of listening is being able to redirect people so that they can see where the principal is coming from, as well as see the principal’s big picture. Respondent 9 stated:

“I like to listen to what my employees have to say. You try to redirect it as best you can, which is a fine art, but you need to redirect them to where you are coming from so that they see the big picture” (2006, p. 41).
Respondent 6 reported that he had to develop the skills of listening and communication because his prior military background experience was not conducive. Respondent 6 stated:

“...I think it is extremely important and I have a very liberal open door policy which also has changed from my training, because I have a lot of very capable and competent people with a wealth of experience and I would be foolish not to listen to them. I like to get the basics and make the decision. I have developed my listening skills a little better. I communicate ideas by meetings, leadership teams and if it will affect the entire school, I will have a meeting that includes all staff including cafeteria and custodial staff. I’d rather them hear it from me” (2006, pgs. 28, 29).

Theme Two—Balance vs. Non-Balance

All of the respondents seemed to be struggling with balancing academics and socialization for students within the school. Respondents 1, 2, 3, and 5 stated that it is difficult to strike a balance between academics and socialization because academics are pushed so much in middle school. In an attempt to balance academics and socialization, these principals incorporated fun activities and gave incentives for positive behavior and good academics.

Respondent 1 stated:

“I think I am more job centered. To be an effective administrator you have to understand what comes with the job and sometimes it means not being so employee-concerned because the job dictates that you follow guidelines and policies and you must do that, not only to protect employees’ negative side but the positive of that employee as also. I would say equally concerned
about tasks and people. I try to maintain the same type of behavior always” (2006, p.1).

Respondent 2 stated:

“I think both are important. You must have structure to get where you are going, but there are things you must consider in order to get where you are going. One is not more important than the other” (2006, p. 5).

Respondent 3 stated:

“My staff would tell you that I am a task master and that I am task motivated. I would tell you that I have a good 50/50 split between task and the relationship because a lot of the task will be completed in good time and it’s easier if there is a good relationship. But sometimes you have to put your foot down and say this is what you have to do. Once again, I try to balance myself between employee and job. My staff will say more job centered and I would say that I am trying my best to balance them. I would say right now that we are out of balance. We are definitely leaning more toward academics than socialization. There are a couple of research articles about middle schools and it says that leaders were told to make the schools more social. But as a principal of a Title I school that is on the needs improvement list, we are moving away from the socialization. We don’t have recess, we don’t even have the little break after lunch. The way we balance it…if the kids’ behavior (overall discipline grade for the school) we will have a day out for outside social time for the kids. They must earn their social time” (2006, pgs. 12, 14).
Respondent 5 stated:

“Consideration. We already have rules and guidelines that we have to abide by and we have to consider each student. I think structure is important and I do think that children thrive and do better with structure. But each situation has to be taken care of individually. I thought that as I was answering you and it made me chuckle to myself. I guess if I know that the overall picture is we are here for the children, it is although we don’t like to consider it as such, teaching is a job, a career…we do like to consider ourselves as people persons. But we are all here for a job…we can be nice to people and the children but does that help them in the long run? No, we have a job to do and we have to get these things done whether we like it or not” (2006, p.22).

Respondent 6 reported that his school gives students the flexibility to test the waters in order to determine what it means to be a young man and a young woman, but he did not elaborate on how his school does this. Respondent 6 stated:

“Well my training, 24 years in the military, I like a lot of structure I like to lead my operation, but I tend to modify that more in the civilian world because I am more inclined to believe that you can have structure but you have to have more people involved in the decision-making process. So I have a leadership team that I rely on a lot and, in fact, I met with them this morning. I meet with them anytime there are major decisions. If they have a part in the decision-making process, they are more inclined to go along with the changes. Well it is hard to separate the two, because when I have tasks there are individuals in charge of that. I am going to assign those tasks to
people that I have confidence in and they have the experience that will be beneficial to the carrying out of that mission” (2006, pgs. 28, 29).

Respondents 7 and 8 stated they were working on finding a balance between academics and socialization. Respondent 7 felt encumbered by requirements of the central office. Respondent 7 stated:

“That is a combination thing. Because of my position I am more task, but I accomplish my tasks through relationships. Everyone is not suited to accomplish a particular task. We strike a balance but we don’t do it enough. Because of some of the tasks laid out by the central office, we don’t have enough room during the day to put the social activities that middle schools should have in a program. My school would be 110% better if we could build in more socialization for our kids. Our kids lack how to function in society. We teach them how to read and write but we do nothing to help them get along with each other. Humph….I really can’t tell you how it compensates them because I am like most particular leaders, I try to combine different leadership styles with different people and situations. I don’t try to focus on one particular way of doing something or approaching a problem. It depends on the situation and what kind of leadership that is needed to accomplish that tasks” (2006, pgs. 33, 34).

Respondent 8 stated:

“Ms. Dallas, I think that consideration and structure go hand and hand. A leader has to be considerate of staff members, students, and of the total school building. Ms. Dallas, that is a good question. It is very hard to
balance sometimes, but if I take the time to listen to my employees and to ensure their well being, the job gets done. A principal cannot do the job alone. If employees are comfortable, competent, and problem free as possible, they can help the organization run properly. They can help see that students are getting a quality education. When your mind is clear and focused, you can get a lot of things done. Ms. Dallas I believe there must be a balance. I don’t think that task behavior should be the only thing. You must utilize task behavior. I don’t want to be best friends with my staff, but I still must have a relationship with them. They need to know that I care about them, their families, and the things going on with them. Again, I feel that in order to get the task done properly, an administrator needs the help of the staff. One person cannot get the job done alone. It must be a shared responsibility. It is important for the staff and faculty to be a part of decision making and getting the task done. One has to do with the other. You can’t always treat everyone the same in every situation. There are exceptions to every situation. You have to be fair and consistent, but when we come down to rules, absolutely, there is no way around rules” (2006, pgs. 36, 37, 38).

Respondent 9 reported that she encourages her teachers to develop a discipline plan that incorporates social time. Respondent 9 stated:

“Structure. Because I think structure is important in how you run things with the amount of children you have. I wanted my classroom structured in elementary school. I am really into how you run things” (2006, p. 41).
Respondent 4 reported that it is a battle to get middle school students to focus on academics and not on social behavior although this respondent did acknowledge that the middle school students are social animals. Respondent 4 stated:

“Structure is very important as a leader. It gives you parameters of which to operate in, but then anytime you are dealing with people, you have to consider that unique situation and what is going on in that particular circumstance. I am job-centered but I care for the employees because I can’t do my job without the employees to help me accomplish the mission. I am more concerned with accomplishing the mission, but you have to have the people to accomplish the mission. (Laughs). The middle school child is a social animal and you know that. So there is a battle between trying to get the students centered on the academics as opposed to social behavior is an ongoing battle. It is ongoing conflict where you have situations where the children are going to discuss activities that are occurring over the weekend or last night, as opposed to doing a math concept. You will have students who, instead of going to talk about the language arts project, they would rather talk about getting nails done. One of those things you need to keep them focused on the academics because in lieu of them having direction, they will be sociable in the way of talking to the point where you will deal with conflict like the he said/she said conflict” (2006, p.16).

Theme Three—Knowing Yourself

Some of the respondents felt it was important to understand themselves in order to be effective leaders. Respondents 1 and 5 stated that they maintain the same type of behavior
regardless of the situation or task. They reported that this maintenance enabled others to see the type of leader they are. Respondent 1 stated:

“It is the same for all teachers. Most times I am able to do that. A few times it changes but most times I am very firm and direct. So people know what kind of leader I am going to be. No. Regardless of the task…I remain the same. Small tasks must be accomplished, large tasks must be accomplished. It has no bearing on it at all. Being a new principal, my leadership style has been very difficult for most of my teachers because I am direct and very firm. I try and let them know that it is not personal, that is just the way I am and that is the way I get results. This way nobody can misunderstand me. I go strictly by policies and what is correct” (2006, pgs. 2, 3).

Respondent 5 stated:

“I’d like to think that I am both. If I have to choose one, I am probably more job-centered because job centered involves the children. In all of my decisions that I make, I put the children first above the employees. I tell them all the time that I do what I have to do first for the children and then the teachers and the parents third. If I have to choose, I would say job-centered. If the employees can have some fun and I can help them out, that is important to me as well. I try to teach everyone the same. I try very hard to do that. But the bottom line is the teachers who seek my advice or my expertise, I probably do spend more time with them because they seek it. I think I should have a professional relationship. I think I need to treat everyone the same regardless of who they are or who they know. No it is not. It is hard
sometimes because I may hear the repercussions but it keeps my nose clean.

When I treat everyone the same in the long run, I have fewer problems”


Respondent 2 reported that through experience, she has learned how to know when it is better not to respond and back away. She stated that it is important not to respond out of anger. Respondent 2 stated:

“There are times that I get really angry about some things. I have learned that if I automatically respond, I say the wrong thing. When I get to that point, I either walk around or walk outside the building so that I do not say the wrong thing. When things make you really angry, you have to stop and address it at a later time. I think it just comes from doing and having had the experience where I have allowed myself to respond to something and if I had stopped, stepped back, I would have addressed it differently. It comes with learning yourself. I’m the boss. Well a lot of times, but we have tried to eliminate a lot of things that are disruptive. The biggest disruption here is the intercom. Our teachers 99% of them handle their business. It’s that one percent that keep people hopping” (2006, pgs. 5, 6, 7).

Respondent 3 stated that like Respondent 2, he has learned that it is important to relate to his staff in an appropriate manner. He reported that he has to know himself so that he can be more intuitive and draw upon his knowledge. Respondent 3 stated:

“I believe that being a leader is like being a coach and every coach has to be able to reach all players. You can’t put down something before your team that all players can’t respond to. So if you treat your teachers like a team,
you will realize that some may need a kick to move ahead and some may need some information and some may need more structure and support…but everybody is different. As a first year principal, I wasn’t concerned with how the staff saw me and how I related to them. I was more concerned with getting the job done. Now in my fourth year as a principal, I feel that it is very important to have a relationship with the staff as well. It’s like being a teacher…if you want to make sure that your student will follow you, you must have a good relationship with them. So as a principal, if you want your staff is to follow behind you, a good relationship with them is important. Definitely. My behavior may change because the person may need a kick in the pants and the next person may just need a kind word of encouragement. Depends on the task and the person that I am dealing with. Task behavior. The way I try to run things at Sego. I do a third method. A third of the time I let my staff vote on how we will do things, a third of the time I try to sell them on new ideas, and a third of the time I am the boss doggone it and that is the way we are going to do it” (2006, pgs. 11, 13).

Respondent 6 reported that it is important to maintain flexibility in order to change your thought process. Respondent 6 stated:

“Yes I do, I think you have to be flexible. As you receive information, you may have to change the thought process before you go into that particular meeting.” (2006, p. 28)

Additionally, Respondent 8 reported that no situation is black or white, there are many grey areas. Respondent 8 stated:
“Yes. I don’t, you can’t say or you shouldn’t say that a situation that is black or white, sometimes there is a grey area. There are so many things going on in the world today. In some situations it probably is, in most it is not” (2006, p.38).

Respondent 4 reported that he was a chameleon and can adjust himself regardless of the situation while Respondent 7 reported that he wears many masks because every situation is different. Respondent 4 stated:

“Because when dealing with teachers, parents, students you have to listen to understand before you can be understood. I am more concerned with accomplishing the mission. Absolutely. I am a chameleon…I am transitional as a tongue. When the situation calls for me to be a tyrant, I can be the biggest tyrant. If it calls for me to be compassionate or a comedian, I can do that too. The hardest part is not to say or do anything. I do, but there are situations that dictate it. For instance I will be attending the Georgia Performance Standards Commission meeting with Dr. Larke and the QLT team and they will be discussing the results and their findings for the December observations. So I find that it would be in my best interest not to try and defend and not to try and elaborate, just to sit and listen to what the findings are. It is very hard for me, but I understand that they are only saying what they saw. Absolutely. My leadership style is transitional. The task will determine to a large extent of how I deal with it. It shouldn’t, but as a leader you do take personal friendships into account as you deal with folk. School leaders take individuals that they work well with to new schools when they
are reassigned. You do deal with them a little different than non-friends or individuals that you don’t have personal relationships with. It shouldn’t be that way but it does happen. Absolutely….absolutely! I am saying that if I have a personal relationship with someone, I may tend to be more fair with that person. I’ll be fair with all of my employees, but if there is an individual….well it’s human nature. I’m being truthful in answering the question. I could give you the “right” answer. But honestly, if someone is a friend of mine and they are doing something, I will take them aside and say look. I’ll do that with anyone but more so with someone whom I have acquired a friendship with. Well….this is my first stint as a principal so I am having to look at the mission of the school and what it is supposed to be doing and also to know that my teachers…or be concerned about my teachers. One of my strong points is the teachers know that I will support them regardless of the situation. Come hell or high water I will back them even if they are wrong. For example, I had a student that was in in-school suspension and the student was throwing some things around to another student. My in-school supervisor was talking to them trying to get them to stop. The in-school supervisor went up to the student and just politely tapped him and said, “boy stop it…” she tapped him on the head. The parent came in and I was talking to the parent and I didn’t say what the teacher did was correct, but I supported him and said he was trying to get the child to behave and not hurt other students. But I did not admonish him in front of the parent. Sometimes I will inadvertently fly off the handle and say something that I
may regret as a leader. For example, we were in a faculty meeting. It was Christmas time and I love Christmas. At the end you are supposed to leave everyone upbeat and positive. So I was saying to the faculty about having effective and ineffective teachers. We have some great teachers and I also talked about the ineffective teachers and I went on to say that the ineffective teachers are that way because of two reasons, even they don’t know, don’t have the skills or strategies and they can be helped, or you are ineffective because you want to do it your way and I can help that too. But before you know it, I was saying letter of intent and if you don’t want to be effective….you don’t have to come back. I should not have said that. Yes I have. Yeahhh (Clap Clap). Ummm what I have is the reactions and comments of others of what happened last year versus this year and some of them are seeing the change. A part of it is, it’s a, I have a three-five year goal for this school to become a school of excellence. I have to remind myself that it will not happen overnight. I am very critical of myself, I am constantly rehashing what should I have done. To answer your question, there has been a change. When I got here, we didn’t have cable in the classrooms we now have that technology capability. We have a Japanese class. The focus is on classroom management. I don’t have time for marking time” (2006, pgs. 16, 17, 19, 20).

Respondent 7 stated:

“Yes, I wear many masks. I can adapt…that is the thing about middle school a lot of people don’t understand. You have to be able to adapt to a different
situation and pull out your bag of tricks whatever it is to fit the situation. You can’t treat two situations the same way. Sometimes it requires a carrot instead of a stick. There are times that the buck stops on my desk, but I am going to make that decision based upon all the evidence I can gather from my staff and faculty. It won’t please everyone, but the majority will be on board and we will all stroke at the same time” (2006, pgs. 32, 34).

Respondent 9 reported she deals with people based on whether they are a child, parent, or teacher. Additionally, she stated if someone becomes irate, she tries to give them time to calm down before addressing the situation. Respondent 9 stated:

“It depends a lot because if it is a new teacher, you don’t want to come across as being overbearing. But if it is a veteran teacher whose opinion I respect, I try not to go too far because I know they have experience and have a lot to offer” (2006, p. 41).

Theme Four—Knowing Your Teachers

Respondent 2 reported that it is important to know that teachers are professionals and should be treated as such. Conversely, Respondent 2 reported that she had to closely monitor those teachers who are reluctant to follow instructions. Respondent 2 stated:

“There are some teachers like Ms. Nipple. Ms. Nipple hardly ever sees me unless I am doing an official observation. If I know my teachers, I let them do what they need to do. They are professional. On the other hand, there are teachers that don’t do what they are supposed to do and those are the people I have to stay on. I stay right behind them. Because you’ve got teachers that know how to do things, they are going to do it effectively. But then there are
others you have to stay on to make sure they get it done. Sure they do. They get frustrated. I tell them that you are the best person to get this done, but if you really can’t do it, that’s fine. But I will be back to you” (2006, pgs. 6, 7).

Respondent 3 reported that it is important to recognize both the strengths and weaknesses of teachers and to counsel teachers in private when addressing negative aspects pertaining to the teacher. Respondent 3 also reported that he tries to respect his teachers in hopes that they will in turn, respect him. Additionally, he reported that some of his teachers do not always take the appropriate amount of responsibility for students. Respondent 3 stated:

“Ummm, I believe it compensates my teachers because I am willing to work with them, meet their needs, and be accepting of their ideas. I am one of the few principals in this county, I give my employees a large amount of comp time. I can’t give money, but I can give time. During the Christmas holidays, schools always have a problem with teachers calling in sick because they have family coming in or they want to go shopping or they have something important to do. So what I did to avoid having them call in sick, every employee was given a couple hours of comp time, but to take that comp time on that day, everyone else on the academic team or department had to be present. With a teacher, I have a teacher here that has struggled to meet the level that we would want him to in classroom management. However, he is a wiz with the computer, very strong in his content and a willing participate if there are activities we need him to attend to gain skills. So from time to time when we get complaints….and rather than berating that employee, I try to manage and bring what they do offer the organization to the forefront and
downplay the shortcomings in the meetings. After the meeting, I will meet with that employee one on one and make comments that I wouldn’t make in front of other people. You can support someone that doesn’t support you, but being a human, it is a lot easier to support someone who knows will support you. Definitely. My behavior may change because the person may need a kick in the pants and the next person may just need a kind word of encouragement. Depends on the task and the person that I am dealing with” (2006, pgs. 12, 13).

Respondent 7 reported that it was important to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of his faculty. Additionally, he stressed the importance of developing a positive professional relationship with his teachers. Respondent 7 stated:

“People. Good people automatically will do a good job which will give you, the task is simple. This is an example, I refer you back to World War II, at Normandy those troops got hung up on that beach. They knew what the task was but all the leadership was dead. But because they were good people and knew their tasks. Sergeants became Colonels…they can accomplish the goal. The same thing is true in the school. Principals can get tied up in a whole lot of things, but if you have good people, they will pick the task up and complete it. Yes. There are some teachers. Just like coaching, there are some teachers you can just simply give the play to. They understand it and they execute it. There are others, just like in coaching, you can’t just give them the play. You have to take them through it step-by-step until they get it. But once they get it, they execute it. I believe the closer professional relationship that
you have with your teachers, the stronger your school is going to be as far as accomplishing tasks and goals” (2006, pgs. 32, 33).

Like Respondent 2, Respondent 5 reported that she recognized that her teachers are professionals. She also recognized that as the principal, she has to guide teachers out of their comfort zones. As the leader of the school, Respondent 5 strived to utilize the talents of her teachers while maintaining a respectful demeanor. Respondent 5 stated:

“Definitely the same thing. They all need their time to complain or talk to vent. That is how we all are we need to be able to do that and move forward. I would try to involve those people that would be the most interested. I think as a principal, I try to utilize everyone’s talent. Does everyone on your staff have talents? I think that yes, that everyone has talents, every student, every adult and it is my job to seek that out and find that in everybody. I would like to think that I rise to whatever occasion that should come about, but different tasks do create different reactions. But then on the other hand, I do have some teachers that tell me that I am always the same person and they respect that in me. They are not afraid to come to me because they pretty much know how I am going to handle it. I am not different this time than another time. I stay true to my word. I don’t think it affects my behavior because I use those talents that they have in situations. There was mixed reaction. We started it last year in the spring. We were having a rash of bomb threats. We went to the block schedule to keep the students in the classroom more and out of the hallways. We tried it and a lot of the teachers really liked it and we decided we will always have some that won’t like it. We all tried it
first semester…but the eighth grade teachers were concerned with the CRCT coming up so in order to meet the students need the eighth grade teams go back to having the same classes everyday so the students can be successful. I do feel that the majority of the teachers at Langford are teachers who have been here for a long time and would love for things to stay the way they have been for 20 years because that is their comfort zone. I think it takes someone to come in and think outside the box. When I came here, Langford was in needs improvement. It is still in needs improvement. I think that it takes someone to come in and bring in some new ways and I think that is a good thing. I don’t. I don’t think they’d still be here. I think they very much understand and they love them for who they are. I don’t think during the day we think about them as being middle school students, they are just the students that we are responsible for, there ours” (2006, pgs. 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27).

Respondent 6 also reported that it is important to recognize the professionalism and experience of his teachers. He also reported the he strives to foster leadership within his teachers. Respondent 6 stated:

“Certainly. Some people are much more experienced, focused and you have some people that have a lot going on in their lives and you have to provide them with more time and guidance. I think the experience factor has a lot to do with it. Well I think they are compensated in a sense that they know where I stand on every issue. They know that I am supportive of them and that they can come to me with anything good or bad and that I am going to be open to
discuss with them the bad just as I would the good. I think it fosters a feeling of trust in the leadership. My basic belief is that I should develop the best leaders in the school….because if we have to, Ms. Lewis and I will both leave but we want them to be able to continue to function. I am not sure I understand the term relationship behavior. If it means that I would attempt to choose the best person for the job or assign the task” (2006, p.29).

Respondent 8 reported that it is important to recognize that teachers are human beings with problems. Sometimes teachers need someone to be a sounding board, a counselor, or a listener. Respondent 8 recognized that not all teachers need the same amount and type of support. She also recognized that all teachers need reminders and motivation. Respondent 8 stated:

“I consider myself to be employee-centered because it is very important to me how my employees feel. I want them to be able to come to work and to feel that I am accessible or that they can come to me about anything, problems or concerns. In order to do their best job, they must be able to come to work and feel comfortable about doing so. Employees are human beings and they bring their problems at home with them and the problems of the school with them. It is important for me to help them. Sometimes they just need to be able to talk and when they can do that, they can work out their problems. The amount of support is determined by their particular needs. Some are more experienced. Some are more informed. They are using different instruction techniques so I don’t need to be in their classrooms as much as a classroom of a less experienced teacher. All teachers need support
and all teachers need directions. You don’t necessarily take for granted that because they have experience they know exactly what to do. Sometimes we take for granted that if a teacher has been at the school for years or the administrator has been there as well, that the teacher would know exactly what to do. But it is important to remind people about things to get them redirected, to continue to instruct them. We all need reminders and motivation. Sometimes we have to do that. The experience doesn’t mean they don’t need support. I believe that my teachers know that I support them 100%, hopefully by my actions and those things that I say. I support them with discipline, with materials, I support them not as much as I need to with words and compliments, but I believe that they know I support them” (2006, pgs. 36, 37).

Respondent 9 appeared to be somewhat intimidated by experienced and/or veteran teachers. She reported that while she treats teachers with respect, she does expect them to comply. She also reported that she treats non-veteran teachers differently than veteran teachers. Respondent 9 stated:

“That depends a lot because if it is a new teacher, you don’t want to come across as being overbearing, but if it is a veteran teacher whose opinion I respect, I try not to go too far because I know they have experience and have a lot to offer. It depends on what I want to accomplish. If I am trying to get a teacher to change their attitude or behavior, I try to use our relationship. I try to approach them like I am trying to help them. When they don’t understand, It comes back around where they normally see and come to a compromise. 
Normally professionally they will seek out someone else’s opinion for a different approach and then it normally works. I try to be available and open if they need something, I encourage them to come see me. I stay late, they have my telephone number. Normally if I ask them to do something for me, they will normally do it. I treat them with respect and they will normally comply if I need something. If they need someone to talk to, I allow them to do that” (2006, pgs. 41, 42).

Respondents 1 and 4 had contrasting ideas as compared to the other respondents. Respondent 1 stated that his focus is on getting the job done. Getting to know his teachers is not important to him; however, following guidelines and policies is most important. Respondent 1 stated:

“I try and let them know that it is not personal, that is just the way I am and that is the way I get results. This way nobody can misunderstand me. I go strictly by policies and what is correct” (2006, p.3).

Respondent 4 described his teachers as being needy, who are sometimes insensitive to the needs of the students. He reported that the best way to deal with teachers is to offer them the opportunity to work in another setting or be antagonized by him. Respondent 4 stated:

“Yes. Some of my teachers are more needy than others. The particular teacher and how much support they need will determine what they get from me. Well then the alternative is, if you can’t work with someone and buy into the organization, then someone has to look at why are we here” (2006, pgs. 16, 20).
Theme Five—Tasks

When asked if they are more concerned with tasks or people, Respondents 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 reported they are more task-orientated. Respondent 1 reported that teachers must follow directions. Respondent 1 stated:

“Teachers are given the GPS standards, that is a task. They must teach according to the standards. When teachers fail to follow the directions or teach according to the task or just teach whatever they want to, that teacher is failing to teach task behavior, then that behavior is unacceptable because it affects that child and that school and that situation must be addressed. More task-motivated” (2006, p.1).

Respondent 2 stated:

“Task. I am an ABC person. I am more concerned with getting the task done. It’s got to be done. If it is a task that needs to be done, we will get it done. Sometimes things will stay on the back burner for weeks if it is not as important, but it will get done” (2006, p.6).

Respondent 3 reported he accomplishes tasks through the establishment of relationships. Respondent 3 stated:

“Task behavior is easy because if you have to make a 90 on the health department inspection, they send you a sheet before they come and tell you what they are going to look for so you can have the lunchroom cleaned, etc. and you know you will make a 90. When it comes to establishing relationships and working through a culture, it takes time, respect. It takes a lot of hard work. Like I said before…I am task-orientated but the means by
which we are going to accomplish these tasks are by establishing relationships. Anybody who comes to the school this year says the school is different. As a principal, you are struggling between what is real (student and grown-up relationships) and what is being forced upon you and that the community things is real (i.e. test scores). So for three years we have been trying to merge the two” (2006, p.15).

Respondent 4 reported that tasks “drive the train.” Respondent 4 stated:

“Task behavior. It all depends on the priorities. If it is something that I have to get done now, then I will do what I need to do. Task motivated. The mission drives the train” (2006, p. 17).

Respondent 5 reported that she is task-motivated but thinks outside the box. Respondent 5 stated:

“I am more task-motivated, I think outside the box. I think ahead it does take people…I don’t throw myself on people just because I am the principal. I feel that people eventually come around and once things start to fall into place and once the teachers see the results, they come on board” (2006, p.24).

Respondent 6 reported that if a situation requires a sense of urgency that requires task behavior. Respondent 6 stated:

“I am very task-motivated. For example, we were meeting in preparation for the middle school something that is coming up for February that all the middle schools are doing. I like to make bullets and divide it up so that there are specific people assigned to specific tasks. Not in a great sense, I would say that maybe there might be more sense of urgency depending on the
particular task. But if it is something that is very time sensitive, then it might change because I would want people to focus and get it done in a timely manner” (2006, p.28).

Respondent 8 reported she was slightly more task-motivated because the job has to be completed. Respondent 8 stated:

“One thing that comes to mind is ensuring that discipline problems are at a minimum in the building. The first thing that I would do is to select a committee to come up with a school wide discipline plan. Once the committee determines the rules, the teams would do a plan for their particular team. In other words…we would have representation from every area and every team of the school ensuring that everyone is covered and everyone’s concerns are addressed. That is the way of getting a task done for the total organization. I would say that I am slightly more task-motivated because even though it is important to nourish the relationships, the job has to be done. Focused and serious on that project. For instance, we are in needs improvement. There are certain things we must do in order to ensure that our students achieve at Morgan Road. We have to insure high student achievement. That is a very serious activity and it is taken very serious. But some won’t be as serious and that is my relationship with my staff may be different. For instance, if we are working on having a social, we are going to ensure that it goes well and that rules are followed, but I won’t be as serious with my staff during our meetings. I am not sure that I answered your question” (2006, pgs. 36, 38).
Respondent 9 reported that people should be matched to the task. Respondent 9 stated:

“I think that I am more concerned about people and then we fit the task in. We get the people and point them towards the task to get done, especially when we assign teachers. We plug them in to see where they would fit best” (2006, p. 41).

Respondent 7 reported that he is more concerned with people that he matches with the task. Respondent 7 stated:

“People. Good people automatically will do a good job which will give you, the task is simple. This is an example, I refer you back to World War II, at Normandy those troops got hung up on that beach. They knew what the task was but all the leadership was dead. But because they were good people and knew their tasks, sergeants became colonels…they can accomplish the goal. The same thing is true in the school. Principals can get tied up in a whole lot of things, but if you have good people, they will pick the task up and complete it” (2006, p. 32).

Theme Six—Vision on Middle School: Child-Centered vs. Team-Centered

When asked if middle school should be more child centered or team-centered, Respondents 3, 4, 6, 8, and 9 reported that middle school should be more child-centered. Respondent 3 reported that middle school should be child-centered in order for teachers to understand the middle school student. Respondent 3 stated:

“That is an excellent question. I think that the main area the school should be concerned with is being child-centered and….I think there is two different sides. I think that a school can be child-centered and not work as a team, or
be team-centered and not be concerned with the child. So I think the culture of the school should be child centered but through team collaboration. I believe team collaboration as related to AYP…it goes hand and hand. My Title I plan for the school. The first thing we did to restructure the school to create a paradigm shift in the school culture where the school is seen as child-centered, where the teachers understand that the middle school learner brings a whole different realm of opportunities for problems. So having a child-centered school, as a Title I school, the only way to truly educate them is to have a positive relationship with the kids. So I believe if you have a positive relationship, you couple that with the team activities. AYP can be achieved but in the middle school you have to have a team concept as well as a child-centered environment” (2006, p.13).

In order to accomplish this mission, Respondents 4, 6, and 8 agreed with Respondent 3 in that the team concept facilitates the needs of the children.

Respondent 4 stated:

“Do I think middle schools should be more child-centered or more team-centered…team- centered means…..? I am finding it hard to answer that question because I think that all schools should revolve around the needs of the child. The student focus should be what we are all about. Here in middle school, our organization is in teams so that we can better facilitate the needs of that team. So…either or” (2006, p.17).
Respondent 6 stated:

“Well I think it definitely has to be child-centered because that is the whole reason we are here, the children. Once again, they go hand in hand. The team concept is a good concept and I would like to see it extended to the elementary school. The team concept is a good concept because you have the right people with the right background working with our students. Well once again you can’t separate those two because the kids are here for academics but a great part of that age level is learning to socialize. I think that it is a growing process in sixth, seventh and eighth grade because they are trying to figure out where they fit in this society. I think we are trying to give them the flexibility to test the waters and figure out what it means to be a young man or woman” (2006, p.30).

Respondent 8 stated:

“Are you referring to the teachers? I think it has to be more child-centered, I want the entire team to be looking at the child. I don’t think about one person on the team having a conference, I think about the entire team working with the child. I want to ensure that the child is being successful. I am looking at the child, but I am looking at the whole team working with the child to ensure the success of the child. No, you don’t hear that. I think it must be both. That team has got to look at the individual child. An example, if the child is having a problem, whether it is in all of the classes or not, the entire team should call the child in to find out what is going on. I think it has to be both, team and child-orientated” (2006, pgs. 38, 39).
Respondent 9 agreed but stated that the middle schools are not doing enough to meet the needs of the students. Respondent 9 stated:

“I feel like it should be more child-centered, because we have too many kids in our classes and we are not paying attention to their needs as they are coming out of elementary school. Well as far as teachers are concerned, I try to remind them what it was like to be in middle school. We need to go back and think about our own children and how they were feeling. I think I have a very understanding staff and a lot of teachers who are motherly. Our eighth grade students are very by-the-book in making them independent. When we put together teams, I try to look at that. If I know a child needs a strict teacher, I try to put them with that teacher or, if they need someone more caring, we set them up that way. Parents don’t understand what is going on with the child, so I try to share from one parent to another. They forget that you might be a parent too” (2006, pgs. 41, 42).

Respondent 5 reported that schools are more child-centered because of accountability issues. Respondent 5 stated:

“I think because of all of the testing and all of the accountability that we are moving from team-centered to more individual. We are accountable for every individual child. I think too much time is wasted with teams not using the time how it should be used. I feel like they are little junior high schools. I feel like need to be little junior high school. I feel like times have changed” (2006, p.24).
In contrast, Respondent 1 reported that middle school students will grow mentally, socially, and physically when they are around other teenagers. Respondent 1 stated:

“Team-centered….middle school students are developing their personalities as adolescents. The only way that they can develop their personalities as teens is to be around other teenagers and share and grow mentally, socially and physically” (2006, p.20).

Respondent 7 reported that the team concept is important because middle school students need to see structure so that they will be able to make positive decisions and express themselves in a controlled environment. Respondent 7 stated:

“Team-centered, because the team is a structure that a lot of middle schools don’t understand. Middle school kids will join anything with anybody to do anything. But if you don’t structure it right, they join the negative things like gangs or trying premarital sex, or whatever. But in a structured team, they get to express themselves without going astray” (2006, p.33).

Respondent 2 had a different view. She reported that middle school is supposed to be child-centered with a team concept. However, Respondent 2 reported that the middle school concept of child-centered and team-centered do not prepare students for high school. She stated:

“Well aren’t middle schools built on a child-centered concept…with all the warm fuzzies and let’s understand each child? I think that is what middle school came from. Do we have that little team concept? Are we doing our kids justice by having the warm fuzzies and making the kids comfortable? Are we really getting them prepared for high school….because
I have been to the high school and they are not ready for the high school. I think we do too much warm fuzzy stuff and we don’t get them ready for where they are going. It doesn’t work like that in the real world” (2006, p. 8).

Theme Seven—Decision Making

All of the respondents stated that teachers are involved in the decision-making process but at different levels. Respondents 1, 2, 5, and 9 reported that the involvement of teachers in the decision-making process allows the school to try new things. Respondent 1 stated:

“We operate on a team level and subject level. There are meetings by content areas and by team leaders. The leadership team receives instructions from the different leaders and the administrator” (2006, p.3).

Respondent 2 stated:

“The ones that want to sit back are always going to be there. Research shows that you will never get every teacher to get involved with what is going on. Some of them are afraid to make a change. Change is hard to do. Some people deal with that easier than others. Sometimes you have to let them just sit back and watch. At times they will come along and sometimes they will never come along. But you have to not let that stop you from doing different things. You have got to do the new things or the new ways because those are the ways you make the biggest impact” (2006, p.8).
Respondent 5 stated:

“Yes, like the block scheduling, but when they come to me with legitimate concerns, I think that I do listen to them anytime a project or something comes along. When I have to do something new or hire someone, I get their input. I try to involve them and not just make the decision myself because they will buy into more and there will be less sabotaging and things will go over smoother. It is constructed of the principal, assistant principal, special education professional, guidance counselor, one teacher from Connections, and a teacher from every grade level so it pretty much touches all areas. We meet every other week and that is necessary. We share different ideas. The teams meet every week and they give us a log and we look at the logs to see which areas we need to help them in. That is pretty much how it runs. If teachers are given money for supplies, they can decide on their own which supplies they need. They are not given a lot of leeway on money and neither am I: a little decision on supplies. We get staff development money and that all goes to the teachers. Some years we will do school-wide things and some years we do individual things. There is not a whole lot of that because there is not a lot of money to spend” (2006, p.26).

Respondent 9 stated:

“We try to do it by grade levels, leadership teams. We talked about how we think the Connections program should be structured. The old way wasn’t working so we talked about how it should be done. When we sat down, we said this isn’t working it. How will we fix it? A couple of the experienced
teachers put together some ideas and we just put most of our master schedule together by working with each other. It was good to see what everyone was concerned about. Everyone had input” (2006, p.42).

Respondent 3 allowed the teachers to participate in the budgeting decisions. Respondent 3 stated:

“Yes, in several ways. We have a leadership team that is composed of different teachers selected by the administration and we meet each week or twice a month depending on what is going on. But the leadership team has a lot of control on budget expenditures. We are a Title I school. The academic budget from the board, I control. The Title I budget is given to the academic leadership team and they go to their department and get requests and we sit down and determine which requests fit into our school. The leadership team has a lot of input. A lot of leaders like to control the purse strings. I feel that letting go of the purse strings shows them that I have confidence in their abilities” (2006, pgs. 11, 12).

Respondent 6 reported that he asks for, and relies on, teacher input because many of his teachers have a wealth of experience. Respondent 6 stated:

“I ask for input not so much on budgeted, but I give flexibility on how it’s spent. Of course we talk about it, but they make the decision and I have final approval. They have a lot of flexibility in that area. Anything that is a major impact I make sure that I get feedback from them. They may have prior experience that would be beneficial to everyone. I like to give them a lot of leadership ability. That’s how you get fresh ideas” (2006, p. 29).
Respondents 7 and 8 relied heavily on committees in conjunction with the decision-making process. Respondent 7 stated:

“Yes, heavily. We formulate committees to discuss. For example, we have a discipline committee, steering committee, even to sit down and say what type of celebration we will have. If you are going to be an effective leader, you have to include the people that will help you lead” (2006, p.34).

Respondent 8 further added:

“They are able to select instructional materials that would help them do a better job. They will be participating in how money is spent, but they don’t have to look at the budget in order to do that. Every subject area will get together to determine what they need for next year to improve their instruction and student achievement. They will have a wish list and put the prices on the things that they want. But they won’t actually determine how all the money is spent. One thing that comes to mind is ensuring that discipline problems are at a minimum in the building. The first thing that I would do is to select a committee to come up with a school-wide discipline plan. Once the committee determines the rules, the teams would do a plan for their particular team. In other words….we would have representation from every area and every team of the school, ensuring that everyone is covered and everyone’s concerns are addressed. That is the way of getting a task done for the total organization” (2006, pgs. 36, 39).
Theme Eight—Conflict Between Leadership and Management

The respondents appeared to be conflicted between leadership and management. Respondents 1, 4, 7, and 9 reported that they believe it is important to have structure in the school and, therefore, be a manager. Respondent 1 stated:

“I think you have to have a lot of structure to be effective” (2006, p.1).

Respondent 4 stated:

“Structure is very important as a leader. It gives you parameters of which to operate in, but then, anytime you are dealing with people, you have to consider that unique situation and what is going on in that particular circumstance” (2006, p.16).

Respondent 7 stated:

“Structure. Because if you have good structure and everyone understands the structure, consideration is going to be automatic. When people don’t understand the structure of things is when everything else crumbles and fall down. It’s like building a building. Even though it may be attractive and draw in, if the structure is wrong it is only a matter of time before it is going to collapse on itself” (2006, p.32).
Respondent 9 stated:

“Structure. Because I think structure is important in how you run things with the amount of children you have. I wanted my classroom structured in elementary school. I am really into how you run things” (2006, p.41).

In contrast, Respondent 2 wanted to be a leader but is forced to be a manager because of demands made by outside forces. Respondent 2 stated:

“I think both are important. You must have structure to get where you are going but there are things you must consider in order to get where you are going. One is not more important than the other. Not willing to step out and support us in the middle school, to do the things we know we should be able to try. It may not work, but what we are doing isn’t working either so let’s try something else. You’ve got to be willing to do different things. What works for one school does not work for another but we are lumped in the same boat and that just doesn’t work” (2006, p.5).

Respondent 3 wanted to be the coach of his school but recognizes that he has to adjust to his behavior to management level. Respondent 3 stated:

“I believe that being a leader is like being a coach and every coach has to be able to reach all players. You can’t put down something before your team that all players can’t respond to. So if you treat your teachers like a team, you will realize that some may need a kick to move ahead and some may need some information and some may need more structure and support…but everybody is different” (2006, p.11).
Respondent 5 reported that she believes consideration is more important than structure, yet she constantly spoke about all of the rules and guidelines she has to follow and consider. Respondent 5 stated:

“Consideration. We already have rules and guidelines that we have to abide by and we have to consider each student. I think structure is important and I do think that children thrive and do better with structure. But each situation has to be taken care of individually” (2006, p.22).

Respondent 6 said that he prefers to be a manager but realizes that he needs a leadership team. Respondent 6 stated:

“Well my training is 24 years in the military I like a lot of structure. I like to lead my operation, but I tend to modify that more in the civilian world because I am more inclined to believe that you can have structure but you have to have more people involved in the decision-making process. So I have a leadership team that I rely on a lot and, in fact, I met with them this morning. I meet with them anytime there are major decisions. If they have a part in the decision-making process, they are more inclined to go along with the changes” (2006, p.28).

Respondent 8 wanted to be a leader and a manager but utilized more leadership techniques such as committees and focus groups. Respondent 8 stated:

“Ms. Dallas I think that consideration and structure go hand and hand. A leader has to be considerate of staff members, students, and of the total school building. One thing that comes to mind is ensuring that discipline problems are at a minimum in the building. The first thing that I would do is
to select a committee to come up with a school-wide discipline plan. Once
the committee determines the rules, the teams would do a plan for their
particular team. In other words….we would have representation from every
area and every team of the school ensuring that everyone is covered and
everyone’s concerns are addressed. That is the way of getting a task done for
the total organization” (2006, p.36).

Theme Nine—Roadblocks and Obstacles

When asked to name the biggest roadblock or obstacle that faces the middle school
principal, Respondent 1 reported time and advocated a longer school day. Respondent 1 stated:

“Time. Teachers need a lot of time to cover the material and the
students need lots of time. Usually we are not available to offer the amount of
time that is needed in an area during a period of instruction. We have so
many subjects to cover. The kids do not get the true understanding of the
subject before it is time to move on. There are so many standards to cover
before the testing period. So I do not think that the students get enough time
to grasp what they need. I feel that a longer school day would be the most
beneficial change that we could make. We need more time, more time would
be more helpful to the students” (2006, p. 4).

Respondent 2 reported that the central office does not offer support for middle school and is
not willing to try different things. Respondent 2 stated:

“Umm, Central Office. Not willing to step out and support us in the middle
school, to do the things we know we should be able to try. It may not work,
but what we are doing isn’t working either so let’s try something else.
You’ve got to be willing to do different things. What works for one school
does not work for another but we are lumped in the same boat and that just
doesn’t work” (2006, p. 9).
Respondent 3 reported that his biggest roadblock was the reluctance of teachers to take the
appropriate responsibility and role for student academic achievement. Respondent 3 stated:
“The biggest roadblock at my school…that is a good question. I’ll give you
a couple. The biggest roadblock to student achievement is like I said,
everybody not accepting role and responsibility. To win the championship,
even though you have three or four superstars…the role players are not
playing their role. I don’t have enough role players. That is my biggest
academic roadblock. As an instructional leader, my biggest roadblock is that
I do not have enough people who know their role or don’t want to play their
role. They want to shoot the ball when they are not a good shooter, they
should be passing to the good shooter. My biggest roadblock would be roles”
Respondent 4 reported that his school is not recognized as a top peer school and that
expectations are low for the students at his school. Respondent 4 stated:
“I don’t know what to do with them. I find out that communicating the facts
and letting the parents know that there are two things I am sure of, I wasn’t
there and you weren’t there and we have to listen and find out what
happened. Want to know who has the facts straight? I deal with the lack of
understanding by communicating. I wish I had the ability to do parenting
classes. We have a class where we assist our parents with GED, resume writing, job placement. Four projects feed into the school so we have 98% of our kids on free or reduced lunch. Not making excuses for our students, but that does make an impact. I can’t think of what. What bothers me is where it looks as if what we are doing here is not important to the powers that be. I have the feeling that in Richmond County Schools, that there are top peer schools and schools on the bottom rung. I have the perception that Tubman is not a top peer school; therefore, the things that are done, the resources. The expectations of our kids are not there, so folks are looking at our students like we are just spinning our wheels…and that is not the case. We have some bright kids. Another pet peeve that gets me is the expectations that the teachers have. When they have low expectations, I feel that they are not allowing our students to be all that they can be” (2006, p.21).

Respondent 6 reported that the transient nature of his student population is a major problem. Respondent 6 stated:

“(Laugh) Uh…middle school students are definitely unique individuals. They are still in the “learning who we are” stage. Most of our teachers are experienced. We have very few new teachers. We have an experience factor that helps us a lot and the teachers want to be here, they requested to be here, and it is challenging, but our faculty is very experienced. The biggest roadblock that we face here is the transient nature of our student body. With No Child Left Behind and the critical nature of the CRCT, we aren’t sure how these kids are coming to us. Some of them come from out of state and
out of county. That is pretty hard for us. We have a good preparation process for the test, but with almost 50% turnover, it is a tough situation to be faced with. No, they aren’t at all. They are probably within that group, probably no more than the normal 5-7% of that group. They are pretty flexible, they know how to adapt” (2006, p.31).

Respondent 7 reported that middle school is seen as a professional stepping stone. Respondent 7 stated:

“So the distance from professional people thinking that the middle school is a step for them to achieve an administrative goal. This is not a place to come to get a promotion to high school or administration or central office. The middle school is a crop and if you don’t work at it, you won’t harvest anything” (2006, p.35).

Respondent 8 reported that her biggest obstacle and roadblock is discipline problems in the school. Respondent 8 stated:

“So the biggest problem that I have faced in middle school probably deals with the discipline aspect. Discipline can take away from instruction if there are not enough things or teachers in place to handle the situation. Principals have to be instructional leaders. That has been one of the biggest problems. Discipline has been an obstacle. Sometimes parents not understanding the middle school concept has been a problem but I think discipline still outweighs the rest of them” (2006, p.40).
Respondents 5 and 9 reported their biggest roadblock was parents. Respondent 5 stated:

“The biggest roadblock I face is parents. My students are wonderful, my teachers are wonderful. It’s the parents who do not know how to conduct themselves appropriately in society and in relationships in school. I think I have a lot of parents who have had bad experiences and bad relationships and bring that into the school. I spend a lot of time dealing with parents who behave inappropriately and embarrass their children” (2006, p.27).

Respondent 9 reported that it is easy to work with kids but difficult to work with parents. Respondent 9 stated:

“Professionally, the hardest thing for me to deal with is the parents. I don’t know if it is just this area…or the middle school and the parents may already be frustrated. I can deal with the kids all day long. The parents have mental problems that cause us so many problems. There are two or three I knew I would have to deal with this morning. Dealing with parents that are insistent that their child does no wrong. They don’t want to come in with an open mind…my child is changing….my child is growing. That is my biggest obstacle” (2006, p.43).

Summary

The purpose of Chapter 4 was to review and discuss the findings of the study. Nine middle school principals from Richmond County, Georgia, participated in the study. Interviews were conducted, transcribed, and each subject was given a number. The researcher examined the transcribed interviews for the purpose of identifying common
themes. The researcher found eight common themes with the interviews. The transcribed interviews were sent for independent review to Dr. Michael Richardson, Professor of Educational Leadership at Georgia Southern University. Dr. Richardson found one additional theme.

The themes that emerged from the interviews included communication and listening, balance versus non balance, knowing yourself, knowing your teachers, tasks, views on middle school on child-centered versus team-centered, decision-making, conflict between leadership and management, and roadblocks and obstacles. The theme of decision-making had the most consistent responses among the subjects. However, the theme of roadblocks and obstacles yielded the most varied responses.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study was designed to determine the unique aspects of the middle school principal in terms of leadership style. In addition to examining the leadership style of the middle school principal, sub-factors were studied as well. These sub-factors included years of experience, level of education, and size of school. The study examined the various leadership thought processes and procedures that the middle school principal utilizes on a daily basis.

The researcher conducted a review of the literature. The review of literature consisted of studies describing leadership, middle school, and middle school principals.

The research design chosen for this study was qualitative. The researcher chose the qualitative research method because it was person-centered. Additionally, the researcher felt that the qualitative method was the best procedure to use in order to collect data so that the research questions and sub-questions to be studied would be answered more truthfully and soundly. The qualitative method allowed the researcher to develop a framework that was thorough, concise, systematic, manageable, and flexible.

The population for the study consisted of the middle school principals in Richmond County, Georgia. Nine middle school principals were selected for the semi-structured interviews. The sample was chosen for convenience and because the participants were appropriate informants because they possessed the knowledge, understanding, and experience that the researcher needed in order to conduct the study.
The instrumentation for the study was semi-structured interviews. The interview questions reflected the review of literature completed by the researcher. Each of the participants in the study was personally contacted by the researcher in order to establish an interview time. Interviews were completed and transcribed. Each participant was assigned a number based on the order of the interviews. The transcribed data was disaggregated according to themes. An independent researcher also reviewed the data. Nine themes were established.

Analysis of Research Findings

After reviewing the transcribed interviews, the researcher, along with the independent researcher, found the material to contain nine themes. These themes consisted of listening and communication, balance versus non balance, knowing yourself, knowing your teachers, tasks, vision on middle school on child-centered versus team-centered, decision-making, conflict between leadership and management, and roadblocks and obstacles.

Discussion of Research Findings

The researcher compared the findings of her study with the material in the review of literature. In regard to Theme One, listening and communication, all of the participants in the study felt that it is important to be a good listener, as well as to stress the importance of structure and consideration. This finding supported the earlier finding of Bass (1981) in which consideration was related to the leader’s attitude toward followers, the warmth of the relationship between the leader and the followers, the leader’s willingness to listen, and the degree of mutual trust between the leader and the followers. All of the participants felt that consideration and structure were important.
The findings in this study also supported the work of Fiedler and Chemers (1984). All of the participants in the study felt that it was important to incorporate behavior such as helping and doing favors for subordinates, looking out for the welfare of followers, explaining procedures, and being friendly and available. All of the participants felt that structure involved actions which defined leader and follower relationship, establishing defined standards of performance, specifying operations procedures, and determining who does what. Additionally, all of the participants felt it was important to be considerate in regard to the leader’s attitude toward followers, the warmth of the relationship between the leader and the followers, the leader’s willingness to listen, and the degree of mutual trust between the leader and the followers. The findings in this study also supported the work of Valentine et al. (1981). All of the participants in the study felt that the middle school principal should be able to constructively interact with students and peers. Additionally, all of the participants felt that effective communication was essential (Edington and Di Benedetto, 1988; Alexander and George, 1981). The findings of this study supported the work of Likert (1961). All of the participants exhibited the System 3 “participative” characteristic regarding the importance of communication.

Theme Two in the study was “balance versus non balance.” All of the participants agreed that the rationale for middle school should have an emphasis placed on human development phases, learning, and intellectual development in adolescents (Weller, 1999). These middle schools had been established to address human development in terms of physical, emotional, intellectual, and social (Weller, 1999). However, the participants in this study agreed with Romano (1973; Boyer, 1983) in that they are constantly struggling to find a balance between academics and socialization. One participant stated that his school gives
students the flexibility to test the waters, while another participant stated that the requirements of the central office hinder the balance. One participant in the study stated that she encourages her teachers to find the balance between academics and socialization through their discipline plans. One participant described middle school students as being social animals.

Theme Three in the study was “knowing yourself.” The findings of the study supported the earlier work of Hemphill (1955). All of the participants in the study were struggling to find a balance between consideration and structure. All the participants in the study wanted to utilize a minimal amount of both types of behavior. The findings of this study supported the work of Brown, Pethel, and Culbreath (1978) in that all the participants in the study felt that it was important to know oneself in terms of their role as leaders. Seven of the nine participants in the study supported the findings of Valentine, et al. (1981), in that they needed to constructively interact with others while showing a respect for the dignity and worth of individuals. The participants also supported the work of Cushman (1992) because they see themselves as the primary leaders of the school. The findings of this study also supported the work of Hersey and Blanchard (1982) concerning the curvilinear relationship aspect in regard to maturity. Also, seven of the nine participants in this studyconcurred with the findings of Fiedler (1967) in that leadership style is determined by a concern for productivity and a concern for people. Only two participants in the study stated that they maintain the same type of behavior regardless of the situation. Both of these participants felt that it was important to maintain the same type of behavior in order for others to see the type of leader they are. One participant stated that, through experience, she had learned to sometimes not respond and back away and not respond out of anger.
Theme Four in the study was “knowing your teachers.” This study supported the findings of Valentine, et al. (1981), in that the participants felt that classroom control and discipline, coupled with the utilization of a variety of learning strategies and good communication, make the most effective classrooms. The findings in this study also supported the work of Alexander and George (1981). The participants in this study did seek opportunities to elicit feedback, as well as rewarding the performances of teachers and students. They felt that it is important to provide constructive criticism. The findings in this study supported the work of Hersey and Blanchard’s (1982) four leadership styles of telling, selling, participating, and delegating. All of the participants in this study stated that they must utilize a different leadership style depending upon the maturity and professional development of their teachers. Also, the relationship between the teacher and the principal was essential. The amount of support and direction given to teachers was directly related to the relationship between the personality of the principal and the situation (Fiedler, 1967). The principals in this study received satisfaction from the relationship-motivated style because it helped the principal build interpersonal relationships with teachers.

Theme Five in the study was “tasks.” This study supported the findings of Fiedler (1967). When the participants in the study were asked if they are more concerned with tasks or people, seven of the nine stated that they were more concerned with tasks. The participants stated that they were more concerned with tasks because they are required to complete a number of tasks. Only two participants in the study stated that they were more concerned with people. Both of these participants stated that they are concerned with matching the appropriate people with the tasks to be accomplished. One of the participants stated that when you are concerned with people, the task will automatically be done. In
contrast, the participants in the study managed tasks (Blake and Mouton, 1964) through relationship grounded avenues. The majority of the participants seemed to resent tasks. Instead, they preferred to practice both tasks and relationship behavior (Hersey and Blanchard, 1982). They utilized task behavior when giving teachers specific directions and relationship behavior when a situation presented itself. These findings also supported the work of Fiedler (1967).

Theme Six in the study was views on middle school in terms of child-centered versus team-centered. The findings in this study were mixed. The findings in the study did support the work of DeVita (1970). Five of the nine participants in the study agreed that middle schools should be child-centered as advocated by Weller (1999). Also, these participants supported the work of Weller, et al. (1987), concerning child-centered schools with a strong emphasis placed on the learning needs of the adolescent student. One participant felt that it was important for middle school to be child-centered because a child-centered school enables teachers to understand the middle school student, while another participant felt that a child-centered middle school helped meet accountability issues. In contrast, the findings in this study did not support the work of Romano (1973). Four of the nine participants in the study felt that middle schools should be team-centered. Some of the reasons given for support of the team-centered middle school were that a team-centered school provides more structure and that teenagers will automatically grow mentally and socially when they are part of a team. One participant stated that the middle school should be team-centered with a child-centered approach. These principals supported the work of Zepada and Meyers (2004).
Theme Seven in the study was “decision-making.” All of the participants in the study felt that it was important to share responsibility and stated that their schools are struggling with developing a balance between academics and socialization. Additionally, this study supported the findings of Alexander and George (1981) in that the participants felt that it is important to use a maximum number of opportunities for one-on-one communication, soliciting advice and input from their teachers, and rewarding performances of students. The findings of this study supported the work of Likert (1961) in that all the participants felt that it was important to build effective work groups with high performance goals. All of the participants in this study practiced characteristics of Likert’s (1961) System 3, consultative method. All of the participants in this study encouraged teacher involvement in decision-making through leadership teams and committees. Also, all of the participants agreed that it was important to practice participative leadership because it is important to seek input and gain knowledge from teachers. Additionally, the findings of this study supported the work of Blake and Mouton’s (1964) Managerial Grid style 9, 9 of involving everyone.

Theme Eight in the study was “leadership and management.” The research findings supported the work of Likert (1961). All of the participants in the study seemed to be in an internal struggle of leadership and management. The participants wanted to be leaders who are employee-centered but struggled with maintaining a balance of job-centered requirements such as making Adequate Yearly Progress. The research findings also supported earlier studies by Hersey and Blanchard (1982) concerning situational leadership. Additionally, the findings supported the work of Blake and Mouton (1964). The participants in this study exhibited the two dimensions of leadership of concern for people and concern
for production. This study supported the findings of Likert (1961). The participants in this study exhibited the System 3 and System 4 characteristics. All of the participants in the study felt that it was important to have worker involvement in decisions, as well as teamwork, trust, and open communication. Also, the findings of this study supported the work of Valentine, et al. (1981), concerning the need for a middle school principal to constructively interact with students and peers, as well as be architects and idea people who lead people to analyze and reflect (Cushman, 1992) a clear and consistent school culture that promotes support for the school (Teske and Schneider, 1999).

This study also supported the work of Hemphill (1955) concerning the Leaders Behavior Description Questionnaire. In their struggle of being a leader or a manager, the principals in this study exhibited leadership styles of low in consideration and high in structure. In addition, all of the participants in this study demonstrated situational leadership (Hersey and Blanchard, 1982). The principals utilized task behavior when relating specific directions and relationship behavior when working to assure the comfort of their teachers.

Theme Nine in the study was “roadblocks and obstacles.” This study did not support the findings of Bobroff, et al. (1994). Bobroff, et al., found that 90% of the middle school principals surveyed stated that their major obstacle to effectiveness was a lack of understanding of the age group and a lack of specialized training for principals. Instead, the subjects in this study stated that their biggest obstacles were lack of time, lack of support from the central office, lack of ownership and responsibility, low expectations, transient population, the view of middle school as a stepping stone for administrators, discipline, and parents. The findings of this study did not support the work of Weller (1999) concerning the need for principals in middle school to have the freedom to operate independently from the
philosophies and expectations of elementary school and high school. None of the participants in this study agreed that they faced the same disadvantages and/or roadblocks as characterized by McGee and Blackburn (1979).

Conclusions

1. The majority of the findings in this study supported the findings of previous studies as outlined in the review of literature.

2. The participants attempted to practice many of the leadership behaviors as outlined by the major research studies completed on leadership.

3. None of the principals stated a need for more professional development concerning the middle school principalship, community involvement, paperwork, lack of staff, funding, space, facilities, planning time for teachers, or counseling.

4. Level of education, years of experience, gender, and size of school had no effect on leadership style.

5. Only one principal had extensive experience in middle school. This principal gave vastly different responses.

6. There was a distinction between a civilian versus military approach to leadership.

7. There were no variations associated with demographic factors.

Implications

1. More emphasis needs to be placed on the people aspect of the job.

2. More emphasis needs to be placed on training for the middle school.

3. Policy needs to be constructed that focuses specifically on middle school.
4. More research needs to be done in the area of training and preparation for the middle school.

5. More emphasis needs to be placed on the support aspect of middle school principals.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that this study be expanded to a larger population.

2. It is recommended that an expanded study be completed that includes the views and attitudes of principals in elementary schools and high schools in order to determine if difference in leadership behavior.

3. This study should be expanded to include the backgrounds of the participants.

4. This study needs to be expanded to include more middle school principals in the State of Georgia.

5. It is recommended that a person should be specifically hired to serve as a middle school coordinator and/or consultant.

6. It is recommended that a mentoring program be established for the purpose of inducting middle school principals.

7. It is recommended that all middle school principals possess an academic teaching background in middle school before becoming a middle school principal.

8. It is recommended that specific state certification needs to be required for middle school principals.

9. Personnel directors need to carefully screen prospective middle school principals.
Concluding Thoughts

In conclusion, I found this study to be very interesting. I felt that the participants were honest with their responses. However, I also felt that the participants were overwhelmed and were not receiving the amount of support needed for the middle school. Student achievement and instructional leadership needs to be the focus in order for our middle schools to improve.
REFERENCES


Grooms, M.A. (1967). *Perspective on the Middle School*. Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill.


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANTS’ CONSENT LETTER
McBean Elementary School
1165 Hephzibah-McBean Road
Hephzibah, Georgia 30815
(706) 592-3723 ~ Fax: (706) 592-3729

Janina C. Dallas
Principal

Carol W. Murrah
Assistant Principal

November 12, 2004

Dr. Larke,

I am currently in the process of completing my doctoral degree in Educational Leadership through Georgia Southern University. In my study, I am focusing on what makes middle school principals unique in terms of their leadership style or styles. In order to complete the study, I am asking your permission to interview each of the middle school principals in Richmond County. These interviews will take place during a convenient time for the principals and will not interfere with any school activities.

Thank you in advance for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Janina C. Dallas
APPENDIX B

IRB APPROVAL LETTER
Georgia Southern University
Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Phone: 912-681-5465
Fax: 912-681-0719

To: Janina C. Dallas
4755 Red Leaf Way
Martinez, GA 30907

CC: Dr. Michael Richardson
P.O. Box 8131

From: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
(IACUC/IRB/IRB)

Date: February 21, 2006

Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered: H06134 and titled "The lived Experiences of Middle School Principals as Related to Their Leadership Style and Behavior", it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.

This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter. If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol, you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, whether or not it is believed to be related to the study, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator prior to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a Research Study Termination form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,

Julie B. Cole
Director of Research Services and Sponsored Programs